

Newsletter

Edition 49 | Summer – Autumn 2023

Christine is living life to the full

A routine mammogram in 2021 led to a phone call and diagnosis Christine Cole never expected.

"I got the call on my 57th birthday. They said, 'We'd like to see you.' My heart stopped. Unfortunately, I was told I had breast cancer."

Sadly, Christine was one of thousands of people who have their world turned upside down due to a breast cancer diagnosis each year.

"We know the statistics are very high but no one ever thinks it's going to be you," says Christine. "When it is, you walk out of that clinic with a different overlay to your life and it's not going to be the same again."



Christine has come a long way since her diagnosis and long hospital stay.

Christine was originally scheduled for a lumpectomy to remove the tumour, but on review she was directed to have an ultrasound and then given the opportunity to participate in our Breast MRI Evaluation Study.

The Breast MRI Study aimed to find out the best way to use breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and whether it improves treatment options and patient outcomes in women recently diagnosed with breast cancer.

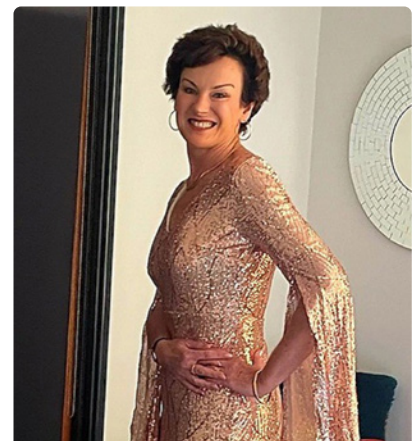
Christine believes that participating in the trial may have saved her life.

"I was so fortunate to get involved in the trial, which involved having a guided MRI – normally an expensive procedure. I was nervous, but I'm so glad I did it, because the results showed that I had another tumour which was triple negative."

"It changed the course of my treatment completely."

Instead of having a lumpectomy to remove the tumour, Christine underwent chemotherapy, a mastectomy to remove her breast, and radiotherapy.

She says that, had she not participated in the clinical trial,



Christine enjoyed getting dressed up for the recent WA Tourism Awards – including showing off her hair which has now grown back.

she would have just proceeded with a lumpectomy – missing an entire tumour only discovered through the course of the MRI.

Thankfully, Christine has come a long way since diagnosis. She's back working full-time and celebrated the end of 2022 by going on a 10-day cruise of the South Pacific with her sister, who she describes as her 'angel' during treatment.

Heading into 2023, Christine is filled with gratitude and positivity.

"I'm keen to live my life to the fullest! I love the beach and this summer is going to be extra special – last year I had a PICC line in my arm for chemo and couldn't swim! I'm just so grateful to Breast Cancer Trials and the people who support them. I dread to think what the outcome might have been for me without them."

Chair's update

I'm delighted to share with you in this newsletter an independent report conducted by The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), which examined the impact of the Breast Cancer Trials research program over the past 40 years.

The report showed that new treatments and strategies identified through our clinical trials program, generously supported by you, have saved the lives of thousands of people in Australia, New Zealand and throughout the world.

We know however, there is still much work to do. Breast cancer still impacts too many people and causes heartbreak and loss.

Our researchers have been developing our Research Strategy for the next five years. It's critical that we identify research topics and methods that are likely to make the greatest impact to improvements in outcomes for people affected by breast cancer; ensure that our resources and the expertise of our research community are used optimally; and that we can proactively respond and adapt to future research opportunities and needs.

Four key themes were identified:

- **Conducting clinical trials in the areas of greatest need and potential impact** for patients throughout their diagnosis, treatment and follow-up, and for those at risk.

- **Collaboration with the right people and organisations** to drive change in clinical management of breast cancer and improve health care systems.
- **Remove barriers and enhance clinical trials participation** through equity in recruitment of a diverse population and overcoming barriers such as geographical location to allow better access to new treatments, improved patient outcomes and faster translation of knowledge.
- **Learning the most from every trial** with data and tissue collected used to inform current and future research to maximise the return on commitments made by donors, funders and trial participants.

Importantly, the value of consumer involvement in our research and the importance of maintaining a consumer-centred and patient-driven approach, underpin our Research Strategy.

As does our commitment to you, the people who help to make this research possible. You are at the heart of everything we do, and can achieve, for people affected by breast cancer. Thank you for the impact you're making on lives and futures with your ongoing generosity and commitment.

I look forward to keeping you informed of our progress.



Professor Sunil Lakhani
Board Chair,
Breast Cancer Trials (BCT)



IN MEMORIAM

We gratefully acknowledge gifts received in memory of:

Mrs Mary Ackland
Mrs Faye Adams
Mrs Zahava Bas Alexander
Mrs Sheryl Argus
Mrs Margaret Armitage
Mrs Brenda Ashley
Mrs Peggy Atkinson
Mrs Marcia Baker
Ms Pauline Barnford
Mrs Gillian Barton
Mrs Heather Beacham
Mrs Jo Bertie
Mrs Ivy Bird
Mrs Violet Bishop
Mrs Helen Black
Ms Jacqueline Bolville
Ms Gwen Bourke
Mrs Helen Bourne
Mrs Lorraine Brennan
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Mrs Marie Camilleri

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Dr Margot McCarthy
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Ms Inta Mezgailis
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Mrs Joyce Morton
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Ms Keja Nielsen
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Mrs Brenda Theakstone
Mrs Melissa Thompson
Mrs Rosa Tosto
Mrs Patricia Totman
Mrs Glykeria Triantos
Ms Elizabeth Tyson
Mrs Stella Vanasse-Bouffard
Mrs Kate Walker
Mrs Beth Ward
Ms Mary-Anne Warner
Mrs Susannah Waters
Mrs Leonie Watson
Mr Robert Williams
Mrs Chun Wong
Ms Dawn Wyatt
Dr Carolyn Young (nee Bennett)

Patricia wants research to discover the reasons why breast cancer occurs

Patricia has been touched by breast cancer, both professionally and personally.

In the late 1950s, when she was training to become a registered nurse at a hospital in Newcastle, Patricia recalls a male patient being admitted for breast cancer. As a young nurse, she wasn't sure if he had been admitted for a biopsy or surgery, or both. But she realised then that breast cancer doesn't only affect women, it also affects men – and she often wonders what treatments were available to that gentleman at the time.

Patricia was first moved to support breast cancer research after her very good friend, and fellow nurse, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her friend, Anita, had no family history and accepted any treatments that were offered to her. Anita became a member of Breast Cancer Trials' IMPACT program and was a 2006 Advocate. Sadly, Anita passed away in 2010.

Another inspiration was her friend Helen, who passed away from breast cancer whilst her twin boys were in primary school. Patricia contemplates the life Helen has missed out on and that she would be a grandmother now.

Patricia has also watched her great-aunt survive breast cancer, as well her cousin and goddaughter who were both diagnosed with breast cancer in recent years. Thankfully, they are still in good health.



Patricia when she graduated from nursing school in 1961.

As a committed supporter of Breast Cancer Trials for almost 25 years, Patricia understands the benefits of ongoing research and has seen significant progress in new treatments being made available – and she sincerely wants this to continue.

In 2019 Patricia decided to leave a gift to Breast Cancer Trials in her Will. She wants all men, women, best friends, aunties, cousins and goddaughters to benefit from her gift, and for researchers to discover why breast cancer occurs.

We are so grateful for Patricia's generosity and know that her legacy will make a profound difference to many lives in the future. **Thank you Patricia.**

BEQUESTS

We gratefully acknowledge bequests received from the following supporters and offer our condolences to their families:

Mrs Betty Kohane

Mr Allan Rowling

Miss Vivienne Windsor

Remembering Breast Cancer Trials in your Will ensures that the special commitment you have to save lives from breast cancer today, is a legacy which will continue beyond your lifetime.

If you would like information about leaving a gift in your Will, please tick the box on your donation slip or contact our Gifts in Will Coordinator for a confidential discussion on **1800 423 444**.

To leave a gift in your Will, the following wording should be used:

"I (your name) give to Breast Cancer Trials:

- the residue of my estate, or*
- _____% of my estate, or*
- the lump sum of \$_____, or*
- my property known as _____ [e.g., real estate, art works, shares, units or other securities in listed companies].*

to be applied for general purposes by Breast Cancer Trials as determined by its directors. I declare that the receipt of an authorised officer of Breast Cancer Trials will be a sufficient discharge to my executors who will not be bound to see the application of this gift."

Research updates

Your support is critical in helping further our research into better breast cancer detection, treatments and outcomes. Here is a snapshot of some of our recent work.

A closer look at our Breast MRI Evaluation Trial

Led by Professor Christobel Saunders, our Breast MRI Evaluation Study is a simple but important study that is investigating whether a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a helpful tool for doctors treating women with early-stage breast cancer. More than 400 patients were recruited to this trial across seven of our participating hospitals in Australia – including Christine on our front cover.

The study was open to women recently diagnosed with breast cancer and where the medical treatment team suggested that an MRI of the breast prior to undergoing initial treatment or surgery will help plan those treatment options.



Professor Christobel Saunders

Study Chair of Breast MRI Evaluation at BCT

MRI uses powerful magnets, radio waves and a computer and was used in this trial to take detailed pictures of the breasts to work out the extent of the breast cancer.

This trial aims to find out if having a breast MRI after being diagnosed with breast cancer might change plans for treatment and how this might affect patient outcomes.

The Australian Federal Government recently funded MRI via the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) to be used in some women with early breast cancer. Under the MBS, MRI can be used where there is a difference between a physical examination of the breast by a doctor (clinical examination) compared to imaging examinations (such as ultrasounds or mammograms) and /or the results of the MRI may change the type of treatment originally planned.

However, this is temporary funding and the Government has asked for more research to find out the best way to use MRI, when it will be most useful, and to find out if it can improve treatment options and patient outcomes.

Tumour-infiltrating lymphocytes (TILs): Helping the Immune System to Fight Cancer Cells

Lymphocytes, which are a type of white blood cell, are an important part of the immune system that helps the body fight off infections or eliminate diseased cells. Lymphocytes, made up of T cells and B cells, are constantly patrolling the body to identify cells that shouldn't be present, including cancer.

As cancers grow, lymphocytes recognise these cells as abnormal and penetrate the tumour. These are the tumour-infiltrating lymphocytes, or TILs. Once in the tumour, TILs begin working to kill cancer cells.

Research has shown that a higher number of TILs detected in a patient's tumour is associated with better outcomes and indicates the patient's immune system is rallying a response to their cancer. This is particularly so for patients with triple negative breast cancer and HER2 positive breast cancer – two of the most aggressive sub-types of breast cancer. Understanding the quantity of TILs provides information on how the patient will respond to conventional treatment, helping doctors to tailor treatments for that patient.

Our researcher and Board Director, Professor Sherene Loi, has led the development and implementation of the TILs biomarker in breast cancer and she has also led a number of ground-breaking trials in immunotherapy – PANACEA, and the NeoN and DIAMOND clinical trials funded thanks to your generosity. These trials explore the use of immunotherapy drugs to help boost the body's immune response to help fight breast cancer.

The TILs biomarker in breast cancer has now been established as part of routine breast cancer pathology reporting in many countries. There is also potential for TILs to be used to predict which tumours will respond to checkpoint blockade or immunotherapy.

If you'd like further information about our research, please visit our website and explore our Research section.



Professor Sherene Loi

Study Chair of CHARIOT and Board Director at BCT

Impact report: Trials Save Lives

An independent study of our research program has proven something our researchers, trial participants and wonderful supporters like you have known for years – that clinical trials save lives.

The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) recently produced a report into the impact of our research over the past 40 years. It found that – with your support – we are creating a substantial impact, helping to shape treatments, and improving quality of life for breast cancer patients, adding up to more lives saved than ever before.

Thanks to worldwide efforts, today 90% of people are alive five years after a breast cancer diagnosis.

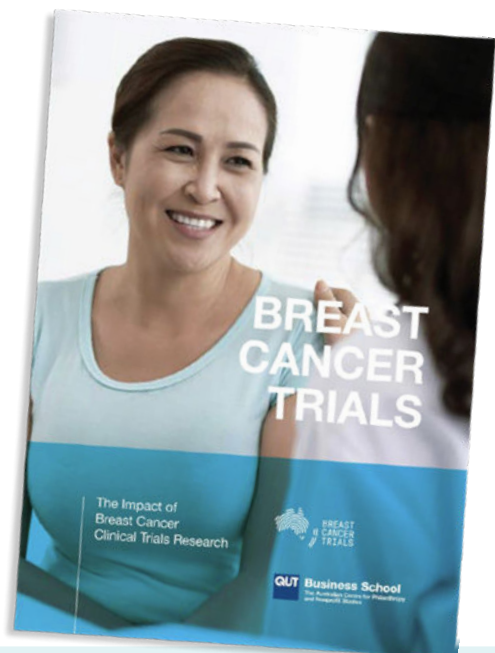
That means more women recovering from breast cancer, more women getting to see their children grow up, and more women living long and happy lives.

Breast cancer isn't the same in every person. That's why it's vital we find tailored treatments and adopt a whole person approach.

The results from our clinical trials inform and change routine care. This makes it possible to provide new treatments and prevention options for breast cancer patients today – helping to save and improve lives.

Our clinical trials can provide patients with access to new breast cancer treatments and strategies not yet widely available. People participate because they may benefit, and because people in the future can benefit from what is learned.

The report also found we are effectively empowering doctors so that they can save and improve the lives of



Did you know?

- Breast Cancer Trials publications are cited at **over 10 times the world benchmark** – an indicator of excellence.
- We bring together **835 researchers** in Australia and New Zealand across 109 hospitals.
- Breast cancer treatments available today are **only possible because people have participated in clinical trials.**
- Our research has been saving lives for **more than 40 years.**

their patients. Clinical trials have the biggest impact when the scientific knowledge is brought to the 'real world'. That's why we provide critical structures and support for clinical trials that have tangible impacts for breast cancer patients and those at risk.

You can see the report in full by visiting: www.impact.breastcancertrials.org.au or let our Supporter Care Team know and we can send it to you!

Your privacy matters

With the recent spate of data breaches impacting Australians, we want to reassure you that as always, we handle your information with care and in accordance with our legal obligations. We are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of our supporters, trial participants and other stakeholders.

We process your generous donations using a secure system that does not store your financial information. We are vigilant in the capture and safe storage of any information you do share with us to assist in keeping you up to date with our work.

We are bound by the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and other privacy laws which govern the way organisations hold, use and disclose personal information. We will not disclose information about you to any other individuals or organisations without whom we have a confidential arrangement in place. Importantly, these organisations are also bound by the Privacy Act.

Our Privacy Policy, which you can access via our website, contains information about how we collect and handle personal information. The policies also contain information on what to do if you have questions or concerns. If you would like us to post you a copy of this policy, please call our Supporter Care Team on 1800 423 444.

You are protecting future generations

A huge thank you to everyone who gave so generously at Christmas time. The care and concern you show for others is truly inspiring and we are so grateful for our breast cancer community.

Together, you raised over \$260,000 towards breast cancer clinical trials research to help give all breast cancer sufferers the chance to live full lives.

We shared Gemma's story, a young woman tragically diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 27. A diagnosis that threatened her whole future and her dream of having a family. Despite everything that breast cancer had cost her, Gemma was determined to stay strong throughout her treatment and vowed to focus on all of the little miracles along the way.

Her biggest miracle came three years after treatment, her beautiful daughter Audrey. Gemma named Audrey after her late grandmother, who had lost her own mother to breast cancer when she was just 13.

It's heartbreaking to see generations of families being affected by breast cancer and it's clear there is so much more we need to learn about all types and stages of breast cancer.

Gemma hopes to see a future with more treatment options so women like her, and in her daughter's generation, don't have to suffer and lose so much to breast cancer.

Gemma is so thankful for your support. Your kindness helps save lives and gives women back to the families who love and need them.



"I owe my future to breast cancer clinical trials. I now have the chance to see my daughter grow up. That is worth everything."

– Gemma

The perfect diary for every woman



Thank you to everyone who has purchased a copy of our 2023 Health Diary (even Santa helped)!

The diary is still available if you would like to get a copy for yourself or a loved one. Purchase yours for \$19.99 at your local newsagent, Woolworths or at participating Post Offices.

We also want to give a special mention to our ongoing partners **The Australian Women's Weekly, Interflora Australia, Australia Post,**



Woolworths and newsagents who are all once again supporting the Australian Women's Health Diary.

We can't thank them enough for their ongoing support and commitment to breast cancer trials research.

Supporters in action

Rosie's fundraising event was an incredible success!

In August, our wonderful supporter Rosie held a fundraising event to support us at the Royal Motor Yacht Club in Broken Bay.

Working tirelessly over several months to bring the event to life, Rosie reached out far and wide to source amazing raffle prizes and auction items for 180 guests.

Her hard work paid off with the event raising over \$56,000!

This is Rosie's second fundraising event for us, her previous one having raised \$7,500. Thank you to Rosie and all her incredibly generous guests for your support.



I-MED Radiology Network – Breast Cancer Awareness Month Partnership

Our Breast Cancer Awareness Month partnership with medical imaging provider I-MED Radiology Network was a wonderful success.

Throughout October, I-MED Radiology Network pledged a donation of \$5 for every mammogram they performed to Breast Cancer Trials. With a total of 8,517 mammograms, this has resulted in \$42,585 raised for our clinical trials program.

We sincerely thank I-MED Radiology Network for their ongoing commitment and dedication. Since they began supporting us a few years ago, they have raised an incredible \$76,585.

Shaw and Partners – Awareness Makes the Difference Event

In October, Candice, Jelena and Felicity from Shaw and Partners Financial Services hosted the fundraising event "Awareness Makes the Difference" to raise funds on our behalf.

It was a wonderful evening with Medical Oncologist and Scientific Advisory Committee Chair Dr. Nicholas Zdenkowski speaking about the importance of our research.

Amazingly, Shaw and Partners matched every dollar raised on the night through their Shaw Foundation; resulting in \$16,000 raised for our research program.

We are so thankful to Candice, Felicity and Jelena for their commitment and hard work. We are truly thankful to everyone who supported this fantastic initiative and are excited to see what the 2023 event holds!

For more ways to fundraise, visit www.breastcancertrials.org.au



REGISTRATIONS ARE NOW OPEN FOR THE 2023 TEE OFF

Calling all golfers!

Do you love playing golf? Would you like to help raise funds for breast cancer research? Consider talking to your local club about hosting a special Tee Off Day!

Thousands of women from more than 120 clubs throughout Australia participated in the 2022 event helping to raise over \$240,000! Tee Off can be held any day of the year, and the format of the day is entirely up to you. We can help with prizes, promotional material and local media.

Golf clubs and their members are always thinking of new and creative ways to fundraise. Ocean Shores Country Club are a great example. They were unable to host their usual Tee Off event on the course due to severe weather conditions. So members rallied together and decided to hold a "golfing garage sale", selling golfing items they no longer use to help raise funds for our research.



Celine and Paula are loving their new looks!



Members from Ocean Shores dressed up for the occasion.

Small and large golf clubs made an extraordinary impact last year. We want to thank everyone for their ongoing commitment in what has been a tough couple of years. Our two top fundraising clubs need a special mention: Christmas Island Golf Club and Noosa Golf Club raised \$16,804 and \$13,200 respectively. Amazing work!

Celine De Cruz, a long-time Christmas Island resident and member of their golf club committee, graciously decided to shave her long hair to contribute to the day.

Noosa Golf Club's Womens Captain Paula Jeffrey threw out a personal challenge - she would dye her hair pink if people donated, resulting in more than \$1,000 being raised by Paula's Pink Ball Day Challenge.

A huge thank you to all our wonderful supporters for making such a meaningful difference.

Find out how you can get involved at www.breastcancertrials.org.au

Shop at Ritchies IGA and support Breast Cancer Trials

We are so excited to be part of the Ritchies Community Benefit program which supports clubs, schools and charities.

If you shop at a Ritchies IGA in NSW, VIC or QLD, simply sign up for the Ritchies IGA loyalty program (if you haven't already), nominate Breast Cancer Trials as your 'favourite recipient', and raise funds every time you shop.

Every month, we will receive up to 0.5% of our IGA supporters' total spend, PLUS you'll receive exclusive offers and exciting IGA rewards.

Visit www.breastcancertrials.org.au/ritchies-iga to find out more.



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