

# The relief of poverty and distress caused by illness and disease

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Mum of 2 overcomes deadly diagnosis

Bonnie Day was in shock when she discovered she had breast cancer.

As the mother of two young children, six-year-old Maui and Kora, 3, she knew she had to survive the deadly diagnosis to be there for them as they grew.

It started in 2016 when she asked her doctor to check a lump that was irritating her breast. At the time the 34-year-old didn't believe it was anything sinister but a biopsy soon showed there were actually three lumps, two of them malignant.

"I was in shock to begin with but I'm lucky because of my beliefs," Bonnie said.

"I had hope ... but my husband Toka was beside himself. He was working in the mines at the time and had to come home because he couldn't deal with it."

Doctors decided the best option was to remove her breast as they couldn't just take the lump out, but Bonnie opted for a more drastic course of action.

"I asked them to remove both of them. My concern was the cancer would spread and I didn't want to go through an operation like this twice," she said.

Four weeks after her diagnosis, Bonnie found herself on the operating table.

"It didn't hit me how serious my condition was until after the operation. That was when it became real," Bonnie said.

"They told me five of my lymph nodes had been compromised so I had a lymph node clearance at the same time as the operation, because once cancer reaches your lymph nodes it can spread to the rest of the body."

The administration manager remained in hospital for one week followed by a course of intense chemotherapy. Gradually the dosage lessened over the six months she received it, but it didn't stop her feeling "really ill, really drained" and losing all her hair.

While Bonnie could cope with the loss of her long locks, losing her eyelashes was another story.

"It was a shock losing my eyelashes. I didn't really feel like myself, but I made sure to involve my children. They helped me choose my wigs and scarves," she said.

"We made it into something positive, not scary. And it was positive, because I was going to the hospital, getting treated and it worked."

It was her second chemotherapy treatment that nearly made her want to give up but the support of hospital staff and the thought of her young family made her persevere.

Bonnie also came to understand the importance of the hospital's chemotherapy chairs, in which every month more than 1600 patients spend up to eight hours receiving treatment.

"They were amazing. They are so comfortable and they are essential when you are having treatment because you feel so bad," she said.

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After six months of chemotherapy, Bonnie underwent five weeks of daily radiation. By this time her husband had reluctantly returned to the mines and, although it was a struggle with the children, thankfully Bonnie's family rallied around to do their bit.

"My mum Liz and the rest of my family were there to give support. But it's a hard thing drawing on that support because you think you can do it all yourself," she said.

"Your pride is already stripped from you because you've lost your breasts, your hair, your eyelashes."

Bonnie, who aims to have a breast reconstruction later this year, had six months off work but has now returned to her former life, albeit a more healthy one.

"Something like this makes you want to be healthy and to make better choices like having more veggies, eating less fatty foods and drinking less," she said.

"And now my whole family is diligent about getting checked.

"I'm positive about the future."

Gold Coast Hospital Foundation will hold fundraising Care for Cancer Lunch on March 16 at Palazzo Versace.

Foundation CEO Kim Sutton said money raised will provide much-needed funds for the Cancer Patient Transport Service, and help pay for new chemotherapy chairs at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

"Everybody is welcome to come and enjoy fine food, drinks and entertainment in the spectacular La Medusa Ballroom. There will be auctions, prizes and something for everybody at this event. Bring your family and friends along too, it is all to support a good cause. Money raised will help buy eight new chemotherapy chairs, and help keep our Cancer Patient Transport Service on the road, which makes 10,000 trips each year," Ms Sutton said.

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](http://gchfoundation.org.au/donate). The Gold Coast Hospital Foundation was established 24 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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