

# Seniors encouraged to have their hearts checked

If you're over the age of 65, it's time to get your heart checked.

That's a message from Dr Rohan Bhagwandeem and local resident and retired minister Alan.

The duo has come together to bring awareness to a statistic not enough people know about – more than half a million Australians are living with heart valve disease and a lot of them don't even know it.

For Alan, it is a very personal mission.

The 81-year-old is living with aortic stenosis (a type of heart valve disease).

In July 2021 Alan underwent a TAVI (Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation) surgery.

"The TAVI procedure is done under local anesthetic and we place a tube into a blood vessel in your groin and we thread it up under x-ray vision into your heart," interventional

cardiologist at John Hunter Hospital and Lake Macquarie Private Hospital Dr Bhagwandeem said.

"We load a new heart valve onto a little balloon and place that over the narrowed heart valve and essentially inflate the balloon and it squashes the old one out of the way and the new one starts working immediately."

Alan says he was in hospital for three or four days and has been feeling a lot better since he returned home.

He encourages everyone to get a heart check – he had no family history of heart disease and, apart from some issues with blood pressure, has been healthy all his life.

"My advice for people even younger than me is to go and get your heart checked regularly," he said.

"If I hadn't gone to the doctor in all these years, I would probably be dead.

"People need to watch their heart, there could be any number of heart issues that you don't know you are living with."

Dr Bhagwandeem echoed Alan's sentiments.

"Sixty-five is a good time to start having a think about this," he said.

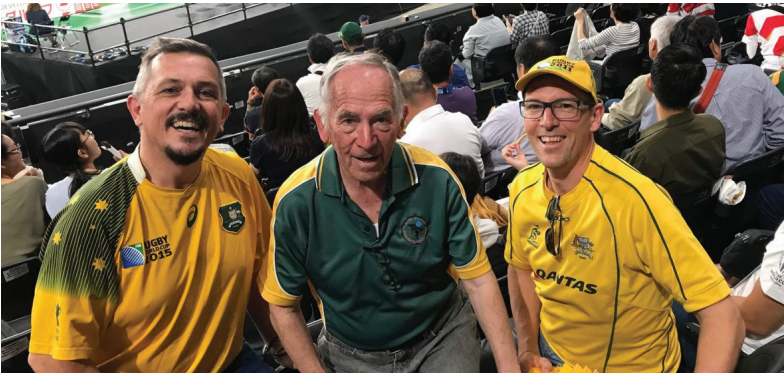
"If you felt you were indestructible it is still time to go along and have a listen to your heart because the

symptoms are quite deceptive.

"They are shortness of breath, reduction of exercise tolerance and that's often misattributed to just getting older.

"A lot of people that I see say I feel pretty good but then when I ask what they were doing three months ago they realise a lot has changed.

"When heart valve disease starts it can be pretty silent."



Alan (centre) says getting a heart check saved his life.



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