

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **STROKE IS NOW A DISEASE OF THE YOUNG - 1 IN EVERY 4 AGED UNDER 65 YEARS**

***BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK LAUNCHES MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST***

Unpublished data provided to Brain Injury Australia by the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry reveals that **1 in every 4 strokes - when blood supply to the brain is stopped by a clot or bleeding - now occurs in people aged under 65 years.** The third most common cause of death after heart disease and dementia, **rates of young stroke are increasing worldwide due to obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.**

**Terry Kennedy's experience of stroke is, at once, both a warning and an inspiration.** In 2011, Kennedy's son was born with a rare brain disease and given little chance of survival. Later that year, his father was diagnosed with prostate cancer and also given little chance of survival. Aged 32, and 35 kilograms overweight, Kennedy used these twin tragedies as motivation to get fit. **But just five days out from running his first marathon, Kennedy suffered a stroke and then a heart attack that left him unable to see, walk or talk.**

Kennedy didn't fit into his 8 weeks of rehabilitation. "I was the youngest person there, by far," Kennedy recalls. "And while I get it's important to know how to make a cup of tea, or fold clothes, all I wanted to do was walk and run again." **"The results from surveys of young stroke - both here and overseas - are absolutely consistent," says Nick Rushworth Executive Officer of Brain Injury Australia. "They just don't get the kind, the frequency or the duration of therapy supports appropriate for their age, especially in the areas of cognitive functioning, psychological well-being and return-to-work."**

Kennedy paid over \$10,000 out of his own pocket to get the physiotherapy and fitness training he needed. **A little over a year later, Kennedy completed perhaps the world's most gruelling endurance event, the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii - a 4 kilometre swim, followed by a 180 kilometre bike ride, finished with a 42 kilometre run. But his battle with the effects of stroke continues.**

**Kennedy will speak candidly alongside other young stroke survivors, and Dr. Ken Baker AM, CEO of National Disability Services - Australia's peak body for disability services - whose wife sustained a series of strokes in her early forties that left her without the ability to speak, read, or write, and neurologist Associate Professor Bruce Campbell, Head of Hyperacute Stroke at Royal Melbourne Hospital at the national launch of Brain Injury Awareness Week. The launch - in partnership with the National Stroke Foundation - will be held next Monday 15<sup>th</sup> August at the Melbourne Brain Centre, The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, 30 Royal Parade, Parkville Melbourne, starting at 10:30 a.m.**

To inform advocacy during Brain Injury Awareness Week and beyond, Brain Injury Australia has released a Position Paper on young stroke, available at the "Latest Publications" area on its homepage; [www.braininjuryaustralia.org.au](http://www.braininjuryaustralia.org.au)

**To arrange interviews, or for further information about the national launch, please contact Nick Rushworth Executive Officer  
Brain Injury Australia on (0417) 373 622**