

# Breast Cancer Network Australia

## Submission to the *Draft Guiding Principles for Regional Cancer Centres*

28 October 2009



### About Breast Cancer Network Australia

Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) is the peak national organisation for Australians personally affected by breast cancer. We empower, inform, represent and link together people whose lives have been affected by breast cancer.

BCNA represents more than 36,000 individual members and more than 230 Breast Cancer Member Groups from across Australia. BCNA works to ensure that women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families receive the very best information, treatment, care and support possible – no matter who they are or where they live. BCNA is represented by the pink lady silhouette. The pink lady depicts the organisation's focus, the women diagnosed with breast cancer.

BCNA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Guiding Principles for Regional Cancer Centres*. We are delighted with the Federal Government's commitment to rural and regional Australians through the establishment of Regional Cancer Centres.

### Submission outline

Our area of expertise is the experience of women diagnosed with breast cancer; therefore the comments in this submission reflect this knowledge base. We have identified two gaps in the current guidelines we would like to see addressed. Further, we also have some additional comments about the current criteria.

### Key Gaps in the Draft Guiding Principles for Regional Cancer Centres

We recommend that the two key points below be included, either through the inclusion of additional guidelines, or through their incorporation into the existing guideline structure.

#### *Quality of Care*

Without doubt, quality of care should be a core value for service development. BCNA recommends the guidelines require applicants to demonstrate:

- how each service will provide quality of care to consumers' accessing the service, and
- how the service will create healthcare pathways that are easy for consumers to access and navigate.

#### *Consumer Participation*

It is now well recognised that consumer participation in all aspects of health service development and delivery is an essential component of best practice for health care services. Consumer participation refers to the genuine and valued contribution of consumers in all stages of service planning, development and delivery. Consumer participation should involve:

- Inclusion of consumers in strategic planning and development of services
- Participation of consumers on committees or working parties that assist in the management and direction of the service, or which are overseeing specific research or service delivery projects

#### **D) Provides equitable and affordable services**

Equitable and affordable services are created by taking into account and addressing where possible, issues that can impact on consumer's access to services. The cost of travel to health services and the cost of accommodation can have a significant impact on the ability of consumers to access the best quality care. While programs such as the Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (PATS) provide some support to consumers for travel and accommodation costs, the Senate Inquiry into PATS in 2007 found that significant reforms to this program are required.

In developing equitable and affordable services, we recommend that Regional Cancer Centres consider their role in responding to the travel and accommodation needs of consumers. This could include centres providing accommodation options for those consumers who are required to be away from home for treatment for a number of days or weeks, and should be targeted to those who are most in need of assistance.

We acknowledge that there may be significant infrastructure costs associated with this recommendation; however we suggest that it is best practice to consider these issues when planning service provision.

#### **E) Addresses sustainability and workforce issues**

We know that consistency of care is highly valued by women with breast cancer through their treatment and follow up care. High staff turnover in rural and regional areas can mean that some women may experience a lack of consistency in their care, which can have a direct and negative impact on the information and emotional support that women receive. These issues need to be considered by services when planning for workforce requirements.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this process. If you would like to discuss any of the points in this submission further, please contact:

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