

LIBERATING: Cancer survivor Susan Duncan, right, with organiser Jacqui Osborn yesterday.
— Picture by Kitty Hill

Making the most of her 'bonus years'

By MELISSA LYONS

FOR Susan Duncan no time was quite as powerful as the moment she faced her own mortality.

The author and former editor of *Australian Women's Weekly* and *New Idea* told of her battle, after being diagnosed with breast cancer 10 years ago, to more than 400 people at a Hunter Breast Care fund-raiser yesterday.

"I know now that cancer isn't a death sentence," she said.

"In a bizarre way, instead of ending my world, it opened it up. I've lived the most happiest, best and most productive years of my life since I was diagnosed ... I now treasure every day."

The crowd at Wests Leagues Club, which included Hunter Breast Care nurses, laughed as Mrs Duncan described how unexpectedly liberating it was to lose her hair.

"I couldn't hide what I was going through, which was great because I couldn't get the wig on

straight anyway," she said.

Tears then flowed as the Sydney-based author spoke of a dear friend and neighbour who also battled breast cancer, but didn't survive.

"I don't ask why," Mrs Duncan said.

"When I die I will have very few regrets because I have learnt to make every moment count - even when I am ironing. I put my iPod on and listen to songs that make my heart sing."

Mrs Duncan called her past 10 years her "bonus years" - ones that would not be possible without the support and treatment brought about through generous fund-raising events like yesterday's breakfast.

The Lawler Partners and *Herald*-hosted breakfast raised \$17,000 for the Hunter Breast Cancer Education and Support Committee, bringing the total raised for the past three years to \$37,000.

