

## ‘EMAIL A CANCER NURSE’ SERVICE – POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### Definition of the ‘Email a Cancer Nurse’ Service

‘Email a Cancer Nurse’ is a free service available through the Cancer Council Victoria (CCV) website (<https://www.cancervic.org.au/get-support/connect-and-learn/ask-a-nurse>). Any member of the general public can submit a cancer-related question which will be responded to by an experienced cancer nurse. All emails received through ‘Email a Cancer Nurse’ will come through to the Cancer Information and Support Service (CISS) inbox and must be replied to within 24 hours, or by the next business day. There are required and optional fields relating to demographics and the individual’s situation that the person is asked to complete. These include:

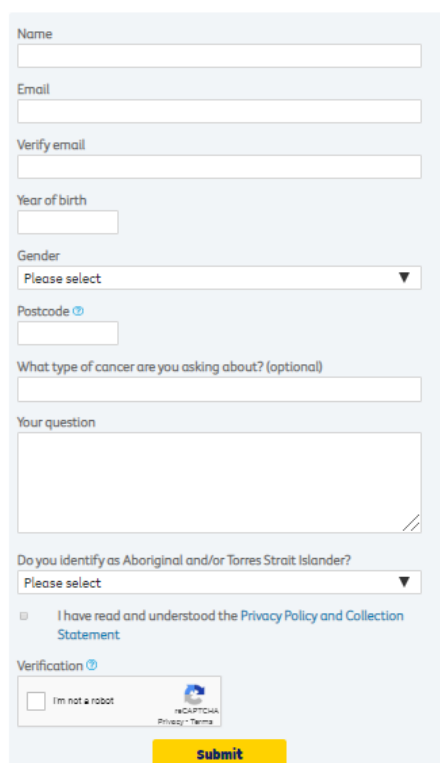
- Name
- Email (including verification of email)
- Year of birth
- Gender
- Postcode
- Type of cancer enquiry related to (optional)
- Question
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Tickbox to confirm Privacy policy and Collection Statement read

The person is then required to click ‘submit’. Below is a screenshot of the webpage:

### Email a question

Send your cancer questions to a qualified cancer nurse using the form below. Someone will answer as quickly as possible (although there will be a delay on weekends).

Please use our [general enquiries channels](#) for any non-support enquiries and comments.



Name

Email

Verify email

Year of birth

Gender

Please select

Postcode

What type of cancer are you asking about? (optional)

Your question

Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Please select

☐ I have read and understood the [Privacy Policy and Collection Statement](#)

Verification

☐ I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA

Privacy Terms

**submit**

## **Aim of the 'Email a Cancer Nurse' Service**

'Email a Cancer Nurse' allows people affected by cancer to contact an experienced cancer nurse via email. They can remain anonymous if they choose to. 'Email a Cancer Nurse' encourages members of the public to ask for information and advice from the comfort of their own home. People have an opportunity to ask difficult questions, gain support and clarify advice already received, in a confidential manner.

'Email a Cancer Nurse' aims to respond to all emails received in a personalised and empathetic manner. All information and advice given is current, reliable, evidence-based and peer-reviewed. 'Email a Cancer Nurse' informs and refers clients to appropriate health professionals, allied health team members, community groups or services/organisations appropriate for them. 'Email a Cancer Nurse' does not diagnose conditions, give medical advice, or provide recommendations or endorsements to individual treating physicians or treatment centres.

## **History of the 'Email a Cancer Nurse' Service**

'Email a Cancer Nurse' has been in existence since 2007. It stemmed from the CISS team's passion to provide reliable and accessible information and support for all Victorians affected by cancer. 'Email a Cancer Nurse' was further developed under the leadership of Doctor Amanda Hordern, Head of CISS, from February 2010 – 2012.

'Email a Cancer Nurse' is operated by a team of CISS Clinical Nurse Specialists. There is an emphasis on standard responses, uniform data logging and a streamlined review process.

## **Clientele**

Clients commonly find the 'Email a Cancer Nurse' service through the CCV website whilst looking for information and support. There are currently no restrictions or eligibility criteria on this service.

There have been some articles and organisations that have highlighted the increasing demand for people accessing health information and support through the internet (see below). Most commonly, people using this source of information are people with chronic health conditions. This highlights the importance of maintaining and developing this service.

Fahy E, Hardikar R, Fox A, Mackay S. Quality of patient health information on the internet: Reviewing a complete and evolving landscape. *AMJ* 2014, 7, 1, 24-28.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3920473/>

Laugesen J, Hassanein K, Yuan Y. The Impact of Internet Health Information on Patient Compliance: A Research Model and an Empirical Study. Eysenbach G, ed. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 2015, 17(6):e143. doi:10.2196/jmir.4333.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4526934/?report=printable>

Rowlands IJ, Loxton D, Dobson A, Mishra GD. Seeking Health Information Online: Association With Young Australian Women's Physical, Mental, and Reproductive Health. Eysenbach G, ed. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 2015, 17(5):e120. doi:10.2196/jmir.4048.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4468597/>

American Cancer Society website – Cancer Information on the Internet

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-basics/cancer-information-on-the-internet.html>

## Roles and Responsibilities

Each day, the 13 11 20 Team Leader (or in their absence, the 13 11 20 Manager), will allocate one CNS (who has been trained to operate 'Email a Cancer Nurse') to manage the CISS inbox and respond to any of the 'Email a Cancer Nurse' emails. The CNS will report directly to the 13 11 20 Team Leader/Manager.

When there are emails in the CISS inbox, the CNS assigned to 'Email a Cancer Nurse' should log in to TouchPoint via the 13 11 20 'backup' queue. This will enable the CNS to focus on email replies whilst being on standby in case the 13 11 20 phone line becomes busy. Should staffing allow for it, and with confirmation from the 13 11 20 Team Leader/Manager, the CNS may log in to TouchPoint via 'Worktime – Emails'. If at any point there are no emails to attend to, the CNS should switch back to the 13 11 20 'Prime' queue.

## Composing an email response

Refer to [E-mail a Cancer Nurse – Quick Tips](#) for general rules.

Important points to remember:

- Show empathy and acknowledge the situation they are in – but be careful not to make assumptions
- Do not assume the person's name from their email address/email name if their email has not been signed off with a name
- Short paragraphs in plain English

The email responses should adhere to the following layout:

- Use the same font and size throughout (Arial, size 12)
- Include the person's question/enquiry below your signature
- Ensure the disclaimer is at the end of each email under your signature

Example of email template:

*<Greeting>*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*<Acknowledgement of email and feelings/request>*

*e.g.* Thank you for your email. I am so sorry to hear that your mother has been diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer and that she has recently had some disease progression. I can imagine that this might have come as quite a shock to you. Watching someone you love enduring an illness, treatment and its effects can be very challenging. It is not surprising at all that you are feeling anxious and concerned, so I am glad that you thought to contact us for information and support.

*<Information>*

*Provide information, offer links to reliable organisations or evidence-based information where appropriate.*

*e.g.* It is important for you to recognise that your role as a carer is very valuable. Although caring for someone can be difficult and stressful at times, many people find that it can also be rewarding. It is important that you get the emotional and physical support that you require to care for your mother. This booklet offers practical tips on navigating the experience of cancer while balancing the demands of caring, family, work and your own needs. The booklet does not need to be read from cover to cover, just read the parts that are relevant to you at the time. The link to the booklet is here:

<https://www.cancervic.org.au/downloads/resources/booklets/Caring-for-someone-with-cancer.pdf>

<Summarise and direct caller back to Cancer Information and Support via 13 11 20>


e.g. \_\_\_\_\_, I hope this information has been helpful. If you wish to discuss the information provided above, or have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Information and Support Service on 13 11 20 (for the cost of a local call). 13 11 20 is staffed by experienced cancer nurses and is available between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. We welcome your call.

<Closing and Signature (including disclaimer, environment consideration and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statement)>

Kind regards,



**Name**  
Clinical Nurse Specialist – Cancer Council 13 11 20  
Cancer Information and Support Service  
T: 13 11 20  
615 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne Vic 3004 Australia  
[www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au)  
Prevent Cancer. Empower Patients. Save Lives.





*Disclaimer: Please note that the information provided in this email is selective and does not cover all possible options. It has been compiled based on your questions to the Cancer Council 13 11 20 service. It is for your interest only and is not a substitute for professional care; Cancer Council Victoria does not give individual medical advice. You should consult your doctor regarding any specific diagnosis, treatment or management questions.*

*Cancer Council Victoria may collect your personal information to provide you with answers to your queries, for program evaluation and reporting, and to contribute to statistical reporting on cancer. We don't share your individual personal information with any other parties, however your de-identified, aggregated data may be shared with government or other health stakeholders to assist with cancer prevention, research and support activities.*

*Our Privacy Policy is available on our website at [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au) or by calling 13 11 20. It explains how we handle your personal information, including how to request access to and correction of your information, how to make a privacy complaint, and our complaint processes.*

#### **Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail**

Cancer Council Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and waters throughout Victoria and pays respect to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

#### **Response timeframe and Quality Assurance processes**

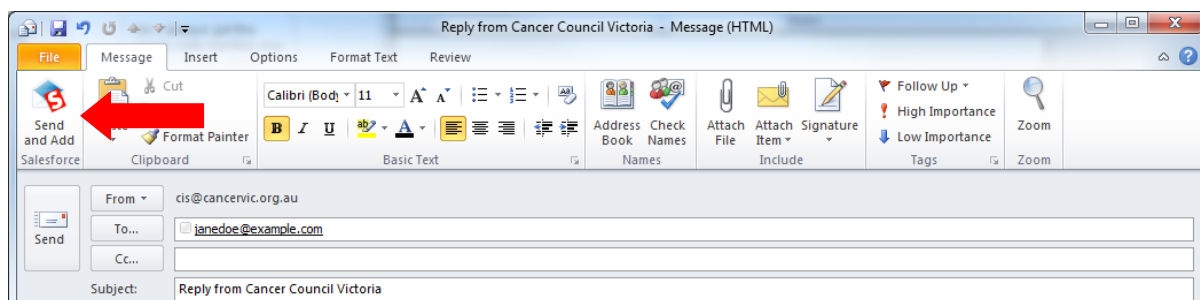
Responses are required within 24 hours (or by the next business day), as stated in the automatic reply email people receive when they have submitted an enquiry, however replies should try to be responded to on the same day that they are received (with the exception of emails received after business hours and on weekends).

Responses are required to be proof-read for consistency and validity of information by the 13 11 20 Team Leader, Manager or another 'Email a Cancer Nurse' CNS (in that order of preference).

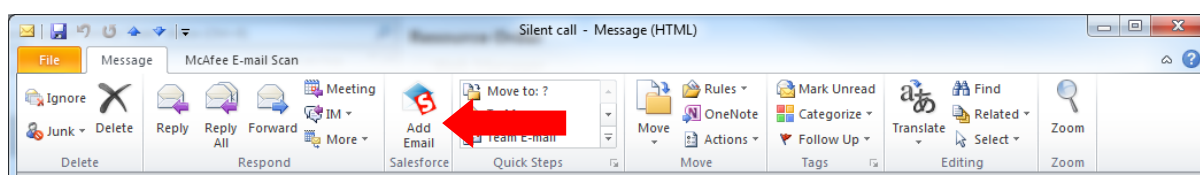
Emails are to be replied to from CISS inbox address to prevent personal email addresses being obtained or responded to in future.

### Logging of emails on CRM

A contact and case should be made for the email sender on CRM with whatever details are supplied, as per normal procedure. The email response should be logged as an activity by automatically adding the email to Salesforce. This is done by pressing the 'Send and Add' button in Outlook (once the contact exists), as below:



Alternatively, if the email has already been sent, the sent mail item needs to be found and opened, and the 'Add Email' button pressed in Outlook (once the contact exists), as below:



Once the email has been added to Salesforce, the email task should then be edited within CRM to reflect details of the interaction. The task needs to be linked to the correct contact and related to the appropriate case as below:

**Task**  
**Email: Information from Cancer Council Victoria**

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**Task Edit** Save Save & New Task Save & New Event Cancel

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**Task Information**

Assigned To	Chelsey Upston	
Name	Contact ▼ John Smith	
Subject	Email: Information from Car	
Related To	Case ▼ CSID-00300000	
TIS Job #		

Details should then be modified in CRM to reflect the date and time that the email was responded to, the activity type needs to be changed from 'call' to 'email' and the duration (in minutes) needs to reflect the amount of time spent researching and typing the reply to the email.

<b>Activity Date / Time</b> ⓘ	17/03/2020 4:48 PM	←
<b>Status</b>	Completed	
<b>Type</b>	Email	←
<b>Duration (minutes)</b> ⓘ	10	←
<b>Activity Outcome</b>	Information provided	
<b>Other Outcome</b>		

Once a reply has been sent and the contact and case logging are complete, the original e-mail can be moved to the 'Nurses' folder within the CISS inbox in Outlook, as below:

- ✓ The Cancer Information and Support Service Team
  - Deleted Items
  - Drafts
- ✓ Inbox
  - Emails forwarded to other areas
  - FAP
  - Gratitude
  - HLAC
  - HLaC EOI's
  - Holiday Break
  - > Nurses ←
  - Repeat emailers/ones to watch
  - Resources - dispatched
  - Wig Service
  - Junk E-mail
  - Outbox
  - RSS Feeds

## Peer Support and Debriefing

CNS's involved in 'Email a Cancer Nurse' have access to monthly peer debrief sessions run by a psychologist. One-on-one appointments can also be made with the psychologist to discuss any issues that the CNS is experiencing as a result of the nature of this work.

All CCV employees also have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP operates independently of CCV and provides confidential counselling and wellbeing support services. More information is available via the following link: [http://intranet.cancervic.org.au/hr/employee\\_assistance\\_program](http://intranet.cancervic.org.au/hr/employee_assistance_program)

## **'Email a Cancer Nurse' Email Templates**

The below link takes you to email templates for common enquiries:

<G:\SSD\CISS\Cancer Council 13 11 20\Email a Cancer Nurse\Email Templates>

With confirmation from the 13 11 20 Team Leader or Manager, a CNS may save a new template into the above folder if relevant and appropriate.

## **Useful email addresses to forward on to**

VIC Supporters' emails: [supportershotline@cancervic.org.au](mailto:supportershotline@cancervic.org.au)

Cancer Council ACT: [cancer.information@actcancer.org](mailto:cancer.information@actcancer.org)

Cancer Council NSW: [cis@nswcc.org.au](mailto:cis@nswcc.org.au)

Cancer Council NT: [support.darwin@cancernt.org.au](mailto:support.darwin@cancernt.org.au)

Cancer Council QLD: [askanurse@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:askanurse@cancerqld.org.au)

Cancer Council SA: [askanurse@cancersa.org.au](mailto:askanurse@cancersa.org.au)

Cancer Council TAS: [askanurse@cancervic.org.au](mailto:askanurse@cancervic.org.au)

Cancer Council WA: [Questions@cancerwa.asn.au](mailto:Questions@cancerwa.asn.au)

Cancer Council VIC: [askanurse@cancervic.org.au](mailto:askanurse@cancervic.org.au)

### *More local TAS Emails:*

- [supportservicessouth@cancertas.org.au](mailto:supportservicessouth@cancertas.org.au) includes southern Tas/Bruny Is/ Triabunna Swansea Oatlands
- [supportservicesnorth@cancertas.org.au](mailto:supportservicesnorth@cancertas.org.au) includes East coast (St Helens St Marys, Bicheno etc) Scottsdale, Campbell Town Deloraine and Flinders Is
- [supportservicesnw@cancertas.org.au](mailto:supportservicesnw@cancertas.org.au) includes West coast, King Island and up to Sheffield