

NATIONAL BOWELCANCER

SCREENING PROGRAM



David survived bowel cancer

David Copley is a Kurna Peramangk man from South Australia. He lives in Mt Gambier and is the CEO of Pangula Mannamurna which is the Aboriginal Health Service for the south eastern region. His Aboriginal name is Tarnda, which means red kangaroo.

David was diagnosed with stage three bowel cancer six and a half years ago. He was away for the weekend with his family, he felt sick and went to the doctor. He had some tests and was sent to a specialist. The specialist diagnosed him with bowel cancer and three days later David had surgery. He then embarked on a long journey of treatment.

Looking back on it, David says that screening would've picked up the cancer earlier which could have meant better treatment options.

"You go back to, well if I had done the screening I would've been so much better off. And my family and community would've been better off. Because cancer impacts on everybody in your community. And sadly bowel cancer is something that our communities don't like talking about it."

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is for eligible Australians between the ages of 50 and 74. A free test gets sent out in the mail. It is a simple test that takes just a few minutes at two different times.

David acknowledges that many people, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, don't want to do the bowel screening test and don't feel comfortable talking about it. But he stresses how important screening is.

"I'm still here six years later. I'm healthy, and lucky to tell my story. But for most of the men that I know, Aboriginal men, they are not here. Because the diagnosis was too late. They just ignored what came in the mail. And it could have made a whole lot of difference", says David.

He says that there is no shame in doing the bowel screening kit – the real shame is in getting cancer because the test kit was ignored.

"We talk about having to do the test is a bit of shame job, 'I don't want to do that'. But what's the bigger shame job? Having the test or going home and telling the family 'I've got bowel cancer because I didn't do the test'. You have to look at the risk to your family if you don't do it".

"This is not about you dying young. This is about you living longer. So we have to turn around and say, if I have this test I will be here at 65. I won't die at 56 or 57".

By completing the free bowel screening test kit, you will be around to spend more time with your family and loved ones.

"This is going to give you not only a longer life but a better quality of life. It's going to mean you see your kids grow up, your grandkids grow up".

"It is ok, it is free, it is there, this could save your life".

If you would like to find out more about bowel cancer screening, visit your local doctor or health service, or visit australia.gov.au/bowelscreening, or call 1800 11 88 68.



Australian Government
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To find out more about bowel cancer and the screening program, visit: cancerscreening.gov.au or call 1800 11 88 68