

Easing the burden

Forced to pay: Lynne Lacny gets support from her sister Gail Pascoe. Picture: ROB LEESON

Change brings a \$70,000 bill

A TERMINALLY ill Victorian mother will have to pay for a costly new breast cancer treatment supposed to be free for those in the late stages of the disease.

Lynne Lacny, 52, has been stripped of free access to Herceptin under tough Federal Government restrictions because she has changed her treatment regime.

The mother of teenagers Elizabeth, 15, and Christopher, 13, may now have to find up to \$70,000 to continue using the drug.

While the campaign to have the drug subsidised for early-stage breast cancer continues, Mrs Lacny's sister Gail Pascoe wants unrestricted access to the drug for those with advanced breast cancer.

The Government says it is free for women in late stages of the disease.

MARY PAPADAKIS

But Professor Ian Olver, chair of the Medical Oncology Group of Australia, said it was only free if used on its own or with chemotherapy drug Taxol.

Mrs Lacny was recently taken off Taxol and put on another chemotherapy drug, making her no longer eligible, after using Herceptin for six months.

Ms Pascoe, 55, said being taken off the drug was a major blow for her sister.

She said that oncologists — not politicians — should make decisions on patient care and not have treatment options limited by government.

"Oncologists should be able to use it whenever they want in the formula they want," she said.



Cash aid for cancer battle

MARY PAPADAKIS

FASHION designer and breast cancer survivor Thomaïy will hold a Herceptin fundraiser for women who can't afford the costly new drug.

The mother of three said she was saddened by the Federal Government's failure to list the costly treatment on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for women with early-stage breast cancer.

Thomaïy, who goes by her first name, has also been moved by the plight of women featured in the *Sunday Herald Sun*.

"When I heard about this I started crying," she said this week.

Thomaïy, who owns a chain of exclusive women's boutiques, said all women with HER-2 positive breast cancer should have access to the drug, which has been shown to reduce by 46 per cent the risk of cancer returning.



The drug costs about \$70,000 for one year and is subsidised only for some women in the late stages of the disease.

"What are we doing? We are saying, yes, we have the drug, but unless you are in the upper echelon of society you can't get the treatment," she said.

Thomaïy was diagnosed with breast cancer 10 years ago, but beat the disease with chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

The event will be at the Watermark bar, Docklands, from 6pm on December 13. Money raised will be distributed to women in need by doctors at St Vincent's Hospital and the Monash Medical Centre.

Tickets cost \$50. Inquiries: (03) 9827 3533 or (03) 9824 4842.

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