

**Date** 20 April 2010

**Subject** **Launch of first comprehensive epilepsy support program a big boost for the Hunter**

Epilepsy Action Australia (EAA), Australia's only national service provider for Australians living with epilepsy, in association with nib foundation, today launched the first comprehensive program to deliver education, support and life saving first-aid and emergency medication training for people living with epilepsy in the Hunter region.

The program replicates the successful model that EAA has developed in other parts of Australia and will provide assistance for up to 400 people, helping to meet the significant, unmet demand for education and support services in the region.

EAA Chairman, television commentator and former England Cricket captain, Tony Greig, who attended the program launch at John Hunter Hospital, said he understands the challenges faced by Hunter residents living with this chronic neurological disorder.

"As someone living with epilepsy, I know some of the challenges facing people with epilepsy. Epilepsy is more than a one-off diagnosis; one third of people with epilepsy will never achieve control of their seizures. Of those whose epilepsy is 'controlled', many will suffer occasional seizures and have complications from the medications they take. People with epilepsy need more than just medical attention. The education, support and training EAA provides helps improve the quality of life for people living with epilepsy and for those who care for them," Mr Greig said.

The program, jointly funded by EAA and nib foundation, incorporates memory and education workshops, emergency medication and seizure first-aid training, a camp for teenagers and an EAA nurse educator who will support the John Hunter Children's Hospital Epilepsy Clinic.

EAA Chief Executive Officer, Carol Ireland, said the program provides practical advice and support for those with epilepsy and their families.

"Memory problems, for example, are extremely common for people with epilepsy and can have a major impact on day-to-day living. Our workshops are designed by experts in the field and provide strategies that people can apply in everyday situations," Ms Ireland said.

"Our Group Education Sessions and the Epilepsy Nurse Educator support at the John Hunter Hospital, will build awareness and confidence, and provide solutions to help people better manage life with epilepsy."

Melanie and David Quick, whose 10-year-old daughter Hayley has benefited from a number of EAA's services, welcomed the launch of this program.

"Epilepsy Action Australia has provided so much valuable information and support, which has made a real difference in our family's life. It's great to know that this support program is now available in the Hunter region, meaning many more families will benefit from the valuable service." Mr Quick said.

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler, said the foundation is delighted to support programs which will make such a considerable difference to the Hunter community.

"With an estimated 12,500 people expected to experience epilepsy in the Hunter, it's important to have services such as these available to the public. We are proud to assist Epilepsy Action Australia make these programs a reality," Mr Lawler said.

**ENDS**

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