

## MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR ANZSCIN

I am delighted to congratulate the newly launched Australia and New Zealand Spinal Cord Injury Network (ANZSCIN). About to incorporate as a not-for-profit organisation, it is set to take its first steps to help nationalise – and ultimately globalise – the spinal research effort.

The ANZSCIN story is a special one.

It is more than four years since New South Wales hosted the *Making Connections Forum on Spinal Cord Injury & Conditions* in January 2003. An Australian first, it created an encouraging and positive climate for sharing new ideas - and sparked bold thinking on ways we could work together as a society to tackle the challenge of spinal cord injury.

Championed by the late Christopher Reeve, *Making Connections* and the follow-up *Re:Connections Forum* held in Sydney in May 2006, brought together over 1,000 of our best and brightest scientists, researchers, clinicians, physicians and community workers, as well as spinal cord sufferers and their loved ones, to support the fight to improve the lives and prospects of people living with spinal cord injury and related conditions.

It created a special community of dedicated people that have become the heartbeat and driving force behind the establishment of ANZSCIN.

ANZSCIN links the best researchers and clinicians from around Australia and New Zealand, as well as a strong core of people living with spinal cord injury in search of improved treatments, and possibly, cures. A major focus of the Network will be building capacity to undertake multi-centre clinical trials in spinal cord injury and disease.

ANZSCIN is also about information sharing – and providing a way for spinal cord injury researchers, clinicians and advocates to communicate and collaborate more effectively.

The NSW Government is proud to have supported establishment of the network through the Office for Science and Medical Research.

To accelerate the spinal research effort we need a collaborative approach that links our best and brightest researchers, clinicians and health care professionals.

We need to build research and community capacity and bring world-class innovation and research to inform our understanding of the local challenges.

It is by working together with our different strengths and taking leadership to drive scientific endeavour that we will make the changes we wish to see.

The establishment of ANZSCIN is an important step towards achieving this goal and I am confident that the NSW Government will be the first of many to support this magnificent initiative. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and tireless efforts of the ANZSCIN Steering Committee and the Network's supporters for making this happen.

We need you to make the ANZSCIN vision – recovery from spinal cord injury and disease - a reality.



**Verity Firth**

NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research