



## Media Release

July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020

### Never Too Young runs in remembrance of young lives lost to bowel cancer

The Never Too Young campaign is running this August, in memory of the four brave, young people who appeared in Bowel Cancer New Zealand's 2018 campaign of the same name and have sadly passed away since then. They wanted to continue to raise awareness, so that other young New Zealanders have a chance to beat bowel cancer.

The Never Too Young campaign has been organised by the charity's Community Ambassador, Chelsea Halliwell. Chelsea, a bowel cancer survivor, came up with the idea after she noticed an increasing number of young people joining Bowel Cancer New Zealand's patient support group.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand (NZ) general manager Rebekah Heal says, "We hope the Never Too Young campaign continues to drive home how important it is for everyone, of any age to know the symptoms of bowel cancer. These include bleeding from the bottom; a change of bowel habit; any lumps in the stomach; fatigue or tiredness; anaemia and unexplained weight loss."

"Our charity has been calling for people to not sit on their symptoms for years. However, with the rising incidence of bowel cancer in young people and the loss of these amazing campaign ambassadors, it's more important than ever people understand bowel cancer can strike at any age. That you're never too young."

Every year, more than 350 people under 50 are diagnosed with bowel cancer. The aim of the Never Too Young campaign is to reduce this statistic of those dying needlessly, through awareness.

Bowel Cancer NZ Community Ambassador Chelsea Halliwell says, "If you have symptoms, taking action quickly is so important – it's because of this that I'm here today. I'm so fortunate I didn't delay in going to my GP - within a week, I had a stage three bowel cancer diagnosis, and my surgeon told me another six months would have made a real difference to my chances of survival.

"Unfortunately, the story was very different for Anaru, Britt, Solon and Fiona, who joined us in the 2018 campaign. For all of them, diagnosis came too late for life-saving treatment, which makes this message all the more important," she says.

Look out for the Never Too Young campaign on bus backs, billboards, digital posters in malls and on bus shelters, in print media, on social media and with our new television advert. Bowel Cancer NZ is a national charity raising awareness of bowel cancer, supporting patients and education in the community. We would like to thank our many supporters who have made this campaign possible.

Bowel Cancer NZ encourages open discussion about bowel cancer with medical professionals and avoiding 'sitting on your symptoms'. Symptoms include:

- Bleeding from the bottom or seeing blood in the toilet after a bowel motion;
- Change of bowel motions over several weeks without returning to normal;
- Persistent or periodic severe pain in the abdomen;
- A lump or mass in the abdomen;
- Tiredness and loss of weight for no particular reason;
- Anaemia.

Those who have a family history of bowel cancer or want to do regular checks, can talk to their GP or buy a commercially available bowel screening kit available at Life or Unichem pharmacies. However, if you have symptoms, we advise seeing your GP immediately.

More information on bowel cancer and Bowel Cancer NZ can be found at <http://www.bowelcancernz.org.nz>

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**About Bowel Cancer New Zealand**

- Bowel Cancer New Zealand (NZ) is a patient-focused charity organisation.
- The registered charity was founded in 2010 by a group of people affected by bowel cancer, committed to improving bowel cancer awareness and outcomes for people with the disease.
- Bowel Cancer NZ aims to provide clear and up-to-date information about the disease, symptoms, what to do if diagnosed and to support patients and families affected by bowel cancer.
- The ultimate aim of Bowel Cancer NZ is to prevent lives being lost to this disease and to promote the national screening program rollout in New Zealand.