

## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

### **Asteron claims statistics drive company wide support for cancer support services**

**Sydney 25 May 2007** – Community groups, businesses and friends got together today and yesterday over a cuppa for the Cancer Council's 'Australia's Biggest Morning Tea' campaign. Asteron encourages people to remember they are fundraising for cancer research and support services that could one day help their friends, family, neighbours or even themselves.

1 in 4 women and 1 in 3 men will suffer a cancer in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>, so it is likely that most people know someone who has been affected by cancer. Over the past few years, Asteron has noticed an increase in incidences of cancer claims amongst its life insurance and recovery statistics.

'Cancer is likely to touch all of us in our lifetime. And while medical technology is, on the whole, increasing our chances of survival, treatment can often be costly - both in a financial and emotional sense,' said Jane Power, Head of Product and Marketing at Asteron.

'While we can't provide a prevention or cure, as an insurer what we can do is help people ensure they are financially prepared for the 'what ifs' in life. Asteron has recently created a new 'Cancer Cover Option' that can be added on to our life insurance policies for a small additional monthly premium. This means that clients now have alternatives to a full trauma package in order to be covered for a disease that is becoming more prevalent. Cancer Cover Option pays the full benefit if you are diagnosed with cancer, and also pays a partial benefit for many early stage cancers, and carcinoma-in-situ.

'We noticed that as well as more people claiming for cancer, people are increasingly concerned about the effects that cancer can have on their family. After all, you may need to take time off work and seek expensive - sometimes overseas - treatment, all while still paying the school fees and the mortgage,' Ms Power said.

And while Asteron does offer an independent, confidential counselling service to all of its claimants and their families, under the 'Grief Support Service' benefit, Ms Power acknowledges that people who are diagnosed with cancer require an empathetic listener and qualified, plain English advice.

<sup>1</sup> Cancer in Australia 2001, Cancer Series No 28, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, published December 2004

'We have recently sponsored a nurse, Ms Libby Todd, in a pilot program in Tasmania called 'Nurse Navigators'. The program is primarily funded by The Cancer Council Tasmania.

Ms Todd, whose work Asteron is sponsoring, is a Registered Nurse with a palliative care background. She sees patients in entire northern half of the state and helps newly diagnosed patients, their families and carers negotiate the journey ahead.

Ms Todd says that the most traumatic experience for the majority of cancer sufferers is the actual diagnosis.

'For cancer sufferers the most scary thing is coming to terms with their loss of control over their life. Upon hearing they are diagnosed with cancer, most people just switch off. The doctor gives them medical information, which they just cannot process.

'Patients can debrief with me, get information in normal, everyday language, discover their options, develop pathways of care and identify appropriate services for their needs. It is through the education process, and with this information, that people can regain a sense of control. And there's a lot of literature that suggests informed patients who feel in control have better health outcomes', Ms Todd says.

Today, on Friday 25 May, Asteron will be holding its own morning tea to raise money for The Cancer Council, which supports programs like the invaluable service Libby Todd provides, as well as cancer research.

Asteron will match all donations staff make to their Australia's Biggest Morning Tea.

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Notes to Editors:

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Asteron is one of the top five life companies (by in-force premium) in Australia and New Zealand. At the end of December 2006, the life insurance portfolio of Asteron in Australia comprised more than 257,000 policies and \$354 million in in-force premiums. Our customers across Australia and New Zealand entrust Asteron with \$9.8 billion in funds under administration.

Asteron's market-leading suite of financial products is offered through a broad network of financial advisers, including the leading financial planning groups, Guardian Financial Planning and Cameron Walshe.

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