



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mates connect to cope with prostate cancer

Men newly diagnosed with prostate cancer in Western Australia 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.

PCFA State Board Chair, Bill Munro, said the service will be accessible to more than 2000 WA men who are newly diagnosed each year.

“About 2100 Western Australian men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year, and nearly 300 will die of the disease. 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.

“Men can get practical advice on surgery and treatment, and the side effects of treatment, such as incontinence, erectile dysfunction, and coping with Androgen Deprivation Therapy,” he said.

“About one in five Western Australian men with prostate cancer will experience long-term anxiety and depression, and men in regional and rural areas of Western Australia have a 24 per cent higher risk of death.

“Of equally great concern, men with prostate cancer face a 70 per cent increased risk of suicide compared to the general population. MatesCONNECT provides vital support to ensure these men do not suffer alone.”

PCFA's Head of Community Services, Chris McNamara, said 10 volunteers had been trained to provide the service.

“While our volunteers can't offer men medical advice, they can 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 hormonal therapy.

“Research shows that peer-run self-help programs deliver significant improvement in psychological and psychosocial quality of life, resulting in decreased hospitalisation, enriched social support networks, and enhanced self-esteem and social functioning.

“This program will be a game-changer for men in WA 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 prostate cancer diagnosis are well-placed to offer emotional and informational support to other men, providing solidarity throughout survivorship, when many men face ongoing side-effects from their treatment.

“MatesCONNECT will build on foundations of shared personal experience and empathy, with a focus on survivorship, wellbeing, and recovery. We are grateful to Woodside Energy for providing a \$100,000 grant to support for this life-changing service,” he said.

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PCFA: Anne Savage 0417 709 869 or Anne.Savage@pcfa.org.au
For more information, email enquiries@pcfa.org.au or visit www.pcfa.org.au.