

Lifeblood

The difference you make

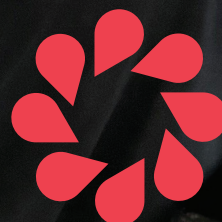


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**Blood
Cancer
NZ**



A message from the CEO

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

When someone is diagnosed with blood cancer, they need support, information and someone to help them through the uncertainty. Over the past year, you've helped us stand alongside 3,325 patients and whānau.

But patients also need a health system ready to respond with timely diagnosis, specialist care, and access to modern treatments that are available in comparable countries. That's why advocacy is such an important and growing part of Blood Cancer NZ's work.

In this edition of Lifeblood, I'm pleased to share a major milestone with you: Our State of Blood Cancer in New Zealand report was launched at Parliament in April and has already led to new commitments from the health system.

The report highlights the scale and impact of blood cancer. Around 27,000 New Zealanders are living with blood cancer, more than 3,000 are diagnosed each year, and it is now the third leading cause of cancer death in New Zealand. Blood cancer patient Andrew Mackintosh shared his experience at the launch, and you can read his story on the next page.

Importantly, the report shows New Zealand is falling further behind in access to modern blood cancer care and treatment. For



The report's launch at Parliament. Left to right: Professor Robert Weinkove (Clinical Director of the Malaghan Institute), Andrew Mackintosh (blood cancer survivor), Hon Simeon Brown (Minister of Health), Tim Edmonds (CEO), Pene Milne (Board Chair), Rosie Shaw (Head of Advocacy) and David Downs (Board Member).

patients and whānau, this can mean fewer options, more stress and lives being lost when better outcomes are clinically possible. It sets out a roadmap towards our clear goal of no lives needlessly lost to blood cancer.

In response, the Minister of Health, Hon Simeon Brown, announced a dedicated Blood Cancer Oversight Group. This is a first step towards faster, more coordinated progress.

My expectation and the government's expectation is that this new oversight group will sharpen the focus, accelerate progress, and ensure blood cancer gets the attention it deserves. Patients should not have to fight to be seen. Advocates should not have to fight to be heard. And clinicians should not have to work around a system that does not support them.
– Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health

While this is just the beginning, it shows what advocacy can achieve. Patients are being heard, and change is being set in motion.

Blood Cancer NZ receives no government funding. That independence allows us to speak up for patients and hold the system to account. But our advocacy is only possible because of your support.

Thank you for helping keep patients at the centre, strengthening their voice, and pushing for the changes New Zealanders with blood cancer urgently need.

With gratitude,

Tim Edmonds
Blood Cancer NZ Chief Executive

P.S. You might have noticed we've changed our name from Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand to Blood Cancer NZ. While our name has changed, our purpose has not. Your support remains just as important – helping families facing blood cancer today, and driving change towards better outcomes tomorrow through research and advocacy.

Living in free fall – and fighting for better



Blood cancer survivor Andrew Mackintosh knows how close he came to slipping through the cracks of New Zealand's health system. His story is a powerful reminder of why advocacy matters – and how your support makes this work possible.

“My blood cancer diagnosis came as a shock, as it does for many. I was told I had a 40-50% chance of survival. Immediately, my life was in free fall.

At first, I thought the falling would continue for whatever time I had left. But then it didn't. I was wrapped in support.

My family stepped up front and centre. Other blood cancer patients shared perspective and kindness. Blood Cancer NZ offered considered advice and a kind ear, and the medical team showed me there was a way through. Together, we got the cancer under some control.

But then I couldn't recover from the treatment, so it couldn't continue. Only one option remained: a stem cell transplant.

That's when the mess started. I was put on a long waitlist, relying on compassionate access to an unfunded medicine to keep the cancer controlled in the meantime. Seven months later, when my place on the waitlist finally came up, we found the cancer was back in force. I couldn't have the transplant as planned.

I was in free fall again.

The medical team did everything they could, and 42 days later, they got me back to transplant readiness. I was relieved, but I was so sick that survival felt unlikely.

Stem cell transplant is brutal. I cannot even describe how hard it was on me, on my wife bearing the load beside me, and on my son.

But I lived. I am grateful.

Some patients I met during my time on the cancer ward have had their voices silenced. Some fell right through the cracks in our system, and they simply can't tell their stories now.

Shortly after my transplant, my father was diagnosed with leukaemia, and his age meant a stem cell transplant wasn't possible. He died just weeks ago as I sat by his side.

I now fear for my son. I need to know that if he ever finds himself in that same free fall after a blood cancer diagnosis, he will get the best shot at the best outcome.

Blood Cancer NZ helps our community to speak with one voice. They give a voice to those who haven't made it. And they advocate for the New Zealand families who will face a blood cancer or a blood disorder in the future.”



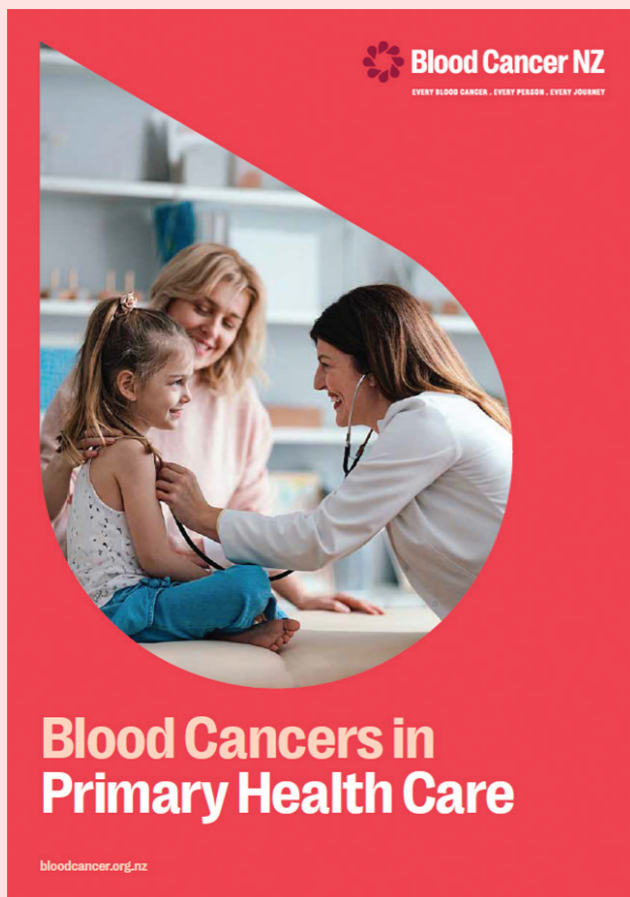
Stories like Andrew's highlight a difficult truth: that even with dedicated medical teams, people can face delays and barriers to care.

That's where your support makes a difference. Because of you, we can keep pushing for fairer access to treatments and a system that works better for everyone, so no one is left in free fall.

Better care for blood cancer patients – made possible by you

Because of your support, people facing blood cancer are getting better, more informed care, right from the very start of their journey.

Blood Cancer NZ has recently launched the **Blood Cancers in Primary Health Care** booklet. It's a practical resource designed to support GPs and nurse practitioners in community health settings across Aotearoa. And it's something your generosity helped bring to life.



Right now, 27,000 New Zealanders are living with blood cancer. Unlike many other cancers, there's no routine screening available. That means the first signs are often picked up in a GP clinic, or sometimes missed altogether.

With your help, primary healthcare professionals now have clearer guidance to:

- Recognise early warning signs
- Understand different blood cancer types
- Support patients and their whānau throughout their journey

This includes an especially important time – when people return to their GP for care after hospital treatment. It can be a period filled with uncertainty, but because of you, GPs are better equipped to provide the ongoing care and reassurance patients need.

The booklet even includes a section written directly for patients, helping people to better understand their condition, ask informed questions, and feel more in control during a difficult time.

This resource is a powerful example of how your generosity reaches far beyond a single moment. By supporting education and awareness in primary health care, you are ensuring that Kiwis affected by blood cancer receive more timely, informed and compassionate care – now and into the future.

Want to take a look?

You can now download *Blood Cancers in Primary Health Care* from the Blood Cancer NZ website via the QR code below, or email supportservices@bloodcancer.org.nz to request a printed copy.



Kimberley's life-changing diagnosis



How your support gave her strength when she needed it most

In 2024, Kimberley had just begun her OE. After travelling around Europe with her boyfriend, she settled in London and was excited to start her new job. Then a blood cancer diagnosis changed everything.

Just four months after arriving in London, Kimberley started to feel unwell. She was constantly exhausted and had a cough that wouldn't go away. When a pharmacist suggested she ask for a chest X-ray, Kimberley had no idea how serious things were.

The X-ray immediately showed that something wasn't right, and further tests revealed a large mass between Kimberley's lungs.

"We had to do more testing in London, because they wouldn't let us fly to New Zealand," she recalls.

Finally, after a terrifying month of investigations, she was allowed to return home.

Back in Auckland, Kimberley was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma and began chemotherapy straight away. At first, the treatment seemed to be working. But after another two rounds, she received devastating news: the cancer was growing again.

Kimberley would need a stem cell transplant.

"Going into that was really daunting," Kimberley says. "I had no idea what to expect."

At one of the hardest moments of her life, Kimberley found support through Blood Cancer NZ – made possible by kind supporters like you.

Rachel from Blood Cancer NZ's Support Services team helped her to understand what lay ahead.

"She connected me with a guy who'd been through a transplant a few years ago," Kimberley says. At a time when everything felt unknown, that connection gave Kimberley reassurance and helped her feel less alone.

During her hospital stay, Kimberley also found comfort in a weekly Blood Cancer NZ support group on the ward.

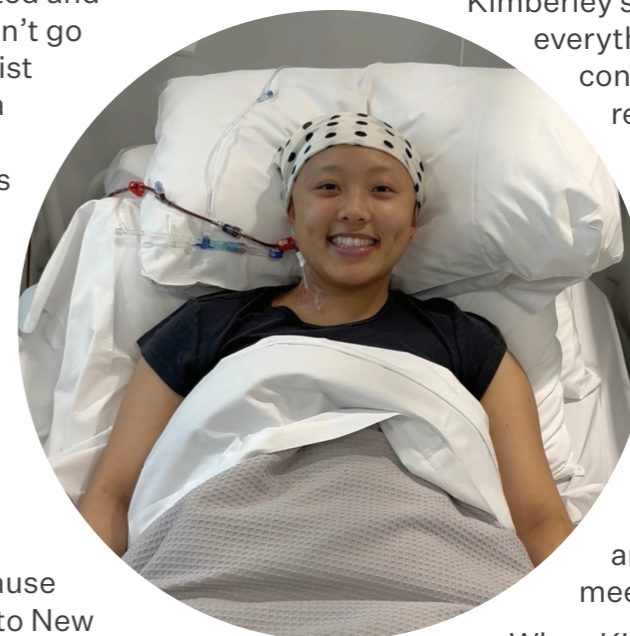
"It was something to look forward to," she recalls. "We'd get coffee and just talk. It was great to meet other patients."

When Kimberley's immune system became too weak for her to attend, Rachel visited her instead. That support – made possible by you – helped Kimberley get through one of the most challenging experiences of her life.

Today, Kimberley is focused on rebuilding her health – and, for the first time in a long time, she's able to start thinking about what's next.

Whatever the future holds, Kimberley knows she doesn't have to face it alone.

Because of you, Blood Cancer NZ is there for patients like Kimberley and their whānau every step of the way.



An update on Isaac – and how you’re still making a difference



Earlier this year, we told you about Isaac – a bright, active 13-year-old whose life was suddenly turned upside down by an aggressive form of lymphoma. What followed were months of uncertainty, isolating hospital stays, and incredibly tough treatment.

Because of your generosity, Blood Cancer NZ was able to stand alongside Isaac and his whānau through every stage, offering practical support, connection, and care when they needed it most.

Today, your kindness is still making a difference for Isaac and his family as they find their feet.

His mum, Kelly, recently shared this update with us:

“Isaac is doing really well. He has started the gradual process of returning to everyday life, including going back to school and picking up some of his sports and hobbies again. We have now moved to three-monthly scans to continue monitoring the remaining tumour. Thankfully, these have all been positive so far.

The transition home has been challenging at times. Isaac is easily fatigued, and we are navigating the ongoing side effects from intensive chemo.

As a family, we are still finding the balance of what life looks like now and working our way through this next phase together. Isaac is making memories and adventuring with our new dog, Marlo, which was a goal he set during his time in hospital.

Blood Cancer NZ continues to support Isaac’s sister Bella through Kids’ Club, which she loves – and I am so grateful for this.

We are so thankful for the kindness we have received, and to everyone who supports Blood Cancer NZ so they can continue supporting families like ours.

You have made such a difference to our whole family.”

Your impact – according to patients

In our most recent Patient Survey, we heard from over 750 patients who’ve been supported by Blood Cancer NZ. Here’s what they told us:

81% of patients said the support they received – thanks to you – made a positive difference to their health journey

What patients told us matters most:

- Access to trusted, blood cancer-specific information
- Resources they can return to when they need them
- Opportunities to learn and better understand what lies ahead
- Connecting with others who truly understand their experience

Real support, when it’s needed most

60% of patients said the financial impact of their diagnosis was moderate or severe. Your support helps provide emergency vouchers for petrol, parking and groceries – easing pressure during an already overwhelming time.

Your generosity makes all of this possible. Thank you for helping provide comfort, connection and practical support to people affected by blood cancer when they need it most.

Winter warmer – a hearty soup made for sharing

As the days start to cool down, there’s nothing more comforting than a warm bowl of soup. This much-loved recipe comes from Emma Barker, the head of our Support Services team at Blood Cancer NZ. It’s her go-to winter warmer – simple, nourishing, and perfect for sharing (or freezing in batches for later).

Emma and her team support people through some incredibly challenging moments, and often it’s the simple things – like keeping warm, eating well, and taking things one day at a time – that can make a real difference.

Thanks to you, that kind of care and support is there when it’s needed most.



Emma, head of our Support Services team, shares her favourite hearty soup recipe

Emma's green soup

- serves around 20 (halve the ingredients to make less)

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 onions
- 1 whole garlic bulb (or 8 cloves)
- A big chunk of fresh ginger, chopped
- 1-2 chillies
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- A couple of veggie stock cubes (or bone broth)
- Veggies of your choice - Emma suggests 3 kumara, 2 whole broccolis, 1 whole cauliflower, a large bunch of spinach, a large bunch of silver beet and 1 leek
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 can coconut cream



Method

In a large pot, gently fry the onion and garlic in the coconut oil. Add the ginger, chillies, veggie stock, salt and pepper, cumin and coriander, and stir for a minute.

Pour in a kettle of boiling water and add the vegetables, roughly chopped. Start with those that take longer to cook, such as kumara. Add more hot water as needed so the vegetables are just covered.

Simmer until everything is cooked through, then blend thoroughly with a stick blender.

Stir through the coconut cream and lemon juice, season to taste, and enjoy!



Stepping up to make a difference

Olympic marathon runner Pete Pfitzinger is no stranger to pushing his body to its limits. But last year, after being diagnosed with myeloma, he took on a very different kind of challenge – supporting Blood Cancer NZ while still on his own blood cancer journey.

In 2023, Pete visited the GP for his yearly check-up. When a blood test came back abnormal, he was sent for more investigations and told that one possibility was myeloma, a type of blood cancer.

“It was a shock,” he says. “You’re getting all these tests and results – trying to understand what they all mean.”

The diagnosis was confirmed, and Pete began chemotherapy before undergoing a gruelling stem cell transplant. The first two weeks were tough.

“I was so nauseous,” he recalls. “I remember one time they brought me the dinner I’d ordered, and I looked at it and just started to cry. I wanted it, but I just couldn’t eat.”

Thankfully, after the transplant and further chemotherapy, Pete was told he was in remission and began long-term maintenance treatment. But like many people living with blood cancer, he knows his cancer will likely return at some point.

Pete also knows there are treatments available overseas, such as CAR T-cell therapy and daratumumab, which could be

critical if he relapses. Unfortunately, many of them are still unavailable or unfunded in New Zealand.

“That’s why Blood Cancer NZ’s advocacy work is so important,” he says.

It’s your support that makes this work possible. You ensure Blood Cancer NZ can keep advocating for better access to treatments, so that when people like Pete need them, they’re available – not out of reach.



When Pete learned about Blood Cancer NZ’s Step Up Challenge – where supporters raise money and climb the 51 floors of the Sky Tower – it seemed like a natural way to give back.

In the lead-up to the event, alongside stair training, Pete reached out to friends and family, sharing his story and fundraising for

Blood Cancer NZ’s work. The response was incredible – together, they raised more than \$30,000 to support people affected by blood cancer.

With his family cheering him on from below, Pete pushed through his pre-race nerves and made it up the tower in good time. He’s already planning to return this year.

“It was really special,” he says. “If you’re thinking about it, I’d encourage you to get out there and do it! It’s a great way to support people going through this.”

Events like Step Up are one of the many ways our community, including supporters like you, help make this work possible.

1103 STEPS COUNTLESS REASONS
THE ONLY WAY IS UP

Blood Cancer NZ
STEP UP SKY TOWER CHALLENGE

TOGETHER WE STEP UP
SUNDAY, 2 AUGUST 2026

Sign up today at stepupchallenge.org.nz