

## Christopher, 76

Retiree, handyman & husband who underwent heart valve treatment, **ADELAIDE**

Retired handyman, Christopher, 76, Adelaide, had always led an active lifestyle. Married to his beloved wife Christine for nearly six years, he'd enjoyed sports in his youth and stayed active through retirement.

Before retirement, he enjoyed a wide-ranging career in electrical and building trades, truck driving across Australia, and as an on-call fireman, keeping him active and engaged throughout his life.

However, four years ago, he developed shortness of breath, persistent fatigue, and lack of energy. As the symptoms worsened, he sought medical advice.

Christopher was referred to a cardiologist who, after a series of tests, identified valve regurgitation, and diagnosed him with aortic stenosis – a condition in which a narrowed heart valve restricts blood flow from the heart to the rest of the body.<sup>1</sup>

Only a month after receiving a medical device he'd personally researched, and requested, Christopher expresses gratitude for the medical technology and care he received.



### This is Christopher's story.

"I'm 76, and I've been married to Christine for nearly six years. We've had a wonderful life together. But things changed a few years ago when I started developing symptoms that worried me," said Christopher.

"I started to feel short of breath. I couldn't keep up with the things I used to do, and I tired easily. It was concerning. That's when I realised I needed to get it checked out.

"I went to my GP, and he suspected it might be heart-related," Christopher said.

"I was referred to a cardiologist, who discovered that my aortic valve wasn't functioning properly. I was then diagnosed with aortic valve regurgitation."

Although Christopher was initially advised to monitor his symptoms, he took a proactive approach, and sought to better understand his condition.

"For the next few years, my cardiologist kept a close eye on things with regular check-ups. He didn't think it was urgent initially, and at one stage, suggested I wait a year before returning.

"Over time, my symptoms worsened. I didn't want to wait any longer, so I revisited my GP and requested a referral to the public system," said Christopher.

Christopher subsequently learned his heart valve function had declined, which made him a suitable candidate for surgical intervention.

"I was initially scheduled for open-heart surgery, but I wasn't comfortable with undergoing such an invasive procedure and long recovery if other options were available. So I started researching innovative medical technologies that might be suitable for me.

"In my research, I learned that the TAVI valve (Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation) works like a traditional heart surgical valve, but is less invasive, and has a shorter recovery time," Christopher said.

"With the TAVI, a balloon is used to expand a metal mesh inside the aortic valve, effectively pushing the old valve aside."

Christopher discussed his concerns about undergoing open-heart surgery with his cardiologist and expressed interest in the TAVI device he had researched. As he had hoped, he was deemed a suitable candidate, and was booked for the procedure within weeks following a cancellation.

"Because of my age and fitness, I was a good candidate for the TAVI procedure.

"I was in and out of the operating theatre in less than an hour, and out of hospital the next day," said Christopher.

"It's been a month since my heart valve procedure. I feel grateful for the support I received and for having access to this medical technology."

Christopher emphasises the value of the Australian public healthcare system in providing access to high-cost, innovative medical technology.

"Although I had to wait a little for the TAVI procedure, the public health system really looked after me. The procedure is expensive, but I didn't have to pay anything out of pocket," said Christopher.

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## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

**Kirsten Bruce and Sophia Heather, VIVA! Communications**

**M** 0401 717 566 | 0411 924 112

**T** 02 9968 3741 | 02 9968 3741

**E** [kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au](mailto:kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au) / [sophia@vivacommunications.com.au](mailto:sophia@vivacommunications.com.au)

## **References**

1. Mayo Clinic. (2024). *Aortic valve stenosis: Symptoms and causes*. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.