

## Gregory, 59

Water quality technician, car enthusiast and father-of-two diagnosed with atrial fibrillation following a workplace accident, **BATHURST**

Recently remarried water quality technician, car enthusiast, and father-of-two, Gregory, 59, Bathurst was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (AF) – a common type of heart arrhythmia – in May 2020.



AF is a chronic, progressive disease caused by poor atrial contraction (heart pumping),<sup>1</sup> involving an irregular and often rapid heartbeat.<sup>2-4</sup> The incidence of asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) AF is between 30 and 40 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

Almost five years ago, after an industrial accident at work in which he severed his finger, Gregory was transported to the emergency operating theatre. Whilst on the operating table, doctors also discovered he was living with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) – a heart disease often associated with AF.<sup>6</sup>

A few months later, in December 2024, following his annual check-up for HCM, Gregory's cardiologist further diagnosed him with AF.

Struggling to accept both diagnoses, Gregory found himself unable to enjoy activities he loved, such as car races and shows, and socialising with friends.

Due to his worsening symptoms, which made climbing stairs increasingly difficult and caused significant fatigue, Gregory underwent a procedure for his AF in December 2024. Unfortunately, the procedure was unsuccessful, and a few weeks later, he had to be fitted with a pacemaker.

In February 2025, Gregory returned to hospital for a second AF procedure, which, on this occasion, proved successful.

His symptoms have since significantly improved, and he now feels stronger, more confident, and in better control of his heart health. Gregory has recently remarried and has grown even closer to his family, particularly his daughters, post-AF diagnosis.

He has chosen to share his story, to raise community awareness and understanding of living with symptoms of AF, and to urge those affected by the disease to prioritise their heart health.

**This is Gregory's story.**

In November 2019, Gregory began struggling to perform daily activities such as climbing stairs and managing the water tanks at work, which was unusual for him.

In May 2020, following a workplace accident in which he severed his finger and was hospitalised, Gregory was diagnosed with HCM. However, it wasn't until a routine check-up in July 2024 that he discovered he was also living with atrial fibrillation (AF).

"If I hadn't severed my finger at work that day, I would have had no idea I was living with HCM and subsequently AF," said Gregory.

After his HCM diagnosis, Gregory unknowingly experienced symptoms of AF. He attributed these symptoms to stress from his personal life and had no idea they were connected to AF.

It wasn't until two years later that he was formally diagnosed with the disease.

"Performing my day-to-day activities at work including climbing a flight of stairs or working on the water tanks, kept getting harder. I knew it wasn't normal.

"With everything happening in my personal life at the time, I had no energy and just didn't feel like myself," Gregory said.

Gregory recalls the fear he felt after his diagnosis with two heart diseases.

"I was terrified. I didn't understand why this was happening to me."

In December 2024, Gregory underwent his first procedure to treat his AF. Unfortunately, the procedure proved unsuccessful, and his symptoms worsened, prompting him to return in January this year for another procedure.

"I returned to hospital two weeks later and they fitted a pacemaker.

"In January 2025 I had a second AF procedure. This one was successful, my doctors were happy, and I'm feeling much better these days," said Gregory.

Although Gregory's HCM and AF have significantly compromised his quality of life, he nonetheless, remains positive.

"Although the heart diseases have been frightening and stressful, they've made me more aware of my heart health and grateful for life.

"That's why it's important to enjoy today, because you never know what tomorrow will bring," Gregory said.

Since finding a treatment plan that has worked for him, Gregory has a newfound confidence.

"I feel good now. I recently remarried and I've got a second chance at life, and I'm getting on with it, without overdoing things."

Gregory has important advice for Australians living with AF.

"Take charge of your life by staying positive and prioritising your heart health.

"Attend health check-ups, and if you're feeling unwell, don't hesitate to visit your doctor," said Gregory.

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**To coordinate an interview with Gregory, please contact:**

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*Individual symptoms, situations, circumstances and results may vary. This information is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment or as a substitute for professional medical advice. Please consult your doctor or qualified healthcare provider regarding your condition and appropriate medical treatment.*

## References

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