



## **National Chairpersons Report 2024-2025**

Tena koutou katoa

On behalf of our National Committee, I am pleased to present this report for the 2024-2025 year to our Breast Cancer Support (BCS) Membership. A warm welcome to all who live with an experience of breast cancer, both women and men, and their families /whānau, and to all who support us. This wider group of allies are strong supporters of all we do, and merit an early and strong acknowledgement. Their continuing support and enthusiasm for the cause means a great deal to us and encourages us onward.

Our National Committee is a skilled and dedicated team. Barbara McLean is our hard working Treasurer, Angela McLeod has a focus on communications and marketing, and Karen Hayes is our talented Secretary. Rebecca Pohe has a strong focus on whānau support, Diane Reece on community groups and support, and Sally Hutchinson holds an interest in building awareness and visibility across wellbeing sectors. Jane Finlayson facilitates our Christchurch group and supports our 0800 line, and we recently welcomed a new Committee member, Leonie Parker.

The National Committee is aided by our National Coordinator Jane Bissell whose excellent work supports the organisation's focus of continuing to make a very real difference as a peer led service for those living with breast cancer.

This peer-based leadership is brought to all we do, and is our important point of difference.

The National Committee met in Tamaki Makaurau in February for our strategic planning day. The primary focus was twofold: to map out our strategic plan and future service delivery, and discuss the ever-important issue of fundraising within an increasingly challenging environment. The not-for-profit sector is navigating uncertain times and BCS, like many other charities, is dependent upon its ability to gather funds that will enable the continuation of current and future services for those living with breast cancer. We do not receive any government funding for the work we do. It is the support of our volunteers, Membership, funding bodies, and our community that sustain us.

We have been exceptionally fortunate this year to have the expertise of Jill Robinson who has offered us a wealth of funding experience and her vast knowledge of the sector. Jill has brought her enthusiasm and energy to our cause and we are most grateful for the generous gift of her time.

We also offer sincere thanks to the community groups and individuals who have undertaken fundraising activities for us this year, in particular our country music groups. The Hibiscus Coast Country Music Club held a special Club Day raffle for us, and the



Hideaway Country Music Club's 'Pink Day' raised over \$3,000 for BCS. We also thank Becky in Christchurch for organising a delightful high tea fundraiser for us.

These wonderful people continue to support our work, hosting events and enthusiastically raising funds to enable us to do the work that we do. Attending these events, and being amongst the supporters, certainly inspires us.

Our services continue to centre around these core activities:



**Our 0800 line** operates 365 days a year, 8am to 8pm, so those living with breast cancer, and their supporters and caregivers, can call and talk with a trained BCS peer support person who has a lived experience of breast cancer.

**We successfully piloted our ‘Cuppa and a Chat’** online support groups which now meet on the last Monday of every month with two sessions at 11am and 7pm facilitated by Jane Bissell (am) and Liz Pennington (pm).

**The first of our face-to-face writing workshops** for women with a lived experience of breast cancer was facilitated by breast cancer survivor, talented writer and published author Jane Bissell in Christchurch in late 2024. The workshop offered time for reflection and an opportunity to process and hear from others who shared the experience of breast cancer. The workshop was well received by all participants and funded through the generous, and gratefully received, sponsorship from a wellbeing organisation.

**Jane Finlayson continues to lead our in-person Christchurch community support group.** A new Auckland group is under development as we continue to rebuild after COVID necessitated the closure of our many groups. It has taken some time for people to feel comfortable and confident to gather together again.

**Rebecca Pohe and Liz Pennington facilitated further mentor training programmes for our new BCS Buddy/Mentors.** It is gratifying to see our small team of volunteer Mentors growing and enabling more opportunities for those newly diagnosed to have someone walking alongside them.

**In the year ahead** there are further writing workshops planned, and a new online whānau support group to commence in the evenings alongside the existing Cuppa and a Chat groups. We hope to lift our visibility through participation in women's health expos and events. We have new brochures and banners to utilise and promote our work, and having representation in the South Island through Committee Members Sally Hutchinson and Jane Finlayson continues to open up opportunities for raising awareness of our work in the South.

To conclude, we reference the words of poet Emily Dickinson who spoke of the role of hope.

*Hope is the thing with feathers-*

*That perches in the soul*

*And sings the tune without the words*

*And never stops – at all.*

Breast Cancer Support continues to hold hope for those with lived experience of breast cancer and their whānau, and be assured that in the year ahead, we will continue to instil hope in all we do, and in all our endeavours.

**Liz Pennington**

**Chair, Breast Cancer Support Aotearoa**