

## Media statement

14 June 2019

### Early detection is key for bowel cancer

June is **Bowel Cancer Awareness Month**, a Bowel Cancer Australia initiative to raise awareness of Australia's second deadliest cancer.

1 in 13 Australians will be diagnosed with bowel cancer in their lifetime. 15 604 Australians will be diagnosed with the disease this year.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) Radiation Oncologist, Marcel Knesl, said the good news is it's one of the most treatable types of cancer if found early.

Dr Knesl said: "If you are experiencing any unusual symptoms such as a recent, persistent change in bowel habit, abdominal pain and swelling, frequent pain or cramps don't delay in talking to your GP.

"These symptoms may be due to other medical conditions but can be suggestive of bowel cancer. If diagnosed early 90 percent of cases can be successfully treated.

"A misconception for younger Australians is that 'I am too young to have bowel cancer', so they let symptoms go unchecked. Yes, it is more common in people aged 55 and over but it increasingly affects people of all ages," Dr Knesl said.

SCHHS Clinical Nurse Consultant Sally Kriel fell into the category of a younger sufferer of the disease. At the age of 38 she had been suffering abdominal discomfort and sought the advice of her GP.

Sally said: "I am a nurse so I take pride in helping others optimise their health. My friends will attest that I enjoy sharing my views on healthy living. So, when I received my stage one bowel cancer diagnosis, to say that I was in a world of shock and disbelief, is an understatement.

"Because I was feeling well and life was busy, I delayed my colonoscopy for about six weeks. I had the colonoscopy on a Friday, and I was informed that I had two polyps removed, one of which the surgeon was 'slightly concerned about'. The following Monday the GP called me in to the practice. With my two small children in-tow, I was told "I'm sorry, you have bowel cancer".

"I have had a wonderful medical team who have taken care of all of the 'life saving stuff'; a prompt diagnosis, rapid surgery and management of the side-effects that can occur with a bowel resection and cancer (malnutrition, muscle wasting, gross fatigue, problems with

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nervous system regulation, immunity challenges and the mental health test marathon, to mention a few).

“I am happy to say I am on the long road to recovery, hoping to return back to work soon,” she said.

“I cannot stress enough how important it is to listen and act when your body whispers. Make sure you seek out a health professional who takes your concerns seriously.”

#### **MEDIA OPPORTUNITY**

Join us to hear more of Sally Kriel’s story.


Dr Knesl will also be available for interviews on request.

**When:** Tuesday 18 June 2019, 10am

**Where:** Meet at Nambour General Hospital main reception.

**ENDS**

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Sally with her family.