

A plan for better stroke prevention, treatment, and care for all Tasmanians

- › **The Tasmanian Government has an opportunity to continue, and strengthen, its investment in stroke prevention, treatment and care, and in doing so, ensure more Tasmanians avoid, survive, and live well after stroke, reducing stroke's burden on our community, health care system and economy.**
- › Tasmania has the highest per capita incidence of first stroke nationally.¹ This year alone, Tasmanians will experience more than 660 first-time strokes¹, and there are more than 11,000 survivors of stroke living in our community¹, many with an ongoing disability.
- › Unless action is taken, it is estimated that by 2050 the number of first-time strokes experienced by Tasmanians will be nearly 1,000 strokes annually¹, and there will be more than 16,000 survivors of stroke living in the community.¹
- › Stroke Foundation gratefully acknowledges the ongoing funding received from the Tasmanian Government (\$94,000 per annum), which has enabled us to maintain a local presence in the state and provide Tasmanian survivors of stroke with valuable information and support.
- › Further to this, we are proud to be partnering with the Tasmanian Government in taking action to address the state's stroke burden. A strong foundation has been established with the delivery of a:
 - › F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Education program.
 - › Stroke Community of Practice (CoP) StrokeLink Program.
 - › Stroke Outreach Program (StOP).
- › **Stroke Foundation welcomes the opportunity to build on the important work already being undertaken in the state, and looks forward to continuing to work with the Tasmanian Government and Department of Health to deliver initiatives focused on stroke prevention, treatment and care for all Tasmanians.**

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Proposal 1

Continue the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Education Program, and implement a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Education Campaign, to reduce stroke and speed up treatment.

Investment: \$185,000 per annum over four years.



Stroke is a time-critical illness, and faster diagnosis and treatment saves lives and results in improved quality of life. When someone suffers a stroke every minute counts. F.A.S.T. access to treatment means a greater chance of recovery and decreased costs for our health system.

It is critical Tasmanians understand if they or someone they know experiences the signs of stroke, including facial drooping, arm weakness, or speech changes, they must call triple zero (000) immediately.

Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Education Program, which is currently being delivered in Tasmania with the support of the Tasmanian Government, recruits, trains and provides support to local volunteers to raise awareness in the community about stroke, including the signs of stroke, and chronic disease prevention, through the delivery of StrokeSafe talks. Through the compelling voice of those impacted by stroke, we increase knowledge and help to ensure patients get to hospital in the critical time window for life-saving stroke treatment.

In addition to delivering StrokeSafe talks, volunteers set up displays and activities at community events, distribute F.A.S.T. collateral (bookmarks, fridge magnets, wallet cards and 'Understand and Prevent Stroke' booklets), gain local workplace support, and engage local media, which facilitates improved awareness about the signs of stroke and dispatches of ambulances.

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Achievements to date

- › 18 volunteers trained as StrokeSafe speakers, delivering free education sessions to community groups and workplaces, and attending events in target communities across the state.
- › Significant local media coverage.
- › Partnerships developed with the University of Tasmania, Metro Tasmania, Libraries Tasmania, Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, Corumbene Care, Catholic Care, local workplaces and community groups.
- › **In 2019:**
 - › F.A.S.T. events were held across the Huon Valley, including information sessions and StrokeSafe talks. Based on the results of pre and post questionnaires completed by attendees at StrokeSafe talks, there was a 36 percent increase in the number of participants who recognised the three F.A.S.T. signs of stroke.
 - › More than 15,000 F.A.S.T. resources (bookmarks, wallet cards, fridge magnets and 'Understand and Prevent Stroke' booklets) delivered by StrokeSafe volunteers to organisations in the Huon Valley and Launceston, including pharmacies, general practice surgeries, community health centres, workplaces, businesses, local and state government organisations, as well as households.
 - › 60 buses with internal F.A.S.T. advertising, and one F.A.S.T. branded bus, in Launceston, raising awareness of the signs of stroke in support of National Stroke Week.
- › **In 2020:**
 - › Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there was 100 percent retention of Stroke Foundation volunteers throughout 2020.
 - › A total of 16 StrokeSafe talks and information booths were held across the state, including in the isolated and at-risk communities of Southern Midlands, Great Lakes, Derwent Valley and Scottsdale, reaching 237 people. The number of events was less than the average prior to COVID-19, as we did not return to community presentations until July 2020, and not all community groups had returned to face-to-face activities. The uptake of online presentations was a low in Tasmania.
 - › Based on the results of pre and post questionnaires completed by attendees at StrokeSafe talks, there was a 59 percent increase in the number of participants who reported a 'Good Knowledge' of stroke, with 93 percent of attendees reporting the presentations had increased their knowledge of how to recognise the signs of stroke.

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- › A strong partnership was established with aged care provider Corumbene Care, resulting in the delivery of a successful series of 'Health Literacy' days (including StrokeSafe talks and health checks) in three at-risk regional areas of southern Tasmania (Campania in the Southern Midlands, Miena in the remote Central Highlands, and New Norfolk).
- › A total of 3,406 F.A.S.T. resources were delivered to the community, including 725 F.A.S.T. magnets delivered by volunteers and supporters to households via letter box drop in the suburb of New Norfolk in the at-risk community of Derwent Valley.
- › **In 2021 (January to June):**
 - › There were six news items published/broadcast in Tasmania, reaching an audience of approximately 52,392, as well as four F.A.S.T./stroke prevention interviews on community radio, and three Tasmanian posts on social media.
 - › A total of 24 StrokeSafe talks and information booths were held across the state (Northwest, North and South of Tasmania), reaching 390 people (including a CALD audience of 80 people). The uptake of online presentations continued to be low in Tasmania.
 - › A total of 330 attendees at StrokeSafe talks completed pre and post questionnaires, and of these, 72 percent were located in SEIFA 1-4 locations. There was a 54 percent increase in the number of participants who reported a 'Good Knowledge' of stroke, with 95 percent of attendees reporting the presentations had increased their knowledge of how to recognise the signs of stroke.
 - › A total of 1,610 F.A.S.T. resources were delivered to the community across Tasmania.

The F.A.S.T. Community Education Program in Tasmania is delivering results. A recent Stroke Foundation study of awareness of the signs of stroke found when unprompted, 60 percent of Tasmanians identified speech difficulties as a sign of stroke, 49 percent identified facial drooping, and 10 percent identified an inability to lift both arms.²

Importantly, Tasmania had the highest unprompted awareness of the signs of stroke, compared with all other states and territories.²

However, there is still more to be done. Only 38 percent of Tasmanians with stroke are arriving at hospital within the 4.5-hour window for clot-dissolving treatment.³

Stroke Foundation proposes that the Tasmanian Government further invest in a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Education Campaign, including television, radio and social media advertisements, as well as F.A.S.T messaging on public transport. This will support and strengthen the work of the current F.A.S.T. Community Education Program,

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and ensure even more Tasmanians understand how to recognise a stroke when it occurs, and how vital it is to call an ambulance.

Continued Tasmanian Government investment in Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. Community Education Program, and the implementation of a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Education Campaign, will strengthen other Government investments in stroke services. This includes providing support for the Tasmanian Stroke Telemedicine Service, targeting those regional communities covered by the Service, ensuring residents know the signs of stroke, and the importance of calling triple zero (000) immediately.

Proposal 2

Continue the Stroke Community of Practice (CoP) StrokeLink Program - providing a better plan for stroke treatment and care in Tasmania.

Investment: \$70,000 per annum over four years.

Stroke Foundation has developed a cost-effective, continuous improvement model that utilises local and national data, expertise, and training, to empower health professionals to deliver evidence-based stroke care across Tasmania.

Stroke Foundation's Community of Practice (CoP) StrokeLink Program supports clinical leaders in stroke to drive quality improvement through shared data, knowledge and best-practice examples.

The initial focus of the CoP was to engage in site-specific workshops and identify opportunities to foster north and south collaboration between hospitals. This has now been achieved, with 6 CoP workshops completed across the state in 2019, and the three major hospitals now engaged in a state-wide quality improvement project.

During CoP workshops, site-specific Australian Stroke Clinical Registry (AuSCR) data was presented and discussed in the identification of 'processes of care' staff felt warranted improvement. Based on these discussions, Action Plans have been developed at each hospital. Participants consistently identified the following aspects of the workshops as the most valuable:

- The benchmarking of site-specific AuSCR data against comparable sites and against best-practice guidelines.
- The opportunity to participate in planning with their multi-disciplinary team members.
- The opportunity to engage in state-wide collaboration with colleagues in other hospitals.

Achievements to date

- Three major hospitals engaged in audit and feedback.
- The first facilitated CoP change workshops were held in 2019, fostering collaboration between hospitals. Hospitals agreed on practice gaps and strategies for change and developed quality improvement plans. **Importantly, 94 percent of health professionals reported greater confidence in identifying practice gaps after the workshops.**

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- › A state-wide forum to further foster the CoP was run in 2019, with positive feedback from participants, who felt it was very valuable.
- › Between July 2020 and May 2021, webinars were delivered as part of the National Stroke Education Webinar Series, covering a range of topics, including Stroke Foundation's 'My Stroke Journey' and 'Our Family's Stroke Journey' resources, 'Risk factors and secondary prevention', 'Introduction to Secondary Prevention', 'Discharge Care Planning', 'Tasmanian Rehabilitation Data', 'Acute Services Audit Training', 'Delirium and stroke', and 'National Rehabilitation Audit Data'.
- › The webinars were promoted to sites across Tasmania, and 264 Tasmanian health professionals attended a webinar. **Results from post-webinar evaluation surveys showed 93 percent of attendees felt more confident about having secondary prevention conversations with patients, and 98 percent of attendees valued hearing how other sites approached secondary stroke prevention.**
- › The Tasmanian Stroke Network CoP has developed clinical initiatives such as the 'TIA Pathway Development and Implementation' and 'Post-Acute Stroke Care' plans.
- › Stroke Foundation is supporting the development of the Royal Hobart Hospital's digital discharge plan, 'Go Home Plan', as discharge planning has been identified as an area for improvement.
- › A state-wide workshop was held in 2021, including both virtual and face-to-face site groups, to facilitate continued CoP planning efforts around mood assessment and referral pathways.

Continued Tasmanian Government investment in Stroke Foundation's CoP StrokeLink Program will help embed the Program, strengthening clinical leadership, and allowing sufficient time for improvements in stroke treatment and care to be seen across Tasmania, maximising the return on the Government's investment.

Proposal 3

Continue StOP (Stroke Outreach Program) with a focus on follow-up to enable system navigation and continuity of care – ensuring survivors of stroke are supported to live well after stroke.

Investment: \$102,000 per annum over four years.

Over 660 Tasmanians experienced stroke for the first time in 2020.¹ More than 11,000 survivors of stroke are living in our community.¹

Ten percent of survivors of stroke will have a subsequent stroke in the first year and 25 percent in the five years following.⁴

The stroke risk in Tasmania is significant¹:

- **116,100** residents are living with high blood pressure.
- **51,000** residents are living with high cholesterol.
- **306,000** residents are overweight or obese.
- **67,00** residents are smokers.
- **80,700** residents are physically inactive.

Yet over 80 percent of strokes can be prevented.⁵ Clinical Guidelines for Stroke Management state that survivors of stroke should be informed about the risk of recurrent stroke and how to reduce this risk.⁶ Evidence-based approaches to achieve this are well established.

The Tasmanian Government is leading the way in follow-up and risk factor recognition, by partnering with Stroke Foundation to deliver the StOP Program across the state.

The first program of its kind, StOP delivers planned, individualised and coordinated education at a key point in an individual's stroke journey. This follow-up service is now delivered in a number of other states. It targets survivors of stroke post-discharge from hospital, when they are highly motivated to act but often lack the knowledge and skills needed to effectively reduce their risk of subsequent stroke and live well. It provides mood screening, and promotes attendance at outpatient appointments and connections with primary care, to ensure ongoing medical management. The Program also provides education and support for hospital clinicians to enable them to deliver effective secondary prevention education and planning to every patient, every time.

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Achievements to date

- 12 sites state-wide referring to StOP.
- 95 percent of patients discharged with a diagnosis of stroke from a Tasmanian hospital receive a StOP service within 21 days of discharge.
- Annually, over 200 Tasmanian survivors of stroke and their families benefit from StOP. Referrals have been consistently over 100 survivors of stroke in each 6-month reporting period.
- A review of the program, undertaken in June 2020, demonstrated that referrers valued the program and supported its continuation.
- 17 percent increase in participant knowledge of individual risk factors.
- 16 percent increase in participant confidence in managing their individual risk factors.
- 10 percent of participants have been identified as vulnerable or at risk.
- Overall, 35 percent of completed StOP calls require some additional input from StOP, such as contacting a person or agency (e.g. the referring hospital), or providing participants with written information (e.g. Stroke Foundation fact sheets) or contact details for additional services (e.g. StrokeLine).
- 100 percent of StOP participants reported the service was of benefit to them. Increased 'support' was identified as the major benefit by 50 percent of participants, increased 'knowledge' was identified by 44 percent, and increased 'confidence' was identified by 6 percent.

"That follow up at home is so important to our area, as StOP callers may be the only person that is stroke focused that the survivor of stroke speaks to post discharge."

Tasmanian StOP Referrer

Continued Tasmanian Government investment in Stroke Foundation's StOP Program will enable it to be further embedded in Tasmanian hospitals, securing more referrals and benefiting more Tasmanian survivors of stroke and their families. StOP will also be a referral service for the Living Well After Stroke Program, and will enable those with critical risk factors for subsequent stroke to access this behavioural change program.

Proposal 4

‘Living Well After Stroke’– a stroke secondary prevention behaviour change program, empowering Tasmanians to stay well and lessen their risk of developing further strokes.

Investment: \$188,750 per annum over four years.

The ‘Living Well After Stroke’ Program will improve post-discharge support, by delivering education and support for sustainable behaviour change, as well as better coordinated care. The program will focus on Tasmanian survivors of stroke who have experienced a mild stroke, with no referral for ongoing rehabilitation, and an identified need to change health behaviours to reduce their risk of future stroke.

Tasmania has the highest per capita incidence of first stroke nationally¹, significantly impacting the community and health sector. However, more than 80 percent of strokes can be prevented⁵, providing a unique opportunity to support health behaviour change and prevent subsequent strokes.

People are at higher risk after their first stroke, yet many don’t receive effective intervention for health behaviour change. In the community, many people find appropriate evidence-informed interventions unavailable or difficult to access, coupled with low health literacy. The ‘Living Well After Stroke’ Program will address this health care gap and support Tasmanians to improve their health outcomes.

The Clinical Guidelines for Stroke Management state that stroke patients should be assessed and informed of their risk factors for recurrent stroke and educated about strategies to reduce their risk.⁶ **In Tasmania, there is a need for services that address behaviour modification for the reduction of stroke risk factors, to reduce further stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA).**

For those with mild stroke, and no rehabilitation admission, short lengths of stay in hospital reduce opportunities for health behaviour education and intervention. After discharge, there is no clear pathway for effective, evidence-based education and intervention to support health behaviour change. This underserved group is at risk of falling through the gaps after experiencing a first stroke.

To reduce the risk of subsequent stroke, the ‘Living Well After Stroke’ Program will target health behaviours related to physical activity, diet, consumption of alcohol and smoking. This will be done through an evidence-based, person-centred, Health Action Process Approach (HAPA), that supports people to build motivation, set goals, plan, and implement and track health behaviour change. HAPA has been shown to be an effective model for people with chronic illness and disability.⁷ A focus on mental health, and accessing treatment and support when needed, underpins the program.

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Table 1 Overview of sessions with an allied health professional as part of the 'Living Well After Stroke' Program

Session 1	Engagement, education, and choosing health behaviours to focus on.
Session 2	Motivation, intention setting and development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals.
Session 3	Individualised action plan.
Session 4	Monitoring progress.
Session 5	Tackling setbacks.
Session 6	Celebrating and setting new goals.
Session 7	Online resources to maintain and build on change.

Acute and primary care settings can identify individuals with risk factors for further stroke and refer them to the 'Living Well After Stroke' Program. Participants' GPs (with their consent) will be provided with information about the participant's goals and activities, supporting effective medical management of risk factors, including increased prescribing of, and adherence to, medication, and improved continuity of care.

Participants will receive a mix of individual and group assessments and interventions, delivered face-to-face and/or via telehealth. Education and interventions will be tailored to each individual, in line with their needs and preferences. Existing Stroke Foundation products and services will deliver ongoing information and support to participants after they complete the Program.

Stroke Foundation is well placed to lead the translation of an evidence-based, person-centred approach into practice in Tasmania. We have existing, effective relationships with acute and rehabilitation stroke services that are delivering our products and referring to our services. Stroke Foundation is already delivering stroke follow-up programs in three states and territories, with referral systems in place with stroke services. We successfully deliver the Stroke Outreach Program (StOP) in Tasmania, which will facilitate engagement with acute and rehabilitation settings and the 'Living Well After Stroke' Program.

Evaluation of the 'Living Well After Stroke' Program will focus on its impact on health behaviours, stroke risk and coordination of care. If successful, this approach could be utilised for people who have experienced TIA, as well as for other disease groups.

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Anita's Story

Montrose resident Anita Kerrison (pictured below) was 50 when she suffered a stroke in early 2019.

Anita had just started a job as an Adventure Coordinator in an Early Childhood Service, which involved taking kids on camps to facilitate their learning in a fun and interactive way.

"I really loved the role, as I have always been an adventurous, active person, and I love the outdoors," Anita said.

Anita's stroke remained undiagnosed for 3 days, during which she lost all movement on the right-hand side of her body.

"My stroke was caused by high blood pressure, which is a key risk factor for stroke, but which I didn't realise I had," she said.

It took Anita 8 months to get her high blood pressure under control.

Anita was shocked that she had suffered a stroke, and was very upset she couldn't work in the job she loved. She remembers saying to a friend "I feel broken, but I am not going to let this beat me". She was determined to recover well and return to work.

With the amazing support of Rehab health professionals, and a great deal of determination, Anita was able to return to work as an Adventure Coordinator in June 2019, 6 months after her stroke. She still suffers from fatigue occasionally, but is determined to challenge herself and live life to the fullest doing what she loves.

Understanding the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and physical activity to her stroke recovery, in 2020, Anita signed up for Stride4Stroke, Stroke Foundation's annual physical activity campaign that raises funds for vital programs. She set herself a challenge to walk 5km a day throughout November.

"I have been given a second chance at life and I am not going to waste it."



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About the Stroke Foundation

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We do this through raising awareness, facilitating research and supporting survivors of stroke.

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