

MARCH 2025

MS + YOU

Stories you'll love about the difference you make

Kellie's powering through because of you!



Thanks for helping people with MS *live their best lives.*

Social worker Kellie says her MS diagnosis was a 'tap on the shoulder', telling her she had to start putting herself first.

Thanks to you, MS Plus was there, even offering boxing lessons!

Kellie loves the Plus Boxing program and says it keeps her body strong and mind sharp. Exercise is Kellie's best ally, so she's grateful for her sessions

with MS Plus exercise physiologist Caitlin.

Emotional support matters too, and Kellie was moved to see her daughter connecting with other kids who 'got it' at Family Camp.

All up, Kellie is grateful to be part of the MS Plus community. She says, "It does support you in so many ways, and you don't feel so alone, which is crucial."

A year of life-changing support for even more people living with MS.

Hearing so many heartwarming stories about humbling and inspiring people is one of the best things about my job. I hope you enjoy reading some of them in your MS + YOU.

There are those living with MS like Cass, who lugs a 25-kilo ventilator to fly as a nurse with the Royal Flying Doctors Service, providing urgent care to patients in remote communities.

Then there are those like MS Plus nurse Jane, who are there every step of the way for people on their MS journey, and Dr. Steven Petratos, who has dedicated his life to finding a cure.

And there's you, whose compassion and generosity helps all of them.

You are here on every page. You give, walk, run, roll and swim—whatever it takes to raise the critical funds to make it all possible. Thank you.



John Blewonski
CEO, MS Plus

Our **events, gifts in wills, and community fundraising** help provide better treatments, ongoing services and funds research for people with MS—until MS is no more.



IT'S OPEN – *and it's awesome!*

Lidcombe Wellbeing Centre is the latest MS Plus centre to open its doors—and we couldn't have done it without the exceptional support of the MS community.

It offers a “one-stop shop” of services and facilities. Absolutely everything has been custom-designed for people living with MS and other neurological conditions.

There's a fully adapted gym (the facilities are state-of-the-art) with physiotherapy, exercise physiology, boxing and pilates classes.

Visitors can access NDIS services – support coordination and plan management, continence nurse, peer support and healthy ageing support for over 65's – and career support, help navigating the NDIS, and more.

The Wellbeing Centre provides space and opportunities for people to make connections and share experiences with others who understand. Or simply unwind in the tranquil sensory garden with your family or carers.

Right next door, there are beautiful new Specialist Disability Accommodation apartments. Respite and long-term accommodation provides safe, independent living for anyone who needs it, whether you are living with a neurological condition or any other form of physical disability.

“Having everything I need under one roof is amazing. It's a great space to meet and connect with others going through the same journey.”

– Chris, MS Plus client

People are already using – and loving – their welcoming, comfortable Wellbeing Centre.

Scan the QR code to take a virtual tour.



Blindsided by her diagnosis – but you gave Tarika the boost she needed.



Tarika was diagnosed with MS just a few months ago after struggling with ‘weird quirks’ that were happening to her body.

A diagnosis of MS is confronting, but Jane, a specialist MS nurse, was there to explain everything and help Tarika manage her symptoms and medication.

Tarika says Jane started with “a bit of an ‘MS 101’. It gave me a sense of how to think about the changes happening in my body, what to expect, and how to come to terms with it all.”

MS nurses like Jane are life-changing. Their extensive knowledge about MS, and their kind

support, really make a difference to people living with MS. And thanks to the generosity of you and others in the MS community, we can provide the specialist nursing service free of charge.

Jane has been a great comfort to Tarika, supporting her through new symptoms and challenges. Thanks to you, Tarika and others like her are facing life following a diagnosis of MS with more confidence.

“MS nurse Jane is an absolute legend. She’s answered my questions and given me some no-nonsense advice and much-needed perspective.”

– Tarika, recently diagnosed with MS

Help for every step of the journey

Your support meant MS nurse and social work advisors helped **1,525** people living with MS, offering tailored support plus group education and information sessions through our Peer Links, webinars and Peer Groups.

You gave people with MS even more in 2024

Thank you!



Health Promotion & Education

2,131 people registered for a webinar

14,718 downloads and **14,356** unique listeners for our podcasts

14,421 clients and professionals viewed on-demand webinars



Plus Peer Support

2,700 monthly volunteer hours donated by Peer Support Facilitators meant around **1,000** people attended **104** active groups



Plus Connect

16,328 connections through phone calls, emails, face-to-face and online



Plus Ambassadors

48 Ambassadors with MS or living with someone with MS donated more than 100 hours, presenting across 31 events to a total of over **2,000** people



Fun, family and new friends

A person's MS can have a big impact on their family. There's the emotional side – of perhaps feeling worried or stressed. It can mean changes to everyday life, with people taking on new or different roles in the household.

Your compassionate support helps those families relax, recharge, and connect with others who 'get it' at MS Plus Family Camps.

There's plenty of time for chat around the campfire with others who know what you are going through, along with the chance to try activities like canoeing or whizzing through the air on a flying fox.

The cost of accommodations, meals, and activities are all covered – allowing families to take a break where they can focus on themselves – then go back to everyday life, recharged!

In 2024, you helped an amazing **106 people** living with MS and their families attend camps in Phillip Island, Victoria, and Collaroy Beach, NSW.



May—the force was with you!

Each year, the May 50k raises funds for critical funds to provide life-changing support for people with MS.

In 2024, 12,801 of you walked, ran, or rolled 50km, 100km, or 150km. 1,085 teams and 237 organisations took part.

You raised: **\$2,244,381**

THE MAY 50K

A gift for the future



Cass flew thousands of kilometres as a flight nurse with the Royal Flying Doctors Service.

MS didn't keep Cass down—now she wants to help others fly high!

"I want to live life to the fullest, and I want that for others, too."

When Cass was diagnosed with MS, she decided that she was going to use her experience to help others.

At the time, she was just 21 years old and thinking of training as a nurse. She didn't let her diagnosis get in the way of her ambitions.

"We all face challenges," she says. "I thought, this is mine, but I'll do my best to manage it."

In the early stages, Cass's MS was aggressive, leading to frequent hospital stays. But good medical support and self-care helps her manage her condition.

In 2021, Cass and her partner moved to Alice Springs, where Cass became a flight nurse with

the Royal Flying Doctors Service and served as an emergency care nurse at Alice Springs Hospital.

MS Plus has been there for every step of her journey. The team helped her understand her condition, get some equipment through the NDIS, and connect with others living with MS.

Cass has regularly donated to MS Plus and recently decided to leave a gift in her Will.

"I've received so much help from MS Plus," she says. "The research and services they provide wouldn't be possible without funding. My gift can go where it's most needed."



Willing a better future

Last financial year, generous Gifts in Wills raised: \$4,939,860

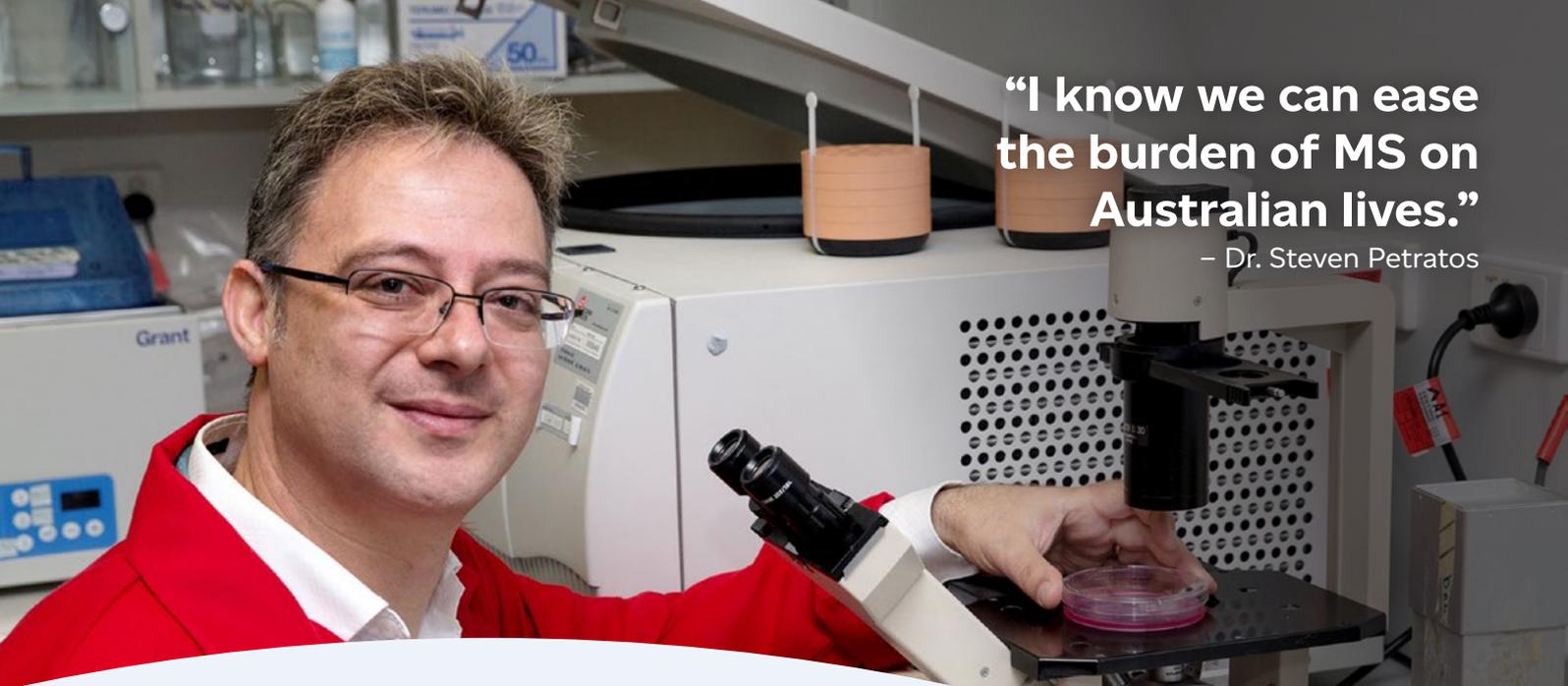
The generous donations we receive through our gifts in Wills program help provide vital services to people living with MS and fund critical research.

All our supporters who leave a gift in their Will join our Callistemon League. The league's emblem is the Callistemon Phoenicis in tribute to your legacy of kindness, care, and the transformation you make possible.

For a friendly and confidential chat about making or changing your will to include MS Plus, call Laura Henschke at **1800 443 867**, email futureplanning@msplus.org.au or visit www.mymslegacy.org.au

“I know we can ease the burden of MS on Australian lives.”

– Dr. Steven Petratos



Can scientists turn back the MS clock?

Our best and brightest have a cure in their sights.

Thanks to your generous support, Dr. Steven Petratos is looking for ways to block the protein that damages nerve fibres in MS and help the body repair itself. And he's excited!

For the past twenty years, Dr Steven Petratos has been obsessed with a protein in the brain called the "Nogo receptor," or NgR1, and how it affects MS.

His research was the first to show that this receptor can cause damage to the spinal cord and optic nerve after an injury with a disease like MS.

His team also found what causes damage to the tiny nerve cables that send messages around the body that can cause many of the problems people living with MS experience.

MS strips away myelin, a protective layer around nerve fibres in the brain and spinal chord. Dr Petratos is excited because he believes his research will eventually help scientists

reverse this through a process known as remyelination.

According to him, this may mean that in the future, “People living with MS can have a better quality of life with limited or no progression.”

Dr Steven Petratos is also hugely grateful. This vital work would not be possible without donations from the generous MS Plus community.

He says, “Without the donors, we would not be able to develop such novel therapies right here in Australia.”

He adds, “Moreover, without these funds, we would not be able to recruit the next generation of MS researchers that will go on to develop



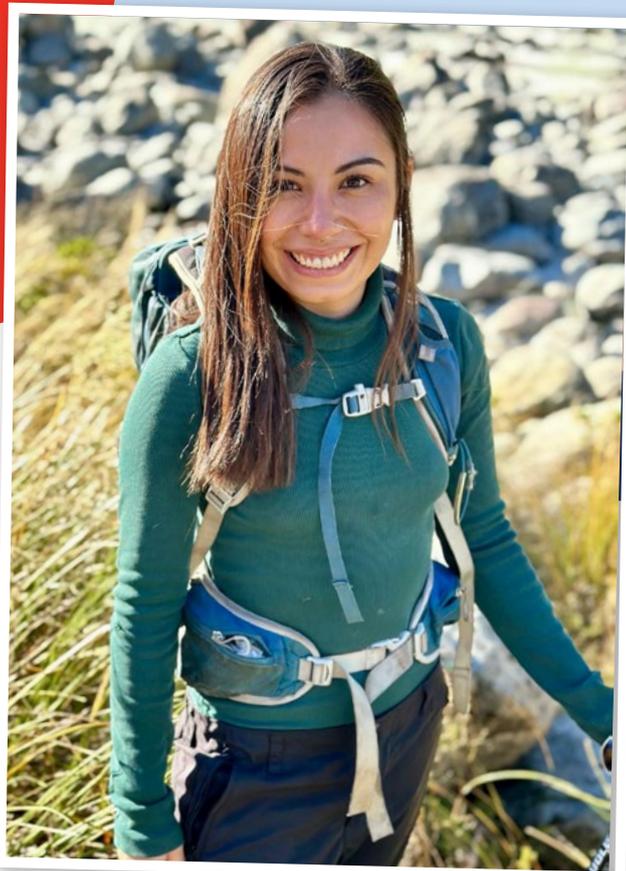
the next generation of groundbreaking therapies or even a potential cure for MS.”

“Right now, MS researchers like myself are working feverishly to give back what MS takes away from far too many lives.”

Thousands of you took up the challenge to end MS

“Life is full of unforgettable moments, and my adventure in the Southern Alps was certainly one of them.” – Jimena

Jimena hauled herself and her backpack past lakes and glaciers and through the wilderness, walking from Christchurch to Queenstown to help people with MS.



MS MEGA CHALLENGE

Australians love this ultimate team swim challenge, swimming 12 or 24 hours to raise funds to help change the lives of people with MS. In 2024, 1,711 of you dived in and gave it your all.

**You raised:
\$471,929**



The funds raised in 2024 were critical after torrential rain cancelled the 2023 event. 6,256 of you put your mettle to the pedal in Australia's largest fundraising recreational bike ride to support people living with MS.

**You raised:
\$1,361,949**



MS WALK RUN+ROLL

An incredible 6,171 of you participated in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, and Launceston, covering 41,622km across the four events.

**You raised:
\$1,001,521**

**You are amazing! Thank you – from everyone
with MS and the people who love them.**

"The challenges I've been through are endless. Just endless. But you give life back to me. You will give life back to so many people living with MS.

Thank you for helping support the research and services that transform the lives of all of us touched by MS." – Ricky

