

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Brain Injury – The Invisible Disability Destroying Lives**

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) destroys the lives of more than 1 in 50 Australians according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

While so many are affected by ABI, resources and support are extremely limited. As a result those who sustain an ABI not only suffer from an invisible disability, but all too often become invisible in the system too.

Striking without prejudice ABI not only affects people who abuse alcohol and drugs or victims of car accidents and assaults, it also affects everyday people, doing everyday activities.

Megan Dodd, the founder of The Dodd Foundation, a charity established to assist families who are affected by ABI, is making it her life's work to ensure sufferers get the support and assistance they need.

"We need to be aware that it could happen to us at anytime and we need to make our system recognise the high unmet need for quality resources and support for ABI victims"

"ABI can happen doing everyday activities like learning to ski, walking down a flight of stairs, riding a bike *with* a helmet or playing a game of football in the park. In many cases these people are innocent victims of bad luck and it is our duty to support them and their families." Ms Dodd said.

Ms Dodd knows first hand the tragic effects a brain injury can have. Megan and her husband Paul Dodd were on their honeymoon in Europe when tragedy struck on Christmas Day in 2007, just twenty four days after they were married.

Mr Dodd slipped down 5 stairs hitting his head as he fell, when a time-delayed light went out early. Sustaining a severe traumatic brain injury, Mr Dodd was not expected to survive the night.

Now fifteen months on from the accident Paul is in a stable condition but his injuries are so severe that it has left his ability to take care of himself and communicate at almost 0%.

"There have been no real measurable developments in over a year in terms of Paul's cognitive abilities and we are told by Neurosurgeons that judging by his scans we should not expect any more developments in the future."

"We know he can hear us and he reacts differently to certain people, especially me, leading us to believe that although his scans and abilities are severely limited, he does have some level of discernment and recognition of what's going on around him. We are not able to understand whether he is in pain, uncomfortable or frightened, which causes me an enormous amount of heartache, it's almost unbearable" Ms Dodd said

With almost no facilities existing that are able to care for young ABI sufferers, most are forced into aged care facilities due to the level of constant and complex care they require.

"There are no age appropriate facilities available for Paul, nor are there programs available which would aid us in bringing Paul home to be cared for in his own home. The only option for Paul, given the nature of his injuries is to go to an aged care facility. Even at this level of care, it is difficult to find facilities that will take Paul or are able to service his ongoing needs."

"We are required to have Paul registered on five aged care facility waiting lists, and what is contributing to the difficulty in narrowing these facilities down is that not all of them have a specifically trained nurse needed to care for Paul's complex needs. Also because Paul is a young man, these facilities are rightly concerned that they will not be able to provide the appropriate lifestyle for him." Ms Dodd said.

Ms Dodd finding strength in her time of need, set up The Dodd Foundation to assist individuals and families affected by ABI both financially and emotionally, as well as become an advocate for them.

"It is my mission to make the Foundation a fantastic resource to help and support families affected by ABI, by putting them in touch with people who can answer their questions, guiding families to find suitable accommodation for their loved ones and acting as an advocate, lobbying the government for dramatic change so loved ones don't fall through the cracks." Ms Dodd said.

In the year ahead The Dodd Foundation will be focusing on education and the prevention of ABI, taking the stance that prevention is the cure.

Megan appeals to anyone who would like more information on how to help her in her quest or how to obtain resources on ABI to contact The Dodd Foundation on 07 3256 2665.

**ENDS**

### **Media Contact**

To organise an interview with Megan or for more background information on ABI and related statistics please contact:

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