

**Ready to live:**  
A plan to deliver all  
Victorian stroke survivors  
and their families a  
better future



[strokefoundation.org.au](http://strokefoundation.org.au)

July 2018

*Victorian stroke survivor Paul Fink and his family.*

# The challenge for Victoria

## State of stroke

Number of strokes: 14,239  
Number of stroke survivors: 118,895  
Number of working age (under 65) stroke survivors: 35,669

## Stroke risk in Victoria (% of total population)

High blood pressure:  
1,092,245 (18%)  
High cholesterol:  
1,605,710 (26%)  
Physical inactivity:  
2,815,252 (46%)

Source: Deloitte Access Economics. (2017). Stroke in Australia – No postcode untouched.

## Paul's story

Victorian working-age stroke survivor Paul Fink and his family.



In January 2014, Paul Fink suffered a stroke. Paul was 34. Paul remembers waking in the morning feeling tired, his son Oscar was six months old and he had recently started a new job. Brushing off feeling a bit off, Paul was preparing to leave for work when his wife, Lauren a physiotherapist, recognised that there was something seriously wrong and called the ambulance immediately.

Paul was transported to hospital where he was treated for a stroke caused by a bleed in his brain. While in hospital, Paul spent two weeks in a coma and underwent four brain surgeries.

Before his stroke, Paul was very social, family-oriented and energetic. He was striving to be the best dad possible, and loved exercise and sports, particularly cricket, football, running and golf. Paul's stroke affected his speech, and he suffered from right dominant side paralysis of his leg and arm. Today, after much rehabilitation and with a lot of hard work and determination, he can talk again and even run alongside his son.

"Rehab was not only about improving my physical and mental abilities, it was also crucial in my overall relationship with my wife, as I could help care for my son independently, freeing up her time to do other things," said Paul.

Stroke has changed the life Paul and Lauren had planned, but the family celebrate every day and the opportunity it brings. Paul and Lauren welcomed their second son Harrison in November 2017.

Before his stroke, Paul had worked for 10 years as an accountant and IT professional. More than four years after his stroke, Paul is continuing his recovery and has not returned to work.

# Stroke services in Victoria are variable

Some parts are excellent...



## Emergency response



- › 39 percent of Victorian patients arrive at hospital within the 4.5 hour window for time-critical stroke treatment.<sup>1</sup>
- › 19 percent of Victorian patients receive clot-dissolving treatment (thrombolysis), compared to 13 percent nationally.<sup>1</sup>
- › Victoria has:
  - o Three of the nation's six comprehensive stroke centres, which provide clot retrieval (endovascular thrombectomy) and clot-dissolving (thrombolysis) services, and stroke unit care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.<sup>1</sup>
  - o Australia's first state-wide stroke telemedicine service.
  - o Australia's first Stroke Ambulance – the Mobile Stroke Unit.

Other parts have room for improvement...



## Life after stroke



### Risk of repeat hospitalisation increasing through poor home transition planning

- › Four in ten people who have had a stroke go on to have another one within ten years.<sup>2</sup>
- › 46 percent of Victorian patients do not receive a discharge care plan.<sup>1</sup>
- › 39 percent of Victorian patients are discharged without vital advice on what they can do to reduce their risk of another stroke.<sup>1</sup>
- › Almost one in three Victorian patients with stroke are discharged without secondary prevention medications (statin, antihypertensive, antithrombotic).<sup>1</sup>



## Working-age stroke



- › 1 in 2 stroke survivors who want to return to work are not provided with support to do so.<sup>3</sup>
- › 20 strokes a day strike Australians of working-age.<sup>4</sup>
- › Zero specialist services and supports targeted at working-age stroke survivors.
- › More than \$972 million in lost earnings caused by reduced employment due to stroke in working-age Australians.<sup>5</sup>

# At a glance

The Stroke Foundation is calling on the next Victorian Government to build on the work done to treat stroke by investing an additional \$5.1 million over four years to deliver a better future for all Victorian stroke survivors and their families.

1.

## F.A.S.T. community education to reduce stroke and speed up treatment

Partnering with community volunteers to deliver the StrokeSafe and F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) messages across Victoria.

**Investment:** \$300,000 over four years.

**Result:** When someone suffers a stroke, every minute counts. Greater awareness of the signs of stroke means more Victorians accessing our nation-leading emergency stroke treatments for a better chance of recovery and decreased costs to our health system.

2.

## StOP (Stroke Outreach Program): empowering survivors to act to prevent further stroke and live well

A dedicated post-discharge telephone service reaching out to stroke survivors and their carers, to provide much-needed education and support to reduce their risk of having another stroke, manage their health and wellbeing, and get their life back on track.

**Investment:** \$2 million over four years.

**Result:** Reduced repeat hospitalisation from stroke by ensuring all Victorian stroke survivors and carers are connected with, and supported to access the information, resources and services they need to recover and live well after stroke.

3.

## Ready for work

World-first targeted project, investing in the future of working-age Victorians impacted by stroke. The project will support the unmet needs of working-age stroke survivors and their families. It will include a specialised rehabilitation clinic and resources to help survivors get back to work and back to life.

**Investment:** \$2.8 million over four years.

**Result:** Working-age Victorian stroke survivors will be empowered to maximise life after stroke. Survivors will be supported to grow and thrive, get back to work and contribute to the community. This project will reduce stroke's burden on families, the community and government.



# A call to action

The next Victorian Government can deliver a better future for all Victorian stroke survivors and their families.

**Ready to live will create better health outcomes for Victorians, and reduce stroke's burden on our community and health system.**

Stroke can be prevented, it can be treated, and it can be beaten. Victorian stroke patients have access to the best emergency stroke treatment in the country. Now we must ensure these treatments are maximised and stroke survivors are empowered to live well.

This year alone, more than 14,000 strokes will be experienced by Victorians and there are almost 119,000 stroke survivors living in our community.

State Government investment and advancements in treatment mean more Victorians are surviving stroke, but for survivors and their families stroke's impact is far reaching. We know families are doing it tough. Recovery from stroke can be a difficult experience, full of uncertainty and sometimes isolation.

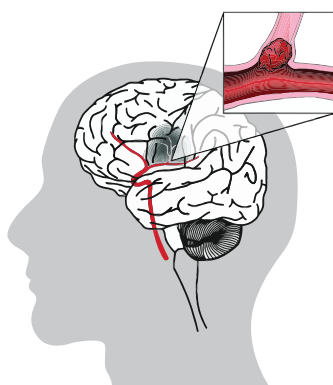
We also know four in 10 stroke survivors will go on to experience a further stroke within 10 years.

It doesn't have to be this way.

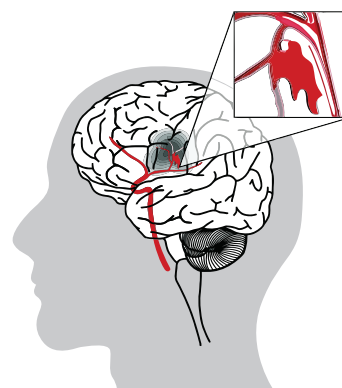
**Survivors need and deserve to live well, to actively engage in the community, and optimally return to education, to work, to retirement, to life.**

## What is stroke?

Stroke attacks the brain – our most vital organ. A stroke occurs when blood supply to the brain is cut off because of a clot blocking an artery (ischaemic stroke) or due to a burst artery (haemorrhagic stroke). When blood supply to the brain is blocked cells begin to die at a rate of up to 1.9 million each minute.<sup>6</sup> Every stroke is different depending on where in the brain it strikes and how severe it is. What is common is the devastation it causes to the survivor, their carer and family. Stroke is the leading cause of acquired disability for adults.<sup>5</sup>



**Clot**  
(Ischaemic stroke)



**Bleed**  
(Haemorrhagic or  
Intracerebral stroke)

# 1.

## F.A.S.T. education to reduce stroke and speed up treatment

**Objective:** More Victorians know the signs of stroke, know the F.A.S.T. test and to call triple zero (000). Think F.A.S.T. act F.A.S.T.

**Investment required:** \$300,000 over four years.

When someone suffers a stroke every minute counts. F.A.S.T. access to treatment means a greater chance of recovery and decreased costs to our health system. When a stroke does occur, the best outcomes are achieved when treatment is received quickly. Victoria has the best emergency stroke treatment in the country, but not enough people are accessing it. Too often treatment is delayed due to a lack of awareness about the signs and symptoms of stroke.

Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech and Time) community education campaign will raise vital awareness of stroke risk factors and the signs of stroke in urban centres and regional communities in Victoria. We have a pool of Victorian volunteers, and existing stroke resources and materials which means the program is ready to roll out immediately.

- › 61 percent of Victorian stroke patients arrive at hospital outside the 4.5 hour window for time-critical clot-dissolving treatment.
- › Evaluation of the annual national F.A.S.T. awareness campaign in the UK showed a return on marketing investment as high as 28:1. Faster access to stroke treatment leads to a reduced burden of disability in the community.

Recognise  
**STROKE**  
Think F.A.S.T.

Stroke FOUNDATION

**F**  
Has their **FACE** drooped?

**A**  
Can they lift both **ARMS**?

**S**  
Is their **SPEECH** slurred and do they understand you?

**T**  
Call 000, **TIME** is critical

If you see any of these symptoms  
**Act FAST call 000**

This globally adopted message has proven results locally and internationally with a **return on marketing investment as high as 28:1.**

“This is a landmark change in stroke practice. It brings the stroke unit and emergency treatment to the stroke patient before hospital arrival.”

– **Professor Stephen Davis**,  
Director, Melbourne Brain Centre, The Royal Melbourne Hospital



## Felix's story

Melbourne grandfather Felix was fixing carpet in his bedroom when he suffered his stroke. **Thankfully Felix's wife knew the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke and called triple zero (000) straight away.** The specially fitted Stroke Ambulance arrived with a specialist team who were able to give him a brain scan on board. They determined that a blood clot had caused his stroke and immediately administered a clot-dissolving drug right there in the ambulance outside Felix's home.



# 2.

## StOP (Stroke Outreach Program): empowering survivors to act to prevent further stroke and live well

**Objective:** Reduce repeat hospitalisation from stroke by ensuring all Victorian stroke survivors and carers are connected with, and supported to access the information, resources and services they need to recover and live well after stroke.

**Investment required:** \$2 million over four years.

Four in 10 stroke survivors will go on to have another stroke within a decade, yet stroke can be prevented. Stroke survivors and their families are leaving hospital without vital knowledge to reduce their risk of experiencing another stroke, including information on lifestyle changes and the importance of secondary prevention medications.

These gaps have significant and at times devastating implications for patients, their families and the health system.

StOP will close these gaps and reduce the risk of recurrent strokes by delivering:

- › **Education and support for hospital clinicians. This support will enable health professionals to deliver targeted secondary prevention education and recovery planning for every patient with stroke, every time.**
- › **Support from a Stroke Foundation health professional to stroke survivors within 21 days of leaving hospital to:**
  - Provide education on stroke and reducing the risk of subsequent stroke.
  - Deliver resources and strategies to reduce a survivor's risk of subsequent stroke.
  - Promote connection with a general practitioner and attendance at outpatient appointments.
  - Check that required appointments and services are in place.
  - Screen for risk and vulnerability, with a focus on depression and anxiety.

StOP builds on Stroke Foundation's extensive experience partnering with health services to provide survivors with much needed education and support to reduce their risk of having another stroke, manage their health and wellbeing, and get their life back on track.

### The Facts

- › More than 80 percent of strokes can be prevented.<sup>7</sup>
- › Risk of recurrent stroke is highest in the first year after stroke.<sup>2</sup>
- › 39 percent of Victorian stroke patients are discharged without vital advice on what they can do to reduce their risk of another stroke.
- › Almost one in three patients with stroke are discharged without secondary prevention medications (statin, antihypertensive, antithrombotic).
- › Non-adherence to prevention medication after stroke can be as high as 43 percent.<sup>8</sup>



# 3.

## Ready for work

**Objective:** Working-age Victorian stroke survivors will be empowered to maximise life after stroke. Survivors will be supported to grow and thrive, to get back to work and contribute to the community. This project will reduce stroke's burden on families, the community and government.

**Investment:** \$2.8 million over four years.

A world-first project will support the specific needs of Victoria's increasing number of working-age stroke survivors, maximising their physical and psychological recovery, and life post-stroke. The project will equip working-age stroke survivors with the skills and support they need to actively engage with the community and optimally, to return to work.

It includes delivering:

- › A specialised working-age stroke rehabilitation clinic run by some of Australia's leading minds in stroke rehabilitation, piloting cutting-edge stroke recovery interventions.
- › Online training resources supporting health professionals to respond to the specific needs of working-age stroke survivors.
- › Targeted resources to empower working-age stroke survivors and their families to live well after stroke.
- › Specialist resources and individualised support for stroke survivors and their employers to aid a return to the workplace.

Stroke strikes in an instant, changing the lives of survivors and their loved ones forever.

This year alone stroke will devastate thousands of Victorian families, and international evidence shows the number of working-age people impacted by stroke will increase over the coming years.<sup>9</sup>

Current health and social services systems are not designed or equipped to help younger stroke survivors. Victoria has led the way on new emergency stroke treatment, with innovations including Australia's first Stroke Ambulance and the Victorian Stroke Telemedicine Service. It is now time to deliver the next break-through in stroke care and ensure a better life for working-age Victorians impacted by stroke.

- › One in three stroke survivors is aged under 65.
- › 1,400 Victorian stroke patients aged 18-55 annually.
- › 96 percent of young stroke survivors report having ongoing needs after their stroke.<sup>3</sup>
- › 88 percent of young stroke survivors report unmet needs across health, everyday living, leisure activities, employment and finance – greater than older stroke survivors.<sup>3</sup>



"I ended up in rehab for six weeks. I had physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and counselling sessions six hours a day, six days a week, and then outpatient rehab for a further three months. I had to learn to walk, talk and eat properly again. I couldn't drive for months (frustrating when I have three kids). I worked my butt off to get to where I am."

– **Ida Dempsey**, Mum and Victorian working-age stroke survivor

## References

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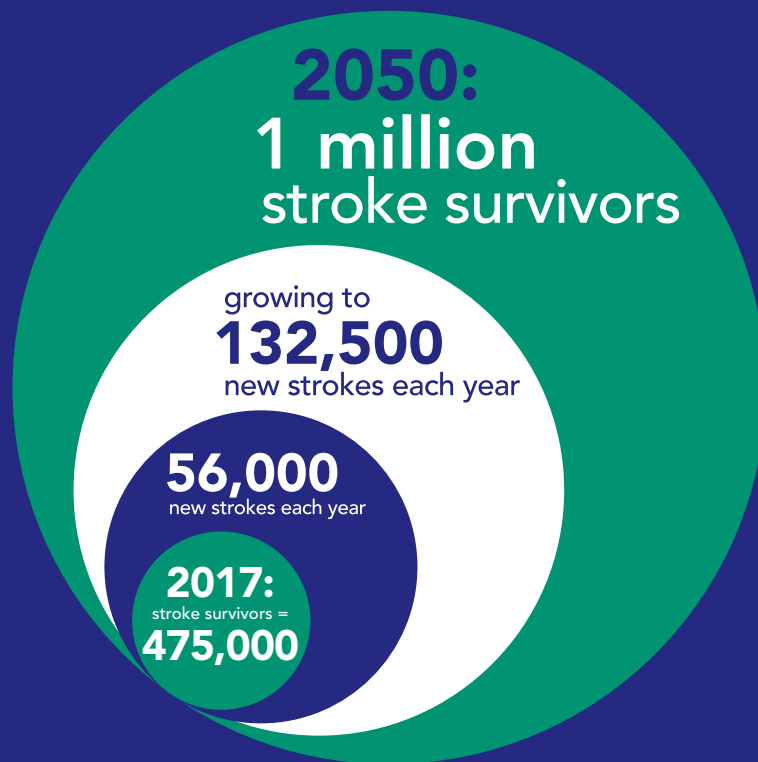


Victorian working-age stroke survivor Alex Wright (right) and his family.





# Stroke in Australia



## Five stroke facts

- › Stroke kills more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer.
- › One in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.
- › In 2017 an estimated 56,000 strokes occurred – one every nine minutes.
- › One in three stroke survivors are of working age.
- › Sixty-five percent of those living with stroke also suffer a disability that impedes their ability to carry out daily living activities unassisted.

## About the Stroke Foundation

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We stand alongside stroke survivors and their families, healthcare professionals and researchers. We build community awareness and foster new thinking. We support survivors on their journey to live the best possible life after stroke.



### How to get more involved

- Give time** – become a volunteer.
- Raise funds** – donate or hold a fundraising event.
- Speak up** – join our advocacy team.
- Leave a lasting legacy** – include a gift in your Will.
- Know your numbers** – check your health regularly.
- Stay informed** – keep up-to-date and share our message.

### Contact us

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- /strokefoundation**
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