



**John Della Bosca MLC**  
**Minister for Health**  
**Minister for the Central Coast**  
**Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council**

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## **Ambulance Research Institute - stroke research**

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said today experts at the new Ambulance Research Institute were finalising a study into stroke cases to improve patient care and safety.

Speaking at Concord Repatriation General Hospital's Stroke Unit, Mr Della Bosca said the research involved the study of 32,000 stroke cases across the State over a three year period between 2004 and 2007.

"Researchers are looking at pre-hospital treatment so we can use the information to better train paramedics in the identification of stroke, plan for the location of future stroke services and improve retrieval and transport arrangements," the Minister said.

Details being examined by researchers include:

- The geographical location of stroke victims;
- The type of symptoms they complain about;
- The time of day the incident occurred;
- Gender of patient;
- How long since the time of on-set of the stroke before an ambulance was called; Ambulance response in assessing the patient and transporting them to an appropriate health facility for treatment.

"Health experts are increasingly finding that stroke treatment and recovery is time sensitive," Mr Della Bosca said.

"If it is a stroke caused by a clot, it is important to get the patient treatment within three hours so they can receive clot-busting drugs – it can mean they will recover more quickly and spend less time in a hospital ward.

"That is why it is important to improve paramedic training so they can identify stroke victims more rapidly, establish where the nearest stroke units are located so people can get transported there within the recommended time to get the appropriate treatment.

"Treating stroke patients more effectively and expediting their recovery will take pressure off public hospital wards and our hard-working doctors and nurses," the Minister said.

Member for Drummoyne, Angela D'Amore, who accompanied the Minister, said Concord Repatriation General Hospital had a proud history of treating people with stroke.

"The Concord Hospital Stroke Unit was opened in 1996 and was the second unit in NSW. It has participated in many trials of treatment for patients following stroke," Ms D'Amore said.

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“They include a community outreach program for stroke patients and their carers and new treatments such as thrombolysis - the administration of blood thinning drugs to patients with acute stroke to help them recover,” Ms D’Amore said.

“The NSW Government is committed to investing in these services and providing on-going support to the hard-working specialists and nurses who provide top class rehabilitation services to the local community,” she said.

Mr Della Bosca said that unfortunately, according to NSW Health data, less than 10 per cent of patients get to hospital within three hours to receive clot busting drugs.

“Stroke is the second highest killer in Australia after heart disease and the leading cause of disability among the elderly,” the Minister said.

“One in seven people will have a stroke during their lifetime and at any one time there are 200,000 people in Australia affected by stroke.

“Each year, almost 10,000 people in NSW will experience a stroke and up to 25 per cent will die.

“You can reduce your risk of stroke by keeping your blood pressure low, quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet and staying active.

“This study is a prime example of the kind of research the new \$3 million Ambulance Research will be undertaking.

“Despite the critical role our paramedics play in the community, research into ambulance practice is a largely unexplored area unlike other areas of medicine.

“The Institute will develop online educational training programs for paramedics in evidence-based best practice,” Mr Della Bosca said.

Research at the Institute will be based around:

- Community needs and expectations, to help Ambulance plan for the future;
- Ambulance clinical practice including the areas of cardiac care, paediatrics, serious trauma, chronic disease, stroke, falls and mental health;
- Medical retrieval, including the safe transfer of critical care, mental health and obese patients, and including vehicles and equipment;
- Systems research including Ambulance performance compared to other states and countries; and
- Workforce and educational research including professional development opportunities for paramedics and volunteer staff.

“With Ambulance NSW experiencing over one million call-outs each year, our paramedics are extremely hard-working and play a vital role in supporting the health and well-being of our communities,” the Minister said.

“But it is important we continue to improve our ambulance services where possible to ensure patients benefit from the best care possible,” he added.