

### Media statement

14 September 2015

#### **Sunshine Coast doctor named Australia's Stroke Care Champion!**

It's National Stroke Week (14-20 September 2015) and Sunshine Coast, we're in good hands!

Dr Rohan Grimley, Senior Medical Officer with the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) and Chair Qld Statewide Stroke Clinical Network, has been named the 2015 Stroke Care Champion.

Awarded by the National Stroke Foundation in partnership with the Stroke Society of Australasia, the Stroke Care Champion award recognises formidable health professionals in the field of stroke.

Dr Grimley received the award at Stroke 2015, the combined 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of the Stroke Society of Australasia and 11<sup>th</sup> Australian Nursing and Allied Health Stroke Conference on 3 September 2015.

Stroke is one of Australia's biggest killers and a leading cause of disability. This National Stroke Week you are encouraged to take the challenge to be aware, live healthy and get checked.

Dr Rohan Grimley said it was shocking that one in six people would have a stroke in their lifetime.

"That's someone's mother, father, partner, sibling, child, relative or friend," Dr Grimley said.

"Stroke is called a silent killer because it attacks suddenly and unexpectedly. People often don't recognise the signs of stroke, and don't seek help quickly enough. But the good news is that many of these strokes can be prevented, and sometimes treated if you seek help urgently," he said.

Michael Shaw was 61 years of age, physically fit and leading an active lifestyle playing competitive sport and exercising daily when he had his stroke. "I had some warning signs that all was not well and I am fortunate I acted on those quickly," Mr Shaw said.

When Mr Shaw noticed a facial droop and weakness in his left arm and leg, he stopped his car on the side of the road. His wife called 000 and thanks to the quick response by the Queensland Ambulance Service, he was able to receive clot busting thrombolysis treatment within 1.5 hours of noticing the symptoms of stroke. Instead of facing months of rehabilitation and a likely ongoing disability, Mr Shaw walked out of hospital after making a rapid recovery.

Dr Grimley said it was important that everyone was aware of the warning signs of stroke as time was vital in the treatment of strokes.

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The acronym used for identifying signs of a stroke is FAST which stands for Face, Arms, Speech and Time. Face - has their mouth drooped? Arms - can they lift both arms? Speech - is their speech slurred? Do they understand you? Time - is critical. If you see any of these signs call 000 straight away.

“Once you have had a stroke, thrombolysis (clot busting treatment) with the drug rtPA is the only potential cure,” Dr Grimley said.

“If your stroke is due to a blood clot (like 85% of strokes presenting to Nambour) and you fit the criteria for this treatment, then your chances of independent survival are vastly improved. This treatment works best the earlier it is given and is only licensed for use within 4½ hours of onset of symptoms. This is why it is so important to get to the hospital urgently,” he said.

Mr Shaw praised the efforts of Dr Grimley and his team at the Nambour General Hospital Stroke Unit. “To be in such caring hands and in such a short period of time without a doubt saved my life. To have a stroke unit based on the Sunshine Coast is an absolute Godsend,” he said.

Shelagh Brennan was just 49 when she suffered a stroke in April 2013 and was treated at Nambour General Hospital. Dr Grimley and the clinical team encouraged Mrs Brennan, as part of the enriched environment they foster in the stroke unit, to stay active and get engaged with something that interests her.

“The team at Nambour General Hospital warned me about post stroke depression, which I suffered with a passion about three months after I had my stroke,” Mrs Brennan said.

“It was soon after my stroke that I began to write poetry. My brain seemed to be in ‘ode mode’ often and at first it drove me nuts but then I realised it was a way of releasing my frustrations, forgetfulness, sadness and other mixed emotions.

“I am launching a book of my poems, ‘A Stroke of Poetry’ on Sunday 29 November 2015 at the Caloundra Power Boat Club. I have posted a few of my poems on my Facebook page [www.facebook.com/astrokeofpoetry](http://www.facebook.com/astrokeofpoetry) and so many stroke survivors seem to be able to relate and take comfort knowing they are not alone,” she said.

**For more information on stroke visit [www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au)**

### INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

**What:** Dr Rohan Grimley joins stroke survivors Michael Shaw and Shelagh Brennan (author of “A Stroke of Poetry”) to mark National Stroke Week.

**When:** **12pm Thursday 17 September 2015**

**Where:** Acute Stroke Specialty Unit, Nambour General Hospital

### ENDS

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