MS PLUS Neuro Wellbeing

Tasmania Newsletter
December 2023

Our Values - *Empowerment, Community, Expertise, Creativity and Spirited*

Our new Hobart Wellbeing Centre opens

We officially opened our new Hobart Wellbeing Centre on Wednesday 1 November 2023! Hobart is our second Wellbeing Centre, after our first opened in Footscray, VIC in August — with more to come.

The Hobart region has one of the highest frequencies of MS in Australia, so these services are vital.

The Hobart Wellbeing Centre will help people keep doing what matters to them, improve their strength and movement, stay connected to the community, succeed at work and feel their best. We do this with services like exercise physiology, physiotherapy, dietetics, employment support, support coordination, nursing and peer support.

People living with all neurological conditions, carers, family, friends and health professionals are all welcome to come and visit us at 246 Murray St Hobart!

Thank you to Liberal Senator for Tasmania Wendy Askew, Deputy Chair Adriana Zuccala and our wonderful client Meg Denham for doing the honors and unveiling the plaque.

[Find out more about the Hobart Wellbeing Centre]

Compliments of the Season and a Happy New Year from all at MS Plus

2023 Annual Report and Annual General Meeting

The 2022–2023 Annual Report is now available, showcasing MS Plus' key milestones, achievements and performance in the past financial year. The Annual Report was officially presented at the Annual General Meeting, held on Wednesday 1 November.

Highlights include:

- Our successful three-year NDIS Accreditation.
- The re-tender of our Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS).
- Official rollout of Key Workers, to act as trusted partners for our clients.
- The expansion of our allied health and ESS service offering.
- Progression of our Wellbeing Centres in Footscray and Hobart .

To read the full report, visit: msplus.org.au/AnnualReport

Festive Season Opening Hours

As we bid farewell to 2023, we'd like to wish everyone a safe and happy festive season and new year!

The MS Plus offices will close from 3.00 pm on Friday 22 December
and will reopen on Tuesday 2 January 2024.

A limited number of staff will be available on Plus Connect on the 27, 28 and 29 of December, they will be working between 9am and 5pm.

If you have urgent concerns about your health, please contact your doctor or your local hospital's Emergency Department.

You can reach the team on **1800 042 138** or email **connect@msplus.org.au**

If you need support for your mental health help is available through **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**.

Please also note **NDIS information** is available on **1800 800 110**.

Awards & accolades for MS Plus Nurses

We would like to congratulate the MS Plus nursing team for their achievements at the MS Nurse conference in Adelaide that was held on 19-21 October 2023.

Jane (Gilliland) and Michael (Mortensen) currently represent MS Nurses from around Victoria and Tassie in their roles as State delegates for MSNA Inc (MS Nurses Australasia Inc). Michael and Jane both contribute to supporting and advocating for MS nurses, freely and generously giving their time to their roles at MSNA. MS Nurses Australasia Inc is the peak body for multiple sclerosis nursing in Australasia and strives to provide professional development opportunities for nurses with continuing education opportunities, support of nurse led research and peer networking.

This was indeed a special conference and year for the MS Plus nursing team.

Bridie (Phillips) was given an opportunity for a podium presentation at the conference and presented on Carers. Bridie creatively weaved her story as a carer with the details of MS Plus Carer's Strategy and how MSPlus supports Carers. Bridie delivered the presentation beautifully and it was so well received that Bridie was awarded the Helen McCarl Award for Best Novice Presentation. Congratulations Bridie!

Michael was also awarded a Lifetime membership with MSNA. This is a very special award that acknowledges MS Nurses who have significantly contributed to MS Nursing in Australasia. It is not a regular annual award but rather an award that is given when exceptional service is recognised by the MSNA Executive and State delegates. Since MSNA's inception in 1997, Michael is only the eighth recipient of this award.

Michael is a well-deserved recipient of this award, dedicating much of his nursing career to improving the lives of people with MS, their families and friends. Michael has provided unwavering support to people with MS in Tassie, he has been a constant through the many changes to the way MS care is delivered. Micheal has provided care with different hats on, in different roles, but stayed focused on his purpose. Michael has been a wonderful mentor to many nurses over the years and a highly valued colleague and friend.

We are very fortunate that Michael has spent so much of his career with us at MS Plus, and we congratulate him on a very well-deserved recognition of all that he has contributed and, indeed, his exceptional service.

Congratulations, and thank you to the entire MS Plus Nursing team.

Our new Plus Flex and Flow program is designed for people who may experience muscle tightness, decreased range of motion and/or spasticity. Led by our exercise physiologists, each session offers low-intensity exercises and gentle stretching to help relax muscles and improve mobility.

Available at our Hobart Wellbeing Centre.

Signup today!

You can help people like Alice to live happier, healthier lives

Too many Australians with MS are not getting the counselling, compassion and support they need to live their fullest lives.

Alice's story sheds light on the essential role that specialist MS nurses like Bridie play in the lives of Australians dealing with the challenges of MS.

When single mum Alice was diagnosed with MS, she'd already lost everything. *Her home. Her children. Her job.*

Alice's MS threatened everything - her financial security, sense of self-confidence, and ability to do all the things she wanted to do as a mum. For seven months after her youngest son was born, Alice's health concerns were not taken seriously and she was misdiagnosed with postpartum psychosis.

Without anyone realising it, Alice was suffering from relapsing-remitting MS. She could not understand what was happening to her or why. She was confused and scared.

She needed support – someone who would sympathise and could explain what was happening and reassure her that everything was going to be okay.

Research shows that around one third of Australians with MS are facing challenges that are limiting their independence and happiness, because they are not getting the individual support they need.

MS is a devastating condition that does much more than threaten motor skills. MS can impact the joy, opportunities and standards that enable a life to be lived to the fullest.

At MS Plus, we're dedicated to giving back what MS threatens to take away.

Alice's story is a prime example of this. Right when Alice was on the brink of giving up hope, she started receiving personalised care and support from an MS nurse to navigate her local resources. With the expert support, care and capacity that Bridie brought into Alice's life, Alice finally saw a bright path open up ahead.

Without the MS nurses helping Alice with her MS, and giving her guidance at that time, Alice would not have been able to cope with managing her diagnosis and understanding her MS.

We are collaborating with MS Australia in their advocacy efforts for the hiring and training of more MS nurses across Australia. As the rates of MS continue to rise nationwide, the support that MS nurses provide is becoming more crucial than ever.

MS nurses give back the control, happiness and general wellbeing that MS too often takes away.

Our commitment to Australians living with MS is that we will do everything we can to stop it taking away the opportunities that create a fulfilled life.

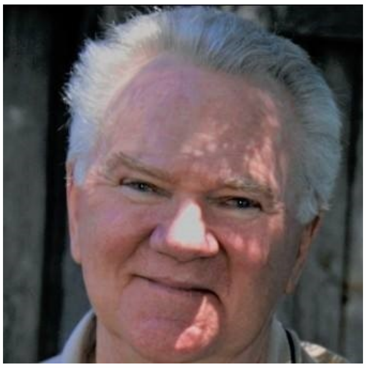
That means supporting MS nurses, funding medical research into treatments and building awareness of the impact of MS.

But today, our immediate need is ensuring that the expert care of an MS nurse is available to everyone who will benefit from their support, insight and understanding.

Please join us this Christmas in supporting our MS nurse workforce. By donating you will help make sure that more Australians like Alice have someone like Bridie standing by their side, helping them face MS with expertise and care. To donate – www.msplusdonate.org.au

To watch Alice's story – https://youtu.be/j7m-cLgaseg

Inspire the Legacy of Love: Make a Difference for tomorrow



In 2005, Ken and his wife Marilyn embarked on a journey across China. Little did they know that this adventure would lead to a profound realisation. Ken began to feel a persistent fatigue, struggling to keep pace with his fellow travellers, some much older than him. **He knew something was amiss but had no inkling of the storm that was brewing inside him.**

Back in their hometown of Dubbo, Ken's general practitioner swiftly arranged a consultation with a neurologist. **After a battery of tests, the diagnosis arrived like an unwelcome guest: multiple sclerosis (MS),** a condition that disrupts the central nervous system, affecting the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. A condition without a cure, although there exist treatments to alleviate its symptoms.

Ken, now 79, looks back and speculates that MS might have silently entered his life in the 1970s. His history included intermittent vision troubles and bouts of fatigue – telltale signs of the condition. **Yet, like many of his time, he chose not to delve into the unknown, fearing the potential repercussions, including the risk of losing his job.**

But Ken's story doesn't stop at a diagnosis; it's about resilience and determination. He continued working as an engineer for three decades and later as an office manager until his retirement in 1997. Ken's MS, a slow-progressing variant, allows him to cherish good days, even though he now navigates the world from a wheelchair. Gardening, woodworking, computing, and DIY tasks are still very much a part of his life, and he's even managed to explore Australia.

For over a decade, Ken and Marilyn actively contributed to their local MS Plus support branch in Dubbo. They organised fundraising events, raised awareness about the disease, and witnessed the profound impact of community support.

Through their journey, Ken realised that he was not alone in his fight against MS. **Grateful for the support of MS Plus, he decided to leave a lasting legacy.**

"I hope my gift will contribute to a future where no one with MS feels alone," Ken shared.

Ken and Marilyn's legacy has found a permanent place among the members of the **MS Callistemon League**, a group of dedicated benefactors. **Together, they are united by a shared vision – to fast-track a cure for MS and provide care along the way**. Their collective commitment paves the path to a brighter future for all those affected by this challenging condition.

Join us in creating a legacy of love where every gift in a Will becomes a beacon of hope for generations to come. Please contact Laura or Rebecca for more information.

www.mymslegacy.org.au 1800 443 867 or email futureplanning@msplus.org.au

Peer Group Christmas Parties

Southern Tassie

Christmas Lunch

Saturday, 9 December—12 midday
Maypole Hotel
$40 a head for 2 course Christmas meal

RSVP Chris: cegm58@icloud.com OR
Angela Land: 62201121 by Friday 1 December

New Norfolk

Monday, 4 December

Venue & Time TBA

Launceston & Surrounds

No function

Ulverstone & Surrounds

Christmas Lunch

Wednesday, 13 December—11:30am
Devonport Country Club
Order from Menu OR Christmas Lunch

RSVP Judy: jsa27276@gmail.com
by Friday 8 December

Circular Head & Surrounds

Christmas Dinner

Monday, 4 December - 7pm
Stanley Hotel

RSVP Jennywallis@iprimus.com.au by
Monday 27 November

Please Note: MS Peer Support groups are pausing throughout January, resuming in February.

Education and Wellbeing

Coping with the heat

Webinar – Watch on demand!

With an increase in temperature during the summer months, many people living with multiple sclerosis experience discomfort and pain. Join an MS Occupational Therapist, as they explore practical strategies to manage heat intolerance and tips and tricks to enjoy this season a little more.

Coping with the heat with Dr Ollie Jay

Podcast- Listen now!

Heat sensitivity is a major issue for 90% of Australians living with MS. Join University of Sydney Researcher, Dr Ollie Jay as he discusses heat intolerance and explore the practical ways of coping with the heat.

Preparing for emergencies and extreme conditions

Webinar – Live: Wednesday 13 December 2023 at 5:30 - 6:30 PM

Being prepared for an Emergency is particularly important in the Australian Summer, as power outages, floods and bushfires threaten many homes and lives. Living with a chronic condition adds further burden and the need for careful planning. This webinar features an expert panel who will provide up to date information and support to help navigate another summer season. Hosted by MS Nurse Advisor Jane Gilliland, and recent volunteer firefighter, with Dr Yvonne Learmonth, a senior lecturer at Murdoch University and accredited physiotherapist, and co-researcher with Dr. Claudia Marck, who will discuss their collaborative project aimed at understanding and enhancing the preparedness of the MS community for future crises. Joined by Eilish Maguire, a National Lead for Urban Climate Resilience at the Australian Red Cross, who will share her insights on individual resilience to disasters.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS GENETICS STUDY

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS NOW!

We need your help to investigate the Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) strain that may play a crucial role in developing multiple sclerosis (MS). This Australia-wide study also aims to identify specific markers in the blood associated with onset and progression of MS.

To participate in this study, we invite

People WITH MS who:

- Are 18 years and above
- Have been diagnosed with MS by a neurologist

AND

People who DO NOT have MS who:

- Are 18 years and above and have NOT been diagnosed with MS, and
- Have NOT been diagnosed with any similar neurological condition

Participation involves:

- Completing a questionnaire
- Providing three saliva samples (postal submissions accepted)
- Optional blood sample (in person)
- $20 gift voucher on completion

To volunteer, or for more information, contact:

Chhavi Asthana, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Menzies Institute for Medical Research
17 Liverpool Street, Hobart, TAS, 7000
t: (03) 6226 4226 e: Chhavi.Asthana@utas.edu.au

This study is approved by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee, H0027273 (H-85821)

MS Research Flagship

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA
MENZIES
Institute for Medical Research

The TAURUS.2 trial is looking for people living in Hobart with

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Can you help our researchers find out if low intensity Magnetic Brain Stimulation (MBS) is an effective treatment for MS?

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP IF YOU

- are age 18-65
- can walk unaided or with a stick
- can attend short daily appointments at Menzies (Mon-Fri) for 4 weeks
- can complete 2 MRI and 3 clinical assessments
- do not have a history of seizures or serious brain injury
- have not received MBS before

Please contact Kate Probert:
(03) 6226 7746
katherine.probert@utas.edu.au

Free parking onsite/All reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed. $50 Voucher on completion.

This study has been approved by The University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee, H0026359

MS Research Flagship

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