

MINTO

Iva keeps eye on bright side

HEADED DOWN THE ROAD TO RECOVERY



Iva Sadaraka continues to have a positive outlook.

Peter Way

MOST people associate brain injury with a severe accident or heavy blow to the head.

When then 18-year-old Iva Sadaraka started suffering sharp headaches and loss of balance, he didn't realise he was about to join millions of other Australians on a journey of rehabilitation.

The 20-year-old, from Minto, has just completed 18 months of treatment at Liverpool Hospital's brain injury rehabilitation unit after developing a brain tumour. His story is one to help raise awareness of acquired brain injuries.

Mr Sadaraka grew up in Minto, attended Sarah Redfern High School and played rugby league for the Minto Cobras.

He was diagnosed with an astrocytoma tumour on his brain two years ago.

With Brain Injury Aware-



Therapist Renee Dunne assists Iva Sadaraka during his arduous rehabilitation program.

Picture: REBECCA RICHARDSON

With Brain Injury Awareness Week earlier this month, health experts are keen to highlight the prevalence of acquired brain injuries.

Brain injury rehabilitation unit diversional therapist Renee Dunne said many people didn't realise an acquired brain injury didn't just come from an accident or a harsh blow to the head.

"An acquired brain injury is a loss of brain function as a result of an injury to the brain that occurs after birth," she said.

"This can be caused by an accident or trauma, but also non-traumatic injuries like tumours, infection or diseases like Parkinson's," she said.

INJURY ALERT

- 75 per cent of those with an acquired brain injury are aged under 65.
- As many as two out of every three of these people acquired their brain injury before they turned 25.
- Three out of every four people with acquired brain injury are men
- Brain injury impacts each person differently

Mr Sadaraka is about to begin the Headway Adult Development Program at Bankstown, where support programs will help him reach his goals of rejoining the community with independence.

"I'm looking forward to

getting my balance back eventually and improving my movement skills," he said.

"If you see me in 10 years time maybe I'll be walking, maybe I'll even be playing sport."

Ms Dunne said the rehabilitation unit treated patients involved in continuing programs.

"Our patients require long-term treatment, so we work with them... until they achieve their rehabilitation goals.

"Brain Injury Awareness Week was a time for us to celebrate with our patients and their families, as well as raising awareness of the impacts of acquired brain injury."