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PROUDLY SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH  
ALL NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

## **MSWA supporting stroke survivors**

Lisa MacLennan was 41 and in the prime of her life. She was married with two young children, working in the disability sector, and two units away from completing a Bachelor of Social Work, when she was struck down by a severe stroke in 2012.

A stroke can strike at any time and without warning, so when Lisa collapsed during a lecture, everyone went into panic mode. Getting a detailed account of the day from her classmates, she says she blacked out and was comatose for the next two days. Her doctors didn't think she would survive.

"Once I woke, I knew exactly what had happened. I'd seen similar symptoms in one of the patients at work, so I knew I had survived a stroke. I couldn't talk, move or communicate what I was thinking, but my mind was still clear," said Lisa.

The stroke had affected Lisa's right side of her body and the left side of her brain, which meant she had intense rehabilitation ahead of her.

"I couldn't believe that I had lost everything. I had big plans, lots of friends and had worked hard to complete my dream of being a social worker. It was extremely difficult to stay motivated when I was stuck in my body," added Lisa.

Once home with her family, the friends Lisa had once called her community had all but disappeared, but this turned around once she was introduced to MSWA.

"I was nervous and excited the first time I went to MSWA's Rockingham facility. To be able to talk with people who are experiencing something similar felt amazing. I didn't realise how exhausting it was trying to fit my old life, around my new life. I've made some close friends thanks to MSWA." Lisa said.

Through the help of the experienced MSWA staff and her National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan, Lisa has been able to adapt her lifestyle to suit her needs, including modifications to her car and accessing weekly physiotherapy and massage to keep her body active. On Tuesdays, she attends outreach sessions where she can spend time with her new friends and enjoy the morning doing creative activities. Lisa also receives domestic support three times a week, which helps her remain in her home.

"Irene, my support worker and now friend, has helped me in so many ways. It's the little things that I can't do anymore that can be frustrating. She's been a big part of my healing and acceptance process. She's shown me that it doesn't matter if I only have one good leg and arm, there are still things I can do to live a happy and full life," Lisa added.

"She was the one that got me on my bike, and I'll always be grateful for that. It was in the garden unused until she encouraged me to give it a go, and I haven't looked back since. It's given me a new-found freedom, and this year I'm even going to ride in the MSWA Ocean Ride 10km Family Ride with my son."



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Lisa is just one of the many Western Australians who benefit from MSWA's support for people living with a neurological condition. Some of the money raised from last year's MSWA Ocean Ride – Powered by Retravisation, has helped purchase an electric wheelchair for stroke patients at Osborne Park Hospital (OPH).

Toni Heinemann, Occupational Therapist at OPH has been working with stroke survivors.

"Through generous funding from MSWA, we were able to purchase an electric wheelchair that has been used in therapy every day. We've never had this opportunity before so it's really fantastic. A stroke can cause a condition called visual neglect or spatial inattention which triggers visual problems. The chair allows us to assist with perceptual retraining and scanning of their environment safely, and with direct feedback," said Toni.

"It has also assisted reaching community access goals, such as road safety, increased autonomy and independence on the ward, whilst patients are working on their walking."

"Last year's MSWA Ocean Ride saw 1,781 participants raise more than \$200,000, breaking records both in numbers and fundraising. The money raised has allowed us to continue to support people like Lisa and other stroke survivors," said MSWA CEO, Marcus Stafford AM.

"Over the past 11 years we have invested more than \$13.9 million into research for MS and other neurological conditions, and this year our contribution was a record \$3 million. In 2017, we made our inaugural contribution to stroke research in the amount of \$250,000 which aims to benefit future stroke survivors. This unprecedented investment was only made possible by the people of Western Australia's ongoing support," added Mr Stafford.

Lisa's life has changed dramatically since 2012 but her determination is inspiring. She finds remembering numbers and names challenging, and conversations can take longer, but she doesn't mind.

"I'll always be grateful that I survived and have a second chance at life. I've lost a lot, but I've gained so many meaningful people, memories and experiences. I know my children are proud of me and together we're living a beautiful life," Lisa added.

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