

Media Release

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More than 35,000 Australians will unite for zero lives lost to blood cancer by 2035

On Friday 11 October more than 35,000 Australians will unite to walk together to shine a light on blood cancer at the Leukaemia Foundation's annual Light the Night event. For the first time, this year they'll also be walking as one towards a bold new goal ... Zero Lives Lost to Blood Cancer by 2035.

The beautiful Light the Night lantern walk is the only event in Australia that brings the country's blood cancer community together, with crowds creating a sea of glowing support for Australians affected by blood cancer.

In a show of national support towards this new goal, Light the Night events will be held simultaneously across Australia on the same night, with flagship events happening in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth on 11 October and more events planned in regional cities and country towns across the nation.

Leukaemia Foundation CEO Bill Petch said Light the Night is a time for all Australians living with blood cancer, their families, carers and friends as well as the medical and research communities to stand united in support for each other and in support of a better future.

"This is an opportunity for the community to band together and transform the darkness into an ocean of light and support to give hope to all those Australians impacted by blood cancer, to reflect on your own personal blood cancer journey, or to remember loved ones lost," he said.

Participants carry lanterns in symbolic colours of blue, white and gold on a beautiful, reflective walk.

- **Gold** ... to remember loved ones lost
- **White** ... to honour those battling the disease, and those who have won the fight
- **Blue** ... to show support and hope for a cure for the future

The Leukaemia Foundation recently released a first-of-its-kind nationwide report titled *State of the Nation: Blood Cancer in Australia*. The report details the true size, scale and impact of blood cancer and the lived experiences of people living with blood cancer in Australia today.

Mr Petch said the comprehensive and evidence-based report shows that blood cancer has been underestimated and underreported. It identifies that blood cancer is now more significant and prevalent than ever before and that diagnosis rates are on the rise across the country.

Every day another 41 Australians are diagnosed with a blood cancer – the equivalent to one Aussie every 36 minutes. Blood cancer still claims more lives than breast cancer and melanoma and sadly 20 Australians lose their life to blood cancer every day.

Mr Petch urged Australians to come together for an unforgettable experience in support of the blood cancer community to help work towards the Leukaemia Foundation's new goal of zero lives lost to blood cancer in Australia by 2035. This goal has been announced as part of the release of the *State of the Nation: Blood Cancer in Australia* report.

For all media enquiries, please email media@leukaemia.org.au or contact 0410 755 514

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"We face many challenges ahead, however the report offers us the opportunity to empower patients, to reform the blood cancer ecosystem and to light the way forward," Mr Petch said.

Mr Petch said due to research survival rates are improving– but there's still a long way to go.

"The Leukaemia Foundation's commitment to advancing blood cancer research is as strong as ever. Since 2002, the Leukaemia Foundation has invested more than \$50 million into research, producing ground-breaking results and supporting the academic and research career of almost every senior haematologist in Australia," he said.

"But with 110,000 Australians living with blood cancer or related disorders and diagnosis rates on the rise, more research into understanding the causes, creating better treatments and ultimately to finding a cure for blood cancer is urgently needed."

Mr Petch said funds raised through Light the Night would be directed into the Leukaemia Foundation's National Research Program to continue the fight for a cure for blood cancer.

"Light the Night lantern holders can become part of the solution by supporting research to help more Aussies survive blood cancer" he said.

Australians are invited to find out more about event details and locations and to become a part of Light the Night today by signing up now at www.lightthenight.org.au. Australians can also reserve lanterns to pick up on the night, or lanterns can be purchased at the event.

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About the Leukaemia Foundation:

The Leukaemia Foundation is the only national charity dedicated to helping more Australians survive blood cancer and live a better quality of life. Leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and related blood disorders are all types of blood cancer, which can develop in anyone, of any age, at any time.

More than 110,000 Australians are living with blood cancer or related disorders, and the equivalent of one person every 41 minutes is diagnosed. Although research is improving survival, sadly an Australian loses their life to blood cancer every two hours, claiming more lives than breast cancer and melanoma. For more information please visit www.leukaemia.org.au

About the Leukaemia Foundation's State of the Nation: Blood Cancer in Australia report:

Full report available here: <https://www.leukaemia.org.au/about-us/mylifecounts/stateofthenation/>

A visual summary of the report's findings available here: https://youtu.be/-leDjy_XOhI

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