

## Newsletter

Edition 55 | Summer – Autumn 2026

### SIMPLE BLOOD TEST COULD GUIDE TREATMENT FOR AGGRESSIVE BREAST CANCER



**The latest analysis from Breast Cancer Trials' Neo-N clinical trial, made possible by you, was presented at the international San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in December. The results indicate that a series of blood tests could transform the way we treat early triple negative breast cancer.**

The tests look for tiny fragments of tumour DNA that have been released by the breast cancer in the blood. In the Neo-N trial patients received a new combination of treatment prior to surgery. Researchers found that patients who had no 'circulating tumour DNA' detected in the blood during treatment were more likely to have no remaining signs of breast cancer and better long-term survival.

This means that it may be possible to see whether a new combination of treatment received prior to surgery is effective, or whether more treatment is needed for some patients.

Study Chair, Professor Sherene Loi said, *"Triple negative is a type of breast cancer that is lacking features we can target, unlike other breast cancer types, making it a difficult breast cancer to treat, so these latest results are an exciting breakthrough."*

This could make a huge difference for women like Naveena (pictured above), who was diagnosed with triple negative cancer 11 years ago at just 39 years of age. Naveena, now a breast cancer advocate and member of BCT's Consumer Advisory Panel, said:

*"Triple negative breast cancer has fewer treatment options, more aggressive tumours, and often affects younger people, severely impacting quality of life. It's great to see there are more targeted treatment approaches emerging from trials such as Neo-N."*

**Because of your support of clinical trials, patients facing aggressive breast cancer have hope for better outcomes.**

# Chair's update

**We enter the new year with renewed optimism and determination to save and improve the lives of people with breast cancer, thanks to you.**

Because of your generosity, our Neo-N clinical trial has discovered that a simple blood test may show if a new combination of treatment received before surgery is working—helping avoid additional treatment or determine when more is needed.

This comes after our EXPERT trial reached a major milestone by meeting its recruitment target of 1,170 participants internationally. These patients are helping to identify whether some people can safely avoid radiotherapy and its side effects without compromise to their survival.

It is with deep gratitude for her exceptional service that we farewell Julie Callaghan, who has stewarded our fundraising program for over 30 years.

Julie's dedication to our mission and deep appreciation for you, our supporters, is a legacy that will continue to drive our team and our researchers to achieve the very best outcomes for people with breast cancer.

Thank you for the crucial role that you play in advancing breast cancer clinical trials research and our mission—no more lives cut short.

**Professor Sunil Lakhani**  
**Board Chair, Breast Cancer Trials**



## GIFTS IN WILLS

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

The Late Anna Binko

The Late Leslie Muir

The Late William Bradford

## IN MEMORIAM

**We gratefully acknowledge gifts received up to 1 Dec 2025 in memory of:**

Mrs Mary Ackland  
Mrs Grace Alcock  
Mrs Susan Allan  
Mrs Ralph Anderson  
Mrs Theresa Andres  
Ms Debbie Armstrong  
Mrs Dawn Ashworth  
Mrs Eses Awad  
Mrs Therese Baggeley  
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Ms Paula Whitman  
Mrs Julie Wight  
Mrs Christina Williams  
Mrs Sue Williams  
Mrs Leanne Wilson  
Mrs Maureen Wilson  
Mrs June Window  
Ms Melissa Wyatt



# Thank you and farewell

Over the past 30 years, I've had the privilege of establishing and leading the fundraising efforts at Breast Cancer Trials (BCT), previously known as Breast Cancer Institute of Australia.

Recently I made the difficult decision to leave BCT. My role has been more than a professional commitment; it has truly shaped who I am and will always hold a special place in my heart.

Clinical trials research takes time, but it remains the proven pathway to meaningful progress and real change. During my tenure, I feel very fortunate to have witnessed its impact on people affected by breast cancer, including my own family.

I am deeply grateful to you, our wonderful community of supporters. Your kindness, care and steadfast commitment inspire our researchers and make this progress possible.

Thank you for your trust and generosity. It's been an honour to keep you informed and share the impact you're making. The relationships and friendships formed with you—with every letter, note and conversation—have all been immensely meaningful to me.

Although I'm stepping away, I remain dedicated to supporting Breast Cancer Trials because I've seen that when we work together, meaningful progress is made and lives are saved.

With my heartfelt thanks and best wishes,

*Julie Carr*



## Supporters bloom for breast cancer



October was bursting with colour, connection and community spirit as over 200 supporters across Australia held **Pink Bloom Parties** for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

From backyard brunches to office morning teas and floral festivities, our incredible supporters showed up for people facing breast cancer—and had a blooming good time doing it.

**Thank you to all who helped raise an inspiring \$100,000 towards vital breast cancer research. You truly made October bright!**



# Beyond hope: The gift you're giving to women like Selma and Bec

It takes clinical trials research, and your support, to make sure no more lives are cut short by breast cancer.

Here's the powerful impact of your generosity in the last six months:



Christmas together was even more special for Bec and her family, thanks to you.

## Your generosity at Christmas is bringing new treatments and cures to families like Bec's.

**You helped raise an incredible \$320,885 to our Christmas appeal. With your help, our researchers are working to find new treatment options for women like Bec with early breast cancer—not just to save lives, but to stop the disease from coming back.**

When Bec was diagnosed with breast cancer at just 42, she faced not only the shock of a life-altering diagnosis but also the overwhelming fear of what lay ahead.

As a carrier of the BRCA2 gene mutation, Bec worries that her young daughters, Daphne (4) and Dottie (2) may be at a much higher risk of breast and ovarian cancers if they've inherited it too.

She can only hope that by the time her girls are older, they won't have to go through the nightmare of side effects, complications and uncertainty that she has endured.

Your generosity is giving more than hope to families like Bec's.

You're giving them new treatments and cures—and the possibility of a future where Bec can watch her daughters grow up, and live long, healthy lives.

*"We deeply appreciate your Christmas donation to Breast Cancer Trials. Your kindness plays an important role in advancing critical research, bringing us one step closer to better treatments, more answers and hope for families like mine. Thank you so much," said Bec.*

**Thank you for giving families like Bec's the chance of many more Christmases together.**



## You raised \$161,063 to help give women like Selma more good years.

Thanks to your support, our researchers are dedicated to finding new treatment options that can slow or stop the growth of metastatic breast cancer with clinical trials like CAPTURE.

Now in the critical analysis stage, this trial has the potential to help women with metastatic breast cancer survive longer and have a good quality of life.

Women like Selma, who credits breast cancer research for giving her 24 years of great living before her breast cancer returned.

Selma is immensely thankful for your generosity.

*"I'm full of gratitude to everyone who donated. Research is vital to make changes so that we*

*can have better outcomes—something only made possible by your donations," she shared.*

Thank you for supporting research that can give women like Selma the gift of more time with their loved ones.



Selma and her husband Michael cherish every moment together.



## An inspiring Hike for Hope

**In September, 15 dedicated Breast Cancer Trials supporters trekked over 130km of Spain's iconic El Camino de Santiago to raise funds for breast cancer research.**

Journeying through the Galician countryside, they braved sunshine, rain, and wind, tackling steep climbs and winding valleys with resilience and determination.

Their pilgrimage culminated in a moving arrival at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, where emotions of joy, relief, and gratitude reflected months of preparation.

**Thanks to their extraordinary effort, over \$93,000 was raised for breast cancer clinical trials research—an achievement measured not only in kilometres or dollars, but in lasting impact.**

# More young women are being diagnosed with breast cancer

Rebecca Angus was diagnosed with breast cancer at 33, when her son was just 11 months old.



**Breast cancer is often thought of as a disease that affects older women. And while it's true that older age is a major risk factor, a worrying trend is emerging in Australia: more young women are being diagnosed with breast cancer than ever before.**

Thanks to your support, urgent breast cancer research is underway to better understand this rise and find solutions for younger women.

Breast cancer has been rising among younger women in Australia in recent decades. In those aged 20–39, cases nearly doubled over 1982–2020, with 1,035 women estimated to have received a diagnosis in 2025.

This rise is of particular concern given breast cancer was also estimated to be the most common cause of cancer-related deaths in women aged 20–39 last year.

In younger women, breast cancer is more

likely to be aggressive, fast-growing, and diagnosed at a later stage.

Treatment is typically more intensive, involving prolonged chemotherapy and years of hormone therapy—which while necessary, carry higher toxicity risks, long-term side effects, and financial strain.

Breast cancer forces many young women to put life plans on hold, creating heartbreak and uncertainty about their future given the higher chance of recurrence.

Beyond that, they're often building careers, planning families, and caring for young children when they receive their diagnosis.

Rebecca Angus was diagnosed with breast cancer at 33, when her son was just 11 months old. Her diagnosis came as a huge shock—like many young women, she hadn't considered herself at risk.



*"I am really grateful for Breast Cancer Trials research, and for Herceptin because I have spoken to people whose family members had to pay for this drug before it was PBS-listed in 2006. I am so grateful now that it is subsidised," Rebecca shared.*

The drug Herceptin was proven to significantly reduce the risk of breast cancer returning for women with HER2-positive breast cancer through our HERA clinical trial, funded by supporters like you.

But while survival rates for young women have improved over the years, outcomes remain poorer than for older women.

Thanks to your support, our researchers can continue to work tirelessly to find more effective, targeted treatment options for younger women.

### **The breakthrough results that are making a difference for young women thanks to your generosity**

As more young women are being diagnosed with breast cancer, your generosity is helping deliver answers—and give them better treatments.

One of the most powerful examples of your impact comes from the long-term results of the SOFT and TEXT clinical trials, as presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting in June.

These global trials, led in Australia by Breast Cancer Trials and supported by generous donors like you, studied almost 6,000 premenopausal women for more than 15 years. The final results show something remarkable: early treatment decisions can continue to protect women many years into the future.

After 15 years, the SOFT and TEXT trials demonstrated that young women who received ovarian suppression combined with the hormone treatment exemestane had a significantly lower chance of their breast cancer returning than those who received standard treatments.

Around 80% of women who received the combined treatment were alive and cancer-free compared with 72% who received standard treatment. For younger high-risk women, the results were even more striking: the new treatment combination improved 15-year disease-free survival to 83%, compared with 68% for standard treatments.

This research is now guiding doctors around the world and leading to better outcomes for young women with breast cancer.

*"These trial results will change the management of breast cancer in young women with hormone receptor positive early breast cancer, leading to fewer recurrences and improved overall survival.*

*"To see that you can actually impact survival in young women, that is what it's all about," said Professor Prue Francis, BCT researcher and International Study Chair of the SOFT and TEXT clinical trials.*

**Progress like this is only possible because of caring supporters like you. Thank you for giving more young women the promise of long, healthy lives.**



**Professor Prue Francis was the BCT researcher and International Study Chair of the SOFT and TEXT clinical trials**



# A mother's legacy of kindness

Lesley (right) with her beloved late mother (left)



Lesley was just 19 years old when her mother received the heartbreaking news she had breast cancer. It was in the early 1960s—and the early stages of breast cancer research—when treatment options were severely limited.

*"Witnessing my mother's struggle was incredibly difficult. She endured radical post-surgical treatment with intensive radiation. Breast cancer treatment has come a long way since then thanks to medical research,"* said Lesley.

One of the things Lesley remembers vividly about her mother is how generously she helped people in need: *"Coming from a working-class background didn't stop our family from helping less fortunate people,"* she shared.

*"My mother's compassion and kindness inspired me to lend a hand. I've been giving to Breast Cancer Trials for over 27 years because I strongly believe that any improvement in breast cancer treatment can only be achieved through research"*



Lesley, now 83, has been giving to BCT for 27 years.

Lesley has been donating monthly since 2006 to support Breast Cancer Trials' researchers in their life-saving efforts.

She's also chosen to continue the legacy of kindness her mother left her, by including a gift in her Will to Breast Cancer Trials.

*"My husband and I have two children and seven grandchildren and, fortunately, none has been touched by breast cancer to date.*

*I am passionate about helping fund breast cancer clinical trials research so new treatments and cures are available for future generations."*

Lesley is among nearly 400 supporters who have informed us they have made the generous decision to include Breast Cancer Trials in their Will.

**A future where no more lives are cut short by breast cancer is only possible because of supporters like Lesley—and you.**

**You can create a legacy that reflects your values and your vision for a world free from breast cancer.**

Making sure you have a Will, and that it's current, can also prevent the stress that can fall on your family if your Will is missing or out of date.

For your free 'Wills Checklist', detailing what you should check, and how often, to ensure your Will remains valid and reflects your wishes, please phone **(02) 4925 3022**, email **bequestenquiries@bctrials.org.au** or simply tick the box on the enclosed form and return it in the reply-paid envelope provided.



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