



GAVIN PAUL BENNIER
**MEMORIAL
RESEARCH
FUND**





With heavy hearts, David and Shirley Bennier have chosen to celebrate the life of their beloved son, Gavin Paul Bennier, by creating a lasting legacy in his memory.

Gavin was only 45 years old when he passed away after having experienced two strokes and numerous seizures.

His strokes were caused by a rare, untreatable and deadly brain disorder called *Cerebral Amyloid Angiopathy* (CAA). Alarmingly, this disorder, most commonly associated with the elderly, is becoming more prevalent in younger people.

David and Shirley are determined to honour Gavin's life and make a difference to young stroke survivors by establishing a research fund in his memory.

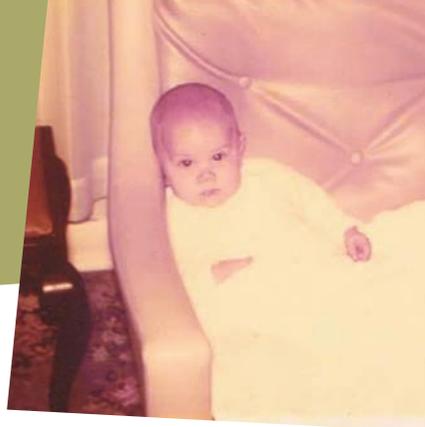
The **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** will support a scholarship which will bolster research into the disorder which took his life. The ultimate goal is to contribute to breakthroughs in the early diagnosis of CAA, treatment, prevention and ultimately find a cure.

David and Shirley also want the fund to help us better understand the impact of stroke on young people and help support them reclaim their life after stroke.

Stroke in Australia

- › Stroke kills more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer
- › In 2017, there were almost 56,000 strokes – one stroke every nine minutes
- › Around 30% of stroke survivors are of working age
- › 65% of stroke survivors suffer a disability which impedes their ability to carry out daily living activities unassisted
- › There are more than 475,000 Australians living with the effects of stroke. This is predicted to more than double in the next 30 years

“He was a larger than life character – likeable, friendly and everyone’s mate.”



Gavin Paul Bennier’s story

Gavin Paul Bennier was a larger than life character – likeable, friendly and everyone’s mate. He had a certain spark that made people want to be around him.

Independent, strong, incredibly loyal and determined. He succeeded at all he pursued through sheer grit and persistence.

He loved his family and his trusty border collie, Jill, with all his heart. His other great loves were a turtle named Spike, the Carlton Football Club and motor vehicles of all makes and models. Gavin had a curiosity for how things worked.

He had a happy life, but it was a life that tragically ended all too soon.

Gavin Paul Bennier was born on 20 September 1971. His parents, Shirley and David, loved him from the moment they set eyes on him. He completed their little family.

The family moved from Adelaide to Loxton, a small country town in the South Australian Riverland. It was a great place for an adventurous toddler to grow up.

He loved spending time with his Mum picking grapes (mostly eating them!), watering the plants or having a paddle in the River Murray with his parents on a hot day. Life was carefree.

Gavin had a wonderful childhood. He was a popular kid at school – outgoing, energetic and happy. Even a life-threatening accident at school after tripping with a pencil couldn’t dampen his spirits. Gavin was able to make friends easily and maintained a close relationship with many of his childhood friends throughout his life.

Gavin was incredibly close and loyal to his Mum and Dad and his girlfriend Maree. He cared for them deeply. Gavin was also loved dearly by his grandparents and his cousins. He adored spending time with all of his family.

He was an outstanding cook. Shirley recalls Gavin started early, joining her in the kitchen one day to help make a batch of scones when he could barely reach the bench. The scones won first prize at the primary school fair, which made him proud.

He continued to dabble in the kitchen for the rest of his life – often baking up a batch of those delicious lemonade scones.



The Bennier family returned to Adelaide in 1979. Gavin went to primary school in Hallett Cove where he surrounded himself with a big group of friends again.

They would laugh and muck around together, as boys do. They'd play with cars, go to nippers (junior lifesaving) and were into all types of sport, especially cricket, soccer and Australian rules football. He was fanatical about the Carlton Football Club.

As a teenager, Gavin was an enthusiastic and accomplished sportsman himself. He excelled at hockey and baseball in school and district competitions and represented South Australia in both sports.

He also had an obsession with cars – especially older cars with history. His first car, a rare Holden Monaro was his pride and joy.

Gavin loved the automotive industry, starting out as a 'grease monkey' and stuck with it for his working life, with various roles over the years including mechanic, foreman, car salesman, manager and finance broker.

Gavin left Adelaide at the tender age of 22 years old with his good friend Andrew Knights. They travelled north



to Cairns together, looking for adventure and fortune. Gavin and Andrew started working at a thriving local family car dealership, beginning long, accomplished careers. It was heaven for Gavin!

David and Shirley would look forward to visiting Gavin in tropical Cairns every year and after their retirement would spend six months of the year up there.

Jill the dog became a major part of Gavin's life in 1997. His beloved border collie would remain loyally by his side for 15 years. They were the best of mates and they were inseparable.

Then at 7am on Friday 5 February 2016 everything changed.

It began just like any normal day. Gavin was at home, getting ready for work as a car salesman as he had done so many times before, when he suffered a stroke.

Gavin's world fell apart after his stroke. Physically, he was paralysed down one side and emotionally, he was gobsmacked. Stroke was not something a strong and vibrant man in his early 40s, like Gavin, would ever expect.

David, Shirley and his girlfriend Maree were by his side in the Stroke Ward in Cairns every day. His mates rallied around him and would visit him in hospital to cheer him on.

He also made new friends with the staff and other stroke survivors in the ward who were drawn to him by his enthusiasm. His inner strength and determination kicked into overdrive but he was extremely frustrated with his left arm paralysis.

Doctors believed Gavin would remain in the stroke unit for around eight months and was likely to leave in a wheelchair, but they didn't account for Gavin's fighting spirit. He threw everything into his recovery and walked out of hospital after just three months.

Returning home after his stroke had its challenges, but Gavin had his parents, Maree and a team of visiting occupational therapists and physios dedicated to supporting his recovery.

Gavin continued to surge forward in his rehabilitation with remarkable gusto. Six months after the stroke, he was making outstanding progress physically, walking up to 80 kilometres a week.

Desperate to return to work and get back to driving, Gavin slowly adjusted to life after stroke. He enjoyed spending time at home, where he'd cook Sunday lunches for family and friends. Life really was looking up. Then he suffered a major setback, the first of many seizures.

It was the day before he was due to take his driving test to get back behind the wheel. This was an important day for him. The test would re-open doors that had been closed since his stroke. He had been looking forward to it.

The seizure sent Gavin spiraling backwards. All of that positive progress he'd made in recovery came to a sudden halt.

A dark cloud and depression moved in. This usually upbeat and strong-willed guy with a lust for life had been rocked to his core. He was scared.

Gavin continued to have seizures, but the doctors didn't know why or whether he would continue to have them. Less than a year after his first seizure, Gavin suffered a second catastrophic stroke. He battled hard to stay alive in intensive care, but his determination was not enough this time. His body could no longer cope.

Gavin's spark had burnt out way too soon.

On 18 May 2017, Gavin sadly passed away. He was only 45 and had suffered multiple strokes.

Whilst Gavin's light may have been lost to the world, within hours of his death he had transformed the lives of two other Australians through organ donation.

David and Shirley take comfort from Gavin's final act of generosity – the greatest gift that anyone could give.





GAVIN PAUL BENNIER MEMORIAL RESEARCH FUND

Losing Gavin has been the most tragic event in David and Shirley Bennier's life. His spark touched so many lives, greatly admired and well respected.

David and Shirley have vowed to make a difference.

They also want the fund to help us better understand the impact of stroke on young people and help support their return to work, return to a better life.

The Bennier's don't want other young people to go through the same devastating experience that Gavin did. They also want to spare other parents the anguish of losing a child.

About the Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund

The **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** has been thoughtfully established by Gavin's parents, David and Shirley Bennier.

They are committed to seeking answers to why Gavin was affected by CAA, the disorder that caused his strokes. David and Shirley want to prevent other young people from losing their lives to CAA.

The Fund will support vital research which is focused towards;

- › the early diagnosis, treatment, prevention and cure of Cerebral Amyloid Angiopathy induced stroke in young people
- › helping to better understand stroke amongst young people
- › facilitating the return to work of young stroke survivors.



“The seizure sent Gavin spiraling backwards. All of that positive progress he’d made in recovery came to a sudden halt.”



How will the Fund be managed?

The **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** will be administered as part of the Stroke Foundation’s Endowment Fund and has been established with a generous gift from David and Shirley Bennier. The family will be represented on the management committee of the Stroke Foundation’s Endowment Fund.

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.

The goal is for the fund to continue benefiting research into CAA and stroke amongst young adults. The Bennier family intends to continue raising funds with the help of Gavin’s family, friends and the wider community to build on their initial endowment.

Donations over \$2 to the Stroke Foundation towards the **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** are tax deductible.

How your support can help support stroke research

Stroke is largely preventable, it can be treated and we believe it can be beaten. Research holds the key.

Contributions to the **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** will support research to deliver a deeper understanding of CAA and stroke in young people.

The results of this research will, over time, help lead to better diagnosis, treatment and support for young stroke survivors. Effective research takes time, perseverance and a great deal of funding. However, the rewards when those breakthroughs come will benefit generation after generation.

How to donate

You can help support vital research to stop stroke from devastating more families. You can either:

- › Complete and return the enclosed donation form
- › Donate to the Fund online at: strokefoundation.org.au/GavinBennierFund

Alternatively, please contact the **Philanthropy Team** on **1300 194 196** to discuss your donation or to make a direct deposit into the Fund.

As a child and son, we couldn't have asked for better – his loyalty and love for us. This is why his memory needs to be preserved and why we've established this fund in his name.

Other parents need to be spared the anguish of having a son or daughter that has a disorder that's not treatable, difficult to diagnose and has no cure. That's as bad as cancer.

We hope this gives a leg-up to the next wave of researchers to find a break-through.

– David and Shirley Bennier



My gift to the Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund

My details

First name	Surname
Address	
State	Postcode
Phone no	
Email address	

My gift

Yes, I would like to contribute towards saving more lives and end the suffering caused by stroke amongst young people with my gift of \$ _____

Payment enclosed (cheque made payable to the 'Stroke Foundation'.)

Please contact me to discuss my donation or to arrange a direct deposit into the Fund.

Please charge my credit card

MasterCard Visa Amex Diners

Card No.

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Signature

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Donations over \$2 to the Stroke Foundation are tax deductible. Please reference the **Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund** when making your donation.

Stroke Foundation ABN 42 006 173 379
Level 7, 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
www.strokefoundation.org.au/GavinBennierFund

Your message

You might like to include a message to the Bennier family or to other young stroke survivors.

I agree this message can be shared publicly



At the Stroke Foundation we take your privacy and personal information very seriously.

Our Privacy Policy is available on our website strokefoundation.org.au

Personal information is collected by us for contact purposes, to identify donors when they request information or change their details, to answer donor queries and to process donations and issue tax receipts. For these purposes your information may be shared with trusted third parties and our service providers (such as banks, mail houses, technology service providers, advertising and promotional agencies, sometimes located outside of Australia). By contacting the Stroke Foundation, you consent to your personal details being used on our database. From time to time we may use your personal information in order to send you further information on our important work or opportunities to support the Stroke Foundation in the future. You can change your communications preferences with us.

Email: supporter@strokefoundation.org.au or mail: **Level 7, 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC** or telephone: **1300 194 196**



"We do not have control over many things in life, but we do have control over the meaning we give it. We are determined to have a positive impact and create a lasting legacy in Gavin's memory."

David & Shirley Bennier



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Let's talk

For more information about the ***Gavin Paul Bennier Memorial Research Fund*** and the work of the Stroke Foundation to prevent, treat and beat stroke, please contact:

Philanthropy Team

 1300 194 196

 philanthropy@strokefoundation.org.au

 strokefoundation.org.au/GavinBennierFund