SPRING 2026

Lifeblood

The difference you make



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Blood Cancer NZ



A message from the CEO

Your support is making a real difference for New Zealanders living with blood cancer.

One in 18 New Zealanders will develop blood cancer in their lifetime. When a diagnosis comes, everything can change in an instant – not just for the person diagnosed, but for everyone who loves them. It can be an uncertain and unsettling time, and it's when the support of a caring community matters most.

In this issue of Lifeblood, you'll see some of the many ways your generosity is helping people navigate that journey while also creating lasting change for everyone affected by blood cancer.

September is Blood Cancer Awareness Month, an important opportunity to help more New Zealanders recognise the signs and symptoms of blood cancer and seek medical advice when something doesn't feel right.

Because blood cancer symptoms can be vague and easily mistaken for other conditions, raising awareness is vital. Earlier recognition can lead to earlier investigation and diagnosis, helping people access the care they need sooner. Thanks to your support, we're sharing reliable information more widely than ever before, including with communities that have historically been harder to reach.

Your generosity is also helping us advocate for better outcomes for patients and whānau. In July, Blood Cancer NZ played a leading role in bringing together 17 patient organisations to launch the Forbidden Pharmacy campaign. This powerful public installation highlighted more than 200 medicines that are improving and saving lives overseas but remain unfunded in New Zealand.

The response has been extraordinary. Around 1,500 people visited the installation in a single day, while thousands more engaged online. Patients bravely shared their stories, and representatives from political parties, including the Minister of Health, came to listen and acknowledge that more needs to be done.

The campaign has already helped prompt the first dedicated medicines policy announcement of the election campaign, with a commitment to a long-term approach and sustained investment. While there's still much work ahead, it's an encouraging step forward, and we'll continue advocating until New Zealanders, and our blood cancer community, has access to the medicines they need.



Health Minister Simeon Brown with representatives of the 17 patient organisations behind the Forbidden Pharmacy campaign

If you'd like to add your voice in support of the campaign, please sign the open letter at **forbiddenpharmacy.org**

Everything you'll read about in this issue is possible because of you. Your generosity provides information, practical support and hope for people facing blood cancer today, while helping create a better future for everyone affected.

Thank you for standing with our community.



Tim Edmonds
Blood Cancer NZ Chief Executive

How you helped Parker's light shine again

When nine-year-old Parker was diagnosed with a life-threatening blood disorder, Blood Cancer NZ helped his family through months of treatment, separation and uncertainty.

Parker was typically a funny, outgoing nine-year-old who loved school, Lego and making people laugh. So when unexplained bruises began appearing on his body, his mum Renee knew something wasn't right.

When his gums started bleeding, Renee rushed him to the doctor, who told her to take him straight to the ER. Tests showed that Parker had almost no platelets, putting him at risk of uncontrolled bleeding. He needed an emergency blood transfusion to save his life.

Parker was diagnosed with severe aplastic anaemia, a rare blood condition where the bone marrow stops making essential blood cells. His best hope was a bone marrow transplant, but neither of his brothers was a match and a potential Australian donor fell through.

Finally, a 22-year-old man in Germany was found to be a match. Parker underwent gruelling chemotherapy before receiving the donor's cells, then spent six weeks isolated in his hospital room with almost no immune system.

The separation was especially hard for Parker and his brothers, Jasper and Coen, who had always been inseparable.

Throughout it all, Blood Cancer NZ's Tim Maifelini, affectionately known as *"Big Tim"*, was there to support the family with guidance, reassurance and a familiar face during an incredibly difficult time.



Blood Cancer NZ's Kids' Club support gave Jasper and Coen a chance to play, talk and process what was happening, while activities and visits brought moments of fun and connection into Parker's hospital room.

"I started to see the happy light we were losing in Parker come back," Renee says. *"I saw him smile and engage again. It was beautiful."*

Tim helped Parker stay connected with school through our Monkey in My Chair programme, taking a toy monkey to Parker's classroom to sit in his chair while he was away. The programme also provided a fun and accessible way for his classmates to understand what Parker was going through.

There were Tuesday pizzas during tough hospital days, coffees for exhausted parents and expert guidance whenever Renee needed to talk.

"Blood Cancer NZ kept filling our depleted bucket so that we could show up for each other better," Renee says.

Today, Parker's bone marrow contains 100% donor cells. His recovery continues slowly, but his humour and his unmistakable smile are shining through.

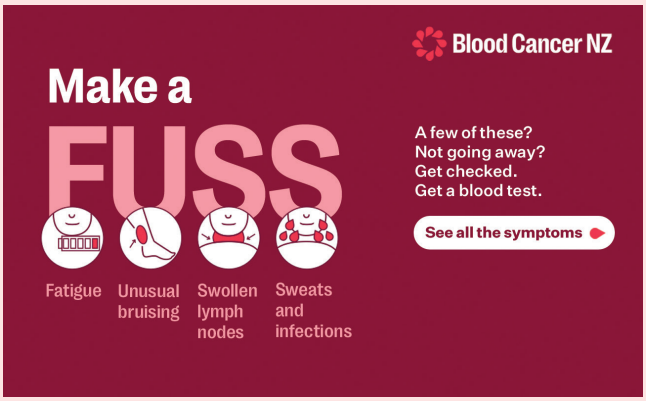
Thanks to the support of people like you, Blood Cancer NZ could care for Parker and his family, helping them feel supported, understood and less alone through an incredibly difficult year.

Taking blood cancer awareness further

September is Blood Cancer Awareness Month. Thanks to your support, we can help more New Zealanders recognise the signs of blood cancer – wherever they live.

More than 27,000 people across Aotearoa New Zealand are living with blood cancer or a related blood condition.

This September we ask people to Make a FUSS. The signs and symptoms of blood cancer can sometimes be easy to overlook or mistaken for other conditions. Knowing what to look out for and speaking with your GP if something doesn't fell right, can help people get the answers and support they need sooner.



Some signs and symptoms can include:

- Persistent fatigue
- Night sweats
- Repeat infections & fevers
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Unexplained weight loss
- Bone, back or rib pain
- Anaemia
- Itchy skin

Having any of these symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you have blood cancer, but it's important to get anything unusual or persistent checked.

Taking awareness into rural New Zealand

For people living and working in rural communities, accessing health information and seeking medical advice can sometimes be more difficult.

That's why Blood Cancer NZ has developed a new booklet specifically for rural New Zealanders, helping people understand blood cancer, recognise possible signs and symptoms, and know when to seek medical advice.

The booklet also looks at factors that may be associated with blood cancer risk, including some workplace and environmental exposures, and provides practical advice to help people protect their health at work.



Research suggests farmers may have a higher risk of developing some blood cancers, although the reasons are not yet fully understood. Environmental exposures, genetics and workplace conditions may all play a part.

Thanks to supporters like you, we can take important information like this into rural and hard-to-reach communities, helping more New Zealanders recognise the signs of blood cancer and know when to seek help.

Turning shock into strength for Mel

After Mel was diagnosed with myeloma, her family and friends rallied around her. Now, as 'Mel's Minions', they're walking together for Shine for a Cure.

Mel had just retired and was enjoying the life she loved. At Bethells Beach, three of her four children lived on the same property, with her youngest only kilometres away. There were barbecues, pizza nights, grandchildren's sport and plans to travel.

Just days after returning from a long-awaited trip to Samoa, Mel reached behind her back and felt a sharp pain shoot through her shoulder and neck.

Mel had always been healthy, so she assumed she had pulled a muscle. Instead, an X-ray showed something much more serious – a tumour inside her shoulder that was splitting the bone around it. Further tests confirmed that she had myeloma, an incurable blood cancer.

Doctors explained that while they couldn't cure Mel's myeloma, they would do everything they could to control it. After earlier radiation treatment failed to shrink a tumour, Mel's treatment journey took another turn, and she found herself facing a stem cell transplant. The treatment took its toll, leaving her with constant nausea for five weeks.

During this uncertain time, Mel and her husband Michael found support through Blood Cancer NZ.

Because of supporters like you, Blood Cancer NZ can provide trusted information and guidance when families like Mel's are facing the unknown.

Now Michael and their daughter are rallying friends and family to join 'Mel's Minions' for Shine for a Cure – Blood Cancer NZ's September fundraising walk in support of everyone affected by blood cancer.

At first, Michael expected it to be a family walk. Then messages began arriving from people wanting to stand alongside Mel.



> *"Without Blood Cancer NZ, you wouldn't have the resources to learn about it properly, or people to help you,"* Mel says. *"They really help if you're stuck with anything.*

"People were calling out of the blue, asking, 'Where does the walk start? We'll meet you there,'" he says. *"I didn't expect so many people to support it. I was blown away."*

Some days, cancer and treatment leave Mel too exhausted to do the things she loves, but she remains determined to make the most of her time with her children and grandchildren.

"I just take one day at a time," she says. *"I want to get on with my life and be really strong through all of this."*

Help shine a light on blood cancer.

Join us in Auckland or Christchurch on 19 September and help fund critical research towards a cure. Visit **shineforacure.org.nz** to register or donate.

Shine for a Cure

Saturday 19 September



Nearly 10 years on, Graham is still part of Jeanette's life



This winter, we introduced you to Jeanette and Graham, whose lives were turned upside down by a diagnosis of acute myeloid leukaemia.

Graham endured months of intensive treatment and hospital stays. Through it all, your support meant Tim from Blood Cancer NZ could be there for both Graham and Jeanette – offering information, reassurance and a familiar face during an incredibly difficult time.

Sadly, Graham's leukaemia returned, and he died at the age of 71.

When we spoke with Jeanette, it had been nearly 10 years since she lost the man she had known since she was 18.

She told us that learning to live without Graham had taken time.

"We did so much together," she said. *"I think it's just the companionship, the friendship. He was just my* person."

For a long time, Jeanette says she felt lost without him. But gradually, life began to move forward. Her family and grandchildren became an important source of joy, and she found herself adjusting to a life that looked very different from the one she had shared with Graham.

"Life moves on and you've got to move with it," she said.

One thing that didn't disappear after Graham died was Jeanette's connection with Blood Cancer NZ.

Tim kept in touch and encouraged her to come along to a local support group. At first, Jeanette wasn't sure she belonged there anymore.

"I said, 'But Graham's died,'" she remembers.

But Tim encouraged her to come anyway. When Jeanette eventually walked through the door, Tim was there to welcome her warmly. She came back again - and kept coming back.

Nearly 10 years later, she is still attending the group – not only receiving support herself but helping others by sharing what she and Graham had been through.

Graham is still very much part of Jeanette's life too. She keeps his ashes at home, talks to him, and remembers the many years and adventures they shared together.

And when she spoke with us, Jeanette was looking forward to a family trip to Fiji, where she planned to visit Denarau Golf Course – one of the projects Graham had been most proud to help build.

Your support helped Jeanette and Graham through some of the hardest days of their lives. And years later, that care and connection are still making a difference.

Thank you for helping families like Jeanette's know they don't have to face blood cancer – or what comes after – alone.

Your impact – according to patients

April 2025 to March 2026

New support referrals – patients and whānau reached when they needed us most

1,798

Support groups held, both online and in-person, creating connection and community

401

Amount invested in research to bring new hope and better treatments

$649,825

Passing it on: words of wisdom from those who have been there

When life is turned upside down by blood cancer, advice from someone who truly understands can make all the difference.

A diagnosis can bring uncertainty, difficult decisions and countless questions. But within the blood cancer community, there is also a wealth of hard-won wisdom, kindness and support.

Recently, we asked members of our community to share their top tip for someone starting out. From taking things one day at a time to accepting help and speaking up when something doesn't feel right, their responses were honest, practical and full of encouragement.

Here, they share the words they hope will help others feel a little less alone on the road ahead.

Jacque

"What you are feeling – the overwhelm, confusion and disbelief – is all valid. Take it one step at a time, and go easy on yourself."

Sharon

"People want to help; they just don't always know how. Involve them, give them a job, and take your family and friends on the journey."

Michelle

"Take someone to your doctor's or consultant appointments. Another set of ears can help take in all the information you're being given."

Tracy

"Celebrate the wins and the small stuff. Treasure every moment with your loved ones. Take it one moment at a time – and accept help."

Duncan

"Remember every person dealing with blood cancer is different and as a result, comparison even if it seems like the same diagnosis, isn't helpful."

Mary

"Buy a good thermometer and a soft toothbrush. Take charge of your healthcare and diarise everything, including changes to your medication."

A legacy of hope for future generations



After living with blood cancer for more than 25 years, Patrick knows just how important it is to have the right information, treatment and support.

His blood cancer journey began unexpectedly. Patrick had been donating blood for decades when, during one appointment, the blood service noticed something wasn't right.

Further tests confirmed that Patrick had multiple myeloma. Fortunately, it had been discovered at an early stage.

Over the years, Patrick underwent a bone marrow transplant, chemotherapy, and several long-term treatments. Today, he is grateful that his myeloma is in remission.

Throughout his journey, Patrick valued the opportunity to connect with others through Blood Cancer NZ. His local patient support group introduced him to people facing similar experiences, while the Blood Cancer Patient Forum helped him learn more about his disease and developments in treatment.

After Patrick's wife passed away, he decided it was time to put his own Will in place. Having experienced first-hand the difference Blood Cancer NZ had made during his journey; he chose to leave a percentage of his estate to help others affected by blood cancer.

Patrick hopes his gift will help ensure that future patients can access the same support that meant so much to him, while also contributing to research that will continue to improve treatments and outcomes.

Like Patrick, you can create a lasting legacy of hope by including a gift to Blood Cancer NZ in your Will.

> *When you see the number of people in the haematology ward, these are people in the prime of their life who have been struck down by blood cancer. It's an area that needs more research.*

A gift of any size can help ensure that future generations of New Zealanders facing blood cancer receive vital information, connection and support, while contributing to better treatments and brighter futures.

Leaving even 1% of your estate could make a profound difference for people affected by blood cancer – while still leaving 99% for the people you love.



A lasting way to show your support

If you would like to create your own lasting legacy of hope for blood cancer patients and their families, you can get in touch with Kaci from our Gifts in Wills team at 027 363 7151 or visit our website **www.lbcnz.link/wills** to find out more.

Blood Cancer NZ

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