



# A GUIDE TO CANTEEN

**Who we are and  
how we can help**

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# Why young people need our help

**Canteen conducts leading research into the emotional and social impacts of cancer to ensure that we truly understand how cancer is different in a young person's world.**

Evidence informs everything that we do – our research underpins and supports the services we provide to young people affected by cancer.

Canteen research is published in peer reviewed journals and presented at national and international conferences to share important findings and outcomes, as well as to increase awareness of young people's needs and to demonstrate our commitment to evidence-based practice.







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## **We work with 12-25 year-olds who...**

- Are dealing with a parent's cancer
- Have/had cancer
- Are dealing with a sibling's cancer
- Are coping with the death of a parent or sibling



**When mum was diagnosed I didn't know how to react because all I knew about cancer was that people died from it. I was scared for her, and didn't want to lose her. Canteen helped me cope. If it wasn't for Canteen, I don't think I'd be the person I am today.**

**Oli, Age 17**

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# Levels of distress

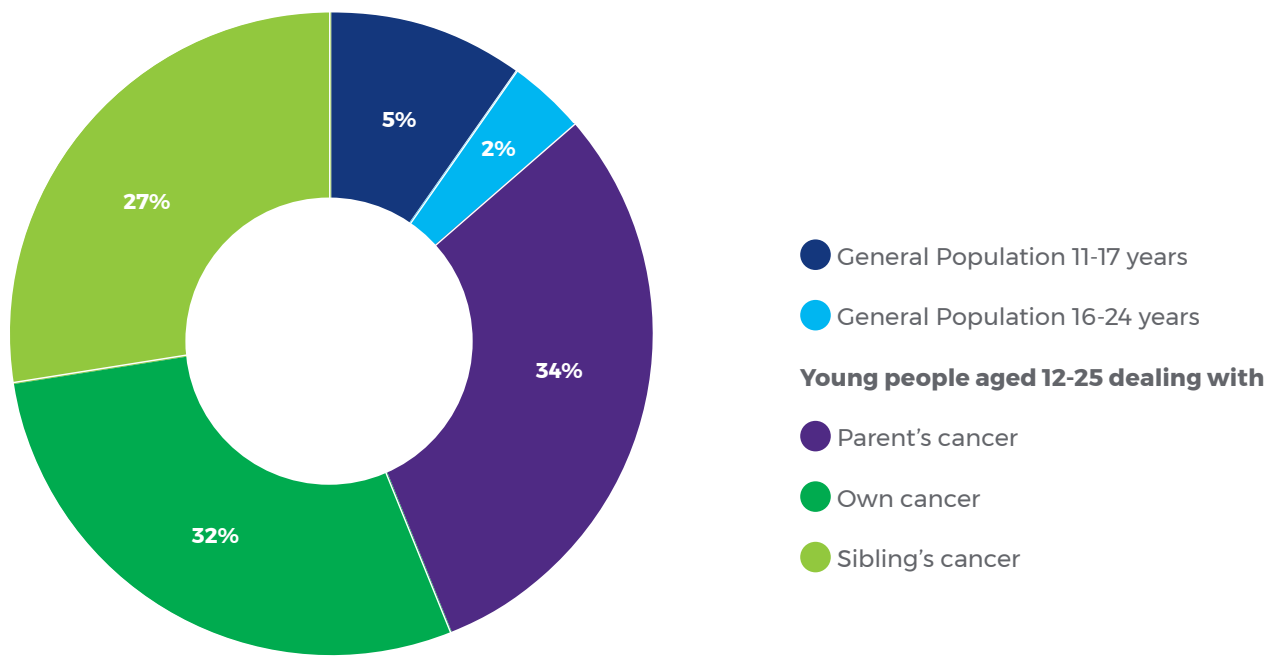
Every year, another 23,000 young people have to face the challenge of cancer.

- 21,000 find out their parent has cancer
- 1,000 are diagnosed with cancer
- 1,000 find out their brother or sister has cancer\*\*

Without support, high levels of psychological distress can lead to difficulties at school or university, along with problematic and unhealthy coping strategies such as drug or alcohol abuse, as well as depression and anxiety.

Many young people affected by cancer feel very alone and become disconnected from their friends, which can lead to social isolation and an increased risk of mental health issues.

## Percentages of young people experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress\*



## Young people who have a parent with cancer

One in three adult cancer patients will have a child or children under the age of 26.

Our evidence shows that young people dealing with a parent's cancer are three to six times more

likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress than their peers.^

# Our evidence-based clinical service

## The Canteen Psychosocial Model

Adolescence is a critical developmental period, and one in which independence and identity are key factors. Both neurologically and socially, the experiences faced shape who they are and resonate into adult life.

The services we offer aim to provide experiences whether they be with professionals or peers that promote resilience and emotional wellbeing.

Our research shows that after 6 months of support from Canteen, almost two thirds of young people

affected by cancer report improvements in their mental health and overall wellbeing.<sup>^^</sup>

The Canteen Psychosocial model provides a strong framework of stepped care and effective, evidence-based intervention for all young people.

The model has five core stages completed with each young person.

### 1. Psychosocial Assessment

- Each young person participates in an assessment of their wellbeing and cancer-related needs.
- The assessment includes standardised psychological distress and cancer-related unmet needs questionnaires and a semi-structured interview (modified HEADSS assessment).
- Questionnaire results are reviewed with the young person and key needs are identified. Possible support options are discussed and young people contribute ideas and priorities for their individual support plan.

### 2. Triage

- Assessment results and the proposed individual support plan for each young person are presented for psychosocial multidisciplinary team review.
- Each young person is allocated to a psychosocial service stream based on their level of distress, cancer-related need, and required level of support (see below).
- Each young person is allocated a key support worker.

### 3. Service Provision

- Young people access Canteen's range of programs and services as per their support plan.

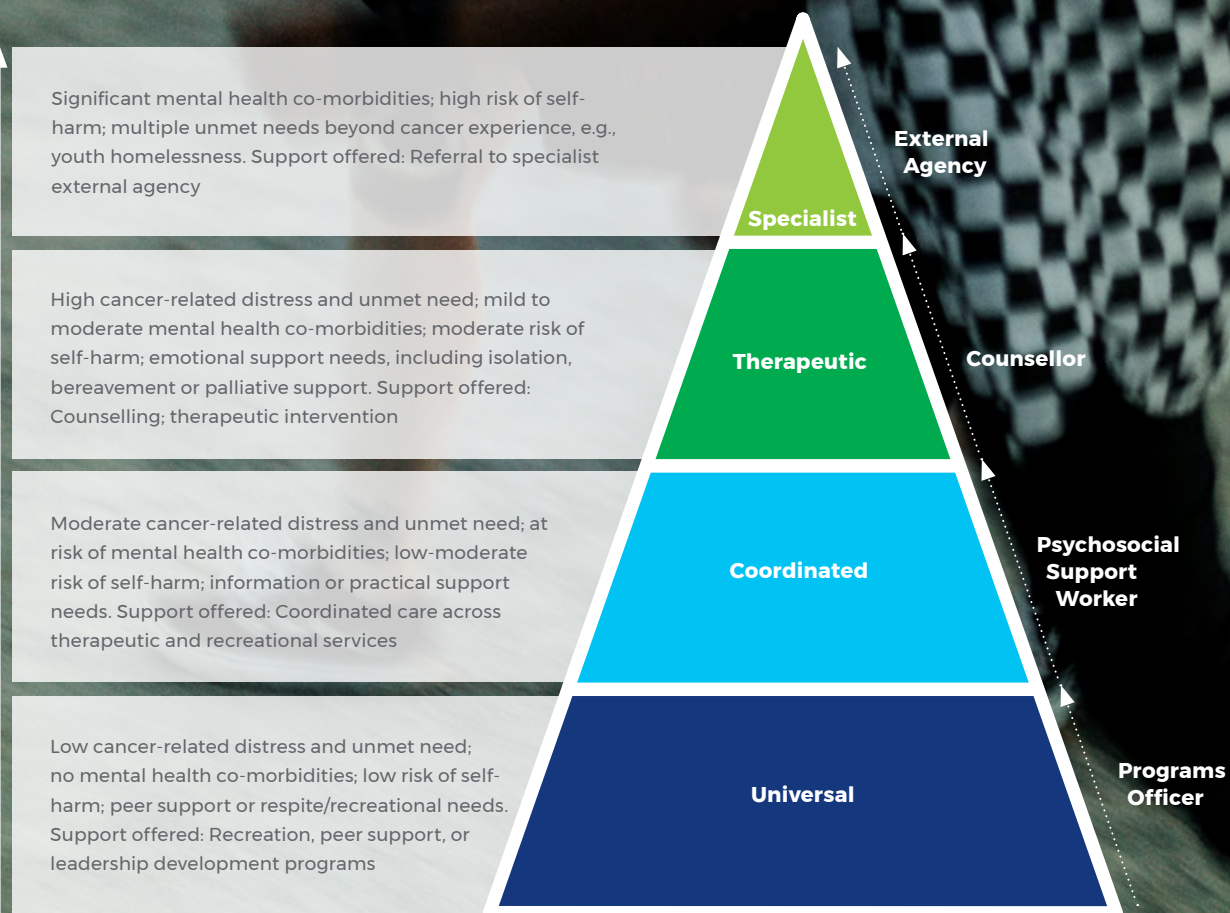
### 4. Psychosocial Review

- Support needs are reviewed after an initial six months and then reviewed annually.
- Standardised measures are completed. The key support worker discusses changes in needs and goals with the young person.
- The psychosocial multidisciplinary team reviews the assessment results and service stream. The young person is allocated to a new service stream if needed and their individual support plan is updated.
- The updated plan can recommend ongoing service provision or service closure.


### 5. Service Closure

- Service provision ends if support is no longer required by the young person.









**I find online counselling really helpful. The times I need support the most are usually not during business hours. With Canteen's online platform, you can chat to someone then and there.**

**Alix, Age 22**

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# Support options

**All of the support options Canteen provides are free. We offer a range of services and programs that are tailored to a young person's specific cancer experience.**

## Online support

Canteen Connect is a secure, online community available 24/7 where young people can connect with others in a similar situation, check out events around the country and chat to a counsellor 7 days a week. [canteenconnect.org.au](http://canteenconnect.org.au)

## Counselling

Canteen counsellors are specially trained to understand the challenges cancer brings and will help develop strategies for young people to deal with the impact cancer is having on their life.

Support is available seven days a week. Phone, email and online counselling through Canteen Connect is available 10am-10pm AEST weekdays and 11am-6pm AEST weekends.

Face to face counselling is available at most Canteen offices, during normal business hours with scheduled after hour sessions also offered.

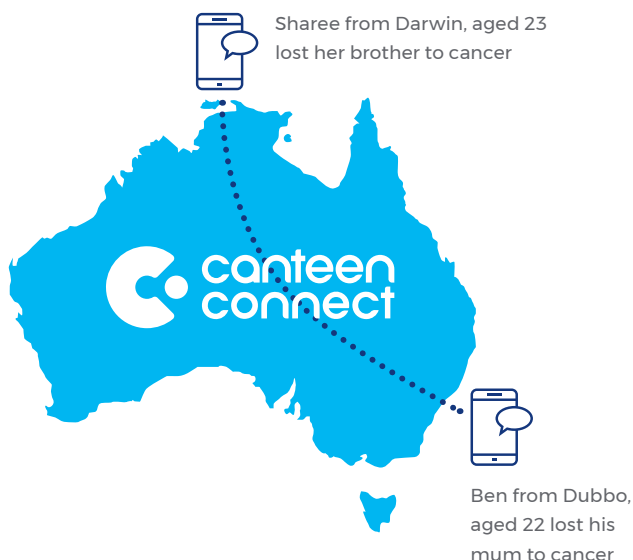
To speak with a Canteen counsellor call 1800 835 932.

## Robots

A cancer diagnosis can considerably disrupt a young person's education. Adolescents may experience difficulties keeping up with their grades, maintaining friendships, and feel anxious about returning to school after treatment.

Providing a robot allows the young person to remotely connect with school when they are unable to attend and supports their education and connection to their peers during treatment. For more information, visit [canteen.org.au/research/robots-project/](http://canteen.org.au/research/robots-project/)

## Reducing geographic barriers and increasing connections via Canteen Connect, our online community



## Youth Leadership

Empowering young people living with cancer to take up leadership builds resilience and can transform their experience into an opportunity to make a difference for others.

Through Youth Leadership at Canteen, we provide meaningful opportunities for young people living with cancer to contribute according to their interest, experience and skill. Canteen is proud to have young people providing direction and advice at all levels of the organisation, including the Board of Directors.

## Youth Cancer Services

The Youth Cancer Services (YCS), funded by the Australian Government and administered by Canteen, support young people (15-25 years) diagnosed with cancer and provide age-appropriate, specialist medical, nursing and psychosocial support from diagnosis, throughout treatment and into survivorship. For more information visit [youthcancer.com.au](http://youthcancer.com.au)

## Youth-friendly resources

Canteen provides a wide range of free resources to help guide young people through the many challenges cancer brings – from how to talk to friends about cancer to what all the medical jargon means. They are available in hard copy (order online) as well as e-books or downloads from the Canteen website [canteen.org.au/resource](http://canteen.org.au/resource)

## Individual Support by specially trained staff

The young person's support needs and goals are identified through a collaborative assessment and review process between the key worker and the young person to create a tailored plan.

Examples of support include:

- Linking and facilitating the young person's engagement in Canteen's internal services such as programs, recreational days and counselling
- The provision of information about cancer related issues
- Advocacy and support in areas such as school/work
- Referral to external services as appropriate – for example, mental health support, family and practical support.

## Support via live music

Created by Australian band Hilltop Hoods and now proudly led by Canteen, Side of Stage gives young people impacted by cancer free access to some of the country's best live music gigs, festivals and experiences. [sideofstage.org.au](http://sideofstage.org.au)

## Overnight and one-day programs

These programs enable young people to make new friends, develop skills to cope with cancer and have some much needed fun too.

Canteen offers a variety of programs that cater specifically to the young person's cancer experience, including bereavement support.

The next page provides an overview of Canteen's program options.





**The hardest thing  
about going through  
cancer is you feel  
like a freak. Going to  
gigs made me feel  
normal again.**

**Sophie, Age 21**

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# Canteen programs

All our programs are free for young people to attend and aim to:

- Build supportive relationships with others
- Reduce the sense of isolation
- Provide quality respite and recreation
- Develop effective coping skills and strategies

## Social / Recreational

### Day events

- **Skill-based learning**  
Careers/vocational workshops, cooking classes, self-care workshops
- **Recreation & Respite**  
Bowling nights, laser tag, movie nights, outdoor experiences (eg. Surfing, rock-climbing)
- **Opportunities for connection**  
Group outings (e.g. local events and cafes), 'drop in nights' at local Canteen offices

### Retreats

- **Summer & Winter Retreats**  
Destination based respite programs that give young people (18+) from across Australia the chance to have a unique experience while sharing their stories and connecting with others in a similar situation.
- **Adventure**  
Whether it's hiking through the wilderness or learning to sail, our 3-day Adventure Programs enable young people (under and over 18) to get out into nature, form new bonds and challenge themselves.

## Therapeutic

### For young people with a parent with cancer

- **Truce**  
Caters to young people aged 14-22 with a parent or caregiver who has been diagnosed or relapsed with cancer in the past five years. This weekly

group program (7 weeks) enables young people to come together and connect over their shared experiences while developing important coping and communications skills. For bereaved young people

- **Sensing our Grief**  
A weekly group program (6 weeks) for young people aged 12-25 who have lost a family member to cancer. It allows young people to explore and express their grief, share experiences and learn from others who have faced a significant loss.
- **Good Grief Program**  
This 3-day retreat is offered to young people in both under and over 18 cohorts who are bereaved following the death of a parent or sibling to cancer. This program helps young people work through their grief and form connections with other bereaved young people.

### For cancer survivors

- **Recapture Life**  
A weekly online group for young cancer survivors aged 15-25 that aims to build resilience and help young people find their 'new normal' after cancer. Topics include: common experiences of young people during and after treatment, reconnecting with friends after cancer, dealing with tricky thoughts, getting back into hobbies and how to work towards future goals when cancer gets in the way.
- **Places You'll Go Program**  
A 3-day program that brings

together young people aged 12-17 from around Australia who are cancer survivors. Young people learn about how to deal with key survivorship issues such as identity, coping with difficult emotions and communicating about cancer.

### For young people impacted by cancer

- **Big Picture Art Therapy**  
Our weekly art therapy group allows young people (12-25 years) to creatively express their emotions. It aims to increase their knowledge of effective, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) based coping strategies (psychological and practical).
- **EXPLORE**  
Aims to develop the foundational emotional skills young people need to face the challenges cancer brings. This 3-day program for young people aged 12 to 17 years is based upon the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and is guided by a positive psychology approach, recognising resilience and focusing on strengths, interests, abilities, knowledge, and capacities.
- **PEER**  
A 3-day program for young people aged 12-17 years that provides recreational opportunities so that young people can escape from the daily experience of cancer, while also addressing their unique needs and building coping and resilience skills.

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# Parent support

**Research shows that when parents cope better with cancer and communicate openly, their children are less likely to experience distress and anxiety.**

In response, Canteen services now extend to parents impacted by cancer to support them through the parenting challenges that cancer can bring.

Our parent support services include:

## **Canteen Connect for Parents**

An online community where parents impacted by cancer can connect with each other, find evidence-based resources and chat to a counsellor.

[parents.canteenconnect.org.au](https://parents.canteenconnect.org.au)

## **Parenting through cancer**

This resource provides practical advice and tips to parents impacted by cancer on communicating and supporting their children through cancer. Available in print and online.

[canteen.org.au/resource](https://canteen.org.au/resource)

## **Locally based in-person counselling**

Concentrates on the parenting challenges cancer can bring and is focused on skills building and communication in the family. For more information, please contact your local Canteen office.

See page 17 for contact numbers.



**It was the first chemo session when all my children first realised that their parents are fragile – we're not invincible.**

**Mary, Mother of 3**

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"I got a call back for a routine mammogram. That's how it all started, back on Tuesday 31 March, 2015. That was the day I was told it was 90 per cent likely I had breast cancer. Two days later, it was confirmed.

My children Sally, Michael and Liam were 14, 12 and nine at the time. It affected them all differently.

I collapsed from dehydration, but with my eyes open, so they all thought I was dead. I had to go back to the [Chris O'Brien] Lifehouse to be rehydrated, and it was the lovely nurse there, Keith, who told us about Canteen.

I strongly recommend getting involved with Canteen to any family battling cancer. Because the thing is, when you're diagnosed with cancer, it's as if everyone around you starts talking in a different language. But Canteen is like a translation service for teenagers – it allows them to communicate at their own level in language that is age appropriate and applicable to them.

As for now? I feel well. I am braver. And I am fearless. Because you know, what's the worst that could happen in this life? The worst did happen, and I got through it."



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## Order free resources

Canteen provides resources to help friends and class mates better understand what a young person goes through when cancer crashes into their world and how they can help.

See our full range of books and order free copies at [canteen.org.au/resource](https://canteen.org.au/resource)



# Canteen and schools

**Canteen provides support to schools as well. We can provide:**

## **In-school cancer awareness education**

Canteen has developed a free, interactive school based program When Cancer Comes Along to educate young people about:

- What cancer is
- Cancer warning signs
- Cancer risk factors
- How to support a friend who is impacted by cancer.

The program aligns with the national curriculum for health and physical education. To host the program at your school or find out more visit [canteen.org.au/schoolawareness](http://canteen.org.au/schoolawareness)

## **Tailored, individual support to your students impacted by cancer**

If a student needs more help dealing with their cancer experience, you can connect them with a Canteen social worker who will develop an individually tailored care plan with them.

You can refer your student to Canteen through our quick online form at [canteen.org.au/refer](http://canteen.org.au/refer) or call 1800 835 932.

You can also encourage the young person to join Canteen's online community to connect to other young people impacted by cancer and find out more about Canteen events and services [canteenconnect.org.au](http://canteenconnect.org.au)

# Canteen around Australia

**Canteen has 11 offices nationally, covering every state and territory.**

Our local offices are here to support you and your students. Please contact via the below numbers, or visit [canteen.org.au](http://canteen.org.au) for further information and support.

- Sydney: (02) 9007 0190
- Newcastle: (02) 4906 1122
- Canberra: (02) 6101 2207
- Brisbane: (07) 3108 1444
- Townsville: (07) 4700 5636
- Melbourne: (03) 9912 4221
- Adelaide: (08) 8122 6492
- Hobart: (03) 6200 5556
- Launceston: (03) 6135 4310
- Perth: (08) 6260 7771
- Darwin: (08) 8985 2013



# Volunteering

## Volunteering with Canteen

To volunteer in your local area and learn more about what Canteen does, visit [canteen.org.au/volunteer](http://canteen.org.au/volunteer)

## References

\*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011. Cat. no. PHE 140 Canberra: AIHW;

Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR (2015) The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Department of Health, Canberra;

McDonald FEJ, Patterson P (2015) Evaluation of a resource for adolescents and young adults diagnosed with cancer. J Ped Oncol Nurse, doi: 10.1177/1043454214563408;

Patterson P, McDonald FEJ, White KJ, Walczak A, Butow PN (2017) Wiley. Psycho-Oncology: Levels of unmet needs and distress amongst adolescents and young adults (AYAs) impact by familial cancer.

\*\*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Cancer in adolescents and young adults in Australia. Cat. no. CAN 110. Canberra: AIHW.

Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2017. 2014 Australian Cancer Database pivot table. Canberra: AIHW.

^Patterson P, McDonald FEJ, White KJ, Walczak A, Butow PN (2017) Wiley. Psycho-Oncology: Levels of unmet needs and distress amongst adolescents and young adults (AYAs) impact by familial cancer.

^^Canteen Australia. (2017). Canteen Annual Report 2017. Canteen Australia: Sydney, NSW.







**It's absolutely amazing to meet people who just understand what it's like to have cancer. Whenever I'm on a Canteen program, I feel like I'm with my family. Honestly, without Canteen, I don't know what I'd be doing right now.**

**Jasmine, Age 16**



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## How to refer a young person to Canteen

- 1 Get permission from the young person/parent to provide us with their details
- 2 Fill in the easy, online form [canteen.org.au/refer](https://canteen.org.au/refer)
- 3 Our qualified staff will be get in touch with the young person/parent in 1-2 business days.