

# Stroke researchers test new treatment

By **CHRISTAL BRAND**

FOLLOWING the success of their latest drug trial, researchers at the University of Newcastle are ready to take it global.

The drug trials compare the effectiveness of the drug Alteplase, used to treat stroke victims, with Tenecteplase, a clot-busting drug used to treat heart attacks.

Clinician and stroke researcher Dr Neil Spratt said the original study involved 75 people at the John Hunter Hospital.

"We think the new medication compared to the existing treatment does better at clearing blocked arteries and reducing disabilities that result from strokes," he said.

"By next week we are looking at having a half-dozen other sites across Australia, and within six to 12 months we hope to have about 50 hospitals worldwide participating in the trial."

The researchers hope to have 1024 participants within four years.

One of Dr Spratt's patients, Crystal Fitzgibbon, had a stroke five years ago at the age of 26.

Afterwards, she could not talk or move the right side of her body, and a scan showed half of her brain was without oxygen.

"I couldn't walk, couldn't talk, I couldn't even call my mum the right name," Mrs Fitzgibbon said.

After being admitted into the drug trial she was given a full dose of Tenecteplase, and the feeling in her right side started to come back.

"I was up and about the next day and I walked out of the hospital three days after I had my stroke," she said.

"I was very fortunate to be in the right place and right time to be a part of the trial."

Mrs Fitzgibbon said she was now fully recovered.

The continuation of the trial was made possible because of the National Health and Medical Research Council and The Greater Charitable Foundation.



**DR NEIL SPRATT**



**PETITION ORGANISER:** Adamstown Heights resident James Grindey on Northcott Drive.

# Traffic safety fears

By **MARK CONNORS**

ADAMSTOWN Heights residents fear traffic changes to Northcott Drive have made the road more unsafe for pedestrians and drivers.

Roads and Maritime Services recently upgraded the section between Westfield Kotara and the Fernleigh Track at a cost of \$350,000, building a new pedestrian bridge, erecting "No U-turn" signs and narrowing the traffic lanes from two to one.

However, many residents on Northcott Drive, Muriel Street and Wade Street say the changes have made it more dangerous and the RMS ignored residents' input.

James Grindey said he collected a petition signed by 80 residents who were unhappy with the changes three weeks ago. He said residents had already witnessed one accident when a car mounted the new pedestrian kerb and took out cycleway signage along the footpath.

The RMS has since installed additional fluorescent arrows where the accident took place.

"People are concentrating on merging lanes right where people are encouraged to cross the road," Mr Grindey said.

He said traffic had also increased on Wade Street, with drivers attempting dangerous three-point

turns in driveways.

Large numbers of taxis and delivery trucks already use Wade Street to access the taxi bay and an elevated truck delivery ramp at Westfield.

The RMS says more than 16,000 vehicles a day and about 30 to 40 pedestrians an hour pass Wade Street on Northcott Drive during peak times.

A spokesperson for RMS said community feedback had been "largely positive" following the changes.

The widening of the central median was intended to reduce the crossing distance and improve visibility of oncoming traffic.



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