



Media Release

Epilepsy Awareness Week 19-26 March 2011

Epilepsy Awareness Week is turning Purple

The Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria is turning its annual 'Epilepsy Awareness Week' purple this year in conjunction with Purple Day (26th March 2011) – the global effort dedicated to promoting Epilepsy awareness.

Epilepsy is a disorder of brain function that takes the form of recurring seizures. It is a common condition worldwide, which can develop at any age, regardless of gender or ethnic group

It is estimated that up to 4 percent or 220,000 people in Victoria will have epilepsy during their lifetime and more than four times that number will be significantly affected. With this in mind the Epilepsy Foundation will support Epilepsy Awareness Week 2011 from 19-26 March 2011 and Purple Day (26 March 2011), to raise awareness in the community about this serious, yet often misunderstood, health condition.

Graeme Shears, chief executive officer of the Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria, said: *"As our annual awareness week and the global Purple Day shared the same goals – to get people talking about epilepsy, creating understanding, dispelling any myths and informing those with seizures that they are not alone – it made sense to bring them both together."*

Epilepsy Awareness Week is also a chance for those with the condition to tell their stories – about their experiences with epilepsy and how they deal with what can be a debilitating, life-long condition – and they are often heart-wrenching accounts.

Graeme Shears, said, *"Unfortunately there is still, today, a lack of knowledge in society about what epilepsy is, how it affects people and how it can be managed. As epilepsy is associated with the brain, there is a reluctance to talk about it."*

"Epilepsy Awareness Week is a chance to explore the different support services offered to people with epilepsy that can help them to live life as best they can and participate meaningfully in society. The Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria provides services including epilepsy counselling, support, information and advice, as well as advocacy and research, and wants to raise awareness and increase understanding of epilepsy in the community."

The Epilepsy Foundation provides support for people living with epilepsy and their families to help them achieve their individual goals. Services include information, advice and support, epilepsy counselling and practical assistance, as well as education and training, research and advocacy on behalf of people with epilepsy. The Foundation also works to raise awareness of epilepsy in the community to reduce the stigma and create a more welcoming and inclusive society.

People with epilepsy or their families can call the Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria for assistance on 9805 9111 or the Epilepsy Helpline 1300 852 853 for the cost of a local call, or visit www.epinet.org.au

Epilepsy Awareness Week will take place from Saturday 19 March to Saturday 26 March 2011.



Epilepsy Australia is encouraging individuals, community groups, schools and businesses across Australia, to show their true colours and 'Go Purple' this Purple Day, 26 March 2011 – getting the nation talking about and understanding epilepsy.

Raising awareness of epilepsy is important, but it's even more important to know what to do when someone has a seizure. If someone had a seizure in your workplace or on the street, would you know what to do?

One great way of checking your knowledge and ensuring that you are 'epilepsy smart', is to take the quiz. Available at www.epilepsysmart.org.au, the quiz is a quick, informative and simple way of testing your knowledge about epilepsy and seizure first aid.

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Additional notes for Editors:

What is Purple Day?

Purple Day is a grassroots effort dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy worldwide. On Saturday 26 March people from around the globe are asked to wear purple and spread the word about epilepsy.

Founded in 2008, by then 9-year-old Cassidy Megan from Nova Scotia, Purple Day has achieved international recognition through the internet, and in particular social networking sites including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Since Purple Day exploded around the world, children, businesses, organisations, politicians and celebrities have embraced Cassidy's simple message: wear purple and spread the word about epilepsy!

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a disorder of brain function that takes the form of recurring seizures. Our every thought, feeling or action is controlled by brain cells that communicate with each other through regular electrical impulses. A seizure occurs when sudden uncontrolled bursts of electrical activity disrupt this regular pattern. This can be confined to just one part of the brain or can occur right across the brain. Communication between cells becomes scrambled and our thoughts, feelings or movements become momentarily confused or uncontrolled.

Epilepsy is the most common serious brain disorder, and is perhaps one of the most universal of all medical disorders. Widely misunderstood, epilepsy has been shown to lead to fear, secrecy, stigma and the risk of social and legal penalties.

Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria

The Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria provides support for people living with epilepsy and their families, to help them live better lives.

The services include information, advice and support, epilepsy counselling and practical assistance, as well as education and training, research and advocacy on behalf of people with epilepsy.

The foundation works to raise awareness of epilepsy in organisations and the broader community, to reduce the stigma and create a more welcoming and inclusive society.