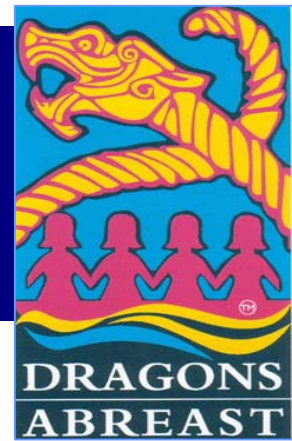


Dragons Abreast
Australia
National News Bulletin
May 2006



Celebrating Life!

Hello everyone,

This newsletter is jam packed with interesting news from around the country and I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Rosemary Shimmin from Hobart on doing such a great job with her first newsletter!

What a wonderful group of people we have involved with Dragons Abreast around the country – both our survivors and our fantastic supporters. DA member groups are so innovative – the story of Bravehearts is just extraordinary and anyone who attended the presentation at Shepparton prior to the DA dinner on Good Friday would have had the pleasure of meeting these wonderful women!

The AusDBF National Titles held at Nagambie, Victoria over the Easter weekend – saw the inaugural debut at nationals for several of our DA groups. We dedicated the Flowers on the Water ceremony to our very dear friend Sylvia Flaxman who passed away in Canberra on Good Friday. Sylvia was an inspiration to us all and one of the DA 'originals' having paddled with the very first DA team that every participated at a National Titles (2000 in Penrith, NSW). The guard of honour which followed at the end of the ceremony was the longest one I have ever seen! It was a truly magnificent tribute to a very special lady.

The May 15th issue of Australian Medicine – the AMA Magazine – has a wonderful article about Dragons Abreast – you can read it on our website by following this link and an extract of our Tribute to Sylvia Flaxman - http://www.dragonsabreast.com.au/images/australian_medicine.jpg

I would like to publicly thank Pru Menzies and all at Dragons Abreast Victoria for all their assistance with making the National Titles in Victoria such a wonderful weekend, and also to AusDBF for their ongoing support of Dragons Abreast.

The Inaugural **Simply the Breast™** Yacht Race held in Darwin on the 7th May – another innovation of DAA - sponsored by **Hogs Breath Café** and supported by **Medibank Private** proved to be extremely popular with 55 yachts turning Darwin Harbour into a giant billboard for breast cancer awareness! We are currently finalising the templates for this event.

Simply the Breast is more than a race – it is a whole package aimed at promotion of breast cancer awareness and education combined with fundraising for Dragons Abreast. The festivities officially kicked off with the launch party held at Hogs Breath Café, followed by the actual race and then the presentation dinner. The launch itself took the form of a Pink Party at Hogs Breath Café on Tuesday 4th April. Local MLA Kerry Sacilotto was the hostess for the evening and NT Chief Minister Clare Martin officially launched the Inaugural event whilst Alderman Helen Galton represented the Lord Mayor and unveiled a magnificent trophy which was to go to the winning yacht.

Medibank Private General Manager, Bob Payne said 'Medibank Private is thrilled to have the opportunity to actively support a community event in Darwin such as the Dragons Abreast, 'Simply the Breast' inaugural yacht race.

"I am personally impressed with the passion and dedication of Dragons Abreast in both the work they do to promote awareness and education of breast cancer but also in the ongoing support services they provide to survivors, their spouses and families."

"Medibank Private is keen to be actively involved in activities such as the 'Simply the Breast' yacht race that promote a fit, active and healthy lifestyle and encourage the participation of people of all ages across the community to become involved and show their support for breast cancer sufferers and survivors.

'We are committed to investing in activities that promote the health and wellbeing of our members and the broader community so supporting events such as Dragons Abreast 'Simply the Breast' yacht race are of particular importance to us, especially in raising awareness of breast cancer, encouraging early detection and demonstrating people can still lead a full and active life despite breast cancer"

Commodore of Dinah Beach yacht Club Mike Butler said "We wanted to involve both the hard core racers and social sailors – so are offered several classes of entry." Mike continued "just as breast cancer does not discriminate neither have we with this race. Everyone can join in!! Handicapped divisions include Racing and Cruising for Mono-hulls and for Multi-hulls. This race also includes a non handicap division."

Those who did not sail were not left out as thanks to Darwin Cruises & Charters they had the option of joining either the *Alfred Noble* for a seated luncheon or the *Tumlaren* for drinks and nibbles on the Darwin Harbour to watch the start of the race.

Member groups who wish to take up this idea will be able to rub their own 'Simply the Breast' as we have a template and have trademarked this event under DAA – another fantastic way to promote breast cancer awareness to a completely different section of the community and in such a 'fun' way!

Michelle Hanton, National Coordinator

THANK YOU - JO PARRY for your wonderful work as Newsletter Coordinator for the past two years!

The following email was received from Pat Hancock.

"Jo. Can I add my voice to the many who think that you have done a wonderful job with the newsletter, particularly considering all the other hats you wear. You stepped in when Anna and I really were snowed under and I was at the edge of my expertise and took the newsletter to the next stage, which needed your expertise. You have done a great job and considering I was supposed to be 'helping' I haven't really done much.

The best part of this association between us all called Dragons Abreast is that we get to team up with wonderful women from all parts of Australia and I guess also the world. That is something to be treasured.

Congratulations on a job well done and with the work you have taken on for 2007."

Editors Note: I am sure we all agree. Thank you Jo.

BRAVE HEARTS DRAGONS ABREAST – ALBURY WODONGA

I have great pleasure in introducing you to an amazing group of women from North East Victoria, who went to extraordinary lengths to become part of Dragons Abreast Australia – they built their own Dragonboat. They had limited carpentry skills and many hadn't paddled before but this did not stop these 40 members of an inspirational support group called Brave Hearts, build a magnificent boat alongside the experts and teachers of the Tafe NSW, Riverina Institute, Albury Campus and volunteers, and launch it just prior to Easter, in celebration of surviving cancer.



The Boat was named after last years special community calendar – Brave Hearts, Faces of Love, Courage and Support which featured many women and men of the region whose lives had been affected by a cancer diagnosis and resulted in total community support, which offered financial backing for the project. The success of this project has come about due to the support of the community and the enthusiasm of its wonderful participants who continually strive to prove to others that you can lead a full active life despite the physical and emotional limitations that a cancer diagnosis imposes. They have been taught and mentored and supported by the TAFE's instructors, Frank Lange, Glen Costin and Norm Peters who worked closely with the Wooden Boat Building Centre in Melbourne to ensure the boat was built to accredited specifications.

The building classes commenced in July 2005 with 4 weeks of introduction to the use of the power tools needed for the boat's construction after all participants had completed their Occupational Health and Safety Green Card requirements. This was followed by a carpentry and joinery course covering accredited modules specific to constructing the 22 seater boat, head and tail, physiotherapy and tai chi classes to prepare their bodies for the task, and was therapeutic and empowering for all involved.

Breast cancer survivor Jodie Hart encapsulated the experience by saying, "building this boat has given the power back to participants, many of whom have felt powerless due to their breast cancer journey and it has pushed their polite friendships through to lasting, more robust relationships. It has also allowed us to regain some of the innocent, carefree happiness that is often lost with a cancer diagnosis and has marked the beginning of a wonderful, positive group for the whole community to embrace and be inspired by".

A pertinent observation, not to be dismissed, was that there were no relapses or recurrences during this past twelve months which supports the research backing positive aspects of support groups and health. One member, Robyn Daly, said that when she was first diagnosed with breast cancer, she couldn't think ahead six months and now she is planning for the International Dragons Abreast meet at Caloundra in 2007.

I have never been inspired so much by such a wonderful group of people who undeniably stand by their name – **Brave Hearts**.

Jenny Black, Breast Care Nurse & Co-ordinator of Brave Hearts Dragons Abreast

WARRIORS ABREAST – ADELAIDE NEWS

Warriors Abreast Adelaide entered a team of 16 paddlers and supporters in the Mother's Day Classic last Sunday, 14th May 2006, with moneys raised going to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

It was a great morning for walking, cool and not very sunny. The walk started at Pinky Flat by the River Torrens, opposite where the masters games dragon boat races were, and meandered for 8km around the river walking trails.

There was a terrific festive atmosphere at the start, heaps of balloons, stalls, and a dozen young girls dressed as fairies on stilts walking around the crowd. The organisers put a flier, which we supplied, in each goody bag that was given to walkers and runners at the end of the event, and we had a "pink table" with pamphlets and newsletters regarding Warriors Abreast and DAA. One of our members had her photo in her local rag and three of us had a great colour picture in the Adelaide Advertiser (in our pink gear). There were approximately 2000 walkers and runners took part in a well run and happy event

SAPPHIRE WATER DRAGONS – MERIMBULA, NSW

The pink Sapphire Water Dragons Abreast ladies, and one lonely man, were out in full force outside "Images" hairdressers in Eden's main street on Saturday 13 May helping them with their annual "Cuts for Cancer" fund raising weekend.

The Dragons Abreast members have either survived breast cancer themselves or have been touched in some way by this horrible disease that affects 11,500 newly diagnosed women and 500 men each year in Australia, with 1,200 losing the battle each year.

The Dragons Abreast Australia movement uses the exciting sport of dragon boat racing to highlight the need for a cure of breast cancer, to give hope and inspiration to those just beginning their journey, and to emphasize that there is quality of life following a diagnosis, and taking part in the Cuts for Cancer day is a way of promoting the cause at the same time raising funds for cancer support at a local level.

Three pink ladies voluntarily lost their hair on Saturday, Valma Barber, Marg Henry, and Pat Helmore, and between them they raised nearly \$2000 in sponsorship money. What a great effort!

Being bald meant that the Sunday early morning paddle was exceptionally chilly, but as usual the Merimbula Lake was magical, and the added touch of Marge Snijder (aka The Flower Fairy) handing out tiny posies of flowers to all the Mothers for Mothers Day more than made up for the freezing water.



PENDRAGONS ABREAST NEWS

Pendragons can't believe the regatta season has come to an end – we have great times catching up with our new made friends from the other teams.

Pendragons took part in the Australia Day Parade in the main street of Camden. The parade gets bigger and bigger every year and the spectators make us girls feel so special. The crowd yells cheers and "Go for it pink ladies" it is a day all the girls look forward to and the amount of people who come over for a chat after the parade is unbelievable.

The group constructed the boat for the Parade out of a refrigerator box a couple of years ago to have as a display showing what we are about – "Proving to women how much enjoyment and fun dragon boats have brought to us all after the rough journey we have been on. "

In our wildest dreams when we were making the boat would we ever have dreamed of having our own real Pink Boat.

Our group is so excited as we have been able to raise sufficient funds through our local community small business people to purchase a Champion Pink Boat. The boat is leaving China mid April and we should take delivery of the boat early May. We are busy planning how we are going to transport "Our Pink Lady" from Sydney to its new home at Sydney Regatta Centre Penrith. Our group is blessed with the facility - the fellows from Pendragons who just care for us so well and now purchasing a new boat.

We will be having a launching and open day in June and would love other clubs to be part of this day. We will keep you up to date on this.

REDCLIFFE PINK SNAPDRAGONS



FIRST FUNDRAISER

Some of the members of the team at our first fundraising night, a Wine & Cheese "Pink Panther" Movie night. Lots of smiles, lots of pink, and lots of great friendships blooming as our new Pinkies Boat gains momentum.

We may have taken a little while to gather, but look out in 2006, the Redcliffe Pink Snapdragons (Dragon Boat Paddling Team) are flourishing and paddling with a passion. !!

QUEENSLAND STATE TITLES

"Beautiful one day perfect the Next"
PINK CHALLENGE TROPHY

This Pink Cup Trophy was run at the Kawana Waters on the Sunshine Coast, (although someone forgot to invite the sunshine!) in March. This was the first time that **Dragons Abreast Gold Coast** entered a full team to race under the DAA banner. We are all very proud of this. We would like to say a special "thank-you" to Michelle Hanton, who helped make this possible by agreeing to be our sweep for the day. Although she didn't "sweep" us to victory, we had a wonderful race and enjoyed the day immensely.

It was a great effort by all the girls, and at the end of the day "we are all winners".

We were extremely impressed by the venue and look forward to next year, when we share it with the rest of the world. So stay tuned and watch us draw courage, hope and inspiration from the Dragon's fire!

Grand Prix Grid Girls!



Nothing stops these DA Vics who jumped at the chance to help BCNA wave the Pink Lady flag in front of thousands (mainly blokes!) at yet another major event in Melbourne last Sunday, 2 April! What a buzz!

Lyn Swinburne thanked the 20 flag bearers:

"I really wanted to let you know how utterly GORGEOUS you all looked in pit strait....or is it straight? I was SO proud of you I wanted to jump out of the corporate box and go quite silly! Ditto Terry Bracks and Kirsten! We also got some looks although ours were mostly "What are those women doing hanging out the windows?"

*The Prime Minister from the Netherlands was there along with almost every politician you could name, so you all made a HUGE impression on them all!
Congratulations and thanks to you all."*

WARRIORS ABREAST – ADELAIDE

“YOU CAN’T KEEP A GOOD WOMAN DOWN”

Just before Julie was diagnosed, she had had her first flight in an ultra light aircraft, with the thought of learning to fly. That dream was abandoned as there were more pressing needs such as getting better and beating it. Well that was a couple of years ago, and although still on treatment, the dream has come alive again. Another Warriors Abreast paddler, Joy, whose husband Graham was hijacked and sweeps for them, just happens to be an ultra light instructor. So it all fell into place and now Julie is on her way again to learn to pilot an aircraft. The picture is of Julie and Graham after her first instructional flight, and the big grin says it all.



BUNBURY CREWSADERS – WA

Saturday 1 April heralded the first birthday of the Bunbury Crewsaders, and one year now since we became part of the DAA family. We have had quite an eventful year. After our initial Saturday morning training sessions through the winter months, we commenced our summer training in October on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

With the generous help of the Forza Dragon Boat Club and their coach Paul Harrison, we were able to participate in their November regatta in Bunbury. We all had a lovely day and I am pleased to say we won our events on the day. It was also great to be able to meet up with the Perth Amazons. Our thanks must go to the Forza team, Paul, and Yvette from the Amazons who very willingly acted as our sweep for the day. We had plans to participate in two events in Perth but lack of numbers, weather conditions and life in general stepping in did not allow this to happen.

Since then we have had a couple of ladies training as sweeps under the expert tutelage of Paul, and we hope to have them accredited by the time the next dragon boat season commences.

We still continue to train, recently reverting back to our Saturday mornings, as this seems to suit most and also allows us to socialize afterward with our coffee and Tim Tams. So we look forward to the next Forza Dragon Boat Regatta in Bunbury in November 2006.

We have had several social events through the year, the first being an Open Garden and afternoon tea. We considered that we had a very successful day even though the weather was not the best. Thank you to Annie Power for generously opening her beautiful garden to us and thank you to all the ladies who supplied all the luscious cakes and slices for afternoon tea, and of course everyone who came along.

Following this, Trish Gibbs daughter, Andrea, rallied the Donnybrook community and staged the "Funnybrook" comedy night, which raised enough money for Crewsaders to purchase team paddles, which I am pleased to say we now have. Thank you Andrea and your "Big Hoo Haa" Team from Perth for this event.

We take this opportunity to thank all those who have been so generous to us and also Piacentini and Sons for purchasing our "Dress Polo's" the pink certainly stands out. Talking of Pink, at long last our Rashies have arrived, so at the next regatta we will certainly grab their attention.

"Win a few, lose a few", we have lost some of our original members, mainly due to family commitments, etc, so it was decided to hold a "Have a go day" in February and we were lucky to sign up six new ladies who have joined in our training sessions and so far seem to enjoy the exercise and of course our Saturday morning coffee and chit chat.

We are also looking at pursuing other sorts of activities to have a change from paddling occasionally, but still being able to enjoy the great company and good humour that abounds in the Crewsaders.

A couple of our ladies are going through a tough time at present, and the Crewsaders and I am sure our DAA family, will keep them in their thoughts and prayers. Do hope you all have an eventful and successful year and look forward to perhaps meeting and sharing a paddle with some of you here in Bunbury Western Australia. Zelda would like to thank the members of the Currumbin Gold Coast team for their hospitality at Christmas and hopes to be able to return the favour one day.