

Media statement

12 August 2019

Celebrating ten years of McGrath Breast Care support at Gympie Hospital

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service celebrated 10 years of McGrath Foundation Breast Care Nurse Sharon Shelford working at Gympie Hospital.

In her role as a McGrath Breast Care Nurse, Ms Shelford is a central point of contact for people with breast cancer throughout their breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and into recovery. Her services are free of charge to patients, thanks to funding provided by the McGrath Foundation.

Ms Shelford ensures clients are well supported by relevant health practitioners, facilitates appointments, results and coordinates treatment schedules. In addition to this physical care, Ms Shelford also provides emotional support to people with breast cancer and their families.

Breast cancer patient Renee said having Ms Shelford to support her was invaluable when trying to cope with such a shocking diagnosis.

“Shortly after being diagnosed I was introduced to Sharon. Within a week of meeting her she had referred me to cancer support agencies, organised information to be sent out to my family and myself and answered any questions I had regarding my diagnosis.

“During my treatment, Sharon organised referrals for the oncologist, psychologist, exercise physiologist and radiation team. I had to take leave without pay from work which meant we had to reassess our finances. Sharon organised letters from the oncologist for the bank and my work confirming my treatment,” Renee said.

“A year after my diagnosis we are still in regular contact. This week I had my first nurse-led clinic and it was reassuring to have someone I know so well complete my examination. We discussed my general health and went through some results of recent tests I had. Sharon explained the results to me which put my mind at ease.

“I have felt so well supported. To know I could reach out to Sharon has helped enormously.”

Ms Shelford said she averages about 80 newly diagnosed clients a year.

“A typical patient is under my ‘care’ for 5 years – although they are always welcome to call me at any time after this with any concerns. Most of my referrals are via BreastScreen Queensland, with patients also being able to self-refer.

“Our nurse-led follow up clinics, which Renee recently participated in, help ease the burden on the over stretched surgical and medical oncology clinics. Whilst the clinics have a medical

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focus, they also have a holistic focus, realising that a cancer diagnosis can have long term side effects both physically and psychologically once 'active' treatment is finished," she said.

"As well as my individual patients and clinics, my role also entails providing breast awareness education to various community groups, and attending fund raising events on behalf of the McGrath Foundation."

Ms Shelford said: "I can honestly hand on heart say that I love my position, and my role is both rewarding and fulfilling and hopefully it makes a difference to the people of our community who have been diagnosed with breast cancer."

www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Meet McGrath Foundation Breast Care Nurse Sharon Shelford and Breast cancer patient Renee for photos and interviews. Please confirm your attendance with media contact.

Where: Gympie Hospital, meet at the main Entrance

When: Thurs 15 Aug, 10am

ENDS

SCHHS Media contact: Alicia Temple | Alexia Kelly | 07 5202 0083 | 0408 713 747

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