MS PLUS
Neuro Wellbeing

Tasmania Newsletter
June 2024

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

MS WALK RUN+ROLL

Launceston took on the MS Walk Run + Roll again in 2024!

On Sunday 26 May, 140 participants walked, ran and rolled at Inveresk Precinct to celebrate the resilience and diversity of our amazing MS community and raised over $19,443!

To each and every one of you who took part, fundraised, volunteered, supported, and shared this event, THANK YOU!!

Because of each of you, we have been able to get closer to our $1,250,000 goal to ensure the continuation of MS Plus support and services for people living with MS and ensuring no one has to face MS Alone.

And as a bonus, fundraising has not closed yet! You can still support the 2024 MS Walk Run and Roll and help us reach our $1.25m goal.

DONATE or lookup the fabulous efforts here



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what's on

Exploring the latest programs and updates from client engagement and wellbeing

JUNE 2024

10—16 June is International Men's Health Week! Throughout June we have taken the opportunity to highlight the importance of men's health and promote and support the health and wellbeing of men in our community. Join us for a live webinar about all things men's health. Our podcast series will have new episodes focused on the experience of being a man with MS and some of the unique challenges. Gain expert insights, practical advice, and community support on managing symptoms, mental health, sexual function, and overall wellbeing. Don't miss out on valuable resources and connections during this important month!

Upcoming MS Plus webinars

Men’s health: what every man should know!
13 June 2024, 12.30 pm – 1.30 pm AEDT

During Men’s Health Week, join us for a live webinar featuring Nurse Practitioner Luke Mitchell. Luke is passionate about all areas of men’s health, with a special interest in holistic sexual health and rehabilitation. Luke has master’s degrees in public health and clinical nursing and has recently qualified as a nurse practitioner. He has over ten years of experience in urology and sexual health. Luke currently sits as an active member on the Healthy Male Health Practitioners advisory board and Chairs the Australian and New Zealand Urological Nurses Society (ANZUNS) Sexual Health Special Interest Group. Luke will be joined by our own very experienced MS Nurse, Michael Mortenson.

In the webinar, Luke and Michael will cover essential men's health topics, including mental health, heart health, MS symptoms that commonly affect men and sexual health. The session focuses on building your knowledge and understanding, as well as getting practical advice to better manage these crucial aspects of men's health. Some of the topics covered are not easy to discuss, but to ensure your privacy and make you feel safe, questions can be asked without your name being shared.

Register Now!

Podcast spotlight: Men’s health

Men at Work
Many men living with MS face daily struggles and challenges in the workplace for a variety of reasons. In this podcast, Jeff Lawrance from our employment support team tackles these challenges and talks about the barriers that men with MS face in the workplace. He offers invaluable advice and strategies to help you overcome these barriers and assist you in making the changes to feel better at work. **Listen here!**

Being a Dad with MS
Parenting can be hectic at the best of times. If you’re living with MS, trying to juggle your needs and those of your partner and your children brings additional challenges. Join Silas as he shares his experience of being a busy dad living with MS. Silas describes the various strategies he has put in place that support him and his family to enjoy life and live well. **Listen here!**

what's on ...

Catch up on recent podcasts:

MS diagnosis and trauma – The unspoken shadow to chronic conditions

Psychotherapist Katie Willard Virant discusses the impact of diagnosis and how this can be a source of trauma, even years later. Katie outlines the importance of these trauma responses, how to recognise these responses in yourself and how post-traumatic growth and healing can be achieved. Katie shares practical advice on where and how to seek support and how those around you can show you the love and support you need.

Listen now!

Feeling sick, faking well – with psychotherapist Katie Willard Virant

Psychotherapist Katie Willard Virant discusses the challenges of chronic illness and the societal pressure to appear well despite having health struggles. We discuss how this can affect daily life for people living with chronic illness, and Katie shares advice on authenticity and taking space despite chronic illness.

Listen now!

The MS Boost will be in addition to our current series, so make sure you're following **MS Podcasts** on your preferred player like **Apple Podcasts** or **Spotify** to be the first to know when new episodes are released.

Catch up on past MS webinars:

Balance & stability with MS

In this recently recorded webinar, MS physiotherapist Mahenddra Raj and MS Nurse, Jodi Haartsen provide an overview of understanding balance in MS, how balance is assessed for people with MS, strategies for improving balance and the psychological and emotional impact that balance difficulties can have for people.

Watch here!

The MS Research Flagship presents:
Research with Connections 2024

Join the MS Research Flagship for a day of research and community presentations, conversations and celebrations.

Date: 28th June 2024
Time: 9am — 4pm
Venue: MyState Bank Arena, Hobart

Free event with lunch, tea and coffee provided.
Free, accessible parking.

Tickets: bit.ly/MSFlagshipResearchConnections2024

For more details visit msresearchflagship.org.au

what's on ...

Information for people supporting someone with MS

The *Plus Navigate: Friends & Family* program is for people who support someone with MS. Over two 75-minute sessions, an MS expert will guide discussions, provide information, links to resources and answer any questions. We'll cover a range of topics including:

- understanding MS
- navigating the health system
- where to access help and support
- how to take care of yourself

Register Here!

Young Carers: Navigating Responsibilities and Wellbeing

Young carers play a significant role in our society, often shouldering responsibilities beyond their years. Each young carer has unique circumstances and responsibilities. Clinical Psychologist, Nicola Palfrey from headspace National talks about the world of young carers, their challenges, and the importance of looking after themselves to manage their daily life.

Watch here!

Carers, Family & Friends Toolkit

This online resource provides a range of information and practical tips specifically designed for people who are supporting someone with MS. Topics include:

Understanding MS for Carers	Looking after yourself	Finances, legal & work
Understanding emotions	Talking about MS	Young Carers
Parents of teens with MS	Navigating support systems	Preparing for emergencies

Explore the toolkit here

Medical Cooling or Heating Concession Tasmania

Two concessions people can access for medically required heating and cooling to manage temperature sensitivity if they have a concession card (Health Care Card / Pension Card) and have a diagnosis of MS. Some other neurological conditions are also eligible for these concessions. Clients can have their GP or Neurologist fill out the medical forms for these concessions.

Daily discount on electricity bill in addition to the one you get for having a concession card due to having an MS diagnosis.

Information: https://www.sro.tas.gov.au/electricity-concessions/medical-cooling-or-heating-concession
Application Form: https://www.sro.tas.gov.au/Documents/medical-cooling-heating-concession-application-2.pdf

Essential Medical Equipment Payment

Annual payment of $183 from Centrelink to help towards costs of medically required heating and cooling.

Clients with MS can apply with the following info on application form Q4 – A neurodegenerative disorder, Q5 any relevant equipment and Q6 Multiple Sclerosis - Medically required heating and cooling to be successful.

Information: https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/essential-medical-equipment-payment
Medical Confirmation Form to apply: https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sa449

what's on ...

Peer Support Groups

We have several Peer Support Groups available in Tasmania that welcome new members any time. If you're interested in joining a peer support group, contact Plus Connect on 1800 042 138.

CIRCULAR HEAD
Meets: First Monday of the month, 7:00-8:30pm
Venue: Circular Head Rural Health

EASTERN SHORE
Meets: Second Friday of the month, 10:30am-12noon, followed by lunch
Venue: Mornington Inn

GLENORCHY *
Meets: Last Tuesday of the month, 6:00-8:00pm
Venue: Glenorchy or Moonah

NEW NORFOLK
Meets: First Wednesday of the month, 10:30am-12noon
Venue: New Norfolk

LAUNCESTON
CURRENTLY "ON HOLD"

Venue: Various cafés in Launceston

WYNYARD
Meets: Third Wednesday of the month, Midday onwards
Venue: Bruce's Café, Wynyard

ULVERSTONE
Meets: Fourth Wednesday of the month, 11:00am-1:00pm
Venue: Ulverstone Life Saving Club

MENS GROUP
Meets: Third Friday of the month, 12 midday-2:00pm
Venue: Dr Syntax, Sandy Bay

CHANGE OF DAY

***GLENORCHY Now meeting LAST Tuesday of the month**

Peer Links

The MS Peer Links sessions are now available for registration. Keep an eye on your email or inTouch for dates!

Peer Links are held online and are short-term programs facilitated by our peer support coordinators. Taking place over 4-6 week 90-minute sessions, guest speakers share information on topics to prompt discussion and learning for the group.

If you're new to peer support, have an interest in a particular topic or can't commit to an ongoing group, Peer Links are a great option.

For more information contact Plus Connect on 1800 042 138.

Retired headmistress delivers a lesson in generosity

When she was in her 40s, Helen Dick lost three of her best friends.

Their deaths later compelled Helen to consider her legacy and ways she could help others.

"In my 50s, I decided to leave gifts in my Will to three charities important to me," she explains.

One gift was earmarked for a cancer charity in memory of one of her friends. It took on more significance when Helen also battled cancer.

Another will go to a charity focused on music, her passion.

The third is for MS Plus. That gift also has personal significance because Helen, now 89, has battled multiple sclerosis (MS) for 50 years. Helen's MS symptoms emerged around 1974. She was working as a teacher in a private school in Melbourne. The job was demanding, and she often felt exhausted. But she also felt something else was causing her fatigue and sought medical advice.

"I went through a stage where I couldn't get out of the car or go up an escalator. The doctor thought it was something to do with my inner ear. Then I got tingling down my spine.
"I had two lumber punctures, but they didn't show anything definite. The specialist said I had a neurological disorder but was reluctant to call it MS.
"My fatigue got worse. I was under stress at school, my friends died. Then I learned I definitely had MS," she recalls.

By her late 40s, Helen's career was on an upward trajectory, and she became deputy head of the senior school. But the workload snowballed, and her neurologist urged her to quit for health reasons.

Helen resisted and moved to the headmistress post in the junior school. She did that job for 18 months. But it was too much. At 49, she reluctantly retired.
"After that, I tutored and drafted articles for year 12 students. But it was a blow as all my friends were still working," says Helen.

Then came the cancer. *"Everything blew up. I know stress plays a huge role in things like cancer. It likely factors in MS," she says.* She fought and beat the cancer.

Meanwhile, the MS progressed. Over time, it affected Helen's mobility and activity levels. But she soldiered on, doing what she liked for as long as possible. She moved to the Mornington Peninsula for a more relaxed lifestyle. She also taught adult education classes for 14 years, which she loved.

As Helen heads towards her 90s, she thinks again about why she's leaving a gift to MS Plus.

"After my diagnosis, a friend went with me to an MS centre, and I met several patients. I was particularly upset about some young women who had just become pregnant and suddenly had this diagnosis. I kept thinking how terrible they got MS so early.

"Those encounters prompted me to think about how I could help. I felt leaving a gift in my Will and donating to MS Plus were the things I could do.

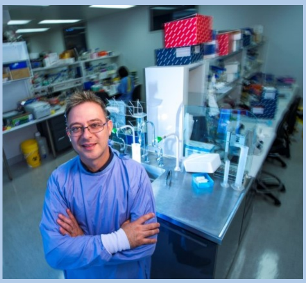
"MS Plus is terrific in the way it supports people. I told them I was leaving them a gift in my Will. I said put it where it's needed most. I feel good about this decision. It's something I can do that's positive!"

Could you help protect future generations from MS? A gift in your Will could fund research or make more services available to the MS community.
If you'd like to know more, contact the MS Plus Future Planning Team on 1800 443 867.
You can also email **futureplanning@msplus.org.au** or visit **www.mymslegacy.org.au**.

For too long, the status quo of MS has ruined lives and torn families apart

Every five minutes, someone in the world learns that they have multiple sclerosis (MS). It's a cruel and pervasive disease which can affect so many aspects of life – taking away a person's strength, their quality of life and even impacting their mental health.

I know we can help research rise to a new level and ease the burden of MS on Australian lives.



My name is Dr Steven Petratos, Senior Research Fellow at the Regenerative Neuroscience and Development Group at Monash University. I'm currently leading a three-year research project developing novel therapies for treating MS and reversing disability.

Right now, MS researchers like myself are working feverishly to develop therapeutic interventions that can give back what MS takes away from far too many lives.

The sooner we can conduct research, the sooner we can translate it to life-changing results for people living with MS – and those who will be diagnosed in the future.

Ricky, was diagnosed with MS at 35. He is a man who lost his job, his family, his mobility and even his independence to MS. Sadly, with 2.9 million people living with MS around the world, Ricky's story is an all-too-common tale. But it doesn't have to be.

Research has the power to challenge the status quo and put a stop to MS, for good. But we urgently need your help to fund transformative research projects that can improve the way we treat, manage and one day cure MS.

Already, my research has linked a specific protein – known as NgR1 – to degeneration in the spinal cord and optic nerve following an MS attack.

Identifying this protein was a vital first step towards finding a cure to MS. It was only thanks to generous people like you that my work received the funding it needed to achieve this world-first discovery. Right now, millions of people around the world are waiting for a cure – only research can help us find one.

Ricky and son

But the truth is, our work simply isn't possible without you.

Unfortunately, funding remains one of the greatest barriers to the progress of MS research in Australia. Only around 10% of grant applications are successful. This means many high-quality research projects don't receive the funding they need to get off the ground.

Your support helps give projects like mine the opportunity to carry discoveries from the lab to the clinic – where they can have a real and measurable impact on the lives of people living with MS.

By supporting MS Plus you are helping fund innovative research projects, enabling us to continue making discoveries and developing novel therapies right here in Australia.

I can't help but think of all the people whose lives have already been turned upside down by MS.

People like Ricky, who despite all he has suffered, refuses to let MS keep him down. Ricky's story is an inspiring tale of humanity's power to rise above even the greatest of challenges.

But it's also a tragic reminder of just how important it is that we conduct research now to stop more people like him from suffering tomorrow.

Together, I believe we can rise to the challenge.

Through hard work and determination, Ricky continues to rise above the challenges of his MS. But what he needs now more than ever is a cure. Today, your generous support of MS research can help drive the discoveries that could give him one.

Dr Steven Petratos
Senior Research Fellow, Monash University

To donate online - https://donate.msplus.org.au/tax-appeal-2024