



Remembering Peter Brown

Cancer Voices NSW was saddened to learn of the passing of our long term colleague and friend Peter Brown in February this year.

We in the advocacy world who have known and worked with Peter have done our best to recognize Peter's long and varied contributions. Two quotes from one Cancer Voices colleague sum up the sentiments regarding the news of Peter's passing. *"Even when expected, the finality is always a blow to those who knew him"* and *"Peter did have a big impact far and wide, and I hope that can be heard"*. Sadly, and frustratingly, many of us believe that no one person (other than Peter) has details of all his involvement and activities, and as such he probably will not get the full recognition so richly deserved.

We at Cancer Voices first met Peter when he attended our Executive Committee (EC) meeting 11 May 2005 as an observer. He had been diagnosed and treated for a blood cancer. My recollection was him talking about his involvement at St George Hospital, that he was keen to be involved with us and that he had focus. His membership application was accepted at our following EC meeting 22 June. Peter then attended as a member of the EC from 27 July 2005. Even this swift process tells us something of Peter making up his mind about something and just getting on with it. He was a regular and loyal attendee over the years. It was usually only ever a clash of his other consumer commitments or a health matter that precluded him from attending.

Peter was such a passionate, tireless advocate in so many areas. Along with Cancer Voices NSW, Peter was heavily involved in committees associated with St George Hospital along with associated support groups. He was still chairing a support group through 2018. He was also engaged with South East Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD). More recently, he was very involved with SESLHD in the restructure around consumer engagement. Peter was impressed that consumers were being given a *"distinct voice direct to senior management in the formulation of a cooperative Health and Welfare system as has been created in Scotland and is still expanding there"* (as per an email from Peter).

Through all his involvement he built strong connections with those that he was associated with and was certainly respected. He would often comment about being approached about something and say *"I am not sure where / how they got my details. I have been asked to participate / join....."*

For Cancer Voices, Peter's name will always be associated with e-health and My Health Records. He was certainly our go to person in this space. Peter was responsible for setting up the Consumers' e-Health Alliance almost ten years ago. He and Eric Browne (Cancer Voices SA) worked closely together for the Alliance.

Over the years I gleaned enough to understand his successful working life in logistics. He certainly did apply that same approach to his advocacy work and often referred to it, including in our strategic planning workshop last year. His family is now quite large. He spoke of Christmas in July events with some 30+ members and was proud of its expanding numbers.

Quotes received from colleagues though varied, all highlight his passion, determination and persistence and a desire to make a difference:

"Probably nobody other than Peter has full oversight of all the many things he has been involved with, and because of that, probably the extent of his contributions may never be acknowledged"

Our Cancer Voices South Australia colleagues recall: *“Peter came to Adelaide about 5 years ago to speak at a meeting organised by Health Consumers Alliance SA on eHealth. As he began to speak, a woman sitting next to me whispered ‘he must be at least 100!’ as if this totally messed with her head that an elderly person could know anything about eHealth. Stereotypes and image might have both helped or hindered Peter’s progress - but you never forgot the clarity of his vision and passion in his voice. Peter wasn’t technologically savvy even using his own computer, but applying his extensive experience in complex transport logistics he certainly knew what was needed and needed to be done to develop and implement systems to make information flow to meet the requirements of multiple different users and user categories. He could deal with complexity without being swamped and overwhelmed by the challenges..... well, he could until now. Thanks again for letting us know”.*

“..... his passion and doggedness. We all knew that he could and loved to talk and I always knew that a phone call from Peter was never going to be a short one. He also wrote extremely well and was very well read”.

Peter would often phone to discuss various issues. We had chatted several times following his pancreatic cancer diagnosis late last year. He was feeling good despite knowing his likely prognosis about “the cancer you don’t want to have” (as Peter described it). He was appreciative of all the information that we had put to him and he was tackling it all in a pragmatic way”.

Peter participated in our last EC meeting for 2018 in late November. He also met up with a colleague from Cancer Voices SA just prior to last Christmas and was still sending out emails through December.

I have always admired his tenacity to keep going, even when faced with various health issues over the years and his perseverance with technology. He followed blogs and was a constant source of up to date material and resources.

Reflecting on Peter’s contribution is a reminder of why we all do what we do. In Peter’s case age certainly wasn’t a barrier. He would have turned 90 in December, what an inspiration.

Of the person I will remember that cheeky smile, the coloured braces, a liking for a sweet treat and in recent years the walking stick.

I leave you with another fitting quote:

“Peter will be sadly missed. He has made a wonderful contribution in the health arena and as members of Cancer Voices we shall remember his desire to make a difference in so many ways. Farewell to a great advocate”.

Elisabeth Kochman on behalf of Cancer Voices NSW and SA, April 2019

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Cancer Voices is the independent, volunteer voice of people affected by cancer - since 2000.

The following was kindly shared by the South East Sydney Local Health District and provides some further insights into Peter's consumer involvement.

Remembering patient advocate Peter Brown



Peter's colleagues took a moment of silence at a recent meeting to acknowledge his life, his contribution to patient advocacy & his dedication to the DCCC • Peter Brown

SESLHD's Consumer and Community Council (DCCC) - the peak advisory committee for the district - recently commemorated the life of one of its own patient advocates, **Peter Brown**, who passed away in February this year.

A moment of silence was observed amongst Peter's colleagues, acknowledging his life, his contribution to patient advocacy and the time he dedicated to the DCCC.

Leisa Rathborne, General Manager, St George Hospital said: "Peter was a long-standing consumer representative on the St George Hospital Consumer Advisory Group. His ideas, input and enthusiasm were most helpful and have assisted us in making valuable improvements to our organisation. Without the support of our consumers this committee would not be as successful, and a model that other consumer groups strive to achieve. On behalf of our committee we thank Peter for his passion over the many years he served as a valued consumer representative."

Amanda Justice, Community Partnership Manager, SESLHD, said DCCC members were honoured to be able to celebrate Peter's achievements.

"As a founding member of the DCCC, Peter's passing has been felt deeply by DCCC members and Community Partnerships Unit staff. Peter, who would have been 90 years old in December, remained a wonderfully energetic and passionate patient advocate despite living a number of years with blood cancer and in his last years of life, pancreatic cancer.

"Known to rarely miss a meeting, he not only sat on the DCCC but also contributed to the St George Hospital Consumer Advisory Group for more than a decade, was a member of Health Consumers NSW for many years and was part of Cancer Voice NSW for over 13 years. With a particular interest in My Health Record, Peter was heavily involved in advocacy to create a good quality electronic health record.

"Health consumers like Peter and the 26 dedicated consumers currently on the DCCC who share their invaluable lived experience, perspectives, wisdom and time are critical to shaping a responsive, effective and efficient health system."