

Ray, 75

Retired Chief Information Officer who experienced enlarged prostate symptoms for more than a year, *BRISBANE*

Retired Chief Information Officer (CIO), Ray, 75, was diagnosed with benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or an enlarged prostate, in early 2017.

An enlarged prostate is a common, urological disease affecting older men^{1,2} that involves a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland, and expansion of the surrounding tissues.^{3,4} This enlargement leads to compression of the urethra, reducing the flow of urine from the bladder, and sometimes blocking it entirely.⁵

Despite leading an active lifestyle, and with no known family history of the condition, Ray began to experience bladder incontinence and altered urine flow. He endured these symptoms for a year before seeking medical advice.

In the interim, he began to use pads, and other “precautionary measures” to avoid wetting himself in public. The need for ongoing vigilance eventually took a toll on Ray, and resulted in anxiety and embarrassment.

After visiting his General Practitioner (GP), Ray was referred to a urologist, and underwent a minimally invasive treatment, which has substantially improved his quality of life.

Today, Ray has chosen to share his story, to raise community awareness, and understanding of enlarged prostate symptoms, and to urge men, nation-wide, to prioritise their physical and mental health.

This is Ray’s story.

Ray began to experience symptoms of an enlarged prostate in early 2016. A year later, he chose to seek medical advice from his GP, and undergo subsequent treatment.

“I started to notice changes to my urine flow, my ability to delay going to the toilet, and difficulty maintaining an erection, or ejaculating.

“The most challenging issue I faced was urgency in relation to visiting the toilet. A few times, I was actually caught out, and wet myself. This was extremely embarrassing and prompted me to do something about it,” said Ray.

Over time, living with symptoms of an enlarged prostate began to take a toll on Ray, from a physical and mental perspective.

“Physically, there was an extra layer I always had to consider. When going to the theatre, or jumping on a plane for example, I had to ensure that I had emptied my bladder. I would also often have to wear pads to avoid an accident.

“Mentally, I was constantly worried about living with incontinence, or bladder complications,” Ray said.

“I was also concerned about making a fool of myself, so would over-prepare to manage my bladder function.” After wrestling with these symptoms for 12 months, Ray finally chose to seek medical advice.



"I visited my GP, who diagnosed me with an enlarged prostate. He then referred me to a urologist, who put me through a series of tests, and offered me various treatment options.

"When the urologist explained the available enlarged prostate treatment pathways, I was so relieved to hear I had options," said Ray.

His diagnosis with an enlarged prostate, offered Ray a sense of relief.

"When I was diagnosed with an enlarged prostate, I felt relieved, because I was really worried about the possibility of living with cancer, and being unable to have sex again.

"Fortunately, my GP was a friend, so this made it easier for me to open up about my condition," Ray said.

"But for many men, I suspect being diagnosed with an enlarged prostate, and experiencing incontinence and ejaculation issues, would feel compromising of their manhood. There's just so much stigma around this condition.

"Many men find it hard to speak to their friends about their personal health and wellbeing. They prefer to tough these things out," said Ray.

"As a volunteer for the LGBTQIA+ community, I work closely with men, and often discuss their sexual health. They don't want to appear to be weak, or to complain about things. So sadly, they refrain from confiding in their friends."

Given his first-hand experience of living with an enlarged prostate, Ray has chosen to share his story, and to reinforce the importance for those experiencing symptoms, to seek medical advice without delay.

"I chose to undergo a minimally invasive treatment, which has improved the quality of my life, and reduced the feeling of urgency to empty my bladder.

"It's important to be aware of, and educated about all available treatment options for an enlarged prostate," Ray said.

"Knowledge can change the entire patient experience.

"The GP is essentially the first point of patient contact. It is their job to keep their patients up to date on health and treatment-related issues," said Ray.

Ray has a simple, but poignant message for other Australian men wrestling with symptoms of an enlarged prostate.

"If you're living with symptoms of an enlarged prostate, don't give up. Seek advice from your GP, and get treatment that best suits you.

"New treatment options may significantly improve your life," Ray said.

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