

New South Wales Pre-budget Submission

2026–27

New South Wales survivor
of stroke, Joe Miller.



Survivors of stroke, Shannon Nelson (left), Brooke Parsons (middle) and fundraiser Dan Maitland.

Stroke Foundation is the voice of stroke in Australia, working to prevent stroke, save lives and enhance recovery

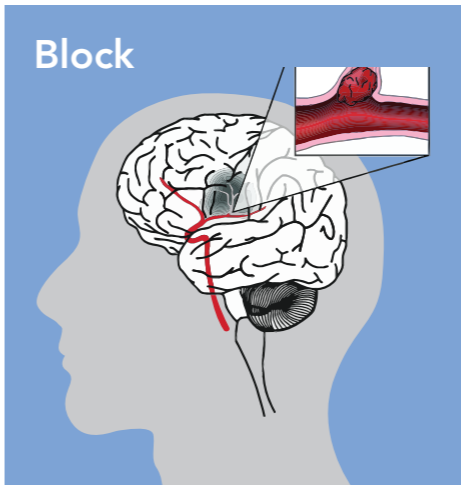
We partner with survivors of stroke, carers, health professionals, government and the community to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke for all Australians.

Stroke Foundation is the leading national organisation in Australia focused on stroke prevention, treatment and recovery.

For 30 years, we have championed breakthrough stroke research, successfully advocated for access to innovative treatments, increased public awareness in stroke prevention and recognition, and educated thousands of health professionals to deliver best-practice care.

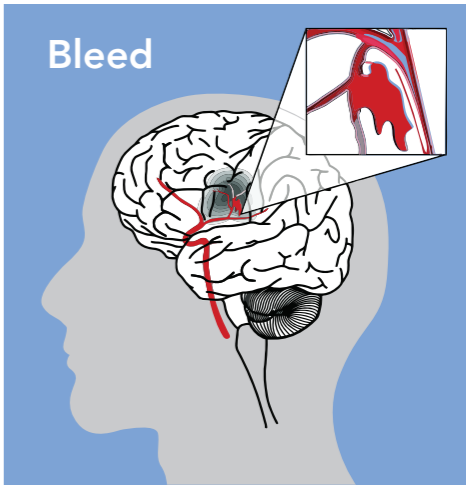
Every achievement takes a united team of stroke champions working together with a single voice and purpose: survivors of stroke with their families and carers, health professionals, researchers, volunteers, advocacy bodies, generous donors, corporate Australia, government and philanthropic partners.

What is a stroke?



Ischaemic stroke

(Blood clot or plaque blocks artery)



Haemorrhagic stroke

(Artery breaks or bursts)

Stroke can strike **anyone**, at **any time**.

A stroke happens when blood supply to the brain is interrupted.

When this happens, brain cells do not get enough oxygen or nutrients and they immediately begin to die.

Stroke is always a medical emergency.

Importantly, we know that more than **80 percent of strokes can be prevented**.

The state of stroke in New South Wales – why we have to act now

In 2023, there were 14,777 stroke events in New South Wales (NSW),¹ and many of those survivors of stroke will be living with an ongoing disability. There are more than 140,000 survivors of stroke living in NSW¹ – and their number is growing.

One of the key modifiable risk factors for stroke is high blood pressure. Importantly, 1,570,100 NSW residents are living with high blood pressure,¹ and many don't know it. In addition, 687,300 NSW residents are daily smokers and 714,700 have high cholesterol¹ – putting them at an increased risk of stroke.

Why is this happening?

Our population is growing and ageing. We are living longer, more sedentary lives. Our physical and social environments are influencing lifestyle choices and behaviours, putting us at an increased risk of stroke, and at a younger age.

At the same time, there is a clear lack of community knowledge and awareness about the common stroke risk factors, the typical signs of stroke when it happens, and the fact that stroke is a medical emergency and calling an ambulance immediately at the first sign of stroke is critical.

Our health system is also struggling to meet the needs of patients with stroke. Improvements have been made in the delivery of acute stroke treatment and care; however, time-critical treatment and best-practice care is not available to all NSW patients. In addition, we know that for many survivors of stroke, their rehabilitation needs are not assessed and those who need rehabilitation do not always receive it. This in turn increases the impact on informal carers and social care services.

It doesn't have to be this way

Stroke can often be prevented and it can be treated. We are making progress, but there is much more to be done.

We are taking action, but we can't do this alone. It takes everyone's support, from government right through to individuals, to prevent stroke, save lives and enhance recovery from stroke for all NSW residents.

We have an opportunity to act, to reduce the impact of stroke on survivors, their families and carers, the community, and the healthcare system. We can and must act for the health and wellbeing of future generations.

We urgently need the support of the NSW government. Our programs and services are in greater demand than ever before, because the health system, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the aged care system are not adequately meeting the needs of the community.

In 2023, the lifetime healthcare costs to government associated with strokes that occurred in NSW were \$1.8 billion, including \$1.4 billion in hospital costs.¹ Therefore, the economic benefit of NSW Government investment in initiatives to reduce the impact of stroke are clear.

Stroke Foundation is proud to be partnering with the NSW Government to deliver the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech and Time) Community Education Program in the Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA). Through engagement at community events, GP education and clinic-based campaigns, the distribution of F.A.S.T. educational resources, and media and digital promotion, this program 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 the Shoalhaven community.

NSW Government investment in stroke infrastructure is delivering results. The NSW Telestroke Service is ensuring residents in regional areas of the state have 24/7 access

to stroke specialists, and regional hospitals participating in the Service are part of a group of leading hospitals nationally that are achieving national targets for timely access to thrombolysis treatment.

The funding proposals in this submission will:

- › maximise the State Government's investment in the NSW Telestroke Service, ensuring more residents in regional communities covered by the Service know the signs of stroke, and the importance of calling triple zero (000) immediately
- › build on the NSW Government's current investment in a F.A.S.T. Community Education Program in the Shoalhaven LGA
- › ensure NSW residents who receive excellent stroke treatment and care in hospital are able to access the information they need in a timely manner, and are supported in their transition from hospital to home and onto recovery.

Now is the time for action and investment to change the landscape of stroke prevention, treatment and recovery in NSW.



Survivor of stroke, Stewart Greig.

The hard facts



Over **14,000** stroke events in NSW in 2023¹



There are more than **140,000 survivors of stroke** living in NSW¹



Stroke can happen at **any age**. **1 in 4** first ever strokes occur in people **under 65 years**¹



More than **80 percent of strokes** can be prevented²

Lifetime costs associated with strokes that occurred in 2023 exceed

\$5 billion
(almost \$354,000 per person)



Costs in the first year after stroke were over

\$2.5 billion
(almost \$175,000 per person)

\$1.8 billion
in healthcare costs for strokes occurring in 2023 including



\$126 million
in road ambulance costs



\$1.4 billion
in hospital costs

Summary of Stroke Foundation proposals

Stroke Foundation is seeking NSW Government investment in our proven, highly effective and evidence-based programs and resources, in order to meet the urgent needs of survivors of stroke, their families and carers.

1. F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Engagement Program

Investment: \$3.6 million (\$900,000 per year over four years).

Ensure more NSW residents know how to recognise the signs of stroke and how vital it is to call 000 (triple zero) immediately, regardless of where they live.

2. Enhanced support for stroke recovery: *My Stroke Journey* for every NSW survivor of stroke

Investment: \$472,000 (\$118,000 per year over four years).

Ensure more NSW residents who are impacted by stroke are able to access the information they need in a timely manner, supporting the transition from hospital to home and on to recovery, and reducing the risk of recurrent stroke.



Proposal 1: F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Engagement Program

Investment: \$3.6 million (\$900,000 per year over four years).

Investment in a F.A.S.T. Community Engagement Program will:

- › mobilise communities through a grassroots engagement program focused on stroke 'hotspot' regions and priority populations at higher risk of stroke
- › drive public awareness and inspire action through a mainstream media campaign, emphasising the F.A.S.T. message through stories told by people impacted by stroke
- › result in an increase in the awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke in the NSW community, earlier engagement of ambulance services and quicker presentation to hospital
- › increase the unprompted awareness of at least one F.A.S.T. sign of stroke in NSW from 63 percent to 73 percent.

Stroke is a medical emergency. When someone has a stroke, every minute counts. **Faster diagnosis and treatment saves lives and reduces disability.**

In 2023, the lifetime healthcare costs to government associated with strokes that occurred in NSW were \$1.8 billion, including \$1.4 billion in hospital costs.¹ **Prompt access to stroke treatment means decreased costs for our health and disability systems.**

The F.A.S.T. message highlights the three most common ways to recognise a stroke (Face, Arms and Speech), and reminds us that Time is critical when seeking treatment.

The 2025 Stroke Foundation F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey reported on the unprompted awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke in the Australian community, and showed that more than one in three NSW residents are unable to name any of the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke (37 percent).³ Only 12 percent of NSW residents are aware of all three signs of stroke³ (up from 6 percent in 2023).⁴

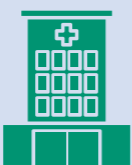
It is critical NSW residents understand that if they or someone they know experience the signs of stroke, they must call 000 (triple zero) immediately. The NSW Stroke Telemedicine Service is ensuring those in regional areas of the state have 24/7 access to stroke specialists, so it is essential they know the F.A.S.T. message.



More than 1 in 3 NSW residents are unable to name any F.A.S.T. signs of stroke³



Only 12 percent of NSW residents are aware of all 3 F.A.S.T. signs of stroke³



Only 39 percent of NSW stroke patients arrive at hospital within the recommended 4.5 hour window for clot-dissolving treatment⁵

The program

Importantly, we know that major gains in population awareness of the F.A.S.T. message can be made over time. F.A.S.T. advertising campaigns are proven to increase awareness of the signs of stroke, and calls to emergency services, nationally⁶ and internationally^{7, 8}, and 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.

Therefore, **Stroke Foundation is calling on the NSW Government to invest in a F.A.S.T. Community Engagement Program.**

We will **engage and partner with existing community groups, services and stakeholders to share the F.A.S.T. signs of stroke.** A network of local volunteers and stroke champions, many with lived experience of stroke, will be recruited, trained and supported to deliver the program. Activities will include **StrokeSafe community presentations, workplace engagement and targeted events.** These local champions will lead grassroots engagement to creatively raise awareness of the signs of stroke and stroke prevention strategies.

A **state-wide, integrated multi-channel advertising campaign** will amplify the F.A.S.T. message across TV, radio, outdoor, digital and social media channels. This will be complemented by a **mainstream media campaign** featuring stories of survivors of stroke, and calls to action encouraging residents and workplaces to actively support the campaign.

This program will **target stroke 'hotspot' areas** across NSW, including NSW Telestroke Service catchment areas and other high need locations, as well as **priority populations at**

higher risk of stroke, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural and regional, rural and remote communities.

We are calling on the NSW Government to invest in a F.A.S.T. Community Engagement Program to increase the number of NSW residents who know what stroke is, how to reduce stroke risk, how to recognise a stroke when it occurs, and how vital it is to call 000 (triple zero) immediately. This program will build on the State Government's current investment in a F.A.S.T. Community Education Program in the Shoalhaven LGA, ensure life-saving information on stroke reaches more NSW residents and deliver economic benefits for our health and disability systems.

Learn the F.A.S.T. signs of STROKE



FACE
drooped?



ARMS
can't be raised?



SPEECH
slurred or confused?



TIME
is critical! Call 000.

If you see any of these signs
Act FAST call 000 (triple zero)



Case study 1

F.A.S.T. in action: Beth's story

Beth Browning was just 19 when she had a stroke in 2019.

"I was lying in my bed and started to feel dizzy. I tried to type something on my phone, but couldn't. I went downstairs to tell my parents, but when I tried to speak, I couldn't get the words out," said Beth.

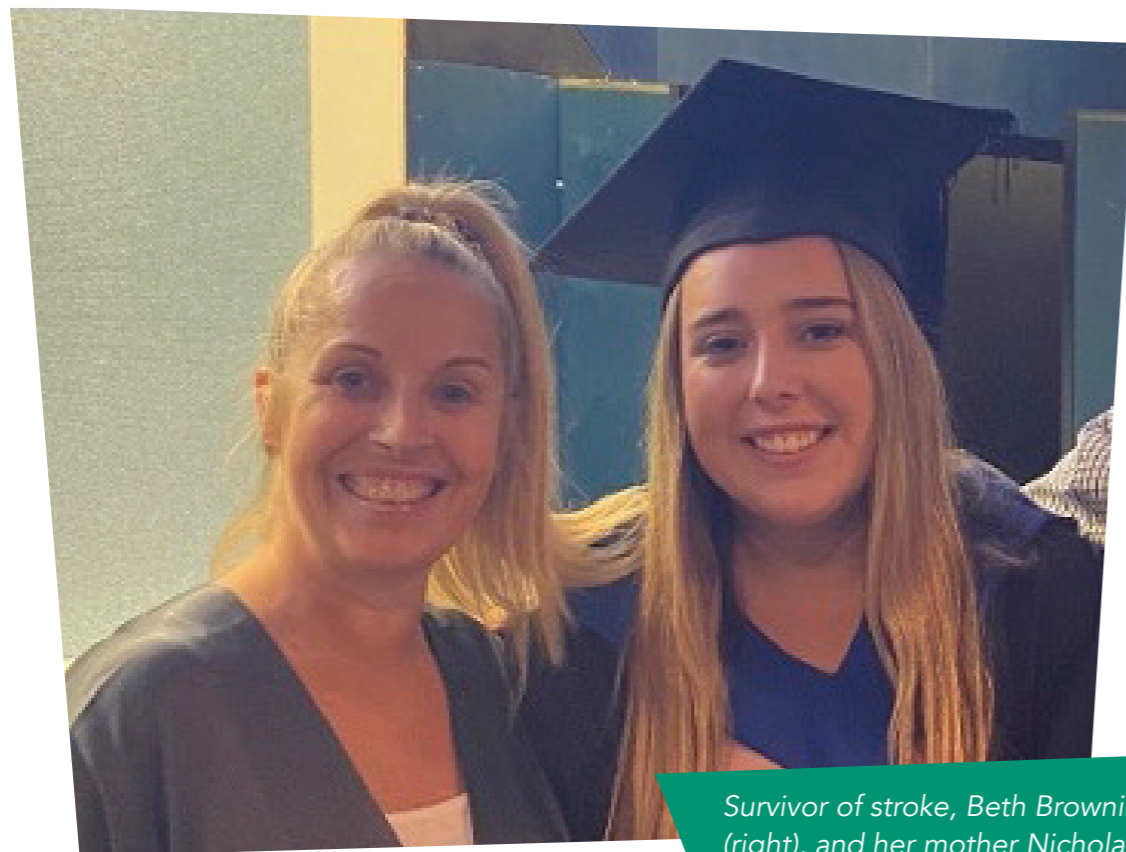
Fortunately, she was a nursing student, and her mother was a nurse, and they were both quick to recognise the signs of stroke.

Beth was rushed to the hospital, where she underwent CT and MRI scans that confirmed she was having a stroke.

Twelve hours after her stroke, Beth's speech began to recover, and she started to feel better.

Beth has no permanent cognitive deficits or motor skill impairment as a result of her stroke, and she has made an excellent recovery; however, she still battles fatigue and headaches.

"I do consider myself extremely lucky. I think it's really important to raise community awareness about the signs of stroke, and the fact that stroke can affect anyone, young or old."



Survivor of stroke, Beth Browning (right), and her mother Nichola.

Survivor of childhood stroke, Tommy Quick.



Proposal 2: Enhanced support for stroke recovery – *My Stroke Journey* for every NSW survivor of stroke

Investment: \$472,000 (\$118,000 per year over four years).

Investment in enhanced support for stroke recovery in NSW will ensure:

- › we can make *My Stroke Journey* free of charge to NSW hospitals, removing barriers to delivery
- › we can provide education and practical support to NSW hospitals to ensure every survivor of stroke receives a copy of *My Stroke Journey* that is in the language and medium of their choice, and is culturally appropriate
- › every survivor of stroke discharged from a NSW hospital receives a copy of *My Stroke Journey*, supporting the transition from hospital to home and on to recovery
- › all NSW survivors of stroke, families and carers have the information they need to take their place at the centre of their care, look after their health, reduce their risk of another stroke and live a good life after stroke.

We need to enhance support for stroke recovery to better meet the needs of our community.

Survivors of stroke, their families, friends and carers, need access to ongoing information as they navigate life after stroke.

People are at higher risk of stroke after their first stroke. Four in 10 survivors of stroke will go on to have another stroke,⁹ and recurrent stroke is more likely to be fatal or cause major disability.¹⁰

Survivors of stroke need information and education about stroke risk factors, and strategies, including behaviour modification and blood pressure-lowering, lipid-lowering and antithrombotic or anticoagulation medications, that can reduce their risk of recurrent stroke.

The *Living Guidelines for Stroke Management* recommend that **all survivors of stroke and their families and carers should be offered information tailored to meet their individual needs, using relevant language and communication formats.** Despite this, the most recent Stroke Foundation National Stroke Audits show that only 62 percent

of acute patients⁵ and 61 percent of rehabilitation patients¹¹ received this information.



94 percent of those who receive *My Stroke Journey* find it useful



Over **75 percent** of those who receive *My Stroke Journey* refer to it after going home



The proportion of survivors who receive advice on stroke risk factors at discharge, has increased by **20 percent** as a result of *My Stroke Journey*



The proportion of survivors who receive advice on secondary stroke prevention and recovery at discharge, has increased by **13 percent** as a result of *My Stroke Journey*

What will enhanced support for stroke recovery in NSW deliver?

Stroke Foundation's *My Stroke Journey* is a resource delivered by our hospital partners in the first few days after a person's stroke, which is used throughout their admission in education and care planning. This free resource also supports the transition from hospital to the community, and includes information on preparing for discharge and available supports and services.

My Stroke Journey is now a suite of resources, with versions available in both standard and easy English, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and parents and carers of children who have had a stroke. The *My Stroke Journey* suite is complemented by other resources, including the *Aphasia Handbook*.

Importantly, we know that many of the people who need this valuable resource the most are not receiving it.

Hospital health professionals have told us that health service expenditure approval processes greatly increase the time it takes to order *My Stroke Journey*. This can lead to delays in ordering, or orders not being made, meaning patients don't receive the stroke information they need.

We will identify and directly engage with NSW hospitals that are not delivering *My Stroke Journey*.

Educational and practical support will be provided to these hospitals to ensure every survivor of stroke discharged from hospital in NSW **receives a copy of *My Stroke Journey* that is in the language and medium of their choice, and is culturally appropriate.**

We are calling on the NSW Government to invest in enhanced support for stroke recovery, which will ensure every survivor of stroke discharged from hospital in NSW receives a copy of *My Stroke Journey*. This will mean more NSW residents who are impacted by stroke are able to access the information they need in a timely manner, which will have benefits for survivors of stroke, their families and carers, and our community, as well as our state's health system and economy.



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**Will you help? We invite you to have a conversation
with us today, to learn more.**

Stroke Foundation | advocacy@strokefoundation.org.au | strokefoundation.org.au

National Office: Level 7, 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

We also have offices in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart.

ABN 42 006 173 379