

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ**

Hamilton, New Zealand

[Wednesday 27 April 2022, 9.00am NZDT]

**Brain Beanies Exhibition to Launch Brain Tumour Awareness Month**

For the past month, Brain Tumour Support NZ trustee Sarah Gibb's office has been taken over by beanies of all shapes and sizes. Sarah is curating the first ever Brainy Beanies exhibition, which will open on 3 May with a launch party at The Meteor in Hamilton to mark the beginning of Brain Tumour Awareness Month.

Brainy Beanies is a craft exhibition with a difference. For the past five months Brain Tumour Support NZ has encouraged crafters from around the country to create original beanies for the exhibition with the message "created with love, by someone who cares."

The response has been overwhelming. "We were hoping that we might be able to get 100 beanies submitted," said Sarah. "We achieved that number early on, then we got to 200, and then 300."

As of today, the number of Brainy Beanies arriving on her desk had exceeded a staggering 750.

"The brain tumour patient community was first to get involved but then news of the campaign spread to knitting and crocheting clubs and other community groups around the country. We have received beanies from first-time knitters through to keen amateur crocheters and people who design and make beanies for a living," Sarah said.

The stories accompanying the beanies have been both heartwarming and inspirational. Some people have created beanies in memory of a loved one lost to brain cancer.

Wellington siblings Lucy and Tom Forrestal lost their father Mike to a brain tumour 12 years ago when Lucy was just 10 years old and Tom 6. Mike was a Wellington policeman who served in the Diplomatic Protection Squad, covering two prime ministers, and later a detective in the Financial Crime Unit.

**Charity Services number: CC56933**

Lucy said: "My dad wore a beanie while he was sick and it kept him nice and warm while we spent quality time out and about as a family. Beanies are very important to people with brain tumours and can give someone comfort and freedom during an incredibly challenging time. I am knitting my beanie in a baby blue, the same as the New Zealand Police uniform shirt."

May is recognised as Brain Tumour Awareness Month in New Zealand and around the world. According to Brain Tumour Support NZ chair Chris Tse, there are over 1,100 people living in New Zealand with brain cancer and many more with non-malignant (benign) brain tumours.

"Around 355 New Zealanders are diagnosed with brain cancer each year representing 1.4% of all cancers. However brain cancer is responsible for 3% of cancer deaths which reflects the lack of effective treatments and poor survival outcomes" said Chris.

Chris says that increased awareness is the first step in improving outcomes for brain tumour patients here and abroad. "Without awareness among our politicians, health decision makers, funders and the general public, there are insufficient funds directed towards brain cancer research and no new treatments will be developed," said Chris.

Sarah Gibb knows the impact a brain tumour can have on the whole family. She lost her brother to the disease in 2018. It was his brain tumour journey which inspired Sarah to come up with the idea of Brainy Beanies. Based on the success of the first campaign, Brainy Beanies is now set to become an ongoing awareness and fundraising event for Brain Tumour Support NZ.

The Brainy Beanies exhibition runs from 4 to 8 May at The Nancy Caiger Gallery in The Meteor Theatre, 1 Victoria St, Hamilton. Entry is free and there will be an opportunity to buy some of the Brainy Beanies during the exhibition.

Ends

#### ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS

- Brain cancer is responsible for the most cancer deaths in children and young people under the age of 40.

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- Brain cancer is the biggest cancer killer of children in New Zealand, being responsible for 38% of all childhood cancer deaths (the next largest is leukaemia with 25%)<sup>1</sup>
- Every year around 355 New Zealanders are diagnosed with primary brain cancer, representing 1.0% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>
- Around 293 New Zealanders die each year from brain cancer, making it the 10<sup>th</sup> most fatal cancer.
- Survival rates for brain cancer have not improved significantly in the last 30 years. The 5 year survival rate for glioblastoma, the most common form of brain cancer, is just 5%.
- Brain tumours can affect anyone, of any ethnicity, and at any age. The causes of most brain tumours are unknown which means there are no preventative measures and population screening is impractical.

#### ABOUT BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ

Brain Tumour Support NZ is a registered charity formed in 2019 to provide much needed support, information and advocacy to brain tumour patients in New Zealand. Our Vision is that everyone living with a brain tumour has the support, information and access to best treatments, so they feel less afraid, less alone and more empowered.

Website: [www.braintumoursupport.org.nz](http://www.braintumoursupport.org.nz)

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Chris Tse – Chair (027-2712004, [chris@braintumoursupport.org.nz](mailto:chris@braintumoursupport.org.nz))

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<sup>1</sup> Ballantine, K & the NZCCR Working Group (2017). *Child cancer survival in New Zealand 2005-2014: A report from the New Zealand Children's Cancer Registry*. Auckland: National Child Cancer Network  
<https://childcancernetwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Childhood-Cancer-Survival-in-New-Zealand-2005-2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Globocan 2020: <https://gco.iarc.fr/today/data/factsheets/populations/554-new-zealand-fact-sheets.pdf>