

12 July 2016

Beating the odds: Diabetes Victoria honours *Kellion Victory Medallists*

During this year's National Diabetes Week (10–16 July), Diabetes Victoria will award *Kellion Victory Medals* to 66 Victorians who have lived with the condition for more than 50 years. Among them are 10 recipients who have qualified in the 70- and 75-years categories.

Less than 100 years ago, type 1 diabetes was a death sentence: half of the people who developed it died within two years; more than 90% were dead within five years.¹ Thanks to the introduction of insulin therapy in the 1920s, and numerous advances since then, the long-term survival of those with type 1 diabetes has dramatically improved over the decades.²

"There is no cure yet for type 1 diabetes, but recent innovations have improved life expectancy and quality of life immensely," says Diabetes Victoria CEO Craig Bennett. "It is a remarkable achievement to have lived with diabetes for so many decades and I congratulate all of our recipients for this outstanding accomplishment. They all deserve our utmost respect and admiration."

Kellion Victory Medal recipient Anna Moresby was not expected to live to see her 30th birthday, but after living with diabetes for more than 75 years, the Brighton woman is still going strong. "I have just celebrated my 80th birthday which nobody thought was possible when I was first diagnosed," Anna says. Her type 1 diabetes was diagnosed in 1940, a time when doctors knew little of the condition and medical treatments were nowhere near as advanced as they are today.

Consequently, having lived with type 1 diabetes for 70 years has given *Kellion Victory Medal* recipient Peter Eaton a feeling of great satisfaction. "To a point I am in disbelief that I really have reached this amazing milestone," Peter says proudly. He was diagnosed aged seven in 1946. "I have been able to keep in very good health and enjoy life without most of the complications that come with diabetes, a lot of the credit for which goes to my wife, Bernie," Peter continues.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease. The immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys cells in the pancreas that make insulin. Insulin is needed to get blood sugar (glucose) into cells for energy. Without insulin, glucose builds up in the bloodstream. This damages cells and tissues throughout the body. People who develop type 1 diabetes need to take insulin via injections or an insulin pump for the rest of their life.

While insulin therapy allows a person with type 1 diabetes to stay alive, it does not cure the condition nor necessarily prevent possible health complications, which may include: kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, heart attack, stroke, and pregnancy complications.

¹ Source: Harvard Health Publications.

² A recent Australian study has found that diabetes results in a modest reduction in life expectancy (3.1 years for women and 3.2 years for men) and a substantial reduction in disability-free life expectancy (9.1 years for women, 8.2 years for men) in Australian adults. Source: Huo L et al. (2016). Burden of diabetes in Australia: life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy in adults with diabetes. *Diabetologia*, July 2016, Volume 59, Issue 7, pp1437-1445.



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

About *Kellion Victory Medals*:

Kellion Victory Medals honour the lives of people who have lived with diabetes for many decades – which is an outstanding achievement. Australia's *Kellion Victory Medal* was named in honour of the late Mr Claude Kellion AM, a Sydney businessman who established a foundation to promote diabetes research after his son died aged 38 from diabetes complications.

Since 1984, more than 1600 people have received *Kellion Victory Medals* in Australia. All Australians who have lived with diabetes for 50 years or more are eligible for a *Kellion Victory Medal*. More information is available here: diabetesaustralia.com.au/About-Diabetes-Australia/Kellion-Victory-Medal

We **support, empower** and **campaign for** all Victorians affected by diabetes.

For more information:

Jane Kneebone 0416 148 845
Sybille Taylor 0408 102 344

jkneebone@diabetesvic.org.au
staylor@diabetesvic.org.au