

WANTED: Epilepsy Connect Volunteers

The world's first, telephone-based peer support service for people living with or affected by epilepsy is working!

Epilepsy Connect is a free and confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects Tasmanians living with or affected by epilepsy with trained volunteers who have had similar experiences.

A year after being launched, Epilepsy Connect is a lifeline for many people, especially the newly diagnosed and their family members, who appreciate the emotional support volunteers provide through listening, understanding and sharing their personal experiences and ways of coping.

"I don't know how I would have coped without the support of my Epilepsy Connect peer volunteer," said Skye Lee from Prospect who phoned the service after her young daughter was diagnosed with epilepsy.

In response to increasing demand, Epilepsy Tasmania in partnership with the University of Tasmania is looking for six more people to become Epilepsy Connect peer support volunteers.

"We are looking for individuals who have or once had epilepsy, or who care or have cared for someone with epilepsy such as a child, spouse or parent," said CEO of Epilepsy Tasmania, Wendy Groot.

"They must have successfully adjusted to their experience of epilepsy, and have excellent communication skills, a friendly manner and ideally a sense of humour."

"Peer support is known to be beneficial in reducing the psychosocial burden of epilepsy¹," said Dr Simone Lee from the University of Tasmania, Centre for Rural Health. "Epilepsy Connect gives all Tasmanians a chance to access support, no matter where they live."

Epilepsy Connect is in particular need of male volunteers and people in caring roles.

Successful applicants will receive comprehensive training and ongoing support.

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¹ Elafros MA et al. Peer support groups as an intervention to decrease epilepsy-associated stigma. *Epilepsy Behav.* 2013 April ; 27(1): 188-192)

MORE INFO: Claire Burnet on 0448 585 947 and www.epilepsytasmania.org.au

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Epilepsy Tasmania's Chief Executive Officer - Ms Wendy Groot.

CONNECT WITH EPILEPSY TASMANIA ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Twitter: @epilepsytas
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EpilepsyTasmania/>
Hashtags: #epilepsytasmania #donatetothelavender #epilepsyconnect

ABOUT EPILEPSY:

Epilepsy is a very common and serious condition that affects nerve cell activity in the brain and results in unpredictable, recurring episodes known as seizures.

A seizure is a disturbance of movement, feeling or consciousness and involves sudden, inappropriate and excessive electrical discharges in the brain. Seizures manifest differently for different people.

Epilepsy can develop at any age regardless of ethnicity or gender. One in 10 people will experience a seizure, and one in 25 Australians (20,000 Tasmanians) will develop epilepsy at some point during their life.

ABOUT EPILEPSY TASMANIA:

Epilepsy Tasmania is a not-for-profit association improving the quality of life and community participation of Tasmanians living with or affected by epilepsy.

ABOUT DONATE TO THE LAVENDER:

Epilepsy Tasmania is a Tasmanian not-for-profit association significantly reliant upon donations and grants, and the only one providing on-the-ground services and support in Tasmania for Tasmanians who live with or are affected by epilepsy.

As we approach our major annual fundraiser this March - International Epilepsy Awareness Month - we are noticing an increasing number of interstate charities collecting donations within Tasmania yet not providing actual services or support here.

To prevent misunderstanding and stop much-needed donations from being taken out of our state, Epilepsy Tasmania has introduced its **Donate to the Lavender** logo: when you see this logo or the name **Epilepsy Tasmania**, rest assured your donation will stay in Tasmania and be used to help Tasmanians.

