

## National Advocates Program.

MS Australia is rolling out a National Advocates Program over the next couple of months.

The program is part of the existing MS Australia Policy and Advocacy program, and will engage a number of volunteer advocates who live with MS in each State and Territory who will take part in the policy development, network and campaign activity of the Policy team across all levels of Government to help ensure that public policies are supportive of the needs of People with MS & their families.

Over the past 5 years MS Australia has campaigned on a range of policy areas (including young people in nursing homes, employment/welfare and pharmaceutical policy). This has involved developing policy papers, addressing Parliamentary committees, hosting forums, direct lobbying and using the media.

The advocates will participate in this work in each State /Territory, contributing to both National, State and local issues. They will be trained and supported by the policy team in Melbourne with policy, campaigning and building sustainable working relationships with Policymakers and community groups across the community

MS Australia has appointed Robert Pask as the National Co-ordinator of the Advocates program. Robert is a well regarded and long standing advocate for MS and chronic illness issues and will mentor, inform and assist advocates in the this program.

Local MS Society contacts will assist advocates to develop local networks in areas of interest (including transport, disability discrimination, aids and equipment) and work with groups such as Councils of Social Services and other exiting community sector campaign alliances. Involvement with local and National campaigns ensures that MS and chronic illness issues are addressed within ongoing community change campaigns.

The National Advocates Program will be an ongoing and training will commence mid year and in October all the we will convene our national Advocacy Conference in Canberra which will be a combined strategy and lobbying, event. It will include briefings with MPs and a visit to Parliament House where advocates will meet with their local members with whom they will already have formed a relationship

For More information check the MS Australia website [www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au), or contact the Coordinator Robert Pask at [rpask@mssociety.com.au](mailto:rpask@mssociety.com.au)