



# Empowering neuro wellbeing and connection

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



## OUR ASPIRATION

The home of comprehensive support for neurological conditions

## OUR PURPOSE

Together on the journey to break down barriers, achieve goals and live well

## OUR VALUES

Empowerment, Community, Expertise, Creativity, Spirited

## Contents

Message from the Chair	3
Message from the CEO	4
MS Plus in numbers	5
Delivering on our Strategic Directions 2020–2025	7
Introducing our new brand: MS Plus	8
Trusted experts	9
Radical empathy	13
Tireless partners	19
Our COVID-19 response	23
Celebrating our staff	24
Concise financials	25
MS Plus Board	29
Our Executive Team	30
Our Senior Management Team	31
Special thanks	33



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

**At our 2021 Annual General Meeting, along with various updates to our constitution, the membership endorsed the Board's recommendation for a name change to MS Plus, to support Strategic Directions 2020–2025.**

The new brand strongly communicates the value and impact of our organisation in the community and in particular for those living with multiple sclerosis.

Given the significant progress made in the delivery of our strategic plan we are now a very different organisation to the 'old' MS focusing on the wellbeing of not only people living with multiple sclerosis but also offering services to people living with other neurological conditions – our new name better representing who we are, what we do and everything we seek to do in coming years.

Another significant achievement during the past year was the successful acquisition of Nursing Port Stephens, which operates Care for You at Home, a trusted private nursing service providing care to NDIS participants, veterans, seniors and others throughout Port Stephens, Newcastle, Maitland, Dungog and the Mid-North Coast areas.

The entry of MS Plus into aged care means that people with MS and other neurological conditions who are aged over 65, who are not eligible for NDIS funding, will now have greater access to our services. MS Plus will continue to operate Care for You at Home from the Port Stephens office, with all staff and services continuing and we are finalising plans to offer services to over 65s in each of the jurisdictions in which we work.

Over the past year the Board has also further progressed the delivery of Strategic Directions 2020–2025 many other initiatives including:

- The development of Plus Connect — the new front end for access to MS Plus Services
- Progressed to tender stage the Lidcombe redevelopment and entered into new leases for properties in Footscray and Hobart to support the establishment of our first satellite wellbeing centres
- Delivered a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to better support our clients, staff and volunteers
- Implemented a new Outcomes Measurement and Social Impact Framework
- Adopted and new Clinical Governance Framework
- Completed the development of a new Carer's Strategy

In the early months of this financial year, we continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic forcing closure of our face-to-face Allied Health services, our community retail shops and cancellation of much of our live fundraising events. However, the resilience across the organisation has again been highlighted and good progress is being made to support our recovery and the resumption of vital service delivery to our community. My thanks to the leadership team for their efforts in steering the course through these difficult times.

During the year the Board farewelled David Nowell who has served it well as independent member of the Risk, Audit and Finance Committee since the 2016 merger with MS Tasmania and welcomed Ally Long as his replacement. I extend my thanks to my fellow Directors and all our independent committee members for their ongoing support and commitment to our work.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, donors and supporters for their strong commitment to our mission in responding to people with multiple sclerosis.

**Garry Whatley**  
Chairman

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

**The launch of our new MS Plus Brand has not only included a modern new look for our materials, a new logo and new website but heralds an exciting commitment to delivering on our Aspiration to become the home of comprehensive support for neurological conditions.**

In announcing the brand in a recent edition of InTouch, I spoke about an exciting new chapter of service provision, education and support for people living with a broad spectrum of neurological conditions. Our new operating model will see us build on the achievements of more than 60 years of supporting people living with multiple sclerosis — extending that care to others living with life-altering neurological conditions.

Our focus will be a whole of life approach with services and supports for which we are so well known being tailored and offered to meet the unique needs of each client — including support for their entire network of carers, friends and family. By expanding our focus on neuro wellbeing to other conditions we will be able to provide more services, in more locations to people living with multiple sclerosis.

The pages of this Annual Report highlight the incredible work of our team over the past year. The impact being made through the delivery of our NDIS, the critical care and support offered in our Residential Facilities, our vital Employment and growing range of Allied Health programs is significant. At the same time our Engagement, Education and Peer Support teams have delivered countless hours of information and emotional support to the MS community.

This year we also celebrated a special milestone of 30 years in the delivery of the Community Visitors Scheme, ensuring those in our community isolated from family and friends continued to be supported to overcome fear and anxiety associated with loneliness.

Despite the ongoing COVID challenges, we have through our dedicated team, maintained significant fundraising capacity, ensuring that we can pivot our recovery, and now of course having incorporated fundraising for research as part of our focus.

We have also again been very well supported by our Corporate Services team overseeing Finance, Information technology, Risk, People,

Culture and Quality and Property – all vital services in a large and growing organisation.

I am incredibly proud to lead a team of hard working and talented individuals who constantly find new and innovative ways of working together to enable the continued delivery of our key programs while continuing to support and to encourage each other.

We continued to serve and support our clients and their carers – true to our purpose and driven by our values. Change was an everyday response, challenges were embraced — commitment to purpose driving innovation as we transformed to deliver services in new and different ways.

My thanks to the Board for its leadership and continued desire to help maximise our impact as an influential voice and a leader in delivery of care and support for people living with multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions.

To our volunteers, donors and carers thank you for your ongoing support – in partnership we remain committed to creating better outcomes for those we serve.

**John Blewonski**  
Chief Executive Officer

## MS Plus : our year

**4,213** hours of  
Plus Exercise Physiology  
provided

Plus Continence support  
provided by Clinical  
Nurses: **187.7** hours

**1,377** people  
generously volunteer their  
time to support MS Plus

MS Plus employs **303**  
full time, part time and  
casual staff

**106,550** hours of care provided through Plus Residential  
and Plus Respite services at Beverly Hills in New South Wales,  
and Watsonia and Williamstown in Victoria

MS Plus Community  
Shops **290** volunteers,  
welcomed **22,058** items.

**29,489** followers  
across Facebook,  
Instagram and LinkedIn

MS Plus contributed  
**\$1 million** to fund  
vital MS research

**248,726** NDIS  
services delivered  
(across all services)



**40,168** hours  
of Plus Support  
Coordination provided

**273** event volunteers  
donated **1,253** hours  
of their time to MS Plus

**80** Plus Peer Support groups, connecting  
over 800 people and providing approximately  
**1,600** hours of monthly support

Total event  
fundraising:  
**\$1,818,831**

Plus Advisors provided  
**1,493** hours of nursing  
and social work advice  
to clients

**17,740** connections  
through Plus Connect

**3,885** registrations for  
an educational webinar

**665** NDIS pre-planning  
schedules completed

**449** people living with  
MS participated in an  
MS Plus event



# Delivering on our Strategic Directions 2020–2025

## YEAR THREE

### About Strategic Directions 2020–2025

MS Plus Strategic Directions 2020–2025 is about meeting the evolving needs of people living with multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions, now and in the future. In the past year we continued to reshape our service delivery to empower neuro wellbeing and connections, all within our changing environment. The strategy remains underpinned by our four Strategic Pillars: Person-centred, Virtual and Physical Hubs, Partnerships and Growth.

### Achievements in FY 2021–2022

#### Person-centred

- launching of Plus Connect: the new ‘front-end’ for access to MS Plus services, supported by plans for our new ‘Key Worker’ roles
- development of an Outcomes Measurement/Social Impact Framework

#### Virtual and Physical Hubs

- securing the Planning permission and appointing a builder to commence development of the new Wellbeing Centre and Specialist Disability Accommodation facilities at Lidcombe
- securing new leased premises in Melbourne’s West (Footscray) and Hobart to establish the first of our new Satellite Wellbeing Centres

#### Partnerships

- Partnering with other state MS organisations to deliver vital fundraising programs to support research into a cure for MS

#### Growth

- expansion of our existing Allied Health, NDIS and Employment Program to support people living with neurological conditions other than MS
- expansion of service delivery to people over 65 years through the acquisition of Nursing Port Stephens
- rebranding to MS Plus, and the development of the MS Plus website
- delivery of new People & Culture, Diversity & Inclusion, Carers, Technology, Data Management, Clinical Governance, and Investment Strategies

#### Year Four: What’s next?

FY 2022–2023 is a huge year for MS Plus, with lots happening including:

- further expansion of services to support people living with other neurological conditions.
- building and launching our Wellbeing Centres
- the launch of our new key worker roles – a dedicated contact who will be with clients on their journey from day one, partnering with them to access what they need.
- our new approach to supporting people who are newly diagnosed.
- Implementation of our new carers and diversity and inclusion strategies

# Introducing our new brand: MS Plus

### Introducing MS Plus — Empowering neuro wellbeing and connection

MS Limited has rebranded as MS Plus. The MS Plus brand builds on our proud 65 years of experience as MS Societies and MS Limited, and is the catalyst for our future growth, offering more services and support than ever before. The new brand is based on three pillars: Trusted Experts, Radical Empathy and Tireless Partners.

The new brand includes not only a name change, new website and refreshed look and feel but also drives an expansion of the MS Plus service

offering, with plans well underway to upgrade facilities to better meet clients’ needs, and a focus on empowered, holistic client wellbeing.

#### New and upgraded locations

New Wellbeing Centres in Lidcombe NSW, Footscray VIC and Hobart TAS to be opened in 2023 are the first of more to come. Improved facilities are one way we will deliver on our model of care and wellbeing, enabling significant changes to not only a client’s physical but mental health as well. Our Wellbeing Centres will provide the perfect setting for unique, tailored care for the neuro community.

#### What does the ‘Plus’ really mean?

Our passion and dedication to helping people live their lives with MS — providing the best long-term options and life outcomes — remains the same. However, the new MS Plus brand will build 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 and support to others living with life-altering neurological conditions.

#### MS + your total wellbeing

MS Plus partners with our clients to meet their specific needs. Becoming an MS Plus client ensures access to our complete suite of wellbeing services.

#### MS + your loved ones

MS Plus includes supporting friends, family, colleagues and carers involved in clients’ treatment and recovery journey.

#### MS + partnerships

MS Plus has strong partnerships within the community and other healthcare providers including GPs, specialists, people living with MS, carers and community support services.

#### VIC + NSW + ACT + TAS

MS Plus supports thousands of Australians across four states working as one to deliver the best outcomes. We collaborate and learn from each other.

#### MS + our wellbeing centres + in your home + virtual support

Whether clients prefer to access MS Plus services from one of our Wellbeing Centres, through a home visit or telehealth, we have options to suit everyone.





## Trusted experts

9

**AS TRUSTED EXPERTS IN THE BARRIERS OF NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS, WE UNDERSTAND IT TAKES TIME TO COME TO TERMS WITH A DIAGNOSIS AND THAT A CLIENT'S INDIVIDUAL JOURNEY CAN CHANGE. WE KNOW THAT LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE ISN'T JUST ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS, BUT ALSO BEING AWARE OF AND MANAGING YOUR OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS.**



### Plus Employment Support Services

The Plus Employment Support Service received four CoAct Excellence Awards this year, under the 'site performance' category — celebrating excellence in service delivery for our MS Employment Support Service. MS services across New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory received the honour.

- **661** people helped through our Plus Employment Support Service (Plus ESS).
- ESS staff provided **26,353** hours of direct service
- **59** people assisted in gaining employment

MS Plus also provided **\$1,108,235** financial assistance to clients with Employment Assistance Funding and Revenue Allocation, including:

- 816 individual items of equipment purchased to assist individuals to maintain or gain employment, with a total value of **\$426,000.00**
- Assistance to individuals to maintain their employment with a total of **\$682,235.00**

### Feel good moment



Our client Sarah had been experiencing significant stress at work, due to end of financial year deadlines and a long commute, which had always been a very fatiguing process for her. Sarah's ESS worker arranged for an education session with her employer, to help them to understand the benefit of Sarah working from home to better manage her MS.

The Plus ESS worker also helped the client to obtain several pieces of equipment funded through Job Access for Sarah's home office, to help with managing fatigue and spasticity. The equipment included universal arm support, ergonomic chair, footrest and desk. Sarah said that without the Plus ESS and her purchased supports ESS fund (massage and acupuncture) she would not have gotten through the last couple of weeks' work pressures.



### Plus Support Coordination

**1,400** participants have achieved their NDIS plan goals.

In 2021, the Plus Support Coordination service introduced a new 'Senior Support Coordinator' role to its structure. There are currently **7** Senior Support Coordinators in the team who play an important role in supporting our new starters and share their expertise knowledge with the wider team. Together, the team provided **166.15** hours of specialist support coordination.



### Allied Health

More than **11,200** hours of service delivery for **679** clients.

Our Allied Health service covers Plus Occupational Therapy, Plus Physiotherapy, Plus Continence, Plus Exercise Physiology and Plus Diet and Nutrition.

10



### Feel good moment



Support Coordinator, Lisa said, 'This is a photo of one of my participants who lives on the northern beaches. He used to be a surf life saver and a lifelong avid surfer, all his social networks are connected to the beach but because of his MS and poor wheelchair he has not been able to get onto the sand for 16 years. Yesterday he trialled this chair on the sand and is putting in an application for funding, he was almost in tears about being back on the sand for the time in so long.'

'Not only does the participant win but so does the community, as now he will be able to start mentoring young surf life savers again and assist with their training. He also gets to watch his sons up close while they are surfing and feel like he is part of the activity and more active in family life. It opens so many opportunities for him.'

### Plus Plan Management

21,422 invoices processed

The Plan Management service has grown significantly over a 12-month period to now support **250** individual participants— a **45%** increase on the previous year.

### Plus Dietitian service launches

This year, we launched our Plus Dietitian service, to empower our clients to make decisions that better manage symptoms and promote overall wellbeing. The service has delivered 46 dietitian consultations and plan developments.

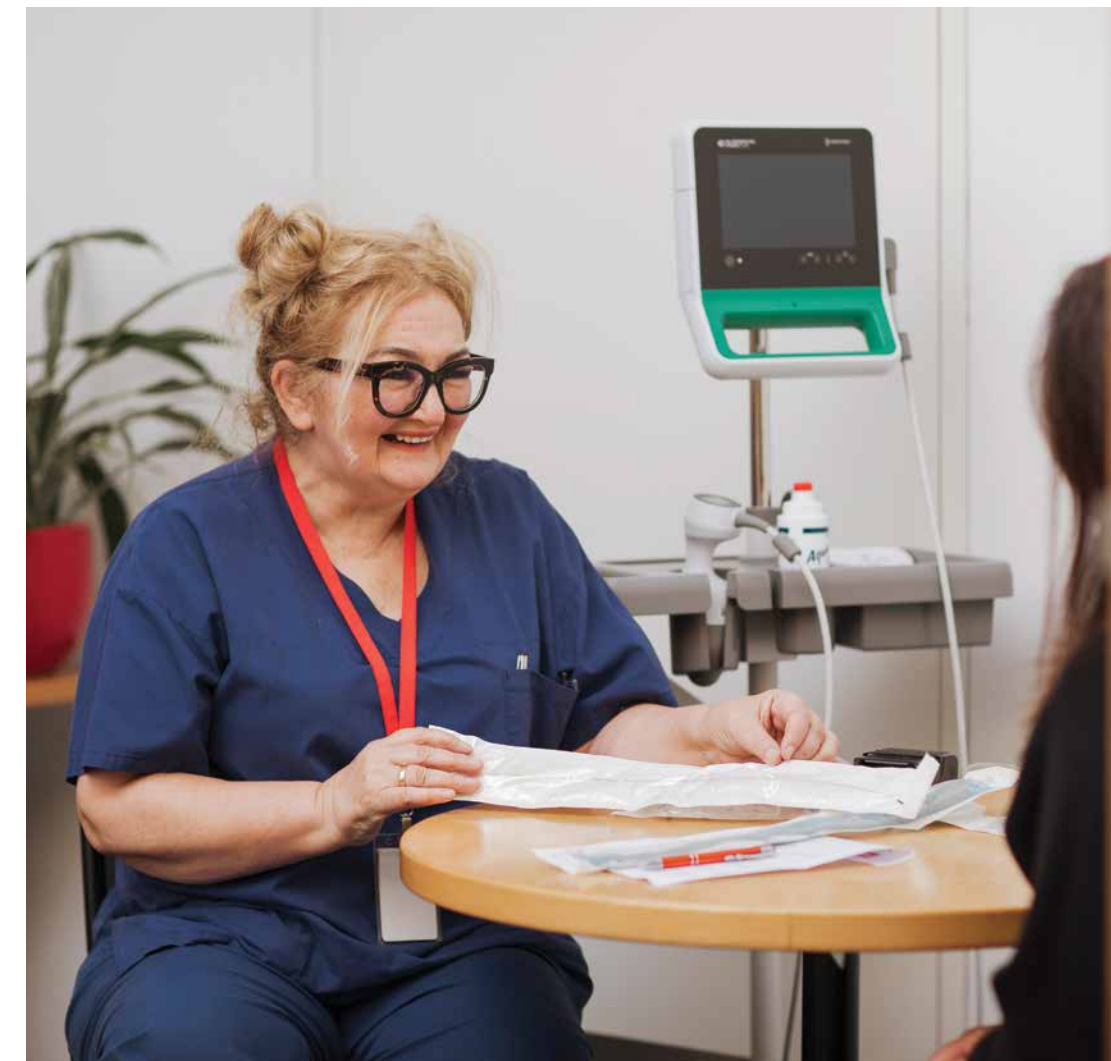
### Plus Continence

A vital service which has provided **225** hours of continence aids assessment, recommendation and training delivered by our nurses.

'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.

**'I have a gel mat for my bed now which has been a lifesaver.' Fiona helped me by recommending products and strategies which have been fantastic.**

'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. 'I would say to anybody else in this situation — don't sweat the small stuff. Just tidy yourself up and move forward.'







## Radical empathy

13



**AT MS PLUS WE PRACTICE  
'RADICAL EMPATHY'  
— MOVING BEYOND  
PUTTING OURSELVES  
IN SOMEONE ELSE'S  
SHOES, TO ACTING AND  
CREATING LASTING  
CHANGE. WE BELIEVE  
OUR CLIENTS ARE MORE  
THAN THEIR CONDITION,  
SO WE ARE OFFERING  
MORE SERVICES, MORE  
EXPERTISE, MORE  
AWARENESS, MORE  
RESEARCH.**



Total raised: **\$176,013**  
Total virtual participants: **1,441**

The 40th MS Gong Ride was postponed from its original November date due to COVID-19 and instead went virtual in 2021. The MS Gong Ride Virtual (GRV) participants had a month to cycle a distance of their choice. After the severe flooding in Sydney early in 2022, the rescheduled 40th MS Gong Ride was again postponed. Our live Gong Ride will be back in November 2022 bigger than ever before, raising important funds to support our clients.

**'Go out there and enjoy the ride, the scenery and, most importantly, remember why you are riding,' Tina Ruhs, Team Captain, Gong Ballistic, our top fundraiser.**

14



**MSMEGA  
CHALLENGE**

Participants: **1,624**  
Total raised: **\$516,560**

The first MS 24-Hour Mega Swim was founded in 2001, held at Fitzroy swimming pool led by Carol Cooke AM, Paralympian.

The program has since expanded to 16 swims across the ACT, NSW, VIC and TAS and grown to encompass not only swims but squash, racquetball and badminton – with more sports coming soon. Additional time durations were introduced this year, allowing for a 12-hour challenge. COVID-19 has impacted the Mega Challenge events in recent years, with participation numbers declining; plus, participants' average fundraising rates also falling.





Participants: **6,075**  
Total raised: **\$879,786**

To celebrate World MS Day the Walk, Run + Roll events were run simultaneously on Sunday 29 May in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Launceston.



**‘Personally, I sometimes feel really isolated with my MS but I didn’t feel that way last Sunday. I’m so grateful to see so many who donated to me and to all the participants who donated their time on Sunday, it was a very emotional and special day,’ Deanna, Ambassador and participant.**

## do it for MS

Total funds raised **\$347,624**, including funds from Kiss Goodbye to MS, fundraising exclusively for MS research.

In FY 2021–2022, **580** community fundraisers eagerly return to face-to-face fundraising and several long-delayed events finally took place.

The Conquer Cradle Mountain to Beat MS challenge finally departed in February and March, with **27** participants. Also in Tasmania, Daniel Deason’s Double Derwent Challenge saw Daniel swim 10km from Long Beach to Bellerive and back again in March. Run for MS returned in full swing, with most events going ahead and almost **400** participants.

In a community fundraising first, Triple H Horsham hosted a radio-a-thon which included interviews with nurses, a musician with MS, and representatives from MS Plus.



Rocio and team

We also had sports clubs, workplaces, and individuals take on challenges to fundraise for MS, from morning teas and physical challenges to haircuts, birthday fundraisers and Christmas lights.

Rocio was inspired to take on Conquer Cradle Mountain for Do It For MS. Rocio raised an incredible **\$3,632** to help fight MS on her five-day hike through Tasmania’s wilderness.

**‘The fundraising for me was very emotional because I received an overwhelming amount of support so quickly. We signed up late and my whole network — friends, friends of friends, family, colleagues, even people I haven’t seen for 20 years — were donating. It was humbling the amount of support I received.’**

‘It was funny — once I was on the mountain something weird happened. I could do a lot more than I thought I could. I don’t know what it was... If it was adrenaline or wanting to go faster, I just propelled onwards.’

## MS Plus Community Shops

MS Plus Community Shops enjoyed strong sales since reopening in early 2022, with sales up **21** per cent in May and **28** per cent in June. Through the pandemic, it has been extremely difficult retaining and recruiting volunteers. The volunteers that stayed on kept shops open by taking on extra shifts and extra hours. Without this loyalty and commitment, we would have been closed.

**‘I prefer donating to the MS community shops as the lovely staff ALWAYS thank me and are always smiling and happy!’**

## MS Ambassadors

Our ambassadors are volunteers living with multiple sclerosis or caring for someone who lives with the condition, who can present at your next corporate, school or community event.

**35** MS Ambassadors attended **65** events presenting to a total audience of **43,644** people.

‘The Ambassador really gave us an excellent presentation of his life with MS and combined it with the effects on daily living with his family giving a holistic and warm-hearted overview of the whole subject,’ Probus Club of Penrith South



**29,422** participants read more than **260,000** books to raise **\$2,310,961**

Now in its **44th** year, the MS Readathon has inspired a love of reading for generations of Australian children.

Children read as many books as they can throughout August while raising money to help people with MS and their families. Kids rate their books and write reviews, choose an avatar for their profile, and receive Reward Badges as they progress through the MS Readathon.

The MS Readathon also provides an opportunity for families to gently introduce children to concepts around the challenges people can face in their lives and the importance of giving.

Funds raised from the MS Readathon help to fund vital support services for families living with MS, including MS Family Camps and Family Fun Days.





## MS GIFT PLANNING

We received a total of **\$1,690,693** from Gifts in Wills from **31** estates and **22** trusts.

## MS SINGLE GIVING

The cash appeals program has gone from strength to strength this year, despite a very uncertain post-COVID-19 environment. The program received **12,557** donations and raised a total of **\$1,526,739**.



**319,931** tickets purchased  
**\$3,313,600** raised

The MS Dream Car Lottery and MS Dream Raffle had a successful year, despite it being a challenging and competitive market this year and contributed **\$3,313,600** to funding vital support services and research for people living with MS.

'I am a regular supporter of the MS Dream Lottery and Raffle program, as I want to help as many people as I can who are living with MS like my Mum, until a cure for MS is found,' Hannah

### Feel good moment



In 2021, funds generated by single giving enabled over 900 people with MS to participate in invaluable Peer Support sessions, both virtually and in person. Peer Support Volunteer, Silas, uses his personal experience of MS to give guidance, support and connection to other people living with MS.

'MS Peer Support is an amazing service that helps people with MS feel a lot less alone, which was so important in 2021. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for supporting MS Plus. It really means so much to me and my family and to so many people living with MS.'

Go for Gold Scholarship recipient, Silas and his family on their scholarship-funded camping trip.



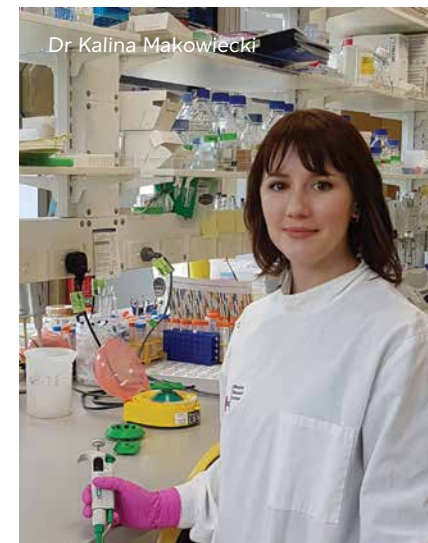
## Our commitment to funding research

Through individual giving, MS Plus was able to contribute **\$1 million** toward four exceptional remyelination research projects.

A world without MS is also now closer than ever, thanks to the exceptional generosity of our supporters. These funds have helped to raise vital funds on behalf of MS Australia, which will go towards funding world-class research into preventing, treating and ultimately finding a cure for MS. MS Plus is also now responsible for coordinating research fundraising from MS organisations across the country.

### MS Plus funded research projects

- Targeted Call Project Grant (Repair), Dr Kalina Makowiecki  
**Identifying the missing link between myelin loss and neurodegeneration.**
- Targeted Call Project Grant (Repair), A/Prof Alexander Klistorner



### Unravelling mechanisms of progressive multiple sclerosis.

- Targeted Call Project Grant (Repair), Dr Lachlan Rash  
**Developing novel acid-sensing ion channel inhibitors as neuroprotective leads and diagnostic agents for multiple sclerosis.**
- Senior Fellowship (Repair and Remyelination), A/Prof Kaylene Young  
**Multiple Sclerosis: Pathways to Protecting and Repairing the Central Nervous System**



## MS Virtual Art Show

MS Plus received **219** wonderfully creative submissions from **109** artists who are living with MS and other neurological conditions, as well as carers.

The artwork categories included paintings, illustrations, sculptures, craft, digital artwork and photography. Winners received their awards on World MS Day on **30 May**.

### Congratulations to:

**The Barry Allen Art Award**  
Circular Blooms by Deanna Renee

**Highly Commended Paintings/Illustrations**  
Fragility by Helen Woodbridge

### Highly Commended Sculptural/Craft Artwork

Together by Sally Waterford

### Highly Commended Digital Artwork and Photography

Sea Mist over North Uist by Fiona Hall

### Carers Award

Flourish by Leigh Pearson



## MS Go for Gold Scholarships

The scholarships provide one-off grants to help a person living with MS to follow a personal dream. The **25** scholarships, valued at up to **\$2,000** each were awarded again in 2021, with a record **217** applications.



## In my shoes campaign

MS Plus marked World MS Day with many events and activities, including the In my shoes campaign, centred on a video featuring four stories of people living with MS together with a broader campaign. The campaign video was viewed **56,957** times across May.





## Tireless partners

19

**WE CONSIDER OURSELVES  
TIRELESS PARTNERS,  
WORKING CLOSELY  
WITH LOVED ONES TO  
COORDINATE CARE AND  
CONNECT CLIENTS TO  
ALL THE SERVICES AND  
SUPPORT THEY NEED.  
WORKING TOGETHER,  
WE CAN BREAK DOWN  
BARRIERS, ACHIEVE  
GOALS AND HELP OUR  
CLIENTS TO LIVE LIFE  
TO THE FULLEST —  
EMPOWERING THEM TO  
NAVIGATE THEIR OWN  
HEALTH JOURNEY.**



### Plus Connect

**17,740** connections through Plus Connect, providing free specialist advice and information about services for the MS community.

**‘Since my call this morning when I spoke with Plus Connect, everything has happened. You guys don’t mess around! I heard from peer support and then had a Nurse Advisor call! I’ve been watching webinars on your website, it has been really helpful to me.’**



### Plus Peer Support

In 2021–2022, **236** Peer Support Volunteers delivered:

- Phone support to **115** people and families, equal to **690** hours of support.
- Facilitated **16** telegroups, connecting over **160** people

- Supporting a diverse range of needs: Mums with MS, people working, Men, women, people over 65, people under 30. Most recently a telegroup for people from the queer and gender diverse community and one for people with trigeminal neuralgia.
- **16** Telelink Wellbeing programs to connect and educate people newly diagnosed or experiencing a relapse, people working, people under 30, people over 65, Men with MS and Mums with MS
- A telelink in collaboration with the Royal Children's Hospital to connect parents of teens with MS
- Bilingual phone support services including Cantonese, Mandarin, Serbian, Italian, Greek, Hindi and German



### NDIS Engagement

The Engagement team, who assist clients to understand and apply for the NDIS, received **496** service requests during the 12-month period and **364** MS clients received NDIS Plans due to the team's support.



### Plus Nurse Advisors and Social Work Advisors

Plus Nurse Advisors provide phone and email support to anyone in need – clients, carers and caregivers, health professionals, family and friends. The Nurse Advisors provide information, advice, support and referral across ACT, NSW, TAS, and VIC.

In the past year, MS Plus has noted the demand for a variety of social work referrals is increasing as our reputation as skilled professionals with much to offer becomes better known.

Likewise, our ability to present to telelinks and podcasts is allowing for informing more than one person on a specific topic.

**‘Your knowledge and advice about the processes of ageing and dementia that my partner/carer is experiencing, including his escalating responses and behaviours over the past few years, has been so enlightening.’**

20

**‘You have gone well beyond the extra mile to help Phillip and we certainly appreciate your commitment and dedication.’**

## Community Visitors Scheme

**543** people volunteer with the CVS through MS Plus  
**11,751** community visits made to vulnerable people in our community

In 2022, MS Plus celebrated 30 years participating in the Commonwealth-funded program and recognised 3 incredible volunteers for their 30 years of service with CVS in 2022.

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) addresses social isolation and loneliness, particularly for the elderly, although eligibility is open to anyone living in an Aged Care Home. Therefore, we are seeing younger people being referred as they are living in aged care due to other conditions.



## Feel good moment

‘Even if it just makes the person happy for a few hours that day – it’s worth it. But from my experience, over time a strong rapport and a true friendship can be developed and the volunteering becomes secondary. The role allows me to offer friendship, support, empathy, laughter and an opportunity for the person I visit to relish in sharing their personal story and experiences. I love that I have created a very relaxed and fun friendship with someone 50 years older than me.’ Stef, CVS volunteer



Kristina with her son Nico



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 and 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.’

## Education

The Health Promotion and Wellbeing team is here to share information with clients, to empower and educate. The team was able to recommence family camps in 2021—2022 and use these opportunities to help families to learn and grow by sharing lived experience.

**3,885** registrations for an educational webinar

**10,061** podcast downloads and **5,162** unique listeners

**44,599** client and health professional views of on demand YouTube webinars





## Our COVID-19 response

**MS PLUS REMAINED DEDICATED TO ENSURING OUR CLIENTS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FELT SUPPORTED AND CONNECTED DURING PERIODS OF LOCKDOWN AND THE GRADUAL TRANSITION BACK TO REOPENING FROM OCTOBER 2021.**

Providing digital resources to the community  
COVID-19-related Facebook Lives were viewed **5,769** times  
COVID-19 related webpages were viewed **2,091** times  
**7,191** views of YouTube COVID-19 resources  
**6,840** streams of a COVID-19 podcast



### Ensuring continuity of care

Our Nurse Advisors continued to provide vital information about vaccines and treatments for people with COVID-19. Many people continued to be challenged with accessing the medical information and services they needed and Nurses helped them to navigate complex and continually changing health system environments, as well as providing care and support to many newly-diagnosed.

Our Plus Nurse Advisors remained available for timely phone appointments, heard the needs and concerns of the wider MS community and worked closely with the Plus Education team to ensure the information from the experts was accessible when it was needed most.

#### Our nurses:

- continued to provide remote support, via email, text, Zoom and Teams
- received laptops to be able to work from home when necessary
- continued to abide by government and agency regulations

- The Plus Social Work Advisors continued to provide vital support for those experiencing financial hardship. This was a particularly difficult year as we heard stories of clients emerging from COVID-19 lockdowns experiencing additional financial burden, loss, and struggle

**‘The way we are set up to work, allows us to be able to respond to a very broad set of needs. We can start conversations on homelessness, finances, mental health, Centrelink, employment, NDIS, relationships and communication issues etc. Soon after the initial conversations, if additional help or specialisation is required to support the caller, we have many other professional and volunteer supports available both within MS Plus and externally that we can bring to further assist,’**  
**Plus Social Work Advisor**



### Supporting our staff

The MS Plus Staff Wellbeing and Engagement Program, launched in 2021, continued to support staff during this difficult period. In addition to encouraging staff to stay active, practice self-care and share their positive experiences, our People, Culture & Quality team created Wellbeing Groups at all MS Plus sites. The program, overseen by a dedicated wellness representative, supported staff returning to the office and encouraged reengagement with colleagues through fun social activities.

**‘For me, having answers to questions is a key part of my role, but more than ever I have found listening to be one of the most valuable things I can do. Being available, having the time to listen, to talk, to hear people — that was important.’** MS Nurse Advisor



## Celebrating our staff

**MS PLUS EMPLOYS 303 STAFF, INCLUDING FULL TIME, PART TIME AND CASUAL STAFF, ACROSS 14 LOCATIONS IN 4 STATES AND TERRITORIES.**

**MS PLUS IS ALSO FORTUNATE TO BENEFIT FROM OUR INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE. CURRENTLY, 1,377 INDIVIDUALS DONATE THEIR TIME ACROSS MS PEER SUPPORT, EVENTS, COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME, COMMUNITY SHOPS AND AS MS AMBASSADORS.**



### Wellbeing program

The MS Plus site-based wellbeing initiative was launched in July last year, to say thank you to staff for all their incredible work adapting during COVID-19 lockdowns and to assist staff with transitioning back to the office. There are currently 16 wellbeing representatives across our 14 sites, who have organised an incredible array of staff activities over the past 12 months — everything from team lunches, office parties, door prizes, puzzles, vouchers and gifts, snacks and breakfast foods, to scavenger hunts and online games. The initiative has been extended for a further 12 months, due to its widespread success.



### Mental Health First Aid training

Mental health first aid training teaches people the skills to support someone experiencing a mental health problem, worsening of an existing problem or a mental health crisis, until appropriate professional help can be accessed. MS Plus selected 7 staff members to undertake certified mental health first aid training and who are now available to assist staff if needed.



### Annual Awards

The MS Plus Excellence Awards were established in 2021, to promote and recognise excellence across the organisation. Nominations are made by colleagues to celebrate significant contributions to the quality of life of clients, residents, communities and the organisation as a whole.

#### Chairman's Travelling Scholar Award

The Chairman's Travelling Scholar Award rewards one outstanding member of staff each year with a **\$10,000** contribution towards a period of travel and study.

**Winner:** Kristen Savva, MS Readathon and Individual Giving Coordinator

#### Innovation Award

**Winner:** The People, Culture & Quality team

#### Improvement Award

**Winner:** Brad Greer, Senior Manager Corporate Risk

#### Exceptional Client/ Resident Service Award

**Winner:** Residential Services team

#### Emerging Leader Award

**Winner:** Natalie Bryant, Team Manager MS Connect and Linkages team

#### Outstanding Volunteer(s) Award

**Winner:** Michael Keogh, Community Visitor Scheme volunteer

#### Best Outcome Award

**Winner:** Vanessa Langsam, Engagement Coordinator

#### High Performing Team Award

**Winner:** Events and Fundraising

#### Adding Value Award

**Winner:** Support Coordination leadership team

#### Award-winning MS advocacy

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



## Concise financials

### MS Plus Ltd and its controlled entities

Consolidated statement of surplus or deficit  
and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2022

**MS Plus' full, audited financial statements are available  
on the MS Plus website ([msplus.org.au](https://msplus.org.au)) or from the  
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission  
website ([acnc.gov.au](https://acnc.gov.au))**

**The information presented on this page and the following  
page has been extracted from the audited financial  
statements and internal accounting records.**

25

Consolidated		
	2022 (\$)	2021 (\$)
<b>Revenue</b>		
<b>Government and fee for service revenue to deliver programs for people living with MS:</b>		
Fee for services	22,137,213	21,549,804
Government grants	4,109,139	9,714,909
<b>Funds raised by MS Plus to support the delivery of valued programs not funded by Government:</b>		
Sales and lotteries	5,271,993	12,010,522
Donation and sponsorship income	10,685,913	7,431,537
Bequests	1,681,246	3,130,663
Specific purpose funding	42,264	346,270
Interest and dividend income	1,029,428	776,190
Net gain on assets classified as fair value through profit or loss	–	2,510,857
Other income	1,882,050	764,761
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>46,839,246</b>	<b>58,235,513</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Employment and staffing expenses	28,293,498	26,722,012
Net Funds raised for MS Australia and MS state societies	3,174,288	127,914
Net loss on assets classified as fair value through profit or loss	3,037,635	–
Implementing Strategic Directions 2020-2025	2,423,160	1,062,544
Promoting our Services to the Community	2,289,261	4,666,282
Investment into MS research to find a cure	1,990,634	1,092,513
Other fundraising costs	1,781,851	1,741,244
Depreciation and amortisation	1,744,685	1,775,405
ICT expenses	1,614,750	1,580,136
Directly supporting clients with financial assistance	1,428,206	1,686,834
Occupancy expenses	1,278,221	1,307,537
Awards and prizes	1,245,007	4,912,369
Impairment expense	–	196,570
Other expenses	2,250,779	1,868,786
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>52,551,974</b>	<b>48,740,145</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>(5,712,728)</b>	<b>9,495,368</b>

### MS Plus Ltd and its controlled entities

Consolidated statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2022

### MS Plus Ltd Sources and uses of Funds

The information presented below and on the following  
page is intended to answer common questions about MS Plus'  
financial performance.

### Summary Financial Performance

The Group\* has undergone significant changes over recent years  
resulting from the impact of the introduction of the National  
Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the decision to sell the  
Group's home care and cleaning services businesses in 2018.

COVID-19 has brought additional challenges more recently.

Despite recording a deficit in the 2021/22 year, over the last five  
financial years the Group has accumulated a surplus of **\$8.7** million,  
as shown in the table to the right:

\* The Group comprises MS Plus Ltd and its controlled entities.

26

Consolidated		
	2022 (\$)	2021 (\$)
<b>Assets</b>		
Current assets	16,746,027	21,841,132
Non-current assets	42,989,337	41,809,431
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>59,735,364</b>	<b>63,650,563</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current liabilities	13,718,679	11,070,760
Non-current liabilities	2,300,082	3,150,472
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>16,018,761</b>	<b>14,221,232</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>43,716,603</b>	<b>49,429,331</b>

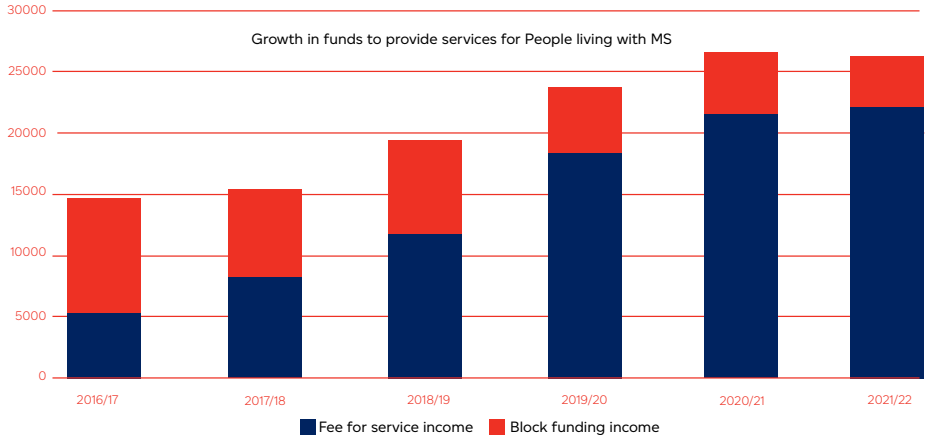
Actual Financial Performance (\$'000)					
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
MS Plus total income	44,096	58,236	52,401	52,720	39,162
MS Plus net surplus/(deficit)	(5,830)	9,396	1,089	(3,472)	247
Group entity impacts	117	99	(28)	7,079	(6)
<b>Consolidated net surplus</b>	<b>(5,713)</b>	<b>9,495</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>3,607</b>	<b>241</b>



Growth in direct service delivery to People living with MS

Direct service delivery includes those activities undertaken by the Group which deliver a service to people affected by MS or other neurological conditions and which are primarily funded by fee-for-service arrangements or government grants. Over recent years, the funding environment has changed significantly because of the introduction of the NDIS.

The Group’s NDIS service offerings include Support Coordination, Allied Health, Plan Management, Supported Independent Living and Specialised Disability Accommodation. Employment Support Services are government funded through the Disability Employment Scheme. During the year, the MS Plus Group acquired Nursing Port Stephens who provide private nursing, personal care and domestic assistance to client in the home and community. The acquisition allows MS Plus to now operate in the private home care and aged care sectors. The continued growth in service delivery funded by fee-for-service arrangements reflects the Group’s continued investment in the scale of NDIS services. The Omicron wave impacted face to face service delivery in 2021/22 which affected revenue for our wellbeing centres and allied health services. The chart below highlights the six-year growth in funds available for MS Plus to provide direct services to people affected by MS or other neurological conditions.



Fundraising to Support People Living with MS

MS Plus benefits from its fundraising program, which supports the provision of those activities valued by its clients, but which cannot be funded by fee-for-service or other sources.

The first half of the year was heavily impacted by the Omicron wave of COVID-19. MS Community Shops were closed between August and October. The MS Readathon was expected to grow again in 2021, however, it was impacted both by the community growing tired of in-home activities in lock-down and by a significant escalation of social media marketing costs throughout the year. This impact, so early in the year, set MS Plus back by loss of net surplus of over **\$800,000**. MS Plus’ major fundraising event, the MS Sydney to Gong ride had to be postponed until May 2022 due to COVID-19. When the damaging floods in the Sydney basin occurred in March, MS Plus were forced to cancel the event altogether, due to concerns for the safety of riders on badly damaged roads. This had a financial impact of about **\$1.8** million. MS Plus’ cash giving appeals during the year enjoyed the strongest net surplus yield to date and the Group saw a consistent growth in both the size of gifts and the number of higher-level donors. The Gifts-in-Wills team met all their future growth Key Performance Indicators, such as new leads and confirmed benefactors, whilst also exceeding budget by around 30%. MS Dream Car Lotteries started the year well with two sold out lotteries and then suffered a drop in sales for the following two campaigns, consistent with the experience of MS organisations nationally.

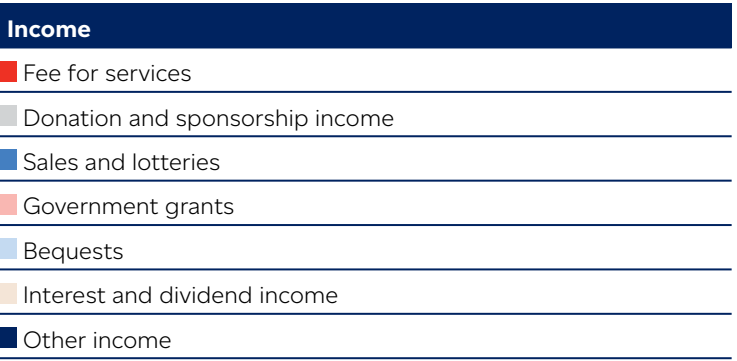
This financial year also saw MS Plus take on the fundraising for research, principally through The May 50K, which was delivered by MS Plus from February to June 2022, yielding fundraising income of almost **\$3.6** million. As has been mentioned, appeals giving for research was very strong, showing growth of over 100% over the cash giving program run by Multiple Sclerosis Research Australia (“MSRA”) the previous year. Overall, the assimilation of fundraising activities for research went smoothly over the year. It remains a long-term project to fully align research fundraising with services fundraising for MS and ‘other neuro’ across the country and there is much work yet to be done to optimise efficiencies and growth.

Where the money comes from

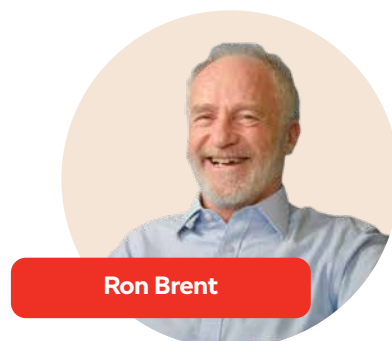
MS Plus relies on a broad range of funding sources to deliver its support for people living with MS. In total, MS Plus Group generated **\$46.8m** in revenue for the year (**2021: \$58.2m**). This income comes from government, fee for services and MS Plus’ investment and fundraising activities. The chart opposite shows where the Group derived its income during the 2022 financial year.

How the money was spent

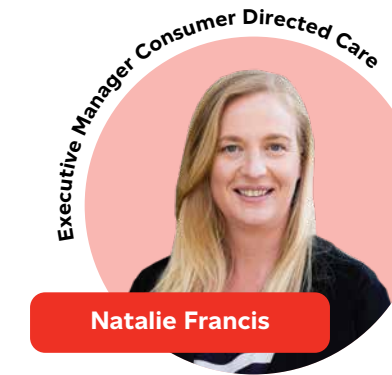
The chart opposite shows how the total expenditure for the 2022 financial year was allocated between the various activities undertaken by MS Plus Group.



## MS Plus Board



## Our Executive Team





## Our Senior Management Team



Darren Spooner



Elizabeth Dorizac



Ganesh Kuppa



Greg Hutchings



Shea Shelton



Stephen Jolly



Natalie Bryant



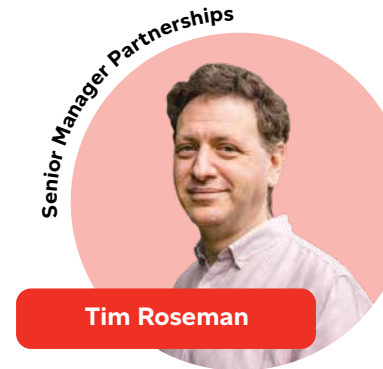
Natalie Silvestro



Raphael Di Francesco



Rhonda Cooper



Tim Roseman



Ara Levonian



Brad Greer



Colin Crum



Sally Dale



Sekaran Amirthalingam

# Special thanks

## STATE GOVERNMENT

The Australian Government  
The Department of Health  
Department of Social Services  
National Disability Insurance Agency  
The Australian Capital Territory Government  
Disability ACT  
National Capital Authority  
The New South Wales Government  
Department of Family & Community Services – Ageing, Disability & Home Care  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
NSW Health  
WentWest Primary Health Network  
Western Sydney Local Health District  
The Victorian Government  
Department of Families, Fairness & Housing

The Tasmanian Government  
Department of Health & Human Services

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### New South Wales

City of Paramatta  
City of Sydney  
Cumberland Council  
Inner West City Council  
Sutherland Shire  
Wollongong City Council

### Victoria

Brimbank City Council  
City of Casey  
City of Greater Bendigo  
City of Melbourne  
City of Monash  
City of Port Phillip  
City of Whitehorse  
Greater Shepparton City Council  
Hobsons Bay City Council  
Mildura Rural City Council  
Yarra City Council

## Tasmania

Central Highlands Council  
Circular Head Council  
City of Hobart  
City of Launceston  
Kingborough Council

## Our Patrons

Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM — Governor of Victoria  
The Honourable Margaret Beazely AO KC — Governor of New South Wales and Mr Dennis Wilson

## Our Education Partners

Alfred Health MSNI Service  
Australasian College of Pharmacy  
Australian Physiotherapy Association  
Focussed Health Psychology  
Menzies Institute for Medical Research in collaboration with the Wicking Dementia Research & Education Centre  
Pharmacy Guild

## Our Media Partners

ABC News 24  
APN News & Media  
Australian Traffic Network  
BCW  
Café Media  
Donor Republic  
Flat Earth Direct  
Free PR  
HomeMade Digital  
i98 Radio  
MCN Multi Channel Network  
MSWA  
Network Ten  
Port Melbourne Football Club  
QMS Media  
SBS  
Southern Cross Austereo [SCA] Radio  
The Brand Agency  
The Reputation Group

## Our Event Partners

Altona Badminton Centre  
Australian Homecare  
Australian Institute of Sport  
Badminton Victoria

Bayside Council  
Beyer  
Bicycle Superstore  
BIG4 Holiday Parks  
Brooks Running  
Camberwell Grammar School  
Destination Wollongong  
Fulgaz  
Funky Trunks  
GoFish Nagambie  
GTR Events  
Hillbrick Bicycles  
Hobson Bay City Council  
JBL  
Kiwanis Australia  
Lendlease  
Life Care  
Lions Club  
Lowrance  
Maribyrnong City Council  
Mitchelton  
National Parks & Wildlife Services NSW  
Nautilus Marine Insurance  
New South Wales Institute of Sport — Cycling  
NSW Police

Nuzest  
Pan Macmillan  
Parks Victoria  
Phil Bates  
Porter Davis Homes  
Property NSW  
Rotary  
Scarborough School  
Squash and Racquetball Victoria  
Telwater [Stacer, Mercury]  
Transport for NSW  
Transport Sydney Trains  
University of Wollongong  
VicRoads  
Victoria Racing Club Ltd  
Weblease  
Westerfolds Sports Centre

## Our Pro Bono Partners

Arnold Bloch Leibler  
HVAC Canberra  
Pro Bono Financial Advice Network

## Our Benefactors Estates

- Allan St Ruth Knights
- Allan Ernest Nicholas Tackaberry
- Colin Erwyd Terry & Jessie Audrey Amy Terry
- David Maxwell Bird
- Donald Ernest Leith
- Elizabeth Lillian Cook
- Geoffrey Robert Burfoot
- Hazel Alice Dunstan
- Jeanie Howard
- Margaret Anne Brown
- Patricia Downes
- Robert Naylor
- Sylvia Dell Mason
- Vic and Kathy Bilbrough

With 27 Anonymous donors

## Trusts And Foundations

Doris Thelma Rowe Charitable trust, managed by Equity Trustees

Elsie Louse Thomas Memorial fund (The), managed by Equity Trustees  
Heather Margaret Ryan Charitable Fund  
Josephine Heather Margaret Ryan Charitable Fund  
Joyce Adelaide Healey Charitable Trust Fund, managed by Equity Trustees  
Margaret Patterson Charitable Trust  
And State Trustee Australia Foundations including:

- Edith Helen Sedlar
- Ellen Jean Matthews
- Harry Schofield
- Phyllis Holman
- Shields Family Charitable Endowments
- Thomas Henry And Marjorie Betty Barnard Donation
- William Arthur Shipperlee

## The impact of Gift in Wills:

Our heartfelt thanks to all our benefactors. Through a gift in their Will they have left a transformational legacy for people living with multiple sclerosis. Funds brought in by estates and trusts help provide our vital “day to day” support services: Plus Connect, Plus Support Coordination and Plus Advisory services. They also help expand the Plus Education services that provide wellness events, family camps, podcasts, carers support and health professional programs to name a few. These gifts also fund research and many other important projects, including development of our “wellbeing” centres.

Shortly after Rod Miller and Lynette married in 1993, Rod began to worry about Lynette. She'd forget groceries, lose house keys, struggled with stairs and employment. Once lively and fun-loving, Lynette sank into a depression. With no easy diagnosis, Lynette had a breakdown and was hospitalised, she saw a neurologist who confirmed the diagnosis. The neurologist put the couple in touch with MS Plus where they received support and expert advice on living with MS. Lynette and Rod decided to travel and enjoyed life together. Lynette currently lives in an MS long-term care residence, with Rod living just 200 metres away and visiting every day. When Rod, now 72, started thinking about his Will, he knew he could make an impact. He has decided to leave half of his estate to MS MS Plus to help with research or enhanced support services.

**‘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,’ Rod said.**







### **Contact MS Plus**

Phone: **1800 042 138**

Website and online chat: **[www.msplus.org.au](http://www.msplus.org.au)**

Email: **[connect@msplus.org.au](mailto:connect@msplus.org.au)**

ABN **66 004 942 287**

[facebook.com/wearemsplus](https://facebook.com/wearemsplus)

[linkedin.com/company/wearemsplus](https://linkedin.com/company/wearemsplus)

[youtube.com/c/wearemsplus](https://youtube.com/c/wearemsplus)