



MEDIA RELEASE

ACT GOVERNMENT URGED TO FUND HELP FOR SUMMER SUFFERERS

For immediate release Tuesday 21 February 2012

MS Australia launched a campaign today to urge the ACT Government to introduce a Medical Cooling Electricity Concession for people suffering from the debilitating effects of heat intolerance.

Heat intolerance is a serious medical condition that is a common side effect of conditions like multiple sclerosis (MS), spinal cord injury or Parkinson's disease. A rise in temperatures above 25 – 30 degrees causes severe exacerbations of symptoms and for people with MS this includes extreme fatigue, muscle weakness, pain, tremors, loss of balance, bladder and bowel problems, decreased cognitive function and even paralysis.

MS Australia is calling on the ACT Government to follow the lead of other states to introduce cool relief for people dealing with the condition.

“People with MS and other heat intolerant conditions don't have a choice about running their air conditioners over the summer,” MS Australia's Senior Policy Advisor Dr Michael Summers says.

“For someone with heat intolerance – summer means being forced to stay indoors, running an air conditioner 24/7 to avoid serious illness.”

MS Australia's discussion paper, *Keeping Cool: Discussion Paper for an ACT Medical Cooling Electricity Concession*, details the severe financial cost of keeping cool to people with chronic illnesses like MS.

“Many people with chronic illnesses like MS are unable to work or have reduced incomes. With electricity prices constantly on the rise, the cost of keeping cool is a burden they shouldn’t have to face alone,” Dr Summers said.

MS Australia is proposing that, in accordance with other schemes across Australia, the ACT concession should be \$100 per annum. This only equates to approximately one third of the average costs of keeping cool for these households.

Research conducted by MS Australia shows that 90% of people living with MS suffer from heat intolerance, and that they run their air conditioning units 14 ½ times more than the average Australian household.

Ends

Case Study – Maureen Caelli

Maureen Caelli, 61, of Chifley was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000.

Maureen is an accomplished artist, but battles the debilitating effects of heat intolerance on a daily basis.

“Just a little bit of heat causes me to feel nauseous and faint,” Maureen says.

“I suffer from almost constant migraines because of MS – and the heat makes them ten times worse.”

“It means I have no other choice but to run my air conditioner constantly, without a break. Affording this on a pension is just too hard – my debt is going up and up.”

Note to editors and producers: Dr Summers and Maureen Caelli are available for interview and photos on request

Contact:

Prue Guillaume
Manager, Public Affairs and Advocacy
MS Australia
Ph: 0450 659 811
Email: prue.guillaume@msaustralia.org.au