Summary Presentation AAGP Brisbane July 2016

Mary O’Brien gave a presentation on “Group work with women with advanced breast cancer and their families” based on the work she and Pia Hirsch have been doing for many years running the Advanced Breast Cancer Group. She gave a brief account of how as AAGP members, Dr Bron Beacham and herself became involved in starting this group in 1999. She then went on to describe how the service has grown and evolved over the years, from a weekly face to face group, to a group that is delivered Statewide by telephone as well as face to face, and now has its own website, a national online forum, runs biannual workshops for women, partners and families, and has also produced three DVD resources which are distributed nationwide. She explained how they have had to adapt the Supportive Expressive Group Therapy model and how this approach differs from traditional group therapy. The highlight of the session was the screening of short excerpts from a recent workshop, where she, Pia and Tom O’Brien facilitated three groups – women, partners & parents, adult children - talking about the impact of the diagnosis of secondary breast cancer on them. It was a very moving experience, which gave some insight into how each group struggled to deal with this confronting diagnosis, while trying to support and protect each other at the same time.