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New phone service to reduce isolation after stroke

Stroke is Australia's second biggest killer and a leading cause of disability. There are an estimated 346,700 stroke survivors in Australia of which 280,000 live with some form of disability.

According to the National Stroke Foundation significant emotional, physical and psychological issues after stroke profoundly impact quality of life with ninety one per cent of stroke survivors feeling depressed at some point.

"Stroke survivors often describe a bleak picture when they return home from hospital and struggle to regain their health and life," said Dr Erin Lalor, Chief Executive Officer of the National Stroke Foundation.

"Without support, depression, anxiety and social isolation are common for both stroke survivors and their carers."

As part of its mission to improve life after stroke, the Foundation has launched a free phone service to support stroke survivors and carers who are struggling with isolation and despair.

StrokeConnect Phone will put stroke survivors and carers in phone contact with trained volunteers who have personal experience with stroke.

The program will allow stroke survivors and carers to discuss issues with communication, dependence, rehabilitation, inability to work, personality and family role changes with others affected by stroke.

Peer support is primarily offered by stroke support groups however it is estimated that only around 4,000 stroke survivors and carers are accessing group meetings because of distance, transport difficulties, fatigue and apprehension.

The National Stroke Foundation believes **StrokeConnect Phone** will help those who access it – as well as the volunteers who provide support – to feel less alone and increase their confidence.

StrokeConnect Phone is a free call **1800 787 653**. The new service will work alongside the National Stroke Foundation's existing StrokeLine which currently provides information and advice on stroke, prevention, treatment, recovery and support from health professionals.

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