

H&N CANCER
AWARENESS
MONTH



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA

2024
**IMPACT
REPORT**
RAISING OUR
VOICES



**Together,
we are making
a difference.**

CONTENT

Chair and CEO Message	1
About Us	2
Our 2023-2025 Strategic Priorities	3
Head and Neck Cancer In Australia: A Snapshot	4
What is Head and Neck Cancer?	5
The Challenges	6
Our Reach in 2024 - A Snapshot	7
Vital Support for Our Community: Our Achievements	8
Raising Our Voices: Government Advocacy	12
Australia's First Head and Neck Cancer Helpline	14
Raising Awareness in the Media	15
Thank You to Our Ambassadors	16
Community Fundraising	17
Scarf Stories: A Bold Campaign for Awareness and Resilience	18
Get Involved	20
Our Board	21
Partnerships	22
Tributes	23



Head and Neck Cancer Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Lands we live and work on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

CHAIR AND CEO MESSAGE



**Associate Professor
Puma Sundaresan**
CHAIR



Nadia Rosin
CEO

As we reflect on another busy year at Head and Neck Cancer Australia, on behalf of the Board and team, we feel immense pride in the progress we've made in supporting Australians affected by Head and Neck Cancer. This year has been a journey of growth and impactful advocacy. We'd like to celebrate some of our key achievements.

We started the year with our inspiring Patchwork Girl Scarf Stories campaign, sparking conversations across the country helping to raise awareness while shining a light on the unique challenges faced by people living with Head and Neck Cancer. It was an uplifting reminder of the strength and resilience within our community.

We translated our 3D animations into nine languages thanks to an educational grant from MSD, ensuring that more people can access the vital information they need with confidence.

In October, we took a significant step forward at Parliament House in Canberra, advocating for the unmet survivorship needs of Head and Neck Cancer patients, including access to essential external facial prosthetics and oral prehabilitation and rehabilitation. Our Parliamentary Lunch, hosted by Senator Deborah O'Neill, together with our ongoing advocacy and the support of people in our community writing to their Federal MP for action, ensures that the voices of Australians affected by Head and Neck Cancer are heard and acted upon at the highest levels.

Thanks to Cancer Australia's Supporting People with Cancer Grant, we kicked off our roadshow starting in Adelaide helping to raise even greater awareness of HANCA's free resources. We look forward to visiting Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory in 2025.

2025 is shaping up to be another busy year with the launch in March of Australia's first Head and Neck Cancer Helpline supported by Federal Government funding as part of the Australian Cancer Nurses and Navigation Program. The Head and Neck Cancer Helpline will offer free, confidential support and specialist information to patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals across Australia.

In November, we'll embark on our inaugural Three Capes Trek, a breathtaking four-day adventure along Tasmania's rugged coastline. Not only will it be an unforgettable experience, but it will also raise much-needed funds for essential services, like access to trustworthy evidence-based information and counselling from diagnosis to recovery and beyond. Limited spots are available— to be part of this incredible journey!

Thank you to the GenesisCare Foundation for the very generous grant of \$100,000 to Head and Neck Cancer Australia, what a brilliant end to what has been a very busy and impactful year.

Lastly, we send our sincerest gratitude to our supporters. Our Christmas Appeal is now live, and we are hopeful that the generosity of our community will allow us to continue to grow, extending our support to those who need it most.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission. Together, we are making a difference.

**Associate Professor
Puma Sundaresan**
CHAIR

Nadia Rosin
CEO



ABOUT US

Head and Neck Cancer Australia is the only national charity dedicated to providing education and support to people living with Head and Neck Cancer.

The charity was launched in 2016 by a team of leading clinicians who saw first-hand the profound impact of Head and Neck Cancer and were passionate about driving change. Their personal commitment to Head and Neck Cancer Australia has resulted in a unique collaboration of patients, family members, carers and clinicians working to educate, support and reduce the cancer burden in some of the most disenfranchised cancer patients.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with all Head and Neck Cancer specialists, patients and carers across Australia to achieve our mission.



OUR 2023-2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



HEAD AND NECK CANCER IN AUSTRALIA: A SNAPSHOT

30% gap in survival rates for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples compared to non-Indigenous Australians⁴



17,374

Living with the lasting impacts of Head and Neck Cancer²



Economic **cost is twice** that of breast cancer⁷



There is NO screening: **early detection** is key

385% increase in tongue cancer in young women in last 30 years despite reduction in smoking. Cause is unknown⁶



63.5%

of tonsil and base of tongue cancers are caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV) - the same virus that causes cervical cancer⁵



Men are **three times** more likely to be diagnosed¹



4 out of 5 people will have HPV at some point in their lives⁸



Sources:

1. Head and Neck Cancers: Cancer Council Australia, Excluding Thyroid and Skin Cancers
2. Head and Neck Cancer: Cancer Australia
3. Cancer Australia's National Cancer Control Indicators August 2018
4. AIHW Cancer in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia
5. Hong reported that the proportion of oropharyngeal cancers which were positive for HPV DNA and p16 increased from 20.2% in 1987-1995 to 63.5% in 2006-2010 [27]. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6015268>
6. www.pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32622292/
7. Cost of Cancer in NSW, [Access Economics/Cancer Council NSW 2007](#)
8. Human Papillomavirus: Cancer Council Australia




WHAT IS HEAD AND NECK CANCER?

5,300
Australians are
diagnosed every year¹



17,374
are living with the lasting impacts
of Head and Neck Cancer²



It is estimated that more than 5,300 people in Australia are diagnosed with a type of Head and Neck Cancer each year, and approximately 17,000 people are living with the long-term side effects of treatment diagnosed in the last five years. Head and Neck Cancer is three times more common in men, 58 per cent higher in lower socio-economic areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately impacted, with a 30 per cent lower survival rate compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

For many people Head and Neck Cancer is a devastating disease. Treatment often takes away basic abilities that many of us take for granted—speaking, eating, breathing, swallowing—and can leave someone unable to smile or laugh. For some, it results in permanent facial disfigurement, leaving visible scars that can't be concealed.

Lack of awareness

Despite its significant impact, most Australians know very little about Head and Neck Cancer. Many mistakenly believe that smoking or alcohol is the main contributing factor. While these were historically significant risks, the face of Head and Neck Cancer has changed in Australia today.

Now, 63.5% of tonsil and base-of-tongue cancers are caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the same virus linked to cervical cancer. These cancers are increasingly affecting otherwise healthy people in their 40s and 50s. Additionally, there has been a staggering 385 per cent increase in tongue cancers among otherwise healthy young women. The cause of this alarming trend remains unknown.

Education and early detection is key

Head and Neck Cancer is a stealthy disease with symptoms that often mimic benign conditions, such as a sore throat, mild earache, tongue ulcer, or neck lump. While Head and Neck Cancers are largely curable if detected early, they are highly aggressive. Delays in diagnosis can significantly affect treatment options, quality of life, and the risk of recurrence or metastatic disease.

But screening is challenging. Each Head and Neck Cancer is different, so there is never going to be a simple screening test like mammography or a prostate-specific antigen test. There may be a test for oropharyngeal cancer that could be used for screening in the future but in the meantime, the education of the general public, GPs and dentists will have the greatest impact.

THE CHALLENGES

For those people who are diagnosed, the challenges are immense. Patients are often blindsided by a cancer they have never heard of and then struggle to find reliable, accessible information about their condition.

Living with Head and Neck Cancer can be an isolating and difficult journey. Survivors often face anxiety, depression, loss of employment, and social isolation. Feelings of guilt, shame, and distress are common. A study by the American Cancer Society in 2018 found that Head and Neck Cancer survivors are twice as likely to die by suicide as survivors of other cancers.

In Australia, Head and Neck Cancer remains one of the least supported cancers, yet it is among the most debilitating and life-altering. Even after being declared "cured," the side effects of treatment often last a lifetime, profoundly impacting survivors and their families.



We offer the most complex and involved treatments for Head and Neck Cancer patients covered by Medicare, yet some have no reliable or affordable route for essential survivorship care. We have a duty of care for our patients to find a solution to give them quality of life.

A/Prof Bruce Ashford

Head and Neck Surgeon
Founding Director,
Head and Neck Cancer Australia

OUR REACH IN 2024 - A SNAPSHOT



70,000
New website visitors

736.9% ↑
Instagram

58.8% ↑
Facebook

493 ↑
LinkedIn

296.3k
YouTube views

In 2024, Head and Neck Cancer Australia had excellent reach with over 70,000 new visitors accessing our website's comprehensive library of resources. Social media platforms experienced a remarkable expansion with Instagram reach growing by 736.9%, Facebook by 58.8%, and LinkedIn gaining 493 new followers with 89,929 impressions. YouTube achieved 296.3K new views and 875 new subscribers.

The Changing Face of Head and Neck Cancer GP and Dental Module was completed by 1622 GP's and 1,151 Dentists in the 2023-2024 triennium. The online education course was chosen as a finalist for the 2024 PRIME Awards in the NGO category. The PRIME Awards recognise and celebrate excellence across a range of categories within healthcare communications and the Australian pharmaceutical and life sciences industry.

HANCA hosted two free specialist-led webinars: *Oral Health and Head and Neck Cancer* (953 views) and *Lymphoedema after Head and Neck Cancer treatment* (569 views), reinforcing our commitment to accessible education and support.

The HANCA team also delivered more than 16 in-service presentations to patient support groups and hospitals across Australia.

We finished the year with our first roadshow to South Australia in November. Thanks to funding by Cancer Australia HANCA staff had a jam-packed two days visiting the major hospitals around Adelaide and connecting with patients and carers at our Tea, Talk and Support Morning Tea hosted at Cancer Council SA.

VITAL SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY: OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



JANUARY

CEO, Nadia Rosin and Board Directors Carolyn Smith and Dr Matthew Magarey appeared at a Senate inquiry into Equitable access to diagnosis and treatment for individuals with rare and less common cancers including neuroendocrine cancer. HANCA advocated for increased awareness of Head and Neck Cancer, supportive care for patients, and public sector funding for oral and maxillofacial rehabilitation, highlighting the critical need for a national subsidy program to enhance the quality of life for survivors facing significant physical and emotional challenges post-treatment.

FEBRUARY

Over **160** people registered for our free Oral Health and Head and Neck Cancer webinar, with expert guests Dr Amanda Phoon-Nguyen, Oral Medicine Specialist, Associate Professor Sharon Liberali, Special Needs Dentist, and Jen Mackay, a former patient from NSW. **165 attendees** and **953 views** to date.



Watch the recording

MARCH

On 20 March 2024, HANCA's CEO and Board Director Carolyn Smith and former patient Len Hatch from Canberra joined leading lymphoedema advocate and 2022 SA Local Hero, Monique Bareham for the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of Lymphoedema at Parliament House, Canberra. With support from Federal Parliamentarians, including Co-Chairs Louise Miller-Frost MP and Dr. Monique Ryan, and 25 key stakeholder organisations, the initiative marks a significant milestone in advocating for Australians affected by lymphoedema. With 75% of Head and Neck Cancer survivors experiencing lymphoedema after treatment, this group represents an important step toward raising awareness and improving support for our community.



Read more or buy a scarf today

MAY

- Just like every scar, every scarf tells a story. Our inaugural Scarf Stories Patchwork Girl campaign raised widespread awareness and over **\$20,000** to support the work of HANCA. Thank you to everyone in our community who shared their story and continues to wear their scarf to help draw attention to the experiences faced by people living with Head and Neck Cancer.
- **Translated resources for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities** Thanks to an education grant from MSD we translated our **Head and Neck Cancer animations** and **What is Head and Neck Cancer fact sheet** into **nine languages**: Arabic, Chinese Simplified / Mandarin, Chinese Traditional / Cantonese, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese with more than **17,700** views since launching.



To view our free multilingual resources





JUNE

The end of financial year
Tax Appeal raised \$37,786.

Thank you to all who contributed to the fantastic effort. Our gratitude also goes to Kath and Sean Hoskin for featuring in the campaign.

Check more
community
events photos



JULY

Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month was one of the busiest for HANCA, with creative community fundraisers, Soup for the Soul events and a generous tax appeal.

- Thanks to our eight **Dry July** participants for helping to raise **\$7,346**.
- **Soup for the Soul** raised **\$32,361** with over **32 events** across Australia.
- As part of World Head and Neck Cancer Day in July, HANCA attended the launch of the Head and Neck Peer Navigation Program at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.
- Head and Neck Cancer Australia Ambassador **Brittany Coles** shared a heartfelt speech at the **Australian Patients Association Annual Awards**, highlighting her father Andy's journey with throat cancer and the challenges faced by their family. The evening was especially meaningful as Andy attended his first public event in over five years, inspiring everyone in the room with his resilience.



Head and Neck Cancers can have a significant impact on patients and their families so to learn from those who have been on this journey and to see that there can be a positive outcome will be really important for people."

Lora Winter

Former patient and facilitator
Victorian Head and Neck Cancer Support Group



AUGUST



- Over **300** people registered for our webinar on Lymphoedema after Head and Neck Cancer Treatment with guest speakers **Dr Amanda Pigott** sharing expert strategies for early diagnosis and treatment, while former patient from Canberra Janet Curran provided a personal perspective on her journey with lymphoedema. Thank you to Essity for your support. The webinar has been viewed **552** times on YouTube.



- **Australian and New Zealand Head and Neck Cancer Society (ANZHNCs) Annual Scientific Meeting**
It was an honour for our CEO and Board Chair to address a record 390 Head and Neck Cancer health care professionals at the annual ANZHNCs 25th Annual Scientific Meeting in Melbourne, on the theme: Collaboration to Redefine the Landscape for Head and Neck Cancer Care.

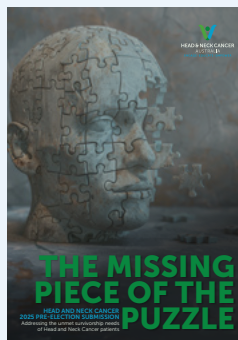


OCTOBER

Parliamentary Lunch:

Head and Neck Cancer: A Critical Gap In Recovery
- Improving access to facial prosthetics and oral prehabilitation and rehabilitation services.

Hosted by Senator Deborah O'Neill, Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Cancer Care and Cure Group, the Parliamentary lunch brought together Members of Parliament, Government representatives, healthcare professionals, patients and carers. They discussed how we can help those who have had part of their face or mouth removed and are struggling with the profound and disfiguring side effects of treatment to literally feel whole again. While in Canberra, HANCA also met with the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon. Ged Kearney MP and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, the Hon. Michaelia Cash to discuss the critical need for dedicated funding to support Head and Neck Cancer survivors.



NOVEMBER

RideBeyondFive

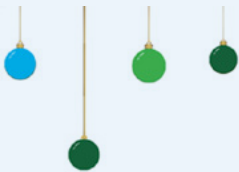
A fantastic day riding through the four gorges of Ku Ring Gai National Park in North Sydney. Special thanks to RideBeyondFive Ambassadors, Dr Trevor Gardner OAM and A/Professor Bruce Ashford, Principal Sponsor, Woolfe Logistics, and our riders who together beat the RideBeyondFive record helping to raise over \$70,000 for Head and Neck Cancer Australia.

Save the date:

Friday 10 October 2025 for the return of RideBeyondFive in 2025!



RIDE BEYOND FIVE



DECEMBER

Give the gift of support this Christmas

By donating to Head and Neck Cancer Australia's Christmas Appeal, you'll help us continue to raise public awareness around the signs and symptoms of Head and Neck Cancer, distribute free information for people who are newly diagnosed, and advocate for dedicated Federal Government funding so that people who have survived Head and Neck Cancer can receive the ongoing care they need.

Thank you to Jen Mackay, a former patient from NSW who shared her story for our 2024 appeal.

GenesisCare Foundation grant

Thank you to the GenesisCare Foundation for the generous grant of **\$100,000** to Head and Neck Cancer Australia. The grant will be put to excellent use supporting HANCA's mission of raising awareness and improving the outcomes of those people affected by Head and Neck Cancer across Australia through education, information, support and advocacy.



Watch the video





RAISING OUR VOICES: GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY

On 8 October 2024, Head and Neck Cancer Australia held a powerful Parliamentary Lunch in Canberra. Hosted by Senator Deborah O’Neill, Co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Cancer Care and Cure Group, the lunch was an opportunity to call on the Australian Government to address critical gaps in post-treatment recovery for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

Tracey Sims, who had an eye, eye socket, and part of her cheekbone removed following a cancer diagnosis, shared her experience of being denied coverage for her \$6,500 facial prosthetic—deemed “cosmetic” rather than essential by Medicare and private health insurance.

Lunch guests also heard expert insights from HANCA Board Director and ENT Head and Neck Cancer Surgeon, Dr Matthew Magarey, who emphasised the urgent need for affordable access to facial prosthetics and oral rehabilitation.

HANCA is advocating for \$15.5 million in government funding to establish an External Facial Prosthetic Reimbursement Program to support priority groups with the costs of external facial prosthetics. Funding will also support two projects to provide an evidence base for action to address key barriers to optimal oral prehabilitation and rehabilitation for Head and Neck Cancer patients.

The projects include developing national evidence-based guidelines for optimal oral prehabilitation and rehabilitation of Head and Neck Cancer patients and a report to quantify the scale, nature and impact of unmet optimal oral prehabilitation and rehabilitation needs of Head and Neck Cancer patients and developing costed and sustainable options for addressing financial barriers to optimal care.



[Watch the Parliament Event](#)



[Read our proposal](#)



Meetings with
Fiona Phillips MP,
the Hon Ged Kearney MP,
Senator Michaelia Cash





I make spare parts for people – a nose, ear or eye.

My life's mission is to help my patients get access and funding for facial prosthetics. They literally change lives. Facial prosthetics empower people to take control of their own lives."

Sophie Fleming

Clinical Anaplastologist

Maxillofacial Prosthetic Rehabilitation



I was lucky that I had some savings but what about those people who don't? A facial prosthetic is literally a lifesaver. It's not optional. People's faces need to be put back together at the end of all of this. You can't leave the job half done."

Tracey Sims

Head and Neck Cancer Patient



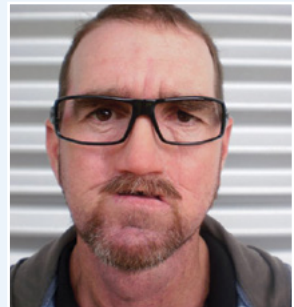
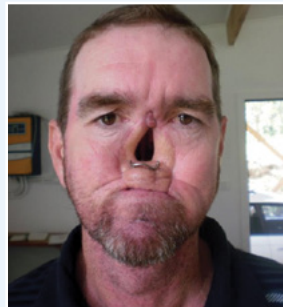
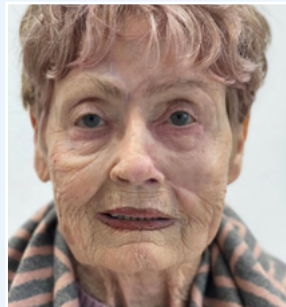
HOW YOU CAN HELP

We encourage you to contact your Federal Member of Parliament and tell them why you believe they need to do more for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer. Use the letter template on our website.



[Download letter template](#)

BEFORE AND AFTER PROSTHETICS





AUSTRALIA'S FIRST HEAD AND NECK CANCER HELPLINE

We're thrilled to announce the upcoming launch of the Australia's first Head and Neck Cancer Helpline, a free and confidential service dedicated to supporting patients, carers, families, and healthcare professionals affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

Community feedback has been invaluable in shaping this vital service. Over 300 individuals, including patients, carers, and healthcare professionals, participated in our surveys to ensure the Helpline meets people's needs.

- Patients and carers shared that they would contact the Helpline for support when newly diagnosed, during treatment, and to manage long-term side effects. An overwhelming 82% said they would use the Helpline if it were available today.
- Healthcare professionals emphasised the importance of offering emotional support and practical information, with 92% likely or very likely to refer patients to the Helpline once it's operational.

Both groups highlighted the need for a mixed skill set team, including nurses, counsellors, and allied health professionals, to provide comprehensive care.

The Helpline aims to improve equitable access to expert information and support for all Australians impacted by Head and Neck Cancer. It's a cornerstone of the Australian Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program, ensuring specialist, culturally safe care is accessible to everyone.

The Helpline will take the shape of a phone line, texting or by Live Chat with the Helpline staff. People can also be referred to the Helpline for support by a loved one or Healthcare provider by filling in a form. This guarantees support is available regardless of barriers in communication which might be the result of Head and Neck Cancer. Stay tuned for more updates as we prepare to launch this much-needed service, taking an important step toward improving support for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.



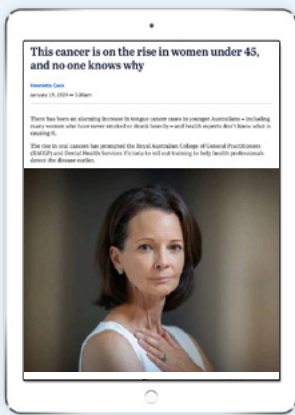
Scheduled to launch in March 2025, the Helpline will operate Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm AEDT, offering specialist guidance and compassionate care.





RAISING AWARENESS IN THE MEDIA

In 2024, Head and Neck Cancer Australia used media outreach to highlight critical issues in care for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer. Stories in major outlets including The Age and Sydney Morning Herald spotlighted rising tongue cancer rates among young women, Head and Neck Cancer Australia emphasised the importance of early detection and improved GP training.



The Illawarra Mercury and ABC Illawarra Breakfast radio featured HANCA's advocacy for Medicare funding of facial prosthetics, raising awareness about the unmet needs of cancer survivors.



HANCA's media outreach was complemented with a powerful interview between Sophie Fleming from Prosthetic Art Technology and Andy Park on the Radio National Drive program. They spoke about the role facial prosthetics play in helping people feel whole again after treatment for Head and Neck Cancer and the challenges patients face due to the lack of Medicare funding for these life-changing prosthetics. This followed a Nine News article about Tracey Sims, a former Head and Neck Cancer patient who lost her eye to cancer but whose prosthesis was considered a cosmetic treatment. Tracey spoke more about her experience at HANCA's Parliamentary event **Head and Neck Cancer: A Critical Gap In Recovery**.



Watch the Parliamentary Event

In December the ABC amplified the proposed funding scheme with a story on Stateline and digital story on ABC News about two cancer survivors who have joined for the Federal Government to fund facial prosthetics. The powerful testimonies of Tracey David and Mark Robinson communicated how crucial facial prosthetics are in reclaiming one's life after Head and Neck Cancer.

Our media outreach helps to elevate public and policymaker awareness of Head and Neck Cancer, advancing HANCA's mission to support patients and drive systemic change.



Read the story

THANK YOU TO OUR AMBASSADORS

We'd like to take a moment to express our heartfelt thanks to our incredible Ambassadors for their unwavering support and dedication to raising awareness of Head and Neck Cancer.



*Together,
we are making
a difference.*

Marty Doyle

A special shoutout to Marty Doyle, founder of the Brisbane Head and Neck Cancer Patient Support Group, Brittany Coles for her inspiring advocacy alongside her father Andy (and even Bill Shorten!), and Mike George for backing at the Senate Community Affairs Committee enquiry into 'Equitable Access to Diagnosis for Individuals with Rare and Less Common Cancers' in February, and for his ongoing efforts to support laryngectomees.



Marty Doyle



Brittany Cole



Mike George

Thank you to our Clinical Advisory Group

Chaired by Tracey Nicholls, ENT Nurse Practitioner and clinicians across Australia who have supported the continuous review of HANCA's library of resources.

Thank you to our Consumer Advisory Group

We also deeply appreciate the contributions of our Consumer Advisory Group members — Tiel Lillehagen, Elisse Kleiner, Dr Usha Salagame and Jen Mackay — whose insights and lived experiences continue to guide and shape our work.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Our community fundraisers are absolutely vital to supporting the work of Head and Neck Cancer Australia, and to ensuring we continue our core priorities to engage, educate and empower.

These community members are just a few examples of how creative our supporters are in their fundraising initiatives! If they have inspired you to host your own event you can read how on our website.



Fundraise for us



The Pellizzari family held a Long Lunch in SA and raised \$3,000!



HBF Run for A Reason, Team Richards Entourage raised a fantastic \$1,576 and looked great doing it!



Sunshine Coast Head and Neck Cancer Support group held a fundraiser dinner and raised \$10,000 for HANCA.



Jumbo Skip Bins and Morton Bay Recycling (QLD) held a Charity BBQ and fundraised \$374



Yvonne McClaren hiked the Camino trail and raised awareness and funds for HANCA along the way. Well done on raising \$875 Yvonne!



Jen Mackay's morning tea with HANCA cupcakes raising \$1,558, and her department's Christmas raffle bringing in over \$4,000.



Geelong Cocktail Fundraiser (VIC), raised \$10,125. A fabulous evening attended by many. Thank you, Kath Hoskin and fellow organisers Yvonne & Claire.



Five Peaks Challenge (QLD) raised \$5,450. Thank you Anna Bofinger and Team for your continued commitment and support to improving the lives of people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.



North Shore Radiology (NSW) raised \$3,203 in the City2Surf 2024, Thank you Fiona Hogarth and Team.



Ian Giles, Three Arms Restaurant, Swan Hill (VIC) raised \$2,400. Ian generously donated \$5 for every parmigiana or schnitzel sold during the month of July – World Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month.



Bye Bye Bradley Locks (WA) raised \$2,000 and donated his ponytail! Thank you Terry, Marianne, Nikita, Naomi, and Brad.



Kelly Sickelmore, Coopers Cookies raised \$550 from sales of bespoke dog treats.



SCARF STORIES

START A CONVERSATION



SCARF STORIES: A BOLD CAMPAIGN FOR AWARENESS AND RESILIENCE

In May 2024, people across Australia took part in the Scarf Stories campaign, bringing style, awareness, and resilience together in the form of a stunning, limited-edition 100% silk scarf. Aptly named Patchwork Girl, the scarf became more than an accessory—it was a symbol of strength, storytelling, and the evolving journey of the Head and Neck Cancer community.

Each scarf represented a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the critical issues surrounding HNC, including the importance of early diagnosis, rising rates of tongue cancer in younger women, and the impact of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) on healthy, non-smoking adults aged 35-55.

The vibrant Patchwork Girl design features a bold flower motif, symbolizing the resilience of those who have faced life-changing surgeries and treatments. Its border carries the powerful words of Victorian survivor Lora Winter:

"I am a bit of a patchwork girl now. Made up of bits and pieces. And I don't mind too much, it means I'm alive."

Lora, diagnosed with Stage IV Tongue Cancer at just 37, inspired many with her determination:

"I wouldn't ever choose to be in this situation, but I am. What I can choose is to find the positives and to focus on them."

Participants across Australia wore their scarves "their way" throughout May, sparking meaningful conversations about HNC. Suzi Newtown, a survivor of Squamous Cell Carcinoma, shared how the campaign resonated with her:

"While I wish that there weren't so many of us patchwork girls, I love the Patchwork Girl scarf campaign and am grateful for all the hard work that HANCA do in raising funds and awareness for Head and Neck Cancer."

Karen Wilson, who purchased scarves to honour her late mother Kaye Hart, reflected on the campaign's impact:

"Mum was definitely a Patchwork Girl, having bone and skin from her leg placed in her mouth. She was a fierce advocate for HANCA, lobbying for government funding. We miss her terribly, but this campaign helps keep her spirit alive."

This heartfelt campaign showcased the bravery of survivors, the dedication of families, and the importance of ongoing research and advocacy. As Kyla, a professional in the field, noted: *"The researchers and clinicians involved in these projects are simply brilliant and give me hope for the future. This is a wonderful campaign."*

HANCA's Scarf Stories combined beauty and purpose, raising both funds and awareness for the HNC community. If you missed this year's campaign, you can still buy a scarf and support HANCA by visiting Scarf Stories.



Buy a scarf today

Let's continue starting conversations and making a difference.





GET INVOLVED

Give the gift of support this Christmas



By donating to Head and Neck Cancer Australia's Christmas Appeal, you'll help us continue to raise public awareness around the signs and symptoms of Head and Neck Cancer, distribute free information for people who are newly diagnosed, and advocate for dedicated Federal Government funding so that people who have survived Head and Neck Cancer can receive the ongoing care they need.

Write to your local MP

Head and Neck Cancer Australia is working hard to achieve better outcomes and improved quality of life for all people living with Head and Neck Cancer in Australia. But we can't do it without your support.

Unlike other more common cancers, there is currently no funding from the Federal Government to encourage Head and Neck Cancer prevention and increase early diagnosis or for supportive care after the acute period of treatment ends.

We encourage you to contact your Federal Member of Parliament and tell them why you believe they need to do more for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

It's important to let them know:

1. Who you are and why you care about Head and Neck Cancer.
2. Why it's so important that the voices of people living with Head and Neck Cancer are heard, like other more common cancers.

Get started by using the template on our website. Together, we can make a difference.



[Download letter template](#)



Register for Three Capes 2025

You are invited to join us on an unforgettable journey along Tasmania's Three Capes Track in November 2025. Over four days, you'll trek 31 kilometres through some of Australia's most breathtaking coastal scenery, all while raising critical funds for Head and Neck Cancer Australia. Spots are limited, register as an early bird today!

Share your story

Thank you to everyone who has shared their personal story with us in 2024. Personal stories are published on our website and used to inform our advocacy and to identify gaps in support.

Your personal journey, from diagnosis to treatment and beyond, can also provide invaluable support and insight for others facing similar challenges. By sharing your story, you help build a community of understanding, inspire resilience in others, and contribute to a greater awareness of the unique complexities of Head and Neck Cancer. For many, reading these stories offers a sense of connection, comfort, and practical guidance during what can be a difficult and isolating time.



[Contact us to find out more](#)



OUR BOARD

Our voluntary Board of Directors includes former Head and Neck Cancer patients, carers and leading HNC clinicians who passionately dedicate their time and expertise to our mission of improving the quality of life of everyone affected by Head and Neck Cancer through education and access to support and to raising awareness nationally.

Chair



**Associate Professor
Puma Sundaresan**

Deputy Chair



Carolyn Smith

Board Directors



Ron Bongetti



**Associate Professor
Dion Forstner**



Terrie Gibson



Greg Graham



Claire McCarthy



Dr Matthew Magarey



Jim Zafiropoulos

Our Founding Directors



**Professor
Jonathan Clark, AM
(2016 – 2021)**



**Professor
Carsten Palme
(2016 – 2022)**



**Associate Professor
Ardalan Ebrahimi
(2016 – 2023)**



**Associate Professor
Bruce Ashford
(2016 - 2023)**



PARTNERSHIPS

We would like to thank our partners who have provided either financial or pro bono support in 2024 helping us to deliver our mission of raising awareness of Head and Neck Cancer and improving the outcomes of those affected, through education, information, support and advocacy.

OUR PARTNERS



| WOOLFE LOGISTICS



OUR PRO BONO PARTNERS



TRIBUTES

Each year, more than 1,100 Australians lose their lives to Head and Neck Cancer.

We remember the people in our community who have passed, honouring their courage and strength as well as that of their loved ones, and reaffirm our commitment to support those still facing this challenging journey.

If you have lost someone from Head and Neck Cancer and are looking for a way to honour their memory, you can set up an in memoriam page on our website.



Create an in
memory page

IN MEMORY OF

Bella Bradford
Micheal Crowhen
Chris Fletcher
Peter Gardner
Kaye Hart
Wayne McLeish
Joe Neary
Hugh Norris
Malcolm Parry
Michael Randell
Dr Rob Thornton



Read Rob's
full poem here



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA

Head and Neck Cancer Australia

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