



Western Australia Pre-Budget Submission

2025–26

*Western Australian survivor
of stroke and StrokeSafe Speaker,
Sherree Morgan, and her family.*



Busselton Jetty, Western Australia

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

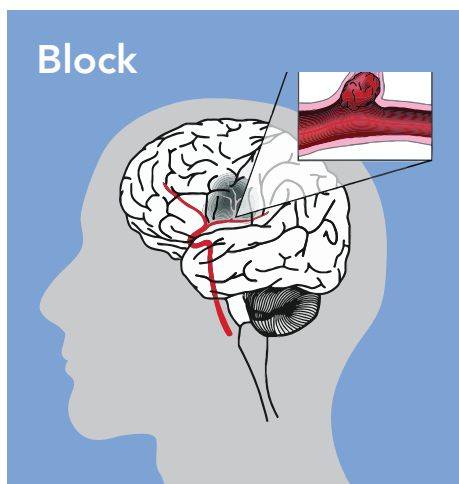
We partner with survivors of stroke, carers, health professionals, government and the community to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke for all Australians.

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

For more than 25 years, we have championed breakthrough stroke research, successfully advocated for access to innovative treatments, increased public awareness in stroke prevention and recognition, and supported thousands of health professionals to deliver best-practice care.

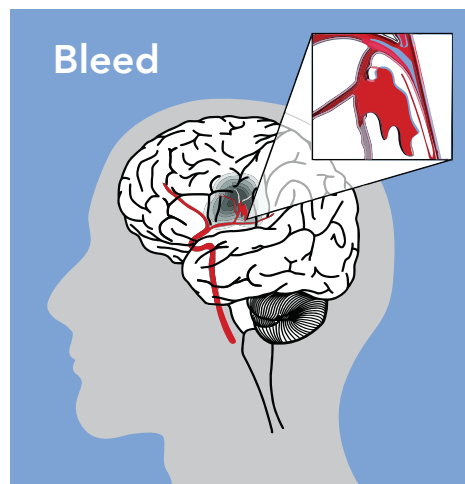
Every achievement takes a united team of stroke champions all working together with a single voice and purpose: survivors of stroke with their families and carers, health professionals, researchers, volunteers, advocacy bodies, generous donors, corporate Australia, government and philanthropic partners.

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 Western Australia – why we have to act now

In 2023, there were 4,035 stroke events in Western Australia,¹ and many of those survivors of stroke will be living with an ongoing disability. There are more than 45,000 survivors of stroke living in Western Australia¹ – and their number is growing.

One of the key modifiable risk factors for stroke is high blood pressure. Importantly, 529,900 Western Australians are living with high blood pressure,¹ and many don't know it. In addition, 238,400 Western Australians are daily smokers and 237,100 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 Western Australian 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 Western Australians.

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.

Stroke Foundation is proud to be partnering with the Western Australian Government to deliver the F.A.S.T. Community Education Program. Thousands of Western Australians have received life-saving messages about stroke, how to reduce stroke risk, and how to recognise the signs of stroke (using the F.A.S.T. test), as a result of this successful program. Continued investment in, and expansion of this program will ensure more Western Australians are able to get to hospital in time to access the stroke treatments we know can save lives and reduce disability.

The hard facts



Over **4,000** stroke events in WA in 2023¹



There are more than **45,000 survivors of stroke** living in WA¹



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

\$1.6 billion
(almost \$412,000 per person)



Costs in the first year after stroke were over

\$747 million
(almost \$194,000 per person)

\$547 million in healthcare costs for strokes occurring in 2023 including



\$38 million in road ambulance costs



\$427 million in hospital costs



Proposal 1: Continue the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) Community Education Program, and implement a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign

Investment: \$700,000 (\$175,000 per year over 4 years)

Continued investment in the F.A.S.T. Community Education Program and new investment in a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign will deliver:

- › a community-led education program focused on raising awareness of the signs of stroke in hotspot areas and among priority groups
- › F.A.S.T. advertisements across high reach, high impact broadcast channels, outdoor or transit media, and digital platforms such as Google Ads
- › a mainstream media campaign emphasising the F.A.S.T. message through stories told by survivors of stroke
- › an increase in the awareness of at least one F.A.S.T. sign of stroke in Western Australia from 60 percent to 70 percent by 2027.

Stroke is a medical emergency. 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.

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. Stroke Foundation is the one organisation in Australia dedicated to sharing this message widely, and encouraging all Australians to learn it and share it with others.

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, nationally³ and internationally^{4,5}, 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.

Stroke Foundation is proud to be partnering with the Western Australian Government to deliver the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, and Time) Community Education Program. This Program recruits, trains, and provides support to local volunteers to raise awareness in the community about stroke, including the signs of stroke, and chronic disease prevention, through the **delivery of StrokeSafe presentations.** StrokeSafe speakers are embedded in their local and cultural communities, and many have lived experience of stroke. Through the compelling voice of those impacted by stroke, we increase knowledge and help to ensure patients get to hospital in the critical time window for life-saving stroke treatment.

In line with the priorities outlined in the 'Western Australian Health Promotion Strategy Framework', **the Program has a focus on engaging the following priority groups:**

- people aged 45 years and over
- people experiencing social and economic disadvantage
- people living in regional areas
- Aboriginal people
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

In addition to delivering *StrokeSafe* presentations, **volunteers set up displays and activities at community events and in health settings, distribute F.A.S.T. resources, and gain local workplace support**, which facilitates improved awareness about the signs of stroke and dispatches of ambulances.

When resourcing has been available, *StrokeSafe* activities have been successfully supplemented by communication campaign activities, including local and WA-specific news coverage and occasional paid advertising.



Key achievements of the program in 2023-24

Over the last 12 months, the program has delivered:

- **11 StrokeSafe speakers**, 10 in the greater Perth area and one in the South-West.
- **54 StrokeSafe presentations**, reaching **1,758 people**, including:
 - 9 presentations (17 percent) in regional areas
 - 3 presentations (5 percent) to CALD groups
 - 7 presentations (13 percent) in lower socio-economic areas (SEIFA 1–4)
 - 51 presentations (94 percent) to people aged 45 years and over.
- **StrokeSafe displays and activities at 7 community events** in metropolitan areas, engaging with **890 people**, including:
 - the Women's Health Expo at Clarkson Public Library
 - the Have-A-Go-day with the Neurological Council of Western Australia and Meningitis WA
 - a Seniors Recreation Council of Western Australia event
 - the City of Sterling Mirrabooka NAIDOC Week event.

We engaged with a total of **488 people from target populations** (Aboriginal people and people from CALD communities) at these events.

- **6,517 F.A.S.T. resources** (bookmarks, posters, wallet cards, magnets, polo shorts, and merchandise [e.g. cups, socks etc]) distributed across the state.
- Partnerships with:
 - the **WA Stroke Community of Practice**, to support the education and training of clinicians delivering stroke treatment and care
 - **Metropolitan Health Service clinicians** delivering stroke care, or in other specialities
 - **regional stroke coordinators**
 - the **Neurological Council of Western Australia**
 - **Synapse** (an Australian brain injury organisation).
- **43 news stories featuring the F.A.S.T. message** published or broadcast by Western Australian media outlets, which included syndications from national stories. The potential audience reach over this period was 470,835.



Stroke Foundation Community Engagement Coordinator, Narelle Little, at the Women's Health Expo, Clarkson Public Library, September 2023.

The F.A.S.T. Community Education Program is delivering results; however, there is still more to be done to increase awareness of the signs of stroke, so more Western Australians are able to receive life-saving treatment sooner.

Importantly, only **39 percent** of Western Australian stroke patients arrive at hospital within the 4.5 hour window for clot-dissolving treatment (thrombolysis).⁶

The results of the **2023 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 Western Australian community, and showed that **30 percent of Western Australians were able to recognise two signs of stroke unprompted, in line with national results (31 percent).**⁷

This was a **7 percent improvement on 2021 results**, where only 23 percent of people in Western Australia were able to recognise two signs of stroke unprompted.⁸

Continue and expand the program

To date, program activities have focused largely on metropolitan areas. Continued and expanded investment in the program will enable the current pool of volunteers to be increased, and more volunteers from beyond the greater Perth area to be recruited and trained. Specifically, program activities will be focused on regional and metropolitan stroke hotspot geographical areas, including WA

Telestroke Service geographical catchment areas, and other areas identified using data from sources such as the No Postcode Untouched report, the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry (AuSCR) and the YouGov F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey.

Expanded funding of the program will also enable a **F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign** to be rolled out across the state, which will support and strengthen the work of the F.A.S.T. Community Education Program, and ensure even more Western Australians understand how to recognise a stroke when it occurs, and what to do. The F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign will include:

- *An integrated, multi-channel advertising campaign* to promote the F.A.S.T. message in Western Australia. 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.
- *A mainstream media campaign* in metropolitan 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 about F.A.S.T. awareness levels.

Evaluation

A formal program evaluation will be undertaken, focused on the following outcome measures:

- F.A.S.T. Community Education Program
 - Awareness of the F.A.S.T. signs (unprompted and prompted), key stroke risk factors, and what actions to take in the event of a stroke, as measured in Stroke Foundation's regular F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey.
 - Short-term (measured immediately after *StrokeSafe* presentations) and long-term (measured 3 months after *StrokeSafe* presentations) recall of the F.A.S.T. signs and stroke risk factors in hotspots.
 - Number of people at risk of stroke in hotspots who discussed their stroke risk with a health professional, and changed their behaviour in order to address a stroke risk factor(s) (measured 3 months after *StrokeSafe* presentations).

➤ Multimedia Campaign

- *Advertising Campaign*: Key performance metrics to be determined with media agency, based 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, and their reach.

We are calling on the Western Australian Government to continue and expand its investment in Stroke Foundation's successful F.A.S.T. Community Education Program, and invest in a F.A.S.T. Multimedia Campaign. This 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 Western Australian community.

This will also strengthen and maximise existing State Government investments in stroke infrastructure, including the WA Telestroke Service, targeting those regional communities covered by the Service, and ensuring residents know the signs of stroke, and the importance of calling triple zero (000) immediately.

In addition, this will support Western Australian hospitals and clinicians in their efforts to progress towards the 30/60/90 National Stroke Targets, a group of metrics designed to drive quality improvement in the areas of stroke unit access and time-critical stroke treatments.

Simon's story

Simon Fairbrother was in peak physique at the time of his stroke just 12 months ago. It was a huge shock to the father of three who had just completed the Busselton 100 Triathlon at the time.

"I was at work and my stress levels were heightened because a few of my colleagues were away, so I was managing the extra workload," Simon said.

"I was sitting at my desk when I began having a few dizzy spells. I called my wife and a colleague, and then lost sensation on my left-hand side and slumped off my chair and onto the floor."

Simon was experiencing the telltale F.A.S.T. signs of stroke. His colleagues rushed into action, bundling him into the car and rushing him to Busselton Hospital. A CT scan revealed Simon had a clot in his brain.

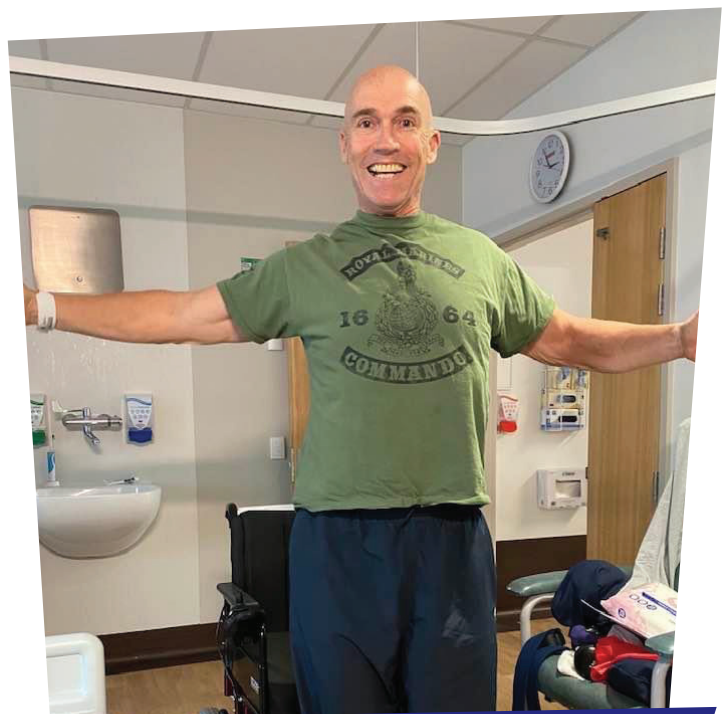
"I was having a conversation with a neurologist in Perth through the Telestroke service. He talked me through what was happening and said clot-busting drugs could be used because I had arrived at hospital within the golden hour of treatment," Simon said.

"I asked the doctor for his advice, he said if you were my brother, I'd want you to take the drug, so I did. The staff at Busselton Hospital were amazing, and I guess that's one of the benefits of living in a small town. I knew many of the nursing staff and the people who attended to me."

Following that, Simon completed six weeks of intensive physiotherapy and occupational therapy at Fiona Stanley Hospital.

"At first, I needed the help of two physios to walk me down the hallway. But after six weeks I was able to walk 30 metres unassisted," he said.

"It doesn't matter what age you are or your level of fitness, stroke can happen to anyone. Everyone should know the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) signs of stroke. It could save a life one day."



Survivor of stroke, Simon



References

1. Kim J, Neville E, Dalli L et al. on behalf of the Stroke Foundation. 2024. Economic Impact of Stroke Report 2024. Melbourne, Australia.
2. O'Donnell MJ, Chin SL, Rangarajan S et al; INTERSTROKE investigators. Global and regional effects of potentially modifiable risk factors associated with acute stroke in 32 countries (INTERSTROKE): a case-control study. *Lancet*. 2016. 88:761-775.
3. Stroke Foundation. 2014. Evaluation of F.A.S.T. Campaign - Report to Australian Government Department of Health.
4. Nicolson M. 2022. 2019-2021 Stroke FAST Campaign Evaluation: Interim report. Wellington, New Zealand: Te Hiringa Hauora | Health Promotion Agency.
5. Fuel. 2016. Evaluation of Department of Health UK Act F.A.S.T. Campaign (February 2009 – March 2016).
6. Stroke Foundation. 2023. National Stroke Audit Acute Services Report 2023. Melbourne, Australia.
7. YouGov. 2023. Stroke Foundation F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey Report 2023.
8. YouGov. 2021. Stroke Foundation F.A.S.T. Signs and Stroke Awareness Survey Report 2021.





**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