



**FUTURE BENEFIT FOR THE REGION:** Grant District Mayor Richard Sage and Mount Gambier Mayor Lynette Martin have announced both councils would each donate \$10,000 towards the purchase of a transperineal biopsy machine for the Limestone Coast. Mount Gambier Hospital executive director of nursing and midwifery Paul Bullen has been working with Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group chairman Richard Harry over recent months to help fundraise for the project.

Picture: MOLLY TAYLOR

# ‘State-leading’ biopsies to help deliver diagnosis

## Transperineal machine in reach of Mount Gambier health facility as result of community-wide fundraising efforts

 **MOLLY TAYLOR**  
molly@tbw.com.au  
CADET JOURNALIST

THE LIMESTONE Coast Local Health Network will soon offer state-leading and best practice prostate biopsies to help deliver better diagnosis and treatment outcomes for regional patients.

A community-wide effort has put a transperineal biopsy machine in reach for the health district, with \$155,000 of the \$207,000 required to purchase the vital medical equipment already raised.

The Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group has already pledged \$65,000 towards the machine, while \$30,000 of an expected \$60,000 has been donated by prostate cancer research and support organisation The Male Bag Foundation.

The foundation made a \$120,000 pledge to support the Limestone Coast and Riverland/Mallee/Coorong health care districts earlier this year after research revealed both areas had alarmingly low prostate cancer survival rates once detected.

Limestone Coast Prostate Cancer Support Group chairman Richard Harry said he joined forces with the foundation after the announcement, becoming a leading ambassador for fundraising in the community.

Mr Harry said the support group's \$65,000 contribution used funds collected through community donations and public events over the years.

“We are incredibly grateful for the community’s contributions over the years,” Mr Harry said.

“We want men living in our country areas to have the same access to what is available to people in the city.”

After speaking with Mr Harry, Mount Gambier City Council, Grant District Council and the Naracoorte Area Health Advisory Council each pledged \$10,000 towards the project.

The final goal of \$207,000 is expected to be reached by the end of the year.

Grant District Mayor Richard Sage congratulated Mr Harry and the support group on doing a fantastic job of informing the community about prostate cancer, as well as their fundraising efforts.

“It was an initiative which came before council, we discussed it and in a very short space of time we decided to get on board,” Mr Sage said.

“Men can be particularly reluctant to talk about health issues and this topic can sit pretty close to their hearts.”

Mount Gambier Mayor Lynette Martin said the machine would be a tremendous asset for the Limestone Coast, particularly as the technol-

ogy was mobile.

“It will save patients who require biopsies to travel to Adelaide and they will be able to remain in the region around family and friends during the process,” Ms Martin said.

“It also takes the pressure off the capital city’s health systems with people who are having to travel essentially clogging them up.

“Being as large of a region as we are, we should have the facilities here for our residents.”

Naracoorte Health Advisory Council president Barrie Moyle said the machine was extremely advantageous to the region’s men.

“I have spoken to people who have had previous surgery before this machine technology was in play and they have said it was particularly painful,” he said.

“If they had to drive an hour to Mount Gambier or Millicent to have that use, so be it.”

Mount Gambier Hospital executive director of nursing and midwifery Paul Bullen said the machine offered the best practice available for patients.

“It is something which is currently not offered in country South Australia,” he said.

“Naracoorte, Millicent and sur-

rounding communities will have access to this machine and it will benefit the wider Limestone Coast population.

“We are very excited to be a part of this fundraising opportunity and are looking forward to being able to offer this procedure as close to home through our community.”

Mr Bullen said access to treatment would operate on a referral basis.

“A general practitioner will refer a patient to a urologist to then make the best decision,” he said.

“A patient will be diagnosed by a health professional who will order the test.

“The patient can then come into hospital and have the test performed under anaesthetic.”

With each test taking around an hour, Mr Bullen said the procedure involved an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy of the prostate gland.

“They will be under anaesthetics so they sleep through the procedure and wake up afterwards hopefully experiencing no discomfort,” he said.

“Currently there are alternative measures in place locally which may continue to be pursued by specialists.

“At the moment anybody wanting to access a perineal biopsy would have to travel to Adelaide or Warrnambool.”

Mr Bullen said the treatment was a safer and cleaner way of performing a biopsy.

Wattle Range Council is expected to discuss potential project support at its monthly meeting on May 12.

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LYNETTE MARTIN  
MOUNT GAMBIER MAYOR

## Domestic violence victims recognised with online vigil

INDIVIDUALS who have lost their lives because of domestic and Aboriginal family violence will be honoured at an online commemorative ceremony tomorrow night.

Limestone Coast residents are encouraged to light a candle as part of a Virtual Vigil to honour and remember domestic violence victims.

This candle lighting ceremony is part of a national event held on the first Wednesday of May each year to raise awareness of the impact of domestic and Aboriginal family violence on families and communities.

Since 2016, Mount Gambier has held its own vigil led by the Limestone Coast group in conjunction with Soroptimist International Mount Gambier.

Limestone Coast Family Violence Action Group chairperson Sonya Meziniec said the public event could not be held due to social distancing, but hoped the online vigil would be just as meaningful and the message it sent be just as powerful.

“This year we are following the lead of the Adelaide Vigil and especially honour the memories of our First Nations sisters and their children whose lives have been lost due to domestic and Aboriginal family violence, recognising that family violence has no place in First Nations cultures,” she said.

“We will have a moment’s silence during the vigil to honour these women.”

Ms Meziniec said current requirements of social and physically distancing and self-isolation had increased the risk for many women and children living with domestic violence.

“During these times when many services are being delivered differently, it is important for women experiencing domestic violence to know that local services are operating” she said.

“If women are in urgent need of assistance or are concerned for their safety, please call 000 or call the Domestic Violence Crisis Line on 1800 800 098 or 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

“These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Ms Meziniec urged community members to show their support by joining the Facebook Vigil, lighting a candle, displaying a white ribbon, white balloon or other symbols of meaning and share photographs using the hashtags #LCDVVIGIL2020 for the Limestone Coast vigil and #VigilSA and #StandByUs to connect with others statewide during the event.

The event starts at 5.30pm and community members can upload their vigils to the Limestone Coast Family Violence Action Facebook page.

Individuals in need of urgent assistance or who are concerned for their safety are urged to contact 000, 1800 RESPECT or the Domestic Violence Crisis Line 1800 800 098 for help and support.



**VIOLENCE VIGIL:** Community members are encouraged to light a candle tomorrow night as part of an online vigil for victims of domestic violence.