**Local support crucial to living well with neurological condition**

[Insert town name] Parkinson’s Peer Support Group is taking part in **27forParkinson’s**, a community fundraiser this October for people living with Parkinson’s, a degenerative neurological condition that affects more than 27,000 Victorians.

With COVID-19 still keeping many Victorians apart, **27forParkinson’s** enables people living with Parkinson’s to physically participate in an event as part of a virtual team with family and friends.

It is estimated that 27,000 Victorians are living with Parkinson’s, with 18% of people diagnosed while still of working age (under 65 years). It is the second most common neurological condition in Australia.

There is currently no known cause or cure. Medication and therapies are used to help manage symptoms, the most common of which are stiffened muscles, slowing movement and changing posture. Many people also experience resting tremor.

Other symptoms can include pain, depression, anxiety, speech changes and loss of facial expression.

For locals living with Parkinson’s, the peer support group provides an important community support system, where participants build knowledge, access resources, share information and talk openly to each other about their experiences, both good and bad.

This is especially important in regional areas, where access to medical specialists is more limited place and there can be many months – and kilometres – between medical visits.

The [insert town name] Peer Support Group is backed by Parkinson’s Victoria, a specialist not-for-profit organisation that raises awareness and funds for information and education services that improve quality of life for people living with Parkinson’s and Atypical Parkinson’s.

“COVID-19 has changed the way we live,” said Parkinson’s Victoria CEO Emma Collin.

“A Parkinson’s diagnosis is life changing, but being resilient, adapting and arming yourself with knowledge is key to living life to the fullest. As is not facing the journey alone, which is why peer support groups are so important at the local level.”

Ms Collin said the event was particularly important this year as many in the community are hurting

“Anxiety can result in worsening of Parkinson’s symptoms, so our focus has been on supporting people living with Parkinson’s, or caring for someone with Parkinson’s to navigate COVID-19 to stay safe, well and focussed on the future,” Ms Collin said.

The organisation has also been working with the health and aged care sectors to improve their knowledge of caring for patients and residents with Parkinson’s during COVID-19. For example, getting medication on time is vital in Parkinson’s treatment.

“That means virtual fundraising events such as **27forParkinson’s** are more important than ever to raise funds to allow us to continue to provide the enhanced level of support required during these challenging times.”

Among those supporting the event is the former Victorian Minister for Tourism and Events and Member for Lara, John Eren.

“I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s in December last year. On Father’s Day 2016, I died for three minutes after a cardiac arrest. I survived and with medication, expected to live a healthy life. Parkinson’s is not like that. There is no going back. Parkinson’s is now part of my life,” John said.

Australian Actor and presenter Shane Jacobson and Olympian Steve Moneghetti, whose mums both have Parkinson’s, are also **27forParkinson’s** Ambassadors.

**ABOUT THE 27FORPARKINSON’S**

Make a personal commitment to walk 27 times across 27 days from 1-27 October.

Sign up on the event website – [www.27forparkinsons.org.au](http://www.27forparkinsons.org.au) - to create your own fundraising page. Registration is free.

Join a team [if you have created a local team, change to: Support local participants by joining or sponsoring our team, Team Name (eg, Team Geelong] or be part of a Parkinson’s team and come together to walk and support those living with Parkinson’s.

Have fun! There's no pressure on distance or time, simply walk what you can, when you can, where you can (within COVID-19 guidelines).

If you don’t want to take part but would like to help support the work done by Parkinson’s Victoria, you can sponsor [insert your team name if you have one] a team or individual taking part in the event.

END NOTE: The [insert name] Parkinson’s Peer Support Group is currently not meeting face-to-face due to COVID-19 restrictions but new members are welcome. Call Parkinson’s Victoria on 1800 644 189 for further information on this and other support services available.

ENDS –

For further information about the event, contact Diane Falzon on 0430 596 699