intouch

Winter 2022

MS PLUS Neuro Wellbeing

Welcome to MS Plus!

Inside :

How MS Plus is working to empower neuro wellbeing and connection

Also :

Creating a state-of-the-art Wellbeing Centre in Lidcombe, NSW

From the CEO

John Blewonski | Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to officially launch the new MS Plus brand, including a refreshed, modern look for our materials, a new website and logo — on display in this special edition of Intouch.

Of course, this change is about much more than just a new name and rebrand but also the beginning of an exciting chapter of service provision, education and support for a broad spectrum of neurological conditions. MS Plus is about a whole of life approach to these conditions, considering everything that makes our clients — and their experience of neurological conditions — unique. Empowering neuro wellbeing and connection is at the core of MS Plus. We will be focusing on all aspects of our clients' health, to help them to live their best life with self-directed care that connects them to the resources they need. Working from a network of Wellbeing Centres spanning four states, we can improve thousands of lives. I can assure you we're still providing all of our previous Services and Support, plus additional care options, including dedicated Key Workers, who will partner with clients from day one, a new approach to supporting those who are newly diagnosed and our new carers strategy — currently in draft form.

Over the coming months, we will be commencing some exciting redevelopment projects that will help us to deliver on the MS Plus philosophy. We break ground in August on a revitalised MS Wellbeing Centre at our Lidcombe site in New South Wales. The purpose-built design will provide a Wellbeing Centre to better meet the needs and requirements for people living with Multiple Sclerosis, and other related neurological diseases, well into the future. The centre is also tailored to include family and friends and those professional and support teams dedicated to providing targeted diagnosis, treatments and research. The new facility will replace the existing Studdy MS Centre. We all look forward to watching this project take shape over the coming months. Keep an eye on our website or social media for more updates. I would like to thank you for your tireless support to date and I look forward to continuing to work together into the future.

Contents

Publisher: MS Plus
ABN: 66 004 942 287 **Editor:** Sarah Pye
Advertising enquiries: intouch@ms.org.au
Privacy policy: ms.org.au/privacy
ISSN: 1833-8941

ACT – Gloria McKerrow House
117 Denison Street, Deakin ACT 2600
NSW – The Studdy MS Centre
80 Betty Cuthbert Drive, Lidcombe NSW 2141
TAS – The ABC Centre
1 Liverpool Street, Hobart TAS 7000
VIC – The Nerve Centre
54 Railway Road, Blackburn VIC 3130
MS Connect: 1800 042 138 (free call)
8:00am – 6:00pm weekdays
Regional offices: msplus.org.au/contact-us

f facebook.com/wearemsplus
in linkedin.com/company/wearemsplus
youtube.com/c/wearemsplus
instagram.com/wearemsplus

News

Run or ride to fight MS this August

With a variety of run and ride distances to choose from, the MS Melbourne Run + Ride Festival, formerly known as the MS Melbourne Cycle + Half Marathon, has something to suit all ages, abilities and fitness levels.

From a 50km bike ride over the West Gate Bridge, to a half marathon finishing under the famous Flemington rose arbour, or even a 2.5km family ride... there is a distance to suit everyone! Register today at: **msrunridefest.org.au**

FREE online course: Understanding Multiple Sclerosis

Monday 12 September, 9am, 6 weeks, 2 hours per week

Increase your knowledge of MS-related issues and be empowered to create and contribute to personalised MS management plans. The course is designed for anyone with an interest in MS including people living with MS, their families and carers, medical and nursing professionals, allied health professionals, advocates, service delivery staff, support workers. To register, visit: **ms.mooc.utas.edu.au**

MS Challenge Adventures

Travel is back in 2022 and you can be part of something life-changing, by travelling with purpose on an MS fundraising adventure. Join us on the trip of a lifetime, while raising funds to help us continue our life-changing work.

Three treks depart this year: Snowy Mountains, Sapphire Coast, and Tuscany. For more information, visit: **doitforms.org.au/travel-2022**

Introducing MS Plus

As MS Plus, we will be better placed to provide clients with more support and more services, to improve all aspects of your health and wellbeing and make sure you feel connected and well equipped to live your best life with MS and other neurological conditions.

Over six decades of experience in MS has helped us understand the common barriers and challenges, and how they can impact you and your loved ones. No two journeys are the same, each with your own aspirations, which is why we're constantly developing our expertise to increase effectiveness and provide value for everyone.

From diagnosis and onwards – we are here. Always available to step in or stand by, ready with meaningful advice, emotional support and practical tools for every milestone and to help manage the highs and lows.

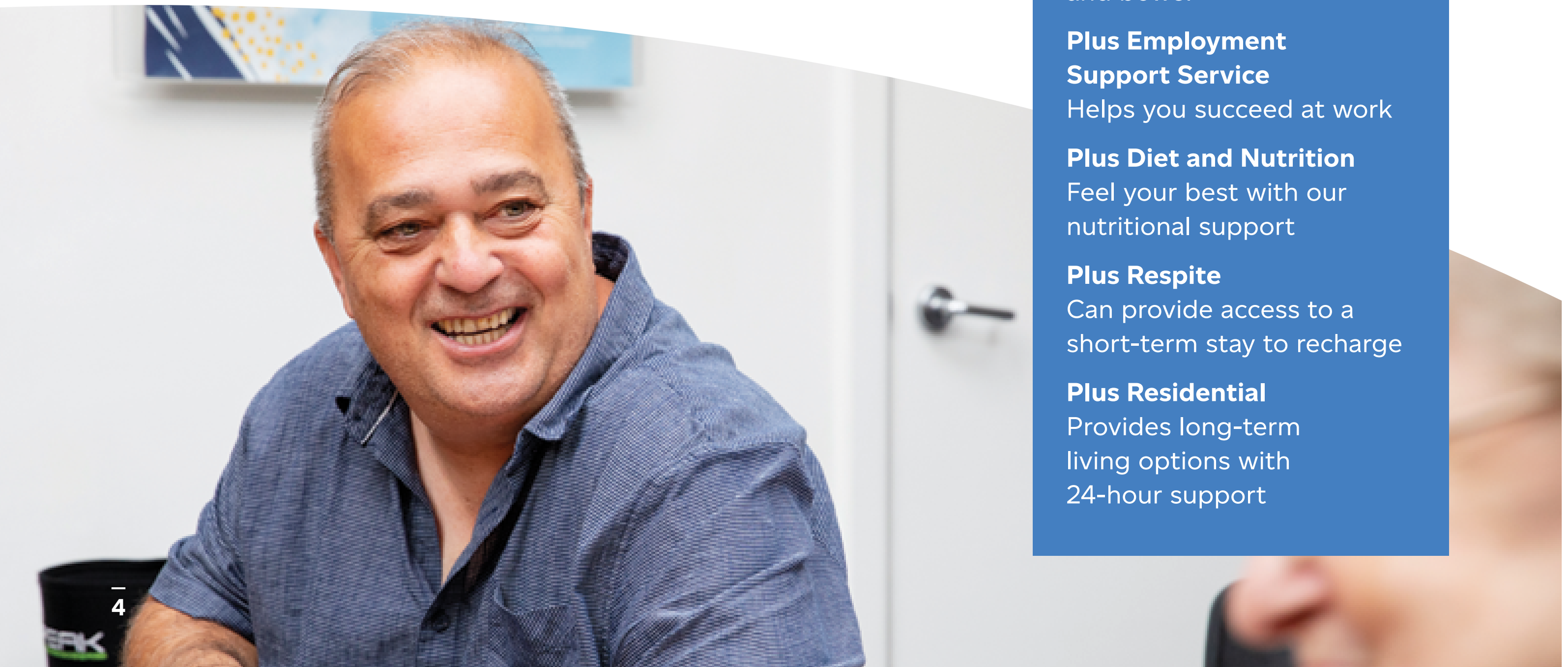
At MS Plus, we are devoted to creating meaningful relationships and supporting you whilst driven by our belief in a future cure.

We've expanded our services and are growing our facilities, to make sure if you're living with a neurological condition, you feel supported and connected and get real value from MS Plus. See below for more information.

MS Plus. Empowering neuro wellbeing and connections.

New and upgraded locations

We are embracing upgrades to our locations in Lidcombe, NSW, Footscray, VIC and Deakin, ACT as well as opportunities to develop smaller hubs in areas with demand. Improved facilities are one way we will deliver on our wellbeing model of care, enabling significant changes to not only a client's physical but mental health as well. Our Wellbeing Centres will provide the perfect setting for this type of unique, tailored care for the neuro community.



Expanding how we care for people

People living with a range of neurological conditions can access our Plus services, including:

Plus Support Coordination
Helps you connect with the NDIS services you need

Plus Plan Management
helps you manage the funds in your NDIS plan

Plus Physiotherapy
Helps you improve your physical wellbeing

Plus Occupational therapy
Provides equipment, technology, home modifications and strategies for daily living.

Plus Exercise Physiology
Helps you create an exercise plan tailored to your goals

Plus Continence Support
Empowers you to take control of your bladder and bowel

Plus Employment Support Service
Helps you succeed at work

Plus Diet and Nutrition
Feel your best with our nutritional support

Plus Respite
Can provide access to a short-term stay to recharge

Plus Residential
Provides long-term living options with 24-hour support

What does the 'Plus' really mean?

Our passion and dedication to helping people live their lives with multiple sclerosis — providing the best long-term options and life outcomes — remains the same.

However, we are building on this commitment with:

- an expansion into other neurological conditions
- a focus on a whole of life approach — with services and supports tailored for each clients' unique circumstances
- an emphasis on holistic, positive wellbeing, including mental and emotional support
- support for, not only those living with MS but also their entire network of carers, friends and family.

This means, in addition to what we currently provide, we are offering and striving for more. More support, more services, more awareness, more connections, more research and more health and wellbeing options for people living with neurological conditions.

MS + other neurological conditions
After many decades of helping people with MS to live their best life, we want to extend that care to others living with life-altering neurological conditions.

MS + your total wellbeing
Your experience of MS is as individual as you are. We partner with you to meet your specific needs. Becoming an MS Plus client also means access to our complete suite of wellbeing services.

MS + our wellbeing centres + in your home + virtual support
Whether you prefer to access your services from one of our Wellbeing Centres or Hubs, a home visit or virtual support via telehealth, we have an option to suit you.

VIC + NSW + ACT + TAS
We support thousands of Australians across four states and work as one to deliver the best outcomes for people with MS. We collaborate and learn from each other, to improve and grow the services and supports on offer.

MS + your loved ones
We understand that MS impacts not only you but your loved ones as well. MS Plus includes your friends, family, colleagues, carers and more in your treatment and recovery and provides ongoing support for all the most important people in your life.

MS + partnerships
We have strong partnerships within the community, to other healthcare providers, GPs, specialists, people living with MS, carers, community support services and more, to refer you into whatever you need to live well.

As trusted experts in the specific barriers of neurological conditions, we have learned it takes time to come to terms with a diagnosis and that your needs are individual and ever changing. We understand the importance of treating, not only symptoms, but your overall mental, emotional and physical health, to ensure the best possible quality of life.

MS Continence Nurse, Fiona Easton, has worked in the MS field for 12 years, helping thousands of people with MS to live confidently with bowel and bladder control issues.

Up to 80 percent of people living with multiple sclerosis experience bladder and bowel issues. This can have a huge impact on people's entire lives – including their social life, relationships, employment, sleep and mental health.

There shouldn't be any shame around it! It's a basic human need. It's not even about quality of life — it's just about life. I'm here to help gain control," said Fiona.

Liz was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2016.

"I had absolutely no control whatsoever. I was too scared to leave the house and I relied on my mother to drive me everywhere," said Liz. "I had gone from an academic and a professional, to only leaving the house to go to rehab. Even doing that, I had to bring three changes of clothes."

When the time came for Liz to think through her NDIS plan, she decided her goals were to increase her confidence to connect with the community to reduce isolation, and to live independently for as long as possible.

Part of this plan included a continence assessment. Liz went to see MS Continence Nurse, Fiona Easton at our Blackburn office.

"Fiona has been superb. She made me feel ok about a topic that can bring shame. She normalised it for me. The way she engaged with me made me feel like I could just be myself and feel accepted," said Liz.

"Most importantly, she helped me change my attitude. I don't care anymore, I just get on with it. I have the confidence and support now to go to my art class every week and it makes me feel normal, the new normal," said Liz.

At MS Plus we practice 'radical empathy' — moving beyond putting ourselves in someone's shoes, to taking action and creating lasting change. We believe you are more than your condition, so we are offering more services, more expertise, more awareness, more research.

Psychologist, Dr Sally Shaw recently presented on where to find empathy and helping people to show empathy, for our World MS Day event in May.

Why do people with MS need empathy?

The invisibility of disease symptoms means people with MS really benefit from others' understanding of this disease. Their quality of life can be reduced in such invisible but dramatic ways. MS can have a significant impact on someone's goals, expectations and lived experiences. Self-identity can sometimes take a blow when diagnosed with MS, and we need others' empathy to be able to successfully navigate this 'new' sense of self.

Is it possible to really understand what someone else is going through?

Everyone in my practice at Focussed Health Psychology either has lived experience of MS or of living with disability in another form. While it can be beneficial to have a lived experience to bring to our understanding of others we work with, I still don't know what it's like for someone else to live with their MS, in their setting. Showing empathy is working hard to see things from another's experience of the world.

Empathy and your health professional

Sometimes it's difficult to be genuine and honest with health professionals. My advice would be: Don't treat your consultation like a job interview. A lot of people with MS don't like playing the patient role, or to 'bore' their practitioner with the details. We then end up forming relationships with our health professionals that don't allow them a genuine appreciation of what we're going through, which makes it really hard for them to empathise and support us in the best way possible.

We consider ourselves tireless partners, working closely with loved ones to coordinate care and connect clients to all the services and support they may need. Together, we're on a journey to break down barriers, achieve goals, and help you live life to the fullest.

Kristina's world was turned upside down in February 2020, when her first episode of MS resulted in permanent damage to her nerves and spinal cord.

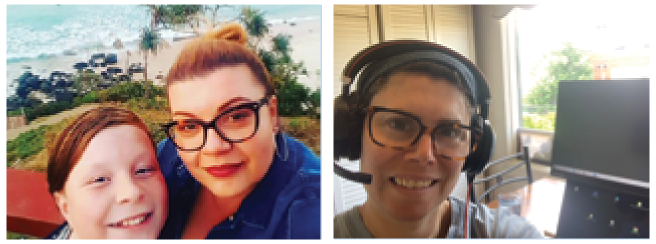
In a time of such stress, Kristina was daunted by the idea of having to communicate the nuances and complexity of her new diagnosis through a NDIS assessment. Then Kristina met Vanessa, from the MS Plus Client Engagement & Wellbeing Team. Vanessa worked directly with Kristina to help her to identify the types of support she would require and to help her navigate through the NDIS system.

"People with MS can do so much better when they're fully educated on what supports are available. NDIS support is there and we can facilitate people to get that support and have a better life," Vanessa said.

"Having access to neurological physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, remedial massage therapy, carer assistance and general living assistance, has helped me achieve my goal of living a well-balanced, pain eased, less burdened life," Kristina said.

"I can now manage my work life better and focus on the things that are important to me my son, family and friends. The assistance has helped me to regain my social independence and renewed my mental state, improving my quality of life immensely.

"The journey through NDIS isn't easy. I'm so glad I had someone like Vanessa to help me through the whole process."



Caption: Pictured left, Kristina and her son Niko and Vanessa.

For more information on MS Plus, visit: msplus.org.au/news/introducing-ms-plus

Breaking ground on our state-of-the-art MS Wellbeing Centre

Construction on our purpose-built MS Wellbeing Centre in Lidcombe, NSW will commence in August, as we work to deliver an advanced, tailored facility for people with neurological conditions, their loved ones and healthcare teams. The new site will be located not far from the current Studdy MS Centre, first opened in 1985 as The Western Region MS Centre.

Artists renders of new facility

Images of previous facility when first opened

The new Wellbeing Centre is being created specifically to help clients feel at home and part of a larger community. To help us achieve this, we are remodelling the existing centre into a more collaborative and inclusive therapeutic space, focused on addressing your physical, emotional, cognitive needs.

How a person feels mentally and emotionally can make a big difference during physical therapy. The Centre will provide spaces that meet social, psychological and complex physical needs, provide internal and external spaces to build confidence and self-esteem, enable learning through physical recreation and social interaction and provide areas for reflection, contemplation and renewal.

The masterplan vision for the Lidcombe MS Wellbeing Centre is to create a vibrant, nurturing, active, safe and accessible therapy space for our community.

The $37 million project will officially launch with a sod turning event in August, with the revitalised Centre expected to open in 2024. We would like to acknowledge the important involvement of the NSW Government, whose generous support was vital to getting this project off the ground.

Keep an eye on the Intouch digital newsletter or follow **@weareMSPlus** for more updates on Instagram and Facebook.

What will the MS Wellbeing Centre in Lidcombe offer?

- 19, 2-bedroom units providing a mixture of long and short-term onsite accommodation for clients and their families
- large open space lounge and café area
- a larger, purpose-built gym with air conditioning
- DDA compliant change facilities
- 8 therapy areas, including designated areas for consultation and treatment
- large multipurpose space for classes, workshops, presentations, events and group activities, convertible into two smaller spaces if needed
- A ‘sensory garden’ in an open courtyard, kids play area, level access for all areas, undercover parking and landscaped outdoor spaces.

Providing:

- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Dietetics
- Exercise Physiology
- Employment Support
- Support Coordination
- Plan Management

Together with services funded by Western Sydney Local Health District

- Peer support
- Continence
- Connect team Key Worker
- NDIS engagement support

Award winning MS advocacy

Congratulations to our Executive Manager, Client Engagement and Wellbeing, Jodi Haartsen, who recently received a global MS Brain Health Leader Award, in the Independent Healthcare Professionals category.

The award honours Jodi's incredible contribution to advancing access to timely, consistent and effective MS care and treatment, as part of MS Brain Health. The organisation creates policies and guidelines to empower health care providers and people with MS to live their best lives.

Jodi has worked for the past 20 years as a nurse in the neurology field, in various roles, including surgery, stroke research, as an educator (teacher) and nurse practitioner, before joining the MS Plus team, where she has passionately supported education and wellbeing initiatives for the MS community.

"I became involved with MS Brain Health seven years ago because it was apparent to me that some people were receiving high standards of care in MS, while others were not afforded the same opportunity due to their location and resources. There was a gap in a globally recognised set of standards that guided services delivery and helped people understand what to expect," Jodi said.

Jodi recounted the many stories she heard of people experiencing MS symptoms and them being dismissed. The symptoms may have resolved, or delays were experienced in accessing specialist care. While people were waiting, their brain health was worsening and damage was occurring.

There was also often the surplus emotional suffering of feeling like they weren't being heard and struggling to get what they need.

"We now have a greater understanding in MS care of the importance of timely access to care and treatment, of keeping a healthy lifestyle for brain health and the need to ensure we have standards that support all health care providers to be aware of these."

"Overall, Australia has a wonderful health system for people with MS, although there's still struggles within it. What happens in one state can be vastly different than what happens in another, and individual experiences are varied."

The policy report the International MS Brain Health group created put forward a key strategy to support brain health in people with MS that included recommendations for leading a healthy lifestyle, monitoring MS disease activity, and acting on changes, supporting shared decisions making and ensuring access to treatment early in the diagnosis.

Jodi joined the MS Brain Healthr steering committee, to find the best way to share the information and make sure the policy was put into practice.

"One thing we focused on was, how do we encourage people to act quickly? Stroke already has that awareness of time sensitivity, but MS does not. We had to ask ourselves, how to we communicate this urgency of referrals to the GP community? To have doctors say, "This is a new diagnosis, you need to see someone within one month, six months is too long, and damage is occurring."

Jodi worked to communicate the brain health message nationally, as well as in all her work in the MS clinic. Using the Brain Heath Standards that were developed as part of the policy, she was able to make changes in clinical practice that included developing better practices for people to achieve a brain healthy lifestyle and improve access services.

"Through auditing our clinical activities against globally recognised standards, we were able to reduce our urgent clinic wait times from four weeks to two days.

"We all have a role to play to create change and action for people with MS to improve brain health, no matter how you are involved with MS.

"Brain health is all about acting now. It matters."

MS Australia also received an MS Brain Health award within the Patient Organisation category, with their submission entitled, 'At MS Australia, Brain Health is integrated into all of our work'.

For more information, visit:
msaustralia.org.au

Jodi's top 3 tips for brain health

- When you're worried, speak up
- Keep active physically and mentally
- Get the right people around you – not just health services but family and friends

Diet tips and tricks

Jady Lam, MS Plus Dietitian

How can we start to build healthy habits around eating and nutrition in 2022?

We can build habits in a few steps:

- increasing awareness by keeping a food and drink diary and become aware of any habits like skipping meals.
- replace unhealthy habits with healthy ones e.g., meal planning, not having certain foods at home
- Celebrate when you achieve new healthy habits, be kind when we fall off track.

What do you recommend to your clients when they want to implement diet and exercise goals at once?

I would recommend setting SMART goals. This are goals which are:

- Specific: what I want to do
- Measurable: hold yourself accountable
- Attainable: tools, time and resources to achieve your goal
- Realistic: small achievable
- Time bound: start date, frequency and end.

Many of our clients experience fatigue. What are some strategies on how to manage this?

Some strategies can include: having regular meals over the day to give us energy

- selecting low GI wholegrains, which provide longer lasting energy
- having adequate iron levels. One of the most common symptoms of fatigue is low iron.

Eating Omega 3 is anti-inflammatory and may be useful for people with MS.

Some foods rich in Omega-3s can include nuts and seeds, fatty fish, fats and oils, omega-rich eggs, wholegrain breads/cereals.

To access the Plus Dietitian service, contact MS Connect: **1800 042 138.** View the full interview: **youtube.com/c/wearemsplus**

Raising awareness of MS care for General Practitioners

By Dr Therese Burke, Clinical Platform Coordinator, MS Australia

The GP and MS care team working well together can offer a person living with MS an individualised and tailored approach to their wellbeing.

A recent issue of the Australian Journal of General Practice has raised awareness about MS symptoms, recommendations for managing MS and understanding the lived experience of people with MS.

What articles did the MS-themed edition include?

Firstly, an article from Dr Brett Travers and colleagues outlined the current diagnostic process in MS, modern drug therapies, setting the scene around modern-day MS care and bringing GPs up to date with the many recent drug advances.

MS Australia-funded nutritionist Associate Professor Yasmine Probst and colleagues outlined the implications of dietary lifestyle management of MS in the community. The key recommendation was that people with MS follow evidence-based dietary regimes in preference to an MS-specific diet.

Physiotherapists Katrina Williams and Dr Sandra Brauer outlined the wide range of symptoms that may impair walking in MS. This includes issues with sensation and feeling, fatigue, vision, dizziness, and vertigo, not just the more obvious signs such as weakness.

Neuropsychologists Dr Wendy Longley and Dr Cynthia Honan also presented a discussion on cognitive impairment in MS (memory and thinking issues), outlining the role of the GP in screening and care coordination for this common, but often overlooked symptom of MS.

The lived experience of MS is explored by myself and my colleagues. This article discusses key trigger points for people with MS from their viewpoint, where the GP may be able to offer extra support, such as at the time of diagnosis, relapse, disease progression, pregnancy, symptom change, relationship change and decisions around medications.

How does this awareness help people with MS?

MS treatment and rehabilitation requires multidisciplinary care, with all members of the healthcare team playing an important and focused role. GPs are central to this team, often providing coordination of MS care as well as clinical expertise for all other co-existing medical conditions. The GP also plays a central role in preventative medicine and health promotion, factors of immense importance in brain health for MS. Education and awareness of modern-day treatment and advances in MS care ensure that the GP can offer high quality, current and patient-focused care for people living with MS. And that people living with MS can feel confident and secure in their GP care.

To read the full article, visit: **msaustralia.org.au/news**

Bringing lived experience to MS research

By Dr Lisa Grech

I was diagnosed with MS in 2000, so over 20 years ago now. I consider myself lucky with my diagnosis because it has been relatively smooth sailing. This, of course, doesn't mean I am without symptoms. I certainly go to the toilet a lot, have sub-standard balance, reduced attention and information processing, and have taken an antidepressant for at least 10 years now.

Despite this, since I was diagnosed, I've completed two degrees and an honours year, a Master of Clinical Neuropsychology and a PhD. Just for fun, I'm currently completing a Master of Clinical Psychology!

People manage their MS diagnosis in different ways. For me, I've built much of my career around it.

My PhD research looked at the role of coping on the effects of executive function (higher order thinking) on stress, depression anxiety, and quality of life in people with MS. It showed that use of more adaptive coping strategies can bridge the gap between reduced executive function and positive psychological outcomes.

I am now focusing on addressing the gap in depression detection and treatment for people with MS. Depression occurs in about half of people with MS at some point, and it can be chronic. I've completed a project to understand current practices and the barriers to improving detection and treatment. I'm now focusing on areas that need improvement to help solve the problem, including the development of better information and resources to assist people with MS and support MS clinicians.

I am honoured to contribute to our understanding and healthcare practices that help improve the lives of people with MS.

While the research world is incredibly competitive, but I've been fortunate to be funded by MS Australia for a couple of small projects, and again for a fellowship to support my salary. I also received a MS Plus 'Go for Gold' scholarship.

I also coordinate a project assessing the impact of treatment burden on medication adherence in people with MS taking the range of oral disease modifying treatments options, funded by pharmaceutical company, Merck.

This is a nurse-led project, and I am passionate about the value of MS nurses and the broader healthcare team, including allied health, and the contribution they bring to good research and support for people with MS. I'm also passionate about the role of people with lived experience and ensure that my research is informed by a wonderful committee of people with MS, their carers and family.

Dr Grech is a registered psychologist and senior research fellow at Monash University, where she heads the chronic and complex healthcare services research group. Her research program aims to improve outcomes in people with chronic health conditions, predominantly multiple sclerosis and cancer, with a dual focus on the healthcare practitioner and patient.

To keep up to date with Lisa's work, follow **@lisa.grech4** on Twitter or visit: **research.monash.edu**

For more information on the Go for Gold scholarships, see page 17.

Climbing for a cure: Mum of three with MS to climb Himalayan peak

In October, Jen Willis, a 50-year-old mum of three living with MS, will embark on a 51-day expedition to the Himalayas, where she will summit Mera Peak (6476m) and then Ama Dablam (6,812m), to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis research and the Forum for the Welfare of Himalayan Children.

> "Having MS has motivated me to get going and realise my childhood dream of becoming a mountaineer. Through this amazing adventure and by raising funds to help others, I am also finding a great sense of purpose in living with MS," Jen says.

In 2018, Jen was officially diagnosed but in early 2021 her MS started progressing. Jen's neurologist advised that if she were to do nothing new, she could be in a wheelchair within three to four years.

Jen realised this was the moment to pursue her dream, so at the end of 2021 she left her job as principal of a small primary school to embark on the journey of a lifetime.

Jen has faced many challenges as she navigates work and parenting with MS, ranging from symptoms such as extreme dizziness and fatigue, burning sensations throughout her body and cognitive impacts.

However, her positivity, ambition and sense of adventure override these challenges, and Jen is set to truly achieve something extraordinary as she takes on this high-altitude adventure, one that few people would even contemplate, let alone with MS!

To learn more about Jen's story, upcoming expedition and to donate visit Jen's website: helpcurems.com

You can also follow Jen's adventure via her Facebook page MS Adventure: **facebook.com/HelpCureMultipleSclerosis**

Exercise and MS

Exercising during a relapse or exacerbation

During this time if you can do something very low impact and modify your routine, so you are still promoting regular movement, that is ideal. Go slow, be gentle with yourself and try a 'movement snack', this could be simply changing positions regularly, walking into the backyard or completing small tasks at home.

Know when to stop

Know when you're having a bad day, so as not to push yourself, but don't give up on exercise or movement entirely if possible. There should be a level of discomfort and effort, to see change and improvement. Don't be discouraged by feeling fatigued or sore after exercise, your body will adapt to the demands.

What about fatigue?

Take rest breaks, exercise earlier in the day, alternate muscle groups, gradually increase the exercise volume (intensity, frequency, duration), apply cooling strategies to reduce the impact of heat sensitivity on fatigue.

Heat in exercise

Heat sensitivity does not cause relapses or exacerbations. Any effect on your symptoms will be temporary and should calm once you've cooled down.

For more exercise advice, visit **msplus.org.au/resource-hub**

Celebrating connections through art

MS Virtual Art Show 2022

We received 219 wonderfully creative submissions from 109 artists who are living with MS and other neurological conditions, as well as carers. The artwork categories include paintings, illustrations, sculptures, craft, digital artwork and photography.

Following our 16-year tradition, one of the artists participating in the 2022 MS Virtual Art Show won the prestigious Barry Allen Art Award. The late Barry Allen was a man who loved painting and received great comfort from his interest in art and music.

The virtual award ceremony took place on World MS Day, Monday 30 May. Congratulations to our talented award winners of the 2022 MS Virtual Art Show.

To view all this year's submissions, visit: **msplus.org.au/VirtualArtShow** Our virtual art show will be live for a limited time only so please help us promote it far and wide by sharing this web page with your networks.

If you would like to send a shout out to the artists, please email **msart@ms.org.au**

THE BARRY ALLEN ART AWARD

Circular Blooms
by Deanna Renee

"Seeing my MRI used to fill me with such dread, would it be worse this time? Until I realised they can be quite beautiful and unique. I started the art project Circular Blooms, mainly using MRI scans of brains with MS, then moved onto other medical and non-medical mediums to explore, life, death and rebirth," Deanna said. "While MS damages the connections in your brain and body, flowers contrast this by building connections through their root systems. It is best to see the beauty even when things may seem bleak."

HIGHLY COMMENDED PAINTINGS/ILLUSTRATIONS

Fragility by Helen Woodbridge

"Making everyday decisions about very ordinary situations was very often difficult. This feeling of fragility helped me realise I needed to quieten down. It gave me time and space to take stock and revaluate what I needed to do if anything."

CARERS AWARD

Flourish by Leigh Pearson

"In my role as carer for Sharon I am privileged to have the opportunity to step into and engage with her world. Despite its limitations, this world is rich, full, and humming with life.

HIGHLY COMMENDED DIGITAL ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Sea Mist over North Uist
by Fiona Hall

"As MS progressed, I sought out silence and solitude and lived in a van on the beaches of the Western Isles of Scotland, building a portfolio so I could study photography — a long held dream," Fiona said.

HIGHLY COMMENDED SCULPTURAL/CRAFT ARTWORK

Together by Sally Waterford

"I like to make figures that relate to each other in some way. The feeling of wellbeing when you are loved by another is unlike any other," Sally said.

A thank you to our heroes

When Rod Miller and Lynette Leber married in 1993, the future looked bright. The couple, in their 30s, looked forward to setting up a home together in Queensland after months of commuting between Brisbane and Melbourne, Lynette's hometown.

But three years into the marriage, Rod was worried about his wife. The highly qualified accountant couldn't hold down a job. She said Queensland was the problem and insisted they move to Sydney for a fresh start. But things didn't get better. After three stressful years, the couple had the answer for Lynette's cognitive issues.

"We had no idea Lynette had MS. Her presentation was unusual. Often, it attacks the legs first. But she had cognitive impairment. We didn't know much about the disease," said Rod.

Two years after her diagnosis, Lynette developed epilepsy. The seizures resulted in Todd's paresis. This is a syndrome associated with weakness or paralysis in the body. She had to stay in a rehab hospital each time to recover. At 40, Lynette couldn't live at home anymore. MS Plus staff found Lynette a place in their long-term care residence in Williamstown. Rod visits every day.

The couple never had children. So, when Rod started thinking about his Will, he decided 50 per cent of his estate would go to their respective nieces and nephews. MS Plus would get the other half.

"MS Plus' work is vital to help people have a better quality of life. One day there will be a cure. I'm happy to leave them a legacy so they can continue their work. Hear more about Rod and Lynette's story: **mymslegacy.org.au**

Applications now open

MS Go for Gold Scholarships provide one-off grants to follow a personal dream.

There are **25 scholarships** available, each valued up to **$2000** with categories including:

- Personal expression
- Education
- Living Your Best Life

Applications close **Wednesday 14 September 2022**
To apply, visit: **msplus.org.au/GoforGold**

MS GO FOR GOLD

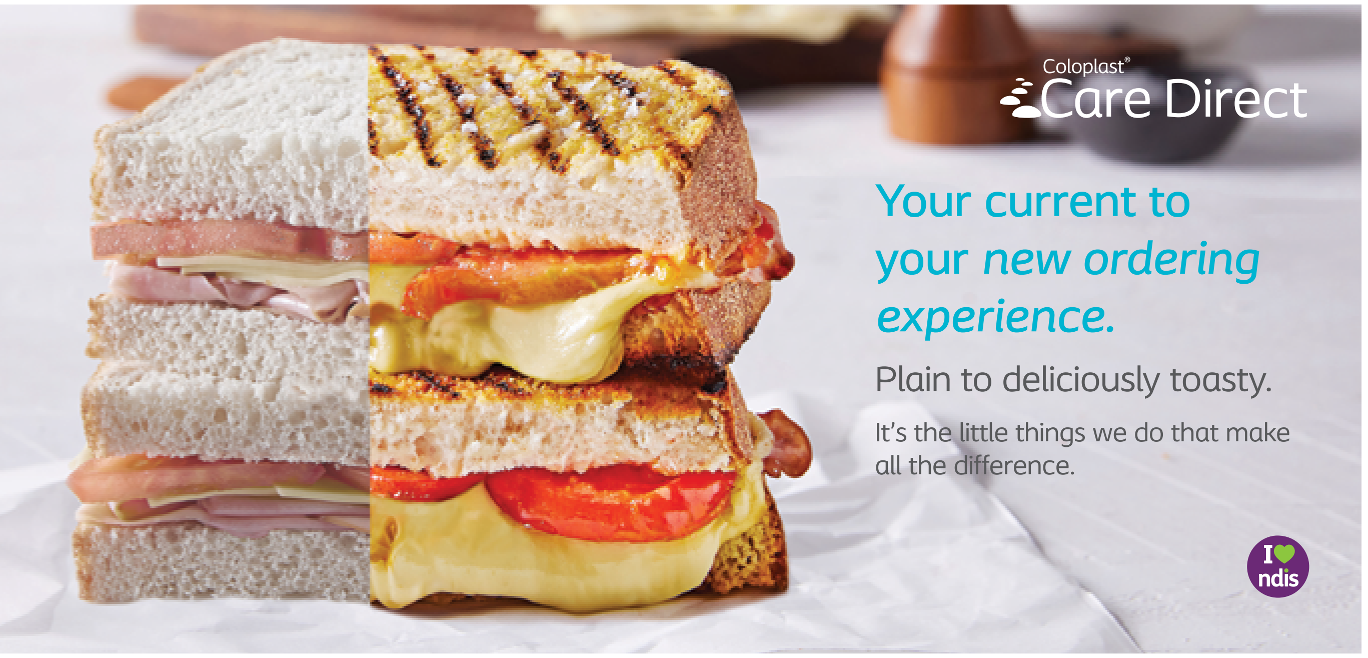
NDIS and you

Do you have a NDIS Plan Review coming up? Here are a few tips to help you achieve the outcome you want:

- **Be well prepared!**
- **List/review your goals and the supports you received in your last plan. Did you achieve your goals?** Take note of whether the supports helped you achieve your goals and think about if you need those supports in your next plan to support your goals.
- **Do you have any new goals?** If so, think about what supports you might need to support those goals. Chat to family and friends and write them down.
- **Did you use all the funding in your plan?** If not, think about why that was. If you didn't use all the funds in your plan, they might not be in your new plan so if you do need the supports make sure you have a reason why you need them.
- **Do you have any unmet needs?** Are there specific supports and services that were missing from your current plan that you need in your new plan? Such as equipment, transport funds, therapy services, support coordination, plan management etc. If you do think of any write them down.
- **Are you happy with the supports in your NDIS plan?** The NDIS will likely contact you before the end of your plan to check whether you would like to have the same plan again.

If you are happy with your plan this can often be rolled over without a plan review. If you would like your plan to be reviewed or any changes to be included, make sure you let them know!

For support accessing the NDIS, phone Plus Connect: **1800 042 138**



What's On

Our MS education and wellbeing events cover a wide range of topics and can be accessed from the comfort of your own home.

Live webinars

JULY

Understanding Personal Insurances
Friday 22 July, 1:00pm
1:45pm AEST

AUGUST

Managing a Relapse in MS
Wednesday 17 August, 11:00am
11:45am AEST

SEPTEMBER

Women's Health Week Improving your Mental Health and Wellbeing
Thursday 8 September, 1:30pm
2:30pm AEST

OCTOBER

Nutrition and Multiple Sclerosis
Thursday 20 October, 6:30pm
7:30pm AEDT

To register or to view past webinars head to **msplus.org.au/resource-hub** or email: **education@ms.org.au**

On demand webinars

Watch anytime! Email **education@ms.org.au** for the link

- Relationships, Intimacy and Communication in Multiple Sclerosis
- Disease Modifying Therapies in Multiple Sclerosis
- Great Ideas for Managing Bladder Issues and Enjoying More Freedom and Confidence
- Optimal Breathing
- and many more!

Podcasts

Check out our latest podcasts on the MS Plus website

- "Learn from Me" series: Juggling Work and MS
- Research Update: Remyelination
- "Learn from me" series: Living well to adjust and manage SPMS — for people with SPMS
- and many more!

Podcasts on a variety of topics can be accessed at **msplus.org.au/resource-hub**

Exercise Groups

NSW

Lidcombe Yoga (independent)
Wednesdays 10:15am
Studdy MS Centre, 80 Betty Cuthbert Dr, Lidcombe

To book, phone Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

Dance Well (independent and chair based)
Mondays 10:30am
Studdy MS Centre, 80 Betty Cuthbert Dr, Lidcombe

To book, phone Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

East Gosford Exercise Group (independent)
Wednesdays 10:30am
(school term only)
East Gosford Lions Hall

Chatswood Exercise Group (independent)
Mondays 10:00am
(school term only)

West Chatswood
Community Learning Facility, 565 Mowbray Road, Chatswood

To book, phone Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

Marrickville Yoga (independent)
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00am
Addison Road Community Centre, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville

To book, phone Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

VIC

VIC For queries relating to exercise groups in Blackburn, please call MS Connect.

ACT

Be better balanced (chair-based class)
Tuesdays 1:30pm
Thursdays 10am
Gloria McKerrow House
117 Denison St, Deakin

Cost: $10 / session
To book, call **(02) 6234 7000**

Wheels in motion (chair-based class)
Thursdays 11:00am
Gloria McKerrow House
117 Denison St, Deakin

Cost: $10 / session
To book, call **(02) 6234 7000**

We're here to help you thrive – with a comprehensive suite of emotional and practical support.

Plus Connect – is the gateway to information, advice, support and services

Plus Support Coordination – helps you connect with your NDIS services

Plus Engagement – helps you understand and apply for the NDIS

Plus Advisor – provides personalised advice from an MS nurse or social worker

Plus Employment Support Service – helps you succeed at work

Plus Peer Support – connects you with a community of other people living with neurological conditions, their family and carers

Plus Education – empowers you with support and information to build your skills and knowledge

Plus Financial Assistance Program – provides one-off funds for financial crisis

Plus Volunteering – giving back to your community can improve your wellbeing and give you purpose

Plus Occupational Therapy – provides equipment, technology, home modifications and strategies for daily living

Plus Physiotherapy – helps you improve your physical wellbeing

Plus Continence – empowers you to take control of your bladder and bowel

Plus Exercise Physiology – helps you create an exercise plan tailored to your goals

Plus Diet and Nutrition – helps you feel your best with nutritional support

Plus Residential – provides long-term living options with full time care

Plus Respite – provides a chance for people living with neurological conditions and their carers to have a break

Plus Plan Management – helps you manage your NDIS payments

MS Go for Gold Scholarships – provide one-off grants to follow a personal dream

MS PLUS

Contact us:
connect@msplus.org.au

facebook.com/wearemsplus
Instagram.com/wearemsplus
Linkedin.com/company/ms-plus/