



2024

NATIONAL
STROKE AWARDS

Showing our appreciation and admiration for our incredible community

At Stroke Foundation we are all regularly humbled by the efforts that people in our wider community go to as they support their family and friends, raise awareness of stroke, and make a real tangible difference in the lives of those impacted by stroke.

The dedication, courage, and compassion to help prevent stroke, save lives, and enhance recovery is inspiring. From survivors of stroke to carers, volunteers, researchers, and health professionals – these amazing people often fill a gap the health sector does not address.

Our annual Stroke Awards acknowledge the exceptional individuals who make such an important contribution to Stroke Foundation. It is the event we all look forward to as we come together to recognise the courage and tenacity shown by survivors and their families in their often challenging, stroke recovery journey.

Celebrating their impact not only shines a light on the efforts of these individuals, but also gives us an opportunity to reiterate to the wider Australian community that stroke can impact anyone, of any age, at any time.

Our community is also richer for the contributions of many talented and dedicated clinicians and researchers. Their work in stroke prevention, treatment, and recovery, ensures the 27,000 Australians who will experience a stroke for the first time each year receive the best care possible.

You will see all of that laid out here as we profile the finalists in this year's Stroke Awards.

Examples of resilience and innovation, of individuals and communities adapting quickly and working together in the changed environment. From the many approaches to raising awareness of stroke, tenacity in

rehabilitation, fierce advocacy and raising funds to advance our mission, our community has made the future brighter for people with stroke.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate an outstanding person for a 2024 Stroke Award. Thank you also to our judges who had the enormously difficult but critical job of selecting the finalists and winners for this year. Thank you to our sponsors for supporting these Stroke Awards and making this celebration possible.

And finally, congratulations to all our nominees. Every accolade is well earned and your invaluable contribution to increasing stroke awareness, improving access to treatment, and ensuring every Australian ensures everyone is given the best opportunity to live well after stroke.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Kristjanson'.

Emeritus Professor
Linda Kristjanson AO
President
Stroke Foundation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Murphy'.

Dr Lisa Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
Stroke Foundation

Courage Award

Recovering from stroke can be an uphill battle. The Courage Award recognises the indomitable courage and hope shown by survivors and carers in facing stroke recovery. This category is open to survivors and carers and celebrates individual recovery and resilience.

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Finalists

Michael Denehy

Father of four, Michael Denehy, is described by his family as the epitome of courage.

In 2020 Michael's wife of 33 years, Yvonne, had a stroke and was left paralysed on her left side. Without hesitation, Michael was by her side every day from adjusting her pillows in the hospital to driving Yvonne to appointments and rehabilitation once discharged.

During Yvonne's rehabilitation journey, the Denehy family was dealt another blow after Michael was diagnosed with cancer. He underwent 12 months of treatment during which his care for Yvonne and dedication to his family never wavered.



John O'Dowd

After having a stroke in 2023, John's 'never give up' attitude has driven his recovery.

The 57-year-old was asleep at home when his stroke struck last year, only a few years after he suffered a heart attack.

During John's recovery, his mother became ill and passed away. During this difficult time, John turned his grief into motivation and set himself a goal to walk out of rehabilitation to attend his mother's funeral. To the surprise of doctors and physios, John achieved this goal after just only three weeks of rehabilitation showing great determination and courage.



Rebecca Schmidt-Lachlan

Rebecca Schmidt-Lachlan had to reinvent herself after her stroke 16 years ago.

Rebecca spent seven months in rehabilitation, re-learning how to complete basic tasks. She was determined not to let her stroke change her life and became passionate about advocacy and inclusion.

She was the driving force behind a \$25 million upgrade at her local train station, which saw lifts installed, ensuring people with disabilities could access public transport.

Rebecca has also written a book about her experience and regularly donates her time to share her story with businesses, community groups and schools.



Creative Award

Stroke recovery is a hugely individual journey, and for some that is enriched through creative expression in writing, photography, music and fine art. The award is open to stroke survivors who have a specific creative project to share.

Finalists

Tiana Ekpanyaskun

Victoria's Tiana Ekpanyaskun was just 10 years old at the time of her third and most devastating stroke.

Tiana was a talented young musician who had been playing since she was seven, but after her stroke, her family feared she may never play again.

But after 18 months, Tiana was accepted into the Melbourne Youth Orchestra's Adaptive Music Bridging Program. She was able to resume playing the violin using a modified instrument, with a chin rest developed using a 3D printer, a grip aid on her bow, and reversed strings which allow her to rest the violin on her right shoulder.

Tiana now uses music as her own form of rehabilitation.



Luke Mann

Before his stroke, Luke Mann never imagined himself standing on stage delivering one-liners. The South Australian was just 26 at the time of his stroke.

When he woke up from being in a coma for nine days, he felt like he had to reinvent himself.

Luke believes he was given a second chance at life, so he decided to pursue a lifelong dream of becoming a stand-up comedian, motivational speaker and poet.

He goes by stage name "Flukey Lukey" and has even entertained audiences at the Adelaide Fringe Festival. His show highlights the serious issues he faces post-stroke, like fatigue, balance and sleep problems.



Erin Porcervina

Erin Porcervina is passionate about theatre and has not let the impact of stroke get between her and the joy of performing.

Erin's most recent stroke was in 2021, during Melbourne lockdowns. It left her with vision impairments, and she had to learn to walk and talk again but was determined to get back on stage.

That is exactly what she has done. The Geelong performer and singer rebuilt her life after the stroke and is an active member of multiple all-abilities theatre groups. She's described as a role model to other adults living with a disability who gives 100% in her performances.



First Nations Stroke Excellence Award

This award recognises excellence in stroke prevention, treatment, recovery or research in First Nations communities. The aim of this award is to highlight the impact of individuals and organisations working to achieve health equity within the First Nations sphere.

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Finalists

Kerri Colegate

Kerri Colegate is a Noongar/Yamatji woman from the Balladong, Whadjuk, Yuat clans. She is a proud mother of two adult children and grandmother to three.

Kerry has her own consultancy business, KM Noongar Consultancy Services, specialising in disability support, capacity building and cultural consultancy. She is also currently Research Project Manager of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sub-study of the AUS-mTBI project based at ECU (MRFF funded) and the creator and coordinator of the Yarning Group for Aboriginal people of all ages with disabilities and the Brain Injury Yarning Circles project (WA Neurotrauma Research Program funded).



Joe Miller

Kooma man Joe Miller is a well-known face of stroke prevention and education in his community. In 2014 Joe had his first of five strokes. Thankfully, he knew the signs and was able to get treatment quickly.

Since then, Joe has dedicated his time to sharing his story and educating others on stroke prevention and awareness. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge, particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

He started the “Yarning After Stroke” Project; contributing to Stroke Foundation’s Reconciliation Action Plan group and being so involved in improving stroke care outcomes in First Nations communities.



Amy Thompson

Amy Thompson is a proud Dunghutti woman, mother of two and a survivor of stroke. In 2022, at the age of 39, the midwife had a stroke shortly after delivering a baby.

During her recovery she knew she wanted to be involved in stroke resource development and research, and since then she’s been passionate about improving the health of Indigenous Australians and closing the gap.

Amy set up an informal visiting service supporting local Dunghutti women who have survived a stroke and she was the driving force behind an inaugural Stroke Information Day to address challenges around poor knowledge of early identification of stroke in the Indigenous community.



Fundraiser of the Year Award

Stroke recovery is a hugely individual journey, and for some that is enriched through creative expression in writing, photography, music and fine art. The award is open to stroke survivors who have a specific creative project to share.

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Finalists

Glenn Browne

Glenn Browne has a passion for sailing but when his stroke struck in 2020, it stopped him from hitting the water.

The Mornington Peninsula man was in rehabilitation for two months, learning how to walk and talk again and dreamt of the day he'd be back on a boat. That day finally came and now he is using his love for sailing to help the stroke community.

In 2022 and 2023, Glenn turned his love for sailing into a fundraising opportunity and started an event called Sail4Stroke at the Mornington Yacht Club. The events collectively raised more than 8,000 for Stroke Foundation and helped spread awareness across the Peninsula.



Tommy Quick

After having a life-changing stroke at the age of 12, nothing has stopped Melburnian, Tommy Quick, from taking on life, head on.

The 31-year old has overcome major physical and mental challenges in his life, but one of the biggest came in 2021 when he embarked on a mammoth journey, cycling to the four most extreme points of Mainland Australia, on a recumbent trike, finishing in 2023.

Tommy cycled to Steep Point, Cape York, Wilsons Promontory and Cape Byron to raise money for Stroke Foundation. He clocked up more than 9,000 kilometres, raising more than \$120,000 and spread awareness of stroke and social inclusion along the way.



Ryan Webber

Ryan Webber from New South Wales was just 32-years-old at the time of his stroke. Ryan, a personal trainer, threw everything he could into his recovery, and became passionate about educating others about stroke.

Ryan hosted a fun run during Stride4Stroke and managed to smash his fundraising goal, raising an incredible \$14,000.

Ryan completed this challenge, all while navigating his own recovery from stroke. Thanks to Ryan and his support crew, there are now hundreds of people who know about the signs of stroke.



Improving Life After Stroke Award

Our community is full of selfless people willing to dedicate their time to help others. This award celebrates the stroke survivors, carers, and volunteers who have chosen to support their community.

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Finalists

Amanda Clayton

When Amanda's daughter, Sophie, had a stroke at the age of four, 14 years ago, she made it her mission to advocate for survivors.

Alongside her children, Amanda has been integral in promoting stroke awareness in schools. She's been a member of the Childhood Stroke Lived Experience Advisory Group for the past 2 years, where she helps co-design resources and advocates for awareness of stroke in young people.

Amanda has also taken her advocacy to parliament, putting stroke in the spotlight in front of Queensland politicians.



Julie Davey

Julie is a survivor of stroke with a passion for improving the lives of other survivors.

Combining her life experience as a survivor previous work as a health leader, Julie is a strong advocate for empowering survivors. She has a special interest in projects that look into how survivors can have more involvement in their own stroke care and has participated in research programs that aim to improve Australia's quality of stroke care and support systems. She's also been an important voice in areas of policy development, governance, and advocacy.



Tony Finneran

Tony Finneran, from New South Wales, has made it his mission to improve the lives of others since his own stroke in 2013.

Tony regularly volunteers his time to influence the media, politicians and is also a StrokeSafe Speaker.

He is also well regarded in the bus and coach industry, and has written many books on the topic. Tony uses these books as fundraisers, and has donated more than \$60,000 to help prevent, treat and beat stroke.

Tony also participates in a number of research projects and works alongside Occupational Therapy students in their final year of studies.



Volunteer of the Year Award

Volunteers are the backbone of our community, and we are thrilled to be able to recognise their dedicated service. This award celebrates volunteers who make a significant difference and contribution to our mission to prevent, treat and beat stroke.

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Finalists

Toni Arfaras

Toni Arfaras from Victoria was recognised for her efforts volunteering as a StrokeSafe Speaker. Toni has been determined to use her lived experience, as well as her skills from years of teaching, to help educate others.

Toni became a StrokeSafe Speaker in 2016. Since then, she has travelled more than 2,400km to deliver more than 80 talks. Toni enjoys giving talks as they allow her to give back to the community, while putting her skills to use.

Toni also recently volunteered her time and shared valuable insights about fatigue after stroke for Stroke Foundation's TakeAway video series.



John Stevens

John Stevens, from Tasmania has been recognised for giving back to the community. He has been a StrokeSafe Speaker since 2019, and since then, has delivered talks to First Nations communities and regional and rural areas.

John has also lobbied local and federal politicians, and hand-delivered informative assets to the community. John is also on the Premier's Disability Advisory Council and in 2023, was appointed by the Menzies Institute for Medical Research as the Inaugural Chair of the Consumer Advisory Committee for the new Cardiovascular Research Flagship.



Janet Weir

Janet Weir, from South Australia, has been a StrokeSafe Speaker for more than a decade. She has delivered more than 210 talks to hundreds of people across the state since joining as a volunteer in 2013.

In 2023, Janet travelled to the Northern Territory, including in rural and regional communities, where she delivered 14 talks in just 15 days.

A passionate advocate, Janet became inspired to deliver talks after seeing the devastating impact stroke had on her own family members. Since then, she's been determined to educate others about recognising the signs of stroke, and ways to lower their stroke risk.



Warrior Award

This award recognises the contribution of a person aged under 18 in stroke awareness, fundraising or advocacy. Designating an award for this age-bracket will give our younger stroke community members the opportunity to be recognised.

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Finalists

Joe Holden

Joe Holden, from New South Wales, was a fit and healthy 7-year-old at the time of his stroke.

After a lengthy stay in hospital, Joe was walking, talking, eating and laughing just a few weeks later.

Since then, Joe has achieved so many milestones, from returning to school, to riding a bike, to swimming, and more recently, finding a passion for cricket. But his biggest love has been returning to the farm and helping during harvest time.

Joe's family say he is living his absolute best life, and his bubbly personality is a daily reminder of how fortunate they are to have been supported by an amazing team of medical professionals.



Spencer McPherson

Spencer McPherson was almost two when he had a stroke. His parents noticed he was displaying some of the key stroke signs, and rushed him to hospital where he underwent lifesaving surgery.

Now seven-years-old, Spencer is thriving at school and never lets anything get in his way. He loves swimming, playing outside and maths.

Spencer and his family have been a driving force behind increased awareness about childhood stroke, and were involved in the development of brochures which are going in school and childcare centres across Australia.



Piper Wakley-Keighran

Piper Wakley-Keighran, from New South Wales, was just five-years-old when stroke changed her life. Piper had been relaxing at home when she became unresponsive.

Piper was in hospital for a month and has since made an incredible recovery. She has been recognised for her bravery and courage in her stroke recovery.

Piper recently started primary school, and is loving every moment. Her family are so proud of everything she has achieved since her stroke, just five months ago, and can't wait to see what the future holds for their strong and courageous little girl.



President's Achievement Award

This award is given to exceptional individuals who have made a significant contribution to Stroke Foundation and is selected by Stroke Foundation's President Professor Linda Kristjanson AO.

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Winner

Brenda Booth OAM



Brenda Booth OAM, from New South Wales, has played a pivotal role in the work of Stroke Foundation. Brenda experienced a stroke when she was 41 in 2001. Since then, she has been passionate about improving stroke care in Australia.

Brenda has worked in the health and disability sector on the Central Coast for more than 25 years. She has played key roles for the Stroke Foundation, lending her experience to the Consumer Council, the Research Advisory Committee, and the Living Stroke Guidelines.

Locally, Brenda is a member of the Working Aged Stroke Group and the Northern Beaches Stroke Support Group.

In 2019, Brenda was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in recognition of her services to consumer advocacy in stroke.

Using her experience and professional background as a Registered Nurse, and a Case Manager with the NSW Disability Service, Brenda has been involved in many advocacy campaigns at local, state and national levels.

Most recently, Brenda has provided valuable insight to the development of the Australian Stroke Coalition Stroke Unit Certification Project which encourages hospitals to consistently meet a set of national criteria to deliver the best possible stroke care to patients.

A heartfelt thank you to our 2024 Stroke Award sponsors

We are so grateful and proud to have partners who understand the stroke community and make such an effort to lend their support. Your recognition of our community ensures that the risks and impacts of stroke are seen and understood – through your support we can continue to educate all Australians, and in doing so, save lives.

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