



Media Release

Date: 11th August 2014

Liverpool Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit highlights prevalence of injuries this Brain Injury Awareness Week

When 18-year-old Iva Sadaraka started to suffer from sharp headaches and a loss of balance, he didn't realise he was about to join millions of other Australians in a journey of rehabilitation and support to navigate some big changes in his life.

Mr Sadaraka was diagnosed with an astrocytoma tumour on his brain, and in February 2013 became one of the hundreds of new patients treated at the Liverpool Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit each year.

This Brain Injury Awareness Week (11th-17th August) health experts at South Western Sydney Local Health District want to highlight the prevalence of acquired brain injuries in people like Mr Sadaraka, who is one of about 1.6 million Australians affected by an acquired brain injury every year.

Renee Dunne, Liverpool Hospital Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit Diversional Therapist, said many people don't realise that an acquired brain injury doesn'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.

Now 20 years old, Mr Sadaraka has completed 18 months of rehabilitation at Liverpool Hospital and has just moved into assisted living at Condell Park.

He will 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.

"The therapists at Liverpool Hospital helped teach me to do all the things I used to do, my goals are to get a job and develop some independence."

Ms Dunne said Liverpool Hospital Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit treated 248 new patients in 2013, as well as patients involved in continuing programs.

“Our patients require long-term treatment, so we work with them for months or even years until they achieve their rehabilitation goals.

“Brain Injury Awareness Week is a time for us to celebrate with our patients and their families, as well as raising awareness of the impacts of acquired brain injury,” Ms Dunne said.

The Liverpool Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit provides rehabilitation services for people aged between 16 and 65 with traumatic brain injury living in South and South Western Sydney.

The Unit includes an in-patient unit, transitional living unit, vocational program, community outreach team and a respite and short-term accommodation service.

Acquired Brain Injury facts:

- 75 percent 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 and can affect people physically, intellectually and emotionally.