

## ***What is MS?***

### **New video launched to explain and demystify a disease impacting more and more Australians.**

**29 March 2023:** With the incidence of multiple sclerosis (MS) on the rise in Australia, an important new educational video resource launches nationally today.

The '*What is MS?*' video attempts to demystify and explain a complex, and often at times, invisible disease that now impacts more than 33,000 Australians.

Commissioned in 2022 by MS Australia to mark its 50th Anniversary Year, the video, *What is MS?*, will educate the general public and people living with MS, especially those newly diagnosed, about the causes, different types of MS and common symptoms of a condition that, as of now, has no cure.

MS Australia Chief Executive, Rohan Greenland says most Australians know that MS means multiple sclerosis, but don't really have a very good understanding about what MS actually is.

"MS affects everyone differently. People living with MS will sometimes be well one day, and then be quite unwell the next.

"So it's really important for employers, for family, carers, and for others in the community to have a better understanding of how MS impacts people living with the condition," Mr Greenland said.

MS Australia President, Associate Professor Des Graham lives with MS and agrees that there is an inherent challenge in trying to explain to the general public, what MS is.

"The public see someone with no visible symptoms and naturally struggle to understand the challenges that individual is dealing with, or incorrectly assume there's nothing wrong with them," Associate Professor Graham said.

Of even greater concern, Associate Professor Graham says that lack of understanding extends to areas of government support such as the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme).

"Too often, people living with MS are denied the disability support they require and deserve. If you've got MS and you're in a wheelchair, government may provide the

support that you require, but if your symptoms are less visible, you are too often left out in the cold,” Associate Professor Graham said.

Couch Creative Director, Mike Sarah relished the challenge to make the invisible, visible and to work on a valuable public health campaign.

“We partnered with Canberra film production agency SilverSun Pictures and worked closely with MS Australia to develop a video that balances technically accurate 3D modelling and live action video to show a real person in everyday scenarios and to bring those symptoms, and challenges to life,” Mr Sarah said.

The launch of the video comes in the wake of new prevalence data released by MS Australia in February 2023 which showed the number of Australians living with multiple sclerosis increasing at a significant and accelerating rate.

The latest data showed that 33,335 Australians were living with MS in 2021, an increase of 30% (7,728) over the four years since the previous update in 2017 (25,607).

Mr Greenland says that with MS on the rise, the video is equally valuable as an awareness raising tool and a reminder to Government of the urgent need to invest more in MS research.

Associate Professor Graham agrees and says the *What is MS?* video also contains a strong message of hope.

“For over 50 years MS Australia has led the world in ground-breaking research to help improve the lives of Australians living with MS.

“With MS on the rise, MS Australia is now doubling its efforts to advocate for greater government investment in MS research, that will bring us closer to treatments that will slow or stop disability progression for everyone,” Associate Professor Graham said.

[What is MS? video link](#)

**[ENDS]**

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

media@msaustralia.org.au

**Sarah Morrison – 0400 477 527**

**Lisa Montague – 0412 002 544**

[www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au)

## **About MS**

MS is the most common acquired chronic neurological disease affecting young adults, often diagnosed between the ages of 20 to 40 and, in Australia, affects three times more women than men. As yet, there is no cure. There is no known single cause of MS, but many genetic and environmental factors have been shown to contribute to its development.

In MS, the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks and damages the fatty material – called myelin – around the nerves. Myelin is important for protecting and insulating nerves so that the electrical messages that the brain sends to the rest of the body, travel quickly and efficiently.

As the myelin breaks down during an MS attack – a process called demyelination – patches of nerves become exposed and then scarred, which renders the nerves unable to communicate messages properly and at risk of subsequent degeneration. This means that the brain cannot talk to other parts of the body, resulting in a range of symptoms that can include a loss of motor function (e.g., walking and hand and arm function, loss of sensation, pain, vision changes and changes to thinking and memory).

## **About MS Australia**

MS Australia is Australia's national multiple sclerosis (MS) not-for-profit organisation that empowers researchers to identify ways to treat, prevent and cure MS, seeks sustained and systemic policy change via advocacy, and acts as the national champion for Australia's community of people affected by MS.

MS Australia represents and collaborates with its state and territory MS Member Organisations, people with MS, their carers, families and friends and various national and international bodies to:

- Fund, coordinate, educate and advocate for MS research as part of the worldwide effort to solve MS
- Provide the latest evidence-based information and resources
- Help meet the needs of people affected by MS.