

Media Release

3 December 2014



Today we celebrate International Day of People with Disability

“Today is ‘International Day of People with Disability’ and we at Muscular Dystrophy Australia are very proud to celebrate our members, as well as the wider disability community,” said Muscular Dystrophy Australia Executive Director, Boris M Struk.

“Our members wish not to be described as heroic or brave for simply living with a disability, rather they would like people to simply see past their physical differences and appreciate what they choose to do with their lives,” said Mr Struk.

Muscular Dystrophy is a progressive muscle-wasting disorder and people with the advanced stages of MD may need to rely on a wheelchair for mobility and a ventilator to assist with breathing for without this vital equipment they would not survive.

“For most people MD their minds are not affected by the condition, rather is it just their muscles which weaken and create physical difficulties. Many of our members are brilliant academics who have completed prominent university degrees and are revered scholars,” said Mr Struk.

“The age-old adage ‘see the person and not the disability’ is a very accurate notion which should be employed when having any interaction with people within our, and the wider, community,” said Mr Struk.

“It is important to celebrate and highlight the achievements of people living with disabilities and remember that they do face challenges to which the general population are not necessarily confronted,” said Mr Struk.

A recent report ‘Economic Study of Muscular Dystrophy’ revealed that the majority of people with MD fall within the low income group – more than 70% of males and 60% of females with MD have a total cash income of less than \$450 per week. This is less than the minimum wage per week in 2013 (*‘Economic Study of Muscular Dystrophy’: Page v*). And the study also showed that raising a child with a disability can possibly cost up to two to three times more than raising a child without a disability (*‘Economic Study of Muscular Dystrophy’: Page 18*).

“We fully support any assistance and support the Government provides people within the disability sector and we were grateful to see that Senator Mitch Fifield, Assistant Minister for Social Services, has written to employers around the country to encourage them to consider the business benefits of employing people with disability,” said Mr Struk.

“We at MDA dedicate our time and resources to providing programs, services and research for the MD community but we only receive modest amount of Government funding and we rely heavily on the support of the community through fundraising,” said Mr Struk.

MDA is hosting its inaugural Big Boys Toys Charity Car Show at Essendon Fields this Sunday 7 December from 9am-5pm to help raise much needed funds for the MD community. You can visit the event website at: bigboystoys.org.au/.

To arrange an interview with Muscular Dystrophy Australia Executive Director, Boris M Struk, please contact:

Media representative: MDA Public Relations and Communications Manager, Courtney Burger

Mobile: 0439 784 890 **Phone:** (03) 9320 9555 **Email:** Courtney.Burger@mda.org.au