



Media release – World Stroke Day – October 26, 2006

STROKE PLAN TO SAVE LIVES, REDUCE HEALTH COSTS

The National Stroke Foundation today announced a four-tiered plan that could cut the number of strokes in Australia by at least 20,000 a year.

Stroke currently costs \$2.14 billion a year (2004), however, properly managed, there is a potential to offset about \$1.06 billion of these costs.

The National Stroke Foundation is asking the Federal Government to commit almost \$40 million dollars over the next four years on fighting stroke.

Despite being Australia's second greatest killer and a leading cause of disability, stroke does not currently receive any Federal Government funding and has not received an allocation in a federal budget since being made a National Health Priority Area ten years ago.

Dr Erin Lalor, the National Stroke Foundation's CEO, said today Australians are suffering one stroke every ten minutes.

"That's 53,000 new and recurrent strokes a year. With the ageing Australian population this will jump to more than 74,000 by 2017," she said.

Today (October 26) is World Stroke Day with the theme, 'stroke is a treatable and preventable catastrophe'.

Under the plan submitted to the Federal Government, the National Stroke Foundation will raise awareness of high blood pressure, which is the main risk factor for stroke and educate Australians about the signs of stroke to reduce the delay in getting treatment.

The National Stroke Foundation wants to enhance the capacity of health care professionals and the health system to provide best-practice care to stroke patients and people at risk of stroke.

"The best care for someone who has a stroke is in a stroke care unit, but there are just not enough stroke units in Australia," Dr Lalor said.

Dr Lalor said a new report in the *Internal Medicine Journal* shows that Australia is lagging behind other countries in providing specialised stroke care. Specialised stroke care is provided in hospitals by doctors, nurses and rehabilitation clinicians, such as physiotherapists, in a coordinated and focused way, much like a coronary care unit.

The National Stroke Foundation's plan also seeks government funding to deliver more support for stroke survivors. Dr Lalor said there are 346,000 survivors living at home, but only 4,000 are accessing peer support.

The National Stroke Foundation has written to all Federal Members of Parliament asking them to urge the Government to support the four action areas that will save lives, reduce disability from stroke and improve the quality of life for stroke survivors and their families.

For more information or to interview Dr Lalor, contact: Nicola Edwards (03) 9670 1000 or 0416 800 790 or Brian Peck 0437 515 505