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NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2025

LIFE MEMBERS

At our recent Annual General Meeting it was Narelle's pleasure to present another two Life Member badges and certificates to Jean Fleming and Rita Glossop. What an amazing effort, giving over 30 years of active service to our group.



Narelle also presented 30+ years' Service Certificates to Olive McKinnon, Jeanie Brown, Nelson Piyaratna, Aileen Sullivan and Denise Walsh. Although these members may not be as active as they were in their earlier years, they remain members of the Illawarra Cancer Carers and still support us. Your dedication does not go unnoticed.

LYMPHOEDEMA CLINIC

Wishing everyone a very happy and peaceful Christmas, and a happy New Year in 2026 from the Therapists and Volunteers at the Lymphoedema Support Clinic.

A big thank you to all the wonderful volunteers and therapists who freely give their time each fortnight so the Clinic can continue operating at Ribbonwood. May you all return refreshed in 2026.

The Clinic at the Ribbonwood Centre returns on 13 February 2026 with clinic dates as follows:

13 & 27 February	13 & 27 March
10 & 24 April	8 & 22 May
5 & 19 June	3, 17 & 31 July
14 & 28 August	11 & 25 September
9 & 23 October	6 & 20 November

Should you require further information then please contact me on 0423 135 342.

Jeanette Emmerich
Lymphoedema Support Clinic Co-Ordinator



SEVERAL BIG THANK YOUS

Below is a lovely email received from a very grateful patient:

"I was given a couple of your breast cushions in the hospital while receiving treatment. I cried and cried into those pillows and was overwhelmed with the love someone had given to make them so special. They have comforted me immensely and I wanted to donate some fabric or stuffing. They have been such a gift of love to me by strangers at a time when I am so vulnerable having had a bilateral mastectomy, and this love helps make the journey softer.

Kindest regards Sam"



We also received a lovely letter from a couple acknowledging our driving service:

"My husband recently commenced 5 days a week for 3 weeks radiotherapy treatment. We never venture to drive into Wollongong at any time now, mainly because of age restrictions (and the horrendous traffic), so we were pleasantly surprised and relieved to know that the Illawarra Cancer Carers had voluntary drivers that would take us to the hospital and bring us home after treatment.

We take this opportunity to sing the praises of your wonderful drivers – so reliable, always on time, a phone call the day before to confirm our pickup and every one of them the nicest people you could wish to meet.

At the end of Don's treatment, we were relieved to get back to our lives and a normal routine but had to admit to a feeling of sadness because we had to say goodbye to our daily friendly conversations with your drivers.

In our opinion, to have this service and these caring people at such a difficult time is precious. We hope the importance of this service and the volunteers who make it possible is appreciated and that it will be unending and it will get the support it needs to continue.

Fabulous service and fabulous drivers!
In appreciation, Don and Donna"

One of our local disability groups, Greenacres, runs a "Blooming with Appreciation Program", and they visited the sewing ladies earlier on this year. Through this program, the participants have put together more than 12,546 flowers and pieces of greenery, which were carefully arranged into 1,536 unique bouquets and gifted to the many individuals and organisations who support our community – one of those being the Illawarra Cancer Carers. This small act of appreciation created moments of joy, connection, and gratitude — bringing smiles and even a few happy tears to recipients.

"We wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy and safe festive season and thank you for the vital work you do every day.
Shaun Ferguson – Greenacres"



A message from the Vine-Perrow lab:
Merry Christmas and THANK YOU for your continued support of our research at the University of Wollongong.

Your commitment and belief in our work allow us to push boundaries, support emerging researchers, and work towards meaningful advances in cancer treatment.

We look forward to working together in 2026 – getting that one step closer to improved outcomes for cancer patients.



THANKS TO STORAGE KING NORTH WOLLONGONG & ROSS TRANSPORT

Storage King have been supporting our group for some time now and continue to do so by offering us a storage container, at no cost, to store documentation. We are very grateful for this generous gesture. Another amazing supporter is Ross Transport who has given us an area to work in and store our mobility equipment in their yard. Thanks to both organisations for your ongoing support – it is very much appreciated.

PALLIATIVE CARE

As we come to the close of another year, I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to the Illawarra Cancer Carers team for their unwavering support to our community - particularly at Bulli Palliative Care and, more recently, David Berry Palliative Care in Berry (where quite a number of Illawarra patients are now being sent).

The newly appointed nurses were deeply appreciative of the toiletries and personal items provided, which met a pressing need for their patients. While the patients benefit directly from this generosity, the nurses also experience the moral and emotional uplift that comes from facilitating and witnessing such kindness.

We also acknowledge the range of services the Cancer Carers Volunteers provide at the Bulli Palliative Care Unit.

Wishing your entire team a Merry Christmas. We have truly valued our partnership and look forward to continuing our shared success in 2026.

We are still very keen to get some more volunteers to work at Bulli Hospital making cuppas and having a chat with the patients. If this interests you, then please contact me for more information on 0438 659 059.

Petrina Chalker
Palliative Care Volunteer Co-Ordinator

SHARE THE DIGNITY

Once again, through the generosity of the sewing ladies and a number of other members, we were able to put together 21 bags, which were delivered to our local Bunnings store for distribution.



Share the Dignity is a women's charity in Australia, that works to make a real difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or doing it tough. Each of these bags also included a Christmas card with a personal handwritten message, making this very special to the recipient.

i98 ILLAWARRA CONVOY

The i98 Illawarra Convoy was held again this year in November, and we weren't going to miss out on the action. We loaded up our bus with members donned in our blue shirts for an early start up at Appin in readiness to head down the mountain and around to Albion Park. We were right up the front of the queue and waved to thousands of people along the way. Annie Peacock was a first-time attender to the event and wanted to personally thank the ICC for participating

in the Convoy, allowing her to go and letting us know how much she enjoyed it. Annie fully recommends attending

this event and is already looking forward to doing it all again next year.



All proceeds from the i98FM Illawarra Convoy go directly to the Illawarra Community Foundation. The Foundation provides critical assistance to families battling life-threatening or life-limiting illnesses. To date, it has supported over 1,000 families with 100% of the funds remaining in the Illawarra and South Coast community.

The Foundation have supported our group on many occasions, including the purchase of a van to transport our mobility equipment, a 22-seat bus, funding to purchase oxygenators for Bulli Hospital Palliative Care as well as supporting our patient transport program with several large donations over the years.

We thank the Foundation for their ongoing commitment and look forward to their future support.

FUNDRAISERS

Throughout the year we have participated in many different ways of raising funds for our group, and I have listed a few below:

Wendy from Nutrimetics came along to our sewing group one Friday morning and set up a lovely display and shared some of her products. She then donated a portion of her commission from any sales made on the day. What a lovely gesture – thanks Wendy.



We have had a number of stalls at Kembla

Grange Bunnings this year, which always draws in a big crowd and has enabled us to make over \$8,000.



One puppy dog even got an early Christmas present (even though it's a bit too hot to wear at the moment, but Rosa is now all set for her Winter walks).

We already have stalls booked in on 4 & 11 January, so call on in and say hello to our ladies.

We were even invited back for their Family Christmas Night and had a small stall with some Christmas goodies and joined in with the fun.



IRT Parkside invited us along to their Art & Craft Day to set up a stall, where we made \$1,557.50. We also received further funding from the residents who held a number of different stalls including morning tea, a BBQ, a raffle, along with a variety of art and crafts.

Audrey Walsh is usually one of the organisers for this annual event, however, being caught up in hospital, Audrey was unable to assist or attend. We were therefore very grateful to still receive an invitation and benefit financially from this wonderful occasion.



Christmas gift wrapping continues at Figtree Grove, Warrawong Plaza and Dapto Mall from 10.00am to 4.00pm, right up to and including Christmas Eve. At all three locations you will find our very talented wrappers, with scissors and sticky tape in hand, and of course with a selection of Liz's beautiful handmade bows. Dapto and Warrawong also have a small selection of last-minute gifts and Figtree has a Christmas raffle.

Our Christmas Market was a monster event. We filled the pavilion at Dapto Showground with a magnificent array of our handmade items, along with Christmas items, baked goods, plants, a bargain table, over 60 gift baskets and of course our amazing raffle with four prizes:

- 1st prize (N76) – N. Langridge
- 2nd prize (U52) – J. Tyson
- 3rd prize (U11) – C. Hayes
- 4th prize (X14) – J. Cole



Congratulations to all our winners – I hope you enjoy your beautiful prizes.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

This year we were contacted by a lovely young family in St James Crescent, Dapto asking if we would like to hold a stall outside their home as part of their Christmas light display. We declined having a stall, but we were more than happy to come along and hand out our handmade bon bons and join in with the community Christmas spirit. Most people were quite overwhelmed with our beautiful bon bons and wanted to make a donation – lucky we brought our trusty Eftpos machine and were also happy to take cash. As well as these options the lovely family have a sign displayed on their fence with our QR code, so people can continue to make donations, even after all the bon bons are gone.



Through these various stalls and many others throughout the year, together with the very hard work of our volunteers and friends, and the generosity of our supporters, the sewing ladies have made in excess of \$57,000, which does not include any of the raffles we have run this year. What a magnificent effort from all concerned!!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we wrap up 2025, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the Illawarra Cancer Carers throughout the year. What we have achieved together is truly something to be proud of.

Our volunteers are the heart of our organisation. Your generosity, commitment and compassion shine through in everything you do – from fundraising and patient support to the many hours spent behind the scenes. You make a real difference, and your efforts never go unnoticed.

To our supporters, donors and friends in the community, thank you for standing beside us and believing in our work. Your kindness helps us continue to care for those who need us most.

On behalf of the Committee and myself, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Narelle Langridge

GETTING TO KNOW YOU SOCIAL LUNCH

Our Getting to Know You social lunches held at the Builders Club in Church Street, Wollongong will resume in February 2026. This is a great opportunity to meet other members who are involved in other roles within the Illawarra Cancer Carers, that you may not necessarily come across. No need to book, so just come along and join us – you deserve a break! We look forward to seeing you there for an informal get together and a lovely meal and a chat.

11 February	8 April	10 June
12 August	14 October	9 December

LATE BLOOMERS LUNCHEONS

Our Late Bloomers luncheons held at the Collegians Illawarra Leagues Club in Church Street, opposite McCabe Park will once again return in 2026. This is a great opportunity to meet “yesterdays” carers, who are now not necessarily active members, but love to keep in touch with the current members. So why not come along, share your stories, listen to others and enjoy a nice meal. All welcome!!

5 January	2 March	4 May
6 July	7 September	2 November

DAPTO CLASSIC CAR CLUB

We had a surprise visit from a couple of members from the Dapto Classic Car Club, who timed it nicely to share a cuppa with the sewing ladies. The surprise did not end there though – they presented us with a further \$1,500.00, which they have requested be put towards vouchers for clients who might be finding it a little tough and would like a “free” ride to their cancer-related appointment.



WHAT WOULD A NEWSLETTER BE WITHOUT A POEM FROM NARELLE??

“Ode to Friday Sewing”

We go to sewing on a Friday at Dapto
Showground,
Where our sewing machines hum their steady
sound.
Overlockers zooming around like running a race,
Every button and reel of cotton has their own
special place.

Breast cushions being filled with gentle care,
The pricing table is always busy over there.
More donations for the girls to sort,
Ahh more wool and material – who’d have
thought!!

Soon it’s 10 o’clock and with that welcoming yell,
The kitchen is brimming with that coffee and tea
smell.
Time to relax and chat for a while,
And listen to me as I deliver all the news with
such style.

We had a stall during the week and how did we
do,
We sold lots of kitchen towels and hessian bags,
thank you.
The table over there has been sorted and you
know the drill,
It’s a free for all, so schnell, schnell, schnell.

Jean’s doing her baby boxes for little bundles of
joy,
Pink or purple for girls and perhaps blue for a
boy.
Out comes the cellophane to wrap up all the
bits,
From coat hangers to washers and microwave
mitts.

Lorraine over there counting all the money,
Let’s go hide some, now wouldn’t that be funny.
Ironing boards near the kitchen, ironing’s such a
grind,
So much so, can you please do mine?

Soon the machines are all put away and whose
gunna vacuum today?
Chairs and tables go back the way they were, the
days gone by in a blur.
We all say goodbye and I hear a shriek,
“SEE YOU ALL LADIES – SAME TIME NEXT WEEK.”

BUS REPORT

Our November bus trip took us to Darryl Lea to
stock up our Christmas chocolate goodies, then
on to Bankstown Sports Club, one of our
favourite lunch stops.

We revisited the Cobbitty Christmas Markets on
our December trip, with lots of lovely stalls to
explore, but with the temperature nudging 40
degrees everyone was happy to make our way to
the Campbelltown Catholic Club for lunch - the
air conditioning being a much-welcomed relief.

Thank you to all who have supported our trips
this year, and we hope to see you next year.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year.

There will not be a bus trip in January, but we will
be back up and running for 7 February 2026. Join
us for morning tea at Bomaderry, before heading
off to Tianjara Gorge, then lunch at Nerriga Hotel.
This trip will cost you \$20 with pick up from
Wollongong Dan Murphys at 8.30am or the
Ribbonwood Centre at 9.00am.

To book your seat or ask any questions, then
contact Grahame on 0407 647 604 or Margaret
on 0411 413 912.

*Margaret & Grahame James
Bus Trip Co-Ordinator & Driver*

NAME BADGES

Members are encouraged to wear a name badge
while representing our group in their various
roles. If you are new to the group, or yours is
looking a little shabby, then a new one can be
purchased from Gala Trophies (3 Ellen Street
Wollongong) for \$12. Gala Trophies are a family
run business and are open from 9.00am to
5.00pm during weekdays.



HORIZON BANK GRANT

Earlier on this year we received a grant from the Horizon Bank to the tune of \$5,000 (thanks to Geoff Failes, our grant and submission extraordinaire). This very generous grant has enabled us to have a couple of the massage tables recovered, along with some of the equipment serviced for the Lymphoedema Clinic.



We were also able to purchase some new sewing machines and overlockers,



which our sewing ladies have been using, busily pumping out more goodies for our stalls and stocking up supplies of breast cushions and turbans for the hospitals.

WELCOME TO TWO NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Lisa Smith joined our group earlier on this year and jumped in boots and all. The name may ring a bell as Lisa took on the role of our Mad Hatter's High Tea Co-Ordinator, which was held in August and was an amazing day. Lisa "enjoyed herself so much", she has put up her hand to do it all again for our 'Black & White' High Tea to be held on Sunday 30 August 2026 at the Fraternity Club.

Cathy Haney is very new to the group and is volunteering in the Cancer Centre and enjoying her role. She was keen to assist further and has stepped up as a Committee Member and taken on the role of Publicity Officer. As of 2026 Cathy will be producing our Newsletters, updating the members database and sending out condolences and get-well cards etc. So, if you have any stories or requests for our newsletters, or require a card be sent out, then please email

Cathy on cathyhaney1@hotmail.com or phone her on 0409 357 821.

A big welcome to Lisa and Cathy – I personally look forward to working with you both.

On that note, I cannot forget to thank Audrey for all her years of dedication to the role of Publicity Officer. Unfortunately, as I type this, Audrey is still recovering in hospital, however, is hopeful to be coming home soon. I know a lot of members have been asking about Audrey and I am sure we are all wishing her the very best and hoping that 2026 will be much better for her.

OPEN MEETING DATES FOR 2026

Please make a note of the dates for our Open Meetings in 2026:

Monday 16 February	Monday 18 May
Monday 17 August	Monday 16 November

All of the Open Meetings are held at 1.00pm at Berkeley Sports Club, so why not come along and see what our group is up to – we're always open to suggestions. Several of our members grab a bite to eat beforehand, which is always great for a quick chat and catch up.

At our February meeting we will be having a guest speaker. Shawn Tyler from the Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Wollongong will be sharing information with us on the Simulated Patient Program and will be happy to answer any questions.



That's all for 2025 now – for those of you who can take a break from your volunteering duties, then please do so and enjoy that time with your family and friends. 2025 has been a big year, and 2026 will be here before we know it, bigger and better, and we'll all be back supporting each other and the many cancer patients we care for in the Illawarra. Please know how valuable your friendship and support have been throughout this year to the many clients we have assisted, as well as the camaraderie we share as a group.