

WINTER 2023

How you're making a difference for New Zealanders facing cancer

# Newscan



Your generosity  
in action.

*“Cancer Society  
has helped us in so  
many ways”*

## See inside

Local schoolgirl's unique project

Expert care in Pete's darkest hours

Jo jumped for cancer!

Remarkable  
together



**Cancer  
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku  
o Aotearoa

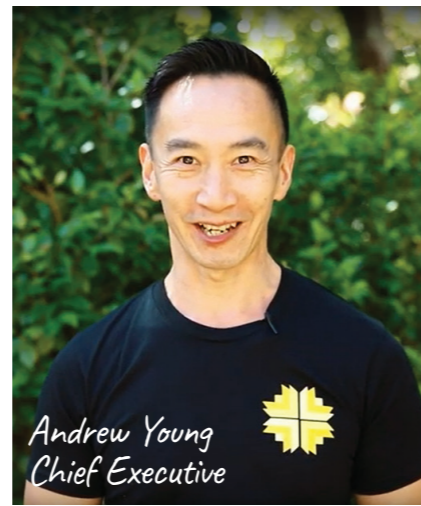
## Welcome to the winter edition of Newscan 2023!

I want to start off by saying thank you. It is only because of kind supporters like you that we can continue our vital work. From free services like specialised nursing support and counselling to our life-saving research, you are making an immense difference to Kiwis facing cancer.

As New Zealand's population continues to grow and age, so too does the number of people diagnosed with cancer, making our services and research that much more essential. This year approximately 25,000 Kiwis will be diagnosed with cancer, but this is

set to double by 2040. Your loyal support makes all the difference – ensuring Cancer Society is there for families facing cancer today, and into the future.

I'm continually humbled by the wonderful generosity shown by our supporters – from school-girl AJ's accessible hoodies to the courageous individuals who skydived from a plane, and to all who support us financially through donations. As you read the following pages, I hope it is clear just how much of a difference your support makes for New Zealanders facing cancer.



Wishing you a safe and warm winter.

Ngā Mihi,

*Andrew Young*  
Chief Executive

## Local Schoolgirl's Project for Cancer Patients

AJ is an incredible year 13 student at Howick College. Despite this being her busiest school year, AJ has dedicated her free time to helping Kiwis facing cancer with a unique project.

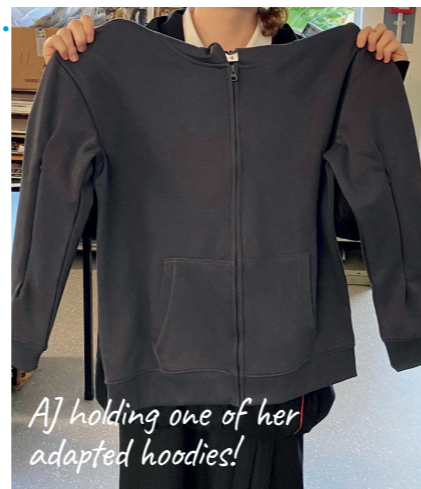
*"I'm making adaptable hoodies for people affected by cancer so that whether they're going through chemo or blood transfusions, they can stay cosy. [The hoodies] have zippers on the sleeves and the chest for accessibility, so that the patient won't have to remove their hoodie during treatment."*

After watching family members go through the cancer journey, Cancer Society is a cause close to AJ's heart and she would

encourage anyone to get involved. First inspired by a video on social media, AJ created a prototype hoodie with the help of her fabric teacher.

*"I've had family and friends face cancer. Quite a few people. So, cancer is something I care about... I hope that the hoodies just bring comfort for people when they are in hospital."*

*"If you're looking to do something to support the Cancer Society, just get out there because a lot of people have the fear of not knowing if a dollar donation or an hour of their time will make an impact, but it will. I just think about it as if everyone gave a*



*AJ holding one of her adapted hoodies!*

*dollar or spent an hour of their time, then it builds up and a lot more can change. Everyone doing their little bit adds up to make a big difference."*

AJ has been generously donated a number of brand-new hoodies from teachers and students to adapt. She hopes to create 20 hoodies for cancer patients over the next month. Well done and thank you AJ! Keep up the incredible work.

## "I'm a huge believer in the Cancer Society" – Mikayla's Journey

28-year-old Mikayla is sadly no stranger to cancer. After watching her little sister and aunt face the awful journey whilst growing up, Mikayla's thyroid cancer diagnosis meant joining her family in the fight.

*"It's pretty unlucky. My whole family has been through various stages... My little sister had aggressive leukaemia when she was two and went through radiation, chemotherapy, over 20 different surgeries. She even had complete organ failure... My aunty passed away from a brain tumour... And mum has recently had basil cell carcinomas removed."*

So, when Mikayla realised something might be wrong, she tried to seek help straight away. But shockingly, it would be months before her voice was heard.

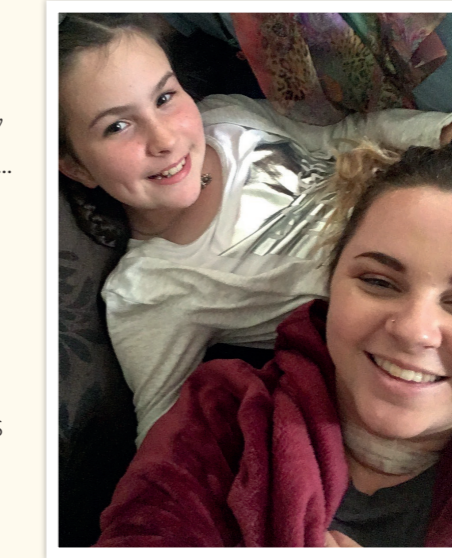
*"Honestly, it's been hell. It's ridiculous, I had to fight to get believed. The tumour was causing me to choke on food and have trouble breathing – thankfully my partner was always there and so he would help me relieve myself from choking. He saw it all."*

*One of the times when it was particularly bad, I went to urgent care and spent a whopping amount of money to ask for somebody to just see me and [the doctor] just told me to go home and have some soup, so yeah, it's been hell. I've had to fight pretty much every single part of the system to get somebody to believe me."*

After struggling for months without a diagnosis, Mikayla finally found an incredible endocrinologist who believed her and was immediately concerned.



*Sisters Rebecca, Emma and Mikayla*



*Emma taking care of me during my illness. When she was sick she would take turns resting in our laps. When I got sick, she had to return the favour.*

A biopsy revealed that she had a papillary thyroid carcinoma requiring Mikayla to undergo a thyroidectomy. Mikayla will also need hormone therapy for the rest of her life.

*"I'm pretty confident I'm in remission, so I'm super lucky. [My little sister Emma] had it way worse than me so I'm actually really thankful for the cancer that I have. Throughout this whole process Rebecca [my older sister] has been our rock."*

Whilst still finishing her treatment, Mikayla joined the Cancer Society's Signature programme, by starting a monthly regular gift.

*"I'm a huge believer in the Cancer Society because the journey to get treatment can be actual hell, so if we can stop cancer from existing that would be amazing! I'm very passionate about the research [Cancer Society] does..."*

*I wanted to donate to a charity regularly once I was financially able to do so and now that I have a full-time job, Cancer Society was always going to be my charity of choice."*

**We are so grateful to supporters like Mikayla. Our monthly Signature donors are crucial to providing stable, ongoing funding for our services and life-saving research, as well as enabling us to plan for the future. If you would like to join our incredible community of Signature monthly donors, simply go online at [www.cancer.org.nz](http://www.cancer.org.nz) or give our friendly team a call at 0800 123 230.**

# Expert Care in Pete's Darkest Hours

Five years ago, Pete had a biopsy of his prostate after a routine blood test showed a high PSA (prostate-specific antigen) level. Pete was still groggy from the anaesthetic when his urologist delivered the horrible news: "stage four cancer".

*"None of it was sinking in," says Pete. "It was kind of an outer body experience. I kept asking myself: Did I hear that correctly? Within just a few weeks, I went from feeling healthy to thinking, I'm going to die within a couple of months."*

Being told you have advanced cancer is incredibly overwhelming. And Pete, who has faced many tough situations over years of active military service, felt unprepared.

*"At the age of 17-and-a-half, I went through the Falklands War. I went through another 17 areas of conflict, from Bosnia to Afghanistan and Iraq. But I was never as scared as when I walked out of the doctor's office after hearing those words: 'If you'd come to me in six months' time, we wouldn't have even bothered.'"*

After his shock diagnosis, Pete underwent two years of intensive hormone treatments, followed by 12 weeks of radiotherapy and two weeks of chemotherapy. For Pete, the physical changes to his body were sudden and drastic. Gaining 30 kgs, losing muscle and growing breast tissue was devastating to his mental health.

***"I was never as scared as when I walked out of the doctor's office after hearing those words: 'If you'd come to me in six months' time, we wouldn't have even bothered.'"***

*"I was depressed that I'd gained weight. I was angry that I couldn't go out for my morning run, or I couldn't walk more than one and a half kilometres without becoming exhausted."*



*Pete sharing his passion with his son.*

***"If I could give any man on this planet one bit of advice it is to get checked regularly. Don't leave it until it's so painful you can't bear it."***

*"I remember once we were driving to go out for a meal with a load of friends, and I just couldn't stop crying. I was sobbing, but I couldn't say why. I was having to say, 'I cannot go to this meal,' because I wasn't telling everybody that I had cancer. It even got to the point where I cancelled a trip back to the UK because I didn't want my friends to see me."*

When Pete's depression and anger began to affect his relationship with his partner, he turned to the Cancer Society for help. Pete was put in touch with Cancer Society counsellor Viv.

*"In the first session, there was a lot of silences, but I remember saying to Viv, 'Where do I start? I have so much bottled up; I'm scared of offloading in case I break and can't recover."*

*But the skill that Viv's got is amazing... It doesn't matter how I went into her office. I came out feeling valued, respected, cared for, and that I was a person and a man, not just a statistic."*

Thanks to compassionate supporters like you, Pete's sessions with Viv gave him a safe space to talk and healthy ways to express his feelings. Today, he's repaying the kindness he received by training to be a counsellor and raising awareness among men:

*"If I could give any man on this planet one bit of advice it is just get checked regularly. Don't leave it until it's so painful you can't bear it. Just get checked regularly because it can save your life."*

*"If I could be 10% of the counsellor Viv is, then I'll class myself as being successful."*

With supportive counselling, many Kiwis like Pete can thrive, despite the challenges they've had to face. When you donate to Cancer Society, you're ensuring cancer patients like Pete have free access to this vital service through our team of specialist health psychologists. Thank you for giving him this priceless gift.



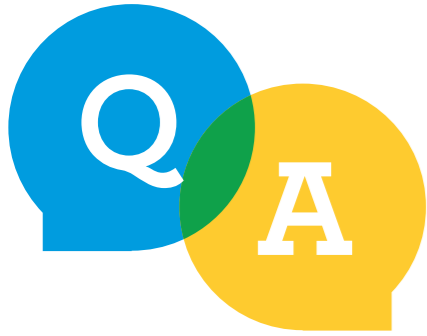
## Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer for men in New Zealand, with around 4,000 men diagnosed every year.

The symptoms of prostate cancer are often hard to pick out and confused with other non-cancerous conditions. That's why it is so important to know what's normal for you so you can spot any changes. The symptoms of prostate cancer may include:

- Difficulty urinating
- Urinating more often, especially at night
- Pain when urinating
- Blood in your urine or semen

**These symptoms may not be caused by cancer, but it's important to talk to your doctor if you have any concerns.**



Your cancer questions answered by registered nurse Michelle Gundersen-Reid

**Q My mother has just been diagnosed with cancer. It's impacted our whole family and I'm feeling quite helpless. Do you have any advice on how I can best support her?**

A few things that can help when supporting someone with cancer are:

1. Have a list of numbers to call when there's a problem, such as GP, cancer nurse, or the hospital.
2. If you're concerned, help your mum contact Cancer Society to find out how we can help.
3. Feel reassured that the person you're supporting is glad you're there. Be kind to yourself, and accept you can't do everything.
4. Remember it's normal to feel a rollercoaster of emotions when you are supporting someone with cancer, and it's okay to seek out your own support – talking things through with a trusted friend, or psychologist.

**Q I've lost my hair during chemo, will it grow back?**

Losing your hair can be upsetting, but for most people, hair will grow back. Usually, after treatment finishes, your hair will start to re-grow slowly. This will take between four and 12 months.

When your hair does grow back, it will probably be a different texture and different colour. Sometimes curly hair grows back straight, or dark hair becomes lighter. These changes are usually not permanent.

Talk to your treatment team about what to expect. You might want to ask them if your hair is likely to be affected by treatment and when it might grow back.

## In Memory of Lorna

From haircutting to volunteer driving, Murray is truly passionate about caring for others. His Cancer Society journey began in the late 90s when his first wife was diagnosed with cancer. Over the next five years, the Cancer Society was a key part of Lorna and Murray's lives, providing support and care when they needed it most. Devastatingly, Lorna passed away from cancer in 2005. Murray remembers:

*"When she passed away, she wanted to have a Will made up and she gave a generous donation to Cancer Society... It can be a very difficult time and it's such a good service [Cancer Society] give, and so I said well if it was good enough for her to do it, I'll do it as well! And my son, he's also got Cancer Society in his Will."*



*"We couldn't do without them - it's just such an important organisation... Nobody wants to see someone suffering through their cancer."*

Now living in the beautiful suburb of Karaka, 78-year-old Murray hasn't lost his enthusiasm for helping those facing cancer.

*"I would say especially if you've been affected by cancer in your family, that you should seriously consider giving a donation in your Will... It goes to a very good cause, and they should be rewarded for the care and good work they do."*

**Leaving a gift in your Will for the Cancer Society is one of the biggest ways you can continue to support cancer patients in the future. If you would like to know more about leaving a life-changing gift in your Will, please call Ashleigh on 09 930 7172 or email legacy@akcansoc.org.nz.**

## Jo Jumped for Cancer!

62-year-old Jo is an Auckland local who doesn't hold back. After being diagnosed with breast cancer three years ago, Jo is now a proud cancer survivor determined to help others facing the same battle.

*"It's so important because cancer affects everybody... My brother passed away from prostate cancer seven years ago and my mum passed away from uterine cancer... My sister also battled with breast cancer and is a survivor."*

**"I couldn't think of a better cause to raise money for."**

When she first heard about Jump for Cancer last year, Jo knew this was an opportunity she didn't want to miss. *"It's a no brainer - a [sky dive] jump and raising money for the Cancer Society. I just can't see why you wouldn't want to do something like that... I couldn't think of a better cause to raise money for."*

And she would encourage anyone even the slightest bit interested to take part next year.



Jo stopped for a photo before her first skydive!

*"[Jumping for Cancer] would have to be one of the better experiences you could ever have in life - it's bucket list stuff... It was just so amazing, and I was buzzing afterwards. And money was raised for cancer at the same time. Do it, just do it."*

**This year an incredible 54 individuals jumped for cancer across the Auckland/Northland region. They raised a total of \$57,000, which will help us continue life-saving research and invest in vital care and support for Kiwis facing cancer. A wonderful effort!**

# Relay For Life

At the beginning of April, we held our much-anticipated Relay For Life event, where participants relay around a track for 12 hours. Despite the cloudy weather, spirits were high among those participating who raised an incredible total of \$533,000 across Auckland and Northland.

We sat down with 29-year-old Rachel Lelieveld to find out what Relay For Life means to her.

*“So, my husband was diagnosed with cancer. Last year around June he had a seizure and they found out that he had a mass growing in his head.”*

At just 28 years old, Rachel’s husband Jason was diagnosed with a devastating grade 3 brain tumour. As his carer, Rachel was inspired to take part in Relay For Life.

**“ I’ve never done anything like this before but because this is so real, and I guess raw for me, I just had to come and show my support. ”**

*“The Cancer Society has helped us in many ways. For example, helping Jason with his travel to the hospital. I’ve also had counselling through them, and they’re constantly reaching out and checking in on him too.”*



Rachel and her husband Jason

Relay For Life is a time to come together, united for one cause - Kiwis affected by cancer. It’s a celebration of survivors, a time of remembrance for those lost to cancer, and an opportunity to fight back by raising awareness and funds.

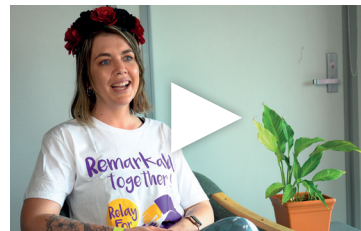
*“You know despite everything everybody’s been through, everybody’s smiling today. It’s kind of like a weight’s been lifted off your shoulders just for today, and if it’s just one*

*day where you can feel like your buckets been filled and then you can go back home, back to real life and just take another day or another week just knowing that you’ve filled up your bucket.”*

*“Cancer Society has helped us in many ways. It’s a lonely journey at times especially for carers but there is support there within the Cancer Society.”*

**Thank you to all who participated! If you are interested in getting involved next year, keep an eye out for registrations and more information at [www.relayforlife.org.nz](http://www.relayforlife.org.nz).**

**Watch Rachel tell her story by scanning the QR code with your phone camera.**



*Thank you so much for your incredible support of people affected by cancer!*

## Cancer Society Auckland Northland

### Contact Auckland

☎ 09 930 7172 | PO Box 1724, Shortland Street, Auckland 1140

### Contact Northland

☎ 09 437 5593 | PO Box 8100, Kensington, Whangarei 0145

[www.cancer.org.nz](http://www.cancer.org.nz)

