

## PRESS RELEASE

# Experts concerned Parkinson's patients may be missing out on support in the Illawarra

The Hon. Sharon Bird MP kicks off education campaign urging patients and families to “*Act on Parkinson's*”

**SYDNEY, NSW** – Thursday 22 February 2018 – AbbVie (NYSE: ABBV) Australia – A high level meeting of Parkinson's disease advocates and experts hosted by The Hon. Sharon Bird MP, Federal Member for Cunningham, was held at Wollongong Town Hall today. Attendees heard how patients living with Parkinson's disease may be unaware of the local support options available to help them manage the condition. In response, a new education campaign called *Act on Parkinson's* is being launched in the Illawarra region with support from healthcare professionals and patient advocacy organisation [Parkinson's NSW](#).

*Act on Parkinson's* aims to encourage people, particularly those with advanced Parkinson's disease, to be better informed through speaking with their healthcare professional, emboldening them to play an active role in the management of their illness. This is especially important for patients located regionally who may not be aware of the local treatment and support capabilities available to them.

**The Hon. Sharon Bird MP, Federal Member for Cunningham**, said after the meeting it was clear awareness of support and management services is crucial for local residents affected by this disease. “Parkinson's is a progressive disease that can occur at any age. Initiatives like *Act on Parkinson's* will help raise awareness within our local community and connect people affected with much needed support services,” said Ms Bird.

The campaign features radio and digital advertisements including a video message from **Narrawallee resident Christene Jones** who has been living with Parkinson's for over 20 years.

Parkinson's advocates including **Dr Sanjeev Taneja, a Neurologist based in Wollongong and Shellharbour**, says patients are not always aware of the fact that even for advanced Parkinson's disease, there may be local disease management support services available.

“There is currently no cure for Parkinson's disease, but there are ways that the disease, even in its advanced stages, can be managed and we have services available locally that may help patients. It's important that patients and carers speak with a neurologist to discuss the available treatment options which may not have been tried previously to decide which ones are right for them. It doesn't have to be a case of patients accepting uncontrolled symptoms and suffering in silence,” said Dr Taneja.

**Jo-Anne Reeves, CEO of Parkinson's NSW**, said the campaign was a much needed reminder for people with Parkinson's disease, particularly those with advanced disease, to remain hopeful. “It is incredibly important for people affected by Parkinson's and their families to be aware of the variety of different treatment options and support available in areas like the Illawarra. We are committed to helping people

affected by Parkinson’s continue to be an integral part of their communities and this starts with a conversation about appropriate management and support.”

**Nina Cheyne, Parkinson’s NSW Neurological Nurse Educator for the Shoalhaven Region** is also supporting the call, experiencing the impact of disease with her patients every day. “Parkinson’s is a disease that deeply affects the Illawarra and Shoalhaven communities. Often people affected can simply accept that uncontrolled symptoms are their new norm. With this campaign we are encouraging them to seek information on what local support may be available to them,” said Ms Cheyne.

**People with Parkinson’s disease are encouraged to seek assistance from Neurologists specifically trained in the management of the disease to discuss their health and best options of treatment for the disease stage they are in.**

A list of resources and support for people with Parkinson’s disease in the Illawarra / Shoalhaven region is available to download [here](#). People interested in further information can also visit [www.livingwithparkinsons.com.au](http://www.livingwithparkinsons.com.au). A symptom checklist is also available for download.

It is conservatively estimated that over 69,000 Australians and 25,000 people in NSW are living with Parkinson’s disease<sup>1,2</sup>. A Parkinson’s diagnosis can occur at any age with the most common age of diagnosis being 65<sup>1</sup>.

The *Act on Parkinson’s* campaign is sponsored by AbbVie Australia as part of their ongoing commitment to improving the lives of patients with Parkinson’s disease.

The campaign will run until March 2018.

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### **About Parkinson’s NSW**

Parkinson’s NSW is a not for profit peak body striving to make life better for people living with Parkinson’s, their families and carers. Providing essential services such as counselling, support groups, InfoLine, Neurological Nurses and education while raising awareness and funds for research to improve the lives of people affected by Parkinson’s. To find out more about Parkinson’s NSW, please visit [www.parkinsonsnsw.org.au](http://www.parkinsonsnsw.org.au)

### **About AbbVie**

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