

**THE OPENING OF THE NORTHERN CANCER SUPPORT
CENTRE BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, LAUNCESTON
TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2013**

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome everyone here to this special event for the Cancer Council Tasmania, an organisation of which I am proud to be patron; the opening of the Northern Cancer Support Centre, here in Launceston. This is a \$4.3 million project funded by Cancer Council Tasmania and the Australian and Tasmania governments as part of the *Regional Cancer Centre* project, supported by the Federal Health and Hospitals Fund¹.

According to Dr David Spiegel, who is the Associate Chair of Psychiatry at Stanford University, and known for his research into breast cancer, psychosocial treatments, including group, individual, and family therapies, are of proven efficacy and deserve inclusion as standard components of biomedical treatment for patients with cancer. In an article published in 2006 in the Magazine of the American Cancer Society², he reviewed four issues regarding such treatment. The first is *need*. Dr Spiegel summarised his article by writing that “significant anxiety and depression are common (and treatable) problems among the medically ill and represent a major aspect of the burden of illness. Even those with less severe emotional reactions need help coping with the stress of serious illness. The second [issue] is *methods*. Psychotherapy, both group and individual, provides valuable emotional and social support and teaches

¹ <http://www.cancersupportcentre.org.au/>

² Cancer published on line 28th June 2006; see infra

important symptom management skills. The third [issue] is *outcome*. Psychotherapy has been shown to be effective in improving quality of life and enhancing the ability of the medically ill to cope with their illness. Results of various psychotherapies include reducing depression and anxiety, improving coping skills, and in some cases, extending survival time. The fourth [issue] is *cost offset*. Appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention saves money by reducing unnecessary office visits, diagnostic tests, medical procedures, and hospital admittance.”³

In recent times recognition of the importance of psychosocial treatment has seen the move to purpose designed “support centres” gather momentum with various models evident internationally and nationally such as the Maggie’s Cancer Caring Centres in the United Kingdom and the Olivia Newton John Wellness Centre at the Austin Hospital, Heidelberg, in Victoria.

As everyone here is well aware, a diagnosis of cancer affects not only the patient but also the patient’s family, carers, friends, work colleagues and others. All of those people are affected by a diagnosis of cancer and will benefit from appropriate support that will be offered to them here in this new building. All those people; indeed, anyone who is affected by cancer will be welcomed through the doors of this purpose built centre and without question, will be given

³ Health caring. Psychosocial support for patients with cancer David Spiegel MD
[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1097-0142\(19940815\)74:4+%3C1453::AID-CNCR2820741609%3E3.0.CO;2-1/abstract](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1097-0142(19940815)74:4+%3C1453::AID-CNCR2820741609%3E3.0.CO;2-1/abstract)

appropriate support. It may be just a cup of tea and a chat to a sympathetic volunteer counselor; or a place to meet others who are affected by cancer, to exchange stories and give each other understanding and support; or it may be attendance at a lecture, or reading research material to better understand cancer.

This modern building provides relaxing lounge areas, a practical kitchen, reflective garden spaces, private meeting rooms and on-site seminar and activity rooms for programs. It will be available for use by all the cancer support organisations in the State. As it says on the Cancer Council's web site, "(f)rom the moment you walk through the door of the Northern Cancer Support Centre, you will know you have entered a place that will enable you, your family and friends to cope better with the challenges and journey ahead."⁴

The Northern Cancer Support Centre is a great credit to the architect, the builder, and the State and Federal Governments. And of course, to the work and energy of Mr Stephen Foster, the members of the Board of the Cancer Council Tasmania and all those fabulous volunteers who give so much of their time, money and energy to help those who have cancer and their families.

As I say, I am proud to be the patron of Cancer Council Tasmania and absolutely delighted to have been asked to declare open the Northern Cancer Support Centre.

⁴ <http://www.cancersupportcentre.org.au/index.php/about-the-centre-garden-setting>