



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED 1 February 2017**

**Access to ovarian cancer drug most significant development in the past 30 years**  
***New treatment option for women with advanced ovarian cancer***

Ovarian Cancer Australia has welcomed today's announcement that a drug treatment for advanced ovarian cancer, olaparib, has been listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) as of 1 February 2017, which also marks the first day of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

The independent national organisation has heralded the listing as the most significant development in 30 years for treating advanced ovarian cancer among women who have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation. Up to 20 per cent of women with ovarian cancer have a mutation of this type.

Jane Hill, CEO of Ovarian Cancer Australia said although olaparib (marketed as Lynparza) was not a cure for the disease, it was a significant development as it delays disease recurrence while preserving a good quality of life for women with advanced ovarian cancer and the BRCA gene mutation.

"There's no better way for us to kick off Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month than with the news that the day-to-day lives of women with advanced ovarian cancer will be improved with olaparib now listed on the PBS," Ms Hill said.

"Treatment options for women with ovarian cancer have not changed since the 1980s. This new class of anti-cancer drugs, the PARP inhibitors, while not a cure, is a promising indication that new and improved therapies can, and will, be found," she continued.

Each year 1,550 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and a further 1,200 women die from the disease. It is the deadliest women's cancer with only 43 per cent of women surviving five years beyond diagnosis, and a high recurrence rate. The low survival rate is largely due to 75 per cent of incidences being diagnosed at an advanced stage, when the disease is difficult to treat successfully.

Before 2016, a small number of Australian women had accessed olaparib through clinical trials and compassionate access schemes. Since January 2016, when olaparib was approved by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration as a treatment for women with BRCA-mutated advanced ovarian cancer, those women who could afford it were able to access the drug for \$13,500 for six months of treatment. The PBS listing means that women can now access the drug for a maximum of \$38 a month.

Gayle Doyle, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2013, was given access to olaparib through a compassionate access scheme in December 2014. She says it has improved her quality of life after months of chemotherapy.

"Feeling healthy and being in a positive state of mind is everything when you're fighting ovarian cancer," Ms Doyle said. "That's a hard thing to achieve when your body has been battered by chemotherapy, especially when the disease returned so soon after the initial



round of treatment. With olaparib, I have hope. I will be celebrating our daughter's wedding in eight weeks. Two years ago, I had grave doubts concerning my survival therefore, this joyful occasion is extra wonderful for our family."

Ms Hill said the announcement reinforced Ovarian Cancer Australia's commitment to taking action for people affected by ovarian cancer.

"We thank the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee for reviewing and considering our position statement which called upon the Australian Government to facilitate affordable access to much-needed new treatments. We are immensely proud of the women, including Gayle, who we supported to attend a patient hearing to discuss the value of the drug to them and their families," Ms Hill said.

This Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, Ovarian Cancer Australia launches its #KnowAskAct campaign.

"For the month of February, we encourage all Australians to #KnowAskAct. That is, know the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer, ask for medical advice if you do have these symptoms, and act to improve the lives of women living with ovarian cancer by donating to Ovarian Cancer Australia or hosting an Afternoon Teal fundraising event," Ms Hill said. Teal is the international colour for ovarian cancer.

All Australians can show their support for women living with ovarian cancer by purchasing and wearing a teal ribbon, particularly on Teal Ribbon Day, Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017. Teal ribbons are available for \$2 from Chemmart Pharmacies, Terry White Chemists, or Chemplus stores nationally, as well as from [www.ovariancancer.net.au](http://www.ovariancancer.net.au)

**The four key symptoms of ovarian cancer are:**

- **Abdominal or pelvic pain;**
- **Increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating;**
- **The need to urinate often or urgently; and**
- **Feeling full after eating a small amount.**

**-ENDS-**

For more information and requests for interviews, please contact:  
Penny Fannin: [penny.fannin@ovariancancer.net.au](mailto:penny.fannin@ovariancancer.net.au), 03 9289 9702

About Ovarian Cancer Australia:

Ovarian Cancer Australia is the independent national organisation that takes action for people affected by ovarian cancer. It provides support to women and their families, raises community awareness of ovarian cancer, advocates for improved services for women and promotes and funds research. Ovarian Cancer Australia's vision is to save lives and ensure that no woman with ovarian cancer walks alone.