Kevin’s Story

I was diagnosed with having a gallstone in my gall bladder. The doctors advised me to have it removed but I hesitated, because a lady that we knew had the same problem with a gallstone. She had the operation, but the doctors cut one of her blood veins and she bled to death.

So I hesitated, thinking I’d rather have the gallstone, rather than going through that operation.

What happened when I was up at Karalundi... The gallstone it come out previously... I felt a little bit sick going up on the Friday and I vomited. But after I vomited, we kept going. But on the Saturday afternoon I felt really... Very, very sick. I was really sick and as the afternoon wore on, I said to myself, ‘I’m in trouble. I need to go see the doctor.’

I remember driving to the hospital, my niece drove me and my wife to the hospital, and arriving at the hospital. I don’t remember anything after that for three months. And they transferred me to Perth by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and that’s where I remained for five months. And the first three months I was in a coma, while they did all the operations and made me well again... Yes.

On reaching the hospital, the doctors examined me and they had their conference about what to do with me...And as they all do... The surgeons and the doctors. And they came to the conclusion that, because of my age and the extent of the damage caused by this gallstone, that had come out and blocked the ducts between my pancreas and the bowel, there was nothing much they could do.

One doctor decided... He told me later that he decided to have a go. He said he had nothing to lose, but I had everything to gain. And I thank him for that, because I’m here today because someone decided that they will try to save my life.

My wife rang up the next day, a Sunday, and expecting me to be, you know, pretty well and okay. They told her that she’d better come down, because they’d given me 12 hours to live... So phone was ringing everywhere, and by the time she got down there all my family were down there, and my friends. And they came down to Perth expecting me to die any time.

She wasn’t there for the first operation. My second youngest daughter came to the hospital and she had to sign the consent form for them to operate.
After the first operation they gave me 24 hours, but I started to deteriorate again and all my vital organs closed down... My kidneys, my liver... Everything closed except my heart which was just going beep... Beep... Not very fast [laugh]. And so they kept me alive and did more operations.

I did die twice on two different occasions on the operating table but they revived me.

I was put in the normal wards but, because my stomach had been cut open and left open for six weeks, a super bug got into my stomach. One of the golden staphs. And so I shifted to my own isolation ward on my own, for some reason or other. They got rid of that golden staph. And I ended up getting three altogether, one after the other, so they were pushing all the drugs into me to get me out of that hospital... But it took about another two months for them to get me finally up and out of the hospital.

It was a very traumatic experience for my wife and my family and... But I thank that doctor who said he decided to have a go to try and fix me up.

She went to the hospital every day. Everyday it was a different day, she said that when she’d go in she would go in and expect them to give her the worst news and... So they assured her that I was starting to improve, and she knew that I was going to pull through... In a way that she knew the doctors would heal me. She had quite a traumatic experience herself... Yes, and my family.

Lots of Aboriginal people that go to Perth, they think that when they go to Perth, if you’re a patient, that you won’t come back to your own town or wherever you come from. And they’d like to have their families down there to be with them all the time, to give them support and to be with them. Because of the close connection with families, they just want that to happen.