

## Family campaigns for stroke treatment in Australia



Meghan Harris | 26th Jun 2015 6:00 AM



Fighting to bring reverse stroke therapy to Australia are (from left) Rebecca Darr, Coralie Graham and Joel Shepherd.

Kevin Farmer

BEING able to have a phone conversation with her son is not something Coralie Graham ever thought she would be able to do.

Her 27-year-old son Joel Shepherd suffered a brain injury when he was three-years-old which affected his motor skills and his ability to communicate.

Last year Mr Shepherd and his family flew to Los Angeles to undergo a revolutionary reverse stroke treatment to reduce the swelling on his brain.

Thanks to three rounds of Perispinal Etanercept treatment Mr Shepherd is now able walk independently and his conversation skills have improved.

Ms Graham said her son's quality of life had improved drastically.

"It is just amazing how much progress Joel has made after just three treatments," Ms Graham said.

"He can actually walk and talk and understand what is going on around him.

"We have phone conversations now and that was something that was impossible up until last year.

"It cost around \$45,000 to take him to America but I would do it again in a heartbeat.

"It's helped Joel so much. It has been life changing," she said.

When Ms Graham and her family returned from the United States, she started a charity, the Stroke Recovery Trial Fund.

The charity is now helping fund a Perispinal Etanercept clinical trial at Griffith University, in the hopes of bringing the treatment to Australia.

So far hundreds of Australians have travelled internationally for Perispinal Etanercept treatment.

It has changed their lives, giving them clearer thinking, improved walking, better dexterity and made the lives for themselves and their carers easier.

The expensive and stressful travel for people that already find the simplest tasks difficult could soon be over.

Ms Graham said the treatment would change the lives of people who have suffered a brain injury or stroke.

"One in six people will suffer a stroke at some point in their life and we need better treatment here in Australia," Ms Graham said.

"The treatment works.

"Joel is living proof that it works.

"That obviously isn't enough to have the treatment available here.

"It has to go through a clinical trial and I am going to do everything I can to bring it to Australia.

"It's not possible for many families to physically travel because of costs and medical reasons and they shouldn't have to. It should be available here.

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"Fundraising was one thing that we could do to help bring the treatment to more people.

"\$50,000 will get the university through stage one while \$250,000 will fund the entire trial.

"We started accepting donations last week and we have already raised more than \$13,000," she said.

Stroke Recovery Trail Fund director Rebecca Darr said she was passionate about bringing the treatment to Australia.

"I work with Coralie at USQ and when she came to me with the idea to start the charity I jumped on board straight away," Ms Darr said.

"It is close to home for me because I lost my mum three years ago to a major stroke.

"It came out of nowhere and she was only 49.

"Bringing the treatment to Australia is definitely something I am passionate about.

"These days it's so hard to meet someone who isn't touched by stroke or brain injury.

"It's a great cause to get behind and our main focus at the moment is to raise as much money as we can and get the trail under way," she said.

The Stroke Recovery Trail Fund launch event will be held on Saturday, August 15, and Ms Graham is planning on holding a charity auction with all funds going towards the trial.

If you would like to donate any items for the charity auction or to make a monetary donation visit [www.strokerecoverytrialfund.org](http://www.strokerecoverytrialfund.org).



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