

# Crowning glory gives a boost in times of need

Nadine Morton

**F**OR Clare Ward, the loss of her hair during cancer treatment was devastating. Not only did she hate the way she looked, but the lack of hair signalled her out to others as a "cancer patient".

The Cromer woman was diagnosed with stage four metastatic ovarian cancer in May last year and the aggressive treatment meant she would lose her hair so she decided to have her own "head shaving party".

The Northern Beaches Hospital Wig Library was launched this week to help people just like Ms Ward as they undergo treatment for cancer.

In her early stages of treatment, Ms Ward said the loss of her hair just added to the grief she was feeling.

"Every day I'd look in the mirror and I'm reminded that I've got cancer. I'd look in the mirror and I'd see a different person," she said. "People just look at you when you're out and it just adds to being self-conscious."

The day she received her long, straw-

berry-blonde wig - the same colour as her natural hair - was life changing.

"To be completely bald, it completely changes how you look and if you put a scarf on you're a cancer patient," Ms Ward said.

"The wigs you can get in the library, you wouldn't even know they're a wig, they look so good. The wig library is a nice and calm, it's not too daunting and it's a really nice environment."

The library is a key project of the recently formed Northern Beaches Community Cancer Charity, and founder Bonita Mersiades said it would provide vital support to the hospital's oncology unit.

"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.

Wigs will be provided to cancer patients who need one, with recipients only asked to make a donation if they can afford to do so.

Cancer Council NSW received a \$25,000 grant from Dee Why RSL to establish the library.



FEEL GOOD: Oncologist Dr Antonio Pearson and patient Clare Ward in the newly opened Northern Beaches Hospital Wig Library. Picture: Supplied