

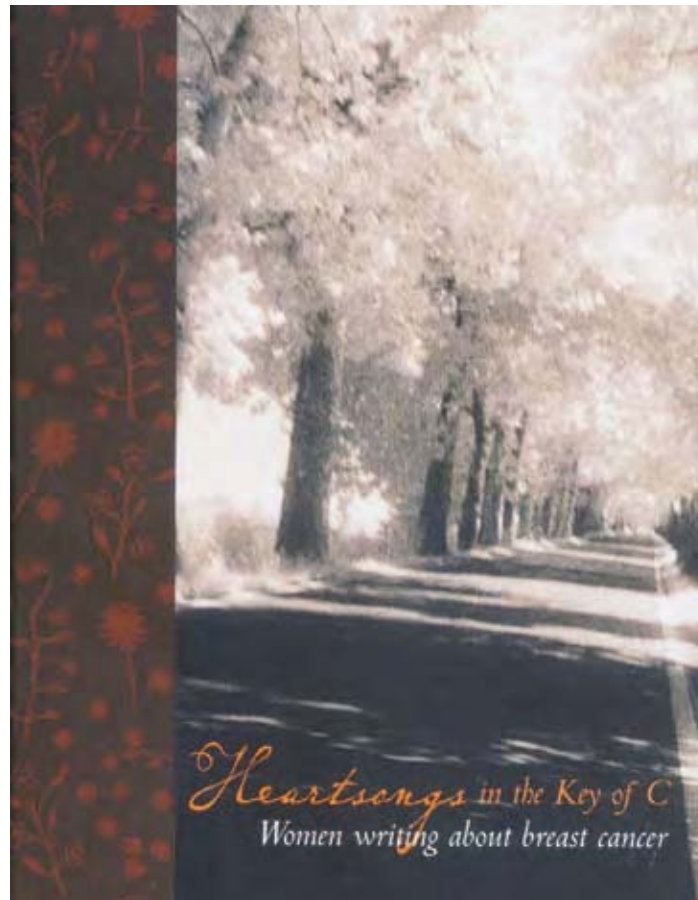
Book review

Heartsongs in the Key of C

Heartsongs in the Key of C: Women Writing About Breast Cancer, hard cover, 267 pages, 0 9775529 0 0, \$24.95, published by Kate Carey Productions. Available through bookshops (some may have to order it in), through www.everycloud.com or by emailing katecarey@overthefencepress.com.au.

Heartsongs in the Key of C is a book of stories, poetry and descriptions of important moments in the personal journeys of a group of women. Each author has experienced breast cancer either personally or they have shared the journey with someone close. This book is 259 pages of pure gold. Collated in a writing project that spanned four years, the pieces are a product of nine workshops from around rural Victoria plus one in Melbourne. They were attended by 94 extraordinary women. The project was managed and nurtured by **Marlene Parsons** and **Sharyn Dickeson** and the workshops facilitated by **Christine Gillespie**. Together with their many other supporters they must be congratulated.

The book is illustrated by **Judy Horacek's** 'The pond of tears' and divided into sections arranged around six frames. These illustrations roughly follow the breast cancer journey from a first discovery in 'Last summer I cried' to 'Strange and beautiful things grow' which explores a phase of new beginnings. The reader is taken through a journey of diagnosis and treatment, through friendship and loneliness, to the end of life, but not the



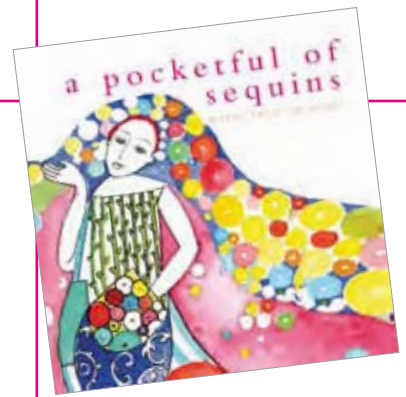
end of living. Evocative smells in hospitals in one story contrast with the perfumes of far north Queensland in another. The cold of winter, of fear and tears, give way to the warmth of summer and hope and laughter.

Perhaps it is best if I describe how I read *Heartsongs*. I started to read it one Saturday morning. I read hungrily, marching from one piece to the next, taking breathers in between each section. But I was always eager to return. The last pieces I read would follow me through the shopping, the housework or the gardening. I became caught up in their moments, sometimes crying, sometimes laughing, sometimes completely enthralled by their words. Each woman's story pressed me onto the next,

until by the end of the day I had finished. Then, the next day I started reading again. This time I savoured the moments, getting to know each of the women more intimately. The biographies of each contributor found at the end of the book gave meaning and context to their writing.

Heartsongs is a powerful book. It is inspirational and a fitting memory for those who did not make it to see the book published, as well as a tribute to the lives of all the women involved. This book is essential reading for all clinicians who care for women with breast cancer as *Heartsongs* gives feedback on their care that comes from their heart. I felt privileged to read it.

Reviewed by Nicola Bruce



A Pocketful of Sequins

BCNA has been working in partnership with the National Breast Cancer Centre and the National Breast Cancer Foundation on a great book.

A Pocketful of Sequins is an inspirational book of more than 90 quotes and thoughts from breast cancer survivors and their families. They are accompanied by beautiful illustrations.

RRP \$19.95. For more information or to purchase online, visit www.pocketfulofsequins.com.au.

Terrific survey response

Thank you, thank you, thank you to the more than 12,500 members who have returned their surveys. Researchers told us to expect a return rate of around 30%. We expected better than that and we weren't disappointed. Almost 70% of the 18,000 surveys have been returned. Given this response, and the many comments, it will take us some time to work our way through them. If you asked a question in your response, please be patient.

If you haven't returned your survey as yet – it is not too late! Watch out for a survey report in the next *Beacon*.