



RELEASED: Thursday April 11, 2018

Australian Story – Monday April 16th, 8pm, ABC and ABC iview Dear Emma

“I was not going to sit around feeling sorry for myself. I was going to dedicate the time I have left to raising awareness for melanoma and the need to be sun smart.”

Emma Betts

“If Emma’s story doesn’t make you go and have a skin check, then I’m not sure what will.”

Leon Betts, father



We think of melanoma as ‘an old person’s disease’, diagnosed after a lifetime spent in the sun.

But what if you were just 22 years of age when your doctor gave you months to live?

Brisbane woman Emma Betts was living her dream life as an aid worker in East Timor when someone suggested she get a mole on her back checked. A year after she had it removed, melanoma showed up in most of her major organs.

Reeling from the diagnosis, Emma was shocked to learn that melanoma is now the most common cancer killer in 20 to 39 year olds.

Emma fell in love, got married and then devoted herself to a blog called *Dear Melanoma*. Her honest account of living with terminal cancer and her candid acceptance of her impending death endeared her to tens of thousands.

Using her newfound fame she began campaigning for better awareness of the disease among her generation and in the process has helped save others’ lives.

“There was lots of people that would actually write to Emma and say, “because of you, I’ve gone off and got a skin check and they found a melanoma.”

Leon Betts, father

“Because of this awful health diagnosis, she blossomed into who she was meant to be.”

Rebecca Sparrow, writer

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