

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 28 September 2005

Cancer survivorship forum

The challenges of facing life after a cancer diagnosis will be explored in a free public forum hosted by The Cancer Council Tasmania in Launceston on Saturday (1 October).

The Cancer Council's Information Officer, Ms Lesley Cooper, said today that for many people who have had cancer, life doesn't return to normal when treatment ends.

"Cancer is a life-changing experience that many patients and their family and friends find very difficult to deal with," Ms Cooper said.

"They might worry that they're not coping as well as they should be; that they don't feel normal even when treatment is finished; that their illness is putting too much pressure on their family.

"And even if they're given the all-clear after follow-up, many people continue to worry about recurrence or hereditary risks for family members.

"There is no simple solution to these problems, but communication is an important part of working through them.

"Talking about their feelings with their doctor, family and friends, or a psychologist or counsellor – and accepting that they will now be different people – will help many cancer survivors deal better with their circumstances."

Saturday's forum will be facilitated by psychologist Professor Stewart Dunn from the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney. Professor Dunn is also Professor of Psychological Medicine at the University of Sydney and a director of the Pam McLean Cancer Communications Centre in Sydney.

The forum is open to cancer survivors, their family and friends, health professionals and the broader public.

More than 2,500 new cases of cancer are diagnosed among Tasmanians each year.

Statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that around 60 per cent of Australians diagnosed with cancer are still alive five years later. Some cancers (including testicular cancer and melanoma) generally have a higher survival rate than others (such as lung cancer and brain cancer). And younger people generally have higher survival rates than older people.

Thanks to improvements in early detection and treatment, the five-year survival rates in Australia have improved from around 50 per cent in the early 1980s (44 per cent in men and 55 per cent in women) to around 60 per cent in the late 1990s (57 per cent in men and 63 per cent in women).

Forum details:

When: 11am – 1pm on Saturday 1 October, 2005

Where: University of Tasmania, Newnham, Launceston (Lecture Theatre 2, Education Block)

Who: Professor Stewart Dunn (facilitator), Dr Frank Madill (chairman)

Available for interview between now and Saturday, or at the forum:

Professor Stewart Dunn – tel. 0411 025 458 (limited availability due to teaching commitments)

Ms Lesley Cooper – tel. 6336 2030 or 0407 879 571

Ms Margaret Egan (Statewide Services Officer, The Cancer Council Tasmania) – tel. 6336 2030 or 0417 588 718

Ms Ina McBride, lung cancer survivor (Lewisham in southern Tasmania)

Mrs Pauline Watson, breast cancer survivor (Launceston)

Mr Craig Maher, testicular cancer survivor (Devonport)

NB: The above-mentioned cancer survivors can be contacted through Lesley Cooper or Margaret Egan

Media representatives are welcome to attend the forum, but please contact Lesley Cooper or Margaret Egan in advance.