

# Supporter Newsletter

Spring 2025



Proudly part of

# Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, The Wesley Hospital, as part of the wider UnitingCare family, pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging and the unique role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples play in the communities we serve.

We acknowledge our gratitude that we share this land today, our sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and our hope to move to a place of justice and partnership together.

## THE WESLEY HOSPITAL FUNDRAISING

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## A sweet tradition of care



Every year, the aroma of Christmas cakes signals something wonderful—the Ashgrove/The Gap Lions Club’s legendary stall is back, and with it, a tradition of community caring that touches lives far beyond the festive season.

**Last year, their efforts raised \$1,900 for Wesley Choices Cancer Support Centre.**

As long-time supporters, they understand that cancer doesn’t just affect individuals—it touches entire families. Their generous support helps us provide a welcoming sanctuary where people affected by cancer can find comfort, connection, and hope when they need it most.

Year after year, they transform community spirit into tangible support for families facing cancer. Their unwavering dedication shows us what’s possible when people come together with purpose and heart. **The cakes will be returning this Christmas.**



## The gift you gave Steph and her family

Steph was just 34 when she discovered the pain in her hip wasn’t a gym injury—it was osteosarcoma, a rare and aggressive cancer that disproportionately affects younger people.

*“The first thing I said was ‘I don’t want to die. I can’t die,’”* Steph remembers of hearing her diagnosis.

She’s part of a concerning trend: early onset cancer—diagnosed in people under 50—has increased by nearly 80% in the past 30 years.<sup>1</sup>

Young cancer patients face unique challenges beyond their medical treatment. They worry about fertility, career disruption, and missing precious moments with their families.

For Steph, the hardest part wasn’t the complex surgery or intensive chemotherapy—it was being away from her husband Ben and daughters Izzy, 8, and Mia, 5.

*“I can handle the pain, I can handle being sick,”* she explains, *“but being away from my family is what hurts the most.”*

During her loneliest hospital nights, it was your support that made the difference. The compassionate nurses you help fund were there to hold her hand, chat about her kids, and work tirelessly to get her home in time to kiss her girls goodnight.

*“I was cared for so well at The Wesley,”* Steph says. *“The nurses understand that it’s not just about the medicine—they know I need to be a mum.”*

**Because of your generosity and the expert care at The Wesley, Steph is now on the road to recovery, dreaming of simple moments: putting on a load of washing, walking the dog, helping out at her daughters’ school.**

<sup>1</sup>Zhao J et al. Global trends in incidence, death, burden and risk factors of early-onset cancer from 1990 to 2019. *BMJ Oncology* 2023.

# The heart of our community

The Wesley Hospital Auxiliary spent this year doing what they do best—bringing our community together.

**Through fashion parades, Christmas stalls, and those famous Lions cakes, these dedicated women raised \$75,000.**

*“When you see what our efforts have done, and what we contribute to the hospital,” says Auxiliary President Stephanie Kidd, “our work is really worthwhile.”*

Funds raised have funded bladder scanners that help nurses assess patients more accurately and comfortably—no more invasive procedures when a simple scan can provide the answers.

They’ve also established another nursing education bursary, ensuring our staff can access the latest training to provide even better patient care.



Every time you buy a Christmas ornament or attend their fashion show, you’re helping purchase equipment that directly improves a patient’s hospital experience. You’re funding education that makes our nurses even more skilled caregivers.

Behind the cheerful stalls and community events is something profound—healing care.

**Thank you for being part of their beautiful story and make sure to support their stalls this Christmas.**

## Your impact in action

Over morning tea earlier this year, supporters heard firsthand about the remarkable advances their generosity continues to make possible at The Wesley.

Dr Anne Day shared how your support has transformed breast cancer care through 3D tomography machines that detect cancers earlier and more accurately.

The Savi Scout® wireless guidance system you’ve helped fund means women no longer need wire localisation procedures—making diagnosis far less invasive and stressful.

Dr Troy Gianduzzo spoke about revolutionary changes in prostate cancer treatment, including the Retzius-sparing robotic surgery technique that helps men get drier faster. *“This approach helps men reach that continent stage much earlier,”* he explained, describing how the technique preserves more of the delicate structures around the prostate.

These aren’t just medical advances—they’re deeply personal improvements to patient experiences.

Less invasive procedures, quicker recovery, better outcomes—all made possible because supporters like you believe in the very best care.

The morning tea was about celebrating how your ongoing generosity transforms lives, one breakthrough at a time. **Thank you for making hope possible.**



# Thank you

## to a community that never stops caring

This September the Gambaro community came together once again, raising an extraordinary \$450,000 for prostate and palliative care at The Wesley—bringing their incredible total to over \$2 million across more than a decade of unwavering support.

This isn't just another fundraising milestone. It's a testament to what happens when a community decides to make hope their mission.

*“For our family, prostate cancer became more than a medical diagnosis—it became a mission,”* John Gambaro reflects. *“We don't just raise funds, we raise awareness. We create connections. We build a support network that catches men before they fall.”*

Behind every dollar raised sits a story of people understanding that sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is simply show up for someone facing their darkest hour.

Dr Troy Gianduzzo speaks with deep gratitude about their impact: *“The evolution of our prostate cancer program is a testament to collaborative community support. We're seeing remarkable improvements in surgical outcomes—shorter hospital stays, reduced complications, and faster returns to normal life. The support we've received has allowed us to attract exceptional talent, creating a Centre of Excellence that benefits patients.”*

The impact of this generosity extends far beyond medical equipment. Contributions have funded the Prostate Cancer Specialist Support Nurse position—a role that transforms the patient experience from the moment of diagnosis through recovery and beyond.

*“Community support has fundamentally transformed our approach to prostate cancer care,”* explains Dr Ross Fowler. *“Our ongoing commitment is to integrate cutting-edge technologies with compassionate care, ensuring we're not just treating a condition, but supporting the whole person. We couldn't do that without support from the community.”*

Support has also helped enhance the palliative care garden. A peaceful sanctuary where families can find



moments of tranquility during life's most challenging chapters. More than just a physical space, this garden represents a profound commitment to compassionate care, offering a place where healing happens not just through medicine, but through connection, quiet reflection and the simple comfort of being surrounded by beauty when words aren't enough.

John Gambaro's vision has always been bigger than any single event: *“This isn't a fundraising mission. This is a lifeline. A promise that no one walks this journey alone. We're building something bigger than ourselves—a community of support, of understanding, of hope.”*



This community support weaves together into something remarkable, funding treatments, equipment and services that help patients return to the lives they love faster than ever before.





# Thank you for a second chance at life

Duncan Barker thought he was the picture of health when he walked into his GP's office for a routine check-up in October 2023.

At 59, the busy draughtsman was simply ticking boxes—blood tests, the usual health maintenance that responsible adults do.

Then came the phone call that changed everything.

His Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) level was 170—astronomically high compared to the healthy range of under 4.

An MRI revealed an enlarged prostate, and what followed was a whirlwind of tests, referrals and the devastating diagnosis: stage 4 prostate cancer.

*“Looking back, I had some subtle symptoms I hadn't fully registered, like more frequent bathroom visits, but I felt completely healthy,”* Duncan reflects. *“It was a shock. I felt fine, so I didn't quite understand what all the fuss was about.”*

But Duncan's story isn't one of defeat—it's one of remarkable resilience and the power of advanced medical care made possible by community support like yours. His GP immediately referred him to a doctor at The Wesley Hospital, where Duncan began hormone

blocker injections and chemotherapy. Within weeks, his PSA levels plummeted from 170 to 41—a dramatic improvement.

*“I was pretty ecstatic,”* he shared.

The treatment plan included robotic prostatectomy performed by Dr Geoff Coughlin, utilising advanced surgical technology funded by generous supporters.

This equipment allowed for precision that would have been unimaginable just decades ago.

*“From the moment I saw my doctors, they guided me through the whole process”* Duncan says. *“My oncologist and the nursing and pharmacy staff were phenomenal.”*

His advice to others facing a similar experience? *“Go to The Wesley Hospital for treatment. And have a positive attitude. Those are the two key ingredients that helped me.”*

**Today, Duncan remains cancer-free, with a message of profound gratitude:**

*“Without the support of donors who funded the advanced medical technology I wouldn't be here. Thank you, you saved my life.”*

# Taking care of yourself and others

## Taking care of yourself helps protect your community:

- **Know the numbers**  
In 2024, an estimated 26,368 Australian men were diagnosed with prostate cancer—that's 72 men every day.<sup>1</sup>
- **Understand your risk**  
If your father or brother has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, your risk increases two-fold. If you have two or more close male relatives diagnosed, your risk increases five-fold.<sup>2</sup>
- **Get checked regularly**  
Men over 50 should discuss PSA testing with their GP, or from age 40-45 if you have a family history.<sup>3</sup>
- **Don't ignore symptoms**  
Changes in bathroom habits, pelvic discomfort, or other unusual symptoms shouldn't be dismissed.

## Support your mental health and others:

- **Recognise the mental health impact**  
Men with prostate cancer experience higher rates of anxiety and depression than the general population.<sup>4</sup>
- **Seek help when needed**  
Only one-quarter of men say they would seek help from a mental health professional, but support is available and effective.<sup>4</sup>
- **Talk openly**  
Create safe spaces for conversations about health, feelings and fears with the men in your life.
- **Know early detection saves lives**  
Over 98% of men with early-stage prostate cancer will be alive five years after diagnosis, compared to around 36% for late-stage.<sup>5</sup>

*Your support of prostate cancer services funds the specialist nurses and compassionate care that help men feel less alone.*

<sup>1</sup>Cancer Australia, 2024 <sup>2</sup>PCFA, 2024 <sup>3</sup>USANZ, 2024 <sup>4</sup>University of South Australia, 2024 <sup>5</sup>PCFA Survivorship Kit, 2024

## Blossoming with hope

Something beautiful happened under the Jacaranda Tree at Toowong Village this year.

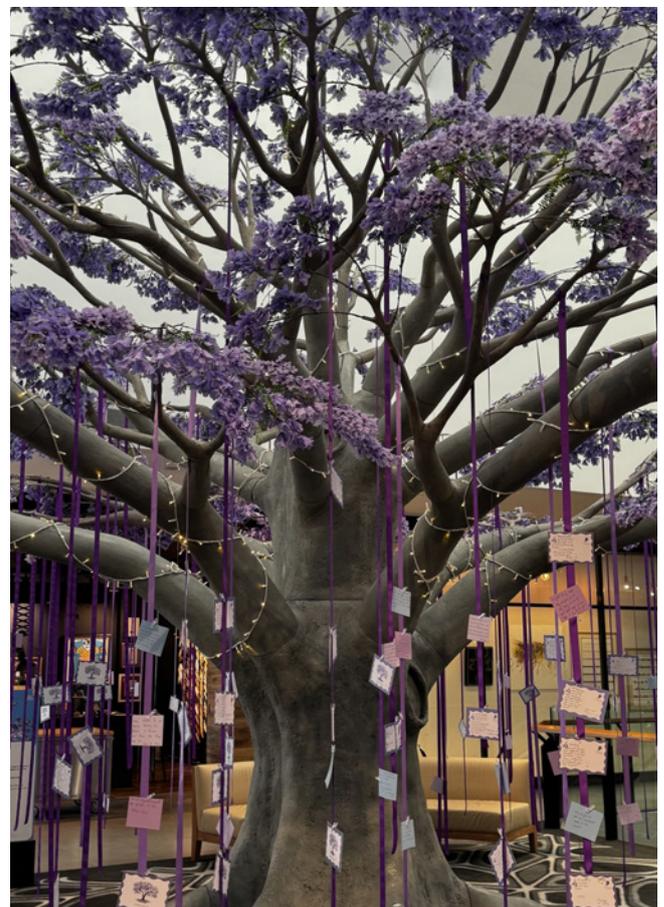
What started as a simple invitation to share messages of hope became a powerful reminder of how community care can bloom in unexpected places.

For every heartfelt message left hanging from the tree's branches—words of encouragement for cancer patients, notes of gratitude to our dedicated staff and volunteers—Toowong Village generously donated five dollars to Wesley Choices Cancer Support Centre.

The response was overwhelming. Messages of hope fluttered like purple blossoms, each one carrying the love and support of strangers who understood that sometimes a few kind words can make all the difference.

These aren't just messages on paper—they're lifelines reaching people when they need it most.

Wesley Choices provides expert advice, support and care at no cost to anyone affected by cancer, regardless of where they're being treated. This beautiful initiative helps ensure these vital services continue.





## The gift of simply being there

Sometimes the most powerful medicine isn't found in a bottle or administered through an IV.

Sometimes it's as simple as a warm conversation over coffee, a gentle walk in the garden or the quiet comfort of knowing you're not alone.

Thanks to your support, The Wesley Hospital has created something beautiful: a network of Compassionate Companions who bring the healing power of human connection to patients when they need it most.

*"This feeds my heart,"* says Pauline, one of our dedicated volunteers.

*"I really enjoy spending time with these people. They get the opportunity to take their minds off their hospital stay and talk about something different."*

Patients far from their country home, facing weeks of treatment with no family nearby. Or patients with limited mobility making it hard to connect with others during their stay.

These are the moments when loneliness can feel overwhelming—and when our Compassionate Companions make all the difference.

*"Some of the patients live regionally or remotely and have limited support networks here in Brisbane,"* Pauline explains.

*"Having a friendly face to chat with makes a huge impact. I love seeing them at the end of my visit far more animated than when I first walked in."*

The program extends across three vital areas of care. The Vulnerable In-Patient Service connects trained volunteers with patients experiencing long stays, those far from home, or anyone who simply needs a friendly presence.

The Dementia and Delirium program provides specialised support for patients whose cognitive challenges make hospital stays particularly disorienting.

And in our most sacred moments, End of Life Compassionate Companions ensure no one has to face the end of life alone.

*"Palliative care, I've come to realise, is profoundly important,"* reflects Sally, one of our trained volunteers.

*"When a patient needs me, it becomes my responsibility to be there, to offer comfort and solace."*

You can't measure happiness, but we certainly notice a change in our patients after they have had a visit from a volunteer. It's a wonderful initiative.

These connections happen because of your generosity.

Your support creates space for the kind of human care that touches hearts and accelerates healing.

Behind every shared cup of tea, every completed jigsaw puzzle, every gentle conversation is your belief that healing extends far beyond medicine.

**Thank you for making these moments of connection possible.**



**Sometimes the most profound gifts come from hearts we never get to meet.**

Through a generous gift in Will, a meaningful legacy continues to transform lives at The Wesley Hospital—proving that compassion truly has no expiration date.

A diabetes education bursary represents something beautiful: a family's desire to honour their loved one's memory by investing in healthcare education. This bursary is now supporting a dedicated healthcare professional, Jubin Jose, to become a Credentialed Diabetes Educator, extending specialist care to more patients living with diabetes.

*“This bursary represents a significant opportunity for personal and professional growth, and I am committed to making the most of it by contributing to the community through diabetes education,”* shares Jubin.

The impact extends far beyond one person's education. As this healthcare professional completes her studies, she'll bring expertise in preventive care strategies, personalised diabetes support, and innovative treatment approaches. She's excited to explore advanced technologies like continuous glucose monitoring systems and mobile health applications—tools that can transform how patients manage their condition.

There's a recognised shortage of qualified diabetes educators across the healthcare industry. By funding this specialised training, the bursary addresses a critical community need while positioning The Wesley Hospital as a leader in diabetes care.

*“I am truly honoured to be selected to receive this bursary. It supports me financially to achieve one of my academic goals, which would not have been possible otherwise,”* Jubin explains. *“It will have a significant impact on my future academic and professional journey.”*

This is the power of gifts in Wills—they create ripple effects of healing that extend far into the future.

Through education, innovation, and compassionate care, one family's generosity continues to touch countless lives, ensuring this legacy of care lives on through every patient helped, every family supported and every breakthrough achieved.

Please contact the Gifts in Wills Team by calling **1800 961 331** or emailing [plannedgiving@ucareqld.com.au](mailto:plannedgiving@ucareqld.com.au) to discover how you can help shape the future of healthcare for generations to come.

