

## Chance Encounters

**Once again, our Melanoma New Zealand Spot Check Van was very busy at the latest Mystery Creek Fielddays, where our nurses saw 745 people and found 106 suspicious lesions during the four-day event.**

Pulling off such a great result was due to the team's effort to manage the eager crowds, with support from our rural partner FMG, who lent us some of their crew to volunteer on our site.

One of the highlights of the event was a surprise visit from Ross Johnston, who took time out of his busy day to thank our now semi-retired Melanoma Nurse Educator, Gill Rolfe, for successfully identifying a melanoma at one of our community spot check events just a few months earlier in the Coromandel.

In July, Ross heard through the local Visitor and Information Centre that our Spot Check Van was coming to the Coromandel and decided to get a mole his wife had identified on his back checked.

Gill was providing the free spot checks that day and agreed that the mole needed further investigation, and subsequently made a referral to Ross's GP. Ross said his GP then sent an image of his mole to Te Whatu Ora in Waikato, and he was advised that the mole needed to be excised immediately.

Te Whatu Ora contacted him soon after to tell him the excision area had to be extended to ensure they had removed all the cancer cells and further surgery was done a month later by a plastic surgeon at Thames Hospital.

Fortunately, the histology report confirmed that no other cancer cells were detected. Ross said he was very relieved, after already having three Basal Cell Carcinomas removed in the past.

Ross's father had also successfully been treated for melanoma in his eye, so he was aware of the risks and signs of melanoma and would advise anyone with a suspicious mole or spot to go to their GP to check it immediately. Ross said he was so happy to see Gill working at the Melanoma New Zealand site at Fielddays.

"It was a chance meeting with the same person I attribute to my textbook identification and treatment of my melanoma.

"I can only say how much I am indebted to Melanoma New Zealand's service, as it catalysed my eventual successful treatment.

"Again, a big thank you to your team and service." ●



Ross Johnston and Gill Rolfe meet again at Fielddays

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I learned through this process that melanomas come in all shapes and sizes, and the only way to ensure that any mole or spot is OK is to seek professional advice immediately. It could save your life.

– Ross Johnston

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# Message from our Chief Executive

## Welcome to our first edition of *Spot News* for 2023.

Our team has hit the ground running with a busy start to 2023, preparing for a number of events. We were fortunate to be part of the Marketing Association's Keith Norris Charity Golf Tournament this month, where more than \$51,000 was raised for Melanoma New Zealand. Then in early March, we head to Dargaville Northland Field Days. We were also chosen as the Official Charity of the recent Downer NZ Masters Games in Whanganui and the Southern Cross Round the Bays in Auckland on Sunday, 5 March.

If you would like to register to participate and fundraise on our behalf at the **Southern Cross Round the Bays**, there is still time. This year, you can join as an individual or team in Auckland or virtually anywhere in the country (or the world for that matter). By giving it a go and supporting us to raise funds through your networks, you will also help us to reach a broader audience to raise awareness about melanoma and help us save more New Zealanders from the effects of this deadly disease.

I am particularly looking forward to taking part in Round the Bays on the day, and one of our trustees, Dr Sonja Bodley, is taking part virtually from her home town in Wellington. Of course, we are both fundraising for the cause as we go — so there is a bit of healthy competition going on there in that regard!

To those who have already nominated to fundraise for Melanoma New Zealand, thank you so much — please remember to tag us so we can help you reach your target. We can't wait to see you at the start line or follow your progress online if you are taking part virtually.

In this issue, our feature story is about Ross Johnston's experience on our Spot Check Van, which he credits with leading to the diagnosis and successful treatment of his melanoma. We are so grateful Ross was happy to share with others how impactful our work can be in the community.

Unfortunately, so many people in New Zealand have a connection to melanoma. We are grateful that many of these people go on to support our work through individual fundraising events — such as Susanne Taylor, who recently held a charity concert in New Plymouth to raise money for us and has shared her beautiful love story in this edition. Matthew Rose, who also features in this issue of *Spot News*, is taking on an epic physical, emotional and philanthropic journey this month, and has chosen to support a number of charities close to his heart, including Melanoma New Zealand. We can't thank Susanne and Matthew enough for their amazing support.

Our rural partner FMG continues to support us by helping us connect to rural communities through events such as the NZ Dairy Event in Feilding, where we took the Spot Check Van in January and Northland Field Days. They also kindly auctioned a signed cricket shirt from our ambassador Martin Guptill on Trade Me to raise funds.

I would like to welcome our newest team members, Leigh Franklin and Sue Bibby, to Melanoma New Zealand. Leigh joins as Corporate Partnerships Manager and comes to us with more than 20 years' experience in sales.

Until recently, Leigh was the National Sales Manager at Hanes Brands Australasia, based in Auckland. We look forward to her using her expertise to help us nurture and grow our partnerships.

Sue has taken over the role of Melanoma Nurse Educator from the wonderful Gill Rolfe, and we discuss her extensive career in this edition.

We are so grateful to our wonderful corporate partners, patrons, ambassadors, donors, volunteers, and Board members who support our team in our work.

The impact we are able to have is made possible thanks to the generosity and involvement of so many, and it is a real privilege to receive this support. ●

### Thank you!



Andrea

**Andrea Newland**  
Chief Executive  
Melanoma New Zealand



**Sue Bibby**



**Leigh Franklin**

# Commemorating a true love story

**Talented Taranaki musician Susanne Taylor recently held a charity concert in loving memory of her late husband, Sean Taylor, who passed away 22 years ago from melanoma.**

To commemorate what would have been Sean's 60th birthday, Susanne (who performed under her brand name Serendipity) kindly donated all the concert proceeds (\$1,700) to Melanoma New Zealand.

Susanne and Sean have a beautiful love story. The couple met during the summer of 1995 at a holiday resort where they were both staying in Bushveld, in a small town in Southern Africa.

Sean had been working nearby and heard through the local grapevine that Susanne was single, so he tracked down her chalet at the resort and bravely knocked on her door.

When Susanne heard the knock on her door, she assumed it would be a staff member from the resort. So, when she opened the door, she was shocked to see Sean standing there and was even more surprised after he introduced himself and nervously said, "Hi, I am Sean Taylor... Will you marry me?".

Susanne said a lot of nervous laughter followed before she agreed to go out with him that evening.

"The next morning, he arrived with camping gear outside my chalet at 6am and cooked me a full English breakfast."

The couple married just a few months later and had a beautiful daughter in 1996, who was just four years old when Sean passed away at the age of 38.

In December, to mark Sean's anniversary, Susanne released a deeply personal song about the first Christmas without Sean, 'Christmas without you' by SuziT, which we have shared on our website.

We are honoured to share their story and to have been included in the commemoration of Sean's life. ●



Susanne Taylor performing at the concert



Susanne and Sean Taylor and their daughter

## Will You Help Save A Life?

Every donation we receive from you, our wonderful donors, goes towards supporting the urgent work we do at Melanoma New Zealand to help save lives. Tragically, we lose too many of our loved ones to this terrible disease, and yet if caught and treated early, melanoma is nearly always curable.

To try to turn around New Zealand's terrible statistics, we need to fight for better funding, as well as reach as many people as we can with our life saving messages about the vital importance of both staying safe in the sun, and getting regular skin checks.

Your generous support enables us to get the message out into the community. Will you help save a life? No donation is too small, and we are very grateful for any support you can provide.



[www.melanoma.org.nz/donate](http://www.melanoma.org.nz/donate) or phone 0800 463 526.



Sue (centre) at the NZ Dairy event with FMG

## Welcome Nurse Sue

**We are delighted to welcome Nurse Educator Sue Bibby to the Melanoma New Zealand team. Some of you may be familiar with Sue after she spent some of 2022 working at our events around the country, providing free spot checks and education.**

After qualifying as a registered nurse in the UK, Sue relocated to New Zealand in 2009. She was fortunate to continue her skin cancer journey with the head and neck cancer team in the Auckland DHB theatres before joining the Skin Institute in 2014, where she worked at the Nelson, Wellington and Auckland branches in various roles, including management. She also furthered her training in skin lesion diagnostics by gaining a diploma in Dermoscopy.

Her work sees her focus on performing skin checks and providing education on skin cancer awareness and sun safety.

Sue is looking forward to being part of a not-for-profit and getting out into the community to spread the word about safe sun practices, melanoma, and skin cancer awareness.

"I want to play my part and help the sector because, unfortunately, Melanoma New Zealand doesn't receive any Government funding," says Sue.

She has seen a change in New Zealanders' attitudes towards getting their skin checks and believes it is because they see more damage to their skin.

"I often hear from Kiwis who tell me that the sun seems stronger than ever, and they can feel their skin burning more quickly than before. Also, because we have the highest rates of melanoma in the world, many people know someone directly affected by it, which has helped raise awareness and made people more aware of the damage the sun is doing to their skin."

She encourages everyone to get their skin checked regularly as it is not painful and can take 'just seconds' to check a spot using a dermatoscope.

"Because you're seeing a professional, there's no need to be embarrassed. It's what we do all day, every day. We'd rather see someone and offer reassurance rather than have someone miss out because they're embarrassed.

"Most people who get it done say it's an enormous weight off their mind, and for those who need further investigation, the earlier we get on to it, the better the result."

The message she gives everyone she meets through her role is to make sunscreen use habitual, like cleaning your teeth. "It also needs to be reapplied every two hours. Otherwise, it's like having bare skin if you're heading outdoors. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation also penetrates through glass, so sunscreen is essential, even if you're working inside or travelling in a car.

"Also, cover your skin by wearing suitable clothing, a hat and sunglasses and use shade whenever you can.

"Keep an eye on your skin. If you spot anything new or changing, get it checked straight away." ●

# "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Lao Tzu

**This month, Queenstown businessman Matthew Rose began the arduous task of walking the length of the South Island as a means of self-discovery combined with philanthropy.**

On 20 February, Matthew headed southbound on the Te Araroa Trail from the historic Ship Cove in the Marlborough Sounds and will walk 1,400 km to the end at the Southern terminus at Stirling Point, Bluff.

He predicts the walk will take somewhere between 60-70 days, depending on his fitness, tenacity, the weather, and buckets of good luck.

Matthew said he set this personal goal to repair his weary mind and to immerse himself in nature for his inner peace.

"Since the pandemic started, I have experienced inexplicable mental health episodes on several occasions. They have led me to query my relevance with my work and colleagues, my intellectual and social competence and, after a long career, my validity and true value to clients and my wider place in the community.

"The impact is often worry, self-doubt and a nagging lack of self-confidence. So, for context, I often reflect on what lies ahead, with the inevitable ageing of body and mind. As I am still a young 61 years, and my physical health and fitness remain high, the motivation is that whilst I can dream, I will."

Embarking on a journey of endurance is an aspiration he wants to fulfil now. He believes this genuinely achievable goal will have demonstrably good outcomes for him and others with the opportunity to give back to the wider community.

For additional motivation, he is using the opportunity to raise awareness and funds for 10 charities that resonate with him for personal reasons, including Melanoma New Zealand.

Other charities Matthew is supporting on his journey are Wakatipu Community Foundation - Mental Health Endowment Fund, Rainbow Youth, Christchurch City Mission, Antarctic Heritage Trust - Shackleton Centenary Year Inspiring Explorers Expedition, Braintree Wellness Centre - The Canterbury Brain Collective Limited, The Champion Foundation, Wakatipu High School Foundation, Bruce Grant Youth Trust and Hollyford Conservation Trust.

"The ubiquity of all cancer types has a massive impact and cost to every New Zealander. In 1995, I lost my beloved mother to ovarian cancer and in 2019 lost a dear brother to bowel cancer. My fundraising support for Melanoma New Zealand is in recognition of the fact we have the world's highest melanoma incidence rate."

Matthew said his supportive wife, Rachel and work colleague, Johnny Cochrane, have helped him keep perspective, guided him with sound judgement and encouraging words to see the good through a few challenging periods, and are both fully supportive of this next endeavour.

He and Rachel have personally committed \$10,000 to the fundraising and welcome others to support him in reaching a minimum fundraising goal of \$250,000, which will be distributed equally to the above-mentioned charities, including Melanoma New Zealand. To follow Matthew's journey and get involved, visit [www.mattsgoodwalk.nz](http://www.mattsgoodwalk.nz).



Matthew Rose

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**As I will be in the great outdoors for the duration of the tramp, raising awareness and funds for Melanoma New Zealand is a rewarding and salient objective.**

- Matthew Rose

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# SunSquirt Kiosks

Melanoma New Zealand has partnered with SunSquirt Kiosks to offer portable sunscreen dispensing machines to facilities that host outdoor events to enable and encourage people at their venue to use sunscreen whenever needed.

The SunSquirt kiosk is easy to operate and is built to withstand indoor and outdoor conditions. It offers an excellent alternative to a sunscreen pump pack left out for patrons to use.

They can also be customised to include branding and sponsor logos.

As well as other measures such as shade, sunglasses and cover-up clothing, sunscreen is an effective tool for blocking UV radiation and preventing premature ageing and skin damage, which can lead to skin cancer.

If you are associated with a sports club, school, council facility or community organisation that would benefit from a SunSquirt Kiosk and would like more detailed information about how your venue can purchase one, visit, **SunSquirt Kiosks - Melanoma NZ.**



Each purchase of a SunSquirt kiosk contributes towards Melanoma New Zealand's mission of championing melanoma prevention, early detection and patient care for all New Zealanders. ●

# Lidgard Shades Visits the Cottage Kindergarten

**Lidgard Shades Managing Director Adam Wilson was given a special afternoon tea when he visited the winners of our 2022 Get Spotted schools' competition, The Cottage Kindergarten, in Invercargill recently.**

Late last year, Adam headed down to do a site visit and award the students and teachers their prize for their winning 'Sun Smart Beach Party' video.

Together, the staff and Adam found the perfect spot for the custom-designed shade sail worth almost \$20,000 that Lidgard kindly sponsored and will install in the coming months.

Adam said because Cottage Kindergarten has no outdoor shade to protect the children and their teachers, Lidgard Shades is thrilled to create a bespoke shade sail for them to allow them to play safely outdoors.

"It has been so rewarding for the whole team to make a big difference for a school like this. It is so important that we have great sun-protective environments so kids can play safely every day."

There is plenty of time to get schools you are involved with to start thinking about their entry for this year's Get Spotted Schools' Competition, launching in October. ●



The Cottage Kindergarten children celebrating at afternoon tea

Thanks to our supporters.



Lynn Stratford

