

Small Cell Lung Cancer: Fraser's Story



LIVING WITH SMALL CELL LUNG CANCER: MEET FRASER STEWART

New lung cancer therapies bring hope to people like Fraser Stewart.

The 64-year-old father of two and retired diesel mechanic was diagnosed with Small Cell Lung Cancer in July 2019. Already he has endured rounds of chemotherapy, radiotherapy and immunotherapy. Now he hopes another new therapy will give him more time with his family and to enjoy life on his acreage outside Melbourne.

"I am still looking on the bright side," Fraser says now. "I don't know how long this treatment will give me and I am just really taking things week by week.

"But this is not the first time I have gone through cancer. I had melanoma about 15 years ago. I am living on the hope that I got through the melanoma. I have beaten the odds once and I hope to live past the odds again. The research is always improving, and different people have different outcomes."

Fraser was "reasonably fit" when he was diagnosed for a second time but knew something was wrong when he became short of breath and began coughing blood.

An initial CT scan was misinterpreted. “The scan guy missed a 10-millimetre tumour. But I knew something was wrong. It took a month or more to be diagnosed.”

Around 12,000 Australians are diagnosed with lung cancer every year and Small Cell Lung Cancer accounts for around 15% of cases.

This disease usually begins in the middle of the lungs and spreads more quickly than non-small cell lung cancer.

Lung cancer symptoms may include shortness of breath, voice changes including hoarseness, chest pain, coughing or spitting up blood, a new cough that does not go away or recurring bronchitis or pneumonia. Some patients notice enlarged fingertips, a loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss or tiredness.

Fraser says it’s impossible to know what has caused his cancer this time around.

“I was a smoker, and obviously through my work I was exposed to diesel fumes, and diesel oils and petroleums. I was also possibly exposed to asbestos. I have not lived the cleanest of lives, but I did give up smoking 27 years ago.”

For now, he is just living “week by week”. “I have got a lot to look forward to. I have got a little granddaughter Harriet, who is nearly four. And my daughter is having her first child due the day before my birthday on 29 November. My son and his wife are having their second child around Christmas. Also, I have not ridden my horse for nearly two years. That’s one of my ambitions - to have another ride.”

Fraser shared his experience in October 2020.