

Annual Report 2022 – 23

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Our team



BSWRICS would like to acknowledge the Victorian Department of Health for their continued support and funding. We would also like to thank the staff from our partner health services and consumers who willingly shared their lived experience and whose contributions have been valuable and critical to our work throughout the year.

BSWRICS acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

Our governance

BSWRICS Governance Committee

Fiona Brew	Dr. Graham Pitson
Alison Patrick	Sandra Anderson
Donna Bridge	Anna Burgess
A/Prof. Philip Campbell	Sandy Chamberlin
Fred Chatfield	Claire Dagley
Lee Fairley	Dr. Theresa Hayes
Lorraine Hedley	Chris James
Sandra Jess	Deborah Kay
Jackie Kelly	Leanne McPherson
Joy Mitchell	Ros Nagorcka
Jasmine Peldys	Gaynor Stevenson
Margaret Underwood	

BSWRICS Clinical Advisory Group

Dr. Graham Pitson	Nathalie Abel
A/Prof. Philip Campbell	Dr. David Campbell
Dr. Ian Collins	Dr. Peter Eastman
Mr. Frank Miller	Alison Patrick
Dr. Vivienne Ramsbottom	Dr. Shelley Walder
Stuart Wilder	Dr. Songmei Wu
Mr. Cheng Hon Yap	

Our partners

Balmoral Bush Nursing Centre

Bellarine Community Health Ltd

Colac Area Health

Epworth Geelong

Hesse Rural Health

Icon Group (Icon Cancer Centre Geelong & Warrnambool)

Portland District Health

St. John of God Geelong Hospital

Terang & Mortlake Health Service

Western District Health Service

Barwon Health

Casterton Memorial Hospital

Dartmoor Bush Nursing Centre, Inc.

Great Ocean Road Health

Heywood Rural Health

Moyne Health Services

South West Healthcare

St. John of God Warrnambool Hospital

Timboon & District Healthcare Service

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Barwon South Western Regional Integrated Cancer Service (BSWRICS), I am pleased to present the 2022-23 BSWRICS Annual Report. This report highlights the range of initiatives undertaken by BSWRICS, in partnership with our Statewide and regional stakeholders, over the past 12 months.

The 2022-23 year has again provided a range of challenges as we all adjusted slowly to a post-COVID world. The BSWRICS Governance Committee said farewell to longstanding community member Fred Chatfield, who announced his retirement as a Consumer Representative for BSWRICS at the end of 2022. Fred has been a valued member of the BSWRICS Governance Committee since 2016 and has represented BSWRICS at various Statewide and local events.

Sadly, we also said goodbye to Gaynor Stevenson when she died suddenly on leave earlier this year. Gaynor, the Executive Director of Nursing for South West Healthcare, was a long serving Governance Committee member and strong advocate for improved cancer outcomes for people within our community.



Left to right: Fred Chatfield, Nathalie Davis, Leesa Jenkins

Additionally, workforce shortages and a particularly virulent influenza year, have continued to stretch existing clinical services and challenge health service delivery at all sites within the region, and in many areas across the State. These issues in turn have an impact on BSWRICS's ability to engage and support local clinical improvement activity. This has resulted in some project delays while staffing resources were recruited or freed up to participate.

Despite these challenges, the team has still managed to have 66/68 projects planned for the 2022-23 period either completed or in progress as at June 2023. The value delivered to our health service partnerships from these projects includes:

1. A well-attended virtual annual forum based around our care closer to home projects (VICS Implementation Plan 2020-24 Focus Area 1B).
2. Continuing support for the Regional Oncology Rehabilitation Network through our education series, and support of the Allied Health Clinical Trials Unit Oncology Research Project (ACT-ONC).
3. Participation in the West-VIC PHN Palliative and Advance Care Plan (ACP) project, which aligns with the completion of the Statewide VICS ACP and Palliative Care Project (VICS Implementation Plan 2020-24 Focus Area 9A & B).
4. Working with Statewide partners on supportive care (Cancer Council Victoria ACCESS Project) and survivorship (Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre).
5. Continuing to support the Regional Oncology Nursing Special Interest Group and plan the Regional Oncology Nursing Forum for later in 2023. This was delayed from late 2022 due to workforce challenges within the regional health services.
6. Completed the Trismus Project with Barwon Health for patients at risk of experiencing this painful side effect during treatment for head and neck cancers.
7. Participated, with a number of expert clinicians from the Barwon South Western region, in both Melanoma and

Pancreatic Tumour Summits held in late 2022.

8. Worked collaboratively with both Barwon Health and South West Healthcare as they developed the Department of Health initiated Regional Cancer Plan for their respective communities.

Along with our statewide partners, we have been fortunate to work with dedicated and talented communities across the Barwon South Western region, to deliver a range of value add services to those with cancer in our region.



A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Brew', set against a dark blue background.

Fiona Brew
BSWRICS Governance
Committee Chair

Message from the Clinical Director/ Program Manager

BSWRICS had our third year without a home base at Barwon Health while the renovations to St Mary's Hall were delayed, leaving the team continuing to work remotely. This, combined with the lingering impact of the pandemic, made clinical engagement in the region more challenging than usual.



Despite this, the **BSWRICS Clinical Advisory Group**, which had experienced a period of downtime during the pandemic, was refreshed in 2023 following significant effort to re-engage with a multidisciplinary group of clinicians from across the region. The group aims to be a conduit for communication between BSWRICS and clinicians across all health services involved in cancer care in the region, and will be able to provide a clinical perspective that can be otherwise hard to reach. The group had its first meeting in June and will meet quarterly prior to the BSWRICS Governance Committee.

BSWRICS had a number of team members attend the National

Clinical Oncology Society of Australia Conference (COSA) held in Brisbane in late 2022. The team presented a poster on the patterns of cancer diagnosis notifications across the Barwon South Western region during the COVID-19 pandemic (providing some data on case notifications and areas of potential under-diagnosis). We also co-authored, with North Eastern Metropolitan Integrated Cancer Service, a poster on Advance Care Planning practices in Victorian cancer services based on data from the BSWRICS led palliative and advance care planning project from 2020-21. Staff enjoyed the opportunity to learn from, and network with, colleagues from around the state and country and

improve their knowledge of cancer initiatives in other locations.

Finally, BSWRICS sadly said farewell to Angela Burns and Margaret Rogers, two long-standing team members in early 2023, as they both took up new opportunities in other areas. We thank them for their contribution over many years and wish them well.

About us

The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS) are Victoria's cancer service improvement network.



Improving patient experiences and outcomes by connecting cancer care and driving best practice.

The nine Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) locally and collectively, collaborate with stakeholders to design and implement service improvement initiatives that lead to better experience, care and outcomes for Victorians affected by cancer.

The VICS work to promote

- **System integration across structural boundaries**
- **Collaborative approaches to evidence-based service development**
- **Quality improvement at the local level**

The VICS build relationships

The **VICS build relationships** between health services, partners and stakeholders to develop, implement and evaluate initiatives that improve the way Victoria's health services provide care and support. Work is delivered statewide and locally to improve cancer outcomes for all Victorians and aligned with the **Victorian Cancer Plan**.



Each of the nine Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) has a core role in implementing the Victorian Cancer Plan locally and statewide, to support three of the plan's five goals:

- **Victorians know their risk and have cancers detected earlier**
- **Victorians with cancer have timely access to optimal treatment**
- **Victorians with cancer and their families live well**

The VICS implementation Plan

The VICS Implementation Plan guides this work by providing a consistent statewide approach, built around nine areas of focus for service improvement work:

1. Adoption of quality cancer care closer to home
2. Alignment with the Multidisciplinary Meetings (MDM) Quality Framework
3. Addressing the needs of the older person in routine cancer care
4. Implementing the Optimal Care Pathways (OCP) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer
5. Addressing unwarranted variations against the OCPs
6. Monitoring and communicating alignment with the OCPs
7. Supportive care
8. Survivorship care
9. Referrals to palliative care and advance care planning.

Types of work undertaken by the VICS include:

- Implementation of a new model of care for improved cancer care closer to home
- Development and application of resources that inform improved delivery of cancer care for the older person
- Increased awareness and understanding by clinicians of the need for cultural awareness and practices to improve cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer patients and carers
- Policy implementation by health services to support best-practice survivorship care practices.

For more information visit <https://www.vics.org.au/>

Our region

Barwon South Western Regional Integrated Cancer Service (BSWRICS) is one of nine Integrated Cancer Services in Victoria, working in partnership with health services to promote coordinated planning, system integration and improvement of cancer services across their respective regions.

33,000 km²



**Total
area**

BSWRICS undertakes its role by consulting and collaborating with regional health partners and people affected by cancer. Our work is governed by a Governance Committee comprising key regional stakeholders from the public and private sector. A Memorandum of Understanding between health service providers across the Barwon South Western region guides the collaborative effort towards cancer service improvement.

440,000



**Region's
population**

The Barwon South Western region of Victoria stretches from the tip of the Queenscliff Heads to the border of South Australia, **covering a total area of 33,000 square kilometres**. It is geographically diverse and includes the large regional centres of Geelong, Warrnambool, Hamilton and Colac. The region's population is approximately 440,000 and is rapidly growing.

6.6%

The BSW
population is 6.6%
of the Victorian
population



Cancer profile

Victoria

- Cancer is the leading cause of disease burden in Victoria. 36,974 Victorians were diagnosed with cancer in 2021.
- In 2021, there was an estimated decline of 4.3% in cancer diagnoses, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The most common cancers in Victoria are cancers of the prostate, breast, bowel, lung and melanoma. These cancers account for 56% of all diagnoses in Victoria.
- Regional Victorians are 44% more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma than Victorians living in major cities.

Source: Victorian Cancer Registry Statistics and Trends 2021
Cancer-in-Victoria-statistics-and-trends-2021.pdf (cancervic.org.au)

Barwon South Western Region

Leading types of cancer in the Barwon South Western region in 2021:



18%
Genitourinary



14%
Prostate



11%
Breast (female only)



9%
Haematological



8%
Skin

Source: Victorian Cancer Registry, September 2023



VICS VICTORIAN
INTEGRATED
CANCER SERVICES

Together for
better cancer care



"Hope and Connection Build our Wonderful Land" by Ngan Thronmarrie

www.vics.org.au

The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services are
supported by the Victorian Government



VICS statewide activity spotlights

VICS Optimal Care Summits

The VICS Optimal Care Summits program delivers strategic consultation, multidisciplinary engagement, data and information analysis, and reporting to identify unwarranted variations in clinical practice and cancer outcomes and priority activities to address them. This statewide program is administered by NEMICS on behalf of the VICS network.

The program, formerly known as the Victorian Tumour Summits, involves the examination of tumour stream cancer care, experience and outcome measures against the standards and targets set out in the OCPs. It aims to identify data-informed patterns of cancer care and outcomes, variations in cancer care, agree priorities for reducing variations, and deliver quality improvement initiatives to reduce variation. Two summits were delivered in 2022.

The Pancreatic Cancer Summit (August 2022)

identified three priority areas of unwarranted variation: Multidisciplinary meeting (MDM) patient presentation rates; timeliness of care; and palliative care referral rates. For each area, several further investigations and actions were recommended.

The Melanoma Summit (October 2022)

identified three priority areas of unwarranted variation: MDM patient presentation rates; timeliness and access to Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy; and supportive care screening rates. Specific actions were identified to help improve outcomes and equity in these areas.

The VICS work with health services and other stakeholders to support implementation of each summit's recommendations.



Care of the older person toolkit

The VICS developed the Care of the Older Person with Cancer Toolkit to help health services and ICS improve care of the older person with cancer. The toolkit provides information to help identify and address existing barriers, examples of existing geriatric oncology services, and key resources including how-to guides, education opportunities and patient resources.

Palliative care and advance care planning

The VICS Report, 'Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning: Current Practices in Victorian Cancer Services' has important insights for all organisations and services about advance care planning, palliative care, and end-of-life care. The report makes 18 recommendations to address different variations including the timing of access to palliative care and advance care planning and quality improvement activities. The VICS will work with cancer services and other stakeholders to help prioritise the recommendations for implementation. This work also informed the peer reviewed publication by Philip et al, Palliative Medicine 2022, Vol. 36(9) 1426–1431.

Victorian statewide collaboration project to improve cancer survivorship care

This is a strategic partnership between the VICS and the Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre (ACSC). This work is still in progress and aims to:

- Facilitate high quality survivorship care through supporting Victorian hospitals to ensure appropriate policies are in place.
- Facilitate high quality survivorship care through collaborating to implement survivorship care models. This is supported by ICS working with member services to implement local change.
- Improve VICS and member services' confidence, capacity, and capability around survivorship through reducing the gap in survivorship education and training.

Local activity spotlight

Strengthening Regional Cancer Centres

The Strengthening Regional Cancer Centres Project commenced in early 2022, with final reports collated and submitted to Department of Health at the end of 2022. The aim of this statewide project was to improve cancer outcomes for all Victorians. Victoria currently has some of the best cancer outcomes in the world, but the Victorian Cancer Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework baseline report identified that not all communities and users of the Victorian health system enjoy these outcomes. Regional Cancer Centres (RCCs) are key to bringing good quality cancer care to the regions. With two regional cancer centres in the Barwon South Western region, one located in Warrnambool (South West region) and the other in Geelong (Barwon region), it was important to develop two independent service plans that address the needs of each local community, whilst also ensuring there was an overarching regional approach.

Both service plans are based on current population and service provision. The plans include a review of the policy context that frames the delivery of cancer care, specifically;

- **Population profile and description of the cancer services available in the Barwon/South West region**
- **Scope for future services not currently provided**
- **Analysis of the current and future demand across both Victoria and the Barwon/South West region**
- **Review and analysis of needs, and a proposed service model of care**

The plans also outlined short (2 years), mid (5 years), and long term (10 years) vision that will support the changes proposed in each plan.

BSWRICS supported both RCCs and service planners during the development stage and will continue to do so during the implementation phase.

Consumer engagement

Patients and carers play an important role in providing a lived experience perspective on service improvement opportunities and advocate for the concerns of those affected by cancer.

The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS) Consumer Morning Tea, an initiative of the VICS Consumer Engagement Peer Group, was designed to bring together patients and carers to give them an opportunity to connect, share, learn, and work towards creating a VICS consumer community.

A range of topics were discussed, including:

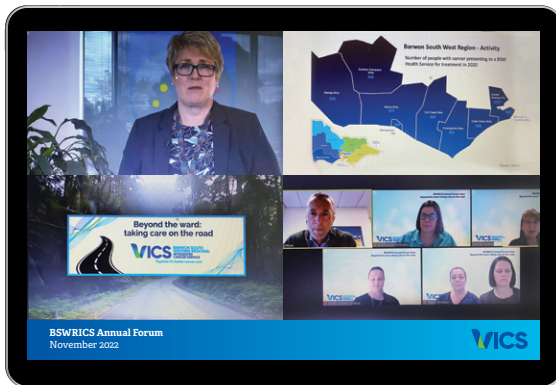
- **An update on the activities and aspirations of patients and carers from across the various regions.**
- **The role and importance of patients and carers in the development of the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024-28.**

This year's consumer catch-up was held virtually, bringing together 18 patients and carers from across metropolitan and regional areas. Several staff from the ICS were also in attendance, with VICS branded cookies distributed to and enjoyed by all in attendance. The morning tea is now embedded as an annual event.

BSWRICS Annual Forum 2022

The BSWRICS Annual Forum took place virtually in November 2022. The theme of the forum was "Beyond the ward: taking care on the road". We heard from three Health Services who shared their insights and learnings from recent BSWRICS-led feasibility projects which looked at embedding a 'chemotherapy at home, or close to home' model of care in regional settings. These projects aligned with the VICS Implementation Plan and Better@Home principles of improving access to care at/or closer to home for people experiencing cancer. The forum concluded with a live Q&A.

Eighty-one people from across Victoria registered to attend the forum. Feedback indicated the forum was an overwhelming success.



Barwon South Western Region Education Program

BSWRICS remains committed to providing targeted education webinars to address the needs of local oncology clinicians. Despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic, we still managed to host a well-attended and insightful webinar, 'Cardio-oncology: Who is at risk and what is the role for exercise rehabilitation?' presented by Dr Erin Howden, Head of the Human Integrative Physiology Lab and the Physical Activity

Program at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute.

Evaluation of the session indicated participants found the webinar extremely useful, and 80% indicated they were likely or very likely to make changes to their clinical practice as a result of their learnings.

Cancer and exercise

Exercise medicine has experienced sustained growth in the Barwon South Western region, with ten health services offering education and exercise programs for prehabilitation and rehabilitation. BSWRICS has upheld its commitment to nurturing the Barwon South Western Oncology Rehabilitation Network, offering a platform for regional healthcare professionals to exchange insights, knowledge, and resources within the realm of cancer and exercise.

Moreover, BSWRICS has remained dedicated to sponsoring exercise clinicians to participate in Cancer Council Victoria facilitator training sessions, thereby fostering a strong foundation of expertise within the region. This investment in training and knowledge enhancement further underscores our commitment to excellence in healthcare provision.

The Barwon Health Oncology Rehabilitation Program team has shown remarkable adaptability in providing exceptional healthcare in the post-COVID era. Erika Kotowicz, Oncology Rehabilitation Care Coordinator and Senior Clinician Physiotherapist at the Sunrise Centre Geelong, reports significant achievements in the past financial year.

'We conducted an impressive 5,000 appointments during this period, with an impressive 98% of these appointments conducted in person, resulting in a low "did not attend" rate of only 6.7%. Our program continues to thrive, receiving over 600 referrals annually. We conduct 15 face-to-face group sessions every week, and in February of this year, we introduced hydrotherapy sessions for our oncology patients.'

+5,000
appointments

+600
referrals annually

Supportive care

The Victorian Cancer Plan 2020-2024 highlights the significance of comprehensive supportive care as an integral component of delivering high-quality cancer care. People with cancer contend with a range of diverse supportive care requirements throughout their cancer experience. These needs encompass physical, emotional, social, psychological, informational, spiritual, and practical aspects. Within the framework of a multidisciplinary team, all team members play a vital role in conducting thorough needs assessments, and collaborating with people living with cancer, to implement tailored interventions that address their specific requirements. This collaborative approach to supportive care not only enhances the overall patient experience, but also contributes to improved patient outcomes.

The Barwon South Western region, in collaboration with the Grampians region, participated in a pilot initiative for the Cancer Council Victoria's (CCV) statewide project known as "Accessing Cancer Care Equitably Using Support Services" (ACCESS). Funded by the Department of Health, CCV continues to implement this project throughout Victoria, enhancing access to supportive care services for people living with cancer.

During the pilot phase, BSWRICS established key connections within local health services, facilitated the delivery of educational and training programs to healthcare professionals, coordinated efforts with healthcare providers to assist in the project's implementation, and collaborated with Deakin University to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot initiative.

BSWRICS additionally contributed expertise as a member of the Project Advisory Group. The insights gained from the pilot phase have proven instrumental in shaping and optimising processes for the project's broader expansion throughout Victoria.

Currently in Phase 2 of the project, efforts are specifically directed towards addressing the needs of underserved populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This strategic focus aligns with our commitment to fostering equitable access and ensuring the inclusivity of our initiatives across the entire State.



Prostate Cancer Project

A study highlighted in our previous annual report indicated there are several disparities for patients with prostate cancer in the Barwon South West region. To explore factors that may be influencing people presenting with higher risk disease in some regions, BSWRICS partnered with the Geelong and Warrnambool Prostate Support Group's to secure funding for a 'regional prostate cancer awareness initiative' through the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) Community Grant program. This joint effort resulted in a grant of \$10,000 from PCFA, and an additional \$5,000 contribution from BSWRICS.

BSWRICS continues its collaborative work with these dedicated groups, coordinating the implementation of a high-impact awareness campaign. The primary goal of this campaign is to encourage early detection of prostate cancer among the population in the Barwon South West region of Victoria.

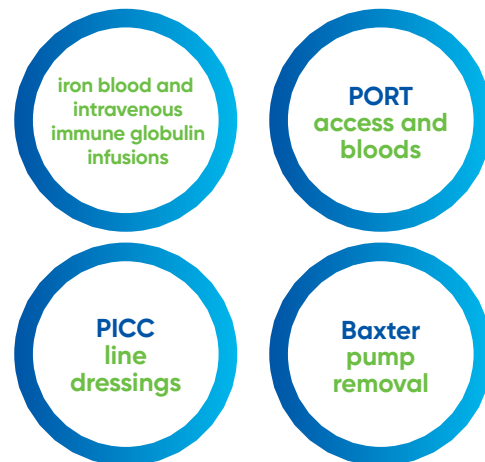


Left to right: Cr. Peter Murrhry (City of Greater Geelong), Bill Rebula (Geelong Prostate Support Group), Alison Patrick (BSWRICS Program Manager), Chris Harding (Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia), Graham Rees (Geelong Prostate Support Group)

Home Based Cancer Care

Building on the success of the home-based cancer care feasibility study at Colac Area Health, BSWRICS, in partnership with the Barwon South West Health Service Partnerships, agreed to support the scoping and establishment of cancer care at home, or closer to home, models of care at Western District Health Service (WDHS) and Great Ocean Road Health (GORH). The intention was to expand on existing integrated home-based cancer service models of care throughout the Barwon South Western region, and to deliver localised services in support of Better@Home principles of improving access to care at, or closer to home, for those people experiencing cancer.

Great Ocean Road Health completed a Day Infusion Service Feasibility Study in September 2022, with the vision to create a more collaborative service model which provides integrated cancer care for patients within the community, and supports them through their cancer journey no matter what road it takes. GORH was successful in receiving Better@Home funding for 2022/23 to commence the implementation of the following services **(Phase 1)**:



Phase 2 will include expanding services to include immunotherapy, chemotherapy and oncology at home. GORH continue to work with the Better@Home team to implement an agreed model of care.

Western District Health Service successfully established a cancer at home service in October 2022. Between the pilot project reporting period of October 2022–January 2023, 14 patients were identified as eligible for the service. Ten patients consented to participate in the pilot. It was identified that most patients who had consented to being provided the at home service lived outside of Hamilton, experienced transport difficulties, or were using the at home service for convenience due to ill health. Of the ten patients consented, 24 treatment visits were undertaken within the home. Overall, feedback from patients and their families was extremely positive.

Identified benefits for patients receiving cancer care at home include:

- Being closer to family and support networks, and keeping families connected
- Increased privacy
- Less time spent waiting for appointments and discharge
- Reduced costs associated with travel
- Offering greater choice
- Reduced risk of exposure to infection
- Decreased burden on families and carers

Alongside benefits to those experiencing cancer, the nursing team delivering at home care felt the pilot provided greater accessibility and knowledge of the patients circumstances, enabling a more holistic model of care.

WDHS continues to remain innovative and explore ways of providing patients and families in the region with greater choice and increased flexibility by offering further cancer care in the comfort and familiar surroundings of the patient's home.

Following the success of the Phase 1 Feasibility Project at Colac Area Health in 2021, BSWRICS has committed to funding a clinical expert resource to potentially support Phase 2, which includes the pilot and implementation of the home-based model of care. BSWRICS will provide support with governance and project management.

Barwon South West Regional Oncology Nursing Network

The importance of networking and collegiality was highlighted more than ever throughout the pandemic. Since mid-2021, BSWRICS have facilitated quarterly regional nursing meetings for the oncology nursing workforce across the Barwon South Western region. The purpose of these meetings includes:

- Promotion of information regarding opportunities for nursing staff across the BSW region and Victoria
- Updating training and education needs
- Networking and sharing information about new and developing resources
- Strengthening collegiality and support for the oncology nursing workforce locally
- Providing a forum for nurses to discuss successes and challenges in a supportive setting

A successful pilot highlighted a demonstrated need for the Barwon South Western (BSW) regional oncology nurses meeting to continue quarterly, in an ongoing capacity. The group has been instrumental in contributing to the future planning of a BSW region oncology nurses forum scheduled for later in 2023 focusing on nursing workforce innovation and wellbeing.



Trismus Project – Barwon Health

The Trismus Project was initiated in May 2021 in response to a service gap, caused by the absence of the sole treating physiotherapist, at Dental Services, Barwon Health. Trismus is a condition experienced by people with head and neck cancers, often caused by the side effects of radiation therapy. Early prevention is key, and if not addressed in its earliest stages, trismus can cause profound loss of movement in the jaw, seriously inhibiting a person's ability to open their mouth. This causes considerable problems regarding speech and nutrition, as well as general quality of life. A multidisciplinary approach to prevention is required, whereby physiotherapists and speech pathologists provide specialist treatment at critical points within the first twelve months of cancer treatment.

To support the current service gap, and for this dedicated specialist work to continue, BSWRICS funded a clinical project worker to develop and implement a trismus intervention model of care within Barwon Health Cancer Services.

A preventative, collaborative model of care between speech pathology and physiotherapy was developed to capture high-risk patients undergoing head and neck cancer treatment. The endorsed model of care includes pre-treatment education, weekly touch points throughout treatment, and the transition to active, preventative intervention post treatment to preserve and rehabilitate mouth opening and encourage lifetime compliance. A Trismus Patient Education Information Booklet was developed and integrated into a revised Andrew Love Cancer Centre Head & Neck Patient Cancer Informational Booklet. Project evaluation will be undertaken in September 2023 and June 2024.

Evaluation of Cancer Outcomes Barwon South West (ECOBSW) Registry

Better access to and use of data and information to drive continuous improvements.

The ECOBSW Registry supports health services within our region, particularly around quality and safety, service planning and redesign, by collecting a comprehensive dataset on all Barwon South West residents diagnosed with cancer.

This past year has seen the Registry reach a major milestone, now holding a comprehensive dataset on over 20,000 patients.



We continued to see the number of data requests and publications grow steadily. The overall theme of recent data requests, specifically looking at incidence, place of residence, and language spoken at home, further highlights an increased focus on operational questions to support service planning beyond the pandemic, and local grant applications for specialist nursing staff.

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) 49th Annual Scientific Meeting was held in Brisbane in November 2022. The ECOBSW Registry presented a poster entitled "Impact of COVID-19 on cancer notifications in the BSW region of Victoria".

Impact of COVID-19 on cancer notifications in the BSW region of Victoria

COVID-19 has had much publicised impacts on cancer diagnosis within Victoria. Statewide there are thought to be over 2000 undiagnosed malignancies since the start of the pandemic, particularly in men and within melanoma, prostate cancer and head and neck malignancies. Regional and local patterns of presentation may differ from Statewide data and local data suggesting under diagnosis may assist in regional service planning.

Impact of COVID-19 on cancer diagnosis notifications in the Barwon Southwest region of Victoria

Graham Pitson, Leigh Matheson, Alison Patrick, Margaret Rogers

Barwon South Western Region Integrated Cancer Services, Geelong, Australia



AIMS
COVID-19 has had much publicised impacts on cancer diagnosis within Victoria. State-wide there are thought to be over 2000 undiagnosed malignancies since the start of the pandemic, particularly in men and within melanoma, prostate cancer and head and neck malignancies. Regional and local patterns of presentation may differ from state-wide data and local data suggesting under diagnosis may assist in regional service planning.

METHODS
Prior statistical analysis using Victorian Cancer Registry (VCR) data has been used to identify a shortfall in cancer diagnoses (1). VCR notifications for 2019-2021 inclusive for the Barwon South West region were utilised for this review. Notifications for the 5 most common cancers were assessed for major variation in notifications, taking a pragmatic approach to classify a major variation where notifications changed by more than 10% from 2019 levels in either or both of 2020/2021. As cancer notifications can occur more than once for each case, diagnoses were derived from notifications by taking the first tumour site notification for each unique case.

This analysis was approved through the Barwon Health Human Research Ethics Committee and information collected was in accordance with the Cancer Act 1959 (Victoria).

Table 1: Total notifications and diagnoses 2019-21

Year	Notifications (No.)	Diagnoses (No.)	Diags (%)
2019	2740	3671	74.5%
2020	3225	3777	86.4%
2021	3273	3751	87.7%

Figure 1: Tumour notifications and diagnoses

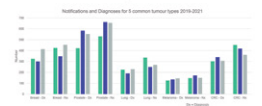
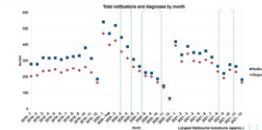


Figure 2: Monthly notifications and diagnoses



RESULTS
Noting that the pandemic effects began in March/April 2020, total notifications did not change significantly from 2019-21 (3671, 3777, 3751 respectively). Likewise there were no obvious reductions in notification by sex or in older patients. Total diagnoses increased from 2019 to 2020 and remained fairly static in 2021 (2740, 3225, 3273 in 2019-2021 respectively). There was a higher proportion of diagnoses to notifications in both 2020 and 2021 (Table 1). Breast and lung cancer notifications dropped by 18% and 25% respectively from 2019 to 2020 while diagnoses for each dropped by 8 and 15%. From 2020 to 2021 breast and lung cancer notifications and diagnoses increased while colorectal cancer saw a reduction in both notifications (14%) and diagnoses (10%). Melanoma notifications dropped by 13% from 2020 to 2021 but diagnoses increased slightly each year (Figure 1).



RESULTS continued
There was marked monthly variation for notifications and diagnoses with numbers decreasing late in each calendar year. The longest lockdown periods in Victoria have been approximately highlighted in Figure 2, noting that most of these lockdowns were less severe outside Melbourne.

In general, private providers showed increased numbers of diagnoses across the major tumour sites compared to public providers where diagnosis numbers commonly fell in 2020/21 (Figure 3a), while inner versus outer regional location of the diagnosing centre appeared to have no particular effect (Figure 3b).

Figure 3a: Diagnoses by public and private providers

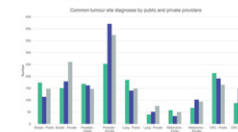
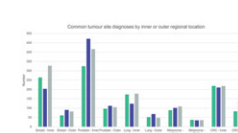


Figure 3b: Diagnoses by inner and outer regional providers



CONCLUSION

Using a pragmatic approach to identifying major variations in cancer notifications during the COVID-19 pandemic, regional data suggests a reduction in lung cancer and colorectal cancer notifications in our region across 2020 and 2021. However more detailed analysis of actual diagnoses suggests no major decrease in cancer diagnoses in aggregate or of the most common tumour sites across the pandemic years of 2020-21. This is explained by fewer duplicate notifications of cases within the region, perhaps reflecting altered referral or treatment pathways.

There was a change in the pattern of public versus private diagnosing institutions with generally reduced diagnoses in public centres offset by higher numbers in private centres. Some of this may have been due to deliberate offloading of cases to private centres to free up public health capacity. It will be of interest to see if the prior patterns re-establish as pandemic restrictions ease further.

Our regional patterns of cancer diagnoses suggest no major cohort of undiagnosed cases. However, this pragmatic analysis has not attempted to account for an absence of prior growth trends and so a degree of concern is reasonable, especially in tumour sites where there was less growth than might otherwise be expected – in particular, lung and colorectal cancer.

(1) Decline in cancer pathology notifications during the 2020 COVID-19-related restraints in Victoria. De Manesha L, White R, McArthur G, Balle LA, Ezzard SM. Med J Aust. 2021 Apr;248(281-283).



Vale Sandra Oriander

Sandra generously gave her time, and willingly shared her personal story, to support numerous BSWRICS projects over the past decade. Sandra was instrumental in helping establish the BSW Consumer Network, was a regular face at many local and Statewide consumer forums, provided valuable input into local strategic plans and was an inaugural member of the ECOBSW Registry Data Governance Committee, a position held since 2014.

We will miss Sandra's insights, her kindness, and her calm and measured approach.

Financial Report 2022-23

Income	
Department of Health Victoria	\$1,315,882.59
Total Income	\$1,315,882.59
Expenses	
Program Office and Clinical Salaries	\$682,182.89
Contract/Other Agency Salaries	\$79,744.35
General Administration	\$16,286.92
Host Agency Charge	\$131,588.26
Conference Sponsorship	\$5,836.00
Training and Education	\$800.00
Contribution to Local Projects	\$24,642.62
Contribution to Statewide Projects	\$71,139.00
Contribution to Ring-Fenced Funds	\$65,794.13
Total Expenses	\$1,078,014.17
OPERATING RESULTS	\$237,868.42

Our team



Fiona Brew

Chair – BSWRICS
Governance Group



Dr. Graham Pitson

Clinical Director



Alison Patrick

Program Manager



Leigh Matheson

Deputy Program Manager /
Health Information Manager –
Data, Quality & Research



Angela Burns

Administration Officer
Until April 2023



Dr. Heather Cameron

Service Development Officer
Until August 2022



Leesa Jenkins

Service Development
Officer



Dr. Margaret Rogers

Data Analyst -
Data, Quality & Research
Until May 2023



Melinda Mitchell

Data Collection Officer –
Data, Quality & Research



Warren Flatt

Service Development
Officer



Dr. Nathalie Davis

Cancer Service Development
Project Manager
*Joint appointment with South
West Healthcare*

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Barwon South Western Regional
Integrated Cancer Service

