



# Australian stroke news

## Official newsletter of the National Stroke Foundation

National Stroke Foundation Level 7, 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000 / (03) 9670 1000 / [www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au)



Dear friends

**With your support 2009 was a year of positive achievements for the National Stroke Foundation as we work towards our goal to save 110,000 Australians from death and disability due to stroke over 10 years.**

During the rollout of *Know your numbers* in Queensland and Victoria, we tested the blood pressure of around 30,000 people. As well as raising awareness of the most significant risk factor for stroke, this vital program ensures those with high blood pressure receive treatment. We aim to reach more people with our *Know your numbers* program in 2010.

We are encouraged to hear first hand accounts from people who called an ambulance when they recognised the signs of stroke from our **FAST** message. Several of these people told us they got to hospital early enough to receive vital, life saving treatments.

I can also report that more Stroke Care Units opened in response to our national audit of acute services and the work of stroke networks around the country. This is indeed a significant achievement that will help to save lives.

As we begin 2010, we are already hard at work and with your support I believe we can do more in the year ahead to reduce the impact of stroke on the community.

We will release new, updated guidelines outlining the best possible care for stroke patients at all stages of recovery. We will also follow up our 2008 audit of stroke rehabilitation services to monitor progress.

Our StrokeConnect program will be delivered in selected hospitals around the country so that even more stroke survivors will become connected to the vital services and people who can help them on the road to recovery.

Thank you for so generously supporting our work in 2009 and I hope with your continued support in 2010 we can stop stroke, save lives and end suffering.

**Dr Erin Lalor**  
CEO, National Stroke Foundation

## Research gets stroke survivors out and about

**Congratulations to Stroke Foundation Research Fellow Dr Annie McCluskey who has been awarded a prestigious Project Grant from the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC).**



The \$566,600 grant allows Dr McCluskey to undertake the 'Out-and-About Trial', investigating ways to increase outdoor journeys and increase the confidence of stroke survivors walking on rough ground, crossing roads and in busy shopping malls.

The study will involve 20 community rehabilitation teams and 300 stroke patients. "The use of a global positioning system (GPS) is a simple method for measuring how far and how often people go out," explains Dr McCluskey.

"GPS will allow us to measure changes in community participation over time which we believe will lead to improved quality of life."

In 2008 Dr McCluskey was awarded the Veolia Environmental Services research grant from the National Stroke Foundation to pilot the research.

She is one of the first National Stroke Foundation Research Fellows, her fellowship co-funded by the University of Sydney (Faculty of Health Sciences) and the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney.

Dr McCluskey will conduct the trial with a team including researchers from Australia, Canada and England.





## Acting FAST saves lives

Tressa Tiller, 65, was having a shower at home in Aberdeen, NSW, when she noticed her right arm wouldn't work properly. She got out of the shower and went to sit on her bed, but slid off. She phoned her daughter and noticed that her speech was slurred.

Tressa remembered seeing the Stroke Foundation's **FAST** ad on TV describing the symptoms of stroke and recognised these symptoms in herself.

She told her daughter to call an ambulance immediately because she was having a stroke. Despite her daughter suggesting that it must be something else Tressa was insistent.

This was the right thing to do. The quick response enabled rural paramedics to transfer Tressa to John Hunter Hospital by helicopter, ensuring she arrived in time to receive treatment to break up the blood clot in her brain causing the stroke.

Her symptoms started to disappear during the treatment.

Days later, the only signs of Tressa's ordeal were a slight slurring of a few words and a tiny twist at the corner of her mouth. She has regained full function of her right arm and leg.



"I can't believe how everything just fell into place. And I also think that I am partly responsible because I listened to the **FAST** ad and was able to recognise that I was having a stroke and that I should call an ambulance straight away," said Tressa

**Visit [www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au) to view the FAST ad and a short demonstration of how the signs of stroke may appear.**

## Are you looking for a Memorable Challenge?



India was a memorable experience for Belinda Bailey (far right).

**Memorable Challenges are adventurous overseas expeditions that will push you to the limit as you raise much needed funds and awareness for the National Stroke Foundation.**

Belinda Bailey survived a stroke four years ago just before her 31st birthday. Here Belinda describes her experience of taking the Memorable Challenge India Cycling Trip in November 2009.

*India is truly amazing and we had the opportunity to see many different parts of the country. The crew really looked after us and made sure we were safe and happy, even teaching us a bit of Hindi along the way.*

*The cycling was truly challenging – it isn't called a memorable challenge for nothing! The Taj Mahal was a magical sight to see in the sunrise. But I would have to say that the true highlight of this trip was the people of India, especially the children running to greet us as we rode by with big smiles on their faces – this is the sight I will never forget.*

*I felt a great sense of accomplishment after completing the Memorable Challenge and can now say that I can do everything I wish – even after my stroke!*

**Are you interested in working on a local school community project in India in 2010? Contact Jasmin Lesniak on 03 9670 1000 to find out about Memorable Challenges India Project 20 September to 3 October 2010.**