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Coolamon prostate cancer survivor Wayne Lewis encourages men to get checked for cancer early. Picture by Bernard Humphreys

MESSAGE FOR ALL YOU MEN

THE RIVERINA'S OWN



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Finn Coleman

COOLAMON'S Wayne Lewis doesn't want men to be put off examinations for prostate cancer because despite any stigma, he knows it's life-saving.

Mr Lewis was put on his toes when both his father and uncle died from prostate cancer.

After researching and discovering it was hereditary, the 71-year-old started getting his prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test checked, which revealed it was rising incrementally.

When he was sent to urological surgeon for Riverina Urology Associate Professor Steven Sowter in 2020, he received a blood test, followed by a digital rectal examination (DRE).

"I think that's turning blokes off of having prostate cancer examinations ... the finger up the bum," he said.

"It shouldn't be. It's the difference (between) being underground or still living."

Mr Lewis said the DRE was the first thing he had bumped into upon visiting the specialist, which found his prostate to be squishy.

A biopsy revealed it was prostate cancer, and though not aggressive, it was a cancer and required treatment.

"I was put on a prostate cancer trial for two years, but unfortunately, it didn't work," he said.

Mr Lewis decided to undergo a prostatectomy in February last year which, though it had side effects, he believed was the best long-term solution.

So far, the surgery appears to have been a success for Mr Lewis, who is approaching the two-year mark of non-detectable results.

"I don't regret doing the surgery," he said.

With 194 new diagnoses of prostate cancer in Riverina each year, Mr Lewis - who is a Coolamon councillor, farmer and member of the Wagga Prostate Cancer Support Group - wants to see more men, especially those with a family history of prostate cancer, get checked.

"I've heard some horror stories of folks that have had their PSA check too late," he said.

"They call it an old man's disease, which is a lot of rubbish because young people can have it. I think the youngest of them in Wagga has been 18."

Wayne is encouraging men not to be fearful of the process of getting checked with a DRE.

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