

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate distribution

Proudly celebrating 15 years supporting women with cancer to live well

MELBOURNE – 20 April 2018

For the last 15 years, Rhonda has been turning her experience of breast cancer into something positive. She is one of the generous women who volunteer at Counterpart to provide peer support to women diagnosed with breast or a gynaecological cancer.

A service of Women's Health Victoria, funded by the State Government, Counterpart connects, supports and informs women with breast or a gynaecological cancer to live well. Proudly celebrating its 15th birthday, the service has supported women affected by breast or a gynaecological cancer 30,000 times since 2003 and developed a range of programs to help women get the information they need.

Counterpart (formerly known as BreaCan) was launched in 2003, the result of tireless campaigning by women who had experienced breast cancer for a consumer-based resource centre and peer support. Rhonda was in the first group of trained Peer Support Volunteers and has seen the service grow and flourish ever since.

Ms Gabrielle Williams, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers presented certificates to Rhonda and other volunteers who achieved 10 and 15 years of service at an event celebrating Counterpart's 15th birthday on 19 April 2018. She also acknowledged more than 135 Peer Support and Program Support volunteers who collectively have contributed over 20,000 hours to the service supporting Victorian women. Over 100 guests, including volunteers, health professionals and donors, took part in this special celebration.

Ms Williams, also launched a new app — the Counterpart Navigator — to assist women with breast or a gynaecological cancer to find reliable, evidence-based information on topics they want to know about. Building on the earlier BreaCan Navigator app, the Counterpart Navigator app has expanded to include six new gynaecological cancer Navigators, funded by the Victorian Government.

Increased screening and improvements in cancer treatments mean more women are living longer with cancer or adjusting to life after treatment. This means the need for support and information for women diagnosed with cancer is growing, making services like Counterpart more important than ever.

Quote from Rhonda, Peer Support Volunteer since 2003

"I volunteer because I think it is important to give others hope, to show them that there is life after a cancer diagnosis."

"I feel that I get as much out of volunteering as I hope I give to other women who come into the Centre or call. They can see me living well and that gives them hope that they too can look and feel well, especially as I have had cancer twice."

Quote from Nadia, Peer Support Volunteer and Navigator working group member

"When I was diagnosed with cancer, I really wanted to understand what was happening but was overwhelmed by the amount of information available. Having this Navigator—that I could access whenever and wherever I needed—would have made such a difference to me."

Quote from Rita Butera, CEO, Women's Health Victoria

"We owe enormous gratitude to the women who developed the idea and campaigned for it to be funded and to those early staff and volunteers who established the important principles that underpin the service and got it up and running."

"WHV is very proud of Counterpart and the wonderful service it provides to Victorian women with breast or a gynaecological cancer diagnosis."

"Over the years I have been fortunate to meet many of the volunteers who give of themselves to support other women. It has been inspiring to see how their dedication and compassion has created a caring and safe space for other women."

Quote from Dianne Hill, Manager Support Programs, Women's Health Victoria

"Since 2003, we've supported women affected by breast or a gynaecological cancer over 30,000 times. That is a significant contribution to helping Victorian women live well after a cancer diagnosis."

-ENDS-

For media enquiries and interviews, including with Rhonda, please contact:

Dianne Hill, Manager Support Programs, Women's Health Victoria
Ph: 03 9664 9328
M: 0400 653 649
Email: dianne.hill@whv.org.au

Katherine Bradstreet, Communications Coordinator, Counterpart
Ph: 03 8488 9839
M: 0421 636 697
Email: katherine.bradstreet@counterpart.org.au

Counterpart is a service of Women's Health Victoria.
Counterpart is supported by the Victorian Government.

About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants. **For more information, visit www.whv.org.au**