

Media release

June 5, 2019

Bowel Cancer Screening Awareness

Health organisations are urging all country South Australians aged over 50 and those who have any potential bowel cancer symptoms to 'Get Screened and Get on With Living' as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening program.

Keen to help spread the word is 48 year-old Clare viticulturist and father of four, Scott (Scooter) Smith. A few years ago Scooter had what he now knows were bowel cancer symptoms. He didn't think too much of it at the time and carried on. But when Scooter continued to have blood in his stools, he knew he needed to get himself checked out.

Scooter went to see his GP. A few days later a colonoscopy revealed he had a tumour the size of a small apricot and was told it was more than likely cancerous. He had a CT scan straight after being told to see if the cancer had spread.

"Waiting for those results was the worst four days of my life. There were definitely a few tears with my wife and my four kids," said Scooter.

"I didn't know where else in my body it had spread and all the worst possible thoughts go through your mind when your mortality is questioned."

Four days later we found out the cancer hadn't spread.

Scooter said "my wife and I nearly lost it." He was booked in for surgery the next day to remove the tumour. Scooter had 40 centimetres of bowel removed along with 19 lymph nodes around the bowel that had been removed. They were sent away to pathology, five days later I was told that the cancer had spread into only one of the lymph nodes which was situated next to the tumour. The rest were clear.

For the next five years Scooter will be continually monitored with regular blood tests, scans and colonoscopies and hopefully remain cancer free.

"I made a deal with the big fella upstairs that if I get through this, I'm going to spread the word - don't ignore symptoms, get checked out and get screened."

Scooter's message is shared by the 'Get Screened and Get on with Living' campaign developed in partnership between Cancer Council SA, Country SA PHN and Adelaide PHN.

Media Inquiries: Kate Dorsey, **Country SA PHN**, 0437 324 382

“We’re very pleased to be involved in encouraging country South Australians to get screened. It’s very important that we help spread this message as much as we can. The simple test literally helps save lives,” said Kim Hosking, Country SA PHN Chief Executive Officer.

“Overall in country South Australia our bowel screening participation is good but it could always be better. Approximately half of all country South Australians aged over 50 haven’t been screened. We want to encourage them to do so,” said Kim Hosking, Country SA PHN Chief Executive Officer.

Scooter says getting checked out is a ‘no brainer’ and that it’s critical to act on anything that seems unusual.

“If I hadn’t gone into my GP when I did and waited until I had my routine screening at 50 years of age it could be too late. The cancer wouldn’t have been detected until I was at stage four and nothing could help me then. I was statistically at a stage three instead.”

“I’ve dodged a bullet at this stage but it’s a long road ahead. It’s a very daunting and very humbling experience,”

“I can’t encourage people to get tested strongly enough. Don’t ignore anything. Listen to your body – if something feels not quite right chances are they’re not and you need to get checked out.”

Bowel Cancer Symptoms (courtesy, The Cancer Council)

Not all bowel cancers show symptoms and experiencing symptoms does not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer. However, you should see your doctor if you notice:

- bleeding from the back passage or any sign of blood after a bowel motion
- a change in usual bowel habit, such as straining (constipation) to go to the toilet or loose motions (diarrhoea)
- abdominal pain or bloating
- weight loss for no obvious reason, or loss of appetite
- symptoms of anaemia - including unexplained tiredness, weakness or breathlessness.

Ends

About Country SA PHN

Country SA PHN (CSAPHN) is responsible for commissioning Commonwealth directed funding for primary health services throughout regional South Australia. It is the health network responsible for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery while improving the coordination of patient care. Established by the Australian Government, CSAPHN exists to bridge the gap of health inequity and access in rural South Australia by building a collaborative and responsive health care system. CSAPHN covers 99.8% of the state geographically, incorporating approximately 30% of South Australia’s total population. For more information go to: www.countrysaphn.com.au

Media Inquiries: Kate Dorsey, **Country SA PHN**, 0437 324 382

