

# CANDO NEWS

July 2022

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- Meet Georgia, Canteen youth ambassador
- Listen to the voices of our young people on sustainable action
- Hear about a Canteen adventure day and from a parent of a young person who attended





# Message from the Chair of the Board



I'm so proud of Canteen's work already this year, and I'm especially proud of our young people's achievements.

I want to highlight **Canteen's youth leadership program**, one of the incredible services we offer. This program has proven to empower and change the lives of so many young people around Australia who live with cancer.

Canteen's youth leadership program enables young people to contribute to our organisation through incredible leadership roles, experiences, and opportunities. I know first-hand the positive impact this leadership program has on young people impacted by cancer, as I too was involved when accessing Canteen's support after my cancer diagnosis at 15 years old.

A cancer diagnosis can make an individual feel extremely disempowered and helpless. However, by having the opportunity to take part in Canteen's leadership program, young people find a sense of purpose and control.

**I'd like to thank you, your generous support makes opportunities like this possible. You have given young people the power to stand up against cancer, to change their lives, and to have a positive impact on the people around them. It's difficult to put into words, how thankful I am for your support of young people living with cancer.**

Kind regards,

**Joey Lynch**  
Chair of the Board and cancer patient



# Message from the CEO

Thank you so much for your ongoing support. Your kindness allows young people experiencing cancer, to access the vital support that guides them through their unique journey.

**Here at Canteen, our young people are at the heart of everything we do. We acknowledge and celebrate, that many of the best ideas for our organisation come from the young people we support.**

Canteen listened when our young people called for easier and better access to an array of cancer support services. They highlighted the need for support services to be easily accessible, in hopes to relieve the stress of researching for the right support, including finding support for their younger siblings under 12 years.

We wanted to ensure this vision could become a reality, so we've partnered with our friends at Camp Quality and with another well-known charity to be announced very soon, to create the Child and Youth Cancer Alliance. Starting with a digital hub, this service helps anyone from 0-25 years old at any stage of their cancer journey, where multiple services are accessible in the one place. Our dream is to provide a 'one stop shop' for cancer support for the whole family.

**You're changing the lives of so many young people impacted by cancer. I'm extremely grateful for your ongoing support.**

Thank you,

**Peter Orchard**  
Canteen CEO

# Meet Dr Kathryn Woodward

Deputy Chair of the Canteen Board of Directors, who had cancer herself

Ten years ago, at 15 years old, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. Like many young people with a cancer experience, I found it difficult to connect with others my age as no one understood the unique struggles I was facing.

Thankfully, a hospital social worker told me about Canteen, and I signed up to attend my first camp. Going along to that camp was an extremely special moment in my cancer journey because it was the first time I connected with other young people who truly understood my situation. It was through this, that I saw the significance of having an organisation like Canteen to support young people experiencing cancer.

Canteen's support extends beyond our camps and recreational days. Not only does Canteen provide emotional support with free counselling services, but we also provide young people the opportunity for personal growth through youth leadership initiatives.

**Canteen understands that the experiences of young people are at the heart of the organisation and we encourage them to share their opinions and thoughts, sit on committees alongside researchers and doctors, and make decisions for the future of the organisation. By elevating and listening to their voices, Canteen can continue to provide the best possible support for our young people.**

As for my personal cancer experience, today, I'm cancer free and working as a doctor. I've continued my involvement with Canteen as I want to use my skills and experiences to positively contribute to an organisation which has been invaluable to me.



With Canteen I had the privilege of being an active member of the QLD Youth Cancer Services Youth Advisory Group, youth ambassador and now a member of Canteen's Board.

**These roles have taught me that a vital key to improving healthcare is by listening to those who have a lived experience. However, they also enabled me to make meaning from my own cancer journey and ensure the sustainability and improvement of cancer support services for other young people.**

I used to believe that only by becoming a doctor would I have the power to help others and make a difference. **However, with support from Canteen, I've learnt to use my patient experience and leadership skills to make positive changes for young people living with cancer.** With this same support, all young people at Canteen can make a difference in themselves, other young people and the broader community around them.

▼ Kathryn at a Canteen Leading Voices program with other young people





To watch Georgia's video, please scan this QR code



Thank you for supporting young Australians like me. It's because of you I've been able to connect with other young people and learn to cope with the long-term challenges cancer brings. Thank you!



▼ Georgia meeting up with her friends from Canteen at the National Leadership Festival

# Meet Georgia

**Canteen local leader and National youth ambassador, 22, who was diagnosed with cancer when she was five years old**

When I was five my parents noticed my right eye to be 'lazy' and often out of line with my other. They decided to take me to see a doctor and unfortunately, an MRI scan revealed a mass on my brain. The very next day I was having surgery to remove it. In the weeks that followed, I was diagnosed with a pilocytic astrocytoma brain tumour and my life was changed forever.

The tumour had crushed my optic nerve, leaving me blind in my right eye. My parents and I had to travel for my treatment, meaning my sister Abbie, then eight years old, stayed at home with family and friends. It was hard to be split up and with 12 months of treatment and travel, I also missed a lot of my foundational schooling.



▲ Georgia (aged 5) with her Dad, Chris and sister, Abbie after surgery to remove the tumour on her brain



▼ Georgia visiting a local primary school as a Canteen National youth ambassador with fellow ambassador, Jacob Boutcher

Thankfully, after surgery, treatment and the many hospital visits, I was cancer free! Later in life, I moved away from my family and small town to further my high school education. During this time, I began to feel isolated, and I struggled to make friends.

**So, I reached out to Canteen for support with the hope of meeting people who would understand where I was coming from.**

Canteen connected me with my, now, two best friends, who I otherwise would have never crossed paths with. Through Canteen, I've also had access to individual counselling. This service helped me process the anxiety and post-traumatic stress related to my challenging cancer experience.

I've also taken part in some amazing leadership opportunities at Canteen, where I learnt the importance of sharing my story, to show others with a similar experience how to not only survive cancer, but to thrive.

**I'd recommend Canteen to any young person affected by cancer. Even if the experience was a little while ago, like me. Cancer changes your life and can create hurdles that you don't even realise are there. If you need counselling, some mates or just a safe space, Canteen is there for you.**



# Listening to the voices of young people on sustainability at Canteen

By Robyn Greaves, Executive Assistant to the CEO and National Office Manager

Cancer isn't the only threat to the wellbeing of Canteen's young people, and it isn't the only thing they're concerned about. At our most recent Annual General Meeting, we heard from our young people that they're concerned about the significant threat climate change poses on our world. These young people will inherit the planet and they're calling on all of us to protect it for them and for future generations to come.

In response, we've created a CanGreen Action Plan, which is an initial year-long plan that lays out a

series of steps to reduce Canteen's environmental impact. The Plan focuses on five key areas for action: purchasing, waste, travel, energy, and education.

**We aim to increase awareness of the environmental impact that our day-to-day lives have on the planet and identify what we can do to ensure a more environmentally sustainable future for the young people we support.**



By listening to the voices of Canteen's young people, we can implement the sustainable changes that they're calling for.



▲ Canteen young people bonding at our epic Outdoor Adventure Day

## Program spotlight: U18s Outdoor Adventure Day at Swan Valley Adventure Centre, WA

By Peri Hawks, WA Program Officer

Through our research we've seen that peer-to-peer connection improves the mental wellbeing of young people affected by cancer. That's why Canteen facilitates recreational days and in-person programs for young Australians impacted by cancer.

Canteen had the privilege of holding the epic Outdoor Adventure Day at Swan Valley Adventure Centre in Western Australia. 24 young people (12-17 years old) took part, along with three Canteen staff and four incredible volunteers. The group spent a lovely sunny day in Perth participating in multiple activities, aiming to help rebuild their confidence and connect with their peers.

These activities included raft building, high ropes course, team building bush games, and a flying fox. Everyone had an amazing time stepping out of their comfort zones, where they discovered the importance of supporting each other during challenging times.

It's heart-warming to see Canteen's young people work together and take time away from the struggles cancer brings. A parent of one of the young people

thanked Canteen for having her daughter involved in the Outdoor Adventure Day:

**"My daughter was incredibly anxious and struggling to leave the house. But when I picked her up after the Adventure Day, she was very happy, chatty, and smiley! She had so much fun and really enjoyed the day – thank you everyone for all the amazing work and support."**

**It's moments like this that reinforce the life-changing work Canteen does for young people experiencing cancer, the work that is only possible thanks to you.**

Thank you also to all staff and volunteers involved who ensured the Outdoor Adventure Day was a success for the young people.



# Thank you

Every month another 1,916 young people aged 12-25 will be impacted by cancer. Canteen can only continue to provide this vital support to young Australians and their families, with your incredible ongoing support. Thank you.

These are just some of the things you've made possible over the past 12 months:



Provided **over 12,000** counselling and support sessions to help young people and parents cope with the impact of cancer



Continued to facilitate vital peer and professional support through our online platform, **Canteen Connect** with **over 57,000** interactions



Reintroduced **in-person counselling, programs and events** across the country



Supported **over 46,000** people in the wider community through free educational programs and resources

If you know a young person who has a family member with cancer, has lost a loved one to cancer or has cancer themselves, please let them know Canteen is here for them. They can visit [canteen.org.au/getsupport](https://canteen.org.au/getsupport) to learn more.

**Thank you for changing the lives of young people living with cancer!**



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