

# How cancer changed Josh

by Kietley Isrin

"I WOULDN'T wish it on my worst enemy. I wouldn't even wish it upon Osama Bin Laden." — These were the words of 23-year-old Josh Bonello who only just days before Christmas finished up his final round of chemotherapy.

In a recent interview, the North Richmond resident spoke to the *Gazette* about how testicular cancer changed his life and the toll it has taken on himself, his career and his family.

"It all started when I felt a lump as hard as a rock and the size of a pea. I knew something was wrong because I couldn't sleep at night, couldn't get comfortable when sitting at work and the area was really sensitive. I went to the doctor and he disregarded it as anything serious."

Two months later, Josh said the lump had grown to the size of a golf ball so he made an appointment with another doctor for a second opinion.

"As soon as I showed the doctor he sent me to get an ultrasound straight away. I was then referred to a urologist. Within one day from going to the GP I was diagnosed with stage one testicular cancer."

Josh said what came over him next was just pure shock.

"You can't put words to something like that," he said.

"I remember sitting in the urologist's office waiting to hear my results. He didn't say straight away that it was cancer he just started talking about how curable the disease was and about fertility after I do chemotherapy."

Josh said his biggest fear was when he found he had to wait for treatment.

"They told me it would be a month from when I saw the oncologist to start my first round of chemo, which is a long time when you just want it over and done with and this was because Nepean Cancer Care Centre treats so many people that when a spot becomes available someone takes it."

He found that the whole experience changed his view on life.

"My life has done a complete 180 since being diagnosed with the disease," he said. "I had a radical orchidectomy which means they removed my right testicle completely. The direction you thought you were heading in changes. There's a lot of uncertainty because you don't know what's coming next, what's going to happen. Am I going to be fully cured? Is it going to come back? I tend not to make plans so far into the future now and I don't like thinking too far ahead because I want to enjoy life and despite being completely terrified, I had to keep reminding myself that the doctor

said it was curable."

Josh told the *Gazette* that knowing he had cancer was nothing compared to the weeks of intense chemotherapy.

"Chemotherapy was the hard bit. That's when everything really gets turned upside down. My body didn't react to it the way I would have liked it to. I experienced nausea, restlessness, I was sick and tired, vomiting, constipation and diarrhoea, loss of appetite, hair loss and an aching in my bones and legs that were pretty tremendous but there's nothing you can do about it."

For two whole weeks, Josh endured compressed chemotherapy treatment at Nepean Cancer Care Centre.

"Because it's curable, the chemotherapy was very intense because they knew I could beat it so they loaded me up with as much as possible."

Josh completed six months of chemotherapy in two weeks. He completed his final treatment in December 2011 and has now been declared all clear.

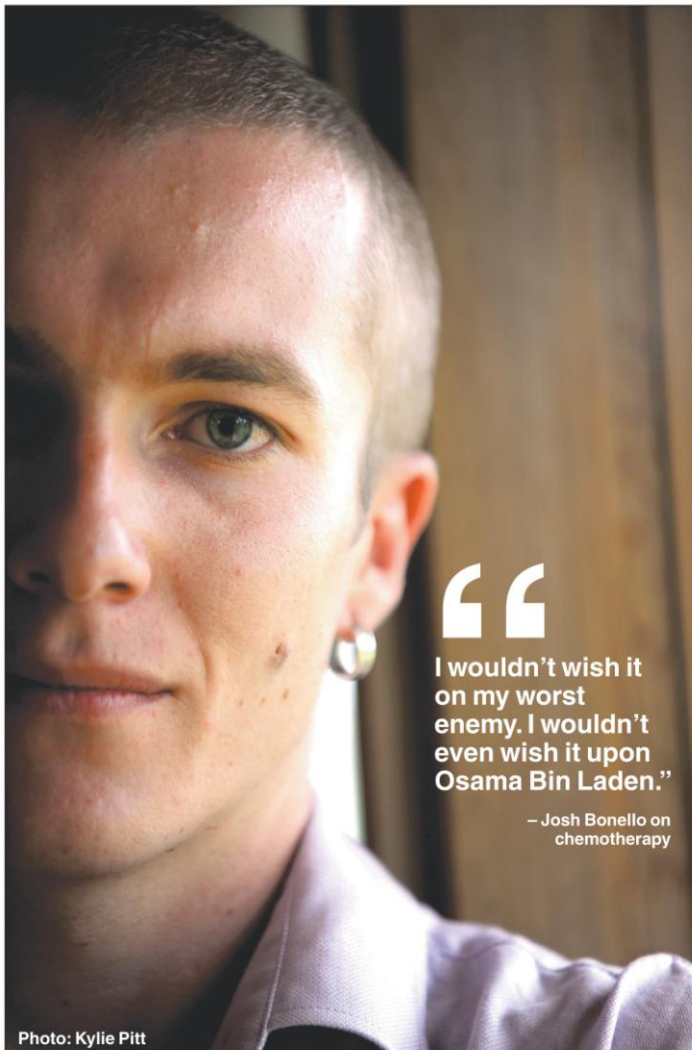
Josh said the impact his cancer had on his family "was by far something I never want them to go through again".

"Mum had to take me to and from treatment every day for two weeks, so you can imagine the amount of petrol she went through, plus juggling my two younger brothers at home."

Josh was also forced to leave his job for some time due to not having enough sick leave or annual leave to cover his treatment and recovery period. "Having an oncology centre in the Hawkesbury would have been heaven-sent," he said.

"Travelling really took its toll and when I had the operation, I used up all of my sick leave because I needed two weeks to recover. I had no choice but to go on Centrelink, but even then my sickness allowance gave me \$400 a fortnight which wasn't enough to even cover my rent. I'm positive I'm not the only one that was in that situation, having to sit and wait for treatment. I know that I wasn't the worse case patient and there were people that needed treatment sooner but at the end of the day it shouldn't come down to priority, there should just be a service available."

"At Nepean they treat about 50 people a day and when you actually sit down and work that out and you see how many people are actually affected by cancer, what is the state government doing with our money? The Hawkesbury is a huge area and would greatly benefit from an oncology centre. It doesn't even have to be as big as Nepean as long as it can treat 10 to 15 people a day it would help out so much."



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— Josh Bonello on chemotherapy

Photo: Kylie Pitt

## BREAKOUT

WHAT: Raising the Roof, oncology fundraiser

WHERE: Richmond Club

WHEN: Saturday, March 17

TICKETS: \$50 including two-course dinner available from the Richmond Club

WHAT TO EXPECT: Raffles, auctions, live entertainment  
See next week's Gazette for more event information