

BY NICK HAKES & LYDIA BUCKINGHAM

Pro Bono Committee



25,000

That is the number of people living with MS in Australia today. A startling statistic that I learnt when the Pro Bono Financial Advice Network was invited to present at World MS Day, in Hobart on the 30th May.

Thinking about the scope of financial advice, we automatically tend to think about things like saving some of our income during our working years to purchase a home, and paying off the mortgage before we retire, our superannuation – again, accumulated during our working years, insurances to protect our family and wealth, and perhaps something aspirational and personally important like a family trip of a lifetime.

MS is most commonly diagnosed when people are still working and can have a slow but debilitating effect over a number of years. The working years that for most people contribute to their building of long term wealth. Over time, MS impacts people's cognitive ability, their mobility but also their dignity - as often once full-time careers become harder to maintain. MS can cause both emotional and financial stress for entire families.

The Pro Bono Financial Advice Network was formally launched at the World MS Day and builds upon our vision to demonstrate the financial advice profession's commitment to the greater good of society and, in doing so, to have positively impacted the lives of those in need. Clients of MS Australia can now access a financial adviser willing to provide pro bono financial advice through their MS Connect portal.

Right now our profession needs a good news story – we need a collective purpose that creates warmth in the perceptions of the public towards financial advice. Warmth and trust are built from putting the needs of others before our own – in this case, service, for no-fees. As the Pro Bono Financial Advice Network expands its reach towards the 25,000 people living with MS we will need more advisers who are willing to make a difference to the financial and emotional well-being of these clients.

You could be this difference.

To help create a common purpose of our profession and find out more contact the Pro Bono Financial Advice Network Secretariat, Lydia Buckingham at probono@afa.asn.au



**PRO BONO
FINANCIAL ADVICE NETWORK**



Image: MS Board Members - Peter Day (Chairman), Sandra Walker (Acting CEO), Sharlene Brown, Nick Hakes (Independent Chair, Pro Bono Financial Advice Network), Associate Professor Des Graham