

Central Australia Chapter



Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

# PROSTATE SUPPORTER

Newsletter of the Prostate Cancer Support Groups of South Australia and Northern Territory

[www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

SEPTEMBER 2011

Volume 4: Number 8

## September is set to *sizzle*

Newsletters can also be read online at [www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/supporter.html](http://www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/supporter.html)



Celebrity supporter Dame Edna will be cooking up a storm during September to help PCFA's Big Aussie Barbie promotion.

SEPTEMBER is the start of spring, footy grand finals, Father's Day – and it's time to dust off your Barbie! By hosting a Big Aussie Barbie and raising funds for PCFA, you will enable us to continue to invest in world leading research, raising awareness of prostate cancer and supporting men and their families affected by the disease.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Australian men and the second most common cause of male cancer deaths. This year almost 20,000 Australian men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and 3300 men will die of the disease. What is not commonly understood is that men can be diagnosed with prostate cancer as early as in their 40s.

The September barbecue campaign was launched nationally on September 1 by PCFA's major sponsor, Commonwealth Bank. Held in Sydney's Cathedral Square, the Commonwealth Bank and PCFA were the "longest barbecue marathon team" and managed to cook up tasty treats on the barbecues for an incredible 26.5 hours.

This long-haul event was frequented by PCFA celebrity supporters, with media recording the record-breaking feat attended by hundreds of PCFA and CBA volunteers and supporters. The event was a great effort by all and finally wound up

at 9am on September 2, setting a Guinness World Record as the world's longest barbecue.

PCFA has a number of events happening around the country during September, aimed to encourage Australians to get behind our cause – so encourage everyone you know to get cooking on the barbecue to raise money and awareness.

You can help support PCFA's work by visiting our website and registering your own Big Aussie Barbie in September at the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

• CONTRIBUTIONS from all Support Group members to the monthly Prostate Supporter newsletters are most welcome; please email items and images to Karyn Foster: [karynfoster@adam.com.au](mailto:karynfoster@adam.com.au)

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

## Prostate Cancer Action Group

# Action stations at Bunnings barbies

## COMING EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER 13 MEETING:

The next meeting of the Prostate Cancer Action Group SA will be held in the upstairs meeting room at the Cancer Council SA, 202 Greenhill Rd, Eastwood, commencing at 5.30pm on Tuesday, September 13. Entry is via the rear stairway.

- Please note that the Action Group's September meeting is also the Annual General Meeting.

- The Action Group is always keen to welcome interested people to its meetings, and for them to engage in Action Group activities. If you want to be involved in this vital area of prostate cancer awareness and support, contact David Merry at [djmerry@adam.com.au](mailto:djmerry@adam.com.au) for more details.

- For more information, visit the Action Group's dedicated website, with detailed archives containing newsletters, at <http://www.pcagsa.org.au>

The support of Bunnings staff is greatly appreciated to help make the Action Group's promotional barbecues a success, as Action Group chairman David Merry reports.

WINDSOR Gardens' Bunnings store kicked off the Fathers Day Barbies on Friday August 26 – the first of this year's Bunnings-supported South Australian barbecue events to help support prostate cancer.

The Windsor Gardens store staff generously organised the barbecue while David Merry was on hand to speak with Bunnings' customers. It was a successful day, thanks to the efforts of Raelene, the Bunnings organiser, and her staff team of Lyn, Antoinette, Matt and Richard.

On Saturday September 3, Jeff Roberts, David Merry and other volunteers from the Action Group manned the barbecue stall at Bunnings' Kent Town store.

### YORKE VOLUNTEERS

THE HUGE Yorke Peninsula Field Days, being conducted from September 27 to 29, will see about 20 of the Action Group and support group volunteers attending our site over the three days.

The site is number 26 within the Oster Pavilion (in a similar position to the Action Group's previous visit) and Jeff Roberts will be maintaining contact with those attending to confirm arrangements.

Site details are posted on the website [www.ypfielddays.com.au](http://www.ypfielddays.com.au) and Jeff will post details to those volunteers who are not connected to the Internet. A roster for those



The bond between Bunnings staff and Action Group volunteers is strong, to help spread the word about prostate cancer.

attending and details of passes have been sent out. Contact Jeff by phoning 8277 3424 or [thebanjeff@bigpond.com](mailto:thebanjeff@bigpond.com)

### BORDERTOWN SHOW

BORDERTOWN Show Day is on Saturday October 1 and David Merry will attend to present a prostate cancer information stall.

### FUNDRAISING CONCERT

A BIG fundraising concert for prostate cancer featuring the Adelaide Male Voice Choir is being held at Concordia College Chapel, 45 Cheltenham St, Highgate, at 2pm on Sunday October 9.

Promotion of this event is now well under way, with posters having been distributed to all support groups.

Prostate cancer public relations supporter Karyn Foster has arranged a large mail-out to several theatre groups in a bid to attract a large audience. Hopefully newspaper editorial can also be arranged, and at least two radio interviews will take place. Several support group

members will assist with duties on the day of the concert.

This is an important fundraising initiative and everyone is encouraged to actively assist by promoting the event as widely as possible.

Tickets are \$30, with concession tickets for \$25. To purchase tickets, call Neville on 8332 1895, John on 8382 6671, Jeff on 8277 3424 or go to [amvc.org.au](http://amvc.org.au) and click on "online bookings".

### CANCER COUNCIL SUPPORT BOOST

THE Action Group has been heartened by the initiative of Tina Gibson, Education and Support Project Officer of Cancer Council SA, to forge more active links between the Prostate Cancer Action Group and the Cancer Council.

One member of the council staff now attends our monthly meetings, which we see as most encouraging. It also helps to extend the Action Group's access to research details from published material through Cancer Council SA.

## McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Specialist explains sowing the seeds of new possibility

A brachytherapy specialist gave support group members an insight to new treatment developments, as McLaren Districts support group president Bryan Hearn reports.

FOR its August meeting, the McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group welcomed guest presenter Dr Raghu Gowda, senior radiation oncologist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, who explained the latest improvements of the brachytherapy program.

Dr Gowda's approach with any new prostate cancer patient seeking to become involved in the brachytherapy program is to describe the how, why and when aspects of the program. In assessing a patient's suitability, he lists several considerations. These included the patient's general level of fitness, the strength of their urine flow, what stage is their tumor at, whether it is contained within the gland or outside the gland, what is their PSA level and their Gleason score.

Following this evaluation, patients will be listed as either low, intermediate or high risk and have treatment options assessed in each risk category. Low-risk patients have surgery, brachytherapy and external beam radiation treatment (EBRT) available to them, while those in intermediate and high-risk groups have surgery, EBRT plus hormone treatment and high-density radiation available to them.

Currently at the RAH, of

## COMING EVENT THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 22

- The McLaren Districts group will next meet on **Thursday September 22** at 7pm in the administration building at the rear of the McLaren Vale & Districts War Memorial Hospital, Aldersey St, McLaren Vale. The meeting will be an open forum for all members to participate in.



Tiny brachytherapy seeds have huge impact on prostate cancer treatments.

those patients having radiation treatment, about 70 per cent of patients undergo EBRT, while 20 per cent have low-dose brachytherapy and 10 per cent have high-dose radiation.

Brachytherapy has the advantage of being able to kill more cancer cells, cause less damage to adjacent structures, is minimally invasive, and radiation risks to staff are almost negligible. Patients who have a large prostate gland, have had hip replacements or suffer from severe urinary tract symptoms are ineligible for the program.

Brachytherapy at the RAH is day surgery, with patients generally going home on the

same day. Procedures are explained to the patient on admission and procedures take between two and three hours. A plan will have been devised as to where the radioactive seeds will be placed, controlled by a computer application. Patients will subsequently undergo a CT scan shortly after the procedure, to ensure the seeds are all in place. Patients may be requested to return for additional seeds to be inserted if any have moved or been expelled.

Normal activity can be resumed after about three to five days. Patients are not radioactive and no travel restrictions need to be imposed. A card can be

provided if travel is imminent, to explain any reactions at airport scanners. The only restriction is that patients are advised to avoid prolonged contact with children up to 15 years of age for the first two months after treatment.

By way of follow up, patients are required to attend six-monthly checks at the RAH for the first two years, then on an annual basis for the following four years.

Under the current low-dose brachytherapy program conducted at the RAH, 52 free treatments can be delivered each year, based on State Government subsidies provided. More could be done if more funding was made available.

The high-dose treatments require a special machine to deliver the procedure. This has to be refurbished every three months at a cost of \$20,000.

The whole presentation was well received by the support group members attending the meeting, many who had participated in the program under Dr Gowda's supervision.

## Meet the people within the family of Support Groups

# Don lives strong through his lengthy cancer journey

Don Piro, co-ordinator of the Barossa Valley Prostate Cancer Support Group, declares that he is MAMIL – and proud of it, especially because he is a cancer survivor.

A FRIEND of mine recently sent me an email and called me a MAMIL, explaining that I should Google it on the Internet search engine to see what it says. MAMIL is defined as “Middle Aged Men in Lycra” and I laughed out loud because that certainly is me when I am on my bike, training and riding with friends.

I have become part of the crowd of men and women who go riding on weekends and end up at one of the coffee shops throughout the Barossa Valley on Sunday mornings.

Indeed, I have become hooked on riding and fortunately been sponsored by a mad keen cyclist nephew who insisted I have the right gear to look the part, and I recently bought a new fancy bike.

When people ask me why I do it, I tell them because it is not only fun but it is also really good for me. I now ride for life, because being in better health and having greater fitness will help me to conquer cancer. I am a Stage 4 Bowel Cancer survivor and I intend to keep going for some time yet.

Being at this stage means that my cancer has metastasised, and in my case this has happened twice. I have had a combination of treatments, including several major surgeries, chemotherapy and natural therapies.

I've decided to embrace life



Don Piro prepares for the start of the 2011 Tour Down Under Community Bike Ride.

to the fullest, and after living south of Adelaide for 35 years, recently moved to the Barossa Valley to be closer to my children and grandchildren. I did not know what the future held for me and my prognosis was not great, so my wife and I thought that the Barossa Valley is a beautiful place and it is where our family is, so that's where we should be.

As my health continued to improve, I decided to return to work as an experienced social worker, starting up my own part-time counselling

business. Today, this business is growing so much I have to keep an eye on the time so I can still bike ride and keep up with family activities.

I have always had an interest in men's health and now co-ordinate the Barossa Valley Prostate Cancer Support Group. I find it very rewarding to be meeting other men travelling with cancer and hearing and supporting them in their stories. It has been a privilege to be invited as a guest speaker at Lions and Rotary clubs, to share my

cancer story and experience as a male therapist with such men's health issues as depression, stress and anxiety, and explaining how we can maintain our wellness and positive mental health in times of scary and life-threatening illnesses.

It is hard to find courage when we are down fighting to survive each moment, being unsure of the future and what's going to happen next, seeing our families watch us without knowing what to do, how to help us, and with all of us struggling with our emotions. Yet we do it.

We get on our bikes, go travelling in our caravans, journey off together with our loved ones, go fishing, play golf, continue working or generally do the things we love doing because, as Lance Armstrong says in his book, “It is not about the bike”. I know now that it is about living. The bike or whatever it is we do is about living. I love Armstrong's logo – LIVESTRONG – because I see many men do this every day.

So yes, I am a MAMIL and proud of it. I'm a member of the Cancer Voices bike team and now train with members of Team Barossa, riding with many other cancer survivors and am now in training for my third Tour Down Under Community Ride in 2012.

Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness: ADELAIDE GROUP

# Providing an independent voice for health consumers

The Health Consumers Alliance provides a raft of benefits for people concerned about our health system, as Ian Fisk reports.

THE Adelaide support group's August meeting featured a presentation by Stephanie Miller on the Health Consumers Alliance – the peak body for health consumers in South Australia. The Alliance provides an independent voice for health consumers, facilitating and supporting consumer leadership through consumer networks and broad community engagement activities.



Stephanie Miller of the Health Consumers Alliance at the Adelaide group's August meeting.

HCA promotes a holistic and integrated approach to health and wellbeing, with mental health being a key focus. Its mission is to provide a respected and informed consumer voice to influence the development of quality health services.

An important role of the HCA is promoting the policy and practice of consumer engagement across the SA health care sector, including public, private and non-government service providers.

HCA involves consumers in policy development and health care decision making, organises forums on relevant health topics, supports consumers to develop skills in advocacy and representation, and communicates systemic advocacy concerns of consumers to health planners and decision makers.

HCA collaborates with the Consumers Health Forum of Australia and peak bodies in

an e-Bulletin and a quarterly magazine, HCASA Voice.

- HCA supports consumer advocates on over 40 state and national networks and committees.

Membership of the Alliance is open to health consumers and health consumer organisations, and it may be beneficial to our cause if the Central Australia Chapter becomes a member of HCA.

For more details, contact executive director Stephanie Miller by email: [info@hcasa.asn.au](mailto:info@hcasa.asn.au) or visit the website: [www.hcasa.asn.au](http://www.hcasa.asn.au)

### FURTHER DISCUSSION

OTHER interesting health matters discussed included the announcement that all new hospital rooms in South Australia will be single rooms. Berri Hospital will be the first and the new RAH the second building to have this policy implemented.

Also interesting is the proposed E-Health (Personally Controlled Electronic Health Records) concept of operations. Google this subject for more information.

It is early days for E-Health, though the final concept of operations document is scheduled to be released soon on the National E-Health Transition Authority website – [www.nehta.gov.au](http://www.nehta.gov.au)

E-Health looks like a likely topic for a future meeting.

### COMING EVENTS

#### SEPTEMBER MEETING:

The Adelaide Prostate Cancer Support Group meets on the third Monday of each month in the Park View Room of the Fullarton Park Centre, 411 Fullarton Rd, Fullarton, starting at 7pm.

The group's September 19 meeting will feature group member Paul Ferrett giving us a presentation on his personal Tour de France.

In November, Dr Bruce Wauchope will speak to us about Molemax.

- For more information about coming events and a detailed archive of support group activities, visit the Adelaide Support Group's dedicated website at [www.psaadelaide.org](http://www.psaadelaide.org) or contact organiser Ian Fisk by phoning 8296 3350, or send email to [info@psaadelaide.org](mailto:info@psaadelaide.org)

## Men's Health promotion in South Australia's rural areas

# Merv tackles the big issues

In an effort to encourage more men to openly discuss their health issues, Merv Hughes arrived in Lameroo and Pinnaroo to talk about blokes' tackle.

**F**ORMER Australian Test cricketer Merv Hughes recently visited Lameroo and Pinnaroo, to encourage men to "talk about their tackle". Merv spoke at a men's health evening in Lameroo on July 25, followed by a breakfast event in Pinnaroo on July 26.

Both events were organised by Mallee Community Health Service. He was joined by local health service representatives and Malcolm Ellis, chair of PCFA's Central Australia Chapter, who told his personal prostate cancer story.

Merv has been an ambassador for Andrology Australia, the nation's peak authority on male reproductive health, since 2006 and he participates in community events to raise awareness of men's health issues. He notes that men generally "don't like to talk

about the bits below the belt".

"Let's face it – unless the subject is sport, men aren't always the best talkers," says Merv, "and we really struggle when it comes to talking about reproductive health. But as you get older, it's more and more important to address health concerns early, while you're in the best position to deal with them."

Merv says that reproductive health issues are common among men and often linked with more serious conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease.

"If you are having problems with your tackle, the longer you say nothing, the less your doctor will be able help you.

"Men all over Australia, including country areas, do have problems – and if you're having problems, you're not



Merv Hughes with Malcolm Ellis at the Men's Health night staged in the Lameroo Football Clubrooms.

on your own. There is help."

Event organiser Margie Arbon from Mallee Community Health Service hopes the locals listened and took notice of what Merv and Malcolm had to say.

"It was a great opportunity to hear Merv have a yarn about cricket and fishing, and take

home some important health information," says Margie.

Free men's health resources were provided by Andrology Australia at the events. For more information on male reproductive health conditions visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org) or phone the freecall number telephone 1300 303 878.

## Whyalla Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Anniversary celebrations

**T**HE Whyalla Prostate Cancer support group recently met to celebrate the first anniversary of the formation of this group with a special dinner.

This group gathers each month to learn about prostate cancer – the causes, diagnoses, treatment and the personal impact it has on men who contract the disease.

From this sharing of information, the group members are also able to

support other men diagnosed with prostate cancer. The wives and partners of group members are an integral part of this group, because any cancer within a family member affects the whole family.

The group acknowledges the input of ambassador Brian Marshall, who was instrumental in setting up the Whyalla group.

The support group meets at 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month, in Room



Whyalla support group members and their partners at the group's first anniversary celebration dinner.

69 of the University of SA campus, Nicolson Ave, Whyalla Norrie. Everybody is welcome to attend these

support group meetings. For more information, phone Stan Oates on 8644 0591, or Terry O'Brien on 8645 1310.

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Building on a strong start

A new expanded committee will take the Alice Springs Support Group to the next level of community prostate awareness and support, as convenor Murray Neck reports.

HAVING attracted 83 members in its first four and a half years of service, the Alice Springs support group will have a new committee of proactive members taking over the reins on Oct 1. Retiring convenor Murray Neck will remain on the committee as deputy to the new convenor, Ian Wagner.

The following members make up the new committee: Tony O'Brien (chairman), Fred Miegel (deputy chair), Ian Wagner (convenor), Murray Neck (deputy convenor), Morgan Flint (secretary), Michael Hall (treasurer), Loretta Wagner and Sandra Clyne.

A six-member delegation will

## COMING EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER MEETING:

**The Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group will meet on Thursday September 8 from 6.30pm to 8pm in the conference room of General Practice Network NT, Skinner St, Alice Springs.**

- **Stride for Health is being held in Alice Springs on Sunday September 25. It is a family outing designed for people to walk, jog or push a pram over 4km. Proceeds from this fundraising event will go to breast cancer and prostate cancer charities.**

attend the Central Australia Chapter Annual General Meeting and Conference in Adelaide on November 18 and 19.

At the August support group meeting, we were very pleased

to welcome back Darwin Convenor Keith Williams, who gave the Alice Springs group vital support during its first few months of operation.

As guest speaker, Keith enlightened our members about new initiatives from

PCFA and the Support and Advocacy Committee.

Supporting speaker Jennah Rose, who has had training at the Gawler Foundation, introduced the members to meditation as a support for general health. We live in an increasingly stressful society and, as a consequence, tend to overdo the physical, mental and emotional aspects of our daily routine. She says that meditation is not so much about relaxing but about clear focussing and learning to become more understanding and compassionate.

Jennah was well received and members requested more information about meditation at a future meeting.

## Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group

# A busy schedule throughout the month

The new Limestone Coast support group is engaging its membership with a busy series of meetings and public awareness events, as Richard Harry reports.

THE Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group had a meeting on August 29 – and the women had a meeting of their own at one of our members' homes. I understand they not only discussed problems relating to prostate cancer and its affect on them via their husbands, but also had a fun time sitting around a table and trying out makeup.

The fellas weren't left out. The meeting we held at the Harry family's home had us talking about many varied subjects, including prostate

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

**The Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group will next meet on Wednesday September 14 at the Commodore On the Park Motel, Mount Gambier.**

problems. We also addressed matters for a busy month ahead. Having conducted a sausage sizzle at Bunnings on September 2, the support group will also be flying the flag at Pirtek on September 16. Like Bunnings, Pirtek has a program with PCFA across Australia, to host barbecues that promote PCFA and men's health.

On September 18, our support group will also be promoted through a barbecue at Woodlands Retirement Village, with funds going to our group.

Our next meeting will be at a different venue, with the Central Chapter Council attending as our guests. This meeting is on Wednesday September 14 at the Commodore On the

Park Motel in Mount Gambier. During this meeting, our group members can ask questions of the Central Chapter Council.

Special guests at this meeting will be representatives of Relay For Life, who will explain how our group members can help support this event even if they do not wish to enter a relay team.

The following day, the Central Chapter Council will hold its own meeting at the same venue, and our members are welcome to attend as observers.

## City of Onkaparinga Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Make sure you use the items in support group libraries

The informative DVDs that are sent to support groups by PCFA are also available for group members to take home and study, as Onkaparinga support group chairman John Shields reports.

At the August meeting of the City of Onkaparinga Prostate Cancer Support Group, we were delighted to welcome Colin and Gina, who were advised of our support group by Dr David Elder. This is a timely coincidence, as Dr Elder will be our guest speaker for the support group's meeting on November 2.

For the August meeting, the group listened to the ABC Life Matters CD titled Sex after Prostate Cancer, which was provided to all Support Groups by PCFA, together with the DVDs Men's Health Seminar: Men's Business Revealed and Rural Health – all of which are available from the support group library. We also have copies of a very informative pelvic floor exercises DVD for group members to take home.

If you do a Google search on the Internet of "talkback sex after prostate cancer-Life Matters-ABC" you can click on the download audio button to have a copy of this episode on your computer.

## PATIENT VOUCHERS

CARLA DEMOS from PCFA has sent the support group 10 vouchers for the Localised Prostate Cancer pack, especially designed for new members and visitors who have recently been diagnosed.

These packs will be available

from several Chemists in the Noarlunga area, and a list of local chemists who will have supplies of the pack will be available at every support group meeting. You may find that chemists will only order supplies of this item after they have had an enquiry, so be sure to persist with enquiries. It is quite an impressive pack, although it will take some time before all chemists receive adequate supplies.

## ANOTHER FUNDRAISER - AND ANOTHER CALL FOR HELP

ON SUNDAY October 9, the Adelaide Male Voice Choir will be singing at Concordia College Chapel, 45 Cheltenham St, Highgate, from 2pm to 4.30pm, to help raise funds for awareness and support in PCFA Central Australia Chapter.

To help promote this exciting event, John Shields has quite a lot of posters to distribute throughout our very large community and we would like to get them into as many shops, chemists, community health centres, libraries, sports and social clubs as soon as possible.

We have a good supply of publicity posters available in A4 size (30cm x 21cm) and A5 size (15cm x 21cm). Therefore, we would greatly appreciate it if members

would take some posters home after the Onkaparinga support group's September meeting.

John Shields is waiting to receive official tickets for this concert in the mail, which will be available for \$30, or \$25 concession.

If anyone is unable to attend the concert and would like to make a donation in lieu, this will certainly be appreciated and John can provide them with a receipt.

PCFA provides financial assistance to all support groups throughout Australia and is reliant on fundraising to exist, so every dollar that we raise helps PCFA.

It means that by supporting these events, we are helping ourselves and all the other support groups.

## CHAPTER COUNCIL MEETING AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WE NEED to know immediately how many people will be attending the Central Australia Chapter Conference at the Arkaba Hotel, Glen Osmond Rd, Frewville, on November 18 and 19, and who needs accommodation.

Apart from catering for council members and their wives, PCFA will sponsor three people from each local support group and it will be up to members to decide at our

## COMING EVENT

### OCTOBER MEETING:

The next City of Onkaparinga Prostate Cancer Support Group meeting will be at 6.30pm on Wednesday, October 5, held in the boardroom at Noarlunga Community Hospital, Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga.

• For more information about meetings and coming events, visit the City of Onkaparinga Support Group's website at [www.pcsog.org](http://www.pcsog.org)

• Special thanks go to our support group's generous sponsors: **Southern Primary Health Morphett Vale, Port Noarlunga-Christies Beach RSL Sub Branch, Cartridges Now Christies Beach, The Original Open Market and The City of Onkaparinga Council.**

September meeting who these people should be.

For anyone else wanting to attend the conference, it will cost \$50, which is still very cheap for such a valuable event.



## Prosper Darwin Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Praise for those who pitched in to help - especially the sick

A fantastic effort from volunteers ensured the success of some important public awareness events, as Prosper Darwin group convenor Keith Williams reports.

**T**HE Darwin Prosper support group was faced with the challenge of manning stalls at two Bunnings stores in our area with a rather battered and reduced workforce.

We also had to cope with the markedly different approach to the occasion by the two stores.

I have to pay tribute to the spirit of all those who volunteered their time and effort, despite most being some way from being in robust health.

We took the view that our prime concern was spreading the word about prostate cancer – but we will also gracefully accept what should be a significant amount raised by Bunnings staff who conducted barbecues and raffles.

I should also mention that our adopted banana benders Graham and Cynthia are still in Darwin and volunteered to man one of the Bunnings stalls before heading for home until next dry season.

## A WELCOME GUEST

It was a pleasure to have the redoubtable Bill Forday from

far north Queensland drop in to our meeting last month. Bill had come across to visit

his brother, who is due to have some serious medical treatment in the near future.

## COMING EVENT

**The Prosper Darwin support group meets on the second Monday of each month, at the Harbour Room, Christ Church Cathedral, corner of Smith St and the Esplanade, Darwin, at 7.30pm.**

• Keith Williams went to see the manager of the Darwin Bunnings store about the September barbecuing project. The manager had been involved with the Gold Coast Support group a few years ago in a fundraising relay race between several Bunnings stores. He spoke with one of the support group members who told him, with a very straight face, that his condition had been diagnosed a few years earlier after a routine doctor's check. The doctor wrote the referral for the PSA test, said "Now we'll do the DRE" and proceeded to investigate. The doctor said, "I'm afraid that I detected several lumps – almost certainly prostate cancer." The patient responded with "I'd like a second opinion". So the doctor took his left hand out, put his right hand in and started doing the Hokey Pokey. Then the storyteller cracked a grin. The Bunnings manager said he was staggered that a bloke diagnosed with such a serious complaint could make a make a joke about it. Keith responded that the storyteller was typical of men who attended support groups, and who had the best chance of getting the best results from their situation.

During August, I was in Alice Springs for two weeks running and mentioned this to Alice Springs support group convenor Murray Neck – then found myself promoted as guest speaker at their monthly meeting, which happened to coincide with my visit.

This gave me an opportunity to demonstrate the generosity of spirit common among Northern Territory residents. I was able to take Barb Neck's handless alarm clock back to Darwin and later have it returned "re-handed" the following week. Life is tough when you can't get your clock fixed, but with a Territorian for a friend, nothing is too much trouble.

Being in Alice Springs, it was great to meet the group's incoming convenor, Ian Wagner, who will, I'm sure, make a great contribution to our cause in the Central Australia Chapter.

## SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

THE Darwin group's guest speaker for September will be resident urologist Trent Farebrother, who is always an entertaining and informative speaker.

## MURRAY BRIDGE PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

• The Murray Bridge support group conducts monthly meetings at 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month, at Our Wellbeing Place, 108 Swanport Rd, Murray Bridge. The next group meeting on **WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 21** will feature Mick Loeckenhoff talking about Men's Sheds. Please send all Murray Bridge support group correspondence to: PO Box 880, MURRAY BRIDGE, SA, 5253.

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99  
or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

## Mitcham Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Advice from the Pillar of wisdom on lymphoedema

A timely visit from Professor Neil Piller proved helpful to many support group members planning to embark on overseas air travel and long road trips, as Mitcham support group joint-chairman Roland Harris reports.

THE August meeting of the Mitcham support group provided members with an insight into the factors affecting lymphoedema. This disease is a swelling of the surface tissues of the arms, legs or other parts of the body. It occurs because a series of very small vessels called the lymphatic vessels have been damaged, destroyed or not well formed.

Professor Neil Piller is an expert on the condition, being the director of the Lymphoedema Assessment Clinic at Flinders Medical Centre. He presented a vigorous treatise on the topic with a PowerPoint presentation, answering questions as they arose and holding our interest with ease.

He explained that when this drainage system in the body does not work, fluids initially accumulate in body tissues.

## COMING EVENT SEPTEMBER MEETING

**The Mitcham support group's next meeting will be held on Thursday September 22. The group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Colonel Light Gardens RSL Club, 4 Prince George Parade, Colonel Light Gardens, from 7pm to 8.45pm. Unfortunately, the speaker arranged for this meeting is unable to attend because of illness and alternative arrangements are being made.**

• For more information on events and group activities, visit the Mitcham Group's dedicated website at [www.psamitcham.org](http://www.psamitcham.org)

Over time, these fluids are replaced by fatty tissue and eventually by harder fibrous tissues. The result may be a loss of limb mobility, discomfort and heaviness.

None of this is very good when you have to sit for hours in a "cattle class" plane seat or road vehicle.

Some things that we cannot control and which worsen

the effects of lymphoedema are the ageing process, some types of surgery and the location of radiotherapy.

However, other factors are within our control: weight, skin condition and general health. This is where a full check by the Lymphoedema Assessment Clinic can help.

Specific treatment by a

health professional may include laser therapy, support garments, lymphatic drainage, massage, stress management and dietary adjustments.

In addition to this, we can help ourselves by participating in regular walking, gentle bike riding, swimming, losing weight if you are obese, deep breathing exercises and gentle foot and leg movements.

The clinic at the Flinders Medical Centre has a range of help sheets, and can be contacted on 08 8204 5754.

The wisdom of Professor Piller on this topic was well received by the 22 members present, and to quote Graeme's minutes of the meeting: "A very enjoyable presentation by an expert".

We gratefully presented Professor Piller with a welcome pillar of McLaren Vale viticulture – a bottle of Wirra Wirra Church Block.

## Gladstone's big prostate cancer fundraising drive

THE Southern Flinders Trail Horse Riding Club is promoting a prostate cancer awareness event within the club's Champagne, Steam & Saddle Trail Ride from Gladstone to Quorn over 10 days from September 24. To start the event, a massed public Blue Ride will be staged from Gladstone to Laura on September 24 – and the Port Pirie

Prostate Cancer Support Group will also have information stalls at Gladstone and Laura on the day. Shan Daw and John Arbon are photographed at right with special fund-raising T-shirts that have been created for the event. To join in the public Blue Ride on September 24, or buy a supportive T-shirt, phone Shan on 0409 026 333 or email [shandaw2010@hotmail.com](mailto:shandaw2010@hotmail.com)



Photo courtesy of Northern Argus, Clare.

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99  
or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

# Understanding women is a key to helping men's recovery

Maggie Angus, convener of the Gold Coast Carers Group, spells out the need to have female partners of prostate cancer sufferers included in future prostate cancer conferences.

**P**ROFESSOR Jeff Dunn, Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Cancer Council, stated in a letter this month, "Our research has shown that more than half of all men treated for prostate cancer have unmet supportive care and psycho-social needs".

A Cancer Council brochure also states that "men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer and their partners are more likely to experience an anxiety disorder than others in the community". This proves that the diagnosis of prostate cancer can affect partners in addition to the person diagnosed.

A woman will generally accompany her partner to a men's prostate cancer support meeting, to support him and his needs. However, these groups neither support nor address her needs. Consequently women often suffer in silence, not knowing who or where they can go for help.

The relationship of a couple that has been impacted by prostate cancer will improve if she is validated and valued. A woman's feelings also need to be expressed, acknowledged and heard by others in a similar situation.

The dilemma faced by some women is made worse when their partner refuses to attend a prostate cancer men's support group. Most women in this situation will not attend a men's meeting to obtain information without their partner.



I strongly believe that more compassion, understanding and care is required for both the man and the woman affected by prostate cancer, and their relationship as a whole.

This should be recognised by any significant event, such as a State or National conference that examines support group functions and can influence the way support groups are conducted. The opportunity exists to introduce a process that will recognise very significant problems that confront partners and resolve to support and assist them through a difficult process.

Significant issues following prostate cancer treatment that I have encountered include:

- A man can withdraw into himself with a total loss of affection or love. This leads

to alienation and confusion for women.

- The effects of some treatments can lead to a loss of self-esteem and lack of intimacy between the couple, particularly when the man chooses to ignore her requests or refuse to discuss them. Women often feel uncomfortable discussing such personal matters with other family members, especially children. This can contribute to a woman feeling incredibly isolated and lonely.

- A man may put on a social face because he does not want others to know how sick he is. The partner sometimes is the only one who knows what he is going through, placing her under a lot of stress and pressure to cope with the reality of the situation on her own.

- Some men turn to addictions such as alcohol, drugs and pornography. This adds another dimension to a couple's relationship that possibly did not exist prior to diagnosis.

- A man can delay or refuse to be checked for prostate cancer, despite the pleadings of his partner. When eventually diagnosed, his condition may be advanced and treatment options become limited. Despite this terrible predicament, his partner still has to accept that it was his choice and somehow learn to face a future on her own.

- Urologists recommend that the treatment for prostate cancer be a joint decision for a couple. If the man cannot cope with his diagnosis, the woman often has to adopt the role of researching various options that are available, increasing her stress levels and responsibility.

Through the prostate cancer ordeal, it is worth remembering that women dealing with prostate cancer also feel vulnerable, isolated, emotionally hurt, confused, angry, drained, stressed, uninformed, physically and mentally fragile, unable to cope, frustrated, hurt, ill prepared, depressed, lonely and unloved.

Men with prostate cancer certainly need to be supported. So do their partners. Women need to be part of the prostate cancer equation now – and in the future.

## Port Pirie Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Addressing our mental health

Guest Speaker Mark Turner challenged the Port Pirie support group to identify a “normal” state of mental health – which proved surprisingly difficult, as Richard Kruger reports.

**M**ARK Turner, a Mental Health Community Clinician, was a recent guest speaker at the monthly Port Pirie support group meeting, and he proved not only to be an excellent orator but also talked about issues relative to the lives of prostate cancer survivors and their supporters.

I first met Mark when he was nursing my 98-year-old mother-in-law, and found him to be surprisingly tender and compassionate, even if his voice can be heard from at least two blocks away!

Through caring for patients over many years, Mark realises that the mental health of clients is frequently being overlooked. Mental illness was too often perceived as people being “mad”, although, like most other illness, it is more a case of being not quite well.

Being in a state of non-normalcy raises questions of what is normal. Everyone thinks they are normal, yet others may not necessarily think so. This is one of the great riddles and difficulties in addressing mental illness within the community.

Mark spoke at length about one of the most common mental illnesses – depression. He explained how depression can be quite debilitating, but he also emphasised that help is readily available.

Seeking the help of a GP should always be the first option, after which a referral to a psychiatrist, psychologist



**Mental Health Community Clinician Mark Turner (centre) with Port Pirie support group members Henry and Coralene Mudge.**

or a self-help group may be the recommended option.

Mark said that from his own experiences, the diagnosis of a potential terminal illness does not always leave a person feeling like they could soar over the moon.

Indeed, depression is not an unusual consequence in such a situation. Several medications are available and different medications can be prescribed for different people.

Mental illness is often termed the invisible illness, because the symptoms are not visible to the casual observer. Often people will declare, “I can’t see anything wrong with you. You’re putting on an act!”

Mark took a barrage of questions from support group members after his talk, especially about Valium, as well as many other issues.

He emphasised that seeking the help of a doctor in these matters is very important. If you don’t feel that you are getting the results that you are seeking, then don’t be afraid to look for fresh opinions from a doctor at a different practice.

## COMING EVENT

- The Port Pirie Prostate Cancer Support Group conducts monthly meetings (from February to November) at 7.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month at the BHAS Bowling Club, Halley St, Port Pirie. For further details, phone group coordinator Allan Manfield on 08 8632 1324.

## Overheard at a recent support group meeting ....

**Richard Kruger from the Port Pirie support group shares this amusing anecdote:**

At a presentation to a Prostate Cancer Support Group, a well-known urologist was describing an aid to continence that consisted of a sphincter which could be opened as required by manipulating a button secreted in the scrotum.

A member of the audience then asked, “So, if I’m at a footy match, have had a few beers, and decide at half time to let some of it go, do I have to flop my testicles out and go scrabbling around for the button, or can you get a remote control to go from the hand to the scrotum?”

The reply was, “In that situation, using the cubicle may be the preferred option!”

## Barossa Support Group

### COMING EVENT SEPTEMBER 20 MEETING

- The next meeting of the Barossa Valley Prostate Cancer Support Group will be held from 2pm to 4pm on Tuesday September 20, at Don Piro’s house, 28 Kindler Ave, Nuirootpa. Please contact group coordinator Don Piro for further information on 8562 3359 or 0419 863 124.
- Please note that meetings are usually scheduled on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at this time. Please contact Don at the above number for more information.