

Taking strides to help those who no longer can



DOING MORE: Members of "Canberra Hospital Speechies", from left, Margaret Jacobs, Anne Hogden, Ashleigh Brown, Nina Wegener, Liz de Plater, Laura Stevenson and Rebecca Sullivan step out to raise money for motor neurone disease yesterday. Right, Michael Ridley, of Caragabal, is pushed by his son Hamish. Photos: KARLEEN MINNEY

By Ben Houston

Motor neurone disease is known as MND. But Canberra's Cindy McGhie believes MND should really stand for "more needs doing".

Mrs McGhie, of Hughes, was one of hundreds of people who took part in the Walk to d-Feet MND around Lake Burley Griffin yesterday.

Some participants walked the bridge-to-bridge circuit. Others cycled. Others still were in wheelchairs or on motorised scooters. All were there to take part in a fund-raiser to support people with MND.

MND is a group of diseases which damage nerve cells that control the

movement of muscles that fall within conscious control. These include the muscles in the torso and limbs and those associated with speech, swallowing and breathing.

With no nerves to activate them, the muscles gradually weaken and waste, and paralysis ensues.

Mrs McGhie's 58-year-old father, Michael Ridley, of Caragabal, in the central west of NSW, was diagnosed with MND 3½ years ago.

Mr Ridley can no longer do anything for himself. He has no control over any of his bodily functions and has essentially lost his ability to communicate through speech. He was pushed around Lake Burley Griffin in a wheelchair by his

son Hamish yesterday. Mrs McGhie said there wasn't much awareness in the general community about MND.

"A lot of people you speak to I don't even think know what motor neurone is," she said.

"I find myself it's not something that people really want to know about. It's not pretty, it's not nice. It's quite devastating.

"A lot of people find it very confronting.

"So I think it's really important that more people know about it."

Mrs McGhie, who helped to raise more than \$10,000, said the fundraiser would provide money for facilities to assist patients, support for carers, and research.

"It felt like a sea of purple love. It was just beautiful," she said of the mood yesterday.

"And I guess you know that everyone walking there today has been touched somehow."

Anna Gallagher, of Kingston, who took part in yesterday's event as part of a team of nine Canberra speech pathologists, said it had been a great day. Ms Gallagher said her team raised \$2265.

"As speech pathologists, we often work closely with people who have motor neurone disease, and we're just proud to be doing our bit in supporting such a worthy cause and promoting awareness of MND in the ACT," she said.

