



## Cancer tests revisions anticipate federal prostate cancer push

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*Mike Berton during his treatment for prostate cancer.*

Confusing and outdated testing guidelines are leaving men liable to devastating health outcomes, as prostate cancer victims argue for a federally funded testing drive.

Prostate cancer deaths continue to rise with the nation's growing and ageing population despite leaps in survivability.

Australia has experienced a 25 per cent rise in deaths across the past 16 years.

It is the most common cancer in Australian men. Each day 70 cases and 10 deaths are recorded.

When the University of Southern Queensland consulted prostate cancer patients, it found most believed the guidelines for prostate-specific antigen testing were lacking.

Sixty-eight per cent believed the system was in need of revision to drive earlier detection of cancer and better monitoring through later life.

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia is leaning on the federal government to provide funding for a national awareness campaign.

When Mike Berton went for a standard check-up in 2018 at age 51 he was hit with a shock prostate cancer diagnosis. He died in November 2020 and his widow, Jen Berton, argues better community awareness could have saved him.



*Mike and Jen Berton with their two children, Kai and Bethany.*

"We just joked that he needed to go to the doctor and get all these tests done. Prostate cancer wasn't even on our radar," Ms Berton said. "Mike didn't even have a GP. He just never got sick.

"He had no family history of it and unfortunately, by the time he was tested, it was already outside the prostate. He was a very magnanimously strong man and he wouldn't concede to not getting a good outcome ... but as he got worse and worse this big, strong man was now a shell in his own body."

Ms Berton, 48, wants the advised age of testing to be lowered by a decade, arguing prostate cancer has been sidelined as an "old man's disease".

"If we can save just one family, that's the goal," the NSW Central Coast mother said.

PCFA chief executive Anne Savage said health professionals were confused by current protocols, which put patients at further risk. "I think one of our biggest failings as a nation has been not funding public education and awareness on prostate cancer," she said. "We see really effective campaigns for things like breast and bowel cancer ... we haven't done the same thing for prostate cancer."