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15th March, 2005

Testimony for Senate Enquiry –

My name is Claire McConaghy and I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1988.

As the mother of three young children, I was totally devastated by the diagnosis and prognosis of less than two years. Having lost my mother to ovarian cancer eighteen months earlier and my father to pancreatic cancer two years before that, I was understandably anticipating that my own death was imminent.

Yet here I am, almost seventeen years later and I am still 'in remission'.

I have been around to see my children grow up, marry and have children of their own.

How did this happen?

In the very early days of my treatment, I discovered the Gawler Foundation and attended the 10 day Residential Course for cancer patients and their supporters. It literally changed my life!

I wholeheartedly adopted the lifestyle changes and I found the service and support they provided to me and my family was invaluable. I spent the next three years very actively involved with the Foundation, attending support groups and workshops and becoming a volunteer support person as well.

I also tried many alternative therapies, literally whatever felt right for me at the time.

The Foundation's approach to health management, considers the whole person and I found this to be very empowering. I will never forget my oncologist's point blank response when I questioned my treatment regime "I know what you need and you need this treatment!"

I firmly believe that without my involvement with the Gawler Foundation, I would not still be here today.

The cost factor during my recovery, particularly for a young family was enormous. Therefore I would strongly urge you to push for direct funding to support this incredible organisation, not only in its' work to support patients & families but also funding support for their research into integrated medicine. Of course, this must also include support and training of health professionals in integrated medicine.

I believe we all must have the right to easy and affordable access to a range of choices and information regarding this life threatening disease, knowing that the research has been done to validate those choices.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Claire McConaghy