

Our Town

The Chronicle



FROM THE DARLING DOWNS TO THE BLACK STUMP

CENTREPIECE

New diary eases burden of Parkinson's Disease

A PRACTICAL and inspirational diary for people living with Parkinson's Disease was launched at the UQ Institute of Research earlier this month, aiming to support patients and their carers and help Parkinson's researchers in Australia search for a cure.

"Day By Day" has been created by the wife of former Toowoomba man, Australian swimming champ and elite coach Ian Findlay, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2004.

Nicole Findlay hopes the diary will provide people with Parkinson's and their carers with a one-stop record book to keep track of daily medications and obtain up-to-date information regarding the disease.

Parkinson's is a progressive, degenerative movement disorder of the central nervous system that often results in slowness or absence of movement, tremor, muscle rigidity and postural instability.

An estimated 80,000 Australians are living with the disease.

"Each page of the diary suggests a fine or gross motor exercise sufferers can perform and allows them to rate how they are feeling at different points throughout the day," Mrs Findlay said.

"Aside from the practical benefits, the book also aims to offer inspiration to people living with Parkinson's and their support team who face a myriad of challenges on a day-to-day



Former Toowoomba man, Commonwealth Games medalist and Parkinson's Disease sufferer Ian Findlay enjoys some time with his son Max.

Picture: SUPPLIED

basis."

Mr Findlay held the Australian record for the 200 metre butterfly in 1983 and coached alongside Lawrie Lawrence when Duncan Armstrong won Gold at the Seoul Olympics.

He's a former Commonwealth Games coach and Australian World Championship Team coach. He also coached Glen Housemen to a world record in the 1500m and a Silver Medal at the Barcelona Games in 1992.

He had set up his own swim school in Toowoomba when Parkinson's struck and he has been forced to make huge lifestyle changes to cope with the disease.

The Findlays received the devastating diagnosis when Nicole was eight months pregnant with their first child.

"The news floored me and I think I lived in shock for a good while," Mr Findlay said.

"As my symptoms progressed I was unable to continue working as a professional swim coach.

"Medication gave me only two hours relief.

"So, I became 'Mr Mum' to our young son, Max and did some part-time consultancy work from home."

Following deep brain stimulation, a revolutionary new treatment provided by University

of Queensland Professor of Neurology, Peter Silburn and surgeon Dr Terry Coyne, Mr Findlay is now able to coach for short periods each day.

Earlier this year, he competed in a 12km ocean swim on the Gold Coast.

All the proceeds from the "Day by Day" diary would provide much-needed funding for Parkinson's Disease research at The University of Queensland's Centre for Clinical Research.

For further information about Ian Findlay's story or to order a copy of the "Day by Day" diary, visit www.parkinsonsdaybyday.net