

AUTUMN 2025

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

# Newscan

Thalea's  
Healing  
at Domain  
Lodge

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Society Research Centre



**Cancer  
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku  
o Aotearoa



## Welcome to the Autumn Edition of Newscan 2025!

With 2025 in full swing, the team at the Cancer Society have been working hard to provide wrap-around support services to Kiwis facing cancer in New Zealand.

In this issue, you'll read about the incredible journeys of remarkable women like Thalea, Tarita, and Colleen, who, despite facing immense challenges, have found strength, healing, and hope through the support of the Cancer Society. From the invaluable resources at Domain Lodge to life-changing guidance from our supportive care team,

your generosity enables us to make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected.

I want to thank you for being part of this journey. Your continued support ensures that we can provide essential services, fund groundbreaking research and together, work towards eliminating preventable cancers like cervical cancer.

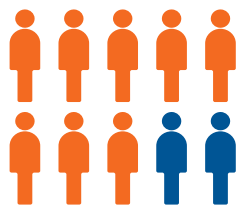
Ngā Mihi

**Andrew Young**  
Chief Executive




## The Time to Eliminate Cervical Cancer is Now

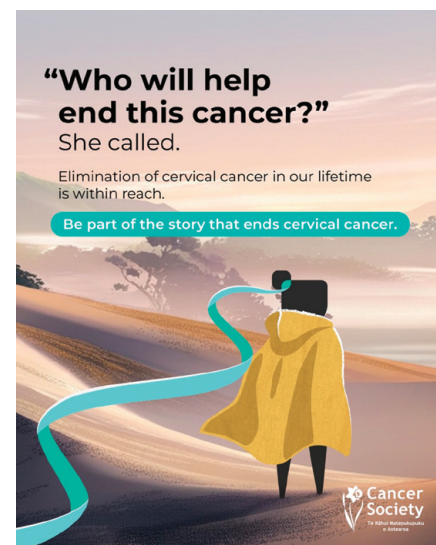
The Cancer Society supports the World Health Organization's goal to eliminate cervical cancer; New Zealand has the tools to make it happen. HPV vaccination, cervical screening, and early treatment are proven to prevent and detect cervical cancer before it develops. With the right action, we can end cervical cancer within our lifetime - but only if we work together.



**Nearly 8/10 people**  
will be exposed to HPV  
in their lifetime

That's why, alongside our partners, we're calling on the government to take immediate action to secure a future free from cervical cancer. We're creating a petition that asks for stronger investment in prevention and more accessible treatment options. This is where you come in.

Cervical cancer is entirely preventable, and yet it still claims lives. The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and free for people aged 9 to 26, available through schools, GPs, and pharmacies and is crucial for the next generation. HPV screening is now more accurate and less invasive, using a simple vaginal swab required only once every five years.



The solutions are here.  
Now, we need action.

**Together, we can write the final chapter on cervical cancer. Be part of the story: [endcervicalcancer.org.nz](https://endcervicalcancer.org.nz).**

## Domain Lodge a safe haven for recovery

When Thalea travelled from her Hokianga home to Auckland for reconstructive surgery following her breast cancer treatment, she found herself without a place to stay. With no close family nearby, a caring nurse connected her with the Cancer Society. That's when she was welcomed into Domain Lodge, a place that quickly became more than just accommodation—it became a safe haven.

Thalea shared with us what her time at Domain Lodge truly meant:

*"Oh my gosh, just the sheer Wairua, or the beautiful feeling that is in that building - in the people, in the volunteers - I can't think of a better place to have recovered. It was such a needed space for me, allowing me to recover and heal, attend my hospital appointments, physio appointments, have family members visit, and was so close to the domain just across the road."*

Every aspect of her stay contributed to her healing, offering the emotional and physical support she needed.

*"I really did feel like I was wrapped in a safe environment. The volunteers were awesome, I had nurses I could access, counsellors I could access, and a community to support me. There was always somebody nearby if you needed them, and that was right down to the yoga, mindfulness and morning teas."*

*Domain Lodge has really been part of my recovery and why I have recovered so quickly and so well. It has been a space of reflection and nurturing that money can't buy - it's priceless."*



*Thalea in hospital with her sister and family*



*Thalea and her son Jayden*

Thalea's experience at Domain Lodge was so meaningful that she has since put up her hand to become a volunteer herself, inspired to help others through the challenging cancer journey.

**Thank you for supporting Kiwis like Thalea.** Your generosity—whether through donations, a gift in will or giving your time—creates a life-changing impact. Because of you,

people facing cancer have a safe place to heal and recover and are wrapped in expert support from our team of specialist nurses and psychologists. If you would like to contribute to this crucial work, please head to [www.cancer.org.nz/donate](https://www.cancer.org.nz/donate)



*Thalea and her grandchild Sophia*



# A Friend's Warning, A Life Saved: Tarita's Breast Cancer Journey

When Tarita went in for her first-ever mammogram, she had no reason to believe anything was wrong. She had never felt a lump, never experienced any symptoms. It was only through the persistence of a friend - who had been through cancer herself - that Tarita decided to get checked. That decision saved her life.

The results came as a shock: triple-negative breast cancer, one of the most aggressive forms of the disease. Even before the biopsy results confirmed it, her surgeon suspected the diagnosis. Tarita, a mother of four with the youngest being just 8 years old and grandmother of two, had no time to dwell on the what-ifs. She needed a plan, and she needed to move forward - for herself and her family.

The journey was overwhelming. Surgery came first, then chemotherapy and radiation. Living in rural Northland added another layer of difficulty, requiring long trips to Auckland for treatment. But through it all, she wasn't alone. A friend moved in to care for her youngest son while she underwent radiation. The Cancer Society provided accommodation at Domain Lodge during radiation treatment, the accommodation was vital easing the burden of travel and offering a safe place to rest.

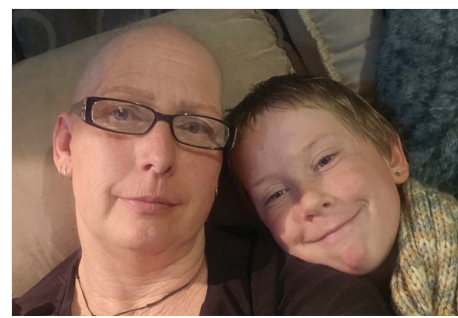
*"Knowing I was close to the hospital, that my husband didn't have to worry about me travelling back and forth - it made such a difference."*

**“Without the Lodge I would have had nowhere to stay down there to get treated. And I just wouldn't have been able to afford it.”**

*"Even though there is travel help, it's still a lot with parking, accommodation and everything else. I wouldn't have been able to get my treatment."*



*Tarita's Children and Grandchildren*



*Tarita with her 8-year-old son*



*Tarita and her husband*

The Cancer Society's support extended beyond accommodation. When the weight of it all became too much, a simple phone call led to a life-changing resource.

*"At one stage I actually called the Cancer Society when it was all feeling a bit much. The lady I spoke to on the phone was lovely, she sent my husband a book that was for partners who are going through breast cancer. That saved his life. That's what got him through."*

*"Losing my hair and gaining weight from steroids threw my confidence out the door. But I'm alive, and that's what's important."*

Now in recovery, Tarita is determined to give back. Her passion for horses led her to create the 'Cowboy Up Ribbon Recycle Day', a fundraiser for the Cancer Society. What started as a small idea quickly gained momentum, drawing in a community eager to help. Coming together to raise over eleven thousand dollars and counting to support others facing cancer.

*"I'm just proud to be able to get my friends and community involved in something so personal. There are so many people [that go through cancer], and a lot of people still don't know what resources are available. So, if we can run events that not only provide funds for the Cancer Society but also open the door for more people to be able to access that support, I think that is the whole goal."*

**“I'm very grateful to be able to support the Cancer Society cause and hopefully prevent someone else from going through the loss of a family member.”**

Tarita's advice to others is simple: *"Get checked. Just because you don't feel anything doesn't mean nothing is there. And ask for help. The Cancer Society is only a phone call or a website away."*

Tarita's journey has been one of resilience, community, and paying kindness forward. She knows she is one of the lucky ones -and she's determined to make a difference for those who follow.

## Take a look at what went down at the Cowboy Up Ribbon Recycle Day

The Cowboy Up Ribbon Recycle Day is a community-driven fundraising event, created by cancer survivor Tarita, to support the Cancer Society.







Colleen Roberts

## A change in mindset “I’m actually *living* with cancer”

Colleen Roberts was a busy woman. She would often spend as much time as she could with her four children and five grandchildren.

So, when she went to her GP about gallstones, a cancer diagnosis was far from expected. Testing revealed that Colleen had cancer in the lower part of her stomach. Swift action soon followed – pre-surgery chemotherapy, followed by a partial gastrectomy followed by more chemotherapy. And by July 2022, Colleen was back at work and back to the busy life she knew.

But in July 2023, the cancer returned, and Colleen discovered that she now had multiple abdominal tumours. Any further treatment would be palliative.

Colleen found long-term chemotherapy tough, taking a toll on her health and mindset, until she realised she needed to change how she viewed her future.

*“I felt, with the prognosis, that I was dying of cancer but then I realized that I was actually living with cancer. The cancer was being dealt with through the treatment and so I had an epiphany and thought what can I do to support this treatment? I realised that I didn’t know where to go for that information and that’s when I engaged with the Cancer Society.”*

Colleen was connected with Claire Gower-James, a Cancer Society nurse. The support was, she says, a game-changer.

*“Claire’s response was absolutely amazing. Everything she gave me was fantastic. The monthly support group, links to meditation, reading materials, resources. There were things specific to my cancer which I hadn’t really accessed before...”*

*The effect on my well-being has been huge.”*

Colleen’s cancer has been responding to treatment since December 2023, and she is immensely grateful that it continues to be held at bay.

*“I was depressed and that in itself is not good for your health. But with the support of Cancer Society, it has flipped. I’m grateful, I’m trying things. Claire is very compassionate, very knowledgeable, and understanding.”*

*This support is vital. This is life-affecting, life-changing support. Without it, it would be really hard for me to continue. It’s not just support – it’s treatment.”*

These life-changing services are only possible because of generous supporters like you. Thanks to donors and those who choose to leave a gift in their Will, Kiwis like Colleen are able to receive the care and support they need during their toughest times. **Donate today to help provide vital care and support for more New Zealanders facing cancer [www.cancer.org.nz/donate](http://www.cancer.org.nz/donate)**

## Golfing for a cause!

For the fourth year in a row, Barry Prinsloo took on the Longest Day Golf Challenge. It is an endurance event where golfers play from sunrise to sunset, tackling 72 holes in one day to raise funds for the Cancer Society. But for Barry, this challenge is about more than just golf. It’s a personal mission to honour loved ones lost to cancer and to support those currently fighting the disease.



Barry Prinsloo

**“It’s meant to be tough, but it’s nothing compared to what people facing cancer go through every day.”**

Barry’s connection to cancer is deeply personal. His father and mother both battled the disease and just over a year ago, his ex-wife and mother to his son passed away from ovarian cancer.



Barry participating in the Longest Day

Barry first heard about the Longest Day Challenge through his golf club and immediately felt drawn to the cause. Although his family didn’t personally access Cancer Society services, Barry has seen how vital they are for people affected by cancer. His fundraising efforts ensure that others receive the support they need - whether it’s accommodation at the Cancer Society Lodge, transport to treatment, or counselling services.

*“You never know who’s going to need access to these services in the future, I may need it, my family and friends here may need it.”*

This year, Barry and golf partner, Sean Gillespie, pushed themselves further than ever before. Their goal? An incredible 144 holes in one day! Double the usual challenge. With months of preparation behind them, they took on the greens, armed with plenty of sunscreen, water, and sheer determination.

*“A big thank you and shout out to all the other participants in the longest day and to all the folk at the Cancer Society who put the time and effort in to make this kind of event possible and all the people behind the scenes who pull this all together.”*

## Games Fair 2025! Get Ready for the Ultimate Gaming Event



All board game lovers, roleplaying games fans, and trading card enthusiasts—New Zealand’s Games Fair is back for another exciting year! Hosted at The Cloud in Auckland on the 10th and 11th of May, this two-day tabletop gaming extravaganza is the perfect event for gamers of all skill levels.

Every ticket sold supports the Cancer Society, helping Kiwi families facing cancer.

Come along, roll some dice, and make a difference—Games Fair 2025 is the event you won’t want to miss! Keep an eye on [www.gamesfair.co.nz](http://www.gamesfair.co.nz) for updates.





# Inside the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre



*Michael Hay  
ACSRC Director*

## Meet Michael Hay

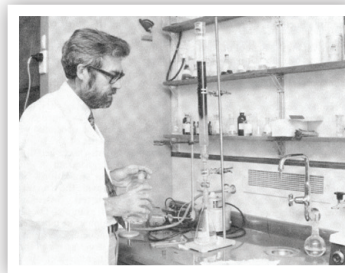
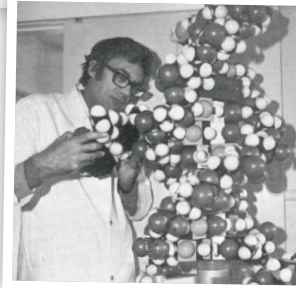
Michael Hay is the Director of the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre (ACSRC). His journey into cancer research was inspired by a childhood fascination with chemistry and a chance encounter with a scientist on TV. That spark led him

to a PhD, work overseas, and eventually a position at ACSRC in 1991. Now, after three decades of research, he leads the Centre in its fight against cancer.

## Making an impact

Michael became Director in early 2020, and since then, the centre has continued to be a world leader in cancer research. With 55 researchers and 25 postgraduate students, ACSRC's work spans medicinal chemistry, anticancer drug design, radiation biology, immunology, pharmacology, and clinical research. Ground-breaking research projects cover an array of cancers that impact New Zealanders, such as lung, breast, and prostate cancer. This makes ACSRC's research critical not only to the global fight against cancer but also to the health of our communities.

Its research is ranked among the top global cancer research centres, thanks to the work of its team and the stability provided by the Cancer Society's support.



*Dr Bruce Cain, the first  
Director of ACSRC*

**“ ACSRC's success is not just in research but in the practical outcomes it has achieved. Many of its discoveries have led to real-world treatments that are making a difference in patients' lives today.”**

## Why Cancer Research Matters

*“Cancer affects us all, we all know someone who has been touched by it. The goal is for patients to live with cancer, not die from it. The Cancer Society has supported ACSRC for over 67 years, and it is the generosity of kind-hearted Kiwis that provides the stability needed for groundbreaking research. We simply couldn't do this without you, it's your support that fuels our progress. Thank you for being part of this journey” – Michael Hay*

The Cancer Society is the largest private funder of cancer research in New Zealand. This is only possible because kind-hearted Kiwis like you. Our committed donors and those choosing to give a gift in their Will make a lasting

difference to future generations.



*Scan here to watch  
Michael's story*

*Thank you so much for your incredible support! We couldn't do it without you.*

## Cancer Society Auckland Northland

### Contact Auckland

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