

**FOR RELEASE ON WORLD STROKE DAY — OCTOBER 9, 2007**

## **NATIONAL SURVEY: AUSTRALIA'S STROKE SERVICES INADEQUATE**

Australians suffer more than one thousand strokes a week but hospital services around the country are often non-existent, inadequate or patchy at best according to the National Stroke Foundation.

“There are many challenges facing stroke care in Australia,” NSF CEO, Dr Erin Lalor said today.

The Australia-wide audit found that less than a quarter of hospitals had a stroke unit despite evidence that the units reduce death and disability. There were only 54 stroke units across Australia, which were able to care for half of the stroke patients in hospitals surveyed.

Few hospital emergency departments and ambulance services had systems in place to speed up admission of stroke patients.

Thrombolysis, the use of the clot-busting drug tPA, was alarmingly low. Only 33 hospitals had treated at least one patient with tPA in the previous year and only 461 patients in Australia had received tPA.

Some hospitals admitting acute stroke patients did not have access to CT brain scanning.

Few hospitals provided clinics for treatment of Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA), a ‘mini-stroke’.

Dr Lalor said the five priorities to begin saving lives and reducing disability caused by a stroke were:

1. Increase the number and size of stroke units, particularly in larger hospitals.
2. Implement procedures so that emergency departments work with ambulance services to speed up assessment and treatment.
3. Improve treatment protocols and procedures to provide patients and families with information before leaving hospital.
4. Conduct education programs for stroke care professionals.
5. Develop TIA clinics to ensure rapid assessment and management of TIA.

Dr Lalor said some of the priorities are the responsibility of state governments but there was an opportunity for the federal government and the states to put in place national protocols and procedures.

“Dollars are needed but so is federal-state cooperation if we are going to stop stroke, save lives and end suffering,” Dr Lalor said.

**CONTACT: To interview Dr Lalor, contact Brian M. Peck 0437 515 505**