

Cancer Nurses
Society of Australia



elevate cancer nursing

innovate | integrate | educate | advocate

28th ANNUAL CONGRESS • 17-19 JUNE 2026
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre

Evaluating a National Head and Neck Cancer Helpline: Early impact on navigation and supportive care

Faye Nucup
HNC Helpline Nurse

Head and Neck Cancer Australia
Australia



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

Acknowledgement of Country



Head and Neck Cancer Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land, sea and nations and pay our respect to Elders, past and present.

Disclosures

None

About HANCA

Head and Neck Cancer Australia is the only national charity dedicated to supporting people living with Head and Neck Cancer and launched in 2016.

Our Mission

To raise awareness of Head and Neck Cancer and improve the outcomes of those affected through information, support and advocacy.



Our Board

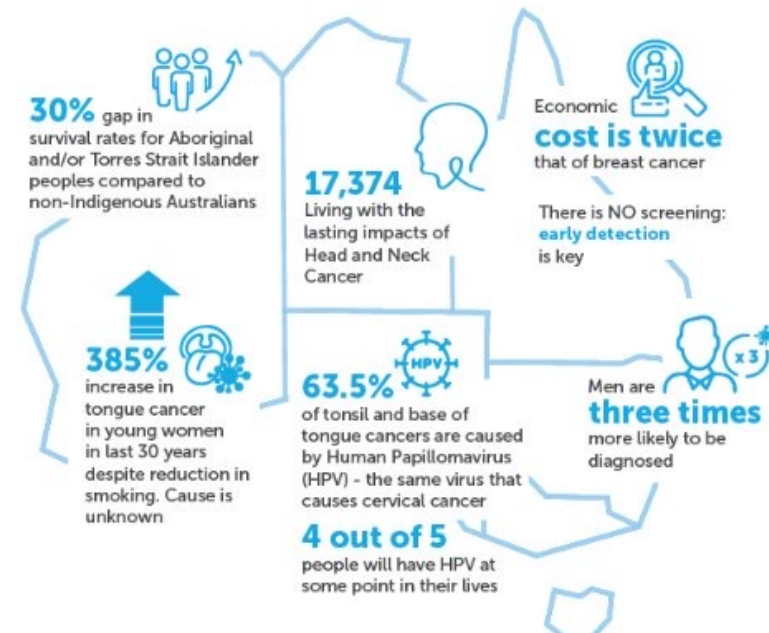


Our voluntary Board of Directors include former Head and Neck Cancer patients and leading Head and Neck Cancer clinicians who are all passionate individuals dedicating their time and expertise to our mission.

 Chair: Dr Matthew Magarey (Director since 2023)	 Deputy Chair: Carolyn Smith (Director since 2020)	 Ron Bongetti (Director since 2023)	 A/Prof Dion Forstner (Immediate Past Chair 2025-2026, Director since 2017)	 Greg Graham (Director since 2020)	 Maggie Hundertmark (Director since 2025)	 Claire McCarthy (Director since 2023)	 A/Prof Sweet Ping Ng (Director since 2025)
--	--	---	---	--	---	--	---

About Head and Neck Cancer

- Over 5,600 people diagnosed each year
- A diverse and complex group of cancers e.g. mouth, tongue, salivary gland, throat, skin, thyroid
- People affected by Head and Neck Cancer face complex and evolving needs over the cancer continuum and often continue for life:
 - Complex physical challenges
 - Functional difficulties
 - Psychosocial burden



How we help

- **Awareness & education:** National campaigns to encourage prevention and increase early diagnosis
- **Trusted resources:** Free evidence-based resources including fact sheets, videos, webinars and podcasts
- **Clinical Support:** Providing free resources and tools to support clinicians and MDTs
- **Community engagement & outreach:** Connecting patients and carers to peer support and services
- **Advocacy:** Engaging with government to advocate for policies and public sector funding that improve Head and Neck Cancer prevention, early diagnosis and patient care.



Cancer patients wait for facial prosthetics funding ahead of election

By Nick McLaren ABC News Health Policy



Money should be calling for federal health funding for facial prosthetics. ABC South East NOW News Adelaide



Free resources

- 60 + Information Sheets and 3D animations
 - Types of Head and Neck Cancer
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Multi-Lingual Resources – nine languages
 - Patient and carer stories
 - Head and Neck Cancer Webinar Series
 - HPV Head and Neck Cancer Podcast Series
 - Database of support groups and services (AU & NZ)



HANCA HNC Types 3D Animated Video Series ▶ Play all

These animations are a useful way to understand more about the different types of Head and Neck Cancer. We encourage you to share with family and friends or anyone else affected by a diagnosis...

- Nasal and Sinus Cancer - What is it? What are the symptoms?**
Head and Neck Cancer Australia
70K views • 3 years ago
- Hypopharyngeal & Laryngeal Cancer (throat) - What is it? What are the symptoms?**
Head and Neck Cancer Australia
147K views • 3 years ago
- Oral Cancer - What is it? What are the symptoms?**
Head and Neck Cancer Australia
239K views • 3 years ago

Find Support

Search by location: 795A Gawler-Orme Tree Hill Rd, Yatalunga SA 5114, Australia

Search by group name: Enter keyword...

Topics: All

More filters

Royal Adelaide Hospital

Multidisciplinary Team meetings every week in Adelaide

Port Rd, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

Contact details Learn more

St Andrews Hospital

Weekly MDT meetings in Adelaide

350 South Tce, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

Contact details Learn more

Identified gaps

People affected by Head and Neck Cancer face complex and evolving needs over the cancer continuum and often continue for life.

Despite these challenges there is:

- Inconsistency access to supportive care
- Navigation services are not widely available or accessible
- Gaps persist along the optimal care pathway



Asia-Pacific Journal of Clinical Oncology

WILEY

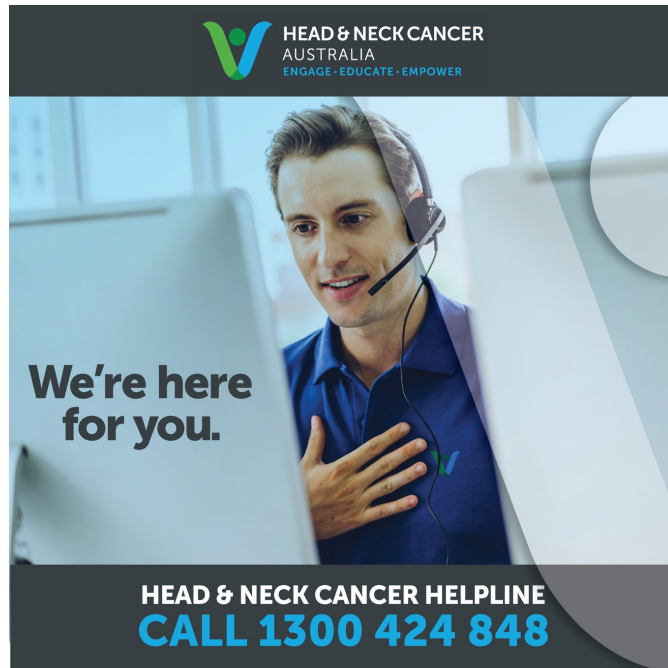
ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Availability and Characteristics of Support Groups for People With Head and Neck Cancer in Australia

Ashleigh R. Sharman^{1,2} | Yuan Peng² | Rebecca L. Venchiarutti^{1,2}

¹Department of Head and Neck Surgery, Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia | ²Sydney School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Intervention



HANCA launched Australia's first specialist Head and Neck Cancer Helpline (HNC Helpline) in March 2025.

Available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (AEST) over phone, text, live chat, video conference and email.

HNC Helpline team includes Specialist Nurses, Counsellors with a Dietitian and Speech Pathologist joining in July 2026.

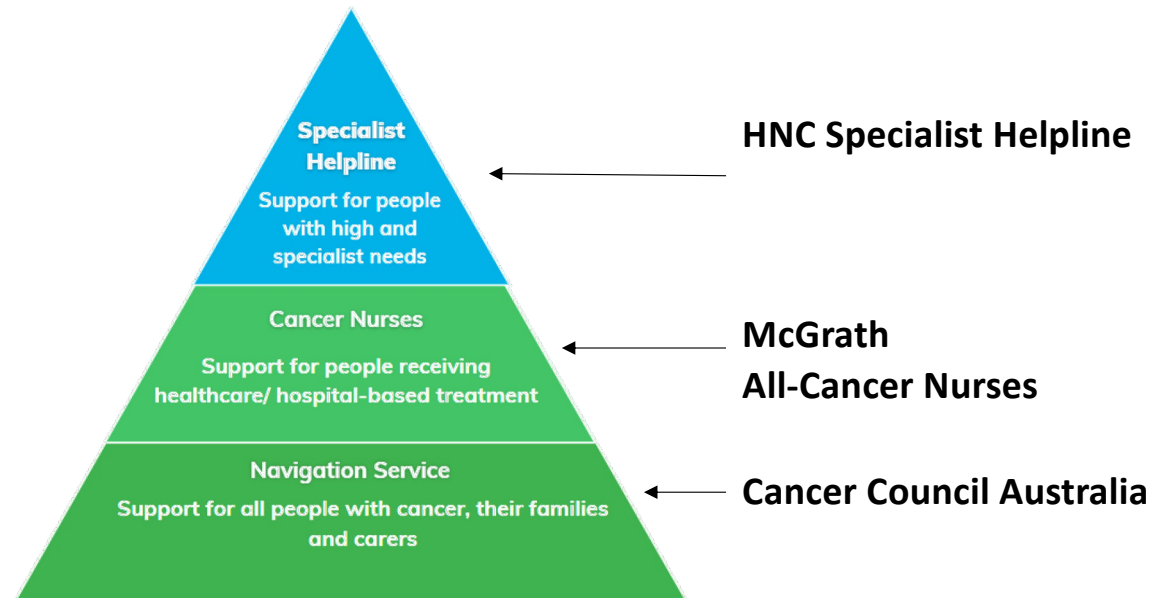
Provides free access to specialist information and support for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer across all cancer stages:

- newly diagnosed
- during treatment
- long-term side survivorship care

Part of a broader program

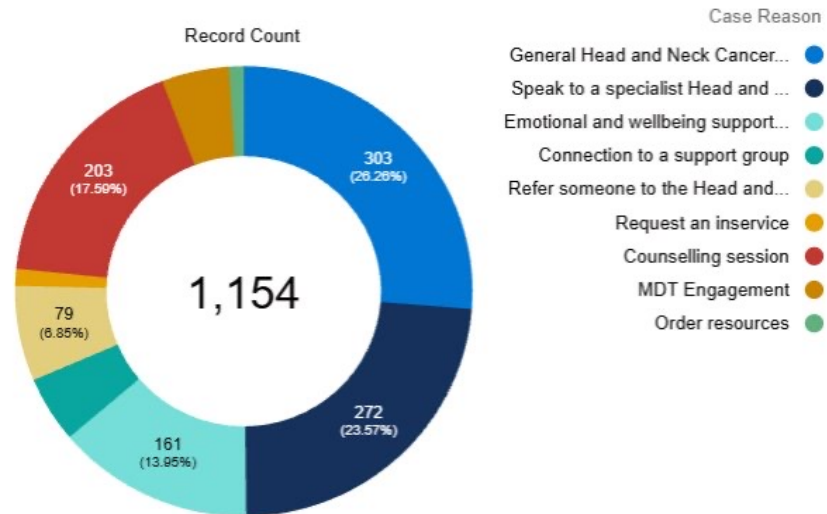
The HNC Helpline is part of the Federal Government's **Australian Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program** offering:

- Tiered model of support
- Person-centred approach
- Movement between Program streams based on need.



Our reach after 12 months

Case Reason



[View Report \(Case reason\)](#)

As of 9 Jun 2026, 9:00 am

New case vs existing interactions
based on known contacts



[View Report \(New case vs existing...\)](#)

As of 9 Jun 2026, 9:00 am

Aim of evaluation

- To understand how the HNC Helpline is being used
- To identify unmet supportive care needs
- To explore early user-reported experience



"Severe claustrophobia had me questioning whether I could even get the treatment because of the radiation mask... Simon's calming and informative words had me going from a 'hysterical, can't breathe mess' to 'okay, what can I do to get through this?'"

"Sometimes talking to a stranger is easier, although he feels like a friend now."

"Fantastic service and would recommend anyone with Head and Neck Cancer to call them."

- Lorna, Head and Neck Cancer patient

HEAD & NECK CANCER HELPLINE - CALL 1300 424 848



HEAD & NECK CANCER
AUSTRALIA
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

Methods

- Pre-launch survey to inform the scope of the HNC Helpline: August 2024
- HNC Helpline Launched in March 2025
- Post-evaluation survey: April 2026
- One-year period de-identified dataset
- Data collected post launch:
 - Caller type
 - Cancer type
 - Reason for contact
 - Type of support provided

Results: pre-launch survey to inform Helpline scope



Who completed the survey

- 191 patients/carers
- 125 Healthcare Professionals
 - 29% speech pathologists
 - 13% HNC nurses
 - 11% dietitians
- Majority of respondents thought **information** and **emotional support** should be the focus of the Helpline.
- All respondents wanted a **mixed skill set** on the HNC Helpline, including Nurses, Counsellors and Allied Health

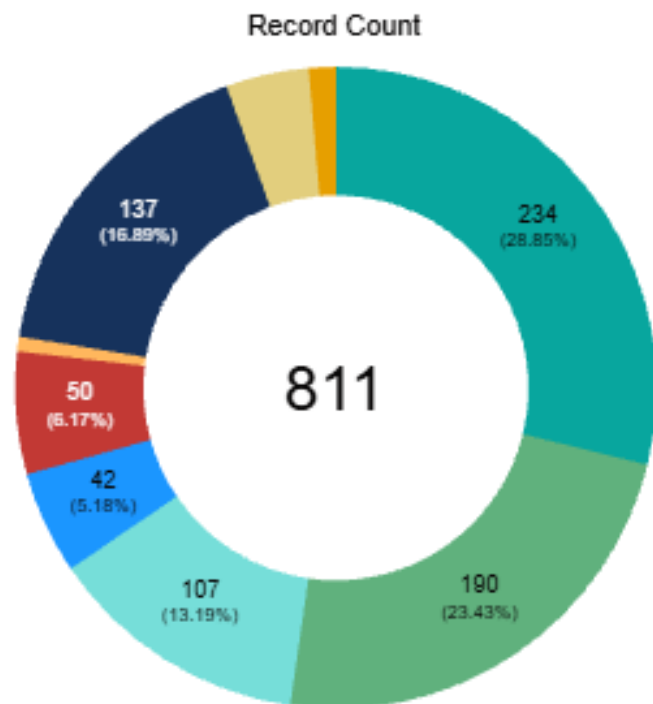
- 82% Patients and carers would access service now if available (equating to 157 callers).
- 92% Healthcare professionals were either likely or very likely to refer to the HNC Helpline once available.

Outcomes: pre-launch



- HNC Helpline team at launch
 - Nurse Consultant/Manager
 - Mental Health Clinician/Counsellor
 - Level 2 Registered Nurse
- Established Clinical Working Group to advise on HNC resources to support people at all stages of the disease trajectory.
- Live chat / text functionality for people who may not be able to speak or have impaired speech following treatment

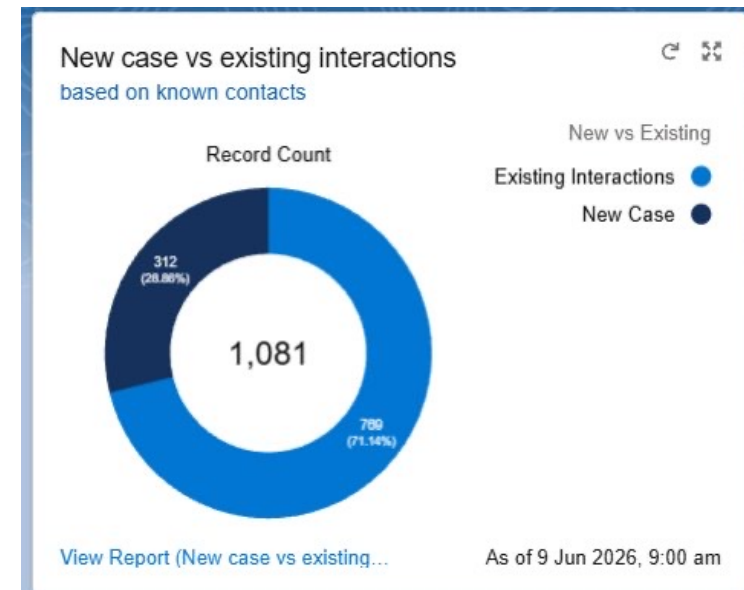
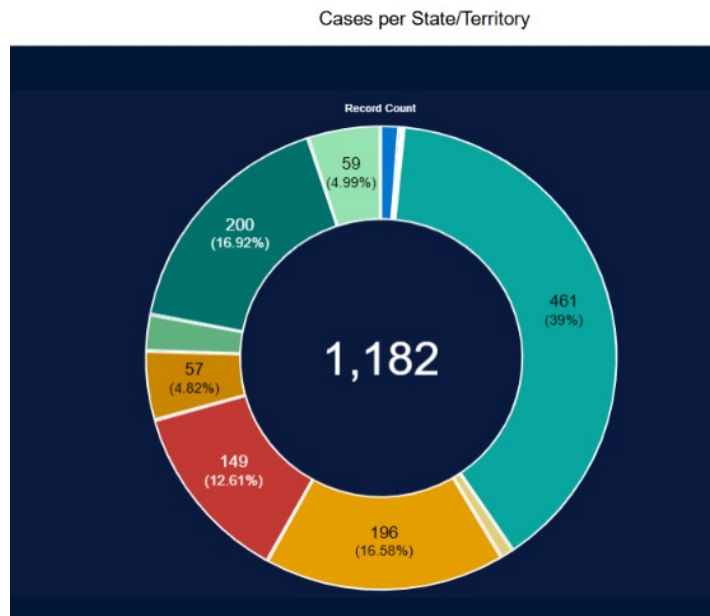
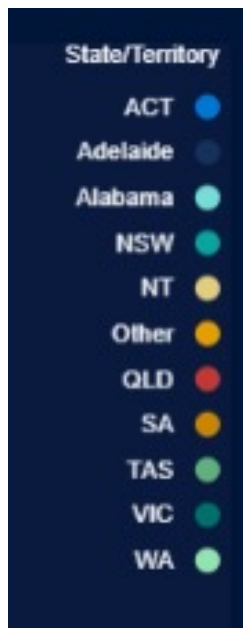
Our reach: 12 months



Case Reason

- General Head and Neck Cancer information and support services
- Speak to a specialist Head and Neck Cancer nurse
- Emotional and wellbeing support with a counsellor
- Connection to a support group
- Refer someone to the Head and Neck Cancer Helpline
- Request an inservice
- Counselling session
- MDT Engagement
- Order resources

Our reach: 12 months



Results: 12-month post-launch evaluation



811 HNC Helpline cases over 1-year period

84 patients, carers and HCPs completed the survey

- person diagnosed with Head and Neck Cancer (57%)
- healthcare professionals (24%)
- family/friends (18%).

Service experience

- 98% contacted within a reasonable time
- 68% strongly felt listened to and understood
- 65% strongly felt respected, safe and comfortable

Satisfaction

- 65% very satisfied
- 23% satisfied
- 95% would recommend the HNC Helpline

Impact/Outcomes - post-launch



In addition to launching the HNC Helpline we have also:

- Expanded access to care through Zoom consultations with a Helpline counsellor and/or nurse
- Established online Zoom support groups for patients, and for family and friends
- Launched two closed Facebook communities, creating safe, peer-led spaces for connection
- Ensured all groups are moderated by the Helpline team, maintaining a respectful, supportive environment
- Encouraged ongoing engagement, connection and empowerment

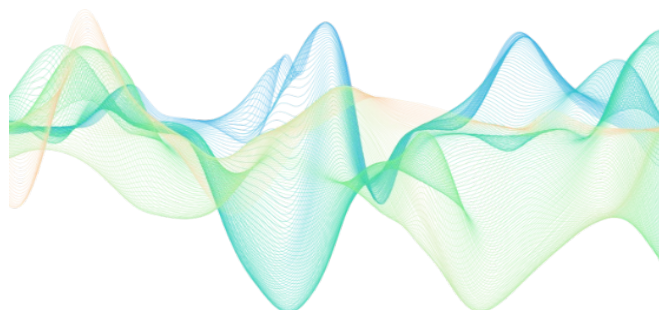


What's next for the Helpline?



YOUR
VOICE

Celebrating 10 years
2016-2026



Expand HANCA & McGrath Community of Practice

First Nations and Priority Group engagement

Continued MDT engagement nationally

Helpline Expansion – Allied Health Recruitment
(Dietitian and Speech Pathologist)

Conclusion

- HNC Helpline addresses a critical national gap in navigation and supportive care
- Strong early engagement, reflected by number of contacts
- Supports holistic, patient-centred care
- Ongoing evaluation to guide service refinement is essential



Refer to us

I can't thank Simon and the HANCA team enough. When my dad was diagnosed with throat cancer, we travelled from rural WA to Perth for treatment, and once home, I felt lost, overwhelmed and completely alone supporting him and my family.

In one of the hardest moments, I found HANCA online and reached out. Within hours, I was speaking with Simon. His support, guidance and practical advice across several calls changed everything for us. He gave me reassurance when I was terrified and didn't know where to turn.

Because of HANCA, I now feel supported and more prepared for what lies ahead. For people in rural areas especially, this helpline is truly a lifeline - and I'm incredibly grateful it exists for my family and so many others."

– Helpline caller

HEAD & NECK CANCER HELPLINE - CALL 1300 424 848

Coming soon



Fundamentals of Head and Neck Cancer Management National e-Learning Program

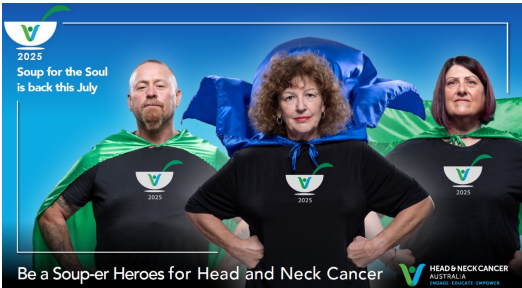
Head and Neck Cancer Australia is developing a national e-Learning program to support **nurses and allied health professionals** in delivering high-quality, evidence-based care to people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.



REGISTER YOUR
INTEREST



Latest news: Sign up to our e-newsletter



HEAD & NECK CANCER AUSTRALIA
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

WIN

a HANCA Patchwork Girl scarf

and a selection of Byron Bay Cookies.

Scan here to sign up to our healthcare professional mailing list to enter.

www.headandneckcancer.org.au



28th ANNUAL CONGRESS • 17-19 JUNE 2026
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre



HEAD & NECK CANCER AUSTRALIA ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

Thank you!

Cancer Nurses
Society of Australia

elevate
cancer nursing
innovate | integrate | educate | advocate



28th ANNUAL CONGRESS • 17-19 JUNE 2026
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre