



MEDIA RELEASE

19 November 2009

Mad Max miner goes public about prostate cancer

As men around the world grow moustaches for Movember, one man at Bengalla mine is going a step further, talking openly about his experience of prostate cancer with his colleagues to encourage them to take better care of their health.

A former actor who appeared as Tina Turner's body guard in the film *Mad Max*, six foot three mine technician Ollie Hall is a force to be reckoned with, but that hasn't stopped him from becoming one of the 18,700 Australian men diagnosed with prostate cancer this year.

Still, optimist Ollie considers himself lucky, because the fact that he was proactive about his health meant the cancer was caught early enough to give him options.

"I went to the doctor after my wife and I noticed changes to my urination patterns. A blood test revealed an elevated level of prostate specific antigens (PSAs), indicating the possibility of prostate cancer," Ollie said.

"After a biopsy, the specialist used the Gleason Score to evaluate my prognosis. My Gleason Score was seven on a scale of one to 10, telling doctors that my cancer, although not overly aggressive, was moderate and needed treatment."

Ollie said the recommended treatment was surgery to remove the whole prostate, known as a radical prostatectomy.

"Possible side effects from surgery include impotence and incontinence, often followed by depression, which were risks I wasn't willing to run," Ollie said.

"My main message to my colleagues is not to advocate a particular type of cancer treatment, but to help people understand that the sooner you catch a problem, the more options are available to you and the better your chance of recovery.

"Close to 3300 Australian men die of prostate cancer each year – equal to the number of women who die of breast cancer. I knew I had been one of the lucky ones who caught the cancer in the early stages."

Upon returning home to Scone, Ollie began sharing his experience with local cancer support groups and his colleagues at Bengalla.

"Around 90 per cent of Bengalla's workforce are men, so prostate cancer is a disease with the potential to effect most of us," Ollie said.

"However, men can be very stubborn about their health and often stick our heads in the sand if something isn't quite right rather than going to see a doctor.

"The worst thing you can do is ignore a medical issue."

Bengalla general manager operations Andrea Sutton said she admires Ollie's honesty and courage in speaking openly about a difficult topic.

“At Bengalla, the health and safety of our employees is our primary concern, so when Ollie asked us if he could speak to crews on site about their health we supported him one hundred per cent,” Andrea said.

“Ollie has been delivering 15 minute talks to encourage other men on site to be proactive about their health, which have all ended in a strong round of applause from his colleagues.

“It goes to show that dealing with a medical problem takes far more courage than pretending it will go away.”

Andrea said Bengalla encourages employees to be proactive about their health by participating in a Rio Tinto Group wide programme called Achieve Health.

“Achieve Health includes skin cancer, blood pressure, cholesterol and weight checks, online health risk assessments and health coaching for those that require and request assistance,” Andrea said.

“We also have activities to encourage people to get moving, such as an annual walking challenge, and ongoing information campaigns about both physical and mental health. Only by making the health and safety of our employees a priority can we develop a truly sustainable workforce.

“Still, it comes down to each one of us to look after ourselves and lead the most healthy, long lives we can.”

Useful links:

- The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia: <http://www.prostate.org.au/articleLive/>
- Movember Australia: <http://au.movember.com/>

Media Enquiries:

Kathryn Harrigan
07 3361 4155