

# Head + Neck Cancer Support Group

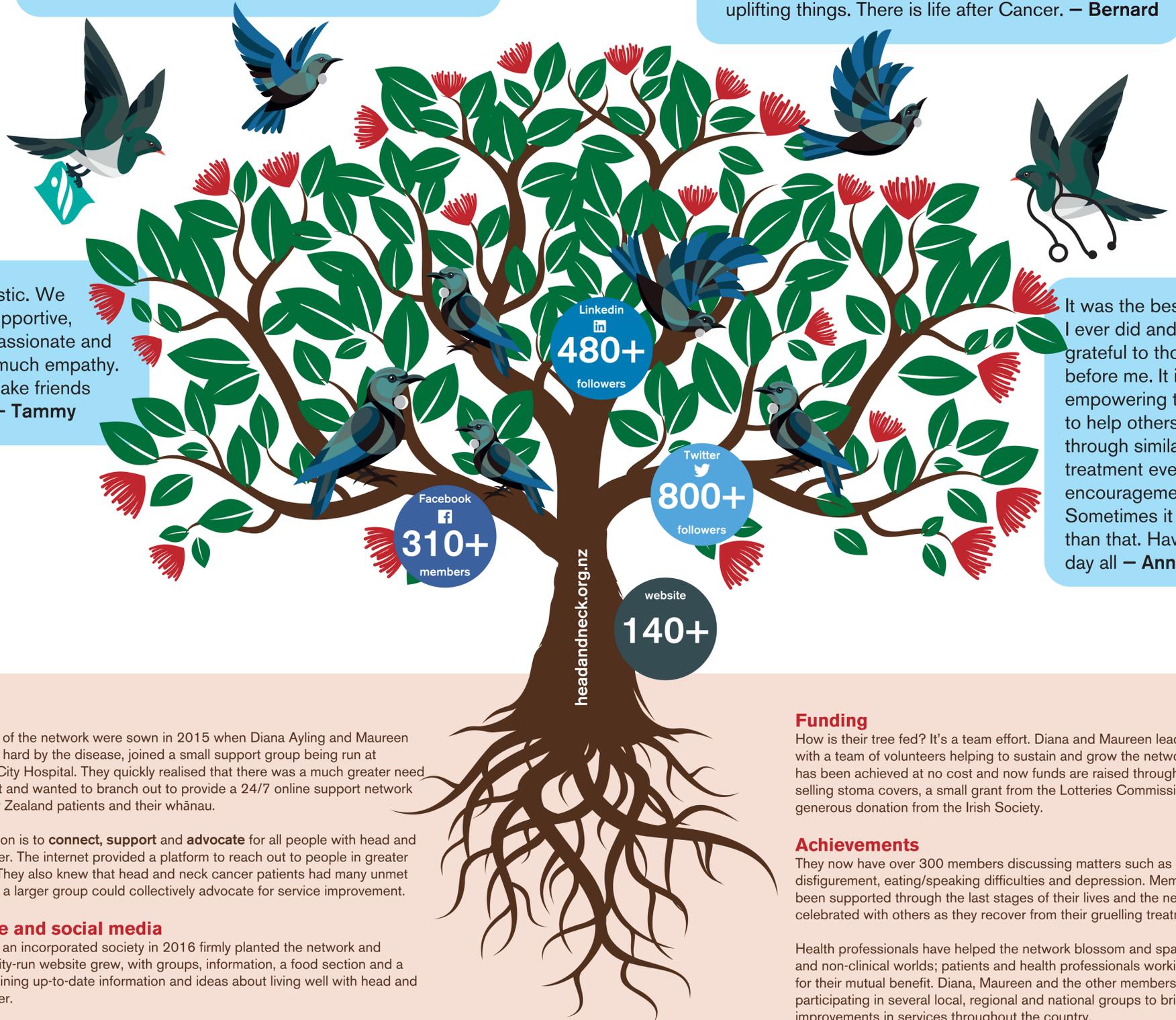
Connecting, supporting, and advocating New Zealand head and neck cancer patients and their whānau.

Such raw stories thanks for sharing and comparing it adds some comfort knowing that each patient here is not alone and most have had a similar experiences – **Michelle**

There are many wonderful posts on the page today. Of people getting back to rebuilding their lives. A whole day in the garden. Out sailing, happy days with their children and grandchildren, and many more uplifting things. There is life after Cancer. – **Bernard**

Fantastic. We are supportive, compassionate and have much empathy. We make friends here – **Tammy**

It was the best thing I ever did and I am so grateful to those before me. It is also empowering to be able to help others going through similar treatment even if it is encouragement daily. Sometimes it is more than that. Have a lovely day all – **Anne**



## Roots

The seeds of the network were sown in 2015 when Diana Ayling and Maureen Jansen, hit hard by the disease, joined a small support group being run at Auckland City Hospital. They quickly realised that there was a much greater need for support and wanted to branch out to provide a 24/7 online support network for all New Zealand patients and their whānau.

Their mission is to **connect, support** and **advocate** for all people with head and neck cancer. The internet provided a platform to reach out to people in greater numbers. They also knew that head and neck cancer patients had many unmet needs and a larger group could collectively advocate for service improvement.

## Website and social media

Setting up an incorporated society in 2016 firmly planted the network and a community-run website grew, with groups, information, a food section and a blog containing up-to-date information and ideas about living well with head and neck cancer.

Before long their website branched out to include social media, especially a closed Facebook group which has become the greenest branch on their tree; a safe place for questions, discussion and sharing. The Facebook group takes account of the whole person: their families, their pets, their travels, their gardens, the weather where they are – as well as their serious need for information and support.

The Twitter branch of the network enabled them to form and nourish connections with other head and neck cancer organisations and health professionals in Australia, the US and the UK. LinkedIn gained them an audience of health professionals, and their most recent offshoot, WhatsApp, helps them to reach out to those who might feel anxious on Facebook.

## Funding

How is their tree fed? It's a team effort. Diana and Maureen lead the way with a team of volunteers helping to sustain and grow the network. Much has been achieved at no cost and now funds are raised through Givealittle, selling stoma covers, a small grant from the Lotteries Commission, and a generous donation from the Irish Society.

## Achievements

They now have over 300 members discussing matters such as coping with disfigurement, eating/speaking difficulties and depression. Members have been supported through the last stages of their lives and the network has celebrated with others as they recover from their gruelling treatments.

Health professionals have helped the network blossom and span clinical and non-clinical worlds; patients and health professionals working together for their mutual benefit. Diana, Maureen and the other members are now participating in several local, regional and national groups to bring about improvements in services throughout the country.

## The Logo

HNCSSN supports head and neck cancer patients and whānau all over the world but are primarily there to support their peers in Aotearoa. The feisty tui with its tufted neck is the perfect symbol of the Network, stylised by graphic designer, Olwen Williams in Blenheim.



**HeadNeckNZ**

Head & Neck Cancer Survivors' Support Network



[headandneck.org.nz](http://headandneck.org.nz)