

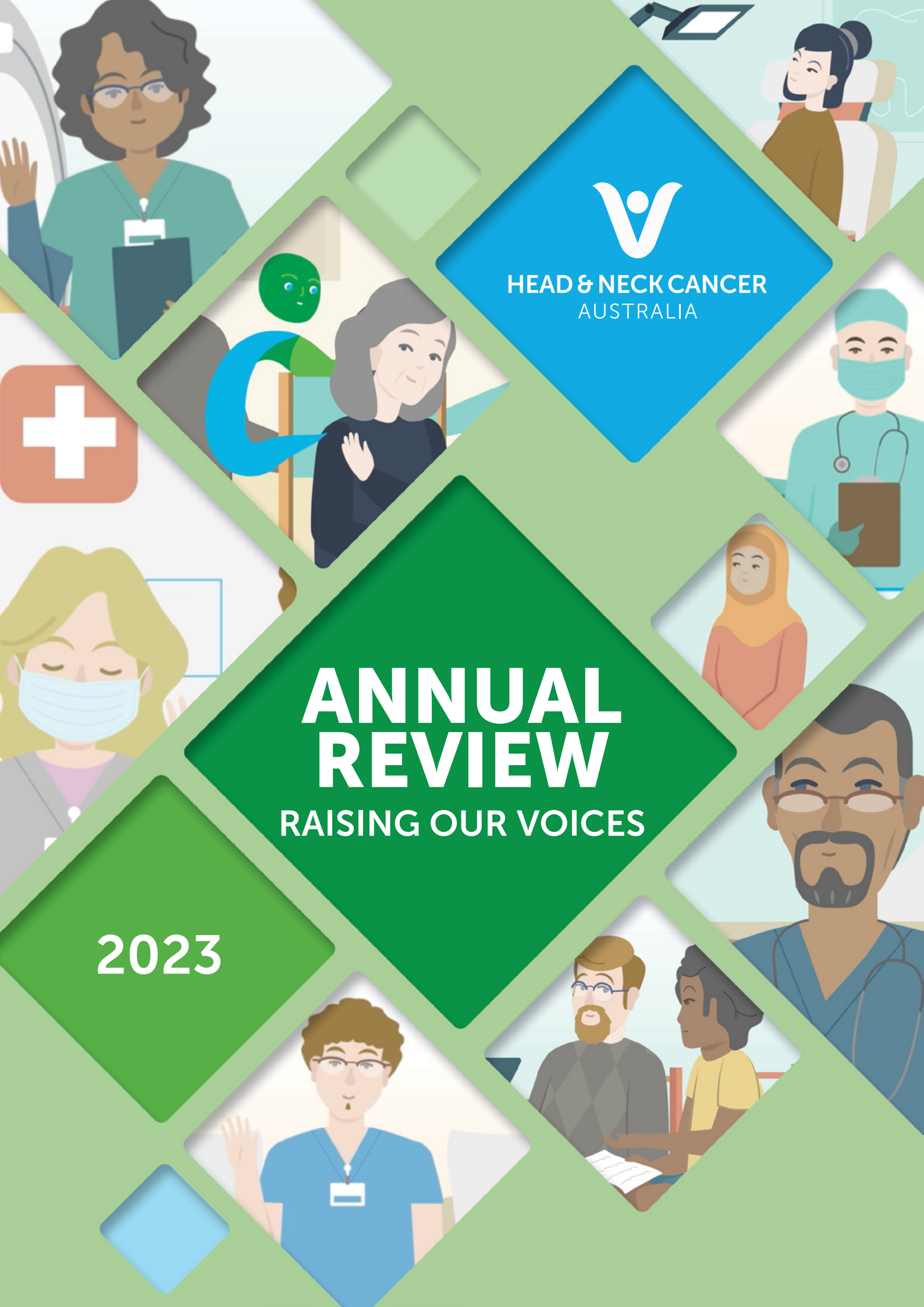


HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA

ANNUAL REVIEW

RAISING OUR VOICES

2023



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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

2023 has been a year of firsts for Head and Neck Cancer Australia (HANCA) with our inaugural government grant enabling us to develop new resources to encourage early detection of Head and Neck Cancer (HNC) and support people who are newly diagnosed, our first-ever parliamentary breakfast helping to raise our voices in Canberra, and a groundswell of community support and advocacy across Australia.

As the only national charity dedicated to HNC, we remain steadfast in our mission to raise awareness of HNC to encourage prevention and increase early detection and improve outcomes for people affected through education, information, support and advocacy.

Our voluntary Board came together for a planning day in November 2022 to develop HANCA's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. Our values of Integrity & Reliability, Equity & Inclusivity, Compassion & Community, and Courage & Collaboration have been firmly etched in our activities over the past year as we work towards achieving our Strategic Priorities including:

Providing vital support

With 140,000 new website visitors accessing our free library of resources, over 400 requests for information and support, and more than 10,000 free patient cards sent to hospitals and support groups for those newly diagnosed over the past 12 months, supporting people affected by HNC remains our top priority.

Raising awareness nationally


This year we turned the entire month of July into HNC Awareness month. Our "What the Heck is Head and Neck Cancer" campaign tackled head on the challenges faced by the general population to identify HNC, we held our inaugural Soup for the Soul event at Parliament House in Canberra joined by Senator Deborah O'Neill, Senator David Pocock, Dr Michael Freeland and over 40 community members. Our very first HANCA community Soup for the Soul event in Sydney at Rushcutter's Bay was aired nationally on Channel Seven's Sunrise program with community members from across NSW, ACT and even Victoria joining us, and our first-ever television commercial aired during the *John Farnham: Finding the Voice* documentary.

Influencing public policy

Our first-ever Parliamentary Breakfast in March 2023 was the perfect platform to launch our two new government funded resources: The Changing Face of HNC GP and Dental Education Module and "What to Expect Next - when newly diagnosed" animation. Hosted by Senator Deborah O'Neill, Senator Michaelia Cash and Kylea Tink MP, co-Chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Cancer Care and Cure Group, the breakfast was attended by Members and Senators from all sides of politics, patients, family members and friends of the HNC community. We are so proud of this achievement that helped to raise the voices of people living with HNC among policy makers. We are very grateful for all the people who were involved in planting the seeds for this event, including the formidable Hayley Eldridge, who sadly passed away in July 2022, and Ambassador, Mike George who joined HANCA for our first-ever Federal Government meeting in March 2021.

Over 
140,000
new website visitors
each year

Over 
400
requests for
support

Over 
10,000
free patient cards sent to
hospitals and support groups
for people newly diagnosed

Securing HANCA's future

We continue to grow the diversity of skills on our Board. As we farewelled our final two Founding Directors this year, A/Prof Ardalan Ebrahimi and A/Prof Bruce Ashford, who have been instrumental to the success of HANCA since 2012, we welcomed four new Board Directors to help steer HANCA through our next phase of growth: Dr Matthew Magarey, Ron Bongetti, Claire McCarthy and Jim Zafiropoulos.

At the time of writing, we are buoyed by the recent announcement by the Federal Government as part of the Australian Cancer Plan to fund the Australian Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program. The Program is designed to improve equitable access to high quality, multidisciplinary and integrated cancer services for all people with cancer, irrespective of their type of cancer or where they live. Stay tuned for more details in early 2024 as we learn more about HANCA's role in helping to deliver a telehealth support service for people living with HNC.

We were also pleased to see the final report of the Senate's Select Committee into the Provision of and Access to Dental Services in Australia published in November.

Recommendations in the report include that the Australian Government:

- Considers commissioning a study into the impact of cancer and cancer treatment on dental and oral health; and the need to provide coverage for oral health treatment, including restorative services for cancer survivors, including survivors of head, neck and oral cancers.
- Reviews the Medicare Benefits Schedule with a view to improving the accessibility of oral health treatment, including restorative services, for cancer survivors, including survivors of head, neck and oral cancers.

We are confident these recommendations will lead to further conversations and opportunities for HANCA and the broader HNC community to advocate the Federal Government to secure dental funding for people living with HNC.

Finally thank you to our entire community of patients, carers, family, friends, staff and health care professionals. Your strength, resilience and dedication inspire us in all we do at HANCA and we are privileged to be working side-by-side with the HNC community towards better outcomes every step of the way.



**Associate Professor
Puma Sundaresan**
CHAIR



Nadia Rosin
CEO

ABOUT US

HANCA is the only national HNC charity in Australia. We are dedicated to raising awareness of HNC and improving the outcomes of those affected through education, information, support and advocacy.

Every day in Australia more than 14 people are diagnosed with HNC. When someone is diagnosed with cancer, information is key. HANCA is the only national charity providing vital information, education and support to people living with HNC, their carers, families and the health professionals who care for them.

HANCA was launched in 2016 by a team of leading clinicians who saw first-hand the profound impact of HNC and were passionate about driving change. Their personal commitment to HANCA 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.

The charity remains committed to working collaboratively with all HNC specialties, patients, families and carers across Australia to achieve our mission.



Our Vision

To save lives and ensure no-one faces Head and Neck Cancer alone.



Our Mission

We are dedicated to raising awareness of Head and Neck Cancer and improving the outcomes of those affected through education, information, support and advocacy.



Our Values

- Integrity & Reliability
- Equity & Inclusivity
- Compassion & Community
- Courage & Collaboration



What is Head and Neck Cancer?

In 2023 it is estimated that more than 5,300 people were diagnosed with a type of HNC and approximately 17,000 people were living with the side effects of treatment. HNC is three times more common in men, 58% higher in lower socio-economic areas and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately impacted with a 30% gap in survival rates compared with non-Indigenous Australians.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

HNC is brutal. Treatment can leave a person unable to smile or laugh and take away basic abilities that we all take for granted like speaking, eating, breathing, and swallowing. For some it can result in devastating facial disfigurements that cannot be hidden by clothing, displayed for all the world to see.

Most people in Australia know very little about HNC. The majority of those who have heard about it are under the false impression that the main contributing lifestyle factor is smoking or alcohol. While in the past this was true, what many people don't know is that today in Australia the face of HNC has changed.

Seventy per cent of tonsil and base of tongue cancers are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) – the same virus that causes cervical cancer. These cancers are increasingly seen in people aged in their 40s to 50s who are otherwise healthy. There has also been an alarming 385% increase in tongue cancers in otherwise healthy, young women. The cause is unknown.^{5, 6}

HNCs are a sinister disease – they produce signs and symptoms which mimic many benign diseases – a sore throat, mild earache, tongue ulcer or neck lump. There is, however, no screening test for HNC so patients and HNC clinicians rely heavily on GPs and Dentists to catch these cancers early.

HNCs are largely curable if detected early but they are typically highly aggressive and a delay in diagnosis can have an enormous impact on what treatment a patient is offered and their subsequent quality of life. It can also increase a person's chances of developing recurrent or metastatic disease.

For people who are diagnosed with HNC the challenges can be enormous. Not only do they get the terrible shock of a cancer diagnosis that they have often never heard of before but they can also struggle to find accurate and easy to understand information.

Living with HNC can be a lonely and difficult journey. It can lead to anxiety, depression, loss of employment and social isolation. A diagnosis can also be compounded by feelings of guilt, shame and distress. A study in the US found that HNC survivors are two times more likely to commit suicide than survivors of other cancers.

HNC is one of the least supported cancers in Australia, yet it can be the most debilitating and challenging of them all. Even when a person is "cured" the side effects of treatment often last a lifetime.

Sources: See Page 8



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



TIMELINE



2023

- Hosted inaugural HNCParliamentary Breakfast at Parliament House, Canberra
- Hosted inaugural Soup for the Soul event at Parliament House
- Over 40 Soup for the Soul events held across Australia to raise awareness and funds for HNC
- Launched HNC GP/Dental Education Module and *What to Expect Next* animation

Successfully advocated for HANCA's inaugural Federal Government grant

2021/22



2020

Changed our name to Head and Neck Cancer Australia

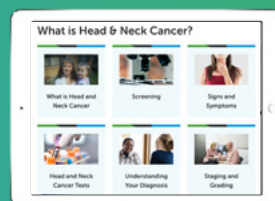


2018

Beyond Five launched the first directory of support groups in Australia



2016



Beyond Five officially launched arguably the world's most comprehensive library of HNC resources with the help of a private donation.

2014

Beyond Five, the first national charity to support people living with HNC founded by a small group of clinicians.

HEAD AND NECK CANCER IN AUSTRALIA: A SNAPSHOT

5,300

Australians are diagnosed every year¹



Economic

cost is twice
that of breast cancer yet⁷



17,374

Australians are living with Head and Neck Cancer²



30%

gap in survival rates compared to non-Indigenous Australians⁴



There is NO screening:

early detection
is key



4 out of 5

people will have HPV at some point in their lives⁸



70%

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

385%

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



Men are

three times
more likely to be diagnosed¹



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 & Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia
5. Head and Neck Cancers: Cancer Council Australia
6. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32622292/
7. Cost of Cancer in NSW, Access Economics/Cancer Council NSW 2007
8. Human Papillomavirus: Cancer Council Australia

REFLECTIONS FROM PATIENTS, CARERS AND FAMILIES

We believe in building a strong community of people affected by HNC. We are committed to engaging with our community to understand their unique challenges and how we can better support them and identify opportunities to advocate on their behalf.



"After treatment for Head and Neck Cancer I was really down. HANCA helped me find support from people who really understand."

Drew



"I was visiting my doctor every couple of weeks, every time feeling unwell as my throat was now very sore and the lump getting bigger, each time I was prescribed more antibiotics,"

Maryanne



"Head and Neck Cancer Australia was a lifeline for me and helped me feel that I wasn't alone. Their information helped me take control of something that I couldn't control."

Mandy



"My people, as soon as you have any symptoms, don't be afraid to go to the doctor."

Uncle Fred



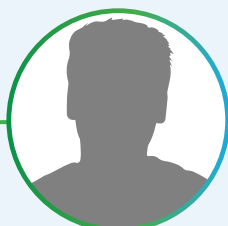
"I am angry that Head and Neck Cancers are not regarded as a high priority. A photo of my bald scarred head with one eye could be what it takes for people to understand the damage that Head and Neck Cancers cause."

Carmela



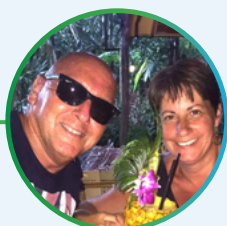
"My GP was shocked at my diagnosis. They said I did not fit the 'typical' profile of a head and neck cancer patient."

Carolyn



"There's a real stigma around HPV. I felt embarrassed and didn't want to tell anyone that is how I got cancer. I wasn't sure who I could talk to about this."

Anonymous



"I want everyone to know that BCCs can kill you if untreated. There is no such thing as 'safe BCC'"

Pete

VITAL SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY

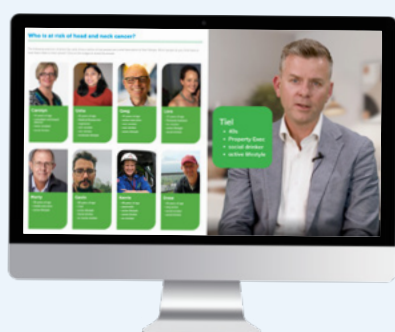
The HANCA website continues to be a valued source of information with over 140,000 new visitors in the last 12 months.

With over 60 information sheets, 3D animations, patient and carer videos, podcasts and links to external resources the website is a lifeline for Australians affected by HNC helping them to better understand their type of cancer and to navigate their journey. The website also hosts the only database of HNC support groups in Australia.

In 2023, after listening to the needs of our community, we launched a refreshed and more user-friendly website helping people to find and share the information they need as quickly as possible.



New Resources



In March 2023 we launched two new resources giving people a better chance of early detection and supporting those who are newly diagnosed with HNC.

The Changing Face of Head and Neck Cancer GP and Dentist Education Module

Accredited by the Royal Australian College of GPs and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and endorsed by the Australian Dental Association, the module helps to improve the confidence of GPs and Dentists to identify HNC patients promptly and refer them to a specialist for further management. Since the launch over 1,300 GPs and Dentists have enrolled in the course.

What to Expect Next, (when newly diagnosed with Head and Neck Cancer) animation

When someone is diagnosed with a type of HNC, they often have never heard of the disease. It is a stressful time and absorbing information can be difficult. The animation provides information from diagnosis to treatment to specifics like HPV related cancer and the use of immobilisation masks in radiation therapy, as well as more general topics such as emotional wellbeing and finding support, and ultimately informs people affected by HNC of the reliable information that can be found on the HANCA website. Since the animation was launched it has had over 1,300 views.

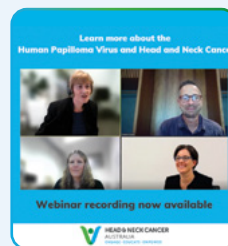
Head and Neck Cancer Webinar Series

Participants: over 700 people Views: 4,600

- Importance of Exercise for People Living with Head and Neck Cancer
- Fear of Recurrence
- Eating Socially after Head and Neck Cancer
- The Human papillomavirus (HPV) and Head and Neck Cancer
- Physiotherapy and Lymphoedema
- Hearing During and After Head and Neck Cancer Treatment
- Laryngectomy Information and Support



To view a past webinar
visit our YouTube channel



Out and About in the Community

HANCA is regularly invited to present at conferences, workshops, hospital information sessions and patient and carer support groups. These are a great opportunity to share the latest news from HANCA and raise awareness of the free resources we have available. They are also an important opportunity to engage with the HNC community to understand how we can better support them. Thank you to everyone who invited us to join them.



REFLECTIONS FROM HEAD AND NECK CANCER EXPERTS

HNC treatment involves a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) of specialists who decide on the best treatment for each patient, and help them regain the best function possible in the long-term.

We asked some leading members of Australia's HNC MDTs to answer two questions:

	If you could change one thing to help improve outcomes for patients what would it be?	What impact do you think HANCA is having on the HNC community?
 <p>Lee-Anne Mundy Senior Dietitian TAS</p>	<p>Early discussion of potential ongoing side effects post treatment by everyone in the team. Many patients feel they are not told that side effects can be long-lasting, especially lymphoedema. Regular access to and availability of psychological support / intervention with a trained psychologist would be fabulous too.</p>	<p>HANCA gives patients a designated HNC port of call. HNC is tough going and normal avenues don't always meet the needs of patients given the specific and often dramatic ongoing side effects and toxicities.</p>
 <p>Paula Macleod Cancer Nurse Coordinator NSW</p>	<p>Early diagnosis and referral pathways.</p>	<p>HANCA is having a massive impact by providing high quality, evidence-based patient resources, working as a team to ensure HNC patients and their carers get the right information and support at the right time. They are also doing a great job of raising the profile of HNC, ensuring patients are not alone in their cancer journey.</p>
 <p>Dr Amanda Phoon Nguyen Oral Cancer Specialist WA</p>	<p>Early detection and diagnosis! I hope for as many of the public and health professionals to recognise the red flags for HNC as possible, and to advocate for getting things checked out as soon as possible.</p>	<p>In my opinion, HANCA is the best national organisation for the HNC community, focusing on many of the important aspects for HNC care. From advocacy and lobbying, patient, family and practitioner education, providing resources, fundraising and raising HNC awareness, HANCA does it from the heart, and does it so well!</p>
 <p>Dr Lachlan McDowell Radiation Oncologist QLD</p>	<p>If I had to change one thing (but there are many), I would like to see more strategies readily available to HNC patients and their carers to improve their long-term emotional and psychological well-being, including psychological interventions to support patients and their family members that might be worrying about cancer returning; to address any trauma they have experienced from their treatment; and to help support patients and their partners with any challenges they may be experiencing in their intimate lives following the diagnosis and treatment of their HNC.</p>	<p>HANCA is having a huge impact by raising the awareness of HNC within the community. It also leads the charge in advocating and lobbying for additional resources for HNC patients, where the available support is under-resourced. HANCA also provides invaluable and reliable resources to support patients, their carers and their family members through their cancer journey.</p>

	If you could change one thing to help improve outcomes for patients what would it be?	What impact do you think HANCA is having on the HNC community?
 <p>Sophie Fleming Anaplastologist NSW & QLD</p>	<p>A dedicated funding scheme for facial prosthetics to match other assistive technology funding schemes in Australia that currently fund arms, legs, breast and other prosthetics. This would have a huge impact on the ability of people in need of facial prosthetics to access more services.</p>	<p>HANCA is amazing. It is connecting people to essential information and shared experience that is so often hard to access, especially after such a life changing experience as HNC. I see people all over NSW and QLD and many have found connection, compassion, understanding, and information through HANCA – thank you!</p>
 <p>Dr Sophie Beaumont Dental Practitioner VIC</p>	<p>Better access for long-term dental and oral healthcare to help our patients with the myriad of oral and dental side effects following treatment for a HNC. This is so important to help restore oral function, improve nutrition and self-esteem, and for lots of people, give them back a smile.</p>	<p>HANCA is having a really good impact. Support in this space is critical and for many people, knowing there is that there is a support network gives peace of mind. Also, being connected with other people who have many shared experiences is empowering.</p>
 <p>A/Prof Eng Ooi President ANZHNCs and Surgeon SA</p>	<p>Access for patients to effective and personalised multi-disciplinary HNC treatments.</p>	<p>HANCA is having a major positive impact on raising awareness of HNC and advocating for HNC patients and their families.</p>
 <p>Siobhan Gleeson Speech Pathologist ACT</p>	<p>To enhance the outcomes for people diagnosed with HNC, it is essential we cultivate awareness within the entire community and continue education for healthcare professionals who play a pivotal role in early detection, resulting in earlier access to treatment and services. Additionally, it is crucial to promote a MDT approach to care and management, ensuring a supportive and empathetic environment for those affected.</p>	<p>HANCA's impactful initiatives have significantly transformed the community's experience with HNC. By establishing a supportive platform for both patients and health professionals, the organisation facilitates meaningful connections, offers informative resources to navigate the challenging rollercoaster, and empowers individuals through the sharing of personal stories. The cumulative effect is not only the crucial contribution to public awareness but also the proactive endeavour to generate funds for continuous improvements in the lives and wellbeing of those living with HNC.</p>

RAISING OUR VOICES: GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY

Head and Neck Cancer Australia headed to Parliament House, Canberra for our inaugural Head and Neck Cancer Parliamentary Breakfast on 7 March 2023.

Hosted by Senator Deborah O'Neill, Senator Michaelia Cash and Ms Kylea Tink MP, Co-Chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Cancer Care and Cure Group, the breakfast was an opportunity for HANCA and members of the HNC community to raise awareness of the unique needs of people living with HNC with the Members of Parliament and Government Department representatives who attended. It was also the perfect opportunity to launch our two Australian Government funded projects, the HNC GP/Dental Education Module and What to expect next... when newly diagnosed animation.

Sincere thanks to our panellists Lora Winter, Mike George, Usha Salagame and Graeme Lewsey, members of the HNC community and our Board who attended or supported from afar.



RAISING AWARENESS: IN THE MEDIA



On 27 July 2023, World Head and Neck Cancer Day, we held a Soup for the Soul event in Sydney, broadcast live on Channel Seven's Sunrise program, reaching over 1 million Australians. An incredible morning with over 40 community members joining, it was a great opportunity to raise awareness. Thank you to our fantastic talent Russ Gluyas, Sarah Susak, Rachelle Robinson and Liv O'Leary and everyone who joined us in person and watched at home across Australia.

The diagnosis and treatment of John Farnham for Oral Cancer in 2022 created awareness of HNC in the general public with clinicians and community members called on to help explain this brutal disease. Our first TV Commercial aired during the *John Farnham: Finding the Voice* documentary. with a reach of 1.3 million viewers nationally.



Social Media

Our social media presence continued to grow during 2022/2023 with more community members joining our Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Linkedin and X (twitter) channels.

Facebook reach was up 189% while Instagram reach was up 458% year on year. We had 333,000 video views on our Youtube Channel and added 940 new subscribers.



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Soup for the Soul

Soup for the Soul is our signature community event raising awareness and funds across to support people with HNC across Australia.

Over 40 events for the Soul events were hosted in during Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month in July.

We also held our first Soup for the Soul event at Parliament House Canberra, attended by a number of politicians and staffers, and members of our community.

SOUP FOR THE SOUL

Community Fundraising

Some of the wonderful events from 2022 and 2023 include the Fasso Family's 'Walk for Ant' at the Melbourne Marathon, Christina Karapetis and Ashleigh De Silva's 'Run 4 Bella' at the Adelaide Lumary City-Bay Fun Run, Anna Bofinger's 5 Peak Challenge, Brett Woolfe and Phil Worley's RideBeyondFive fundraisers, Mandy Keleher and Qube's recycling initiative, John Farnham Fanclub, Kath Hoskin's event at the Geelong Masters Club, Rob Thornton's fundraising stall, Café Medley's Soup for the Soul, Southern Implants Golf Day, Fred Wilks' meat-tray raffles, Mark McLaughlin and Michael Chapman's Sydney Marathon, Karen Wilson's Brisbane Bridge to Bridge, Steve Kennedy's Canberra Fun Run, Ashlee Freeman's Haircut for Cancer, Beverley Shadlow's Cent Fundraiser and the Santa Steppers.

Dry July 2023

Once again in we partnered with Dry July as a Guaranteed Beneficiary, with 100% of donations (up to \$10,000) going directly to HANCA to help support people affected by HNC.

RideBeyondFive

The brainchild of recently retired Board Director A/Prof Bruce Ashford and HANCA supporter, Dr Trevor Gardner OAM, RideBeyondFive has raised over \$32,000 since 2019.

Capital Classic

In April 2023 HANCA Board Directors A/Prof Ardalan Ebrahimi and Carolyn Smith hosted the inaugural Capital Classic Mountain Bike event in Canberra.

Thank you

to our community of supporters including friends, family and local communities who have hosted community events to support people affected by HNC. Funds raised go directly towards helping HANCA to continue to provide free information, education and support and to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of the community. We can't do it without you!

PARTNERSHIPS

We would like to thank all our partners who have provided either financial or pro bono support in 2022/23 helping us deliver our mission of raising awareness of HNC and improving the outcomes of those affected, through education, information, support and advocacy.



Find out more about
partnering with us

OUR PARTNERS

Corporate Partners



Pro Bono Partners



Professional Bodies



GET INVOLVED



**SHARE YOUR
STORY**



**CONTACT YOUR
LOCAL MP**



**HOST A COMMUNITY
FUNDRAISER**

FIND A SUPPORT GROUP

HNC support groups bring people together to help them manage the challenges they may face, share ideas and get more information. Visit our website to see if there is a support group where you live.



Find a support group
near you

MEET OUR COMMUNITY

MEET LIZZY

A CARER'S STORY



My partner in crime (Drew) was diagnosed with cancer of the larynx in February 2019. I had no idea then how much it would affect our lives and how lonely the journey would be for me as his carer. Although he is now cancer free, there are lingering side effects of HNC such as dental and swallowing problems. There have been times I have asked the universe, what did we do wrong to end up here?

We were blessed with an amazing medical team. Drew's initial treatment involved a long period of radiation and chemo, which sent him into remission. However, his cancer returned just under two years later. Things moved swiftly and we travelled to Sydney (from Canberra) where he had a partial then full laryngectomy.

I remember that on top of the fear I had about Drew, the stress for me, as his carer was enormous. I had to be the person to hold it together and ensure we came out the other side. I was his personal driver, record keeper, appointment booker, nutritionist (while having chemo and radiation, Drew had a gastric feeding tube so couldn't eat real food), and ensure the weekly nurse, dental, speech and dietitian visits kept happening.

Post-surgery, Drew couldn't swallow so I moved on to creative chef, working out which foods could puree with the most calories and nutrients to ensure he put on the weight he had lost.

Drew's mental health was probably most concerning at this stage. I rang over 20 psychologists but they were all booked out (it was the middle of Covid). Then I called HANCA and stumbled across the wonderful Nadia who suggested a support group called The Larrykins might be able to help. And help they did.

If I could change one thing about my time as Drew's carer, it would definitely be support. It's a lonely position and no-one in real life truly understands what is going on or how bad things are. A lot of focus is on the patient (and rightly so), with little support given to the carer... but my goodness, at times, it's hard!

Imagine suddenly having a partner with no voice and you have total responsibility for their entire life, including their health, wellbeing and treatment. Imagine having to make the tough calls and get them to the hospital or doctor if something wasn't right, knowing it was the last place they wanted to go. Imagine spending hours driving and, even with your partner in the car, having no one to chat to because they couldn't speak. HNC is hard on everyone, and more people should be aware.

Drew and I are happy to support HANCA and we can see how its profile has increased over the last 18 months. People seem to be more aware and know that HNCs are truly unique and difficult to deal with. The HANCA team are incredible with their dedication and passion for raising awareness, funding and drive to change legislation so that HNC patients have a fair and equitable level of treatment and support.

Thank you Lizzy.

MEET ROB & SARAH

Rob and Sarah shared their HNC journeys this year through poetry.

HEAD AND NECK CANCER POETRY



A Head and Neck Cancer Poem by Dr Rob Thornton

Two years ago, we were on holiday in Cape York. Never been there before, so time to have a gawk. As usual, I was chatting and singing. But when I was unable, alarms started ringing.

An E.N.T. specialist was visited prompt, With an assessment that had us all stomped. A growth was seen, so a biopsy was taken. Cancer the result, which had me shaken.

A team of surgeons was summonsed quick. We have a technique that should do the trick. What was involved? I asked in dismay. Simple they said, we will take your throat away.

Never fear, we will replace. We will take your thigh muscle, just in case. My breathing so bad a tracheostomy was arranged. By this time, I was almost deranged.

Soon after, the theatre was made ready. I said I hoped all hands were steady. Seven hours later I woke in intensive care. My vocal cords missing, and a hole in my neck for air.

Half my thigh gone and transplanted to my neck. A younger appearance, so what the heck! Seven weeks later I was shown the door. Now managing at home is a big chore.



[Read Rob's full poem here](#)



Dear Head and Neck Cancer - What the Heck by Sarah Susak

Dear Head & Neck Cancer,

I have just endured 7 rounds of IVF to finally have my baby,
This pain neuralgia in my face might be cancer, maybe?
But she is only 1.5 years old, my miracle is finally here
One biopsy. One knowing look. I'm afraid it's what you fear

What the heck?

You have a rare head and neck cancer, it's a very serious case
The tumour is large and attached to nerves inside your face
We can operate immediately to remove it, we promise you to try
But the chances are it will metastasise, with a high chance you could die

What the heck?

You will need to move to Brisbane, the specialist you need is there
He is known as the "nerve chaser", you will be under the best of care

But you must go now, and leave your job, this really is quite urgent
It is critical that we operate now, there can be no deferment

What the heck?

The surgery will take 19 hours, we will need to open up your face
We cannot say how you will look after, this is a very difficult case
Be prepared to lose an eye and possibly some of your ability to hear
Little did I know that half my mouth palette and teeth would disappear



[Read Sarah's full poem here](#)

OUR AMBASSADORS

Our Ambassadors play an integral role in helping to raise awareness of Head and Neck Cancer in their local communities and across Australia and promoting the work of HANCA. We are incredibly grateful for their ongoing commitment and support.



Brittany Coles

(pictured with father Andrew and the Hon Bill Shorten MP)



Mike George



Marty Doyle

2023 has been an exciting year for our Ambassador program with the addition of **Brittany Coles** who comes to HANCA with the perspective of a carer and loved one. Brittany, a journalist and news producer, was a recent graduate when her father, Andrew Coles, went through treatment for a HPV-related Throat Cancer. Brittany is passionate about giving carers a voice and securing support for people living with the long-term side effects of HNC.

Mike George continues to be a wonderful support to the HNC community, particularly to people who have had a laryngectomy. Mike spoke at our Parliamentary Breakfast in March sharing his experience of life as a "Lary".

Marty Doyle continues to be a passionate advocate for HNC, having started the very first HNC support group in Australia in 2006 which is still going strong thanks to his dedication.

Former Ambassadors



Denyse Whelan



Graeme Lewsey



Julie McCrossin

In August **Denyse Whelan** stepped down after five years as HANCA Ambassador. Denyse, a retired K-6 NSW School Principal and educator, was treated for a rare Oral Cancer in her gums and was keen to share her story to help others. Denyse had a lot to give and in November 2018 we were delighted when she became a HANCA Ambassador. She has been a powerhouse of support and action. Thank you Denyse for your dedicated service.

Ambassador **Graeme Lewsey**, who spoke so eloquently at our Parliamentary Breakfast about living with HPV related Throat Cancer and was part of our community working group advising on our "What to Expect Next" resource for newly diagnosed patients, is also stepping down at the end of the year. Graeme has been a wonderful support to HANCA helping to raise awareness and improving patient education. Thank you Graeme.

We would also like to thank our first Ambassador, **Julie McCrossin**, who achieved an incredible amount for HANCA over a five year period before stepping down in 2022. Julie remains a champion for those living with HNC.

OUR BOARD

Our voluntary Board of Directors includes former HNC 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 HNC through education and access to support and to raising awareness nationally.



Read more
on our website

Board Chair



Associate Professor
Puma Sundaesan

Board Directors



Ron Bongetti



Associate Professor
Dion Forstner



Terrie Gibson



Greg Graham



Claire McCarthy



Dr Matthew Magarey



Carolyn Smith



Jim Zafiropoulos

Our Founding Directors



Professor
Jonathan Clark, AM
(2016 – 2021)



Professor
Carsten Palme
(2016 – 2022)



Associate Professor
Ardalan Ebrahimi
(2016 – 2023)

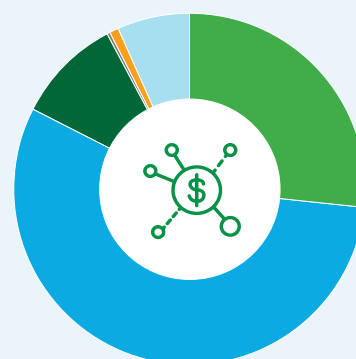


Associate Professor
Bruce Ashford
(2016 - 2023)

OUR FINANCIALS

Statement of Profit & Loss Income Sources

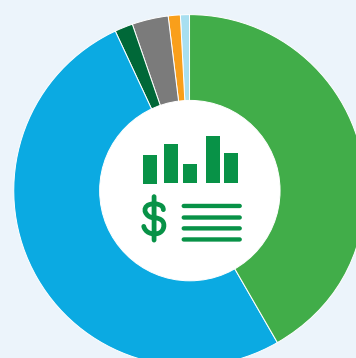
Donations	\$160,426
Government Grants	\$334,068
Philanthropic Grants	\$57,000
Merchandise	\$1,214
Other income	\$5,940
Corporate Sponsorships	\$38,500



- Donations
- Government Grants
- Philanthropic Grants
- Merchandise
- Other income
- Corporate Sponsorships

Program Expenditure

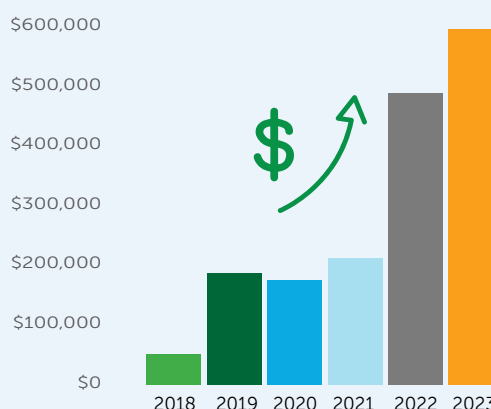
Education, Advocacy & Public Awareness	\$251,039
Employee expenses	\$308,479
Finance & Administration	\$10,285
Fundraising & Marketing	\$19,113
Insurances	\$6,741
Professional Fees – IT, Auditor	\$4,310



- Education, Advocacy & Public Awareness
- Employee expenses
- Finance & Administration
- Fundraising & Marketing
- Insurances
- Professional Fees – IT, Auditor

Income Growth 2018-2023

2018	\$51,820
2020	\$174,894
2021	\$213,260
2022	\$490,009
2023	\$597,148



TRIBUTES

Sadly, every year over 1,200 people will die from a type of Head and Neck Cancer.

We pay tribute to everyone who has passed away and fondly remember Hayley Eldridge who was a force of nature joining us for our first ever meeting with a Member of Parliament in 2021, sharing her story with the hope and determination of helping others for years to come.



Mick Tobin



Jenny Devine



Balaji Srinivasan

IN MEMORY OF

David Brimson
Keith Briones
Mathew Casey
Jennifer Devine
Hayley Eldridge
Allan Lewis
Mark McLellan
Wayne McLeish
Andrew Penhallow
Balaji Srinivasan
Jennifer Thompson
Mick Tobin
Silvana Witheridge

"I wanted to just send an email and say thank you so much for everything you have done for myself and fellow HNC patients. You truly are my hero."

You put the passion inside of me to spread awareness and understanding for HNC patients, you made me feel as if I had a purpose in this last chapter of my life and I will forever be grateful for that.

My next step is now a few weeks off from all treatments and then I will start palliative chemo, I wish it didn't have to have the word palliative in it! They should change it to 'happy chemo'.

Feel free to continue to share my story as well and any photos or anything associated with it that you think will help spreading awareness, my story is yours to share."



Hayley Eldridge
3 April 1991 - 24 July 2022



**Find out more about
how you can
support us**



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA

Head and Neck Cancer Australia

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