The phone rings.

You are told there’s been an accident and your child, critically injured has been rushed to the Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

What are you going to do?

A critical accident can happen to anyone’s child. It is unexpected and in an instant your life is irreversibly and dramatically changed. Your beloved child is suddenly in an unfamiliar hospital, connected to a dizzying array of mysterious equipment, surrounded by confident doctors and assertive nurses. Who are you? What is your role? Will your child survive? What about your job, your other children? How will you cope? Why did this happen to you? These questions and the vital support of these children and their families are our inspiration, motivation and absolute reason for being. The work of the Day of Difference Foundation is solely to care for these extraordinarily vulnerable families.

The Day of Difference Foundation was founded in 2004 by Ron Delezio and his wife, Carolyn Martin following the tragic and highly publicised accidents of their daughter Sophie. It is a non-profit registered national charity based in Sydney and governed by an independent Board of Directors. The Foundation’s revenue is generated by donations, philanthropic grants and sponsorships.

The purpose of the Day of Difference Foundation is to permanently reduce the incidence and impact of children’s critical injury in Australia.

**Did you know.....**

* **Injury is the leading cause of death for children aged between 1 and 14 in Australia.**
* **Approximately 1000 children are hospitalised each week; more than twice the number of children hospitalised with cancer, diabetes and asthma combined.**
* **More than 40% of parents of critically injured children suffer depression**
* **Severely injured children are three to six times more likely to survive their injuries if they receive definitive care at a paediatric trauma centre.**
* **Child injury is of such public health importance that the Australian government recently identified children aged 0-14 as a priority issue, but has not yet implemented any nationally coordinated injury prevention strategies to address it.**

In 2012, a commissioned study by Dr Claire Wakefield of the University of NSW revealed a lack of centralised national data relating to children’s critical injury despite alarming statistics.

Dr Wakefield’s study discovered that parents of injured children experience myriad emotional, mental and physical stressors which result in anxiety, depression, addictions, job-loss and collapse of the family unit. 60% of these parents are likely to meet the criteria for Acute Stress Disorder and 70% of parents report fatigue 6 months after their child’s discharge. A parent’s ability to cope with the stress associated with the injury will affect the quality of life of all members of the family, as parents have total responsibility for practical considerations such as accommodation, jobs, other children, transport, bill payment as well as and holistic implications, however little is known from an Australian perspective with a paucity of evidence-based recommendations or solutions.

Over several years, the Foundation delivered specialised medical equipment, technologically innovative machines, therapies and individual services to hospitals and families across the country.

**However, to permanently reduce the incidence and impact of children’s critical injuries, we must better understand the breadth and depths of the challenges faced by these children and their families throughout the trauma journey, and assess the health-care system’s efficacy in addressing these challenges.**

*Presently in Australia, we do not have adequate knowledge about who is injured, where they come from, what causes the injuries, how the families cope and whether or not families survive intact in the longer term.*

The first step in achieving the purpose of the Day of Difference Foundation is to gather evidence for change through the **Paediatric Critical Injury Research Program**. This pioneering program is led by Associate Professor Kate Curtis of the Sydney Nursing School, University of Sydney.



**Informed interventions** such as in-hospital family care co-ordinators and other direct services will be piloted by the Foundation.



Their effectiveness will be **measured.**



Ultimately **we will advocate** for systemic change where appropriate in order to reduce the incidence and impact of these tragic accidents.

**The Paediatric Critical Injury Research Program**

Developed and led by Associate Professor Kate Curtis of the University of Sydney, Sydney Nursing School, the 6-year $960,000 program will:

* Quantify exactly how and why many children are hospitalised in Australia as a result of severe injury.
* Investigate whether ambulance protocols should be mandated to ensure that children are transported directly to a paediatric trauma centre.
* Provide definitive answers regarding unmet needs in an Australia-wide, Australian first survey of parents of severely injured children.

The program is currently on schedule and on budget.

**Informed Interventions**

Evidence gathered during the research program will inform interventions to be piloted by the Day of Difference Foundation. Prioritised interventions will focus on family support. Piloted interventions may include:

* Appointment of in-hospital Family Support Coordinator service to assess and support at-risk families
* Development of a resilience tool-kit for parents
* A 24-hour help-line for parents and families of critically injured children

**Measuring effectiveness**

The effectiveness of interventions will be measured against the data gathered during the Paediatric Critical Injury Research Program.

**Advocacy**

Advocating improved care for thousands of Australian families, the most effective interventions and services identified will be included in recommendations for health policy change to Federal and State Health Departments. The Day of Difference Foundation’s ultimate objective is reducing the incidence and impact of children’s critical injury in Australia.