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# Cancer Day reunion

**Matthew Connellan**

WORLD Cancer Day on Tuesday was also a special day for Epping teacher Lowenna Rappo.

It marked 18 years since she received treatment for a tumour on her neck.

In 1996 as a 13-year-old, Mrs Rappo was one of the youngest patients to be treated with radiation therapy at the Royal North Shore Hospital.

Radiation therapy involves the controlled use of radiation to treat cancer either for cure, or to reduce pain and other symptoms caused by cancer.

As part of the Radiation Oncology Targeting Cancer initiative by the Faculty of Radiation Oncology at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists, Ms Rappo was this week reunited with her doctor, Jennifer Donovan.

Dr Donovan, who still works at Royal North Shore, met Mrs Rappo and her 20-month-old daughter Penny.

"Lowenna is living proof that even in 1996 radiation therapy was a safe and effective cancer treatment with good long term outcomes," Dr Donovan said.



**Cancer survivor Lowenna Rappo, with her daughter Penny, reunited with her doctor Jennifer Donovan.**

"Huge advances in radiation therapy have also occurred (since 1996) and treatments are even more sophisticated and targeted."

Mrs Rappo grew up in Epping and now teaches at Karonga School for kids with special needs.

She said that having radiation treatment was a difficult experience at such a young age.

"It was scary, doing radiotherapy for three months. I was only at school for two

hours a day, so that made building friendships and the schooling very hard."

Mrs Rappo said that in the face of that difficulty, Dr Donovan and hospital staff did everything they could to make her comfortable.

"The support was amazing," Mrs Rappo said.

"After three months they felt like family.

"It all went fine and it really helped, I probably wouldn't be here otherwise," she said.