



8 August 2026

To everyone living with severe and very severe ME, and to those who love and care for them,

I stand alongside you on this day of awareness. I have never needed convincing that severe and very severe ME is real, serious, and gravely neglected. However, I won't claim to have spent sufficient time with you to understand your daily reality from the inside, how your lives have altered immensely, what this illness has stolen from you, and how you've been harmed by the systems with a duty to heal and protect. I do not have that insight, and I would not presume to.

What I can offer, if not true understanding, I hope, is more durable than sympathy. Much of my work as a doctor, researcher, and volunteer with ME Group Australia has been to help bring ME into the light after decades in which this illness was relegated to the margins of medicine. Your body is not deceiving you. The failure has been in our looking, not in your telling. So, when I say you are seen, I do not mean it as a sentiment. I mean that the biology bears you out, and that the evidence continues to accumulate irrespective of doubts and ignorance.

Awareness of ME, though important, is insufficient to carry you, and it does not do justice to the resilience you have demonstrated living with this illness. I have made a deliberate decision to shape my career around ME, so that what I offer is not a message, but a direction. I am also glad to be part of a growing number of clinicians and scientists who have chosen to give ME the attention it warrants. The specialists who will understand this condition and what it's taken from you are being formed now, and some of us have already devoted ourselves to that work.

What people with severe and very severe ME ask for is incredibly reasonable—to be believed, understood, and for that to translate into meaningful care that reaches you at home or at the bedside. These are ordinary expectations of anyone who is unwell. That they remain unmet is an indictment of medicine and of policy, not a failure in you.

Today is also a day of remembrance. We hold in our hearts those who were lost in the context of living with ME, and those who experienced preventable harm through deficiencies in care. Their lives are part of why this day exists, and part of why I have chosen this pathway. To the carers, whose compassion is often unseen and given at great personal cost, your work is deeply appreciated and matters more than my words can convey.

I offer you this message, and my commitment. You are seen. The science increasingly reflects what many of you have known for years, and more clinicians are recognising what can no longer be overlooked. I intend to spend my career helping to turn that recognition into tangible outcomes— a system in which diagnoses of severe and very severe ME are taken seriously, research that reaches you, and care that finally comes. Your presence matters. You are not forgotten, and you will not be left behind.

With deepest respect and much hope,

Stan

Dr Stanley Du Preez, MD PhD