

**SUPPORT FOR  
WOMEN  
AFFECTED BY  
BREAST CANCER**

*“It was helpful to see another woman who had been through a similar experience and is now well and happy”*

# **BREAST CANCER SUPPORT SERVICE**

**A Support  
Program  
of  
Cancer  
Connect**

**CANCER CONNECT LINKS  
PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR  
EXPERIENCE OF CANCER.**

**IT IS A FREE AND  
CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE  
AVAILABLE TO ALL  
TASMANIANS.**

Cancer Connect is a peer support service that puts people in touch with others who have had a similar cancer experience. It not only supports those with cancer, but also those who are caring for people with cancer.

The Breast Cancer Support Service is an integral part of the Cancer Connect program, and has been providing a support service to Tasmanian women with breast cancer for over 25 years.

## **THE SERVICE**

The needs of a woman who has a diagnosis of breast cancer go beyond surgical and medical care. Practical and emotional needs are also very important for recovery.

The Breast Cancer Support Service (BCSS) is available to help meet these needs.

The service is provided at no cost by the Cancer Council of Tasmania, and is available to all Tasmanian women. The service is delivered by carefully selected and trained volunteers who are women who have been treated for breast cancer.

All Cancer Connect/ BCSS volunteers have undertaken an extensive training program and are provided with ongoing support, supervision and training.

The Regional Coordinators based in the four Cancer Support Centres coordinate the Breast Cancer Support Service. The coordinators provide support and ongoing training to volunteers and respond to requests for support.

Spokespersons are available to address health care and community groups on the work of the BCSS.

## **SERVICES PROVIDED BY BCSS**

Pre-operatively – a phone call or visit can be made before surgery.

Post-operatively – hospital or home visits or phone contacts as required.

During recovery – phone contact is offered during recovery from surgery as well as during and after treatment.

## **AFTER SURGERY**

BCSS volunteers can visit in hospital after surgery and provide a comfort pillow kindly made for The Cancer Council Tasmania by members of the Country Women's Association.

Volunteers can offer women who have had a mastectomy a temporary prosthesis that may be worn until healing has taken place.

A permanent prosthesis is fitted after the completion of treatment. BCSS volunteers are not surgical fitters, but can provide information on breast prostheses and the Statewide Breast Prosthesis Scheme.

It is just as important for women who have had conservative treatment to discuss their fears and feelings. A volunteer will be 'matched' in terms of treatment experience, and as closely as possible by age and circumstance.

## **INFORMATION**

The provision of relevant and up to date information is an vital part of providing support for people dealing with a diagnosis of cancer.

The Cancer Council Tasmania has a wide range of information resources available free of charge, and BCSS volunteers can provide resources selected to suit the needs of each individual woman.

Resources include a range of booklets specifically on breast cancer as well as booklets, information sheets and brochures on all aspects of cancer treatment, dealing with a cancer diagnosis and living with cancer.

## **CARERS, FAMILY & FRIENDS**

The Cancer Connect program can put family members and carers in touch with others who have been through a similar experience. Talking with someone who understands is most helpful when dealing with cancer.

## **SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

BCSS volunteers can also provide information about support programs available for women with a breast cancer diagnosis.

- Cancer Support Groups
- Look Good – Feel Better program
- Living with Cancer Education program