

MEDIA RELEASE

BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ

Hamilton, New Zealand

[Tuesday 15 March 2022, 9.00am NZDT]

'Created with love, by someone who cares'

Brain Tumour Support NZ launches Brainy Beanies campaign

The Covid-19 pandemic has played havoc with fundraising events, not just in Aotearoa New Zealand but around the world. Charities which normally rely on community events to provide the bulk of their revenue have been forced to innovate and move their activities online or into more Covid-friendly environments.

This was the backdrop for the inception of "[Brainy Beanies](#)", the brainchild of Brain Tumour Support NZ trustee, Sarah Gibb. "We wanted a campaign where people could participate in a safe way yet retain the sense of kinship and belonging of a community event. Brainy Beanies seemed to tick all the boxes, while creating something useful for people with sore heads and anyone else really" says Sarah.

There are not many Kiwi families who don't have a knitter, crocheter or crafter in their ranks. Previously regarded as pastimes for seniors, a recent resurgence has seen many younger people take up knitting or crocheting as hobbies. The advent of social media platforms such as Instagram has fueled a trend to [make knitting cool again](#).

So late last year Brain Tumour Support NZ put a call out to Kiwi handcrafters to design and make their own original Beanies. Each Beanie will have a Brainy Beanies tag sewn onto it and be displayed in an exhibition at The Meteor Theatre in Hamilton from 3 to 8 May 2022 (May is Brain Tumour Awareness Month in New Zealand and around the world).

Sarah says: "Every Beanie will be handmade, created with love, by someone who cares, for someone who will be very grateful. The fact that no Brainy Beanie will be the same reflects the uniqueness of our brain tumour patient population."

A launch party is planned for 3 May which all Brainy Beanie creators are invited to attend. The Brainy Beanies will be available for sale over the course of the exhibition, and also on

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the Brain Tumour Support NZ website, with all proceeds going to fund the charity's [Brain Box programme](#).

“Brain Boxes are care packages containing important information which we send out to people who have been newly diagnosed with a brain tumour”, explains Sarah.

“To deliver that information gently, the Box contains things like a wheat bag, calming oil, magazine, tea and biscuits, and other goodies. We hope that people continue to send us Beanies so that we will eventually be able to include one in each Brain Box. We know that people with a brain tumour find comfort in a beanie,” Sarah says.

Chair of Brain Tumour Support NZ, Chris Tse, says: “Brain tumours are considered rare. They certainly meet the definition of a rare disease, which is less than 1 in 2000 people, as defined by Rare Diseases Europe. The New Zealand government has not agreed upon a definition of a rare disease, which tells a story in itself. Brain cancer represents just 1.3% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand annually, making it the 16th most common cancer.”

However the response to the Brainy Beanies campaign to date suggests that brain tumours may be less rare than we are led to believe. “Perhaps it is the small degrees of separation in New Zealand but it seems as though many more Kiwis have been impacted by brain tumours than we ever imagined,” says Chris.

Over two hundred Brainy Beanies have been created so far, a number which has exceeded the charity's expectations.

Many of the stories being sent in with the Beanies have touched the hearts of Brain Tumour Support NZ staff and volunteers. From people who have lost loved ones to patients currently undergoing treatment, Kiwis have really got behind the spirit of Brainy Beanies. Word has also spread through knitting and crocheting clubs around the country, spurring people without a connection to brain tumours to send in their creations.

With seven weeks to go before the Brainy Beanie exhibition opens there is still plenty of time for people to make their Beanies and send them in to Brain Tumour Support NZ. Every Beanie made sends a message of support to a brain tumour patient in need, and raises awareness of a cancer which is often overlooked.

Ends

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ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS

- Every year around 345 New Zealanders are diagnosed with primary brain cancer, representing 1.3% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand.
- Around 250 New Zealanders die each year from brain cancer, making it the 10th most fatal cancer.
- Survival rates for brain cancer have not improved significantly in the last 30 years. The 5 year survival rate of glioblastoma, the most common form of brain cancer, is just 5%.
- Brain tumours can affect anyone, of any ethnicity, and at any age. There is no effective screening or prevention.
- 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%)¹

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

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¹ 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>