

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

Newscan

WINTER 2026



**With your
help, no one
faces cancer
alone.**

Welcome to the Winter edition of Newscan 2026!

Last month, I had the privilege of standing at Parliament alongside colleagues from across the Cancer Society, speaking directly with politicians about the future of cancer care in Aotearoa New Zealand. At its heart, our election manifesto asks a simple but urgent question: what kind of country do we want to be - for the people we love, and for future generations?

Because behind every statistic is a person, a whānau, and a story - and often, the people who stand beside them.

As you read these stories, I hope you are reminded of the significant impact your support has on Kiwis facing cancer.

Alongside our amazing donors, volunteers are at the heart of this work. They are often the first friendly face, the steady presence, the helping hand that turns a difficult day into something more manageable. Quite simply, we couldn't do what we do without you.

With Daffodil Day coming up on the 28-30th of August, we'd love for you to be a part of something special by volunteering or fundraising.

Find out more at www.daffodilday.org.nz

Thank you for standing with us as we continue to push for a future where fewer New Zealanders face cancer, and where those who do are supported every step of the way.

Ngā mihi,



Helen Carter
Chief Executive Officer
Cancer Society
Waikato/Bay of Plenty



From a Second Chance to Giving Back: Volunteering with Kapil

"That's one hour or two hours of your time... it can change someone's life."

For most of his life, Kapil was focused on getting ahead: building a career, providing for his family, and keeping life moving forward.

Then everything changed.

"I've been admitted to hospital multiple times," he says. At one stage, it became serious. He remembers being told he had a 50/50 chance to live.

"I was like, oh my God... am I going to make it?"

He did - and that experience shifted everything.



Kapil volunteering on Daffodil Day



Kapil and his volunteering team on Daffodil Day



"My entire life, I'd been chasing money," he says, "I realised it's your time to give back to the community."

That realisation led him to Daffodil Day.

"I was like... why not? Why don't I try?"

For the past three years, Kapil has volunteered with the Cancer Society. As a business manager, he thrives in an Daffodil Day Area Coordinator role, putting his skills to use by managing collection sites and volunteers across two special days. Kapil recognises it as a great opportunity for others to develop their own skills.

"If you really want to build your people skills and relationship management, go for it."

For him, volunteering is about more than giving time, it's about making a real difference.

He's seen how even a few hours can have a lasting impact, both for others and himself.

He's also quick to point out that you're not doing it alone.

"It's not just a day," he says. "It's months and months of building. You get training, regular updates, you've got all the resources you need."

"It's leadership, it's teamwork, it's people management - it's working with people."

Whether it's giving a few hours collecting on Daffodil Day or stepping into a coordination role, there are many ways to get involved - and support is there every step of the way.

For Kapil, the key is that it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

"Try it," he says. "You will never go back."

If you're interested in volunteering with the Cancer Society, there are many opportunities available, from collecting at Daffodil Day to supporting events and patients.

Visit www.daffodilday.org.nz and see where it could take you.



Taryn just before leaving work for treatment

“I didn’t feel alone”: Taryn’s journey through cancer

“It’s such a cliché, but life can be long and miserable, or it can be short and really, really great.”

At 43, Taryn was living life at full speed; a mother, wife and early childhood teacher who describes herself as “really aggressive about living.” She had just enrolled to begin her PhD.

“I wasn’t symptomatic,” she recalls. “I felt ill at work one day and started bringing up an enormous amount of blood.” After emergency treatment for an ulcer, she returned weeks later expecting reassurance. Instead, doctors found stomach cancer.

“I actually saw my lab results before meeting with the doctor, and it said carcinoma. And I thought, surely carcinoma’s cancer. Then everything changed.”

The shock was immediate.

“Disbelief. I’m the healthiest person I know,” she says. “I didn’t plan for this.”

“I told myself if I didn’t think about it too much, if I just put my head down and got through it, that was my coping mechanism. I didn’t want to wallow in self-pity. I didn’t want to draw any attention to myself.”

At first she didn’t tell her 10-year-old son Tristan, saying she was unwell without using the word “cancer.” But when he overheard her speaking to family, he confronted her.

“He said, ‘Mum, why didn’t you tell me that it’s cancer?’” she remembers. “I didn’t want him to think I was going to die. And he said, ‘It’s okay, I’d rather you just tell me.’”

“I’ve worked with children for many years, but somehow I forgot how resilient they are. After that we just moved through it together.”

Despite her instinct to handle things on her own, the reality of cancer made one thing clear.

“I struggle to ask for help in general,” she admits. “But there was so much support available it leaves me speechless.”

That support, made possible by donors like you, came in the form of Frances, a Cancer Society nurse who became a constant presence in Taryn’s life.

“Frances came to my home and gave me a wealth of information; stuff to read, things to listen to.” From helping prepare for conversations with her surgeon to counselling and transport, the support was extensive.

“She took me through it,” Taryn says. “In many ways she and the Cancer Society became a lifeline for me.”

“I could speak to her about things I didn’t want to share with my family. Things I was afraid of, when I struggled with medication and when I wasn’t feeling well.”

As treatment began, the scale of what she faced became undeniable. Taryn underwent chemotherapy and surgery to remove her stomach.

“It was big. I tend to downplay things, but I do understand the enormity of it and it was life-changing.”

Beyond the physical toll was something harder to articulate – a shift in identity.

“So many people say, ‘It’s just hair, it will grow back,’” she says. “But your identity is, I feel, directly linked to the way you look, the way you carry yourself, how you exist in the world. And then you lose all of that. Your phone doesn’t recognise you to unlock. You don’t recognise yourself when you look in the mirror.”

Through it all, Frances remained a steady guide.

“She held my hand through navigating the uncertainty,” Taryn says. “Her knowledge was extensive and she gave me lots of tools I could use.”

Your donation helps wrap support around cancer patients and their families when they need it most.

“I didn’t feel alone,” she says. “I definitely felt I had a tribe.”

That sense of being held left a lasting impression.

“I am mesmerised by the community that exists within the Cancer Society and the support for people who are experiencing cancer and their families.”



Taryn with her family



Taryn supported by her husband during treatment

“You feel loved,” she says. “By people who don’t know you. People you never see, never speak to.”

She speaks with admiration for the Cancer Society volunteers who help patients through some of their hardest days.

“Chemotherapy, it’s hours, you don’t feel you can drive, you don’t want to sit there alone,” she says. “And seeing the volunteering, I can’t believe there are people who would sacrifice their time to take an unknown to hospital. And wait and sit with and be with them.”

It’s a quiet kindness that stays with her, shaping how she sees the world, and how she hopes her son will move through it.

“I speak to him about how he can leave an imprint on the world. I’m hoping this experience will make him more aware and change his life to be of service in some way.”

For someone who prides herself on independence, that support was transformative.

“I am a very capable person,” she reflects. “But I don’t know how I would have done without it.”

“So thank you.”

Watch Taryn’s inspiring story here





Thomas at the Cancer Society Lodge

“Sod It. Work the Problem”: Thomas’ Story

For many Kiwis facing cancer, getting the care they need means travelling far from home. That can bring added stress, cost, and uncertainty at a difficult time - yet distance should never be a barrier to treatment.

Through Cancer Society lodges, patients and their loved ones have somewhere to stay that’s safe, welcoming, and close to care. This support is only possible thanks to people like you.

For Thomas and his wife Susan, it made all the difference.



Thomas at the Cancer Society Lodge in Auckland

Diagnosed with prostate cancer, Thomas was offered a choice: weeks of conventional radiotherapy, or a newer, highly targeted option suited to his type of cancer – the CyberKnife.

“It’s something out of *Star Trek*,” Thomas says. “You’re on this high-tech bench and this thing becomes alive and comes towards you.”

“It’s like a *Jurassic Park* dinosaur, one of these raptors weighing you up and down.” He grins, “I called it Cyril the Robot.”

At the heart of this technology is precision. Tiny markers skilfully injected allowed the machine to pinpoint radiation to the tumour, delivering treatment in just five sessions.

That decision meant travelling five hours from home and staying in Auckland where treatment is based.

“What made it so much less stressful was the Cancer Society Lodge,” he says. “It was fantastic. We couldn’t believe it.”

Staying there together, Thomas and Susan quickly found a rhythm.

“We used to walk up to treatment, it was a nice walk in the morning.” With everything close by, the practical worries melted away, “You can walk everywhere, it’s marvellous.”



Susan exploring Auckland during their stay



Thomas at the Cancer Society Lodge

Then there was the atmosphere.

“Just the set-up of the place and the friendliness, we couldn’t get over it,” he says, “You made friends, people came and went.”

Afternoons were spent on the putting green, exploring the garden, chatting to others who understood what they were going through.

“There are people far worse off than I was, it was a humbling experience. You’re more or less in the same boat, just different degrees of it.”

Through it all, the Cancer Society Lodge became more than a place to stay.

“It made it almost like a holiday,” Thomas reflects. “It made what could have been a very difficult time a lot less difficult.”

Thomas and Susan are immensely grateful for the skilled urologist and oncology team, and for the generosity that made their stay during treatment possible.

That’s the difference you make.

Cancer Society Lodges are only possible because of supporters like you. By donating today, you can help more Kiwis find comfort, community, and a place to call home during treatment.

A Quick Guide to our Election Manifesto

Last month, Cancer Society leaders from across New Zealand came together to launch the Cancer Society's Election Manifesto at Parliament. It was a significant moment.

At its heart, this manifesto asks a simple but important question: what kind of country do we want to be for the people we love, and for generations to come?

Cancer touches almost every whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand. We already know a great deal about what helps prevent it, detect it earlier, and improve outcomes. What we need now is the political courage to act on that evidence.

This election year, we're taking a clear message to Parliament: New Zealand can do much more to prevent cancer and save lives.

It is a practical plan for action, showing where smart decisions today could mean fewer families facing cancer in the future, and more people being diagnosed early, when treatment is most effective.

At its core are five actions to prevent cancer, detect it earlier, and make support fairer across Aotearoa:

1. Prevent cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers we can eliminate entirely. Fully fund cervical screening and help reach 90% HPV vaccination by 2030.

2. Stop more skin cancers

Invest in a national prevention and early detection programme. Skin cancer impacts too many New Zealanders and most cases are preventable.

3. Catch lung cancer earlier

As New Zealand's deadliest cancer, lung cancer needs urgent attention. Introduce a screening programme within three years to enable earlier diagnosis.

4. Lower the bowel screening age

Begin screening at age 50 to find cancer sooner and save more lives.

5. Protect families from cancer risks

Reduce nicotine in tobacco, limit junk food marketing to children, and remove alcohol marketing from media, protecting from the commercial drivers of cancer.



Cancer Society leaders presenting the Election Manifesto at Parliament

These actions are affordable, evidence based, and ready to implement. A future free from cancer won't happen by chance. It will happen through choices and those choices start now. Read the full manifesto at www.cancer.org.nz/manifesto