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CanAssist marks two decades of helping

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This year marks 20 years since cancer support network Can Assist Tumbarumba was established. And the branch recently received a vital donation from city-based greenslips.com.au, which will help keep local cancer patients' cars on the road.

"This is the first time our individual branch has received help from a corporate donor," says Can Assist Tumbarumba President Bob Ayliffe. "It's a wonderful gesture on behalf of the company".

"People can get into some terrible financial strife when doing long-term treatment. Not many people have a few thousand dollars in the bank to draw on for emergencies. If they have a lot of medical expenses due to cancer and then car expenses come in, it can be overwhelming. That's why it's a relief that we can fund part of those expenses, namely green slips. This will be a blessing for our clients."

Each year, Can Assist Tumbarumba helps around a dozen

clients – they're currently helping 15 – in Tumbarumba and surrounding towns – of all ages, with different types of cancer and at different stages of their cancer journey. The branch provides practical and financial support including travel and transport, scans, pharmaceuticals, Telstra vouchers and accommodation at Can Assist's purpose-built facility, Lilier Lodge, in Wagga Wagga.

Bob says it's extremely important for locals to have their own cars to get around.

"We have no taxis and while there are community transport cars, they're not always going where you need to go on the day you need to travel," he says. "Treatment for cancer requires a lot of travel. The closest cancer centres are in Wagga, a 200km round-trip, and Albury, a 300km round-trip. A lot of people prefer to travel every day to treatment rather than staying in Wagga or Albury, because it takes them out of their community

and away from family at a time when they most need the support. And, of course, some people need to come back because of pets or farming commitments. All that travel is very tiring, which is why having a vehicle in good condition is crucial. While IPTAAS (Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme) does help, not all clients are eligible."

What sets Can Assist apart from other charities is that all money raised locally stays in the area to help local cancer patients across the district. The branch is funded entirely by local donations, fundraising events, and corporate support such as greenslips.com.au, a CTP green slip insurance price comparison and information website.

"Our philosophy is, if we have money raised by local people, we will help local people to the best of our ability. We have such a wonderful community that helps us. They put on events to raise money and

they know the money stays local – that's a big plus for Can Assist. We'll be holding a street stall in October to raise funds – and all donations are gratefully accepted."

Volunteers are the backbone of Can Assist Tumbarumba and Bob says the branch is looking for new members – particularly younger members who can keep the branch going into the future. "I'm 73 and am at the younger end of the spectrum of our members. Most have been with the branch since it started and some are in their 80s and 90s," he explains. "Volunteers don't have to come to monthly meetings but it is important the branch keeps on going and renewing itself. It really is a good thing for a community to have a Can Assist branch; it's a powerful demonstration of community spirit and community caring."

Bob has been President for 10 years, having joined as a volunteer when he retired. "I was a fortunate 'escapee' from bowel cancer; how-

ever, my dad died from cancer, and I felt Can Assist was a worthwhile cause to be part of. That's often how we get members: a family member is helped by Can Assist and they then volunteer."

Stephen Treacey, founder and owner of greenslips.com.au says: "We began partnering with Can Assist three years ago and are proud to support their country NSW patients with the cost of their green slip, which helps keep their cars on the road. Can Assist's amazing volunteers and their unique fundraising model, with all money raised locally staying local, ensures donations make a tangible impact with those who need it most. Can Assist provides both practical and emotional support at a time when people need it."

For information about donating or volunteering with Can Assist Tumbarumba, contact 0428 689 318. For further information about how to support Can Assist, visit www.canassist.org.au.