



Submission on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019

Introduction

This year there will be almost 10,400 strokes in Queensland¹, and there are more than 90,000 stroke survivors living in our community¹, many with an ongoing disability.

More than 80 percent of strokes can be prevented.² One of the key modifiable risk factors for stroke is high blood pressure. Research has shown eliminating hypertension in patients could reduce stroke incidence by an estimated 48 percent.² Yet, almost 900,000 Queenslanders (17 percent of the population) are living with high blood pressure¹, and many don't know it.

In addition to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and physical inactivity are also risk factors for stroke. Almost 1,300,000 Queenslanders (26 percent of the population) have high cholesterol and more than 2,200,000 Queenslanders (45 percent of the population) are physically inactive.¹

Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We do this through raising awareness, facilitating research and supporting stroke survivors.

Stroke Foundation is committed to reducing the number of preventable strokes in Queensland. As the voice of stroke in the state, we welcome the introduction of the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019 into the Queensland Parliament.

State Government investment in support for stroke survivors, access to stroke units and the quality of stroke care through the Queensland State-Wide Stroke Clinical Network, has delivered results, and serves as a best-practice exemplar for other states to follow. By establishing the proposed health promotion agency, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, the State Government will again lead the way nationally, reinforcing its commitment to chronic disease prevention.

For every dollar invested in preventive health programs, there is a return on investment of \$14.³ Stroke Foundation has developed several programs to improve community awareness of stroke and its risk factors. This submission outlines a number of potential opportunities for Health and Wellbeing Queensland to partner with Stroke Foundation to deliver preventive health initiatives which address the burden of stroke, and other chronic diseases, in the state.

Stroke Foundation shares the State Government's goal of making Queenslanders among the healthiest people in the world, and looks forward to continuing to partner with the Government in order to make this a reality.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland

Stroke Foundation supports the development of Health and Wellbeing Queensland as an independent and transparent agency, aiming to work in partnership with the like-minded organisations and the community.

In establishing the agency, it is important to recognise the benefits of many health promotion and disease prevention programs may not be seen until several years after implementation. As such, it is essential that investment decisions are not influenced by political processes and short-term electoral cycles. Governance arrangements ensuring transparency of decision making and public accountability will be key.

To ensure its success, Stroke Foundation requests the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Board contains adequate cross-sectoral representation, including specific expertise in the delivery of community-based health promotion and disease prevention programs.

Standing by regional and rural Queensland stroke survivors – Reducing the risk of recurrent stroke through effective secondary prevention

The Queensland STroke Outreach Program (StOP) approach

Four in 10 stroke survivors will go on to experience a further stroke within a decade⁴ and it is regional Queenslanders who are bearing the brunt of much of this stroke burden. Yet, most strokes can be prevented.²

People living in regional and rural Queensland are less likely to have access to a stroke unit and the specialist stroke care it delivers. Regional and rural health services are also less likely to see a high volume of stroke patients. While health professionals are doing their best, they are often not equipped to deliver the best-practice stroke care required to ensure patients are empowered to make the best possible recovery.

StOP is a new approach for the Stroke Foundation, building on what we have learnt through the StrokeConnect program, our work with health services, clinicians and consumers, and on the capacity we have created. It will assist in closing these gaps to give people in regional and rural Queensland the very best opportunity to reduce their risk of recurrent stroke. The program will also promote a more sustainable health system through a reduction in avoidable hospital readmissions.

StOP has two key components:

- **Education and support for hospital clinicians.** Health professionals need support to enable them to deliver effective prevention education and planning to every patient, every time. With onsite education and support, backed by online resources, StOP will ensure that every hospital clinician is confident to deliver prevention planning and education, and that systems support them to deliver this efficiently, consistently and effectively. Outcomes of this work will include quality improvement plans being in place in hospitals.
- **Contact with the stroke survivor from a Stroke Foundation health professional within 21 days of discharge.**

During this contact, our health professionals will:

- Provide education on stroke and reducing the risk of subsequent stroke.
- Deliver resources and strategies to reduce the person's risk of subsequent stroke.
- Promote connection with a general practitioner and attendance at outpatient appointments.
- Check that appointments and services arranged as part of the discharge plan are in place.
- Screen for risk and vulnerability, with a focus on depression and anxiety.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland would partner with Stroke Foundation to deliver StOP in Queensland, improving the health and wellbeing of regional and rural stroke survivors, and reducing health inequities.

This program will empower regional and rural Queenslanders with the information they need to understand and reduce their stroke risk, and live well after stroke. It will help improve health

outcomes, reduce stroke's burden on Queensland families, as well as reduce hospital readmission and healthcare costs.

Building on the initial investment in *My health for life*

My health for life is a free, State Government-funded evidence-based behaviour modification program for patients at high-risk of developing a chronic disease. It is delivered by the Healthier Queensland Alliance, and covers areas such as healthy eating and physical activity, achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, reducing alcohol consumption, and smoking cessation.

The program enables chronic disease to be detected early, helping Queenslanders to reduce their risk of developing stroke, heart attack and type 2 diabetes, and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, delivering savings to our health system.

Stroke Foundation is proud to partner with the Healthier Queensland Alliance and the State Government to deliver *My health for life*.

Highlights of the program to date include:

- **More than 140,000 people** throughout Queensland have been engaged in a conversation about their health through the **undertaking of a chronic disease risk assessment**.
- More than **9000 people have enrolled in the program**, and of those who have commenced the program, **more than half have completed it**. Currently **over 100 participants per week are completing the program**, making changes to their lifestyle including losing weight.
- More than **200 locally-based healthcare organisations are actively involved** in delivering the program in their communities, targeting prevention as a key activity.
- By the end of the program, **90 percent** of participants **understood the factors that lead to chronic disease**, and **80 percent knew what actions to take** to reduce their risk.
- **Sixty-eight percent** of participants **lost weight** during the program. Of those who were obese or overweight, 20 percent lost more than five percent of their weight by the completion of the program.
- Participants **increased consumption of fruit** (49 percent ate two serves of fruit a day at program completion) **and vegetables** (20 percent ate five serves or more of vegetables a day at program completion), **and reduced consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages** (daily consumption fell from seven percent at commencement to three percent at program completion).
- **Fifty-four percent** of participants were **physically active for 150 minutes or more per week** at program completion.

Continued funding of the program for another four years would enable 45,000 people per year to engage in risk assessments and conversations, leading to in excess of 4,000 people at risk completing the program. Extending the program would also enable further inroads to be made in chronic disease prevention in Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Queensland.

We know the State Government is committed to keeping Queensland healthy, and understands that if interventions are made at the right time, in the right way, it is possible to shift the burden of chronic disease and make Queensland the healthiest state in the country.

There is an opportunity for Health and Wellbeing Queensland to partner with the Healthier Queensland Alliance to deliver *My health for life* beyond 2020, and secure the enormous gains made so far in establishing and rolling out this program state-wide.

Continued investment in the *My health for life* program will help stem the rising tide of chronic disease and its impact on the Queensland health system.

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

Stroke Foundation's F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, and Time) Community Education Program will raise vital awareness of stroke risk factors and the signs of stroke, and of the need to respond to these signs as a medical emergency by calling an ambulance immediately. This program is currently being delivered in Tasmania and Western Australia, and is showing positive outcomes in the communities where it has been rolled-out.

Stroke Foundation has a pool of Queensland volunteers and existing stroke resources and materials. In the last 12 months, over 170 StrokeSafe talks have been delivered to community and not for profit groups and residential aged care facilities across the state, reaching more than 6000 Queenslanders in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and a range of regional areas including Cairns, Townsville, Gladstone, Mackay, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Toowoomba. State Government funding of this program would enable Stroke Foundation to train more speakers, expand our suite of resources, and ensure even more Queenslanders understand the risk factors for stroke and hear the lifesaving F.A.S.T. message.

There is an opportunity for the proposed health promotion agency, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, to partner with Stroke Foundation and empower community volunteers to deliver StrokeSafe and F.A.S.T. messages across the state, ensuring every Queensland household has someone who knows the risk factors for and signs of stroke. **While this program is focused on stroke awareness, it does educate participants on how to manage their stroke risk, and as such would fall within the remit of Health and Wellbeing Queensland.**

Prevention of stroke and F.A.S.T. access to treatment will mean a greater chance for recovery for Queensland patients, and decreased costs for the Queensland health system.

References

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