

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ**

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

**Brain Tumour Support NZ celebrates International Brain Tumour Awareness Week 2023**

**[Hamilton, New Zealand].** From 28<sup>th</sup> October to 4<sup>th</sup> November, Brain Tumour Support NZ will join patient advocates around the world in marking the 2023 International Brain Tumour Awareness Week. This annual campaign serves as a platform to raise awareness about the impact of brain tumours on patients and their loved ones, while also highlighting the importance of continued research and support.

Brain tumour cases appear to be on the rise in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2021, Ministry of Health data shows there were 413 new cases of primary, malignant (cancerous) brain tumours, well above the ten-year average of 350 cases. Hundreds more people are diagnosed with non-malignant brain tumours, which although not cancerous can cause debilitating symptoms and lead to loss of life.

Still more people are diagnosed with metastatic brain tumours (tumours which have spread from other parts of the body into the brain) resulting in the total number of brain tumour cases diagnosed each year being well into the thousands. The exact number is not known because the NZ Cancer Registry does not collect data on non-malignant or metastatic brain tumours.

Brain tumours are indiscriminate and can strike people of any age and any ethnicity. They are the largest cancer killer of children, responsible for 42% of all cancer deaths in New Zealand children aged 0 to 14, almost double the number of deaths from leukaemia (22%).<sup>i</sup> Māori children are at particularly high risk as they represent one third of all childhood brain cancer cases, well above their proportion of the general population.<sup>ii</sup>

With thousands of people in New Zealand affected by brain tumours each year, Brain Tumour Support NZ remains committed to its mission of providing vital resources, information, and assistance to those affected by this devastating diagnosis. International Brain Tumour Awareness Week is a time for the charity to amplify its efforts in educating the public, advocating for improved healthcare, and supporting those facing the challenges of brain tumours.

**Charity Services number: CC56933**

Throughout the week, the New Zealand brain tumour community is holding several events to engage the public, spread awareness, and raise funds for much-needed support. Brain Tumour Support NZ receives no government funding and relies on the generosity of donors to continue its crucial work. The organisation is promoting fundraising campaigns to help secure resources for research, support services, and advocacy efforts.

In Tauranga, following brain surgery in June, teacher Bryony Smith is bouncing back from months of intensive rehabilitation to attempt a 5km run during the Awareness Week. She has called her fundraiser "Chasing dreams, outrunning brain tumours".<sup>iii</sup> In Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), part-time pilates instructor Katerina Hond is breaking out of her comfort zone to walk the Auckland Half Marathon in support of her beautiful mum who is currently battling brain cancer.<sup>iv</sup>

Brain Tumour Support NZ is encouraging other community awareness events throughout the week, including bake sales, high teas, walks and bike rides. These events will provide opportunities for individuals to learn more about brain tumours, their effects, and how they can support those affected. The charity's support services and online resources will be readily available to assist patients, families, and caregivers seeking guidance and support during this challenging time.

Brain Tumour Support NZ chair, Chris Tse, remarked, "International Brain Tumour Awareness Week is a time to unite our efforts with other organisations around the world to shine a spotlight on this critical issue. It is our hope that, through education, advocacy, and support, we can make a significant impact on the lives of those facing brain tumours in New Zealand."

The charity invites everyone to get involved, whether through participating in events, making a donation, or simply spreading awareness via social media using the hashtag #IBTAWeek.

For more information about Brain Tumour Support NZ and International Brain Tumour Awareness Week, or to support the organisation's work, please visit [www.braintumoursupport.org.nz](http://www.braintumoursupport.org.nz).

Ends

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#### ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS

- Brain cancer is responsible for the most cancer deaths in children and young people under the age of 40.
- Brain cancer is the biggest cancer killer of children in New Zealand, being responsible for 42% of all childhood cancer deaths (almost double that of leukaemia).
- In 2021, 413 New Zealanders were diagnosed with primary brain cancer, representing 1.4% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand.
- Around 260 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 type 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 people affected by a brain tumour feel less afraid, less alone and more empowered.

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

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<sup>i</sup> National Child Cancer Network. 2022. Childhood cancer survival in Aotearoa, New Zealand 2010-2019. Auckland: National Child Cancer Network.

<https://childcancernetwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Final-July-2022-Childhood-cancer-survival-2010-2019-1.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Health

<https://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/cancer-data-and-stats>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://givealittle.co.nz/fundraiser/chasing-dreams-outrunning-brain-tumours>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://givealittle.co.nz/fundraiser/half-marathon-to-fundraise-for-brain-tumour>

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