

Newsletter

Edition 50 | Winter – Spring 2023

“We can end this terrible disease.”

Virginia Anthony is not only a breast cancer survivor – she is one of Breast Cancer Trials’ earliest supporters, having donated to us for more than 25 years.

“I’m 81 now, but was 58 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, discovered during a mammogram. I thought they had made a mistake.

All I could think was ‘No, this can’t be happening. This couldn’t possibly happen to me.’”

Virginia remembers being fearful of the unknown in the days after her diagnosis.

“I was devastated, wondering if my life was going to be completely disastrous. Thankfully, I had wonderful support from family and friends and a very caring treatment team. It wasn’t a breeze – but I felt very reassured.”

It’s this experience, along with watching other breast cancer patients around her who were extremely sick, that has motivated Virginia to be such a long-standing and generous Breast Cancer Trials’ supporter.

“Breast Cancer Trials research is absolutely imperative. They’ve helped so many women through research. The outcomes for women have been superb; survival rates have increased dramatically since even 25 years ago. The treatments are so improved, they’re so much more refined and less invasive.”

Virginia is so grateful to have survived breast cancer, and lives her life to the full.

“I love my life. I have my wonderful husband of 53 years, John;



two lovely daughters, and two grandchildren I’m excited to watch grow into happy and enthusiastic people. My passion is my garden and I love theatre and art. I’ve learned to be more tolerant and resilient; to treasure every moment and not be concerned about trivialities.”

Virginia has been supporting us throughout the years because she truly believes that there will come a day when no more lives are cut short by breast cancer.

“I encourage people to donate to Breast Cancer Trials because with your help, we are going to eradicate this dreadful disease – and breast cancer might become a faded memory.”



Virginia lives her life to the full, and loves spending time with her family.

Thank you, Virginia, for standing with us for over 25 years to help find better, kinder treatments for breast cancer.

Chair's update

Welcome to the 50th edition of your bi-annual Supporter Newsletter.

This milestone represents 25 years of communicating the impact of your wonderful generosity on the lives and futures of others.

It has also prompted me to reflect on the importance of our partnerships with you, our clinical trial participants and our researchers. This unique collaboration is critical to the progress we've made and will influence the discoveries yet to come.

An example of this is the 12-year analysis of the TEXT and SOFT clinical trials which involved 5,738 women internationally including 489 from Australia and New Zealand. The outcomes of this research first reported in 2014 and 2015 respectively, changed the treatments available for premenopausal women with breast cancer. The 12-year analysis of participants in these trials, reported in your Research Update, has shown how important this treatment has been to their outcomes indicating the broader impact to all women who now also receive this treatment approach.

Breast Cancer Trials has been pleased to work in collaboration with many other medical research groups on a new Australian data resource initiative, HeSANDA. This new resource catalogues previously published research so that it may be used for secondary research purposes. This has the potential to identify gaps in knowledge, fast-track new areas of research and expedite the discovery of new health related benefits which otherwise may take many years.

Over 300 of our researchers will soon come together for our Annual Scientific Meeting. It's an important event in our calendar where we share knowledge, update on research results and progress, plan new breast cancer research and prioritise areas of unmet patient need.

Whether you are a new supporter, or you have been with us on this journey for some or all of the past 25+ years – thank you. You've made possible the many breakthroughs which today benefit breast cancer patients and their families.

I look forward to keeping you informed of the next breakthrough that we make together.

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



IN MEMORIAM

We gratefully acknowledge gifts received up to 15 May 2023 in memory of:

Ms Yasmin Abdullah	Mrs Joan Cresswell	Mrs Carol Innes	Mrs Nina Mokrij	Mrs Mary Silvestri
Mrs Maureen Abell	Mrs Divine Dajac	Mrs Veronica Januszke	Mrs Cathy Montgomery	Mrs Thora Simpson
Mrs Faye Adams	Ms Joy Davies	Mrs Amanda Jessop-Shaw	Ms Robyn Mulholland	Mrs Cheryl Singh
Ms Maria Albiez	Mrs Emelie De Leon	Mrs Gwen Johnson	Ms Lay Ling Ng	Ms Dulcie Stephen
Mrs Bonnie May Ampt	Ms Lorraine Dickson	Ms Sally Johnson	Mrs Tracy Nicholls	Mrs Del Steward
Mrs Val Armstrong	Mrs Ivy Dodd	Mrs Mariana Kadib	Miss Kathryn O'Neill	Mrs Bonnie Stewart
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Mrs Pat Clowes	Mrs Lee Howard	Mrs Frances McKiernan	Ms Laura Schiemann	Mrs Ourania Zakris
Mrs Pauline Colgan	Ms Thuy Lan Huynh	Mrs Elizabeth Moir	Mrs Ceri Schultz	

You've given hope to women like Diane

Thanks to your support this tax time, we raised an incredible \$456,404 towards critical breast cancer research, giving hope to women like Diane.

Your generosity gives breast cancer patients confidence that our clinical trials are constantly asking important questions, identifying better treatments, and finding the best ways to prevent and treat breast cancer.

Diane held onto hope throughout her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment, even as she was faced with fear and uncertainty about her future.

The thought of leaving her husband and daughter behind was terrifying.

It's been over two years since Diane was diagnosed and she is feeling healthy and well. But there is always doubt in the back of her mind that her breast cancer may return.



"If my breast cancer returns, it's clinical trials that make it possible for me to access new and innovative treatments, but that is only possible if there is funding available."

Thank you for supporting our new TUGETHER clinical trial, which aims to identify a new treatment option for people with metastatic HER2-positive breast cancer to slow the progression of their disease and give them more time with their loved ones.

Thank you for sharing your precious memories

Thank you to everyone who supported our Mother's Day appeal, raising over \$130,000 towards the OPTIMA clinical trial.

The OPTIMA trial aims to identify patients who may be spared chemotherapy and it's short and long-term side effects without compromising their chance of survival – giving women the hope of better quality of life through kinder treatments for their breast cancer.

Lee knows all too well the toll breast cancer treatment can take on your body.

"There were days when I didn't think I could go on. But what I do know is that, without medical research, there's a good chance I wouldn't even be here today for my family. I am beyond grateful."

Thank you so much for supporting Breast Cancer Trials to help more mums like me to survive breast cancer and have the quality of life we need to enjoy precious moments with our families."

In honour of Mother's Day we asked you to share with us your special 'Mum memories'.

Here are some of the beautiful responses we received:



Lee, pictured right, with her mother and children.

My mum was a mum who gave me so much love and affection. I miss her so much and will always have such special loving memories. Will always love and remember you Mum. – Pam

My mum memory is of her resilience to breast cancer, twice, both breasts off, no hair with the chemo. But she always managed to smile. I wish I had her resilience to pain. Her smile lit up the room. Miss you lots my dearest mum. – Marin

My mum has faced so many challenges in her life, including fighting breast cancer. I am pleased to say she is a survivor. – Michelle

Mum was a kind lady, blessed with a lot of patience (with 11 children!). She supported and encouraged us to do whatever we wanted to do career wise. Taught us by example to be kind, respectful and to care about other people, especially the poor and less fortunate. She always had a smile and she had great faith. – Anne

Research updates

Your support is critical in helping further our research into better treatments and outcomes. This follow up of two important clinical trials shows how your generosity continues to benefit people through new treatment approaches.

Suppressing ovarian function increases breast cancer survival in high-risk premenopausal women

Two scientific papers published in December 2022, reported on the latest analysis of data from two long-term international clinical trials conducted by Breast Cancer Trials and generously supported by our donors.

The Suppression of Ovarian Function Trial (SOFT) and the Tamoxifen and Exemestane Trial (TEXT) involved thousands of women from all over the world, including 489 from Australia and New Zealand. These trials are investigating the effects of different hormone treatment combinations on survival and the recurrence of cancer in premenopausal women.

The recent analysis shows that the addition of ovarian suppression is providing at least a 4% improvement in overall survival at 12 years.

Among premenopausal women with breast cancer, 80% have hormone-responsive breast cancer, where the hormone oestrogen can stimulate the growth of cancer cells. To stop this from happening to any cancer cells that remain after the primary breast cancer has been removed, women may be given one or more hormone blocking drugs. These either prevent the uptake of oestrogen by cells (oestrogen blockers like tamoxifen), switch off the production of oestrogen in the ovaries (ovarian function suppression), or block oestrogen production in body fat (aromatase inhibitors such as exemestane).

The research partly stemmed from the observation that women under the age of 35 treated for hormone receptor positive breast cancer often had worse outcomes than women closer to menopause. One suggestion was that by placing younger women into a state of menopause, by suppressing their ovaries, might help prevent recurrence of the cancer.

Professor Prue Francis, the BCT Principal Investigator for SOFT and TEXT and the international co-chair of SOFT and chair of the international steering committee for both trials, says "At 12 years in SOFT, we can now see that some sub-groups of women at particularly high



Professor Prue Francis
Breast Cancer Trials Principal Investigator
for SOFT and TEXT

risk of recurrence seem to benefit from the more intense endocrine therapy with ovarian function suppression and exemestane." They include women with larger tumours, who had chemotherapy before surgery. "Also, women under 35 look like they are getting a good survival benefit from ovarian suppression, and those with aggressive grade-3 tumours."

Women with a lower risk of breast cancer recurrence have on average had good outcomes using tamoxifen alone without ovarian suppression. "This is a reassuring finding, that there are premenopausal women who don't need chemotherapy and don't need ovarian suppression. More than 95% in this [low risk] group who did not receive chemotherapy are still alive."

After 12 years the combined TEXT-SOFT analysis shows a continuation of trends that became apparent after five and eight years. Treatment with exemestane and ovarian suppression significantly improved disease-free survival and reduced distant metastases compared to tamoxifen and ovarian suppression.

There are important considerations for patients when it comes to seeing increased effectiveness of the treatment and increased side effects associated with that treatment, which requires personalised decision making. Professor Francis says, "Aromatase inhibitors (like exemestane) can have challenging side-effects. They certainly can cause more musculoskeletal complaints. They are harder on your sex life and can cause more loss of bone density. Tamoxifen has side-effects, such as increasing the risk of blood clots, but these are not common."

"I now wonder if in fact my breast cancer may have been hereditary."

Kaylene's breast cancer diagnosis in 2011 came as quite a shock. Having lost her mother at the age of 15, Kaylene really did not know if there was a history of breast cancer in her family.

After undergoing radiation treatment, Kaylene was given the all clear.

Kaylene could not believe it when in 2014, only three years after her last diagnosis, something showed in her annual mammogram in her opposite breast. Her doctor told her that it was breast cancer and that she would need to undergo treatment once again.

While Kaylene has not participated in a clinical trial herself, she believes that the work carried out by Breast Cancer Trials is extremely important in making a profound difference to the treatment of breast cancer now and well into the future.

Not only does Kaylene support Breast Cancer Trials by purchasing The Australian Women's Health Diary each year, she has also decided to leave Breast Cancer Trials a gift in her Will, hoping to fund new and better treatments.

"I want to ensure my granddaughter and future generations do not have to face the fear and uncertainty that comes with a breast cancer diagnosis, just like I did".

If you would like more information about how you can leave a lasting legacy and make a profound difference to the future of breast cancer research, please call **1800 423 444** or email bequestenquiries@bctrials.org.au



Today Kaylene enjoys spending time with her three energetic dogs, Peanut, Sugar and Rex.

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

"I give to Breast Cancer Trials (ABN 64 051 369 496) to be applied for general purposes as determined by its Directors:

- The residue of my estate (or _____% of the residue of my estate), or*
- The whole of my estate (or _____% of my estate), or*
- The sum of \$_____, or*
- My asset/s listed (e.g. shares, real estate, etc)*

I declare that the receipt of an authorised officer of Breast Cancer Trials will be sufficient discharge to my executors who will not be bound to see the application of this gift."



**INCLUDE
A CHARITY**
Make your mark

This 4-10 September is Include a Charity week, where all Australians are encouraged to remember their favourite charities in their Will. Including Breast Cancer Trials in your Will can help create a world without breast cancer. We are so grateful to our wonderful supporters who have decided to leave a legacy in this way – thank you.

GIFTS IN WILLS

The Late Robyn Valerie Garrard
The Late Maria Teresa Grosso
The Late Shirley Healy

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

The Late Lynne Hunt
The Late Lynette Joyce Paley
The Late Margaret Anne Richmond

The Late Garry Shirvington

Your supporter survey feedback

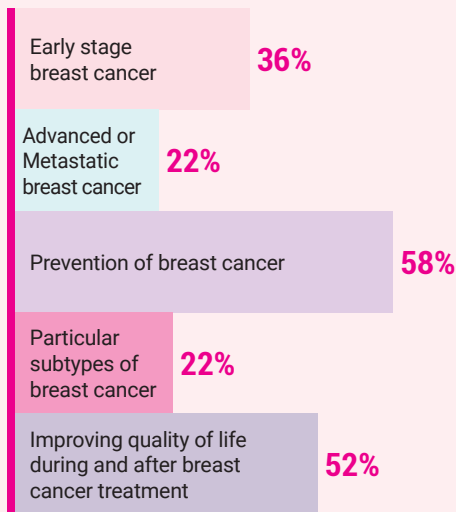
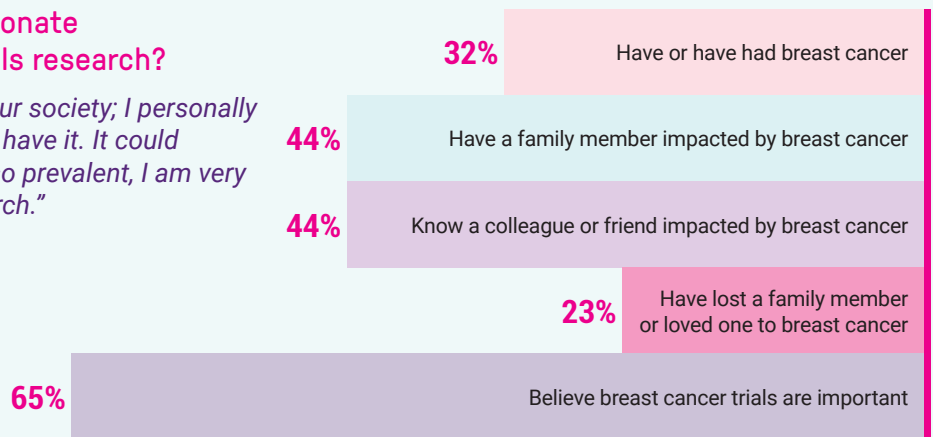
Thank you to everyone who completed the 2023 Supporter Survey. We take time to read each and every comment, and hope you know that your feedback is so important. It helps us plan and communicate with you about the things you care about most, and learn more about why Breast Cancer Trials matters to you.

Thank you for helping shape the future of your charity and saving lives from breast cancer.

What is your motivation to donate to breast cancer clinical trials research?

"Breast cancer is so prevalent in our society; I personally know of a number of friends that have it. It could happen to me! But because it is so prevalent, I am very motivated to donate to the research."

"Having been through surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment and suffering side effects every day – I really do not want anyone else to have to go through this."



What research areas are you most interested in?

Our trials span every aspect of breast cancer research, from prevention, to slowing disease progression and improving quality of life.

Scan this QR code to find out more on the latest research you are helping make possible.

"I've been involved in Breast Cancer Trials as an oncologist since 1976. You're doing a great job – congratulations."

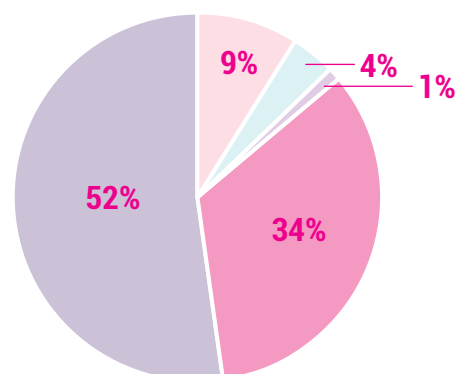


Did you know?

The vast majority of our supporters have never participated in a breast cancer clinical trial themselves – but know how important trials are in developing better, kinder treatments and saving lives.

Have you included a gift to Breast Cancer Trials in your Will?

Many important breast cancer clinical trials have been funded through this kind of legacy, saving lives and changing the way breast cancer is diagnosed and treated.



- Have included / Intend to include BCT in their Will 9%
- Do not currently have a will 4%
- Would consider and would like more information 1%
- Have a will but not included a charity 34%
- Not interested right now / Preferred not to say 52%

Supporters in action

Standies' annual horse show was a big success!

Two of our wonderful supporters, Lesley and Maree, started their fundraising initiative 'Standardbreds for Breast Cancer Trials' (or Standies, for short!) back in 2019.

Standies hold two fundraisers annually, a horse show in January and a stallion auction in August.

For this year's show, 36 horses were presented on the day and everyone involved had a ball with one of the highlights being the Fashions On The Field, judged by Leslie, the Chair of Breast Cancer Trials' Consumer Advisory Panel.

The show raised \$6,700, bringing their total raised close to \$30,000. Thank you Standies for your wonderful, ongoing support!



Maitland Patchwork Quilters – over 20 years of support

This wonderful group of women make up just some of the Maitland Patchwork Quilters Inc, an organisation incredibly dedicated to supporting breast cancer clinical trials research.

For over 20 years, they have supported us through their Bi-Annual Quilt Exhibition, where members showcase their beautiful quilts.

Countless hours go into bringing the quilts to life and all their hard work has paid off in the most amazing way.

Their last exhibition held in October 2022 raised \$10,000, bringing their overall contribution to our life-saving clinical trials research to over \$62,000. Thank you for helping save lives in such creative way!

Belle's Breast Cancer Bash

Since 2017, Belinda, along with her friends and family, has worked tirelessly to create and hold a fundraising camping weekend, 'Belle's Breast Cancer Bash'.

This year, Belinda raised more than \$11,000 for Breast Cancer Trials!

Thank you Belle for your amazing donation – we know you're already planning for next year's event and we're so grateful for your continued support.



Supporters in action

That's a wrap on Race for a Cure for another year!

Race for a Cure was created by Ben, Toula and Michael Kavich after Ben's wife Toula, was diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer. Ben and Michael participate in the Bathurst 6 Hour event held every Easter, asking for donations to support Breast Cancer Trials research.

This year Tickford Racing Supercars driver Thomas Randle joined the team which was an exciting addition. They also had their best finish, placing 4th overall.

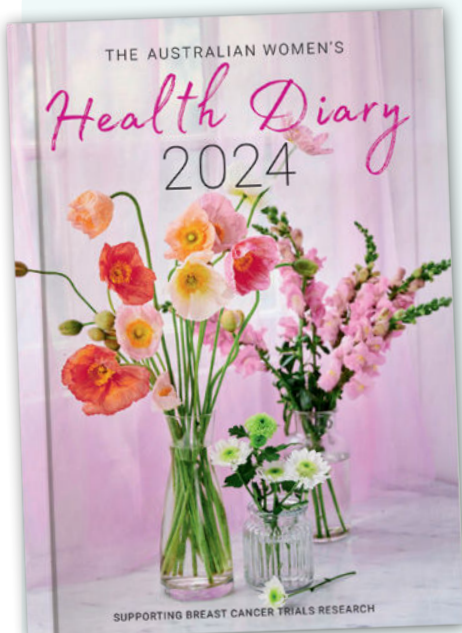
We're also thrilled to announce that this was their most successful fundraising year yet with over \$50,000 raised for breast cancer clinical trials, bringing their total raised since 2017 to an amazing \$175,000.

We also want to acknowledge our wonderful official marketing sponsor, Yellow Pages, who has supported Race For A Cure since 2021.

We can't wait to see the car hit the track again next year!

There are many ways you can raise funds for Breast Cancer Trials; visit www.breastcancertrials.org.au for inspiration.

To watch the highlights from the race, scan here:



Saving lives for 26 years

The Australian Women's Health Diary, in its 26th year, remains an informative and much-loved organiser for women of all ages.

It's also a critical tool in our fight against breast cancer raising almost \$900,000 last year for clinical trials research, to save and improve the lives of every person diagnosed. Thank you to everyone who purchased the 2023 edition.

Available from September, the 2024 edition is again packed with health

information for women of all ages, wrapped in a practical, easy to use diary format.

Priced at just \$19.99, it will be available in newsagents, Woolworths, participating post offices and from our website at www.breastcancertrials.org.au

Many of our wonderful supporters buy the diary each year, and have shared that it's even become a family tradition or special Christmas gift for loved ones.

Keep an eye out for your supporter 'special offer' released in September

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