

"Cancer didn't break me": Brooke's breast cancer journey

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Peel Health Campus staff member Brooke started 2023 full of excitement. "We'd just bought a caravan and headed to Augusta for Australia Day," she said. "It felt like the start of a beautiful new chapter."

But just weeks later, life changed. In February, Brooke found a lump in her breast. "I booked an appointment straight away," she said. "The GP reassured me it was nothing, but I pushed for more tests."

Two weeks later, on St Patrick's Day, Brooke received the news no one wants to hear: "You have cancer." She was just 36.

"In that moment, our world stopped. We walked out of the clinic, our minds flooded with questions —What stage is it? Will I see my girls grow up? Will I need chemo and lose my hair?"

Telling her daughters, then six and eight, was the hardest part. "I held them close and whispered, 'Mummy has breast cancer.' I'll never forget that moment, it was the hardest thing I'd ever had to say." The overwhelming weight of fear and uncertainty marred the weekend that followed.

The months ahead were a whirlwind of scans, surgeries a constant stream of apprehension. "I had a lumpectomy, then a second surgery was required, and an unexpected surgery (number 3), being a double mastectomy," Brooke said. "It was an emotional rollercoaster."

Brooke credits her surgeon, Mr Saud Hamza, who became Brooke's 'rock' throughout the journey, and Breast Care Nurse, Liz Young, whose unwavering support and compassion made all the difference. "The team at Peel Health Campus deserves every bit of praise for being so incredible," she said.

Despite the challenges, Brooke's determination never waned. "Cancer didn't break me — it revealed how strong I truly am," she said. Just 16 weeks after her double mastectomy, Brooke completed a 200km bike ride to raise funds for cancer research.

"If there's one thing I've learned from this journey, it's that life is too short to take for granted. Cancer gave me a new perspective. It led me to some of the most wonderful people, some have become my closest friends. I've learned to surround myself with positivity, embrace kindness, and prioritise what truly makes me happy. Life is fragile, and I'm committed to living it to the fullest."

Her message is clear: "Check your boobies! Know your body. Cancer doesn't discriminate — I was young, fit and healthy. If something feels off, get checked."

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month:
1 in 7 Australian Women will be diagnosed with breast cancer - awareness can save lives.
