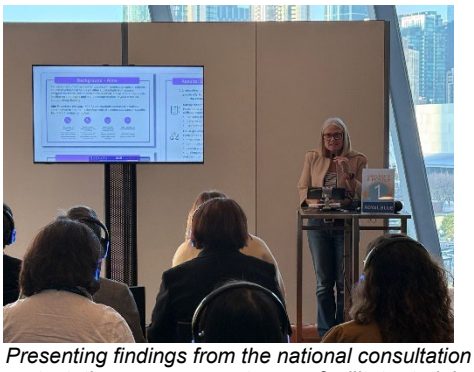
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Full Reference: **Smith AL,** Bowley C, Butow P, Dare S, Ellis N, Evans A, Henwood J, Hope M, McAuley R, O'Brien M, & Boyle F. *Defining core competencies for facilitators of metastatic cancer support groups: insights from a national consultation to inform curriculum development.*
Conference/Meeting Name: MASCC/ISOO 2026 Annual Meeting
Location: Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Dates: 25–27 June 2026
Presentation Type: Oral presentation (5 minutes), Education session, Thursday 25 June 2026

Report

The MASCC/ISOO Annual Meeting is the leading international, multidisciplinary conference focused on supportive care in cancer. The 2026 meeting brought more than 1,200 delegates to Melbourne, including clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals, researchers, trainees and patient advocates. Its broad program examined how supportive care can prevent and manage the physical, psychological, social and financial impacts of cancer and its treatment, with a strong emphasis on access, individualised care and practical translation into health services.



Presenting findings from the national consultation to inform metastatic cancer support-group facilitator training.



With co-author and fellow researcher Professor Frances Boyle at MASCC/ISOO 2026

My presentation

I delivered a five-minute oral rapid e-poster presentation in the Education session on our national consultation to define the core competencies required by facilitators of metastatic cancer support groups. The consultation identified needs that extend beyond general group-facilitation training, including managing conversations about death and dying, balancing hope and reality, responding to conflict and complex group dynamics, maintaining boundaries, and supporting facilitator self-care. The presentation was well received and prompted thoughtful questions about equitable access to metastatic support groups and how these groups can be integrated into palliative and supportive care pathways.

I was also a co-author on two five-minute oral presentations delivered by Ashleigh Sharman: a qualitative scoping review of financial toxicity in advanced and metastatic cancer, and an Australian qualitative study of the financial impact of metastatic breast cancer. Together, the studies highlighted the structural, psychosocial and behavioural dimensions of financial toxicity, and the particular pressures created by ongoing treatment, employment disruption, indirect costs, navigating support systems and uneven access to holistic care. Both presentations generated strong audience discussion, including an especially useful exchange with researchers from the McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer who presented in the same session.

Areas of momentum and key messages

Metastatic survivorship: A dedicated session highlighted the critical differences between survivorship after completion of treatment with curative intent and survivorship with metastatic or advanced cancer that is incurable but treatable. People living with metastatic cancer may experience years of ongoing treatment, uncertainty, cumulative side effects and changing supportive-care needs. Research, services and language need to reflect this distinct experience.
Integration across care: Support groups, palliative care and supportive care should not operate as separate systems. Earlier and better coordinated integration can help people receive psychosocial, symptom, practical and financial support alongside cancer treatment.
Integrative oncology: The interactive pre-conference workshop provided a valuable overview of evidence-informed approaches that bring conventional cancer care together with supportive strategies such as exercise, nutrition, mind-body approaches and symptom management. The workshop strengthened my understanding of how integrative approaches can be discussed safely and incorporated into person-centred supportive care.

Engagement and networking

The meeting provided an important opportunity to connect with leading survivorship researchers from Australia and internationally, including Professor Michael Jefford (Aus), Professor Sanchia Aranda (Aus), Professor Hope Rugo (US) and Dr Larissa Nekhlyudov (US). I also met with stakeholders from Melanoma Patients Australia, the McGrath Foundation, So Brave, Cancer Council NSW and Breast Cancer Network Australia. These discussions created opportunities to share approaches to metastatic survivorship, psychosocial support, consumer partnership and financial toxicity, and to strengthen relationships relevant to future research and translation.

Knowledge gained and benefit to my current research

The conference will directly inform the next phase of my metastatic support-group facilitator training program. The audience questions sharpened the need to consider equitable delivery, referral pathways and integration with palliative and supportive care as the curriculum is developed, piloted and evaluated. The metastatic survivorship session also reinforced the importance of clearly distinguishing the needs of people living with incurable but treatable cancer from post-treatment survivorship models. Discussions arising from the financial toxicity presentations will inform interpretation and dissemination of our findings and help identify opportunities for collaboration with researchers working at the intersection of cancer care, law, policy and financial wellbeing.

Relevance to the wider Sydney Cancer Partners membership

The learning is relevant across tumour streams and disciplines within Sydney Cancer Partners. Key implications include designing supportive-care pathways that are equitable and coordinated; recognising financial toxicity as a multidimensional care issue; adapting survivorship models for people receiving lifelong or ongoing treatment; building workforce capability through evidence-informed education; and embedding consumer perspectives in intervention development. These priorities are applicable to translational research, service design and routine cancer care across metropolitan, regional and community settings.

Personal highlight

A personal highlight was presenting our Australian work to an international supportive-care audience and seeing all three presentations generate engaged, practical discussion. It was particularly valuable to share the meeting with Professor Frances Boyle, a long-standing collaborator and co-author, while also reconnecting with established survivorship researchers and building new relationships with consumer and cancer organisations.