



MEDIA RELEASE

BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ

Wellington, New Zealand

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WALKING FOR BRAIN TUMOUR AWARENESS

On 7 September 2020, brain cancer survivor Kate Coatsworth set out on foot from Cape Reinga to begin her epic journey “Beating The Track For Brain Cancer”, traveling the length of the country along the Te Araroa Trail to raise awareness about brain cancer and to fundraise for Brain Tumour Support NZ.

On Saturday, some 104 days and 1695 kilometres later, she tackles the final leg of the North Island section of the Trail with Miniwalk Wellington, a shared public walk from the Mount Victoria Lookout to Island Bay on Wellington’s south coast.

She will walk the last 9 kilometres accompanied by the Minister of Health, Hon. Andrew Little.

“Having the Minister of Health participate in Miniwalk Wellington is huge for the brain tumour community in New Zealand,” said Mandy Bathan, chair of Brain Tumour Support NZ.

“In many ways, brain cancer is a forgotten cancer. Although it represents only 1.4% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand¹, many people are unaware that it kills more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer²,” said Mandy.

“Awareness is the first step in achieving better outcomes for patients,” Mandy said. “Since Kate began her walk, Brain Tumour Support NZ has received a significant increase in enquiries which has resulted in more patients gaining access to our information and services,” she added.

Kate’s supporters have been following her progress on social media and many have posted comments saying how amazed and inspired they are by her efforts.

“To achieve what Kate has done over the past three months is nothing short of remarkable,” according to Brain Tumour Support NZ trustee, Chris Tse. “The treatment for high grade brain tumours can cause significant side effects over and above the cancer itself, one of the most common being fatigue,” Chris said.

¹ Ministry of Health, Cancer data and stats, <https://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/cancer-data-and-stats> (ACCESSED 26 November 2020)

² The Brain Tumour Charity <https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/get-involved/donate/why-choose-us/the-statistics-about-brain-tumours/> (ACCESSED 3 December 2020)

Despite this, Kate and her team have walked, biked and paddled their way down the Te Araroa Trail, often covering in excess of 20 kilometres per day, through some of the North Island's toughest terrain. They have endured all of Aotearoa's typically erratic spring weather – wind and rain as well as scorching sunshine. They have tramped through magical forests, walked along windswept beaches and marvelled at magnificent crater lakes.

Alongside Kate has been a dedicated support crew. Parents Ian and Moira Coatsworth have masterminded the planning and logistics, altering the walk schedule to account for weather disruptions and taking turns to drive the campervan. Close friend Stan, personal trainer Fiona, her partner Shaun and their two boys Sam and Luke, have been the mainstays of the walking team.

The trip has not been without its logistical challenges. The September start date was in jeopardy due to the COVID-19 border restrictions in place around Auckland. A highlight of the North Island leg, the Auckland Harbour Bridge Climb, was almost cancelled after the centre of the bridge was closed for repairs following an accident which caused extensive damage to one of its support structures. Kate was only given the go ahead on the morning of the crossing, as the repairs were signed off and the Bridge Climb was re-opened.

Kate's story has touched many hearts and minds along the way. As the team have wound their way down the North Island, they have caught up with old friends and forged new friendships with fellow walkers doing the Trail. Major highlights of the journey have included the six miniwalks, short sections of the Trail where Kate has invited members of the public to walk alongside her. Miniwalks have been held in Whangarei, Auckland, Meremere, Hamilton, Whanganui and Palmerston North.

Besides supporting Kate and the team, the miniwalks have been an opportunity for members of the brain tumour community to come together and connect with each other in a spirit of hope and friendship. Fellow brain tumour patients, their carers, friends and family members, have turned out to support Kate on her mission. Many people have walked in honour of a lost loved one.

Emotions are sure to be running high again on Saturday 12 December at Miniwalk Wellington, but there will also be an air of celebration as Kate reaches the bottom of the North Island. There are two walk options, a 9.0 km walk starting at 2.00pm at the Mt Victoria Lookout and a 4.5 km walk beginning at 3.00pm at Melrose Park. Participation in the walk is free and is open to the public, with online registration details here: <https://www.braintumoursupport.org.nz/miniwalk-wellington>

Brain Tumour Support NZ will be holding a closing ceremony at Shorland Park, Island Bay, commencing at around 4.00pm as the walkers finish. Health Minister Andrew Little will address the crowd at the closing ceremony. Members of the public who do not wish to participate in the walk are welcome to attend the closing ceremony.

Donations to the Beating The Track For Brain Cancer campaign can be made here: <https://givealittle.co.nz/fundraiser/beating-the-track-for-brain-cancer>

For more information, visit: <https://www.braintumoursupport.org.nz/>

ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS

- Brain tumours are the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under 40.
- The most common malignant brain tumour, glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), has a median survival of 15 months and a 5-year survival rate of 6%.
- Every year around 335 New Zealanders are diagnosed with primary brain cancer, representing 1.4% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand.
- Brain cancer is the 10th most fatal cancer in New Zealand with an average of 250 deaths per year.

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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