

'There is cancer present in your prostate!'

It was a shock when the urologist said these words to me. 'Neil, There is cancer present in your prostate' I had been monitored and treated for benign prostate problems for a number of years by my GP and more lately by a Urologist, but now matters had turned to a more serious and sinister phase.

I consulted with my GP and the Urologist and was referred to an Oncologist to determine the next steps. They all agreed that, they had no argument with my decision to opt for radical surgery. Given the size of my prostate 'key hole' surgery was out of the question therefore open surgery had to be the ticket, which meant a cut from the navel to the pubic bone was required, so within 10 days I was on the table.

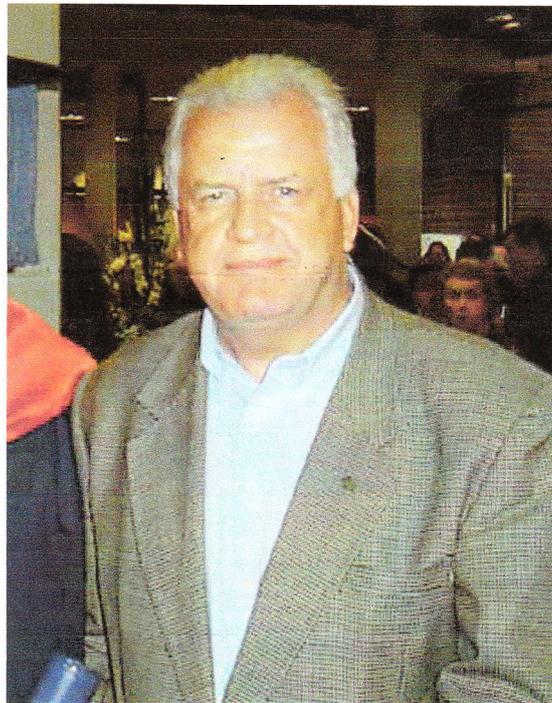
The operation went well. I remember waking up in the hospitals' ICU (Intensive Care Unit) with tubes in and monitors beeping and feeling like I had run a marathon. However, within a few days I was up and about taking 'one small step for a man' at a time and then subsequently being transferred to the general ward before going home for six weeks recuperation.

I was informed my recovery would be challenging at times and it was. I had to learn a few new tricks and I did. Normal continence and erectile function were challenges ahead for me. The Surgeon said, 'Neil you will be ok, it will take time' and he was right.

You learn very quickly not to over do things. Case in point, I decided to go for a walk around the block a week after I got home. Wrong! I struggled back and hour and half later and slept for most of the day. When you are told to take it easy it often helps if you listen.

It is now 16 months since surgery and apart from a few ups and downs including removal of my thyroid and gall bladder (totally sperate issues) I am back on track, working, studying, power walking, boating, socialising and doing a few bits and pieces as a volunteer. I have never felt better.

I will need to be monitored via blood tests every 6 to 12 months and hopefully these tests will return a negative reading. However there are never any guarantees, but things do look very positive and I am certainly not in the 'departure lounge' yet.



I have been incredibly lucky to date, namely being monitored closely for an uncomfortable and irritating benign prostate condition and because my cancer was detected early. Early detection is essential! I am also very fortunate to have the love and support of a very caring family who were there for me.

I am not a health evangelist for blokes, but I do hope sharing my modest story may prompt those who are not being regularly checked for prostate and other matters to do so. Life is not a dress rehearsal, so talk to your GP and have regular checks. What has happened to me can happen to any one of us.

So live every minute of the day with sixty seconds worth of distance run. Above all have fun and keep a watching brief on 'the plumbing'.

Neil D. Armstrong

Neil D. Armstrong (pictured above) is a former Council CEO and LGMA State Body CEO (LG Pro Vic) He now consults to Local Government, private companies and 'Not for Profit' organizations