

The relief of poverty and distress caused by illness and disease

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MEDIA RELEASE

Bus service invaluable to brain cancer sufferer

When doctors diagnosed Lisa Gilmer with terminal brain cancer she was given only three months to live.

Three years later and the 49-year-old remains a survivor of the lethal disease.

“The only reason I was diagnosed was because my mother came home and found me collapsed on the floor,” Ms Gilmer, of Highland Park, said.

“Before that I’d been sick for a long time and no one could tell me what it was. I knew something was wrong and I don’t know how many doctors I’d been too.

“I’d been getting seizures down my arm at night, bad enough to wake me up and I thought I had chronic fatigue syndrome. I even joined a support group for it.

“I was so tired all the time I had to give up work. I tried to explain to doctors but they really didn’t understand. So, in one way, the diagnosis didn’t come as a great shock.”

Ms Gilmer spent three days in the ICU at the Gold Coast University Hospital. First came the biopsy to enable doctors to make an accurate diagnosis and then came six weeks of radiation followed by chemotherapy tablets.

“They gave me three months ... but I’ve always been a bit stubborn. I’m still here,” she said.

“It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever been through.”

Ms Gilmer has been using the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation’s Cancer Patient Transport Service to get to and from treatments for the past three years.

The service, which operates from 6am to 6pm five days per week, makes close to 10,000 trips annually for about 1000 patients and Ms Gilmer said it was invaluable for cancer sufferers.

“You have to think of former Mayor Ron Clarke (who established the service in 2009 in memory of his late daughter Monique who passed away from cancer) ... all these patients ... they couldn’t survive without the bus service,” she said.

“You have to have it. If it was shut down people just wouldn’t go to hospital. They couldn’t get there – they just couldn’t do it. The service is just so important.

“And the staff are absolute legends. They’re amazing. They need their handprints put in the pavement.”

She said despite the huge challenge of her incredible fight against the disease, and at times feeling like giving up, the staff at the transport service and the hospital always had a way of making her feel more positive.

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“People don’t understand what you are going through. They can sympathise but you can’t describe it to anyone. You feel like you’re in your own world ... that you’ve gone into another world. You just have to fight it but it never really seems to end,” she said.

Despite her mammoth battle, Ms Gilmer has tried to fill her time with positive activities, one being to write children’s book, *The Stripy Dachshund*, which will be on sale at the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation’s Care for Cancer lunch on March 16. All funds raised from sales of the book will go to the foundation to help keep the bus service up and running.

“The Foundation has been my absolute lifeline. I couldn’t have done it without them,” she said.

“I couldn’t have done it without the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation because their bus service is awesome. The staff is awesome. You can’t get to the hospital without them. You can’t rely on other people. You need them to get you there.

“People don’t always understand that you have to go to hospital at set times. You have to be there and they’ll say they’ll do it, but they haven’t got time and so that bus service is a lifeline, an absolute lifeline.”

Gold Coast Hospital Foundation will hold fundraising lunch Care for Cancer to raise much-needed funds for the Cancer Patient Transport Service as well as chemotherapy chairs at the Gold Coast University Hospital. The lunch will be held on March 16 at Palazzo Versace. Tickets are \$110 per person or \$1100 for a table of 10 and can be booked at <http://bit.ly/2n96huS>

Gold Coasters can also donate to the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation by visiting gchfoundation.org.au/donate/.

The Gold Coast Hospital Foundation was established 23 years ago as the official charity for Gold Coast Health, which includes Gold Coast University Hospital and Robina Hospital. The Foundation raises funds to help medical professionals make a difference in the lives of sick and injured children and adults each year, delivering a range of vital programs, medical equipment and research funding. Gold Coast Hospital Foundation helps more than 95,000 each year in the local community.

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