



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA
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THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

**THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR:
THE SOLUTION IS READY**



Facial Prosthetic Funding:
Closing a Critical Gap in Care

THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

It's time to close the gap in Head and Neck Cancer care.

The gap we can no longer ignore.



More than 5,600 Australians are diagnosed with Head and Neck Cancer every year.



Around 300 people require an external facial prosthetic following life-saving but often disfiguring cancer surgery.

While Medicare covers the cost of cancer treatment, there are no Australian Government or State and Territory funding schemes to help cover the cost of facial prosthetics such as a nose, ear or eye.



Despite decades of government support for other prostheses, including breast and limb prostheses, Australia still has no national funding scheme for external facial prosthetics.



As a result, patients can face out-of-pocket costs of many thousands of dollars, or go without the prosthetic they need altogether.

WHY FACIAL PROSTHETICS MATTER

Head and Neck Cancer treatments are among the most complex in cancer care. Surgery can result in the loss of part of a person's face, including a nose, eye or ear, that cannot be reconstructed surgically.

Facial prosthetics are an essential part of recovery and survivorship care helping people to.



Regain confidence and self-esteem



Restore speech, function and quality of life



Return to work, relationships and community participation



Protect sensitive tissues and support ongoing rehabilitation



THE PEOPLE MOST AFFECTED

Fifty-eight per cent of people diagnosed with Head and Neck Cancer live in lower socio-economic areas or belong to priority populations identified in the Australian Cancer Plan.

These Australians already face significant barriers to accessing specialist care and support. The lack of funding for facial prosthetics adds another layer of disadvantage, leaving many without access to an essential part of their recovery.

Without financial support, many people simply cannot afford the prosthetics they need to rebuild their lives after cancer.

No Australian should be denied a facial prosthetic because they cannot afford one.



THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR. THE SOLUTION IS READY.

Achieving equity in cancer outcomes across tumour types and population groups is a key objective of the Australian Cancer Plan. Yet Australians who require an external facial prosthetic after cancer treatment remain without access to a nationally consistent funding scheme.

In 2025, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review by KPMG examining access to facial prosthetic services across Australia.

Published in May 2026, the review confirmed significant gaps in the current system, finding that people requiring facial prosthetics face:

- **High** out-of-pocket costs
- **Unequal access** depending on where they live
- **No nationally** consistent funding pathway
- **Gaps** in workforce capacity, accreditation and training
- **Inconsistent access** to specialist services and long-term support

The review also identified practical options to improve access and create a more equitable system, providing a clear foundation for government action.

The **evidence has been gathered**. The need is understood. What is missing now is a commitment from the Federal Government to ensure Australians who lose part of their face to cancer can access the prosthetic care they need, regardless of where they live or their financial circumstances.

Four immediate actions to close the facial prosthetics gap

- 1 Fund facial prosthetics nationally.
- 2 Recognise facial prosthetics as essential healthcare.
- 3 Ensure equitable access for all Australians.
- 4 Build a sustainable specialist workforce.

A PRACTICAL, COSTED SOLUTION

HANCA is calling for a four-year Commonwealth investment of **\$25.13 million** to establish Australia's first External Facial Prosthetic Funding Scheme. This targeted investment would deliver:



Equitable access to new and replacement facial prosthetics



Direct provider reimbursement so patients do not pay upfront



Clear referral pathways



National accreditation, training and workforce development



Strong governance, accountability and evaluation.

THE HUMAN IMPACT

“What price is dignity – not that much, surely?”

Christopher Sequeira

Sydney-based Christopher Sequeira is a full-time procurement specialist in the emergency services sector and an internationally published writer of mystery, science fiction, fantasy and graphic novel stories. Since September 2023, Christopher has undergone a series of increasingly significant surgical interventions for head and neck cancer. He first lost his nose, and later the entire middle portion of his face, part of his upper jaw and several teeth.

“When I lost my nose I sought clarity and advice on funding for necessary prosthetics; and I found it nowhere. I spent frustrating hours on the phone and online trying to get simple answers and clarifications of published health policies – and was just sent in circles. I am not shy, though, so I kept going, even seeking help from my local member. The system on this issue is a tangled, unfeeling mess. I found good people in the health and political system who want this to change, but it’s clear we are going to have to make a bit of noise to allow that to happen.”

“We could fix this instantly and easily, and very, very affordably, saving staff in the health systems an aggregated hundreds of hours of time responding to unhappy inquiries going in endless loops: All we need have is a national, fully funded response for a tiny cohort of patients who just want to go out of their homes with the choice of not startling people because of how we look. What price is dignity – not that much, surely?”

Christopher continues to work full-time while pursuing his passion for writing. Reflecting on his situation, he says: “It’s pretty funny that I now look like a character out of one of my stories. But I’d like the choice of a prosthetic so I don’t have to draw that attention if I don’t want to. If we can fully fund artificial limbs through the health system, why not a missing face?”



Christopher has chosen not to include a photograph with this story.



Ben Hale, a father from Adelaide, lost his eye to cancer in 2021. He was told prosthetic options existed, but there was no pathway, guidance or financial support.

“It was easier not knowing. I knew I wouldn’t be able to pay for it anyway.”



Tracey David, from the NSW South Coast, lost her nose to cancer. The only reason she was able to access a \$6,500 prosthetic was because philanthropic funding was secured on her behalf.

“We are not asking for something cosmetic. We are looking to live with dignity.”

WHY CLINICIANS ARE CALLING FOR CHANGE



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.

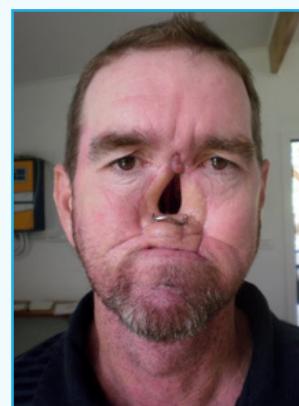
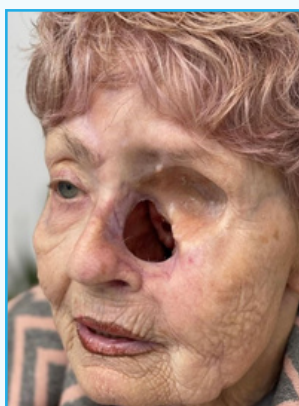
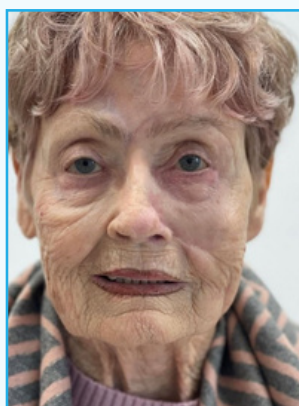
Facial prosthetics empower people to take control of their own lives.

Sophie Fleming
Clinical Anaplastologist
Maxillofacial Prosthetic Rehabilitation



We provide our patients with some of the most complex Head and Neck Cancer treatments covered by Medicare, yet there is no reliable or affordable pathway for people who need a facial prosthesis after cancer surgery. These people have often lost part of their face as a result of treatment. As a society, we have a responsibility to find a solution that restores not only their appearance, but also their confidence, dignity and ability to fully participate in community life.

Dr Matthew Magarey
Head and Neck Surgeon
Chair, Head and Neck Cancer Australia



Images supplied by Prosthetic Art Technology.



FOUR PIECES. ONE COMPLETE SOLUTION.

THE PROBLEM

While Medicare covers the cost of cancer treatment, there are no Australian Government or State and Territory funding schemes to help cover the cost of facial prosthetics such as a nose, ear or eye.

As a result, patients can face out-of-pocket costs of many thousands of dollars, or go without the prosthetic they need altogether.

THE EVIDENCE

In 2025, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review by KPMG examining access to facial prosthetic services across Australia.

Published in May 2026, the review found that people requiring facial prosthetics face significant gaps in the current system.

THE SOLUTION

HANCA is calling for a **\$25.13 million** investment over four years to establish Australia's first External Facial Prosthetic Funding Scheme. The proposed scheme includes:

- Equitable access
- Clear referral pathways
- National workforce development

THE OUTCOME

Every Australian who loses part of their face to cancer can access the prosthetic care they need to rebuild their life, regardless of where they live or what they can afford.



ABOUT HEAD AND NECK CANCER AUSTRALIA



Every day in Australia, 15 people are diagnosed with a type of Head and Neck Cancer.



Head and Neck Cancer Australia is the only national charity dedicated to providing free, trusted and easy to understand information, education and support to people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.



We represent over 5,600 people who are newly diagnosed each year, and more than 18,000 people diagnosed in the past five years who are living with the long-term impacts of this cancer across Australia.



We also lead the national effort to advocate for government support to encourage prevention, increase early diagnosis and improve the quality of life of people living with Head and Neck Cancer.



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Partnering to deliver
the Australian Cancer Plan

Trusted Information Partner of



Health information
funded by the
governments
of Australia



www.headandneckcancer.org.au



Head and Neck Cancer Helpline: 1300 424 848



helpline@headandneckcancer.org.au



Head and Neck Cancer Australia: 2026 Parliamentary Event
The Missing Piece of the Puzzle. The Evidence is Clear: the Solution is Ready.

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We provide our patients with some of the most complex Head and Neck Cancer treatments covered by Medicare, yet there is no reliable or affordable pathway for people who need a facial prosthesis after cancer surgery. These people have often lost part of their face as a result of treatment. As a society, we have a responsibility to find a solution that restores not only their appearance, but also their confidence, dignity and ability to fully participate in community life.

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