

Media Release
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New Gold Coast volunteers provide mateship to prostate cancer patients

Men newly diagnosed with prostate cancer on the Gold Coast will now have mates they can turn to for support, thanks to a new program by Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

Launched this week, the MatesCONNECT program connects newly diagnosed men with trained volunteers who have been through the disease in an effort to provide more local support services.

PCFA CEO, Professor Jeff Dunn AO, said the service will provide a vital network of support on the Gold Coast for men impacted by prostate cancer.

“About 570 Gold Coast men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year. This program will ensure they receive the type of support that can only be offered by those who understand what living with a diagnosis of prostate cancer is like,” Prof Dunn said.

“Men can get practical advice on surgery and treatment, and the side effects of treatment, such as incontinence, erectile dysfunction, and coping with hormone therapy.

“About one in five Gold Coast men with prostate cancer will experience long-term anxiety and depression. Of great concern, men with prostate cancer also face a 70 per cent increased risk of suicide compared to the general population.

“MatesCONNECT will provide vital support to ensure these men do not suffer alone.”

PCFA’s Head of Community Services, Chris McNamara, said their first volunteer had been trained to provide the service and is ready and available to lend a hand to men impacted by the disease.

“While our volunteers can’t offer medical advice, they can be there as a mate and provide newly diagnosed patients with an understanding of what to expect and provide a practical and supportive insight into living with prostate cancer,” he said.

“It’s common for men to struggle with understanding their treatment options and many are unable to access evidence-based information about the pros and cons of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment or hormone therapy.

“This program will be a game-changer for men on the Gold Coast affected by prostate cancer. Importantly, the program responds to the evidence that men who have a lived experience of prostate cancer can be a source of great strength and support for those newly impacted by the disease.

“Those who understand what it’s like to live through a diagnosis are well-placed to offer emotional and informational support to other men, and provide solidarity throughout survivorship, when many men face ongoing side-effects from their treatment.”

MatesCONNECT Gold Coast has been made possible thanks to a \$25,000 grant from The James Frizelle Charitable Foundation.



MatesCONNECT volunteer, John Caldwell, said after his own experience with prostate cancer, he's thankful to have the opportunity to support other men through their diagnosis.

"I was not in a good space was in when I was diagnosed in 2009 and would have found a service like this helpful. I feel that I can help others get through it and make it easier for them," the Parkwood local said.

"When diagnosed, you don't always get information about the long-term side effects and mental trauma that can result from some of the treatments, so it's important to have someone there who can help provide that information and help you through it."

For more information about Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and MatesCONNECT, phone 1800 22 00 99 or visit www.pcfa.org.au.

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