

Expo helps people with disability to achieve their potential

Rod O'Donnell, OAM, of St Helens Park, has devoted 25 years to ensuring his daughter Emily, who has multiple disabilities, has the care and services she needs to reach her full potential.

Emily, now 25, was born at 24 weeks and suffered complications including a brain haemorrhage, which left her with multiple health issues.

The bright and cheerful girl won a Special Olympics NSW championship in rhythmic gymnastics and competed in athletics but suffered a serious setback when she had two strokes at the age of 12.

For many years, Mr O'Donnell and his wife Jenny have navigated a diverse health system to ensure their daughter received the care and support she needs to achieve her potential and live a fulfilling life.

Mr O'Donnell encouraged the community, people with a disability and their families and carers to visit South Western Sydney Local Health District's International Day of People with a Disability Expo at Campbelltown Hospital on Monday 3 December.

Macarthur Disability Services, South Western Sydney Local Health District, One Door Mental Health, Australian Hearing and Mission Australia are among the organisations holding stalls at the expo from 10am to 11am in the main hospital foyer.

"The expo is a great way to learn about the services and care available in our community for people with disabilities," Mr O'Donnell said.

"It is also a great way to meet other people and form connections. We found speaking to others and establishing relationships and connections helped us find the support we needed to care for Emily and help her reach her full potential.

"I encourage people to visit the expo, meet the stall holders, obtain information and learn from each other."

It is the first year South Western Sydney Local Health District has held the annual expo at Campbelltown Hospital. This year's theme of International Day of People with a Disability is empowering people with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.

Mr O'Donnell received an Order of Australia Medal in recognition of his many years of service as president of the Rainbow Swimming Club in Campbelltown, a swimming club for special needs children.

The NSW Government is investing \$632 million in the Campbelltown Hospital stage two redevelopment, which will include an expanded emergency department, a new intensive care unit, upgraded maternity, paediatric, mental health, cancer and surgical services and enhanced diagnostic services, including more medical imaging equipment.