



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia



Royal Perth Hospital

Media Statement

Wellington Street, Perth Western Australia 6000
Tel: (08) 9224 3943 Fax: (08) 9224 3447
Email: jessie.ielati@health.wa.gov.au

16-02-05

MEDIA RELEASE

Ten years since WA's first heart transplant

Exactly ten years ago to the day, Rod Western became the first man in WA to receive a heart transplant.

The Esperance father of three made medical history on 20 February 1995, on the day of his 35th birthday, when he underwent the State's first heart transplant operation.

Mr Western had suffered from idiopathic cardiomyopathy and had been unwell for two years, spending eight months living in Melbourne and waiting in vain for a transplant.

After returning to his home state, Rod was shopping in the supermarket for party food when he got the call from Royal Perth Hospital to say a heart had become available.

With only an hour to get ready, the Royal Flying Doctor Service flew him up to Perth while staff at the hospital prepared for his arrival.

Ten years on, Rod has taken up four-wheel drive motorcycling through the Esperance sand dunes.

Mr Western said since the transplant, he had learned to appreciate life so much more.

"My first grandson was just born on the 20th November, my wedding day was 20th September, the 20th February is my birthday and I got my new heart on the 20th too – must be something lucky about the number 20!"

Mr Western will be at Royal Perth on Thursday 17 February for his ten-year check up with cardiology consultant Dr Gerry O'Driscoll.

Prof O'Driscoll said Rod is the sort of person who made him want to keep doing transplants.

"He has made the most of the opportunity given to him and accommodated all of the rigours of post-transplant life with little difficulty," he said

"He has been diligent with his treatment and as a consequence is very healthy, and he returned to the workforce very soon after his transplant."

Rod continues to support the heart transplant program and organ donation by sharing his experiences with, and offering support to, other patients and community members.

Royal Perth Hospital has since undertaken some 70 heart transplants and has recently seen the hospital undertake lung transplants, doing the first last December.

Rod will join with other RPH transplant recipients on Sunday 20 February for a transplant anniversary celebration party.