

# PROPOSAL FOR WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT BY LOCAL PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS

Prepared by the Prostate Cancer Support Group - ACT Region

6 February 2012

## Background

On 15 July 2010 the Prostate Cancer Support Group ACT Region Inc. started its own web site:

<http://www.prostate-cancer-support-act.net>

The content of the site was determined by the Group's executive. The technical development of the site and its maintenance was undertaken by a member of the group - Mike Boesen.

Analysis of traffic for people accessing the site and feedback from members of the group and other people indicates that the site has been very effective in providing access to information about:

- how the group can provide support to individuals through activities such as meetings and through individual networking;
- the Group's past and planned activities including meetings and awareness-raising activities;
- the nature and incidence of prostate cancer, risk factors, detection, treatment, and rehabilitation after treatment;
- sources of information on such matters and direct access to important documents and reports;
- links to agencies and organisations that provide services and information about prostate health and the detection and treatment of prostate cancer (e.g. PCFA, Cancer Council, ACT Health Directorate);
- information about new developments and research;
- the importance of early detection and regular testing

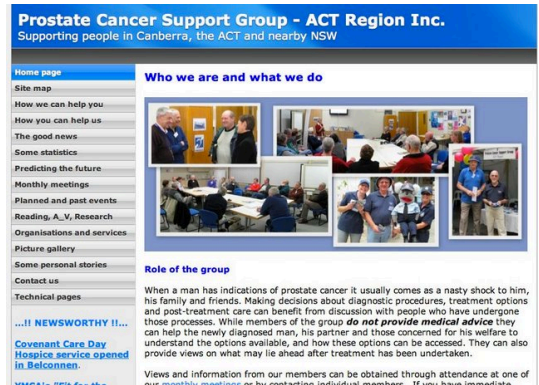
Between 15 July 2010 and 2 February 2012, there have been 4,238 visits to the site, made by 2,250 people, who browsed on average 5 pages per visit. A significant number of new members joined the Group after becoming aware of the contents of the site. Currently we are getting about 12 hits per day with two-thirds of the visitors being new visitors.

From our experience we are convinced that web sites developed and maintained by local support groups can facilitate and promote support through local groups, enable networking, and make a very significant contribution to enhancing awareness about prostate health, the detection and treatment of prostate cancer and availability of information and services. Such web sites would complement the sites that are maintained by PCFA, Cancer Council, and health agencies.

One support group (the NSW Northern Beaches group - Mary Jones is the web site developer) has recently approached us seeking advice about how a web site might be established. We feel that there are other groups that would be interested in having their own web sites. We are prepared to provide advice and assistance in the development of such web sites, capitalising on our experience.

The hardware and software used for development and maintenance of our site is very modest but also very efficient and effective. Hosting of the site is inexpensive. Development and maintenance was and is easy, using software that enabled rapid development without needing to write HTML, Javascript, PHP code. If other groups had such hardware and software and the cooperation of a person who has an intermediate level of PC skills, they would be able to develop and maintain a web site that would be well-matched to their needs.

Our Group is prepared to provide training to people from support groups who would be willing and able to undertake development and maintenance, if they committed to using the same software and hardware of the type proposed in this document.



While our web site is not perfect, we are happy to make its contents available to any interested support group to copy and modify to meet their own needs.

## Objectives of this proposal

The objective of this proposal is to stimulate discussion by the NSW/ACT Chapter Council and local support groups that hopefully would culminate in the Council:

- (a) supporting the concept of developing and maintaining web sites at a local support group level, using the same software and hardware of the type that we have used in development of our site
- (b) arranging for a survey to be undertaken amongst support groups to determine:
  - (i) the level of interest in such development
  - (ii) existence of a suitably qualified person who could undertake the development and maintenance and
  - (iii) the extent to which hardware of the type that we propose already exists or would need to be acquired
- (c) for any support group that is seriously interested in web site development and has a person with the computing skills that are required to undertake development and maintenance, seeking funding from the PCFA for:
  - (i) acquisition of domain names and site hosting services
  - (ii) purchase of software of the type that we propose
  - (iii) if not already available, purchase of hardware of the type that we propose, and
  - (iv) undertaking hands-on training in Canberra for site developers

## Development and maintenance of web sites at a local level

Development and maintenance of web sites at the local support group level has these merits:

- (a) it ensures that content is relevant to the needs of the local group; and
- (b) it does not require any central body such as PCFA to provide resources for development and maintenance, except for a very modest establishment cost for software, hardware and training.

However, local groups would need to secure the ongoing services of a site manager: a person who has intermediate level computing skills. That manager would undertake initial site construction and ongoing maintenance (including updating of content, such as notifications about events). Local groups would need to develop copy and provide documents and pictures (if required) for the manager to format and to then insert into pages in the site.

Our Group is agreeable to having any of the content in our site copied and modified to suit local requirements for any other site.

## Desirable features for a web site development/maintenance system

Based on our experience, we feel that the way in which local web sites are developed and maintained should reflect these criteria:

- (a) **Operating system on the computer that is used for web page development and maintenance must:**
  - (i) be easy to use with an intuitive user interface
  - (ii) require very little maintenance
  - (iii) be inherently resistant to malware
  - (iv) operate reliably
  - (v) be highly rated, well-established, well-supported and have a large, supportive community of users
  - (vi) NOT involve major upgrades in the short to medium term

- (b) **Computer hardware for site development and maintenance must:**
  - (i) be easy to use and master and have an intuitive user interface
  - (ii) require nil or minimal maintenance
- (c) **Software for site development and maintenance must:**
  - (i) be easy to use and master by a person who has intermediate-level computer-usage skills
  - (ii) have an intuitive user interface
  - (iii) enable rapid development of a web site
  - (iv) NOT require writing code ( e.g. involving HTML, CSS, PHP, Javascript, etc)
  - (v) enable a style to be implemented that maximises readability, comprehension and functionality for the particular target audience (especially, mature-age and elderly people)
  - (vi) generate site content that will work on all significant web browsers (especially, Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Chrome)
  - (vii) be highly rated, well-established, well-supported and with a large, supportive community of users
- (d) **Software for transmission of files and assets to the web site's hosting server must:**
  - (i) be easy to use and master
  - (ii) enable effective synchronization between the local site and the remote server
  - (iii) be fast, effective and reliable
- (e) **Hosting of the web site must:**
  - (i) provide for 5 GB of storage space on the host's server, 100 GB of monthly data transfer, mySQL databases, cPanel site management
  - (ii) permit uploading of large files
  - (iii) guarantee fast presentation of pages accessed by browsers and fast downloading of files
  - (iv) provide 99% uptime
  - (v) be highly rated by clients
  - (vi) provide fast and effective handling for problems and queries, with staff who speak English that is 100% understandable

## Recommended web site development/maintenance system

The following components for web site development and maintenance are recommended:

### (a) Operating system

The recommended operating system is Apple OS X (V10.5 or later release). It has all the "Desirable features" specified above.

In terms of the "Desirable features", Windows and Linux operating systems do not measure up as well as OS X. More importantly, the recommended software will not function on PCs that use those operating systems.

### (b) Computer hardware

The recommended computer is an Apple Mac capable of running OS X (V10.5 or later). This may be either a Macbook Pro, iMac or Mac Pro.

If a new Mac were to be purchased, a Macbook Pro would be a good choice. Because of its portability it would also be very useful in the context of making presentations about prostate cancer. Cost of a Macbook Pro would be about \$1,400.

In terms of the "Desirable features", PCs that are designed to use Windows and Linux operating systems do not measure up as well as Macs. They are cheaper than Macs but not as good in terms of

value for money. More importantly, the recommended software will not function on PCs that use those operating systems.

### **(c) Software for web page development**

The recommended software to be used in development and maintenance of the site is Rapidweaver, with a few addons. This is proposed because:

- (i) It is easy to comprehend and master. The user interface is clean and well structured. The more complex functionality is located in sub-structures that are easy to access. Menus are meaningfully structured and labelled and the meanings of icons are obvious.
- (ii) Rapid development is enabled through a number of features including: use of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) and style templates; easy duplication and modification of pages; immediate toggling between editor mode and proof-viewing mode.
- (iii) Inbuilt functionality allows for: easy creation of text pages; drag and drop inclusion of pictures; easy inclusion of downloadable assets such as PDF files; and creation of special page types for picture albums, email contact forms and a site map.
- (iv) A wide range of free or inexpensive “plugins” are available if users wish to add additional specialised functionality.
- (v) The existence of a wide range of alternative style templates plus the inbuilt functionality means that web sites can be created to suit the specific needs of different audience types, including audiences that have an interest in matters relating to prostate cancer and support.
- (vi) Sites can be developed and maintained without the user being required to write code ( e.g. involving HTML, CSS, PHP, Javascript). However, it is also easy for more advanced users to add code should they wish to do so to achieve special effects.
- (vii) Rapidweaver is a mature application that has been used for a number of years. There is a very active development community and forum.
- (viii) Rapidweaver is inexpensive (\$90).

Rapidweaver is designed for use in a single-user environment not as a CMS (Content Management System). Development would be undertaken on the developer’s local computer rather than on a remote site as occurs with CMS applications.

### **(d) Software for transmission of files and assets to the web site’s hosting server**

The recommended software to be used in transmitting files and assets to the web site’s hosting server is Transmit, costing \$34. This easy to use application meets all the requirements specified above. However, if the user has experience with and prefers other transmission software which will work in a Mac environment then that can be used.

The developer must have a reliable broadband connection to the internet and a reasonably large upload/download quota

### **(e) Hosting of the web site**

There are probably many providers that meet the requirements specified above. An Australian-based hosting company that we use for our site and that people have rated highly is VentrailP. That company can also provide a domain name registration service. There are advantages in having the one company provide domain name registration as well as hosting.

As an example of costs, VentrailP can register a domain name for three years and provide their Economy hosting plan for three years, costing \$129 for the three years. The Economy plan give 5 GB of storage space and 100 GB of data transfer per month.

## **Other development/maintenance systems evaluated but not recommended**

Consideration has been given to a number of alternatives to the package that has been recommended. A detailed analysis is not provided but summary comments are provided in an appendix.

## Determining interest in development of web sites by local groups

To assess interest in local web site development, a survey could be undertaken amongst NSW support groups to determine:

- (a) the extent of interest in having their own web sites
- (b) if interested, the extent to which they would be prepared to undertake development along the lines outlined in this proposal or along alternative lines
- (c) if interested, the human resources and IT resources that they would be able to apply to development and maintenance

Such views could be obtained through an electronic questionnaire (e.g. using SurveyMonkey). Our group would be prepared to undertake that survey.

Providing that there is sufficient interest, representatives from interested groups could meet to see if a consensus can be developed about:

- (i) the desirability and feasibility of local development and maintenance
- (ii) what resources might be required and how they might be secured
- (iii) how to proceed

The NSW/ACT Chapter Council could then determine what steps might then be taken to progress development. In the long run, the Council might propose to the PCFA that it provide funding to support local development and maintenance and related training. Such a proposal might be enhanced were another support group (such as Northern Beaches) to implement the model that has been implemented by the ACT support group, so as to provide an independent evaluation of its effectiveness. To enable such a test case to be undertaken, a modest expenditure for purchase of the proposed software and hardware would be required.

## Involvement of Prostate Cancer Support Group - ACT Region

Our Group would be prepared to undertake the electronic survey referred to above and to convene the meeting referred to if it were to be held in Canberra.

We would be prepared to provide hands-on training in Canberra or Sydney and follow-up support to enable another group to set up a web site as a test case. That process could be documented as a "how to.." document that could be used in broader scale training.

If there is sufficient interest in undertaking development of local web sites in the way that we have proposed, our Group would be prepared to run a hands-on training session in Canberra, lasting two or three days. People attending would need to have an appropriate level of computer skills (intermediate), to bring hardware of the type that we have recommended to the training, with the software that we recommend already installed, to have acquired a domain name, and to have subscribed to a hosting service (such as - but not limited to - VentrailP).

At the end of such a training session, our expectation would be that people attending would have functioning web sites comprising a set of pages of all the types that would be needed in a complete site. They could undertake completion of their web site at home. The training session would be run by Mike Boesen - see brief CV attached.

We would be happy for any of the contents of our site to be used as-is or in a modified form in the development of any other site.

## Conclusions

Our Group's web site has made a considerable contribution to the work of the Group. For people who have an interest in prostate health and in diagnosis of and treatment for prostate cancer it provides valuable information and increases the likelihood that they will avail themselves of the Group's support. The web site also contributes significantly to the Group's effectiveness in raising awareness about prostate health, treatment options, after-treatment rehabilitation and the importance of early detection.

We believe that other support groups would benefit significantly if they were able to develop and maintain their own local sites.

The particular package of hardware and software that has been used in the development and maintenance of our site has been extremely effective in achieving the rapid development of a site that has a style that is highly appropriate for our target audience and is easy to maintain. We recommend that package to any support group that is interested in web site development. It enables rapid development, is ideally suited for the purpose, and would require only intermediate level computing skills for development and maintenance.

We suggest that other interested support groups can benefit from the work that has been put into the development of our web site. They can copy materials from our site. They could benefit from hands-on training of the type that we have proposed. Such training could reduce enormously the time and angst that might otherwise be involved were any group to start development from scratch.

## Recommendations

We recommend that the NSW/ACT Chapter Council:

- (a) support the concept of developing and maintaining web sites at a local level, using the software and hardware type that we have proposed
- (b) arrange the undertaking of an electronic survey amongst support groups to determine:
  - (i) the level of interest in such development
  - (ii) existence of a suitably qualified person who could undertake the development and maintenance
  - (iii) the extent to which suitable hardware exists or new hardware of the type that we have proposed would be required
- (c) seek funding from the PCFA for a test case development exercise
- (d) in the longer term, seek funding from the PCFA to enable local development and maintenance of web sites by groups that have a strong interest and a person who has requisite computing skills, including funding for:
  - (i) acquisition of domain names and site hosting services
  - (ii) purchase of the software that we have proposed
  - (iii) if not already available, purchase of hardware of the type that we have proposed
  - (iv) undertaking hands-on training in Canberra for site developers

## Appendix 1 - Brief CV for Mike Boesen

### Academic qualifications

- BA
- MA

### Relevant work experience

- 5 years in commercial survey research and market research.
- 5 years as senior tutor the School of Education, Macquarie University. Instructed undergraduate and postgraduate students in statistics, research and evaluation techniques and educational technology.
- 2 years in ACT Schools Authority. Undertook policy development, education research and school evaluations.
- 18 years as a Commonwealth public servant. Worked in the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, and then Commonwealth Department of Education. Undertook education policy development. Designed, developed and managed the Department's higher education statistics collection systems, associated software systems and higher education statistical publications.

### Relevant consultancy experience

- Undertook missions for AUSAID and the World Bank to the government education authorities of South Africa and Vietnam. Developed systems for collection and analysis of education statistics. As a private consultant developed related computing systems and applications.

### Skills and interests of relevance:

- 30 years as a user of personal computers.
- Programming skills.
- Skills in systems running Windows, Apple, Linux.
- Developed and maintain this web: [prostate-cancer-support-act.net](http://prostate-cancer-support-act.net)



## Appendix 2 - Other development/maintenance systems evaluated but not recommended

These alternatives were considered:

(a) **Wordpress**

Wordpress is a development system that can be used through a Windows, Mac or Linux operating system and any type of computer. The web site is developed on a remote server and then published to whatever hosting server the user wishes to use. It is a CMS (Content management System) that enables a single or multiple administrators to undertake the development work.

In the author's view, the system would be difficult for a non-expert to use and to get an appearance that is ideally suited to the target audience is difficult, if not impossible. Similar CMS systems such as Drupal and Joomla would be even more problematic.

(b) **Google Sites**

This system can be used through a Windows, Mac or Linux operating system and any type of computer. The web site is developed on a remote Google server.

While the system is easier to use than Wordpress, in the author's view, it would be difficult, if not impossible to get an appearance that is ideally suited to the target audience. There are more constraints of that nature than for Wordpress.

(c) **Dreamweaver**

Dreamweaver is an application that only works under a Windows operating system. The application is complex and expensive. The system would be difficult for a non-expert to use and to get an appearance that is ideally suited to the target audience is difficult, if not impossible.

(d) **Less complex development environments**

There are less complex development environments that might be considered. For example the free application Kompozer would be one that could be used to create basic sites and is available for both Apple and Windows operating systems. However, use of systems that employ CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) and style templates would be more appropriate for rapid development of a site that looks sufficiently professional and meets the needs of the people whor comprise the target audience.