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Reclaim Your Curves E-Newsletter - March 2016

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# the inside story



## Welcome to our March E-Newsletter

This publication aims to highlight the latest and most current issues in breast reconstruction, introduce you to inspiring women who have reclaimed their curves and to inform you about the growth and development of Reclaim Your Curves the organization.

Reclaim Your Curves is in it's infancy and is taking some big steps towards reaching the more than 6000 women who undergo mastectomy each year. Your membership is an important part of the success of this fledgling initiative, so thank you for being involved.

### **NEWS:**

## **Breast Reconstruction Awareness Event -**

## Central Coast

BRA Event Central Coast - last days [REGISTER NOW](#) so you don't miss out. Great speakers, women sharing their stories and local community gestures of support, take home Tool Kit to help plan your reconstruction steps.

## Promotional Video

8 special ladies from the Reclaim Your Curves community had an emotional few weeks exploring what RYC means to them and expressing it with the help of Rubicon Films, an acclaimed Sydney film company. There was tears and laughter, new friendships formed and a clear message that RYC represents much needed reliable resources and warm embracing support for women facing the choices associated with mastectomy. Watch the completed video at the top of this newsletter. *Play video below.*

**What you can do to help other women find our resources and support:** Like our public [Facebook page](#) or Share our [website](#)



Click on the image to play

The CoverGirl logo, featuring the word "CoverGirl" in a blue, cursive font. Above the letter "i" in "Girl" is a stylized flower with five petals in shades of pink, purple, and green.

## Meet the brave ladies behind the video

These are the brave ladies who shared the view that the message about Reclaim Your Curves needed a boost to help people understand what we are about. Here from top left we have (hair and makeup artist) then Kelly, Alison, Rosie, Annmaree, Tracey and Kirsteen. Missing are Sam and Louie (who had not yet arrived)

This video was created by Sydney film company [Rubicon Films](#) and all the crew donated their time, products and services to help these girls feel relaxed and safe while they shared something unique of themselves.

Follow [this link](#) to a behind the scenes gallery.



*Become a Cover Girl....* Each month we will feature an inspirational woman to learn her story and how she has overcome or is managing the challenges of breast reconstruction.

**Share Your Story**

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## Latest news and Conversations

### [Nipple Tattooing - Podcast by BreaCan](#)

Monique Baldacchino, Breast Care Nurse at The Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne has trained in and practises nipple tattooing (sometimes called micro-pigmentation) after women have undergone breast reconstruction surgery. Monique will talk about the process of tattooing the areola and nipple, the pigments used, when, how and where women can access the service.



### [Open letter to my patient on the day of her mastectomy](#)

The day you undergo your mastectomy is etched onto your soul.

The awakening on the morning of the surgery, the surreal feeling of autopilot because however else would you willingly get to the hospital for this, the crispness of the early morning to be sure arrival is 6.00am as the surgery takes all day, the quiet drive with your partner because no words fit the somber mood, the strange reality of seeing the early morning bustle on the street outside as you are prepped for such brutal surgery, the hurried arrival of the surgeons, the concentration as they mark your body with texta for the incisions they will make, the coolness of the nurses hands as she places the canula, the fear and the inability to speak because the reality of your situation hits hard, the gentle quiet loneliness as you drift off to the pre op drugs that take away your awareness.

It is heart warming to know that in the operating theatre there might be a human who is watching over me and feeling the significance of my situation.



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## Services Directory



### [Service Directory - Nipple and breast tattooing](#)

This is where you will find providers of nipple tattooing in some locations in Victoria, ACT and NSW. We need many more, please let us know your contacts for this service.



### Service Directory - Bra fitting, breast prosthesis and lingerie

This is where you will find bra and prosthesis retailers from all over Australia. Including some retailers of beautiful lingerie made especially for the breast cancer survivor.



### Service Directory - Physical health and well being

There are some wonderfully supportive therapies and services for breast cancer survivors and to assist with the recovery from breast surgery. Find some here, if you know more we would love to know about them.

## Ask an Expert

### Are you interested in nipple tattooing?

- whats involved?
- how to choose a colour?
- how long does it take?
- is it more than one visit?
- will it hurt?
- will it fade?
- i have heard of 3D nipple tattoos....what's that?



Letitia owns In My Skin, Bendigo, Victoria as a Medical and Cosmetic Micro-Pigmentation

Consultant Injectables Practitioner. She is committed to assisting women to reach the final stages of their breast reconstruction process.

You can ask Letitia questions about the procedure via RYC website.....

[Go to Ask an Expert on our website](#)

## Events



### **BCNA Information Forum Traralgon Victoria**

One the 24th Feb Reclaim Your Curves attended the first of several rural forums across Australia with Breast Cancer Network Australia in Traralgon VIC. These forums are a great way to find the local services available for women at various stages of their breast cancer journey. We rubbed shoulders with Look Good Feel Better and the Wig Bank, and many other local services in and around Traralgon.

We were so pleased to see a little about breast reconstruction on the program and spoke to lots of ladies looking for information about their reconstruction options.

We also had the opportunity to get to know Raylene Boyle who is a huge supporter of

BCNA, so lots in common there!

We are off to Orange 23rd March.....if you are around that location look for the forum details here and register. Be sure to pop over to the RYC stand and say giddy and get a snap with the girls <https://www.bcna.org.au/news-events/information-forums/>



### Reclaim Your Curves lunch - Melbourne @ Think Pink

Melbourne Ladies had a lovely catch up at the 'Think Pink Living Centre'. Great to meet some new faces, and hear individual stories. You are all going to end up with amazing new curves. Next catch up in May for a Sat lunch.

#### What's coming....

This year we have a busy schedule of social events and awareness seminars. You can find everything that is happening on our [event calendar on the website](#),

#### Reclaim Your Curves Lunches

- [Sydney](#)
- [Central Coast](#)
- [Melbourne](#)
- [Perth](#)
- [Brisbane](#)

## Breast Reconstruction Awareness Events

As promised we will host our next BRA Events on the NSW Central Coast 21st March, Green Point, Central Coast NSW - [MORE](#)

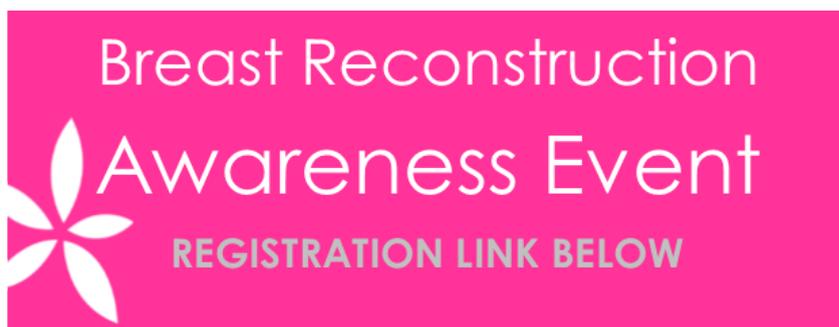
## BCNA Information Forums 2016

Reclaim Your Curves will be attending most BCNA Information Forums throughout 2016. We will be providing take home information and an understanding ear to anyone facing mastectomy and wanting to know more about their options. Why not drop in and say hi. Upcoming locations and dates:

- Orange NSW 23rd March

You can find locations and details to [register at BCNA website](#)

## **EVERYDAY** IS BREAST RECONSTRUCTION AWARENESS DAY



[Register for the Central Coast NSW BRA event here](#)

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## Our supporters

### SUPPORTERS OF RECLAIM YOUR CURVES

We promote RYC to health professionals, below are our recent supporters who actively promote RYC to their patients include: [View a list of all our supporters here.](#)

**Postcard Invitation Program** - help your patients find the information and support of RYC. Click the image to find out more.

Reclaim Your Curves

Breast Reconstruction  
INFORMATION and SUPPORT



**Promoting choice for women**

Breast reconstruction can be an extraordinarily difficult time for many women. With so many decisions to make, it's easy to become overwhelmed and frightened.

This is your invitation to join us at Reclaim Your Curves,™ a comprehensive online resource to help you understand your options for breast reconstruction. It is a place to meet women on a similar journey, view realistic images and learn what to expect during and after surgery.

[www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au](http://www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au)




member group of



## Print resources

Download or order stock [here](#)

Reclaim Your Curves

### Choosing your surgeon

**TOP 10 TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR RECONSTRUCTIVE BREAST SURGEON**

1. **Member of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) or is appropriately skilled in the procedure being performed** - This is important to ensure you have an appropriately qualified specialist plastic surgeon to undertake your procedure.
2. **Approachable** - It's great to have a surgeon who you feel comfortable asking questions of, where no question is a silly one, and who is happy to discuss your fears and concerns.
3. **Makes you feel like part of the decision making** - Being offered options is an important part of decision making however not everyone has this luxury due to their specific situation. A good surgeon asks you questions, listens and helps you to make informed decisions and gives you information and helps you see the different possibilities. They take the time to ensure everything gets covered rather than feeling rushed.
4. **Contactable** - One of the most valuable things you can have is a direct line to our surgeon, whether this is by phone or email. A surgeon who offers their small or mobile number understands you might have further questions or might need to be in touch during out of office periods over the months or years of your relationship.
5. **Considerate and respectful** - It's just so nice when your doctor remembers your name, either in their office or at the bedside. A good surgeon will listen to your concerns and attempt to allay fears while offering realistic outcomes. It's extra good if they consider the potential financial burden of procedures, but that they do not make assumptions about your ability or willingness to pay.
6. **Dedicated** - If most of these points are a yes, then your surgeon is committed to you as a patient. Many surgeons will visit you personally bedside post-surgery but this isn't always possible and often it's someone from their team.
7. **Sense of humour and smiles** - A surgeon who smiles and can have a laugh helps to keep things relaxed. Surgery and appointments can be emotional, so this trait can help to break that composed and formal atmosphere that can make you feel intimidated.
8. **Confident** - You want a surgeon who is confident and reassuring, especially if things stray from the plan. You need to be able to trust your surgeon that he or she has the capability to get things corrected and back on track.
9. **Skilled and experienced** - Your surgeon should be able to show you several pictures of their work. Ask to see images of their work and if they have any patients willing to speak to you about their surgery and outcomes.
10. **Works in a team and consults with colleagues** - Many surgeons work as part of a multi-disciplinary team where they discuss cases to make the best judgement in consultation with colleagues.



For more information go to [www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au](http://www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au)

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Reclaim Your Curves

### Invest in Yourself

**PREPARING FOR SURGERY**

No one else needs to invest in your reconstruction surgery to the extent that you do. You are living with the outcome for the rest of your life, so it is important to bring what you want and need into the conversation. Not everyone is comfortable having these conversations and even the strongest of us can feel intimidated when in the surgeon's office getting caught up in the flurry of jargon, drawings and measurements. It's common to just agree with the surgeon so that you can get out the door and back to some sense of control. A good way to overcome this anxiety is to go to your appointments well prepared with the materials and information you have gathered from reputable sources such as the Reclaim Your Curves.

Bring in a list of questions to ask and a pad and pen to jot things down. Some ladies have said it is empowering to go armed with information, even if you don't need it. Another good tip is to tell your surgeon that you are nervous and unsure, and this can sometimes slow the conversation down a bit and help the surgeon to understand where you are at.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON**

One way to get the right answers for your situation is to understand the right questions to ask. Getting to know the language and terminology used in reconstruction will help you to make informed decisions and to get the responses you need at your appointment.

**PRE SURGERY QUESTIONS**

1. Am I a candidate for an immediate skin/ripple sparing breast reconstruction at the time of mastectomy?
2. How quickly do I need to decide about my options? Do I have time to wait a little longer to be sure I have thought over my options?
3. What factors impact on the timing of my breast reconstruction?
4. I have had some lymphoedema - is this surgery likely to make it worse, or might it be improved?
5. What are the specific steps in each stage of the procedure you have recommended for me? What are the risks related to each stage?
6. What's the projected timeline for each stage? How flexible is this timeline?
7. What are the options for my other breast? How and when is contralateral surgery recommended / done? What are the advantages/ disadvantages and risks?
8. Am I able to keep my own nipples? If not, what are the options, and when do I need to make any decisions regarding this?
9. If my nipple/s are saved, will I have sensation/feeling in them? What will they look like?
10. How will reconstruction affect my skin sensation?
11. Where will the incisions be made on my breasts and my tissue donor area?
12. What do you recommend to manage scars post-surgery?



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*Reclaim Your Curves*



Better choices  
for women  
thinking  
about breast  
reconstruction.

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### Preparation & recovery

**PREPARING FOR SURGERY**

Smoking increases the potential for serious risks. It is advised that you plan to give up smoking and any nicotine therapy at least 2 months before surgery.

- You may be advised to stop taking certain medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), aspirin, or other aspirin-like medications that may interfere with blood clotting for a brief period before your surgery. You may also be asked to stop taking nutraceutical substances such as garlic, ginkgo, ginseng and St. John's Wort, as they may affect clotting and anaesthesia. Be sure to tell your surgeon and anaesthetist everything you are taking and take their advice before stopping any medication.
- Avoid excessive alcohol prior to surgery.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, including plenty of foods rich in vitamin C, which may help promote tissue healing.
- Exercise regularly to build energy, improve fitness and maintain strength.
- Ready your home, including preparing food and rearranging furniture if necessary.
- If necessary, arrange for someone to take care of your children while you are in the hospital.
- Make sure a relative or friend will drive you to and from the hospital. You will not be able to drive for a few weeks and should only consider doing so when you have healed sufficiently.
- You should not be alone for at least 24 hours after you arrive home.
- Arrange for help with shopping, housework and caring for any small children as you will be unable to do any heavy lifting or strenuous activity for several weeks.

**RECOVERY TIPS & ADVICE**

Your surgeon will provide you with advice on caring for your new breast, when you can shower or bathe, as well as how to look after any drains that are still in place. Drainage tubes remove fluids that collect in the surgical site. The drainage tubes remain in place until the amount of fluid draining substantially decreases.

If you have had a tissue expander inserted, you will need to see your doctor regularly over several weeks or months to have the expander filled until the desired shape and size have been achieved for the implant. A support bra may be worn to help reduce swelling and support the reconstructed breast.

You may be prescribed painkillers, antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs when you are first discharged from hospital. It is vital to use these as prescribed to successfully manage any pain and to reduce the risk of infection.

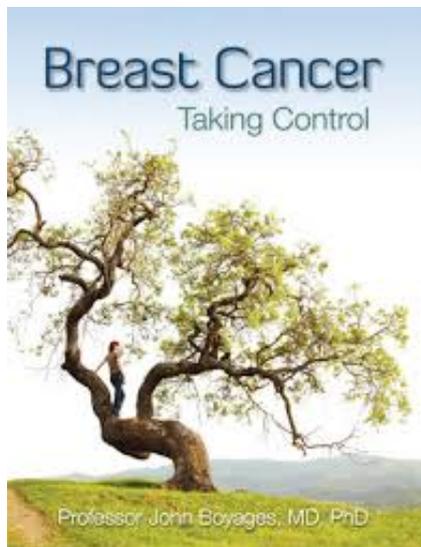
Post-operative recovery can take longer if complications occur, so it is important to get adequate rest, make sure you follow your surgeon's directions and exercise within the limits of comfort - if you feel any pain or pulling, especially around the wound sites, stop. It is normal to feel tired and sore after your surgery. Generally it is advised not to swim, play sports, exercise or do any heavy lifting for at least two weeks after your surgery. There is no set rule when it comes to your recovery time. Your Specialist Plastic Surgeon will prepare detailed instructions on post-operative care - make sure you follow these carefully.

It can take up to twelve months to completely heal and for scars to fade and for you to get a good indication of how your new breast will settle into your body. You might feel further surgery to refine the shape of your new breast mound.



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## Special offers



**NEW**  
**SPECIAL BOOK OFFER**  
**for Reclaim Your Curves registered members**

Professor John Boyages has offered his book "Breast Cancer - Taking Control" at a discounted price.

Available on Amazon and iTunes for immediate download. For full terms and conditions see [www.bcpublish.com](http://www.bcpublish.com) and click on privacy.

- Amazon - Breast Cancer Taking Control
- iTunes - Breast Cancer Taking Control

or, if in Australia, have one of John's books couriered to your door and receive free delivery and \$5.00 off the book.

Use promotion code: **"curves"**

## WHAT DOES RECLAIM YOUR CURVES DO?

We are a group of volunteer consumers who have had breast cancer and breast reconstruction. We recognise how difficult this journey is, even beyond surgery and we work to help inform and support women undergoing these life changing surgeries.

Our current activities include:

- Facilitation of the BCNA Breast Reconstruction Online Group
- Online community managing Reclaim Your Curves closed Facebook group: *We have 2 online communities with 5 volunteers facilitators working every day to connect new people and to help members find the information they need.*
- Developing and facilitating face to face support groups around Australia. *Currently we have groups in Perth WA, Melbourne VIC, Brisbane QLD, Central Coast NSW, and Sydney NSW..*
- Our Ambassadors actively promote Reclaim Your Curves to health professionals and breast cancer support organisations through one on one meetings and presentations. We encourage health professionals to participate in the Postcard Invitation Program which assists women to find our information website and the support of others.
- Development of the clinical online information and fact sheets
- Research daily for current news and information relevant for Australian women, this information is brought to you through [Latest News](#) on our website and through our [Facebook PAGE](#)
- Facilitate educational sessions through rural Australia

## WHY IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP IMPORTANT?

One of the most influential aspects of Reclaim Your Curves is the number of members we have in our communities. This is our evidence that information and support for breast reconstruction is in demand by the women who need it. We are growing steadily everyday, our current membership includes:

# Current member registrations 1,550

(an increase of 114 in the previous month)

We are a fledgling organisation but with your membership we can all help make a difference to women reclaiming their curves after breast cancer.



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### Contact us:

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