

# Amazon is amazing treatment, Women have their heart in cancer ride

AMAZON Heart motorcyclist began in 2004 when two breast cancer survivors — Megan Dwyer and Meredith Campbell — met for the first time.

Meredith is a 33-year-old champion sailor and mother-of-one and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000. During the next 10 months, she battled mental and physical effects of two rounds of chemotherapy, surgery and radiation treatment.

Megan had been in her new career as a real estate agent for just a few weeks when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002, at the age of 35.

She was previously a structural engineer and amateur triathlete and water polo player and required surgery and four months of chemotherapy.

"Amazon Heart was set up to change negative perceptions about breast cancer and to offer inspiring support for survivors, particularly young sufferers," Meredith said.

"Many breast cancer sufferers endure severe depression and find it difficult to adjust to normal life when they finish treatment."

The 16 women from Australia, the United States and the United

Kingdom will stop off at Boyd Yung Motorcycles, 307 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba, this Friday at 8.30am to host a public information session and share their experiences, survival stories and reasons for taking this new challenge.

After supporting them through their battle with the disease, most of the bike riders' families were at the starting line in Sydney last Friday for a special tour and will be at the finishing line in Brisbane.

The Amazon Heart team is not "traditional" motorbike riders — they are ordinary mothers, grandmothers and working women, whose bond is their battle with breast cancer. The first trial run in 2002 saw 20 young breast cancer survivors challenge themselves to a 1000-mile journey from San Diego to San Francisco. Along the way they formed lifelong friendships and found new ways to deal with their cancer while raising much-needed funds.

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— breast cancer survivor Meredith Campbell

The first official ride, Changing Gears, expanded in 2005 to become a global relay with 1000-mile rides in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia, involving 48 young breast cancer survivors from around the world.

Amazon Heart is a non-profit project and the money raised from the 2006 Sydney to Brisbane ride will go to Dragons Abreast Australia — a group of women living with breast cancer, offering support and counselling to other sufferers of the disease.

"Amazon Heart lives by the values of community, empowerment, social impact, living life to the full and humanism," Megan said.

"Without these, the ride would never get off the ground."

Breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer-related death in Australia. One in 11 women will be diagnosed with the disease before they turn 75 — and the risk increases with age.

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A group of breast cancer survivors, Amazon Heart, will stop in Toowoomba to talk about their experiences on Friday morning. PICTURE: SUPPLIED