

COUNTER PART

Women supporting women with cancer



Year in Review 2017–2018

Celebrating 15 years
2003–2018

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Cover photos
Clockwise from top left: the circle of women statue — representing the connection between women; the Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Women, launches BreaCan in April 2003; founding volunteers Judy and Rhonda, with Helen Coleman, Chair of the Counterpart Advisory Group, cut the 15th birthday cake at a celebration in April 2018; guests at the 15th birthday celebration.

Counterpart service principles

- Acknowledge difference** – We recognise that every woman’s experience of cancer is different and must be seen in the broader context of their lives.
- No advice** – We share experiences and give support. We do not give medical, legal or financial advice.
- Welcoming environment** – We provide a welcoming, accessible and safe environment.
- Encourage participation** – We actively encourage people to participate in the development and operation of the service.
- Empower people** – We are committed to enhancing people’s skills and capacity to make informed choices.
- Respect privacy** – We respect the privacy of people using the service.
- Non-judgemental** – We provide support and information in a non-judgemental way.
- High standards** – We maintain high standards in all aspects of the service and regularly evaluate the service’s relevance to consumers, its sustainability, and effectiveness.

Connecting, supporting and informing women with breast or a gynaecological cancer across Victoria

Warrnambool

Menopause after cancer hosted webinar,
South West Healthcare, Warrnambool, July 2018

Our activities in 2017–18

Counterpart Resource Centre (Melb CBD)
Peer Support Volunteers support women over the phone and in person
Library resources are sent out to women anywhere in Victoria
Webinars are run so women can join in online

Supporting women with cancer across Victoria
Read more about our rural project on page 17

Bridge of Support
Read more on page 13

Stepping into Wellness
Read about our exercise programs on page 21

Events
Read more about our What's On and Making Connections programs on page 23

Western Melbourne

Bridge of Support Sunshine Hospital, every week
Stepping into Wellness Sunshine, August–September 2017
Lymphoedema What's On session at Footscray Hospital, March 2018





Janine assists a service user to find information in 2004.



Judy, Rhonda and Helen Coleman cut the 15th birthday cake, April 2018.

Judy, Janine and Rhonda all celebrated 15 years volunteering with our service. We have asked them to share their thoughts about their experiences.

What is the best thing about being a Counterpart volunteer?

Judy: Being involved with such an essential and valuable community of shared experiences.

Rhonda: Connecting with other women and helping with their recovery and first steps to a new life not dominated by the fear of a cancer diagnosis.

Janine: Being selected as one of the very first BreaCan volunteers was truly a great honour. The training, care and consideration given has made the last 15 years a great experience.

What has kept you motivated to volunteer all this time?

Janine: I have never lost sight of what it means to be diagnosed with breast cancer and how it feels during and after treatment.

Rhonda: Definitely my fellow volunteers and the knowledge we can (and do) make a difference to another woman's life following a cancer diagnosis.

Judy: I realised that many women were unaware of the benefits of a few hours of exercise a week, so volunteering to conduct exercise programs with Counterpart over the last 15 years has been a way I can help others not only survive cancer but thrive after it.

What have you gained from being a volunteer?

Rhonda: Being a volunteer has given me confidence, self-esteem, friendships and belief in myself.

Janine: It's something I thought I would never do. It has helped me step out of my comfort zone, meet some great people and hopefully make a difference to someone's cancer journey.

Judy: I find it rewarding to inspire others. Helping women who had been scared to exercise discover that exercise doesn't have to be difficult and can actually be fun ... healing with humour I call it.

Power of peer support

Judy: Cancer is an experience no one wants, no one is prepared for. It's like being dropped into a country where we don't know the language. Talking with someone who 'has been there' allows women to adjust and take comfort that they are not alone.

Rhonda: Peer support gives hope to women that they too will get through this time: that they can be well and happy (again) and not always fearful.

Janine: I have no doubt that a woman's cancer journey is eased after using our service; I hear it in their voice at the end of our conversation.

Well it's been an amazing year as Counterpart celebrated its 15th birthday. In April 2018, over 100 guests joined Gabrielle Williams MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, to celebrate this wonderful milestone and acknowledge our achievements. Since BreaCan began in 2003, over 135 volunteers have supported women with cancer more than 30,000 times.

Our service has grown from small beginnings and now has over 60 volunteers who provide more than 2,500 support contacts to women each year. Three volunteers have celebrated 15 years of service and 20 have been with us for 10 years or more.

Counterpart has a proud history of innovation. We were one of the very first cancer support services to offer health and wellbeing information sessions, in person and then via webinar.

Our services have expanded to hospital settings and outreach to rural and regional areas is growing. We have a large borrowing library and our health and wellbeing sessions provide up to date information from qualified health professionals.

We also developed one of the first apps for women with early breast cancer, the BreaCan Navigator, launched at our 10th birthday in 2013.

Our highlights for this year include:

- celebrating our 15th birthday
- launching the Counterpart Navigator, expanded to include six gynaecological cancer navigators with funding from the Victorian Government
- more women using our service from all regional and rural areas across Victoria
- more women using peer support during treatment through Bridge of Support
- six Stepping into Wellness programs in outer metropolitan Melbourne
- refurbishment of our Resource Centre at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre.

As you read through the *Year in Review*, you will find inspiring stories from women who use, support and deliver our service. You will also see highlights from the last 15 years.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our counterparts in cancer care — our funding partners, and health professionals and service providers who promote and refer women to our service or contribute to our health and wellbeing sessions or partner with us to deliver outreach and other projects.

Thank you also to my own counterparts — the inspiring women I work with — the small staff team and our Peer Support and Program volunteers whose dedication and caring brings hope and courage to women diagnosed with cancer.

Our focus over the next year will be to continue to offer peer support over the phone and at the Resource Centre as well as provide support to women during treatment. We are extending our programs and services to women in their local areas in a new partnership with services within eastern and southern Melbourne and through our rural and regional networks. We are also expanding our digital presence with new telehealth facilities thanks to a grant from the LUCRF Super Community Program.

I look forward to working with you all as we continue to grow our service to meet the needs of women with cancer.

Dianne Hill

Manager Support Services
Women's Health Victoria



Acknowledgements

Our success would not have been possible without the vision and commitment of those women who identified the need for support in 2002 and the early pioneers of the service. We acknowledge the following women for their foresight and innovation all those years ago.

Onella Stagoll, Lyn Swinburne, Sue Lockwood, Avis Macphee, Nicola Bruce, Heather Beanland, Dianne Lewis, Pam Williams; the founding volunteers — Ang, Betty, Christine, Ellen, Heather, Janine, Liz, Mary, Pas, Rhonda, Rosemary, Sandra, Judy and Helen; and the first staff team — Di Missen, Helen Shepherd, Gina Mancuso, Justine Dalla Riva and Marilyn Beaumont — then Executive Director Women's Health Victoria.

Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018

In the beginning...

Women who experienced breast cancer successfully advocated for a place to connect with other women and get more information about living with cancer.



2003

- The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Health, launches BreaCan.
- Trained Peer Support Volunteers begin supporting women in the new Resource Centre.
- What's On and Feel Good programs offer health and wellbeing sessions and gentle exercise.

2004

- More Peer Support Volunteers are trained.
- We start building a library collection offering free resources to women across Victoria.



Clockwise from top left: consumer advocate Sue Lockwood in 2003; BreaCan is launched by the Hon. Bronwyn Pike; art therapy in the Resource Centre, 2004; BreaCan staff, BCNA CEO Lyn Swinburne and Sue Lockwood with the first intake of Peer Support Volunteers, 2003; volunteer Christmas party, 2004.

CEO's message

Women's Health Victoria is a not-for-profit, statewide organisation that works to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorian women. Our vision is Women: healthy, empowered, equal.

As one of five priorities in our Strategic Directions 2015–2018, Counterpart provides services by women for women, recognising the role of gender in the experiences of women with cancer.

In 2018, we are proud to celebrate 15 years supporting women with cancer and the wonderful legacy created so far.

In 2002, a group of women living with breast cancer had a vision to establish a support service for other women which included peer support and somewhere to meet. The Victorian Government funded a pilot project and BreaCan opened its doors in 2003.

At the time support services for people with cancer were in their infancy, but services like BreaCan and BCNA, who are celebrating 20 years in 2018, led the way for women with breast cancer. In 2008, BreaCan expanded to support women diagnosed with a gynaecological cancer.

We owe enormous gratitude to the women who developed the idea and campaigned for it and to those early staff and volunteers who established important principles that underpin everything we do.

Peer support is the cornerstone of our service. Our highly-trained, professional volunteers provide a listening ear and emotional and practical support to help women adjust to life following a cancer diagnosis.

Over the years I have been fortunate to meet many of the volunteers who give of themselves to support other women. It has been inspiring to see how their dedication and compassion has created a caring and safe space for other women. But we couldn't do this alone. There are many people and organisations who have contributed to our successes over the last 15 years.

I want to say thank you to our volunteers, our staff, our funding partners, the many health professionals we work with, the women who use our service and the Victorian Government for your support over the last 15 years. I look forward to working with you all in the future as we continue to support women with cancer to live well.

Rita Butera

CEO, Women's Health Victoria



*Dianne Hill,
Rita Butera and
Helen Coleman
at Counterpart's
15th birthday
celebration.*

Chair's message

Women and Cancer is a key priority of Women's Health Victoria and I have been honoured to Chair the Counterpart Advisory Group over the last year.

It has been an exciting year for everyone as we celebrated our 15th birthday. It is also ten years since the Counterpart Advisory Group was established. Over the years many volunteers, consumers and health professionals have participated in the group, helping to connect Counterpart with the health system and provide an opportunity to share ideas and expertise which has helped to shape the service.

I'd like to thank everyone for their contributions to Counterpart and their commitment and dedication to helping us create a high-quality service that can reach more women.

I'd like to thank the Victorian Government, Pink Affair, Besen Family Foundation and the LUCRF Super Community Program for their generous financial contributions, the wonderful individuals and organisations who partnered with us to promote and deliver our programs, and staff for their excellent work during the year.

Supportive care and survivorship continue to be important areas of growth in the cancer sector, as survival rates improve and more people are adjusting to life after a cancer diagnosis. Counterpart will continue to evolve as we strive to connect, support and inform more women with breast or a gynaecological cancer to live well.

Helen Coleman

Chair, Counterpart Advisory Group and
Women's Health Victoria board member

Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2005

- Chorus of Women connects women through music.
- An evaluation shows a positive impact on the wellbeing of women with breast cancer and we secure recurrent funding.
- Making Connections provides information sessions to support women living with advanced cancer.

2006

- The Hon. Mary Delahanty, Minister for Women's Affairs, launches new premises in the Queen Victoria Women's Centre.
- We release *Young Women Talking*, for women diagnosed with breast cancer under 45.
- Our 1300 number is launched.



Clockwise from top left: Hon. Mary Delahanty launches new premises, 2006; Mary M, Rita, Mary N and Joanne at the launch of Young Women Talking, 2006; Chorus of Women perform, 2005; volunteers at the launch of the new premises, 2006; staff members Justine Dalla Riva, Di Missen, Helen Shepherd and Josie Scott, 2005.

Counterpart is a woman-centered service in every way. This is reflected by our volunteers who bring dedication and compassion to support women with cancer to live well. Our volunteers are all women who have experienced breast or a gynaecological cancer and decided to give their time to help other women going through similar experiences. They bring a wealth of skill, experience and passion.

In addition to the unique role played by our Peer Support Volunteers, Counterpart is supported by Program Volunteers who look after our cancer resource library, assist with exercise programs and mail-outs, and help promote the service at events.

In 2018, Janine, Judy and Rhonda reached 15 years of volunteering. Aaltje, Annette, Chris S, Jules and Patricia joined the ranks of those women who have reached 10 or more years of volunteering: Ang, Betty, Ellen, Frederika, Heather, Janine, Joy, Judy, Lea, Lois S, Meril, Pam, Pat M, Pauline, Rhonda, Rita, Sandra, Teresa.

Team Leader Operations and Volunteer Coordinator Kellie Holland (right) and Volunteer Training Coordinator Helen Martin (left) with the 2017 intake of Peer Support Volunteers. Another 10 women were accepted into the 2018 program.



In 2017–18, 56 volunteers contributed 2915 hours of their time.

Peer Support Volunteers:



1865 hours
Resource
Centre



368 hours
Bridge of
Support



21 hours
Rural
programs

Program Volunteers:



330 hours
in the
library



129 hours
supporting
exercise programs



114 hours helping
with mail-outs and
promotional events



88 hours working as
Peer Link Volunteers at
Sunshine Hospital

Danni's story

It was a complete shock to be diagnosed with endometrial cancer in February 2015. I thought I was having a routine laparoscopic procedure at the Royal Women's Hospital, but a few days later, I received multiple missed calls asking me to contact them urgently for further testing. Everything progressed very quickly from there.

Things were a blur and I found the technical jargon, such as 'sentinel node biopsy', confusing. I also had to come to terms very quickly about losing all of my reproductive organs. In my early forties, this was much harder than the cancer itself.

During one of my visits to the hospital, I was handed a leaflet about Counterpart (then known as BreaCan) and got in touch. The Peer Support Volunteers were extremely friendly, supportive and empathetic and it was comforting to know they had been on a cancer journey themselves.

Now, I am as healthy as ever with one full marathon and one half marathon behind me. I will be running a half marathon again in October 2018 to raise funds for Haven; Home, Safe which supports people experiencing homelessness.

I was part of the 2016 intake of Peer Support Volunteers and trained with a group of amazing women. It is a privilege to give back to the community the kindness I received from Counterpart.



Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2007

- BreaCan wins a Victorian Public Health Care Award for Innovation in Models of Care.
- We expand to support women who have experienced a gynaecological cancer.
- We hold our first forum in Gippsland.

2008

- We run a music therapy program with the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Women's Hospital and Western Health.
- First Peer Support Volunteers with a gynaecological cancer diagnosis start.
- An Advisory Group is established to inform the development of the service.



Over the last 15 years, Counterpart has developed and refined a volunteer peer support program that provides a high standard of care to all who use the service.

Our highly-trained, professional Peer Support Volunteers provide understanding and a listening ear, as well as emotional and practical support.

Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers:

- listen to and provide space for women to talk through their feelings following a cancer diagnosis
- validate women's experiences and share useful aspects of their own cancer experience if helpful
- assist women to locate reliable information
- direct women to other services that provide practical help, medical advice or support.

Our peer support model complements the medical system, giving women who have experienced breast or a gynaecological cancer hope and confidence they can live well following their diagnosis.

"My first contact with a Peer Support Volunteer was one of such warmth, a warmth that I was obviously needing ... just the conversation on the phone enabled me to breathe and to feel that this is okay, that here is a place that I can be safe in, a place that I can just forget about all the other things."

service user

A founding Peer Support Volunteer, Heather Beanland, was presented with a Counterpart Champion award by Gabrielle Williams MP in acknowledgement of her commitment to improving the experiences of women with cancer, as a BreaCan volunteer and consumer advocate. Counterpart 15th birthday celebration, April 2018.

A health professional's perspective Belinda Astl, Psychologist

Nurturing each other is a beautiful quality that women bring to relationships and this is the bedrock of Counterpart's peer support model. Clients benefit enormously from the message of health and hope when they speak with women moving through their own cancer experience and living well. The compassion and practical approach enables women to deepen their own ability to cope and understand what is happening to them.

BreaCan grew out of the advocacy of consumers of breast cancer services and retains a strong empowerment model at its core. The service has continually sought channels to inform women: from the drop-in centre, library and outreach programs in hospitals to the Navigator app. The commitment to women being active partners in their treatment decisions has changed the patient/doctor relationship significantly. Consumer advocacy, including that of Counterpart's founders, has been an important catalyst to this evolution.

To associate cancer with joy is not easily done, but when I engage with the wonderful people who built Counterpart my heart lifts and I always look forward to the next visit.

Peer Support Volunteers 2003–2018



30,000
contacts with
women with
cancer



21,500
hours
volunteered



Belinda (centre)
with staff members
Helen and Di at the
launch of BreaCan
in 2003.

15 years of peer support

Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2009

- We reach 10,000 contacts with women with breast or a gynaecological cancer.
- Steps for Fun and Fitness is delivered at Bulleen, Mitcham and Epping.
- Recipes for Living forums connect women in Craigieburn and Frankston.
- Forum for women under 45.

2010

- Bridge of Support at the Breast Service of Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals is launched by the Hon. Daniel Andrews, Health Minister.
- Cancer Australia fund a project to improve support and information for women from a CALD background in partnership with Western Health.



Bridge of Support has been running since 2010. It is one of our first and most successful outreach programs, delivering our service in a hospital setting. Bridge of Support is the result of a partnership with health services, providing peer support to women diagnosed with breast or a gynaecological cancer when they receive treatment or attend appointments.

As well as providing support at a difficult time, Bridge of Support connects women with our community-based service. Many women find finishing active treatment and finding a 'new normal' a challenging time and peer support – connecting with other women who have experienced this transition – can help. Bridge of Support shows how effective acute and community sector partnerships benefit women.

2017–18 was a big year for our Bridge of Support program. At the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, we expanded to Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre: our VCCC program already supported patients at the Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals.

At Sunshine Hospital, the Bridge of Support program was further embedded into the hospital, as staff and volunteers saw more women with cancer and connected with more Western Health staff.



Project partners
 Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
 Royal Melbourne Hospital
 Royal Women's Hospital
 Western Health

Acknowledgements

Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital is supported by the Victorian Government.

Staff at the four hospitals, including Shayne Aldover, Monique Baldacchino, Danielle Carpenter, Niamh Condren, Melanie Fisher, Ali Hall, Ilana Hornung, Annie Howitt, Kate Jenkins, Sara Jorgensen, Esther Lim, Geraldine McDonald, Chris Marinakis, Prof. Bruce Mann, Oanh Nguyen, Claire Noonan, Dr Meron Pitcher, Sarah Pratt, Jo Spence, Kerry Shanahan, Lisa Sheeran, Patriece Shelly, Kaylene Soligo, Susan Thomas, Darcie Vogan.

*Left: Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital.
 L-R: Louise Knell, Counterpart;
 Sara Jorgensen, Western Health; Coralie,
 Counterpart volunteer; Melanie Fisher,
 Western Health; Chris Marinakis,
 Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.*

Fatuma's story

In 2017, I learnt some devastating news – news that I have only heard happening to people in movies and television. Never before had I known someone with cancer and now I was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. I was in a state of shock, confusion and stress. Stressing about how to tell my five beautiful kids that their mother was sick. Stressing about what will happen next. But I always knew to stay strong and true to my faith. I prayed that God will guide me through this tough time. And my prayers were answered alhamdulillah.

A mastectomy, six months of tiring chemotherapy and three months of radiation would've been hell to go through alone, but thankfully I was not alone. Being introduced to Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers made this long and rocky journey that tad bit bearable. These amazing people really understood the struggles and challenges I was going through. Meeting them gave me hope that one day I too will have my eyebrows back, my hair back... my life back. Thankfully I did! I feel so much better and stronger and would like to thank all those at Counterpart.

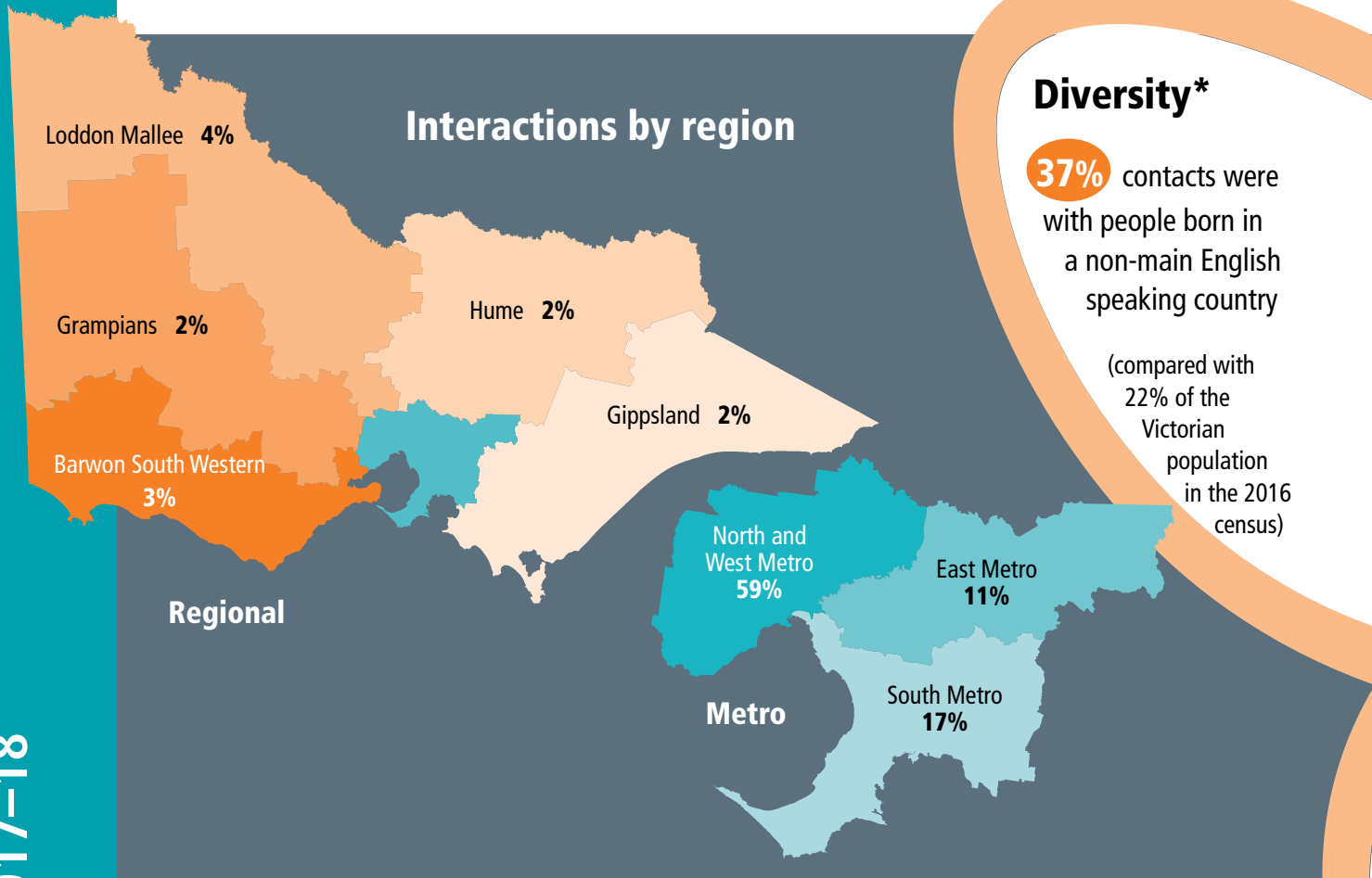


2435 contacts with women affected by breast or a gynaecological cancer.
865 individuals.

Number of interactions


 Resource Centre
1177

Interactions by region







Diversity*

37% contacts were with people born in a non-main English speaking country

(compared with 22% of the Victorian population in the 2016 census)

Diagnosis*

Contacts by cancer type

	Breast cancer	85%
	Gynaecological cancers	8%
	DCIS	3%
	Other	4%

Other includes unknown cancer diagnosis, not stated and other tumor streams.



Contacts by cancer stage

15% contacts with women living with metastatic cancer

*of those contacts where data is recorded.



Bridge of Support
395



Group sessions
863

Group sessions

90 sessions held

26 What's On

5 Making Connections
(events for women living
with metastatic cancer)

59 exercise (Feel Good
and Stepping into Wellness)



41

in community locations

10

webinars



25 languages spoken by
women who use the service

*of those contacts where data is recorded.

Communications and online information



4363 people on our mailing list



1033
health professionals



3330
individuals



3550
Counterpart
Navigator
app used



1285
webinar
videos
watched

Volunteers



2915 hours

2254

Peer Support
Volunteers

661

Program
Volunteers

Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2011

- National Volunteer Week celebration with the Hon. Mary Wooldridge, Minister for Community Services.
- We work with Ovarian Cancer Australia to design new resources for women with a gynaecological cancer.
- Poster on Bridge of Support at the 13th National Breast Care Nurse Conference in Melbourne.

2012

- Our volunteer team grows to over 50 women.
- Over 100 women attend regional forums in Sale and Geelong.
- BreaCan is a partner in a Victorian Cancer Survivorship Program project.
- We run forums to support CALD women in western Melbourne.



Clockwise from top left: Sale forum, 2012; BreaCan, Ovarian Cancer Australia and Dept of Health launch a gynaecological cancer fact sheet, 2012; Manager Di Missen, Advisory Group Chair Annabelle Pollard, Hon. Mary Wooldridge, Board Chair Louise Johnson, CEO Rita Butera at our National Volunteer Week celebration, 2011; Steps for Fun and Fitness session, 2012.

With funding from the Victorian Government, Counterpart is undertaking a project to increase the reach of our services to women living in regional and rural Victoria. Now in its second year, the project has resulted in significant increases in service use by women living in rural Victoria.

Women diagnosed with breast or a gynaecological cancer can access Counterpart's services — including peer support, webinars and our cancer resource library — without needing to come to Melbourne. The rural project aims to increase awareness of our services so we can assist women to live well following a cancer diagnosis, regardless of where they live in Victoria.

Building and strengthening partnerships with local service providers has been key to the project's success. One of the most common ways that women connect with our service is on the recommendation of a health professional. Ensuring that health professionals working with rural women with cancer know and trust our service is essential.



Menopause after cancer webinar group, Warrnabool, July 2018.

Webinar in Warrnambool

We held our first hosted webinar in Warrnambool in July 2018, in collaboration with local nurses Rebecca Hay and Sharna Purcell from South West Healthcare. The successful event brought 19 women together to participate in Counterpart's 'Menopause after cancer' webinar. A Peer Support Volunteer travelled to Warrnambool for the event, so attendees had the opportunity to learn more about Counterpart and the services we offer, as well as connect with each other and participate in the webinar.

Service use increase in 2017–18

Barwon South Western	279%
Gippsland	69%
Grampians	192%
Hume	26%
Loddon Mallee	150%

Counterparts in cancer care

Leanne Storer and Joylene Fletcher, McGrath Breast Care Nurses

Here in the Ballarat and Lower Grampians area, we have had positive experiences with Counterpart services, enabling well-rounded supportive experiences for those having treatment for cancer.

We use Counterpart to support our women by discussing the option of telephone support from trained Peer Support Volunteers. Sometimes patients prefer to accept an offer of an online referral, so that Counterpart gives them a call. Knowing that someone 'who knows' is just a phone call away is so helpful — especially if in a more remote location.

We always point out sessions on pertinent topics from the What's On program. Women in regional areas are often very travel weary from attending treatment or appointments and need some 'at home' time so our patients love that they can utilise the webinars!

We provide Counterpart Navigator cards and demonstrate how the app can be used to assist in treatment decisions — we especially encourage our patients to read through the 'key questions prior to treatment' discussion. At the commencement of each treatment modality, we remind women of the relevant topic in the app. Women who have limited internet access at home can use the Ballarat Wellness Centre computers whilst they are in attendance for treatment or appointments.



Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2013

- Our service celebrates ten years:
 - The Hon. David Davis, Minister for Health, launches the BreaCan Navigator.
 - The Hon. Mary Wooldridge, Minister for Community Services, unveils an anniversary quilt.
 - Judy Sammut receives the inaugural BreaCan Champion award.
- Eight volunteers celebrate a decade of volunteering.
- Co-author a presentation on survivorship for the 2013 Breast Cancer Symposium, San Antonio.

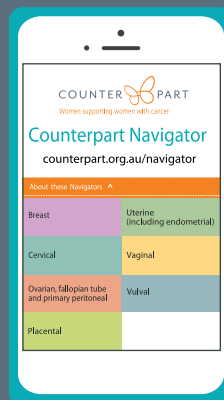
2014

- We reach 20,000 contacts with women with breast or a gynaecological cancer.
- Premier Hon. Denis Napthine launches our Connecting and Supporting Rural and Regional Women with Cancer project in Geelong.
- We hold our first webinar and offer more outreach sessions in response to women who want to attend events in their local area.

10BreaCan
YEARS SUPPORTING WOMEN
WITH CANCER TO LIVE WELL

Clockwise from top left: Lyn Swinburne, Prof. Bob Thomas and Onella Stagoll, BreaCan's 10th birthday, 2013; rural project launch, 2014; National Volunteer Week celebration, 2014; service users Florence and Anita use the BreaCan Navigator, 2013.

The Navigator in numbers



7 Navigators

300+ resources

40 reviewers

2,157 sessions
using the new app
(14 April – 30 September 2018)

Counterpart assists women to find reliable information so they can make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. We do this in many different ways, through:

- the Counterpart Navigator app
- a cancer resource library with over 500 titles
- information sessions with qualified presenters
- past webinar recordings available on our website
- encouraging women to take questions back to their treating medical team
- directing women to relevant services that can provide medical, legal or financial advice.

Counterpart Navigator

A highlight of 2018 was the launch of our new Counterpart Navigator. Building on the earlier BreaCan Navigator, the new app has expanded to include information about six gynaecological cancers. All resources included in the app have been reviewed by health professionals and women who have experienced a gynaecological cancer.

The Counterpart Navigator covers early breast, cervical, ovarian, placental, uterine, vaginal and vulval cancers.

Acknowledgements

Victorian Government

Navigator Working Group: Wendy Dawson (Epworth Freemasons), Annie Howitt (Royal Women's Hospital), Jenny, Jillian, Lisa and Nadia. Reviewers and focus group attendees are listed on page 27.

Gabrielle Williams MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, launches the Counterpart Navigator, April 2018.



Nadia's story

Post-diagnosis was a real head-spinning time for me: I was recovering from a huge surgery and processing my diagnosis. The hard bit was not the diagnosis, it was needing to be an 'expert in all things ovarian cancer' overnight and make decisions which would impact my life.

My sideboard at home was so heavily weighed down with piles of booklets and printed copies of this and that, I could almost hear the groan. My head hurt, my heart hurt and I was so overwhelmed I didn't know which way was up. Every decision I made would impact me for the rest of my life and that was hard to face and process. The decision I really wanted to make was not to have cancer at all.

Fast forward seven years and, as a Peer Support Volunteer, I heard about the funding to develop new gynaecological cancer Navigators. I let out a big woo hoo! Being part of the working group on this project was a pleasure and privilege. Whether you are newly diagnosed or a way down the track, the Counterpart Navigator has information to suit. I hope this helps take away some of the craziness that is cancer.



Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2015

- Pink Affair funds Stepping into Wellness, beginning a partnership that assists women getting back into exercise after cancer in suburban Melbourne.
- LUCRF Super Community Program funds a pilot program to bring Bridge of Support to Western Health.
- An independent evaluation by researchers from Deakin University reinforces the value of BreaCan services.

2016

- Bridge of Support Western Health is launched by Natalie Suleyman MP at Sunshine Hospital.
- The Victorian Government fund a three-year project to assist women in rural and regional Victoria to access peer support and information.
- We join the steering committee for a Melbourne University metastatic breast cancer project.
- Stepping into Wellness continues in six locations.



Counterpart runs two introductory exercise programs. They provide social connection and a safe space where women can resume exercise or begin a new regime following a cancer diagnosis. Both programs are free and conducted by certified fitness instructors. They are open to all women who have had a breast or gynaecological cancer diagnosis, so long as they are at least eight-weeks post surgery and have approval from their treating doctor.

Feel Good

Feel Good has run fortnightly in Melbourne for 15 years and has provided support and encouragement to many women. Women can join the program at any time, and continue for as long as they find it useful.

Feel Good partner:

Genesis Fitness, Lonsdale Street

Stepping into Wellness

Stepping into Wellness is a free, six-week program that aims to motivate women to increase their level of physical activity by introducing them to a range of exercise types in a safe and supported environment. The program includes motion exercises, resistance training, body-weighted exercise and Tai Chi, as well as discussions around lymphoedema awareness, goal setting and local exercise options. It is funded by Pink Affair, who have been important partners over many years.


Stepping into Wellness partners:



- Casey RACE
- Fernwood Fitness Sydenham
- Input Fitness Frankston
- Olympic Leisure Banyule
- Sunshine Leisure Centre
- YMCA Leisure City Epping
- Kaye Elias
- Dawn Roleff
- Judy Sammut
- Michelle Taylor



Stepping into Wellness

 **80** women participated in **6** programs

 **22%** increase over the previous year

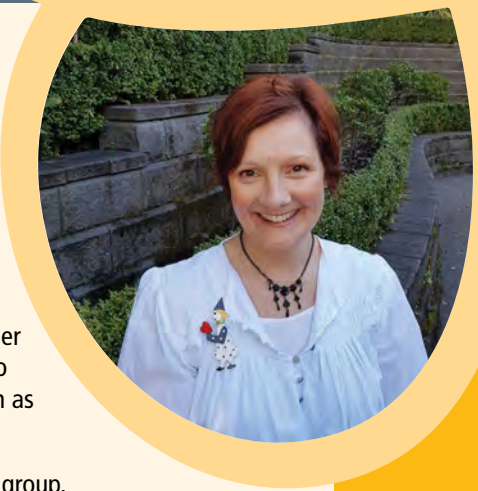
Stepping into Wellness in Sunshine, September 2017.

Colette's story

Stepping into Wellness! That's the brochure I had in my hand. I think 'Of course I feel well, I'm here and I'm living!' Six years post breast cancer, I was feeling a little lost, having tried a gym membership and never feeling better after a workout. Then I read further, ooh, an invitation to a gentle exercise program tailored to women who have gone through breast and/or a gynaecological cancer. Okay, I might give that a go!

I enjoyed the different exercise routines each week. We could go at our own pace and discover what exercises truly suited us. I also had a revelation that I needed to make healthier food choices too, so I could fuel my body and this foggy brain of mine with the nutrients it so desperately needed. That was discovered in a conversation at one of the sessions and I laugh as it was a light bulb moment!!!

I now do a Pilates class on a weekly basis. I also catch up with another lovely lady from the group. The main reason why I benefited is because I was ready. Be kind on yourself and relax with time, little did I know that my readiness would come six years after diagnosis.



Celebrating 15 years

2003–2018



2017

- Our new name **Counterpart – women supporting women with cancer** is launched by Dale Fisher, CEO of Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in May.
- We run our first outreach Making Connections session, with Eastern Health in Croydon.
- Stepping into Wellness continues in six locations.
- Besen Family Foundation donate funds to support outreach and increasing access for women from diverse backgrounds.

COUNTER  PART
Women supporting women with cancer

2018

- We reach 30,000 contacts with women affected by cancer.
- We celebrate 15 years of our service.
- Three volunteers celebrate 15 years of volunteering and 13 celebrate 10 or more years.
- We launch the Counterpart Navigator, now covering six gynaecological cancers as well as early breast cancer.
- Heather Beanland receives a Counterpart Champion Award.

Clockwise from top left: What's On session at Maroondah Breast and Cancer Centre, 2018; Rhonda, Jules, Aaltje and Judy (10 and 15 year volunteers) with Gabrielle Williams MP at our 15th birthday; Dianne Hill, Manager Support Services, with Penny Sanderson and Peer Support Volunteer Greta at the launch of Counterpart, 2017; volunteers at the launch, 2017; Dale Fisher launches Counterpart, 2017; Dianne with Amanda Piper, Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre, and Liz Simkiss, Dept Health and Human Services, at the launch, 2017.

Health and wellbeing sessions with qualified presenters have been a core part of our service for the last 15 years. These events allow women who have experienced cancer to connect with each other, as well as find information. The What's On program is for all women who have experienced breast or a gynaecological cancer and the Making Connections program is tailored specifically for women living with advanced/metastatic cancers.

See over for a list of sessions and presenters for 2017–18.



Yoga at the Complementary Therapies Day held at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre in April 2018. The event was a success with 32 people attending. The day included presentations from health professionals and complementary therapy practitioners as well as opportunities to try out some wellness practices.

Evaluating our programs

What's On survey

147 women responded

96% of attendees found What's On sessions helpful or very helpful.

Most common reasons women don't attend sessions:

- They are too far away **52%**
- Work commitments **23%**
- Times don't suit **16%**
- Parking too expensive **14%**
- Get information from other sources **14%**

Making Connections survey

29 women responded

100% of attendees found Making Connections sessions helpful or very helpful.

Most common ways women think we can improve our services:

- Activities close to where I live **56%**
- More sessions available as webinars **37%**
- Navigator app on advanced cancer topics **37%**

In 2018–19, we will run more webinars and events in community locations.

Amanda's story

Counterpart webinars were a valuable, reliable and readily-available 24/7 resource during my 'cancer sabbatical' in 2017.

It might have been helpful to attend information sessions in Melbourne and mingle with other women experiencing the same dilemmas a cancer diagnosis brings. However, a trip into town from the outer Eastern suburbs (where I live) was not on the top of my to do list.

Whenever I was facing any fears or concerns and, more importantly, when I felt ready to absorb the information I needed for the next hurdle, I would simply look up the list of webinars and download them. It was all there, at my fingertips, allowing me a sense of control as to how, when and where I would take on the information I so desperately needed.

I distinctly remember taking the laptop into my bedroom one night, removing myself from the family perhaps to protect them from the information, and listening to the webinar (in my pajamas!) by Professor Michael Green. It helped knowing it came from a very credible and respected source.

To have this information accessible for me to easily download and listen to, in the comfort of my own home was invaluable.



Clinical and information

A new treatment for vaginal dryness

Dr Jillian Woinarski, Gynaecologist and Obstetrician

Advance care planning

Volunteer, Advance Care Planning Australia

Body image, self-esteem and sexuality after cancer

Dr Wendy Vanselow, Head, Sexual Counselling Clinic, Royal Women's Hospital

Chemobrain

Adrian Schembri, Director Clinical Science, Cogstate

Fear of cancer recurrence

Dr Dani Bullen, Clinical Psychologist, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Integrative medicine: mind, body and spirit

Dr Sandra Parsons, General Practitioner

The law and cancer

Sondra Davoren, Senior Legal Policy Advisor, Tarishi Desai, Legal Research Officer and Deborah Lawson, Legal Policy Advisor, McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer

Lymphoedema

Cheryl Prendergast, Registered Nurse and Lymphoedema Therapist, Mercy Health and Melton Health

Scalp cooling

Vicki Durston, Clinical Nurse Consultant and Breast Cancer Service Coordinator, Cabrini Health

Sleeping Soundly

Justine Diggins, Clinical Psychologist, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

When cancer challenges your budget

Sara Bunnnett, Practical Support Program Manager, Cancer Council Victoria

When cancer impacts our sexual health and wellbeing

Jo Gniel, Counsellor, landscape of life, and Felicity Carson, Breast Care Nurse and Meditation Teacher

Creative and nurturing

African drumming

Djulz, African Drumming

City street photography

Marion Vincent and Bob Clothier, photographers

Mindful dance and movement

Bouthaina Mayall, Dance Movement Therapist

Sashiko

Lea O'Sullivan, Kimono House

Transformation through doll making

Lisa Fam, Art Therapist

Wellbeing

All is calm

Lynda Evans, Social Worker

An introduction to wellness practice: what's in it for me?

Dr Leon Tan, Wellness Medical Practitioner and General Practitioner

Bras, boobs and breast forms

Joy Buchanan, Corsetry and Post-Mastectomy Bra Fitter

Breaking down depression and building resilience

Volunteer, Black Dog Institute

Demystifying Chinese medicine

Vlado Krstevski, Chinese Medicine Practitioner, Westgarth Traditional Chinese Medicine

Meditation

Matthew Young, Melbourne Meditation Centre

Mingle and meet at Maroondah

Counterpart volunteers

Complementary therapies day

Diet and cancer

Maree Brinkman, Accredited Practising Dietitian, Nutrition Biomed

Exercise

Judy Sammut, Fitness Instructor

Hand reflexology

Bernadette Voss, Reflexologist

Mindfulness workshop

Suzanne Peyton, The Mindful Well

Naturopathy

Sandra Villella, Naturopath, Jean Hailes for Women's Health

Reiki

Noga Nicholson and Annemiek van de Kamp, Reiki Therapists

Tai chi

Margie Brett, Celestial Tai Chi

Traditional Chinese medicine

Vlado Krstevski, Chinese Medicine Practitioner, Westgarth Traditional Chinese Medicine

Yoga

Swami Karunananda, Doncaster Meditation and Yoga

Making Connections sessions 2017–18

Finding some inner calm with yoga

Swami Karunananda, Doncaster Meditation and Yoga

Making good decisions

Belinda Astl, Psychologist

Nurturing hope and optimism

Paul Bedson, Senior Therapist, Gawler Foundation

Tea, nurturing and mindfulness

Sarah Cowell, Teasense

Trials and treatment for metastatic breast cancer

Dr Catherine Oakman, Oncologist

Our Volunteers in 2016–17

Volunteers – women with a lived experience of breast or a gynaecological cancer – are the heart of our service. As always, we offer our heartfelt gratitude for their generosity, skill and dedication to supporting other women to live well.

Peer Support Volunteers

Aaltje	Jan	Nikki
Annette	Janice	Pauline
Branka	Janine	Rhonda
Bridget	Jenny C	Rosemairi
Chris G	Jenny K	Sue F
Chris S	Jo	Sue G
Cindy	Joan	Sue S
Coralie	Lianne	Susan
Danni	Lois M	Teresa
Denise	Lyn	Trish
Elizabeth C	Marcia	Victoria
Elizabeth D	Margaret	Vivien
Grace	May	Vivienne
Greta	Mika	Wendy
Helen	Nadia	Yvonne

Program Volunteers

Adikari
Ailsa
Gwen
Jaya
Jennifer
Jules
Kene
Maryse

Exercise Support Volunteers

Judy
Lois S
Meril

We remember with fondness Peer Support Volunteer Victoria, who died in 2017.

NAB volunteers

We would also like to thank volunteers from the National Australia Bank for assisting us with mail-outs: Angelina, Belinda, Camilia, Catherine, Charles, Elena, Gaithri, Irina, Ivan, Janice, Jeanette, Jenny, Julie, Jyoti, Kellee, Leilani, Lien, Nina, Olivia, Robert, Roopashree, Sandy, Sarah, Tracey.



Current and former volunteers at our 15th birthday celebration.

Staff

Dianne Hill
Manager Support Services

Fiona McRae
Assistant Manager and Team
Leader Strategy and Development

Kellie Holland
Team Leader Operations and
Volunteer Coordinator

Tammy Boatman
Rural Program Coordinator and
Stepping into Wellness Coordinator

Katherine Bradstreet
Communications Coordinator

Lauren Ferris
Digital Resources Coordinator

Rebecca Harraghy
Administration Officer
(from Jan 2018)

Louise Knell
Bridge of Support Western
Health Coordinator

Wendy Pullan
Program Coordinator

Linda Rehill
Program and Resources
Coordinator

Brooke Underwood
Administration Officer
(on leave from Jan 2018)

Mary Macheras-Magias
Casual Program Coordinator

Helen Mertin
Volunteer Training Coordinator

Lieve De Clercq
Casual Program Coordinator

Priscilla Salloum
Casual Administration Officer

Farewells

Robin Curwen-Walker
Bridge of Support Western Health Project Manager (until August 2017)

Counterpart Advisory Group

Helen Coleman (Chair)
Lyn Allison
Monique Baldacchino
Kate Broun
Danielle Carpenter
Christine Evely
Judy Hacker

Alison Murphy
Beth Wilson
Janice (Counterpart volunteer)
Pam (Counterpart volunteer)
Victoria (Counterpart volunteer)
Rita Butera (CEO)
Dianne Hill (Manager Support Services)

We thank Penny Sanderson for her contribution to our service as a member of the Advisory Group from 2008 to 2018.

We also acknowledge the contribution of Victoria, who was an Advisory Group member from 2016 until her death in 2017.

Some of the
Counterpart
team at the
15th birthday
celebration.
NOT PICTURED:
Kellie Holland,
Wendy Pullan,
Lauren Ferris.



Thank you to all the people and organisations who have supported us in many different ways in 2017–18. Their support makes it possible for us to continue to connect, support and inform women with breast or a gynaecological cancer in Victoria to live well.

Donors

Margaret Brown
Giselle Buller
Susanne Burgess
Minglu Chen
Coburg Basketball Association
Jan Collier
Mary Considine
Helen Edwards
Margaret Fisher
D Gelt
Anne Grant
Lynette Hunter
Jeanette
Annie Lindsay
Rosemary Marshall
Cheryl Mather
Leonie McBride
Jan McMenamin
Nina Mirzabegian
Anne Moras
Betty Myers
Massiny Ng
Elizabeth Papazi
Peninsula Grammar Parent's Association
Jenny Pietsch
Anita Plesko
J Plenty
Ange Rizutto
Rozi
Sajn Family
Nuni Sim
Marina Smirniotis
Sue Song
A L Steele
Khim Ung
Rhonda Walker

There were also donors who wished to remain anonymous.

In-kind donations

Belinda Astl
Libby Blackley
Casey RACE
Wendy Dawson
Fernwood Fitness Sydenham
Genesis Fitness, Lonsdale Street
Michael Green
Input Fitness Frankston
Sara Jorgensen
Swami Karunananda
Vlado Krstevski
Deborah Lawson
Amanda Piper
Faith Rees
Judy Sammut
Adrian Schembri
Leon Tan
Marion Vincent
Bernadette Voss
Sandra Villella
Sunshine Leisure Centre

Gynaecological cancer navigator

Contributors

Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group
Tammy Boatman
Dani Bullen
Danielle Carpenter
Elizabeth Collins
Elizabeth Cooch
Jackie D'Abaco
Wendy Dawson
Naina Dhana and her team, Austin Hospital
Maria Dillane
Vicki Doherty
Helen Eason

Christine Evelyn
Diane Gardiner
Sue Hegarty
Annie Howitt
Linnet Hunter
Tom Jobling
Isabella Lees-Trinca
Robyn Leslie
Karen Livingston
Carmel McCarthy
Jodhi McMahon
Orla McNally
Anne Mellon
Tracey Moroney
Deb Neesham
Sheryl O'Connor
Libby Oldfield
Michelle Peate
Jane Power
Courtney Smyth
Pennie Stoyles
Lisa Taylor
Wendy Vanselow
Amanda Vincent
Merran Williams

Aaltje
Branka
Danni
Denise
Janice
Jenny
May
Mika
Nadia

Working group

Jillian Brown
Wendy Dawson
Annie Howitt
Lisa Taylor
Jenny
Nadia

Friends of Counterpart

African Drumming
Arena Printing
Attractor Solutions
Margie Brett
Casey RACE
Community Data Solutions
Kaye Elias
Fernwood Fitness Sydenham
Genesis Fitness, Lonsdale Street
Jo Gniel
Input Fitness Frankston
IT Strategic
Loretta Leigh
Mezzo
National Australia Bank
Olympic Leisure Banyule
Dawn Roleff
Judy Sammut
Squisito
Sunshine Leisure Centre
Michelle Taylor
Bernadette Voss
YMCA Leisure City
Epping

Presenters

Belinda Astl
Paul Bedson
Margie Brett
Maree Brinkman
Joy Buchanan
Dani Bullen
Sara Bunnett
Felicity Carson
Bob Clothier
Sarah Cowell
Sondra Davoren
Justine Diggins

Djulz
Vicki Durston
Lynda Evans
Lisa Fam
Jo Gniel
Annemiek van de Kamp
Swami Karunananda
Vlado Krstevski
Deborah Lawson
Bouthaina Mayall
Noga Nicholson
Catherine Oakman
Lea O'Sullivan
Sandra Parsons
Suzanne Peyton
Cheryl Prendergast
Judy Sammut
Adrian Schembri
Leon Tan
Wendy Vanselow
Sandra Villella
Marion Vincent
Bernadette Voss
Jillian Woinarski
Matthew Young

Project funding

Besen Family Foundation
LUCRF Super Community Program
Pink Affair
Victorian Government



COUNTER PART

Women supporting women with cancer

Contact us



1300 781 500



info@counterpart.org.au



counterpart.org.au



Counterpart is a service of
Women's Health Victoria



Counterpart is supported by
the Victorian Government

Counterpart Resource Centre



Queen Victoria Women's Centre

210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Hours of operation

Monday 10am–5pm

Wednesday 10am–5pm

Thursday 10am–5pm

Peer support offered from 10am–2pm on these days

(Closed public holidays)

Postal address

GPO Box 1066, Melbourne VIC 3001

Women's Health Victoria acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional custodians of the land, the peoples of the Kulin Nation. As a statewide organisation, we also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters across Victoria. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and that we are beneficiaries of stolen land and dispossession, which began over 200 years ago and continues today.

Celebrating
15 years
2003–2018



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