

## Closure of the Northern Ostomy Support Group formerly PANCH Ostomy Support Group

**Where it all started:** In June 1987 Lilian Leonard, a Stomal Therapy Nurse hosted a special meeting for people that had undergone ostomy surgery @ Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH). This function was held as part of Stomal Therapy Week which was added to the calendar of health events for the first time that year. This was the start of 11 years of the support group based at 'PANCH' with quarterly meetings averaging 30-50 members in attendance. At the time it was the only ostomy support group in Victoria, a pioneer with a wonderful group of ostomates who worked tirelessly and with a passion to offer support with friendship in a relaxed atmosphere. So many wonderful people have contributed to the group's function. Lilian had formed the Young Ostomy Support Group 'YOU' in 1989, the 2 groups shared so many happy memories together, always incorporating Stomal Therapy Week in June, hosting a Community Awareness Day incorporating Fashion Parades, information booth in Bourke Street & other communal activities. Both PANCH OSG and YOU gave their own special support to each other.

Moving to the Northern Hospital with the closure of 'PANCH' the group continued to give support, maybe with a change of direction but the values remained the same – Support and Friendship. Lilian moved to East Gippsland & Genevieve Cahir took over the Stomal Therapy Department. With Genevieve's expert guidance & President Joy Walker the name changed to the Northern Ostomy Support Group (NOSG), the group now met in Preston to assist the elderly members who resided in that area. With the sad passing of Joy Walker in 2010 the group has struggled despite the best efforts of Peter Farmer, Treasurer, hence in April 2016 the NOSG held its final meeting with the groups funds being transferred to YOU Inc. as per the constitution.

Sir Edward (Weary) Dunlop twice was a guest speaker at the PANCH OSG in 1988 and again in 1991, he enthralled everyone with his stories while a P.O.W. in WW2, saving lives by giving prisoners with dysentery lifesaving stomas. Therefore it seemed appropriate for YOU Inc. to donate \$500.00 to the Sir Edward Dunlop Research Foundation in memory of Joy Walker and PANCH OSG.

For me personally the closure of the group felt like losing a dear friend but to all the wonderful members who were part of this group it was an honour to share these special times with you. How can we forget Cec Sellars, Ivy York, Ted Brown, Thelma Hosking, Shirley Hutcheson, Joseph & Ida Dolinko, Vi Osmond, Heinz God, Vince Capobianco, Margaret & John O'Brien, Don Peckham and Julie Little just to name a few.



**Helen Ebzery with the wonderful Joy Walker**



**Peter Farmer, Ida Dolinko & Silva Farmer**

**Footnote:** In 1993 Lilian Leonard was awarded an Advance Australia Award for outstanding contribution in Community Services, which included the formation of PANCH OSG and Young Ostomates United which is still a viable self- help group for younger ostomates.