

Media Backgrounder

Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness 2019

Purple Day is a worldwide grassroots campaign dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy, held on 26 March each year.

Purple Day was founded in 2008 by nine-year-old Cassidy Megan from Canada, in an effort to get more people talking about epilepsy and assure those living with this condition that they are not alone. Over the past 11 years the Epilepsy Foundation has been a proud official Purple Day partner, using this campaign as a platform to educate the community about epilepsy and challenge myths, which still exist today.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder of the brain that involves recurring seizures. A seizure is a sudden and temporary change in the electrical activity in the brain, which can alter and impair awareness, thought, movement, sensation or behaviour. Every person's experience of a seizure is different. Following a seizure the person may feel tired, confused, angry, sad or worried, and some may be physically injured during a seizure. Unfortunately around 300 Australians die annually as a direct result of their epilepsy, often due to Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP), seizure-precipitated drowning or accidents.

The impact of epilepsy can be far greater than seizures alone. Epilepsy can affect a person's ability to study, work, drive a vehicle and enjoy an active social life, which can have negative financial and emotional consequences. Misunderstanding in the community has also led to people living with epilepsy feeling stigmatised and socially isolated. Epilepsy is a largely 'hidden' condition and many people in the community may not even realise they know someone living with epilepsy.

Graeme Shears, chief executive officer of the Epilepsy Foundation, says, "It is not uncommon for people living with epilepsy to not disclose their epilepsy diagnosis, or to only do so reluctantly, because of fear of discrimination and stigma from peers, colleagues and even family. **Purple Day is a chance for the community to have a conversation about epilepsy, learn about it, know what to do if they witness a seizure and let people with epilepsy know that they have the support of everyday Australians.**"

The Epilepsy Foundation provides one-on-one support to people living with epilepsy and all those who care for them, through the provision of information, counselling and training. It is also working towards building an *Epilepsy Smart Australia* through research, advocacy and awareness-raising activities.

On 26 March, the Epilepsy Foundation asks people to spread the word about epilepsy, get involved in Purple Day activities, share stories and consider donating. Please join us to help ensure that *no one with epilepsy goes it alone*.

There are many ways of supporting those living with epilepsy on this important day, including hosting an event, buying merchandise or setting up a fundraising page. More information is available on the Epilepsy Foundation websites www.epilepsyfoundation.org.au or www.purpleday.com.au

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Media Enquiries

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