

Spire is a service division of AQA Victoria Ltd



Run Melbourne 2015 - Pushing4Spire

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NewsLink is the official newsletter of AQA Victoria Ltd (AQA), and is published bimonthly. NewsLink seeks to publish material of interest to people with spinal cord injury and their families, other people with disabilities and those with a personal or professional interest in the issues of life with spinal cord injury.

NewsLink welcomes content from a wide range of sources, particularly from those with lived experience. Please feel free to send in your contribution.

Articles will be published at the discretion of the Editor who also has the right to edit all submissions as it sees fit.

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Volume 29: Number 03 / August 2015

FROM THE CEO

It's a busy time for AQA with financial audits, quality audits and a mix of events and the launch of new initiatives.

First I'd like to thank all those involved in our Run Melbourne Team this year.

Melbourne turned on another cold but clear Sunday morning as our Pushing 4Spire team of Georgina, Julie, Carol, Duke, Mario and Tania, Marty, Michael, Wayne, Naz gathered in Federation Square ahead of 5km, 10km or in Tania's case the half marathon. This was a team representing various connections with AQA and Spire including peer mentors, staff, members of community networks, committee members, management, friends and family.

We really appreciate the efforts of all those who helped spread the word to their friends, family, colleagues and networks. This year with assistance from John Shuo Jiang, media student, La Trobe University we produced some great video clips that helped share people's stories and capture their motivations to be involved and support the event.

The support the team felt from all those who got behind them was so encouraging. So thank you all.

All funds raised go to initiatives being progressed under Spire which is all about building capacity, utilising the lived experience of SCI, networking, connecting and unlocking resources to assist people tackle the issue of LIFE with SCI.

One such initiative, kicked off in August is our *Pathways to Employment* project looking to develop tools, materials, networks and peer facilitated supports to assist people consider the possibility of work and to find their pathway to work, study, volunteering or community participation.

We have commenced the discovery phase of this initiative, connecting with researchers, existing providers & practitioners and most importantly people with lived experience and expertise of work and other meaningful activity.

We are taking a community development approach that recognises there are existing resources along this pathway but these can be difficult to access and negotiate and so there's a need for peer facilitated supports to assist via training, education, support, mentoring, coaching along the way.

We look forward to updating you on this initiative in the coming months.

On a policy front we welcome the NDIA's release of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) framework previously described by the Productivity Commission in their report as Tier 2 supports. These are basically supports to people who do not have individually funded packages and may need to be funded differently, recognising that services like information & referral, case management,



Peter Trethewey
Chief Executive Officer

peterretrethewey@aqavic.org.au

community development, may not suit fee for service funding from individuals.

There are five streams of service under ILC which provide support to people with disability, their families and carers, and community and mainstream services:

1. Information, Linkages and Referrals
2. Capacity building for mainstream services
3. Community awareness and capacity building
4. Individual capacity building
5. Local area co-ordination

HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to the August issue of Spire NewsLink. You'll find this issue jam-packed with information including the results from our Run Melbourne Pushing 4 Spire fundraising event. This was the third year we have taken part in this event. Team members Mario and Julie write about their experience on page 6.

Over the coming editions of NewsLink we will be having a closer look at SWEP (State-wide equipment program), what it is and how it could assist and/or be of relevance to you. The first part to this can be found on page 8.

Spinal research is an important area

for people with a spinal cord injury. On page 10, you can read how Naz trialled the Rex robotic legs a few weeks ago, a first in Australia, to see how the potentially life-changing technology is working.

On pages 12 & 13, we have a couple of articles on access. One is about planning and using public transport and the other is about new disability parking at the Austin Hospital.

Gillian Fowler fell off a horse a few years ago breaking her back. Multiple surgeries and years of rehabilitation meant she regained nearly full function and was recently able to return to her love of the great outdoors. Read about

her journey and her outdoor adventure organisation BackStrong Adventures on page 14.

Our Regional Networks have been going well for a while, particularly the Ballarat Network. The group will next meet for an information session at the State Wide Equipment Program (SWEP) headquarters. The next launch site will be in Bendigo in September, followed by Shepparton and then Echuca. You can read more about this great initiative on page 17.

NewsLink contribution deadlines are:

October	1 st October 2015
December	1 st December 2015

Tasmanian Discounts and Concessions Guide

The 2015-16 Tasmanian Government Discounts and Concessions Guide provides details on all the discounts and concessions provided by the Government, including those on essential services such as housing, electricity, water and sewerage, health services and public transport. Discounts and concessions are also available on a range of services such as licences and registration, education, and entry fees to parks and heritage sites around Tasmania

Spire has sent copies to our readers in Tasmania. Let us know if your local council have products or services you'd like to share with others. If anyone else would like to receive a copy please email us at info@aqavic.org.au.

Rowing Australia

Rowing Australia is currently looking for potential athletes (male and female) who were born in 1996 or later who could be part of an exciting new opportunity to represent Australia in Para-Rowing at an U21 level against New Zealand.

They are looking for athletes who fall into the Arm Shoulder category.

Athletes in the Arm Shoulder (AS) category row with their arms and shoulders only. Athletes use strapping around their mid-section to provide support and stability in the boat. Common impairments which fit in this category are below.

- Loss of muscle strength equivalent to complete spinal cord injury at T12 level (minimum level).
- Ataxia, athetosis or hypertonia from CP, brain injury or stroke who may use a wheelchair or walking aid

If you would like to find out more, please contact Tara Huntly who is the Para-Rowing Talent Development Coordinator at Rowing Australia;

T (02) 6214 7518

M 0449 153 211

E thuntly@rowingaustralia.com.au

W www.rowingaustralia.com.au

Have a relaxing accessible holiday in Paynesville, Gippsland

Imagine being able to rent a full house instead of just a room! Add to that, if you have a disability, having full access and all the equipment already there to use.

Wendy's House is a lovely fully restored California Bungalow style home which was set up with full wheelchair access and equipment for the owners' disabled daughter, Wendy, in Paynesville, Victoria. Sadly Wendy passed away before living in this house, but this is her legacy. It is now possible to rent "Wendy's House" out for short term holiday placements in beautiful Paynesville, on the Gippsland Lakes. The house is designed for a disabled or aged person with mobility limitations, their carer or their family.

Optionally, it is also available as a two bedroom house with living, lounge kitchen and bathroom/laundry for general holiday rental (with disabled room and facilities locked off).

Intercom system between all bedrooms, living and kitchen areas, with voice activation option in the accessible bedroom.

Sleeps total of 5 people in three separate bedrooms, or 4 people in two bedrooms, if disability access not required.

Location is Paynesville, Victoria, Australia, on the Gippsland Lakes, between Lake Victoria and Lake King.

If you have any interest please contact:

Contact: Nancy

Phone: 0427 231 969 or 0427 545 266

Email: wjhouse3880@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.wendyshouse.com.au>

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SpinalHub
.com.au

SpinalHub is a community website for people with spinal cord injury in Victoria and throughout Australia.

SpinalHub covers a wide range of subjects related to spinal cord injury including:

- What is a Spinal Cord Injury?;
- How to Keep Healthy;
- Support, Equipment & Funding;
- Work & Leisure;
- Transport & Travel;
- plus much more.

The SpinalHub website can be found online at www.spinalhub.com.au and by registering free members can comment on articles, upload images and receive access to the forum.

SpinalHub TV is a collection of 'how to' online videos that feature people from the spinal cord injury community in Victoria. The short 2-3 minute videos provide practical and safe advice with the aim to help people get back into life after a spinal cord injury. Go to www.youtube.com/spinalhub to view the full list of online videos.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY

Making a bequest

Bequests provide a legacy to an organisation you already support or want to support in the future. Making a bequest to AQA Victoria in your will is a meaningful way of supporting people with spinal cord injury. All bequests help strengthen the services provided by AQA Victoria that promote independence, quality of life and inclusion of people with disabilities in the community.

If you have included AQA Victoria in your will, or you are considering making a bequest to AQA Victoria we would love to hear from you so that we can acknowledge your support.

We would also like to include you on our list of supporters who receive our bi-annual supporters newsletter that provides an update of our services, the year's events and other activities that AQA Victoria is involved in that support people with spinal cord injury.

If you would like more information about making a bequest to AQA Victoria please contact Peter Trethewey CEO or Robyn Canning Executive Assistant on 03 9489 0777.

Run Melbourne - Pushing 4 Spire

As you would have read in the last issue of NewsLink, Spire entered a team “Pushing 4 Spire” in this year’s Run Melbourne event on Sunday, the 26th of July. This was the third year we have taken part in Run Melbourne, which has become an important call to action to our many supporters and friends and an important fundraising event for Spire.

Funds raised from the event will go directly to expanding our Spire program in providing Direct Peer Support, Information Services, Short Courses, Community Forums and Resource Expos, including Regional Support Networks. Team members Mario and Julie give their perspectives below.

Mario’s perspective

There’s a reason I decided to join in “Pushing 4 Spire” @ the Age Run Melbourne in July. This year makes 14 years since I became a quadriplegic and I owe the fact that I am a reasonably adjusted and happy person today, largely to the mentoring I received from a couple of AQA mentors during that traumatic period. Their frankness and willingness to share their extensive experience living with a spinal injury, was crucial to me coming to terms and coping with my new circumstances. Most of all, they were able to instil the hope in me that it was possible for me to make a really good life as a quadriplegic.

My intention was therefore, to be able to join with the others in raising awareness and as much funds as we could towards supporting the Spire program, to benefit others like myself that have acquired a spinal injury more recently.

“Pushing 4 Spire” was made up of 7 other members; Georgina, Julie, Duke, Marty, Michael, Peter-5Km & Carol-10Km. In addition to the entrants, we had 6 supporters made up of friends and family



members. “Pushing 4 Spire” also had a number of people that worked hard for the cause on and off the track. Robyn & Harin covered all the organisational aspects and John Jiang did an amazing job producing professional quality videos and photography before, during, and after the event.

Not being that great at physically pushing myself, my cunning plan was to enlist the help of my niece Tania to run the 21.1 Km whilst I went about raising as much in the form of donations that I could from my networks. Tania enthusiastically agreed and began pounding the yards around Fitzroy and the Dandenongs’ (brrrr!), whilst I got about to (the much easier) pounding out e-mails at (toasty) home in Heidelberg.

Despite the somewhat crisp conditions on the day (quite cold but fortunately we had no rain till after the race was over) all the participants and support crew turned up at Fed Square prior to the start for the Pushing 4 Spire team rendezvous, T Shirt donning and some morale building chitchat. All the participants then rolled up to the starting area and were off (except Tania who had an earlier start as she was taking part in the longer version). Naz & I made our way to a more ambient spot near the finish line. The 5K Crew - Georgina, Julie, Duke, Marty, Michael, Peter, 10 K - Carol and 21 K - Tania, all came in reasonable time, good spirits and in good nick, as can be seen in the official team picture at the finish line.

Formalities over, we retired to

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Riverland for a debriefing. Over an ale & sausage we reflected on the day, the cause, the team and our supporters-all together Pushing 4 Spire. I shouldn't be speaking for the others but I am happy to say that it has been a really worthwhile and fun thing to do; my hand is already up for the gig next year.



Julie's perspective

All week I watched the weather report with all the other thousands of people who had bravely enrolled to the Run Melbourne event to raise funds for various charities. Mick my husband and I entered to raise money for Spire.

The day finally came for the great race. I looked out the window and saw a glimmer of sun. It was 6.30am when we set off for our adventure. We arrived at Federation Square where we met with thousands of cold enthusiastic people ready to face the challenge. We found the Spire team and we were all given our bright orange Tee-shirts to put on (which of course would make us walk, run and roll faster).

As we waited for our event to kick off, we tried to keep warm by sitting in the rays of the sun. This didn't really help because the chill factor in the wind was FREEZING. We were all so so cold, and then yes finally, it was 10.30am, time for the Spire team to take their mark and begin their 5 km journey. Even though it was so cold, we were there as a team to provide encouragement to each other.

Countdown began and off we went, people cheering everyone on.

Mick was pushing me then, when... oh no we came to a hill. He pushed me up with determination, so much that he was getting too warm. So, yes he gave me his jacket which I immediately put around my legs as I was freezing. Mick increased his pace and did a small jog (bit scary when you are being pushed and have no control).

We soon came to a down-hill section. This was where I had to pray that Mick wouldn't let me go. I must admit he looked after me every step of the way.

All the other entrants were enjoying themselves chatting as we were going along. We reached the 500 meter sign and thought we were nearly there but when you are as cold as an ice block, 500 meters seems a very long way. But we made it.

Everyone in the Spire team worked hard and proudly accomplished their mission.

Well done team and a huge thank you to all of our donors.

Editor's Note:

At the time of printing, the grand total was at \$11,036 for our goal of \$20,000, with Team Mario & Tania leading the charge followed closely by Duke. You still have time to support the team by going to <https://runmelbourne2015.everydayhero.com/au/team-aqa/members>.



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SWEP (State-wide equipment program)

Over the coming editions of NewsLink we will be having a closer look at SWEP (State-wide equipment program), what it is and how it could assist and/or be of relevance to you. We will be taking an in-depth look at the individual Programs they have available.

What is the State-wide equipment program?

The State-wide equipment program provides people who have a permanent or long-term disability or are frail aged with subsidised aids, equipment, and vehicle and home modifications.

SWEP includes the:

- Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
- Community Equipment Programs (CEP)
- Contingence Aids (CA)
- Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)
- Specialist Equipment Library (SEL)
- Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme (SAEAS)
- Top-up fund for Children (TFC)
- Vehicle Modification Scheme (VMSS)

SWEP assists people with a disability to improve their independence and safety in their own home, facilitate their participation in the community and supports families and carers in their role. SWEP is a subsidy program funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services and administered by Ballarat Health Services.

Do you have to pay anything?

You may need to make a non-refundable contribution for any

difference (gap) between the subsidy amount and the full cost of any new aid or equipment, home or vehicle modification that is purchased for you.

If there is a gap, SWEP will require confirmation of who is paying the difference before your equipment or modification can be ordered.

SWEP – Contingence Aids Program (CA)

Once you have been assessed by your healthcare professional and your application has been accepted by the Contingence Aids program SWEP will supply continence aids for as long as you need them. You will need to be reassessed every year.

Eligibility:

- All applicants must be referred to SWEP by a registered Contingence Prescriber. You must meet the eligibility requirements as described by the Victorian A&EP guidelines.
- If you require further information about where to find a Contingence Prescriber please consult your health professional or visit <http://www.contingence.org.au>
- Whilst receiving continence products from SWEP you may also be eligible for funding from other Department of Human Services continence programs at the same time.
- The Contingence Aids Payment

Scheme (CAPS) formerly known as Contingence Aids Assistance Scheme (CAAS) may be able to assist you; to find out if this applies to you, please follow link Contingence Aids Payment Scheme <http://www.bladderbowel.gov.au>

Products Available:

- Anal plugs
- Catheters
- Tubes
- Drainage bags and straps
- Intra-vaginal bladder supports
- Bottles and connectors
- Washable continence pants and pads
- Waterproof covers or mattress protectors (kylies, blues)
- Washable floor mats

Please Note: SWEP are unable to fund disposable pants, pads, nappies, drip collectors, colostomy appliances or urinals.

Type of Assessment Available

Initial assessment by an urologist, gynaecologist, continence nurse

Review & Follow Up

A prescription form is valid for 12 months, after that time a review will need to be undertaken by a urologist, gynaecologist or continence nurse.

Other Relevant Information

Based on the recommendation of the continence aids prescriber a maximum of 12 pairs of re-useable

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pants / pads per 12 months applies. In exceptional circumstances, supply maybe increased.

Please Note:

Continance products can be provided to SWEP clients whilst receiving the Commonwealth Government's Continance Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)

Contact SWEP:

They operate during normal business hours from:
8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday with after-hours service for emergency breakdowns.

P: 1300 747 937 (1300 PH SWEP) or 03 5333 8100

F: 03 5333 8111

W: <http://swep.bhs.org.au/>

E: swep@bhs.org.au

In the next issue of NewsLink, we'll bring you information on the SWEP Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)








TRY BEFORE YOU RIDE

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Robotic Legs – A step in the right direction

A few weeks ago, Naz trialled the Rex robotic legs, a first in Australia to see how the potentially life-changing technology is working.

A few weeks ago, I was talking with Dr Andrew Nunn from Austin Health Spinal Services and he told me that a company called Rex Bionics had a pair of robotic legs they were promoting to rehabilitation centres around Australia.

Andrew told me that the company was looking for someone suitable to trial the 'legs' because the ABC's 7.30 Report was also going to do a story on it. I thought he was asking if I could suggest anyone I knew from my networks. But he was suggesting that I would be good to trial it, and make a good story because I was fairly fit, was a quad, played sport, and had my injury over 20 years ago.

I had heard and read about exoskeleton legs in the past but the Rex was different. There are a number of exoskeletons developed by various companies, however most need to be used with crutches or a walking frame. They too have their benefits but wouldn't be suitable to quads because of our limited strength and function compared with para's. Where the Rex is different is that it is totally self-balancing so there is no need for other supporting devices.

The Rex is basically a pair of robotic legs joined by a hip girdle that supports a user with mobility impairment in the upright position, providing enhanced functional mobility and enabling Robotic

Assisted Physiotherapy.

The user transfers into Rex while the device is in a seated position. You are then strapped in using a series of straps and a harness. It is operated by a joystick which is very similar to a control on a power wheelchair.

The functions of the Rex allows you to sit and stand, walk forwards or backwards, step to the left or right, and of course turn left or right.

Rex was started by two Scottish immigrants to New Zealand, one of whom had been diagnosed with MS and both of whom had mothers in wheelchairs. They started in their garage and developed a number of prototypes before ending up with the commercial version.

REX is intended for use in a controlled environment such as a rehabilitation centre or hospital under clinical supervision, however there is a version for private use which is also able to climb stairs.

Getting into the Rex was a bit of a mission for me because there is a very decent lift required to get over the leg of Rex when it's in the seated position. Fortunately Mel, the physiotherapist at the Royal Talbot is very inventive and found a solution to get me across. Mel also helped me with the transfer across by taking some weight off my bottom.

Once I was strapped in and



given the instructions on how to operate the Rex, fear started to set in. I was worried that I would pass-out once I stood up because of my low blood pressure, which is an issue with all who have a spinal cord injury. But the excitement must have boosted my blood pressure because it wasn't an issue at all.

Once standing, I couldn't believe how tall I was. I was probably the tallest person in the room. I was cautious about my balance and was worried I'd fall forwards, not being able to hold myself up. The support I had in the Rex was good. The harness held me in tight and the backrest was nice and high for me.

Unlike sitting in a manual wheelchair, where you need to

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keep your weight forward so that you don't tip out the back, the Rex was the opposite. I had to keep my weight back and stand as straight as I could. This was an unusual but good feeling because it forced me to stretch my back out which I hadn't done for years.

As I pushed the joystick forward to start walking, the movement jolted me around a bit and I was fighting to keep my balance. This was only until I got used to the way it operated and felt comfortable.

I have a C6 complete injury, however have a little numb feeling in parts of my body. I was able to feel weight on my joints and my muscles moving. I also got the sensation of my muscles and joints being stretched out.

Overall it was a good experience for me. Ideally I should have limited my time in it to 15 minutes, only because I haven't bared weight on my feet for over 20 years and my feet gave gone soft. I was in it for around an hour (time should be increased incrementally over time) and paid the consequences afterwards. I had massive bruising under both feet which are still healing as we speak.

My personal view is that it's not for everybody. It's not a solution to walking by a long shot but it's a step in the right direction. It gives people hope and to many, it will help psychologically. It's great that this is one of the many areas that money is being put into for progress and research.

The biggest benefit I got from it was it completely stretched my joints and muscles out and reduced my spasms. This benefit lasted for nearly 2 weeks.

You can see the story at <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2015/s4276119.htm>. More information on the Rex can be found at www.rexbionics.com.



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AQA Qualcare is a division of AQA Victoria Limited and is an industry recognised provider of high quality personal care services. For over 20 years Qualcare has delivered personal care and support throughout the state of Victoria to people with a disability, injury or illness in their homes and communities.

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Watch The Gap

Knowing the importance of planning, Naz set off into the city using public transport to attend a workshop, however things don't always go to plan.

It was a pleasant winter morning and I had to be in the city for a Risk Awareness workshop by 9am. I thought I'd done my planning the night before and come to a good decision on how I would get there.

I decided that I'd use public transport instead of driving into the city and worry about parking. I estimated that it would take me nearly 2 hours to drive in peak hour traffic and find parking.

I looked on the Public Transport Victoria website and could see what time the train would come to my station and arrive in the city. A 40 minute journey. Nice I thought.

I have a few options of train stations in my area. The night before I decided I would drive to the station that didn't require a ramp or elevator to access the platform (the last time I used public transport, I used a train station that had an elevator to access the platform. But guess what... The elevator was broken which meant I had to find another station. It was a bit of a run-around).

But I changed my mind at the last moment and decided to use the train station that had a loooooonnnnggggggggg ramp. Bad mistake. I was worn out just getting to the platform and I thought to myself "why'd you change your mind about the station to go to. Now you have to use the same ramp on your return".



Anyway, the train came and the driver was very helpful, bringing out the ramp and asking me where I was getting off so that I wouldn't miss my stop and get stuck on the train. I arrived at Flinders Street and the driver made sure I was ok.

It was about 8.30 and I had plenty of time to get to the workshop. I had made the right choice in getting the train to the city. I bought myself a coffee and sipped on it as I headed to Collins Street. Anyone who knows Collins Street heading east, would know that it is a very steep incline - too steep for me to handle.

With the coffee in between my legs, I thought to myself "Great opportunity to catch a tram at the Superstop to the top of Collins Street and roll down the hill to the building". Nice and easy I thought.

This is where we come to the title of this blog, Watch The Gap.

I caught the accessible tram from the Superstop and got prepared to get off at the top of the hill. The doors opened; I made sure my coffee was secure in between my legs and I wouldn't spill it;

As I slowly went down the incline inside the tram, I notice the gap in between the tram and the platform. I thought to myself "The gap doesn't look that wide and if I take it nice and easy, my front wheels shouldn't get caught". But they did and I was hanging on for dear life - my rear wheels got airborne as my wheelchair over-balanced onto the footplate. My coffee fell over and spilt all over the platform. I thought I was next. It was a matter of time before I followed my coffee. But luckily for me, someone behind me sat my chair back onto the rear wheels. I was super-lucky on the Superstop.



I don't want to scare off anyone from using public transport because it's great and pretty accessible and a great way to get around. I didn't expect to be caught by the gap. Next time I'll have to be a bit more careful.

What a day of dramas, especially on a day I had a workshop on Risk Awareness.

I was 10 minutes late to the workshop but still very happy I made it.

And yes I did enjoy a coffee afterwards.

Parking Arrangements at the Austin Hospital

A few years ago Gary Allsop fought to get free disabled parking at the redevelopment of the Austin Hospital. Below he writes to us about some changes to the situation. For patients attending the Austin Hospital, you would probably have noticed that the “wheelchair only” parking at level 4, near the kiosk is currently unavailable. The reason for that is the Austin Hospital is building a new overnight stay facility in their emergency department. This has meant that parking for ambulances will be reduced, so Austin Health Management have commandeered the wheelchair only parking for ambulances to park, “temporarily” we hope!

In 2007, when the Austin tower was built, there wasn't going to be any free wheelchair parking. I complained to Equal Opportunities on behalf of all wheelchair users and in a VCAT hearing, it was ruled that 11 free spaces were to be allotted to wheelchair only parking spots, which is that particular space in question. I have had extensive discussions with the Austin Management about this and whilst the construction of the new ED Department is going on, wheelchair patients have a special concession arrangement in the Austin Tower undercover car park at level B3.



Firstly, what you have to do is:

- the day before you are coming to the Austin, call Metro parking on 9496 4512,
- tell them what time you will arrive at the Hospital and your type of car and registration
- let them know if you're a quadriplegic and driving and you are unable to get a ticket from the machine due limited hand function, or for any other reason,

If you aren't able to take a ticket when you arrive at the boom-gate, toot your horn (which they'll be listening out for) and they will come out and assist you.

On the day of arrival:

- go through the entrance of the left in the Studley Road entrance,
- take a ticket from the machine
- take the first turn on your left and then left again and you will see a roped off area of disabled spots on your right hand side.
- go to the Metro parking office which is on the left-hand side of the entrance for them to come and let you into your disabled parking space.

They will then issue you with a \$3 concession pass so you can stay as long as you need to.

It may also pay to let them know when you are booking if you are paraplegic and make arrangements for them to come to you in your car, otherwise you will have to get out of your car and into your wheelchair to go to the office prior to getting your parking spot, because they are roped off.

When leaving the hospital, go to the ticket machine insert your original ticket you received from machine on entry, followed by your \$3 concession pass then your \$3 and you will receive your exit pass from the car park.

Hospital management have not given us a guarantee that the wheelchair only parking that has been in place for the past eight years will be reinstated when the new Emergency Department is completed, however I will certainly be fighting for that to happen. Watch this space!

If you have any problems please let me know at madge@alphalink.com.au.

Gillian Fowler - My Journey

Gillian Fowler lives in Scotland and fell off a horse a few years ago breaking her back. At the time, the fear was that she may have also broken her neck. Multiple surgeries and years of rehabilitation meant that she was recently able to return to her love of the great outdoors. She knows she is very lucky compared to others with a spinal cord injury, having nearly recovering full function. But she still has issues. Below she writes to us about her journey and why she started BackStrong Adventures, an organisation that specialises in outdoor adventures. The website for BackStrong Adventures is www.backstrongadventures.com.

I am someone who has always loved the outdoor life, with skiing, golf, hillwalking and horse-riding being important parts of my life. But in 2008, my life changed instantly due to a horse-riding accident that resulted in my back being broken, and the doctors querying as to whether I had broken my neck.

I remember that fateful morning near Aberdeen vividly – it was a glorious February day, very cold, blue skies and sparkly grass from the frost. But my memory then fails me, and still I have no memory of why I came off the horse. I do remember excruciating pain as I lay on the ground, and I knew instantly that I was badly injured. I just didn't realise how bad.

Being treated in Accident & Emergency was a frightening experience. The doctors told me that the accident resulted in an unstable break in L1, and possibly also C5 (my neck). Thankfully my neck was given the all-clear. I had no feeling in my right leg and foot. I was in Trauma for a number of weeks, where I was finally fitted with a back brace, and start the long process to build strength, and learn to stand and walk again.

Unfortunately, the recovery didn't go quite as planned, and I've had five spinal surgeries, two related surgeries, regular spinal injections, years of physiotherapy as well attending the Pain Clinic.

Despite all this, I know I am so very lucky to have the life I have. I have experienced paralysis, although temporarily, and live with chronic pain and limitations, but I have become even more determined to live a life to the full, and enjoy every moment. And one way to achieve this is to always have goals - planning and date setting is my coping mechanism. I have also discovered that I best manage my pain through exercise.

I do still miss the outdoor life I used to enjoy, but last year I was finally able to enjoy hillwalking again. Just months after a spinal surgery, I climbed UK's highest mountain with my boyfriend. The climb was tough



but amazing, the weather was clear, and the scenery was breath-taking. That day I knew I had moved to a whole new level in my recovery and mindset – and my hillwalking has continued ever since.

It is from this desire and an in-depth understanding of trauma that I launched BackStrong Adventures this year. BackStrong Adventures specializes in overseas challenges for anyone with an adventurous spirit. We particularly welcome inquiries from those suffering from injuries, depression, trauma, bereavement, disability and any other life-changing ailment. I want to encourage people to not give up when life is hard, to set goals and believe in their ability – with training and determination, you can achieve your dreams.

As such, my own journey of recovery and wellbeing continues. I have set large challenges for myself over the next several months, which include kayaking in Croatia in August; climbing in the Atlas Mountains; climbing Kilimanjaro in February 2016 to raise awareness for spinal injuries, and the Annapurna trek in Nepal in April 2016 for the charity Funding Neuro.

My experience has taught me that life goes on, and if you are determined, and willing to adapt and ask for help, the adventure goes on! Stay strong.

Do you practise intermittent self-catheterisation?

Do you use the same catheter more than one time before disposal?

The Spinal Rehabilitation Service at Caulfield Hospital is involved in a research project documenting the safety and satisfaction of single-use catheters (one-time usage) with the catheters you are currently using. If you are eligible we will provide catheters at no cost for 4 weeks and ask you to attend two visits to Caulfield Hospital. If you are unable to attend the visits at the hospital, the study staff can perform home visits instead.

We are looking for eligible participants who:

- ✓ Are 18 years or older
- ✓ Have practised Intermittent Self-Catheterisation 4 times a day or more, for at least 3 months
- ✓ Use the same catheter more than one time before disposal
- ✓ Are not currently taking antibiotics

This study does not involve medications or surgery. Compensation will be given for your travel expenses due to study participation.

For more information, please contact **Cameron Redpath**:

Phone: 0431 932 362

Email: redpathcc@yahoo.com

Responsible physician: Dr. Peter New

Annual Electricity Concession

The Annual Electricity Concession is available to help ease cost of living pressures by providing concession cardholders with a discount of 17.5 per cent off household electricity bills. The concession is calculated based on the remaining account balance once any retailer discounts and/or solar credits have been applied.

The Commonwealth Government currently provides eligible cardholders with compensation towards energy costs, including the Energy Supplement. This compensation represents a subsidy of \$171.60 for electricity across the year and so for a concession cardholder's annual electricity bill the State Government concession will not apply to the first \$171.60. This is so that eligible households are not compensated by two levels of government for the same expense.

Concession households with annual electricity bills in excess of \$2,882 (approximately double the average household amount) will need to apply for the Excess Electricity Concession to continue to receive the 17.5 per cent concession on energy consumed above this amount. Recipients of the Life Support Concession and/or the Medical Cooling Concession are exempt from the need to apply for the Excess Electricity Concession and are not required to lodge an application form in order to receive the concession.

The Annual Electricity Concession fact sheet is available to download on this site. <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/financial-support/concessions/energy>

Winter Gas Concession

The Winter Gas Concession is available to help ease cost of living pressures by providing concession cardholders with a discount of 17.5 per cent off mains gas bills during the winter period -1 May to 31 October- of each year. The concession is calculated based on the remaining account balance once any retailer discounts have been applied.

The Commonwealth Government currently provides eligible cardholders with compensation towards energy costs, including the Energy Supplement. This compensation represents a subsidy of \$62.40 for gas across the six-month winter period and so for a concession cardholder's winter period gas bill the State Government concession will not apply to the first \$62.40. This is so that eligible households are not compensated by two levels of government for the same expense.

Concession households with gas bills in excess of \$1,523 (approximately double the average household amount) during the winter period (1 May - 31 October) will need to apply for the Excess Gas Concession to continue to receive the 17.5 per cent concession on energy consumed above this amount. Recipients of the Life Support Concession and/or the Medical Cooling Concession will be automatically eligible to receive the Excess Gas Concession upon submission of a completed application form.

The Winter Gas Concession fact sheet is available to download on this site.

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/financial-support/concessions/energy>

News Link Delivery

Did you know that many of our members now receive News Link in full colour via email?

If you would like to change your mailing arrangements, please contact us on 03 9489 0777 or via email at info@aqavic.org.au.

Do you have something to share?

Our readers love to hear about anything related to SCI: Example Travel, Modificatons, Equipment. We encourage anyone wanting to share information to contact the Spire on 03 9489 0777 or by emailing info@aqavic.org.au.

Regional Networks

The Ballarat Network met in July for a catch up at a new venue to discuss the way forward. John and Jenny just got back from their cruise overseas and talked about their adventure. The Ballarat group will meet next in August with an information session at the State Wide Equipment Program (SWEP) offices where we'll also be asking many questions.

Our next Network will be started up in Bendigo when we meet on the 23rd of September.

Spire's partnerships with SCI Regional Network Groups is moving in a positive direction, the momentum in these community networks is growing so it's important we keep sharing this information to keep you up-dated - Maybe you'll find yourself becoming interested and involved as different events/activities/subjects evolve. We recognise the importance's of supporting regional groups as they roll out and value new participants so please keep your eyes/ears peeled to see when SCI Regional Networks pops up near you. Your involvement is entirely up to yourself and everyone is welcome.

Ballarat Regional Network Group

The Ballarat Network met in July at a new venue organised by the group for a catch-up and to follow on with their agenda. The catch-up (coffee/tea/cake/chat) involved the group sharing their travel stories tips & tricks and where they have been. John and Jenny had recently returned from a cruise across the top of Australia. The cruise started in Sydney and went through Airlie Beach, Cairns, Darwin, Bali and Singapore. Everyone who listened to John and Jenny's story of their adventure enjoyed it and found it very interesting.

The group met again on the 27th of August for an information session at the premises of the State Wide Equipment Program (SWEP) for a Q & A session. SWEP discussed with our group what they do and what is available to people in Victoria. We'll give you more details of what was discussed in the next issue of NewsLink.

Hume / Southern Loddon Regional Network

Surveys were sent out to people in the Hume / Southern Loddon Region and replies have shown good results with 81% of SCI people living in these areas indicating they are interested in being part of a regional support network.

We had a huge response from people wanting to meet at Bendigo, Shepparton and Echuca. We decided that we'll invite everyone to Bendigo and possibly to Shepparton after that.

With these good results SPIRE has set a date for the meeting for Wednesday 23rd September 2015 @ Bendigo (location/time to be confirmed).

We will use this meeting to discuss how people want the group to run, what they want to cover in their meetings (educational, social, etc.), and set an agenda for how we can partner with each other to help support the future of this group.

The "top topics of interest" from the

survey results showed people were interested in; Travel; Healthy living (including managing Bowel & Bladder, skin, diet, exercise, stress, etc.); New developments in SCI management and research.

The main activities people wanted to participate in were; Coffee catch-ups; Social get-togethers/outings; Dining; Movies; Sport and community activities.

To keep up to date with information regarding the Regional Networks, make sure you have a look at our website noticeboard and our Facebook page;

<http://www.spire.org.au/regional-networks>

www.facebook.com/AQASpinalSupport

If you would like to be a part of this new program or have any questions please call.



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 Steps Neurological Physiotherapy
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Call Steps on 03 9568 5611 today to arrange an appointment

The Clever Kid

A young boy enters a barbers shop. The barber whispers into a customer's ear "See this kid, he is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch I will prove it"

The barber puts a dollar in one hand and two 20 cent coins in the other. He puts out his hands to the kid and says "Hey son which one do you want?"

The kid grabs the two 20 cent coins and runs out of the shop. The barber looks at his customer and says "See what I mean, the kid never learns".

Later the customer is walking along the street and he sees the kid coming out of an ice cream shop.

"Hey kid! Mind if I ask you a question. Why did you take the two 20 cent coins instead of the dollar?"

The boy answers, "The day I take the dollar the game will be over"

Lost Hunters

Two inexperienced hunters went hunting in the woods. Before long they got lost. "Don't worry," said the first hunter, "I heard that when you're lost you should fire three shots in the air that someone should hear you." They fired three shots in the air and waited a half hour. They tried again another three and nothing happened. Finally they decided they will try it once more. "This better work," said the second hunter nervously. "These are our last arrows!"

The Dachshund Hunter

A wealthy man decided to go on a safari in Africa. He took his faithful pet dachshund along for company. One day, the dachshund starts chasing butterflies and before long the dachshund discovers that he is lost.

So, wandering about, he notices a leopard heading rapidly in his direction with the obvious intention of having him for lunch. The dachshund thinks, "OK, I'm in deep trouble now!" Then he noticed some bones on the ground close by, and immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching cat. Just as the leopard is about to leap, the dachshund exclaims loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious leopard. I wonder if there are any more around here." Hearing this, the leopard halts his attack in mid-stride, as a look of terror comes over him, and slinks away into the trees. "Whew," says the leopard. "That was close. That dachshund nearly had me."

Meanwhile, a monkey, who had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree, figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the leopard. So, off he goes. But the dachshund saw him heading after the leopard with great speed, and figured that something must be up. The monkey soon catches up with the leopard, spills the beans and strikes a deal for himself with the leopard. The leopard is furious at being made a fool of and says, "Here monkey, hop on my back and see what's going to happen to that conniving canine." Now the dachshund sees the leopard coming with the monkey on his back, and thinks, "What am I going to do now?" But instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to his attackers, pretending he hasn't seen them yet ... and, just when they get close enough to hear, the dachshund says.....

"Where's that darn monkey?"

Sent him off half an hour ago to bring me another leopard."

Memory Loss

Three elderly sisters, ages 92, 94 and 96, shared a house together. One evening, the 96 year old sister went upstairs to take a bath. As she put her foot into the tub, she paused. Then she yelled down to the other two sisters and asked, "Was I getting in the tub or out?"

"You darn fool," said the 94 year old. "I'll come up and see." When she got half way up the stairs she paused. "Was I going up the stairs or down?"

The 92 year old sister was sitting at the kitchen table drinking a cup of tea and thought, "I hope I never get that forgetful, knock on wood." She shook her head and called out, "I'll be up to help you both as soon as I see who's at the door."

Vacuum Salesman

The new salesman had just completed his training and was anxious to put his skills to work. He took his Hoover vacuum cleaner to the front door of a house and rang the bell. A rather unpleasant woman answered. Before she could say anything he threw a pile of cow patties in the door behind her onto the rug. "Lady," he said, "If this vacuum cleaner doesn't clean up all those cow patties, I'll eat them myself."

"I'll get you a spoon," scowled the lady. "Our electricity hasn't been turned on, yet."

FOR SALE

Motor Home - Rc320 Coach

This vehicle was modified in 1997 specifically for a paraplegic to drive & live in it independently. Hino Rc320 coach fitted with Monarch hand controls, 4 speed Allison auto, 427 litre diesel fuel tank, 600 litre water tanks, Sleeps 2 queen bed at rear, Full shower & toilet, plus much much more.

Price: \$40,000 - Negotiable

Phone: 03 9703 2531 (Bev or Bill)

Email: bevandbill.berry@spin.net.au (05/15#a) J

1999 Holden Combo

Manual ramp access, 5 speed transmission, regularly serviced (160,000 km), Seats 3 and wheelchair passenger, Tie downs, wheelchair seatbelt, CD player

Price: \$7,999 (Trish Henry)

Phone: 0409 132 537

Email: mrsuppets@bigpond.com

Falcon 1998 EL Flashcab

Complete with wheelchair tie down straps. LPG. 329,000 km, drives great but body in poor condition due to hail damage, Feb 2016 Rego. No RWC

Price: \$4,500

Phone: 9326 0335 (Peter)

1999 Holden Combo SB Wheelchair Access Van

Holden Combo Freewheeler Sydney 2000 Olympic Edition, This car was used in the 2000 Sydney Olympics & will come with Certificate of Authenticity, cost \$50,000 new, professionally converted for wheelchair access, 45,000kms, excellent as new condition, Air Con, Power Steering, Rear Access Ramps, Tie downs, 2 x Fold-able rear seats.

Price: \$14500 ONO

Phone: 0413 639 099 (Hamza)

Email: utback1966@hotmail.com

Glide Light Weight Manual Wheelchair

Harnesses / Headrest, Tie down points, Folding frame

Price: \$1,000

Phone: 0409 132 537 (Trish Henry)

Email: mrsuppets@bigpond.com

Magic Mobility - Electric Wheelchair.

Tilt in space, Headrest, Gel cushion, Battery Pack with 12V Battery Charger, Tray, Good condition

Price: Make An Offer (Nancy)

Phone: 0427 545 266

Jazzy 1121 - Electric Wheelchair

Right hand controls plus rear controls for carer, RoHo cushion, Tilt in space, Headrest and tray, Very little use, Very good condition but requires a new battery.

Price \$2,000 ONO (Nancy)

Phone: 0427 545 266

FOR SALE

Pride Q 6000z Electric Wheelchair

Heavy duty custom built chair with heavy duty motor, batteries and charger, Tilt in space, Power elevating leg rests, Headrest, Curved backrest, Adjustable height arm rests, Seat belt, Custom size Ro-Ho cushion, attendant controls, 650mm wide x 500mm deep - can be extended to 600mm

Price: \$10,000 - \$12,000 ONO

Phone: 5243 2351 (Joan Millar)

Magic V6 Frontier rear wheel drive

Suit large person, comes with spare motor, 12 months old, left hand controls, mint condition

Price: \$5,500 ONO (Sue Ouzas)

Phone: 0490 067 334 or 0468 339 541

Glide G2 Portable wheelchair

Never used, no armrests, Paid \$2600

Price: \$500 ONO (Sue Ouzas)

Phone: 0490 067 334 or 0468 339 541

Rugby Wheelchair

Built by Melrose in 2007, only used for 1 year, wheelchair is built for a high point attack, 2point +, comes with wheels and wheel bag.

Price: \$1,000 ONO

Phone: 0414 715 591 (Nathan)

Outdoor Chair on Wheels

Ideal for wheeling across paddocks or uneven ground.

Price: \$100

Phone: 0409 132 537 (Trish Henry)

Email: mrsuppets@bigpond.com

Aquatec Ocean VIP - Commode / Shower Chair

Adjustable footrest / headrest, stable, flip up arm rests, Seat tilt individually adjustable (0-35 degrees)

Price: \$300

Phone: 0409 132 537 (Trish Henry)

Email: mrsuppets@bigpond.com

Toilet Commode

Height adjustable, Light-weight, Portable, Good condition

Price: \$30

Phone: 0409 132 537 (Trish Henry)

Email: mrsuppets@bigpond.com

ROHO Cushion

Rarely used, Suit large person.

Price: \$250 ono (Sue Ouzas)

Phone: 0490 067 334 or 0468 339 541

LIKO overhead hoist

Maximum 200kg, comes with motor, rail and sling.

Price: \$2,000 ONO (Andrew)

Phone: 0434 923 189

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

Double Bed with single air pressure care mattress (Ultimate 75)

Comes with raised sides, Electric remote and repositioning.

Price: \$3,000 (Andrew)

Phone: 0434 923 189

Electric Table

Good condition; 150cm x 75cm.

Price: \$350 ono (Joe Rourke)

Phone: 03 5156 3291

ITEMS FOR FREE

Telex Headset With Microphone For PC Voice Application

Excellent condition. It was used for voice command software as well as communicating via the computer. Pick up from Elsternwick or pay for postage.

Phone: 0422 528 258 (Hilary)

For a full list of classifieds and items for free,
please visit

www.spire.org.au/classifieds

ITEMS FOR FREE

Magic Mystic Electric Chair

10 year old electric wheelchair; left hand controls; fair condition.

Phone 0490 067 334 or 0468 339 541 (Sue)

(#9/13)

6 x Conform Support Bed Panels

1 x panel: 700mm x 500mm (15 nodules x 10 nodules) high profile.

4 x panels: 830mm x 500mm (18 nodules x 10 nodules) high profile, plus joining strips for same.

1 x foam panel: 830mm x 500mm with joining strip. Normally used with 3 panels to make a complete mattress.

The foam panel goes under your pillow which is fine for a person of average height. Tall people need 4 inflatable panels.

Phone 03 8838 2866 (Ed or Livia)

Wymo Car Roof Wheelchair Hoist

Dani has a car roof wheelchair hoist she'd like to give away that was given to her by a friend - but she has never used it as it doesn't fit her car.

Mobile: 0417 378 905 Dani

Medical Continence Supplies

25 x 750ml Simpla Trident T1 Leg Bag - Short Tube

70 x 750ml Simpla Trident T1 Leg Bag - 30cm Tube

200 x Unomedical Nelaton Catheters - Firm - FG14 - 40cm x 4.7mm Exp. 09 / 2016

400 x Unomedical Nelaton Catheters - Firm - FG14 - 40cm x 4.7mm Exp. 07 / 2017

1 x Self Inflating Resuscitator - The Bag II Ref 805011

Phone: Spire 03 9489 0777

HOW CAN I SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

Make a donation

With community support Spire continues to make a difference in the lives of people who sustain spinal cord injury and for the family that support them. You can provide support with a donation.

By Phone - please ring AQA Victoria on 03 9489 0777 and have your credit card details available. (Mastercard, Visa, American Express)

By Mail (cheque or credit card) - fill in the slip below and send with your cheque to:

AQA Victoria Ltd

P.O. Box 219

Fairfield VICTORIA 3078

Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ P/Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

I'd like to donate: \$ _____

Card Type: Visa Mastercard Amex

Card Number:

Expiry Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____