

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

9 May, 2016

### **McGrath breast care nurses to be honoured on International Nurses Day**

Breast care nurses Maree Wylie and Sue Fawkes have been recognised by the McGrath Foundation for their work with women recovering from breast cancer.

Ms Wylie and Ms Fawkes are based at Dalby Hospital and have helped women from throughout the western cluster of the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS), covering an area from Dalby to Taroom and everywhere in between.

Their achievements, which include providing care to more than 170 families since 2012, and developing an exercise-based wellness program to help women post-recovery, will be formally acknowledged on International Nurses Day, May 12.

“It was certainly a very big surprise when we were notified about being recognised for what we do,” Ms Wylie said.

“It’s a privilege for us to be let into these women’s lives at such a difficult time because it can be a real roller coaster ride so we aim to help them and empower them to find ways to get through, and it’s not just for the women, it’s about holistic care for the family as well.”

McGrath Foundation CEO, Petra Buchanan said many McGrath Breast Care Nurses go above and beyond the everyday when supporting people going through breast cancer.

“International Nurses Day is a fantastic opportunity to honor their remarkable contribution,” Ms Buchanan said.

“Our McGrath Breast Care Nurses act as patient advocates and they coordinate care not only for patients with breast cancer, but also for families and carers.

“The wellness program founded by Maree and Sue is a great example of this type of commitment to patient care.”

DDHHS Director of Nursing and Midwifery Services Dr Robyn Henderson said the work of Ms Wylie and Ms Fawkes was invaluable.

“Effective cancer survivorship is a core issue for women who have had a diagnosis and subsequent treatment of breast cancer,” Dr Henderson said.

“Worry and anxiety don’t necessarily end at the conclusion of treatment and the work of these nurses to support women is recognised as an integral factor in terms of recovery.”

The model developed by the Dalby-based McGrath Breast Care Nurses has been readily accepted by the first group of patients to participate.

“The wellness program model has been based on our current cardiac rehab model that I coordinate in Dalby and Tara, so we’ve modified it to suit ladies who have completed their breast cancer treatment,” Ms Fawkes said.

“It’s exercise-based but a key part of it is the support that the ladies get from each other, and this was reflected in the overwhelmingly positive feedback we’ve had from the first eight ladies who completed the program.

“At the beginning they all said that they had received wonderful support throughout the treatment phase, from the doctors, nurses and specialists who treated them, but once the treatment was all over and they got home, they felt a little bit lost.

“In that regard it has been so pleasing when we’ve collected feedback forms at the end of each session and they’ve said things like “I’m not alone with this problem” or “I thought I was the only one suffering this particular issue” and all of a sudden they realise that what they’re going through is not unique to them, and there is a way to work their way through it, and having the support has made that much easier for them.

“It was also interesting to see that each week over the course of the program the ladies would arrive earlier and earlier, because they were so keen to get here.”

Maree Wylie said one of the most pleasing aspects of the program was to see the return of confidence in the women who attended.

“We noticed that they went from looking quite frightened to being really empowered and feeling ready to get back into the swing of life, post-recovery and moving forward, and you could really see that confidence returning by the looks on their faces,” she said.

“We had one lady in the group who had finished her treatment three years ago, and another who finished six months ago, and it was really good for that lady to see someone who was three years on from recovery, and see how well she’s doing now.

“It was also very beneficial for her to hear that lady say “Oh yes, I used to have those same issues but that’s behind me now” so it showed her that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

“We’re looking forward to continuing the program because we think it’s a great way for people to access support, especially if they’re not interested or don’t need one-on-one help, but are keen to do something in a group setting where they have that focus on exercise and wellness.”

Maree and Sue will be running four groups per year with the next one starting soon. Women who are interested in finding out more about the program should phone 4672 4000.

## **ABOUT THE MCGRATH FOUNDATION:**

Jane McGrath’s personal experience has seen a team of passionate and dedicated people come together to make life for families experiencing breast cancer just that little bit easier.

The McGrath Foundation raises money to place McGrath Breast Care Nurses in communities across Australia and increase breast awareness in young people.

To help us make a difference, please visit our website [www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au](http://www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au) or join us on Facebook (mcgrathfoundation), Twitter (mcgrathfdn), Instagram (mcgrathfoundation) or LinkedIn (mcgrath-foundation) and encourage your friends to do the same.

- The McGrath Foundation raises money to place McGrath Breast Care Nurses in communities across Australia as well as increasing breast awareness in young people.
- McGrath Breast Care Nurses help families in Australia experiencing breast cancer by providing invaluable physical, psychological and emotional support from the time of diagnosis and throughout treatment. This support is provided free of charge and can be accessed through self-referral.
- Since 2005 the McGrath Foundation has supported more than 44,000 families experiencing breast cancer.
- The McGrath Foundation funds 110 McGrath Breast Care Nurse positions in communities right across Australia. The majority of these communities are in regional and rural areas.
- It costs almost \$14 million per year to fund 110 McGrath Breast Care Nurses.
- The McGrath Foundation is continually working to meet the needs of people in Australia diagnosed with breast cancer, no matter where they live or their financial situation. As soon as there is enough funding to employ a McGrath Breast Care nurse for three years we recruit for a new position and then work with health services to place them in areas that need them most.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- Every day, the Australian community supports the McGrath Foundation by making donations, hosting or attending community events or purchasing a pink product that supports our cause.
- To find out more about the McGrath Foundation visit our website ([www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au](http://www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au)), or join us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/mcgrathfoundation](http://www.facebook.com/mcgrathfoundation)), Twitter ([www.twitter.com/mcgrathfdn](http://www.twitter.com/mcgrathfdn)) or LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com/company/mcgrath-foundation](http://www.linkedin.com/company/mcgrath-foundation)) and encourage your friends to do the same.
- The McGrath Foundation was co-founded by Jane McGrath and her cricketing husband Glenn in 2005 after Jane was first diagnosed with breast cancer at just 31 years old. Jane became a passionate believer in the need for breast care nurses and greater breast awareness for all women regardless of age. The McGrath Breast Care Nurse Programme and Curve Lurve are the result of Jane's legacy.
- It is estimated that 43 people will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia every day each year<sup>1</sup>.
- In Australia, one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer by the age of 85<sup>2</sup>.
- Recent statistics show that 150 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year<sup>2</sup>.

- 90% of women diagnosed will be alive in five years<sup>1</sup>.
- 15,600 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia in 2015<sup>2</sup>.
- 15,934 women are estimated to be diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia in 2016<sup>2</sup>.
- In 2020, it is estimated 17,210 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in women<sup>3</sup>.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/cancer-types/breast-cancer/breast-cancer-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality (ACIM) Books - Breast cancer for Australia (ICD10 C50). <http://www.aihw.gov.au/acim-books/>

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Cancer in Australia: an overview 2014*. AIHW 2014

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