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# Northern Beaches Hospital opens wig library, with funds from Dee Why RSL, local cancer charity

A free wig service for cancer patients who have lost their hair has opened on the northern beaches, thanks to a mammoth effort by community groups.



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A new wig library has opened at Northern Beaches Hospital for cancer patients who have lost their hair.

The new service – which is totally free, but accepts voluntary donations from users – has 100 wigs to choose from.

It also offers expert advice from trained volunteers like Yvonne Bellamy, 72, who will help patients choose the right colour and style, as well as advise them on their make-up to “help people feel better about themselves”.



Ms Bellamy, of Wheeler Heights, and a long-term volunteer at the Frenchs Forest hospital, said the Cancer Council was offering the training through its Look Good Feel Better program.

The funds for the wigs are from Dee Why RSL, which donated \$25,000, as well as Northern Beaches Community Cancer Charity.

“It will be a good feeling to be able to help people in this way,” Ms Bellamy said. “I have a friend going through this so it helps me to understand how important this is.”



Northern Beaches Hospital oncologist, Dr Antonia Pearson and patient Clare Ward, trying on a wig, in the hospital's new wig library. Picture: Supplied.

One patient who knows how much it means to have this service is Clare Ward, 50, of Cromer.

She got her wig before the library opened. It was donated to the hospital and she had to try it on in the toilets.

The ovarian cancer patient who is now in remission, said she cried when she saw the new wig library had opened on Monday.

She told the *Manly Daily* she hated losing her hair so much she showed no-one her bald head, not even her husband. She wore a beanie everywhere, even in bed.

So when she got a wig, she said it was a very emotional moment.

“It made me feel like a human again,” she said.

“It was almost life changing.”

Another patient Sara Nimmo, 55, of Lovett Bay, is currently undergoing chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer. She makes the trip to the Frenchs Forest hospital every second week, by boat and car.



Yvonne Bellamy with patient Sara Nimmo at the Northern Beaches Hospital in Frenchs Forest, Picture: Christian Gilles

The opening of the Northern Beaches Hospital's new wig library. Left to right: Toby Williams Dee Why RSL Director, Mark Rendell Dee Why RSL Vice President, Angelina Belluomo Cancer Council NSW Community Programs Coordinator, Andrew Spillane NBH Chief Operating Officer, Graeme Liddell Dee Why RSL President.

Hospital Chief Operating Officer Andrew Spillane said Cancer Council NSW helped secure the \$25,000 grant from Dee Why RSL.

“The Northern Beaches Hospital Wig Library is a wonderful example of community support for the hospital,” he said.

“The wig library will make a tremendous difference to cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.”

Northern Beaches Community Cancer Charity founder, Bonita Mersiades said the wig library will provide vital support to the NBH Oncology Unit.

She said she used to have long, red, hair, but she had cut it short like Liza Minnelli and the chemotherapy had caused it to thin.

Ms Nimmo said when the time was right she would be using the wig service and said it as wonderful it was free because good wigs are very expensive.

“It’s a fantastic thing they are doing,” Ms Nimmo said. “It’s important to have easy access to wigs.”



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Left to right: Elaine Arnold, McGrath Breast Care Nurse Consultant, oncologist, Dr Antonia Pearson and Day Medical Nurse Unit Manager, Grace Kimani at the opening of the new wig library at Northern Beaches Hospital.

“Losing your hair can be devastating for many cancer patients and a wig can make a real difference to self-esteem and hope for the future,” Mrs Mersiades said.

“It was amazing to see the overwhelming support from the community for our #WigWarriors campaign which helped fund the wig library.”

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