

## **Incidence of one of Australia's deadliest cancers doubles in the last 20 years**

**EMBARGOED**

Data released by the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)*<sup>i</sup> estimates that more Australians than ever before will be claimed by pancreatic cancer, a disease that is now, for the first time, acknowledged to be a common cancer.

Pancreatic cancer has a devastatingly low five-year survival rate of only 12.5%. The disease is predicted to claim more lives than breast cancer this year (an estimated 3,669 people) and has the lowest survival rate of all common cancers. Over 4500 people will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this year, and 80 per cent of patients will die within 12 months<sup>ii</sup>.

"The deadly outcomes in pancreatic cancer result in limited visibility and reduced public awareness, and consequently, many people do not realise that pancreatic cancer is now a common cancer," says Michelle Stewart, CEO of PanKind, The Australian Pancreatic Cancer Foundation. "In contrast, more high-profile cancers experience survival rates of over 90% while for pancreatic cancer the survival rate is only 12.5%, which drops alarmingly to just 6.8% for people who live in regional Australia<sup>iii</sup>," continued Ms Stewart. "With the disease now acknowledged to be a common cancer, there has never been a more critical time to call for increased focus and funding."

Miss World Australia finalist, Tirah Ciampa from Hobart was diagnosed in February this year, but lived with the symptoms for an entire year as they progressively worsened. The 27-year-old's weight plummeted – from 58kg to 49kg – and she suffered bouts of excruciating pain radiating through her abdomen and back – which she initially passed off as "just cramps". "When I was diagnosed, I had no idea what pancreatic cancer was – I'd never heard of the disease before. When doctors discovered the tumour, it had already eaten half of my organ. People need to understand pancreatic cancer can affect anyone – it doesn't discriminate. When I started researching more about the disease, I realised how lucky I was to have it detected as early as I did, and this saved my life."

Key findings from PanKind's 2021 *Consumer Awareness Survey* found only 1 in 10 Australian's are aware that pancreatic cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in Australia. In addition, the majority of Australians (53%) are not aware of the signs or symptoms of pancreatic cancer. Professor Chris Baggoley AO, the former Australian Chief Medical Officer, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in early 2019, and says "this data shows that the urgency to make rapid progress in diagnosis and treatment of pancreatic cancer has heightened."

Since 2010, PanKind has invested over \$12 million into pancreatic cancer research at Australia's top research institutions. \$1.5 million alone has been allocated to the *PanKind Early Detection Initiative*, reflecting our commitment to early diagnosis, and enhancing survival rates and quality of life for Australians diagnosed with the disease.

**Notes for Editors**

Available for interview:

- Michelle Stewart, CEO of PanKind, The Australian Pancreatic Cancer Foundation. Michelle has a Master of Public Health. Sydney, NSW.
- Professor Chris Baggoley AO, former Australian Government Chief Medical Officer, recently treated for pancreatic cancer. Adelaide, SA.
- 27-year-old Tirah Ciampa from Tasmania. Tirah was diagnosed in 2022 and underwent major surgery numerous times, with a massive impact on her quality of life.

## **About PanKind**

PanKind, The Australian Pancreatic Cancer Foundation is exclusively dedicated to pancreatic cancer with a mission to triple the survival rate by 2030 and dramatically improve the quality of life for patients and their families. We aim to achieve this through a strategic focus on raising awareness, collaboration to increase progress and investing in ground-breaking medical research.

**For more detailed information, further commentary and case studies, please contact:**

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<sup>i</sup> [Cancer data in Australia, How are pancreatic cancer rates changing? - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#) Accessed 6 September 2023

<sup>ii</sup> Data?

<sup>iii</sup> [national-pancreatic-cancer-roadmap-consultation-submission-27112020.pdf \(ruralhealth.org.au\)](#)