

# A better plan for stroke awareness for all Territorians

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Pre-Budget Submission  
2023–24



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

## About Stroke Foundation

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We stand alongside survivors of stroke and their families, healthcare professionals and researchers. We build community awareness and foster new thinking and innovative treatments. We support survivors on their journey to live the best possible life after stroke. We are the trusted voice of stroke in Australia, and we work to:

- Raise awareness of the risk factors and signs of stroke, and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Improve treatment for stroke to save lives and reduce disability.
- Improve life after stroke for survivors.
- Encourage and facilitate stroke research.
- Advocate for initiatives to prevent, treat and beat stroke.
- Raise funds from the community, corporate sector and government to continue our mission.

Our work aligns with three key pillars, Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, as outlined in our strategic plan, [Stroke Strategy 2024](#).

## Contact

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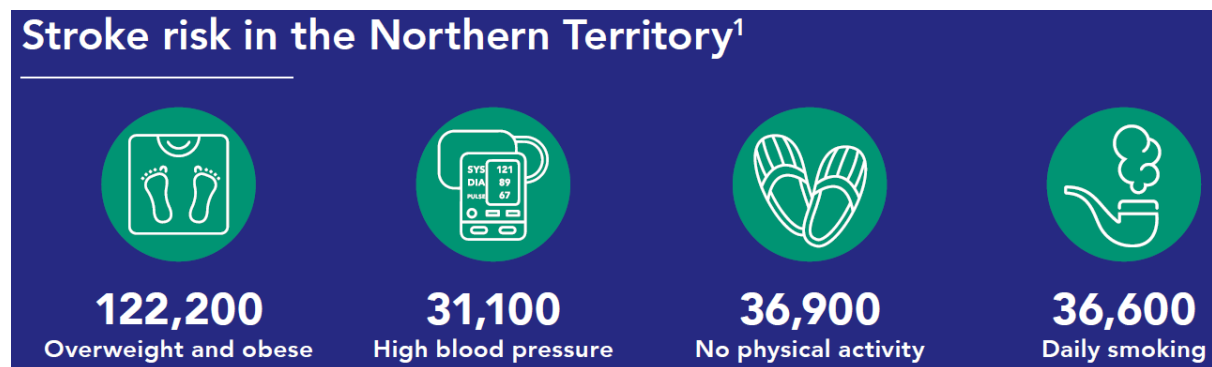
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## Introduction

In 2020, 172 Territorians experienced stroke for the first time, and there were 2,545 survivors of stroke living in our community - many with an ongoing disability.<sup>1</sup> Unless action is taken, it is estimated by 2050, Territorians will experience an additional 129 new strokes annually, and there will be an additional 2,158 survivors of stroke living in the community.<sup>1</sup>

One of the key modifiable risk factors for stroke is high blood pressure. Importantly, more than 31,000 Territorians are living with high blood pressure<sup>1</sup>, and many don't know it. In addition, 36,600 Territorians are daily smokers, 14,400 have high cholesterol, 36,900 are physically inactive, and 122,200 are overweight or obese<sup>1</sup> – putting them at an increased risk of stroke.



We know there are vulnerable populations in the Australian community who experience greater risk factors, worse access to care, and increased morbidity and mortality compared with the general population. With respect to stroke, these populations include<sup>2</sup>:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: Indigenous Australians are 1.7 times more likely to be hospitalised for stroke, and 1.8 times more likely to die from stroke, as non-Indigenous Australians.
- People from regional, rural and remote areas: The prevalence of stroke in outer regional and remote areas is 1.2 times that of major cities. Those in remote or very remote areas are 1.2 times more likely to be hospitalised for stroke, and 1.1 times more likely to die from stroke, as those living in major cities.

- People from low socioeconomic areas: The prevalence of stroke in the lowest socioeconomic areas is 2.3 times that of the highest socioeconomic areas. Those in the lowest socioeconomic areas are 1.1 times more likely to be hospitalised for stroke, and 1.4 times more likely to die from stroke, as those in the highest socioeconomic areas.

Importantly, the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous residents among its population – an estimated 32 percent (79,000 people)<sup>3</sup>, and 77 percent of the Territory's Indigenous population lives in remote or very remote areas.<sup>4,5</sup> In addition, the Northern Territory has the worst economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote or very remote areas of any state or territory in Australia.<sup>6</sup>

**Stroke Foundation is committed to reducing the number of preventable strokes, and improving outcomes for survivors of stroke, in the Northern Territory, and a critical step in achieving this is increasing the awareness of stroke in our community.**

Significant gains can be made from a modest investment.

With targeted investment, strokes can be prevented, and patient outcomes improved, reducing stroke's burden on our community and health system.

Stroke Foundation understands the significant and unique challenges the Northern Territory Government faces in delivering health services, including a dispersed and ageing population, the growing burden of chronic disease, rising healthcare costs and challenges attracting and retaining a skilled health workforce, particularly in regional, rural and remote locations.

**We are calling on the Northern Territory Government to invest in Stroke Foundation's evidence-based F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Multimedia Campaign, to reduce the number of preventable strokes in our community, and ensure more Territorians know the life-saving F.A.S.T. signs of stroke.**

## F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Multimedia Campaign.

**Investment:** \$100,000 per annum over three years.



### Background

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.

**Importantly, only 32 percent of Northern Territory stroke patients arrive at hospital within the 4.5 hour window for clot-dissolving treatment (thrombolysis).<sup>7</sup>**

**There is a clear lack of awareness in the Northern Territory community about stroke and the need for it to be treated as a medical emergency.**

The results of the 2022 Stroke Foundation F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey showed the unprompted awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke in the Northern Territory community<sup>8</sup>:

- 39 percent knew none of the signs of stroke, compared with 38 percent nationally.
- 33 percent knew facial drooping was a sign, compared with 40 percent nationally.
- 11 percent knew an inability to lift both arms was a sign, compared with 10 percent nationally.
- 47 percent knew speech difficulties were a sign, compared with 51 percent nationally.

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

## The Campaign

A F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, and Time) Multimedia Campaign will be rolled out across the Northern Territory, which will include an integrated multi-channel advertising campaign, as well as F.A.S.T. stories delivered via a mainstream media campaign.

Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign will raise awareness about stroke in our community, including the key risk factors for stroke, how to reduce stroke risk, and how to recognise the signs of stroke (using the F.A.S.T. test), ensuring more Territorian stroke patients get to hospital in the critical time window for life-saving stroke treatment.

### *Proven success*

**F.A.S.T. advertising campaigns are proven to increase awareness of the signs of stroke, and calls to emergency services, nationally<sup>9</sup> and internationally.<sup>10, 11</sup>**

At the end of Stroke Foundation's last F.A.S.T. national advertising campaign in 2013–14, which was funded by the Australian Government, it was found that among the target audience<sup>9</sup>:

- there was an increase in the awareness of the signs of stroke, from 35 percent to 39 percent, which equated to almost one million people, and was reflected as an immediate 0.5 percent increase in calls to ambulance services for stroke emergencies
- 87 percent of people could recognise one or more signs of stroke
- the number of people who said they would call an ambulance if a stroke was suspected increased from 70 percent to 76 percent.

F.A.S.T. advertising and marketing campaigns support well established scientific findings that significant and continuous exposure to public health messages over several years leads to gradual improvement in population awareness and knowledge.

**Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. Community Education Program is currently being delivered in Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory, funded by respective state governments, and has been shown to be highly effective.**

In Tasmania, where the State Government has been funding the F.A.S.T. Community Education Program for four years, the unprompted community awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke is significantly higher than in all other states and territories<sup>8</sup>:

- 54 percent knew facial drooping was a sign, compared with 40 percent nationally.
- 12 percent knew an inability to lift both arms was a sign, compared with 10 percent nationally.
- 64 percent knew speech difficulties were a sign, compared with 51 percent nationally.

In New South Wales, where the State Government has been funding the F.A.S.T. Community Education Program in regional areas since 2020, to support the roll out of the Statewide Telestroke Service, the unprompted community awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke in regional areas has been higher than in metropolitan areas<sup>8</sup>:

- 53 percent knew facial drooping was a sign, compared with 33 percent in metropolitan areas.
- 14 percent knew an inability to lift both arms was a sign, compared with 9 percent in metropolitan areas.
- 61 percent knew speech difficulties were a sign, compared with 43 percent in metropolitan areas.

### *Key deliverables*

- Advertising Campaign
  - ◆ An integrated, multi-channel advertising campaign to promote the F.A.S.T. message in the Northern Territory will be delivered. This may include high reach, high impact broadcast channels, Outdoor (OOH) or transit media, supported by digital advertising using a screens-based approach such as digital video on YouTube or catch-up TV.
- Media Campaign
  - ◆ Mainstream media coverage in news outlets emphasising the F.A.S.T. message through stories told by survivors of stroke. News stories will include a call to action for all residents and workplaces to get behind the campaign, as well as announcements of annual F.A.S.T. awareness levels.

### *Evaluation*

A formal evaluation plan will be developed. The key outcome measure will be awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke (unprompted and prompted), as measured in Stroke Foundation's annual F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey. Other specific outcome measures will be determined at the commencement of the campaign:

- Advertising Campaign
  - ◆ Key performance indicators to be determined with media agency, dependent on the target audience, objectives and media channels selected.
- Media Campaign
  - ◆ Number of news stories promoting the F.A.S.T. message published or broadcast in news outlets.

**Northern Territory Government investment in Stroke Foundation’s F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign will increase awareness of what stroke is, how to reduce stroke risk, and how to recognise the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke, in our community. This campaign will help to realise one of the strategic goals of the Northern Territory Government’s *Strengthening Our Health System Strategy (2020 – 2025)*, which is to build healthier communities by empowering our people and communities to actively engage in their healthcare journey, and ensure wellbeing promotion and illness prevention is driven by communities.**



## Jake's Story

Jake Vincent was just 22 when he suffered a stroke in March 2020.

"It had been a great night. I'd been to a concert and then hung out with my mates in town afterwards. It was late, so I decided to call it a night and head back to my girlfriend Sidney's house with her," said Jake.

As Jake was getting ready for bed, he experienced a sudden, throbbing headache. Thinking little of it, he got up to get some paracetamol from the other side of the room, and fell over. Jake picked himself up, thinking he'd had a little too much to drink, but fell over again, this time onto the bed.

Sidney woke, and saw that Jake had a facial droop, was unable to move the left-side of his body, and was slurring his words. She remembered the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke that her Grandma Dot had taught her as a child, and called an ambulance immediately.

The paramedics arrived within 10 minutes. Jake was seen immediately upon arrival at hospital, where a brain scan confirmed he had suffered a stroke, and he was given a blood clot busting drug.

Jake spent two days in hospital, including one day in the Intensive Care Unit, before being discharged.

"Jake still has issues with fatigue and anxiety, but we know the outcome could have been far worse if we delayed seeking medical treatment," said Sidney.

Jake is now back at work full-time.

"Stroke doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter what age you are. I'm grateful beyond words to Sidney, and I urge everyone to know the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) signs of stroke, as the knowledge could save someone's life one day."



**Survivor of stroke  
Jake Vincent and his girlfriend  
Sidney.**

## References







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#### Contact us

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#### 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.