



MEDIA RELEASE

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Advocacy Charities Join Forces to Call for the Establishment of a National Centre for Neurological Rehabilitation

The Australian Institute of Neuro-rehabilitation (AIN) and Brain Injury Australia (BIA) have united in calling for \$10 million to fund Australia's first National Centre of Excellence in Technology-Assisted Neuro-rehabilitation Exercise and Research.

In a Memorandum of Understanding signed today, AIN's founder - lawyer turned disability advocate Trish Leonard - and BIA's Executive Officer Nick Rushworth assert that funding for such a Centre is critical for maximising quality of life outcomes for the hundreds of thousands of Australians with physical disabilities the result of brain and spinal cord injuries, stroke, Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease etc. The Centre will evaluate the ensuing reduction in the national cost of these conditions on Australia's healthcare, disability and welfare system.

"Australia is just failing to fully realize the recovery potential of every individual living with these conditions," said Ms. Leonard and Mr Rushworth. "It is not just bad economics, but a denial of their right to the best recovery available," they said. A 2010 National Disability Services report found that \$5 billion could be injected into the economy if just 2 per cent of people with a disability were able to come off the Disability Support Pension, and just 10 per cent of carers to return to the work. "As a country we can't afford to invest in care and return to work programs, at the expense of investing in neuro-rehabilitation which actually strives to get people better," they said.

Dr. Stephen de Graaff, Director of AIN and Immediate Past President of the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine says: "Neuro-rehabilitation exercises and therapy are our best defence against disability. Neuroscience discoveries have revealed the brain's incredible capacity to recover and regenerate."

"Australia is missing a dedicated national community centre of excellence for technology-assisted neuro-rehabilitation exercise and research for adults, to drive best practice, access and service affordability throughout Australia" said Frances Simmonds, AIN Director and Manager of the Australasian Rehabilitation Outcomes Centre. "As you can imagine it's very difficult to see a private specialist therapists in the community, the costs are a huge setback for people – especially if they have to travel long distances to access services," Dr de Graaff added.

Looking to best practice in the USA and other European nations leading in technology assisted neuro-rehabilitation initiatives, the AIN, with the support of BIA, is asking for community support and looking for major funding partners to deliver an Australia first National Centre of Excellence for Technology-Assisted Neuro-rehabilitation Exercise and Research.

The Centre will be equipped with cutting-edge wearable robotic technologies for upper and lower limbs. It will include mobile devices which can even be placed in regional centres with trained health professionals. Advances in telemedicine mean an individual regional user, their device and local therapy team, remain connected with the Centre and equal participants in neuro-rehabilitation exercise programs, as those who are able to visit the Centre.

Tax-deductible donations can be made by visiting AIN's website – www.ain-rehab.org.au - clicking the "Please Donate" button and specifying "Centre Fund" in your donation message

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