

# Offering vital support

**M**ERRIWA cancer patients who rely on their cars to travel to treatment can get help to pay for their CTP green slip insurance through a local cancer support group.

Can Assist Merriwa has received vital funding from greenslips.com.au to aid with providing financial support to patients in need.

The group also provides practical and financial support to cancer patients in Merriwa and surrounding townships, through travel, food and fuel vouchers, pharmaceuticals and utilities payments. The volunteers who run the branch know that there are many more in the community who need help - and they're keen to support more patients in need, especially with the funds from www.greenslips.com.au to help pay for cancer patients' CTP green slip insurance. The month of June marked Can Assist Merriwa's first anniversary, after it was established by Marlene Rogers, a bowel cancer survivor. Ms Rogers experienced first-hand the unique support of Can Assist, when the Tamworth branch assisted her when she was going through treatment.

"Their support blew me away, and when I was well again, I decided to open the branch in Merriwa," she said.

Fast forward 12 months and Can Assist Merriwa now has 21 volunteers and is supporting 10 local cancer patients.

It provides confidential support to cover everyday bills and the costs associated with cancer, even assistance with housekeeping and gardening.

"Cancer costs a lot of money, especially when



**HELPING HAND:** Can Assist founding members and volunteers Dave Martin and Marlene Rogers at the group's one-year celebrations.



**SUPPORT:** Can Assist volunteer Olivia Gear at a Merriwa fund-raising event.

you live in the country" Ms Rogers said.

The branch recently helped a patient who came home from four weeks treatment and needed immediate support to clean their house.

Can Assist paid for alternate accommodation, cleaning, and provided help with everyday bills while the patient got back on their feet. According to the volunteers, what sets Can Assist apart from other charities is

that all money raised stays local to help local cancer patients across the district. The branch is funded entirely by local donations, local fundraising events, and corporate support such as greenslips.com.au.

Ms Rogers says the funds from greenslips.com.au will make a "huge difference".

"Having a car is essential for local cancer patients because they have to travel extensively for treatment," she said.

"It's much harder and more expensive for those in rural areas to get to treatment, compared to our city 'cousins'.

"We have to travel hundreds of kilometres and stay overnight, because you can't manage the trip home. And therein lies another expense.

"We have a lot of people in the area who travel for treatment. And a lot of people want to travel in their own car, take their time, pull over if needed, or travel with family or friends for support.

"So, to be able to offer payment for their greenslip is amazing! It will make a huge difference to their mental health and wellbeing."

Branch President, David Martin says the money from greenslips.com.au will be a "big relief" for local cancer patients.

"It just takes the pressure off and the anxiety away," he said.

"So many country people

are proud, with a 'we'll be right, battle through, give it to someone else' attitude - but everyone deserves help.

"A car is the number one necessity; it's over 200km, at least a 5-hour return trip, to Newcastle and Tamworth to visit the cancer specialists.

"A car provides privacy when you're vulnerable. When you're going through treatment, you don't want to be around others, you want to be with family and friends. The car gives you a chance to talk in a low-key environment."

Stephen Treacey, founder and owner of greenslips.com.au, a CTP green slip insurance price comparison and information website, says the work of Can Assist Merriwa typifies the enormous impact the charity has on people's lives.

"I'm humbled by the work that Can Assist does," Mr Treacey said.

"We are proud to help Can Assist in its support of rural

and regional cancer patients, to raise awareness of this wonderful charity and their work, and to help cancer patients with their CTP green slip insurance.

"We estimate we have helped support over 280 cancer patients and their families by paying for CTP green slip insurance, ensuring they keep their cars on the road when they need them most - to get to and from treatment."

## Greater awareness and support needed

Since the branch opened, Can Assist Merriwa has had 19 enquiries from cancer patients and is currently supporting 10 of different ages and at different stages of their cancer journey.

"It's amazing what our branch has done in just one year," Ms Rogers said.

"Can Assist is my passion. If I can help one person, I get immense joy out of that. Amazing things happen when you can give; you receive back so much more."

Can Assist Merriwa is also welcoming new volunteers.

For information about donating or volunteering with Can Assist Merriwa, contact 0431 939 093.

## Fundraiser

Can Assist Merriwa is holding a fundraising event on Saturday, September 25 at Merriwa Sports Club, doors open 5.30pm.

Acclaimed drag queen Glenda Jackson is coming to town to perform, and it's just \$50 a head for a 2-course meal and the show, with plenty of glamour, comedy, fun and games.

Contact Marlene Rogers on 6548 5191 or 0431 939 093 to book.

**For more visit:** [www.canassist.org.au](http://www.canassist.org.au)

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## COVID-19 IMPORTANT CONTACTS

*"It's ok to ask for help"*

Lifeline: **13 11 14**

NSW Mental Health Line: **1800 011 511**

Beyond Blue: **1800 512 348**

24hr COVID Helpline: **1800 020 080**

Business and Household Support Payments: **180 22 66**

Indigenous Australians Advice: **1800 079 098**

Healthdirect - 24hr Free Health Advice: **1800 022 222**

COVID-19 Information for Seniors: **1800 200 422**

*"Look after each other and listen to the health advice"*