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Media release

Vision for world's best cancer care comes to life for Peter Mac patients

The largest group of past and present patients to step inside Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre's soon-to-be new home within the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) building, had a special preview of the \$1.1 billion dedicated cancer hospital and research facility today.

Thirty cancer survivors and their families were the guests of honor welcomed by the Victorian Minister for Health The Hon. Jill Hennessy MP and Peter Mac Chief Executive Ms Dale Fisher at an event marking the start of Cancer Survivorship Week.

The special guests stood before 110 purple and silver balloons on display in the Welcome Hall, each representing 10,000 Australians – 1.1million in total – who are living today after having had a cancer diagnosis. This includes some 256,000 Victorians.

The survivors are among the 30,000+ Victorians cared for each year at Peter Mac, whose ongoing treatments and regular check-ups will be in the new facility from 24 June 2016.

Minister Hennessy was pleased to welcome Peter Mac's cancer survivors and their families to the new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre for the first time.

"I am so proud that those who are having treatment for cancer, or supporting somebody they love that has cancer, will soon be able to do so in one of the most beautiful buildings, with our best and brightest minds and wonderful health workforce," Minister Hennessy said.

Chief Executive Dale Fisher said it was a fitting occasion to provide a sneak peek of building, and to hear feedback from the survivors on how the vision to provide the world's best cancer care was coming to life within the state-of-the-art facility.

"People affected by cancer were at the heart of every decision in the development of our new home. We have sought their feedback and consulted with them every step of the way," Ms Fisher said.

“Access to natural light, private rooms, a personalised experience and spaces such as outdoor gardens and the new Wellbeing Centre where they can get away from the rigors of cancer treatment were, not surprisingly, at the top of their wish-lists.

“Many of our patients, including those here, have seen Peter Mac develop and change over several decades. Today we can show how we have responded to their needs in the design of this amazing facility.”

Among those attending were cancer survivors in their 80s and 90s – some having been treated or had annual check-ups at Peter Mac for up to 50 years – each with a unique story to tell. For example:

- Glen Cloke has been a Peter Mac patient for 50 years following his diagnosis with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma at age three. Some of his earliest childhood memories include Peter Mac nurses entertaining him by drawing animals on his hand. He still has annual check-ups at Peter Mac.
- Jacques LeRoux is a 33-year-old father of two. Jacques was diagnosed with osteosarcoma (bone cancer) in his knee in late 2014. He is now cancer free after intensive chemotherapy and surgery but lives with the reality it could return. As part of his day job, he erected the signage within Peter Mac’s new home
- Natalia Dewiyani was diagnosed in early 2015 with Ewing’s Sarcoma, a very rare form of cancer. She was successfully treated only to find a melanoma on her back. She launched the popular “Laughing with Cancer” website and Facebook page to change perceptions of living with cancer.

Also in attendance were representatives from The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre (ACSC), a Richard Pratt legacy. The ACSC was established at Peter Mac in 2009, with the generous support of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and The Pratt Foundation.

Cancer Survivorship Week runs from 28 May to 5 June 2016 and is celebrated annually. The week has its origins in the US based *National Cancer Survivors Day* held on the first Sunday of every June.

Key facts:

- 130,000 Australians are diagnosed with cancer every year.
- More than 1.1 million Australians are living today after having had a cancer diagnosis, including more than 256,000 Victorians.
- One in 23 Victorians have a personal history of cancer.
- Two-in three Victorians who have a cancer diagnosis are cancer free five years later.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with one of the past or present patients in attendance please contact Peter Mac:

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