



in the LOOP

The monthly e-newsletter from Dragons Abreast Australia - December 2009

This will be the last issue of In the Loop for 2009. We hope you have enjoyed the new look format introduced in August and we will be continuing to tweak the contents. We love to receive your feedback and contributions – so keep them coming to newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au

Our national office has undergone some big changes in 2009 – with the major one being the move into our very own **'proper' office** (rather than in a granny flat) which was **officially opened** on the 11th July. The office continues to be a wonderful hub for those on the breast cancer journey to connect and this email was recently received from one of our members after a recent Saturday morning get together *"All the ladies really enjoyed themselves. I know it helps some of them tremendously, just for them to make that first move is so very good, especially the ladies that are struggling"* - we like to think it is the dragon spirit at work.

Thank you all for your amazing support in 2009
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

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Dragons Abreast Tasmania

The Coming of the Dragon to Tasmania

In 2010 Dragons Abreast Australia will be celebrating the twelfth year of paddling for breast cancer survivors in this country. We have led the way in many regional areas of Australia where there have been no dragon boats until the people started to hear about Dragons Abreast.

Tasmania is an excellent example of the positive impact that Dragons Abreast has had on those travelling the journey with breast cancer as well as on the development of the sport.

Dragons Abreast in began in Tasmania in 2002, when Sheena Short, the facilitator of the local Encore group asked participants if anyone would like to be part of a Steering Committee to commence Dragons Abreast in Tasmania. Louise Woodruff, Chris van Buuren and myself put up our hands. The Steering Committee was duly formed which consisted of four survivors, a husband and a friend.

It was a hard slog as no one had heard about Dragon Boats, there were no existing Dragon Boat clubs in Tasmania. We started by speaking at local Lions, Rotary, Zonta, and anyone else who would listen, firstly to explain what dragon boating was, and the benefits it provided for breast cancer survivors. A Dragon Boat to most Tasmanians was a class of yacht. We were given some funny looks, for here were a group of women of differing ages, shapes and sizes wanting to paddle a 12 metre boat!

We had numerous fund raising functions to spread the awareness of our cause, and the Steering Committee became the formal committee, with a Constitution drafted, and became an incorporated Body, all without a boat. We were then given a \$10,000 Grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund, what excitement!! We could now order a boat.

Before the boat's arrival there were many sessions sitting with clunker paddles in chairs upstairs in the Rowing Club trying to simulate being in the boat. Looking back we were so naïve, but this was the fun part, since we had to do everything ourselves, which, on reflection, laid the foundation for a strong club. Michelle, of course, was a huge help during our formation.

In 2003 our first boat, "Boobiella", arrived, what an exciting day that was, and in October she was blessed and launched, Michelle was the Sweep, as she had promised Sheena and Louise that she'd travel down and do this. The eye dotting was performed by the wife of the Governor of Tasmania, Mrs Jocelyn Cox. The blessing was done by 20 Jin-gang Dhyana Buddhist Monks.

As there was no competition to race against we attended Regattas, Festivals, and paddled on the river to spread the word to as many of the general public as we could.

Several members travelled to the Masters Games on the Big Island to gain experience. Since 2003 we have travelled to Vancouver, Singapore, Ber-

lin, Shanghai, along with many Big Island cities. A full team from Hobart took part at the Nationals at Nagambie, at two Chinese New Year events, Abreast in Australia in Caloundra, and will at the forthcoming Peterborough Festival in Canada.

Hobart now has three dragon boats and a Recovery Boat, named the Chrissie-Lou, after two of the founding members, who have lost their battle with breast cancer and graduated to the Angels Abreast team. Whenever we are on the water they still have a presence with us.

The second Dragons Abreast group was formed in **Devonport**, under the guidance of **Irene Westcombe**, who, sadly, is now also among our **Angels Abreast** team. **Launceston** was the third group to become established, largely due to the efforts of **Kathy McConnell**.

Dragon boating has come of age in Tasmania. There is now a sporting dragon boat club, the **Derwent Storms** in Hobart, and it is a sport which is ready to take off in Tasmania, largely due to the influence of Dragons Abreast clubs, who have spread the initial awareness amongst the public of what a great team sport it is.

From those small beginnings Tasmania is very proud that the Inaugural Dragons Abreast Australia member convention will be held from September 17 to 19th 2010 in Hobart – with paddling taking place on the Franklin.

Moira Cannell Founding Member Dragons Abreast Tasmania.

Personal Perspectives on Dragons Abreast

From one of our new survivors in Canberra

I have been involved with Dragons Abreast for about a year and it has been the most healing part of my cancer journey. I am so thankful to the wonderful ladies in Dragons Abreast for welcoming me to paddling. The fundraising regatta this year was a first for me in a support and organizational role. It was fabulous! Two teams from the American Embassy participated in supporting me and Breast Cancer. We had a fabulous day and want to return every year! I will so miss Dragons Abreast when I return to my home in the US next July. My kudos to Marion and the Dragons Abreast crew in Canberra for the event and for their support in my recovery.



*Cheryl Brower
Community Liaison Office
US Embassy, Canberra, Australia*

A Supporters Perspective

My name is Rachel Hall and I am 14 years old. I am a member of Coffs Coast Dragon Boat Club and supporter member Dragons Abreast Coffs Coast.



I first heard of Dragon Boat paddling a few years ago when my mum started. I started paddling a year ago after my mum passed away. I participated in both the recent Coffs Coast regatta and the Dragons Abreast October regatta for my mum and because I know if she was still here she would be involved and doing as much as possible. It also makes me feel close to her.

At the Coffs Coast Regatta I am registered with my team - Coffs Coast Dragon Boat Club and

I also gathered some school friends and we entered our own team called Woopi Wiggles. The people involved in our team Woopi Wiggles had never paddled before but all had a ball! This years Dragons Abreast Regatta in Darling Harbour was an amazing experience for me as I have not been to a Dragons Abreast event before apart from a dinner that was held in Coffs Harbour. I really loved the harbour cruise, the friendship extended to me by all the ladies from across Australia and the fact we all had such a great time despite age differences :)



I have been touched by the effects of breast cancer, I believe I am a better person after drawing strength from my Mum who loved life and family. I love Dragons Abreast!

Rachel Hall



Personal Perspectives cont...

Reflection

As we approach the end of each year I find myself sometimes pondering but also taking the time to celebrate the fact I am still here and indeed that our Dragons Abreast organisation exists. I actually have several reasons to celebrate.

- I was initially diagnosed Christmas Eve 1996 (what a Christmas present that was!). However, I am able to celebrate my 13th anniversary this year– not bad.
- November 1998 I was one of the original survivors who took to the waters with Michelle at Lake Alexander in Darwin, for what was to become the inaugural / birth of Dragons Abreast Australia – Wow! How far things have progressed since then and I am still here to help tell the tale.
- December 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of my recurrence with the dreaded disease – another pretty good reason to celebrate!
- Added to all of the above, this year I celebrated my 60th birthday – one I thought I may not see 13 years ago.

What made my birthday even more special was the fact I travelled to Europe for my first time, visiting Switzerland and Italy. There were many highlights for me, but very close to my heart was being able to share in a training session,

(along with my travel buddy Trish Greenfield - DAA Regional Rep Manager) with the “girls” in Firenze/Florence Italy. The day was pretty miserable weather wise but it was so wonderful to be welcomed into their group and to witness their enthusiasm and camaraderie. Earlier in the year Trish and I met Milena whilst she was visiting Darwin, so we had a contact person for when we arrived into Firenze. She not only welcomed us into her home but did her best to convince us to abort the remainder of our tour to join the group in Rome for a regatta. Most tempting! But alas it did not eventuate.

Home to sultry Darwin, and the celebration continued with a “bling” paddle followed by drinks and nibbles. Always good to be home! The small celebration was made that much more wonderful however when Michelle presented me with a gift, from DAA – a newly released silver pendant - totally unexpected and very special gift to me.

To have been one of the originals (incredible in itself), to have been a part of the journey and to still be here as a participating member of this amazing organisation, it was so lovely to have been given a gift I shall treasure. So thank you DAA. Thank you for the fact that my journey has turned into being a real positive – I would never have done the travel that I have done had it not been for DAA; I would never have met so many wonderful, inspiring people over the years who have some pretty amazing stories to tell also. I am proud to be a part of DAA and really do

celebrate being one of the originals and being able to help fly the banner in my own small way.

Judy Smith, Dragons Abreast NT



Trish Greenfield & Judy Smith



FUNdraising & Chinese New Year 2010

Over the past month or so we have received some unexpected and very generous support. One was from **Deb Hirst** who chose Dragons Abreast Australia as the recipient for her 50th birthday celebrations. Deb asked that her party guests donate to Dragons Abreast instead of buying her gifts.



Tim Bourke

Another great surprise happened earlier this week when our National Fundraising Manager, Denise Lynn, bounced through the door and asked us to guess what her Christmas present from her lifelong friend was going to be? After much deliberating we gave in! **Tim Bourke** very kindly donated \$500 to Dragons Abreast Australia as Denise's Christmas gift! Tim donates to the charity of his choice each year instead of purchasing gifts and we thank him very much for his generosity and support to Dragons Abreast Australia.



Deb Hirst

Chinese New Year – Sydney 2010

The Dragons Abreast category will be held on Sunday 28th February 2009 at Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour. The national office will assist with putting together composite teams if there are individuals who wish to come to Sydney but do not have a full team to travel with.

This is an excellent opportunity to relax, enjoy Sydney and have a paddle at this great Festival. Anyone interested in being a part of a composite team should email office@dragonsabreast.com.au. The cost will be \$27 per person to participate.



If a full team wishes to enter **the deadline for entries is 18th December 2009** – so do not delay. All Dragons Abreast team entries should be submitted to us via phone or email, payment is requested with your entry. All participants in the Dragons Abreast Challenge must be breast cancer survivors and hold a Dragons Abreast photo ID card.

When in Sydney Dragons Abreast Australia prefers to stay at the **Meriton Apartments** as they are all very conveniently located and superior standard apartments. Our Italian visitors were thrilled when we stayed there on their recent visit to Australia.



MERITON
SERVICED APARTMENTS

For Chinese New Year 2010 the Meriton Apartments are offering our members 10% off the best available rates. You simply enter the code "DAA10" when making an online booking at <http://www.meritonapartments.com.au/> - this offer is available from Wed 24th Feb to Wed 3rd March inclusive

As this is this is also the Mardi Gras weekend we suggest you book quick smart!

Merchandise

Sierra Marketing

Our friends at Sierra Marketing, they do the fabulous Key ring and Charm of Hope as well as lots of other goodies, have asked us if Dragons Abreast members would like to take part in the survey to enhance the Breast Cancer Support Site – if you would like to participate just follow this link.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1r_2fXdnlmG3wz77_2fMu17pnw_3d_3d

E- Cards for Christmas

There is only 18 days left until Christmas! You might like the convenience of an “E-card” which is available online and is very eco-friendly. Click [2] for the Christmas cards or [3] for a generic Dragons Abreast card for any occasion. E-cards are available by donation only, all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Links:

- <http://www.mycause.com.au/ecards.php?pid=catcard&id=Christmas>
- <http://www.mycause.com.au/ecards.php?charity=55&pid=catcard&id=Dragons%20Abreast>

‘The Pendant’

This beautiful pendant is on everyone’s Christmas list! We have already received a considerable number of orders, so, be quick! To receive your pendant before Christmas, orders must be placed by the 11th December, please use order form below. Please note: a 50% deposit is required for all 9ct gold pendants and all orders need to be placed by calling the national office on 1 300 889 566.



Yes, I am a member of Dragons Abreast, please apply my member discount

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Cheque Amount: _____ Direct Debit: BSB: 035-302 ACCOUNT: 295-465

Credit Card: Debit my Amex Visa Mastercard

Cardholder Name: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____

Cardholder Signature: _____ Amount \$ _____

Email: fundraising@dragonsabreast.com.au
Phone: 08 89470086 Fax: 08 89470087
GPO BOX 1948
DARWIN NT 0801
1300 889 566



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Christmas Gift Ideas \$20 and under!

Please send through your order before 15th December to ensure you receive the products in time for Christmas



Giant Pink Dress Paperclip
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Candle of Hope \$10
Not just a candle...it's a massage oil & a shot glass as well! Great stocking filler



Ray of Hope \$20
Cute purse size torch with pink pouch



Charm of Hope \$5
great to hang from a mobile phone



Keyring of Hope \$15
interchangeable keyring with charms

Dragons Abreast Mackay

The Dragons meet the Mad Hogs...

Dragons Abreast Mackay and the Mackay and District Harley Owners Group (MAD HOGS) joined forces in October to raise funds for DAA. Around 140 people registered to take part in the Mackay & District HOG Ride Against Breast Cancer. There were prizes for the best decorated car and bike and "pinkest" dressed male and female. Dale Ramsay of the Eureka Riders raised \$1,500 before the ride when workmates dared him to wear a pink mohawk and pink goatee.



At every stop we rolled the dice for a chance to win cash prizes which were donated by local Mackay businesses. Bunnings closed part of

their carpark for us to spend some time playing games involving motorbikes and water balloons and shoppers dug deep when approached by DA Mackay members and MAD HOGs rattling donation buckets.



On arrival at the Mackay Yacht Club (the home of DA Mackay) we invited all participants to come paddling with us and then celebrated into the night at a Pink Party with a Charity Auction and karaoke. There was plenty of spirited bidding and a painting by local artist Shelley Miers, depicting the day that the HOGs met Dragons Abreast sold for a whopping \$1150!



Not only did we raise a grand total of \$13,000 for DAA, we also raised awareness of breast cancer, promoted Dragons Abreast and had so much fun. Everyone agreed it was a fantastic day. Our new HOG friends are keen to make this an annual event and so are we, so plans for next years event are already taking shape. *Karen Baker, Secretary Dragons Abreast Mackay*



Dragons Abreast Queensland

QLD Dragons Abreast on fire at Lake Kawana!



On Saturday 28th November, QLD Dragons Abreast hosted their first state Dragons Abreast Regatta.

We welcomed participants QLD groups including Townsville, Mackay, Bundaberg, Sunshine Coast, Bribie Island, Redcliffe, Brisbane and Gold Coast. We were also delighted to welcome our Dragons Abreast friends from NSW – Mt Warning, Clarence Valley, Coffs Coast and Central Coast.

Early Saturday morning the crews arrived. Volunteers happily assisted us with erecting tents, and setting up the venue for the day. It did not take long for the participants to arrive and get settled in and ready for their races. It

was amazing to feel the excitement among the ladies – this is their opportunity to paddle in a regatta dedicated to Dragons Abreast members.

Also exciting was that we happily gave our much loved supporters their own category for the day. We value our supporters and this is one way we can share our appreciation.

The whole day went smoothly thanks to our volunteers, and also thanks to our participants who made sure they were ready on time and keen to go.

Congratulations to our winners for the day. The perpetual trophy will be engraved for the first time. We hope this will be the first of many and that the trophy will get a chance to live in other groups 'houses'. Each participant received a participation medal, one of which we hope will be kept as a special memento of the day.

Many of us finished the day at the Celebration Dinner at BreakFree Resort. This was a fabulous evening organised by the Sunshine Coast group – the food was fantastic, as was the singing and dancing to follow. We were blown away by the very generous donation of \$13000 from Dragons Abreast Mackay. Thank you again!

Congratulations to Carol Hanckel (pictured) from Gold Coast Dragons Abreast for winning the lovely sterling silver Dragons Abreast Pendant. This is the very first pendant to be

worn by a member and it was great to see this in a QLDer!



Thanks again everyone for joining in the fun and for making sure the day was such a success. Once of the most amazing things for us was the way everyone embraced the day - this was the underlying feeling for the whole weekend.

We loved meeting people following the regatta who were brimming with praise and encouragement and who are all ready to come back again next year! **Jo Parry, Regional Rep QLD**

"It was everything that DAA is all about - fun, friendships and fierce but friendly competition.

We all enjoyed a great evening together on the Sat night which included a buffet style dinner followed by karaoke and dancing - so much fun!!!"
Gillian Goddard

Butterfly Survivors

Butterfly Survivors.....a story of courage and determination

At Dragons Abreast we often have the opportunity to hear incredible stories and meet amazing people.

11 deaf ladies and 11 breast cancer survivors from far and wide, including Wollongong, Bowral, from the Blue Mountains to Baulkham Hills all got together to participate in our October Regatta. They joined the dragon boat for adventure and something exciting and new!



The group trained at the Penrith Regatta site and were one of the quietest groups. We hear that Gerry, the coach, who did not know sign language, was forever telling them to keep their heads up as there is no money on the bottom of the boat!

Lorraine Mulley, a member of the team told us, via an email, "In the training we had to come up with ways to communicate on the water that didn't include ears (to listen) or hands (to sign in sign language). It was an incredible achievement of the team to start in February this year and continue to travel to Penrith from Sydney, Wollongong and Campbelltown just to be together in this experience as a Deaf crew for the very first time ever.

Girls I still have tears in my ears and heart when I think of you all and what a magic feeling of pride you bought to the Deaf community of Sydney and beyond"

Butterfly Survivors what an inspirational group of individuals who once again demonstrate that with determination and a 'can do' attitude anything is possible!

PS - The reason they called themselves butterflies is because butterflies are deaf.



Dragons Abreast Darwin office were thrilled to be the receipt of a **Community Benefit Fund** Grant for \$2750 to purchase MYOB Premier Edition and a new computer which will allow the office Elves (volunteers) to work much more efficiently.

We have started with some basic computer skills training for some of the volunteers and over the Christmas break will also be working on modifications to our online photo albums and the archiving of old documentations – we have gathered heaps over the last eleven years! Huge thanks to the NT Government and Community Benefit fund for supporting Dragons Abreast.



Dragons Abreast reunites school buddies after 35 years!

Never in their wildest dreams did Meg Milne and Angie Walter, both Dragons Abreast members, ever think their paths would cross again they had not seen each other for 35 years since they were in Year 8 together! Meg and Angie went to school at Loreto Convent Normanhurst Sydney, Meg leaving in 1974 to move to Brisbane and Angie in 1976 to begin her studies at Business College.



At the Medals Presentation in Sydney for the Dragons Abreast October regatta, fate would see their paths cross again. Meg said *"It was fantastic to see Angie, I couldn't can't get over how she hadn't changed a bit! It made my night to see her and to see how well she was, it gave me hope for the future."*

"I wasn't nervous about seeing Meg again, only that I wondered if I would recognise her - but as soon as she walked up the stairs, there was no mistake, the only thing missing was her plaited pigtails! Fortunately we were able to grab some time to catch up after the presentation and we were able to talk about our lives and our journeys" said Angie.

Angie shared her excitement about the upcoming trip to Canada, and encouraged Meg to join the Dragons Abreast contingent participating. A recent email from Meg to Angie read *"It is very exciting, and my family are thrilled - bit shocked - who would have thought that I would be an international sports competitor? After they picked themselves up from the floor laughing, they said are right behind me."*

So the magic that is Dragons Abreast lives on!

Great Australian Heroines

As a Historian & Author I would be very interested in receiving any information about any local ladies who were born before 1940, **have never been officially acknowledged in a book**, yet as the "real quiet achievers" have left their mark **within their local communities** through their dedication, kindness or sadly committed the ultimate sacrifice and until today have received little or no thanks, gratitude, or formal appreciation for their actions.

If any of your readers have stories of family members, friends or know of any wonderful ladies within the area whose good deeds (from being the most reliable tuck shop lady, helping people in the community, was always there to take on the mantle of babysitter when needed, helped families or animals in the area when they were in dire need, organised local events, headed companies, was a doctor, nurse, teacher, or was just there to give support to someone when required), changed for the better the life of just one person or an entire community, I would very much appreciate being contacted at greaaustralianheroines@gmail.com or by snail mail to P.O. Box 2009, Moorabbin, Vic. 3189.

My thanks for your assistance
Jodie Forsyth - Author



Around the Nation

Fundraising in Darwin

October saw a few local Northern Territory businesses and organisations get on board the fundraising campaigns and donate to local charities. Dragons Abreast was on the receiving end of these campaigns which stemmed from the Pink Breakfast held every year by Women's Network NT (WNNT). This year the event managed to raise over \$7,000 and recently WNNT held their Christmas party and presented a cheque for \$2,200 to Michelle Hanton.

Sofia Dilshad from **Advantage Real Estate NT** was also presenting on behalf of Andy Hinks, the auctioneer at the Pink Breakfast. Andy very generously donated \$800 to the cause as well as raising over \$1500 from the auction.

Pat Boehler from **Dermal Essence** was also at the lunch to present Michelle with an amazing \$2,475. Patricia's initiative was to offer a wonderful pamper package to patrons of the Pink Breakfast, to the value of \$350 for only \$99! This proved to be extremely popular as 50 pamper packages were sold in 2 hours! Patricia then donated \$49.50 from each pack sold.

A Note from Patricia-Dermal Essence:

Our business is about teaching women the benefits of spa wellness, and we thought of the novel idea to introduce ourselves to the public by offering a service to new clients while at the



Patricia Boehler - Dermal Essence, Denise Lynn - Fundraising Manager DAA, Sofia Dilshad - Advantage Real Estate NT, Michelle Hanton - Founding Director DAA, Bridie McIntosh - President Women's Network NT

same time helping those travelling the journey with breast cancer. At the Women's Network Christmas Luncheon we were delighted to present the money we raised at the Pink Ribbon Breakfast to Michelle Hanton of Dragons Abreast Australia, a national charity that is locally based, so they continue to promote breast cancer awareness. We hope all the people who helped us raise this money enjoy their spa treatments and realise the benefits of taking the time to take care of their body, mind and soul and so help towards solving the mysteries of cancer. I know we greatly enjoy providing spa treatments to you, and whilst we are only a small business we like to think that we can contribute to the well being of our

community.

If you missed out on the Pink Ribbon Breakfast Offer, go to www.dermal essence.com.au and check our new Christmas Specials. "Ladies Don't leave yourself till last this Christmas."

All the Best for the New Year
Patricia Boehler - Director Dermal Essence

Ladies! Don't leave yourself till last this Christmas...

Buy a Gift Voucher - Get One to the Same Value for Yourself **FREE!** Hurry, only 29 available!
(Conditions of FREE Gift Voucher valid from March 2010 Mon-Fri only)

- Hair-free Heaven**
 - Sexy Legs 1/2 Leg Wax
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"Absolutely wonderful, everyone's so friendly and they make me look fabulous!"
Tracey, Computer Business

ID Badge Draw Winner December - Ailsa Dunsford NSW

Photo Montage - Tasmania



Thank you

Dragons Abreast Sunshine Coast \$500

Dragons Abreast Camden Haven
for a donation of \$176

Dragons Abreast Albury Wodonga
for the donation of \$781

Womens Network Northern Territory \$2,200

Andy Hinks – Advantage Real Estate NT \$800

Dragons Abreast Mackay Club for the fabulous
donation of \$13,000 raised at fundraising event
with the local Harley Davidson Club specifically
for Dragons Abreast Australia

Ports Australia \$500 in lieu of Christmas cards

Tim Bourke \$500

The Dunn & Day Families for the beautiful new
armchairs and coffee table for the national office
valued at \$1,665

Donated in memory of Irene Dunn

Deb Hirst for her Birthday gift donations of \$340
instead of receiving gifts Deb asked her guests
to donate to Dragons Abreast Australia



Please submit all editorials and photographs to be considered in this newsletter to newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au