

Spire is a service division of AQA Victoria



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Spire NewsLink is the official newsletter of AQA Victoria Limited (AQA), and is published bimonthly.

Spire NewsLink seeks to publish material of interest to people experiencing issues in life arising from a spinal cord injury or other physical disability, their family and social networks, clinicians, professionals and other organisations with an interest in this community.

Spire NewsLink welcomes content for publication. Content will be published at the discretion of the Editor who retains the right to edit all submissions as they see fit.

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FROM THE CEO

Highlighting NDIS Resources at AQA

As we mentioned in the last Issue of NewsLink, we believe that people are most likely to maximise the opportunity of their NDIS plans if they approach the NDIS planning or review process knowing what others have achieved including; the way they have presented information, the words they have used to describe goals and support needs, how they have connected these goals with NDIS principles and the NDIS price guide.

As we continue to share the journey through the NDIS transition with many of our clients and community there are a number of resources I'd like to highlight that have been developed based on people's lived experience and our learnings.

The first is a series of Pre-Planning Workshops for participants that are new to the scheme, as well as those that are about to transition to a new plan. These sessions provide an overview of the NDIS and an understanding of what a NDIS plan is and what it could look like. The

sessions focus on the lived experience of people with SCI and have been used as an opportunity to share tips and raise questions and concerns about the NDIS, hear about what others have learned from their experiences and the outcomes they have achieved. Family and friends are welcome at these workshops. We are also developing additional NDIS related information and resources on our website as we gather them.

Secondly we have launched our Support Coordination Service and commenced supporting clients maximise outcomes from their NDIS plans. Support Coordination is a service type that people can include in their plans and is meant to be about building the capacity of people to understand and engage the NDIS process and to arrange services that contribute to achieving their goals. Some other providers have taken a case management approach to support coordination, assisting clients with the basic administration of their plan. Our approach builds on our experience of applying resources from the lived experience, supported by people with experience of SCI, goal setting and



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accessing resources in order to support our client maximise outcomes for them in this new model. Our focus is on building capacity and supporting people frame goals and life outcomes.

For more information about these resources please contact Fiona Scoullar on 9489 0777 or fionascoullar@aqavic.org.au

HIGHLIGHTS

Hopefully everybody had a great Easter and had a chance to spend time with family and friends, and of course the Easter Bunny. The April issue of NewsLink has some great information and reading which you'll find interesting.

A lot has been happening in our Community Networks. Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton, and Geelong have had some great guest speakers. The groups are looking forward to learning more from others in their monthly meetings. You can read more about this on page 7.

Spire was again invited to be part of the Arnold Schwarzenegger Sports Festival to showcase inclusive sports.

This year we partnered with other organisations to demonstrate and bring awareness of a wide range of sports and activities. It's a huge success to be part of a popular mainstream event. Turn to page 8 to read more.

Everyone has an artistic side to them. The International mouth painting group wants more Australian members. If you're interested in painting or drawing, read the article on page 9 for more information.

In his latest blog article, adventurer and disability advocate Dave Jacka, shares his 7-day voyage sailing around Port Phillip Bay upon the wheelchair accessible tall ship 'SV Tenacious'. Part

2 will be published in the June 2018 issue of NewsLink. You can find the article on page 10.

Parks Victoria is doing some amazing work on accessibility and inclusion. You can read three articles on such projects from pages 12 through to 15.

Finally, below are this year's contribution deadlines for the upcoming editions of NewsLink:

June	1 st June 2018
August	1 st August 2018
October	1 st October 2018
December	1 st December 2018

The Dylan Alcott Foundation

Dylan Alcott was born with a tumor wrapped around his spinal cord and, at a young age, struggled to come to terms with his paraplegia. After that difficult period, Dylan found a lifeline through sport that changed his life forever.

At the age of 12, he discovered Paralympic sport, and at the age of 17 became the youngest wheelchair basketball gold medalist in history at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, going on to win 2 more golds at the 2016 Rio Paralympics, this time for wheelchair tennis.

Over the next 10 years, he dedicated his life to sport and, through this, has helped to break down the stigmas that once prevented him from participating. Through the Dylan Alcott Foundation, Dylan hopes to provide young Australians living with disabilities with the same opportunities and help them realize their dreams.

The foundation helps young people with a disability overcome barriers of entry that exist due to the lack of resources, funding and understanding.

For more information:

Web: dylanalcottfoundation.com.au

Email: info@dylanalcottfoundation.com.au

Address: 5, 570 St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 3004



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.

T 03 9482 4373

F 03 9482 7933

W www.qualcare.org.au

E qualcare@aqavic.org.au

Disabled Motorists Australia

Disabled Motorists Australia is a non-profit organization with members throughout Australia, each with their own personal experience of driving with a disability. With an annual subscription fee and one off joining fee, you can become part of their community. They are currently doing a drive to increase their membership.

Through their meetings, social events and quarterly newsletters they are able to provide a forum where members are supported and encouraged to share their knowledge and advocate for motorists with disabilities. Disabled Motorists Australia is unique as it is a company that is run by and for people with disabilities to promote their independence with driving and motoring.

Disabled Motorists Australia relies on the dedication of their members, and board of directors to share their expertise and provide insight into the common obstacles faced by motorists with disabilities. Disabled Motorists Australia is an organisation that caters not only to people who have a disability but for their families and carers as well. They encourage social inclusion and active participation in the community which ensures individual members are provided the opportunity to have their voices heard.

As a collective Disabled Motorists Australia represents the interests of motorists with disabilities to both government and non-government authorities on legislation that affects the disabled community and all aspects of transport.

For more information:

Phone: (03) 9386 0413

Web: www.disabledmotorists.org.au

Email: dma@disabledmotorists.org.au

Address: 2A Station Street Coburg Vic 3058



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Fiona Donaldson
Your personal travel manager

M: 0403 868 746
E: fiona.donaldson@travelmanagers.com.au
travelmanagers.com.au/FionaDonaldson




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SPIRE EVENTS

Upcoming Events	Date	Time	Location
Shepparton Regional Network	2 nd May 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Bendigo Regional Network	9 th May 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
ATSA Independent Living Expo	16 th , 17 th May 2018	8.30am - 4pm	Melbourne Showgrounds Epsom Rd, Ascot Vale, Melbourne
Spinal Cord Injury Network of Professionals (SCIP)	17 th May 2018	4pm - 6pm	Lonely Planet Offices 551 Swanston St., Carlton
Ballarat Regional Network	17 th May 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Geelong Regional Network	21 st May 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Women with SCI Network	2 nd June 2018	2pm - 4pm	Span Community House, Thornbury
Shepparton Regional Network	6 th June 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Bendigo Regional Network	13 th June 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Geelong Regional Network	18 th June 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Ballarat Regional Network	21 st June 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Shepparton Regional Network	4 th July 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Bendigo Regional Network	11 th July 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA
Geelong Regional Network	16 th July 2018	11am - 3pm	TBA

Blue Badge Insurance A-Z Guide on Disability Converted Cars

The well-known Australian company Blue Badge Insurance is making available a comprehensive guide to disability converted cars on its website.

The **A-Z** guide is designed to be a one-stop guide for both drivers and passengers with a disability. Blue Badge recognises that having access to a car can improve the independence and freedom of people with disability and their families.

Today there are many ways to modify cars to make them more accessible for people with disability. In light of this, the Blue

Badge Insurance A-Z Guide on Disability Converted Cars has been developed.

In this free guide you will find a vast amount of information about buying, owning and maintaining a Wheelchair Accessible or Converted Vehicle.

Topics in the guide include: Accelerators, Access, Air Bags, Brakes, Carer, Converted Vehicles, Driver Assessment, Driving

Controls, Electronic Clutch, Funding, Gas Ring, Hire Cars, Imported Cars, Insurance, Joystick Control, Keyless Entry, Lifting Systems, Storage Lifts, Mobility Equipment Storage, Maintenance, NDIS, Occupational Therapists, Ramps, Restraints, Second Hand Vehicles, Spinner Knobs, Transferring, Underinsurance, Vehicle Certification and compliance, Wheelchair and much more.

Visit the website at: <https://www.bluebadgeinsurance.com.au/disability-converted-car-guide/>

Community Network Roundup

We need your help!... We are starting to gather information for our local directories for our Community Networks in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Shepparton. Our goal is to create a booklet which has information on accessible services. This booklet can then be accessed online or printed out.

This may include medical services, restaurants, wheelchair repair centres, accessible activities or holiday accommodation.

It can also be local services near these four communities, so if you have any information that would benefit other people with SCI, then we want to hear from you!

Please email it to info@spire.org.au or call us on 9489 0777.

Shepparton

In March, we welcomed the lovely and knowledgeable Wendy and Kathryn, both Rural Access Workers, to our March meeting. One of the roles of Rural Access Workers is to support people with disability to fully participate in their local community. This also means strengthening the community's ability to support people with disability.

We then had a lively discussion about the roles of Rural Access Workers, and found out the different things community members can do to make their community more accessible for people of all abilities.

To find your local Rural Access Officer, contact your local Council for more information.

Ballarat

In March, we visited the beautiful Ballarat Botanical Gardens and viewed the spectacular flowers of the Begonia Festival. The Begonia Festival is a one-week event held once a year in autumn. Apart from the award-winning Begonia flowers, there are also entertainment, activities and markets.

After spending some time viewing the flowers, we had a stroll on the Prime Ministers Avenue nearby. This pathway had statues of past Australian Prime Ministers, but unfortunately the soil and rocks on the pathway was quite soft, so those on wheels had a bit of an "off-road adventure" navigating the path before lunch!

Bendigo

In March, we met at the Bendigo Stadium Bistro and enjoyed a lunch, chat, and welcoming new members to the group. We also met the cute and well behaved puppy of one of our members, who made his home in the wheelchair basket!

Afterwards, guest speaker Curtis Palmer spoke about his inspiring journey from a rugby loving - teenager, to wheelchair rugby Paralympian, to his life now as a father and personal trainer. His

love for sport and rugby were one of the defining factors that helped him with his rehabilitation, and reinforced the fact that one can still do what they love after injury.

Geelong

In March, we braved the windy day to meet at the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, which had accessible facilities and a beautiful view of the beach and water! We look forward to having future meetings there.

Our guest speakers from Sailability introduced us to the amazing Sailability program. Sailability is "an entry level program for people of all abilities to get into sailing and all activities at clubs." This means that anyone with a disability can learn how to sail safely with experienced volunteers and staff. They have safety vests, hoists and slings available.

Sailability is also available in many other areas such as Shepparton, Bendigo, Ballarat and Melbourne CBD. Check the website for your local area: http://websites.sportstg.com/assoc_page.cgi?c=1-10131-0-0-0&slD=316329

For those who want to feel the thrill of speeding faster than their wheelchair can handle, then sailing may be for you!

For further information on any of the SCI Community Network Groups, please visit www.spire.org.au/community/community-networks, or contact Spire by email info@spire.org.au or call 03 9489 0777.

Arnold Sports Festival Australia 2018

In March this year, Spire built on its previous success by once again highlighting inclusive sports at the Arnold Schwarzenegger Sports Festival. It was important to be able to demonstrate and bring awareness of inclusive sport to such a huge mainstream event.

It was bigger and better this year as we included other organisations to make it an even bigger success. Spire, along with Disability Sport & Recreation, YMCA, and Special Olympics, demonstrated 10 different sports and activities over three days.

The majority of these sports are available for people to play at a local level or at the highest level like the Paralympic Games. In fact, many of the athletes taking part were Paralympic Gold medallists. Physical health, mental health and wellbeing is vital to all of us. The sports and activities included:

1. Wheelchair Rugby
2. Wheelchair Tennis
3. Special Olympics Australia
4. Electric Wheelchair (Balloon) Soccer
5. Blindfold boxing
6. Wheelchair Handball
7. Para-Badminton
8. Wheelchair Basketball (played for the Arnold Schwarzenegger cup)
9. Wheelchair AFL
10. Come & Try

Our appearance at the festival was a massive success in exposing the wider community to the skills and abilities of

wheelchair athletes, as well as athletes with other disabilities, raising awareness about the range of inclusive sports available.

Arnold jumped in one of the spare wheelchairs and had a hitout with wheelchair tennis star Dylan Alcott.

The Come & Try sessions proved to be hugely popular with the general community. Spare wheelchairs were on hand for

people to learn some skills from the experts and see what it's like to participate in a sport from a different perspective.

The Arnold Sports Festival is Australia's largest fitness expo and multi-sport festival with over 40 different sporting events and hundreds of professional and amateur competitors. The festival is very popular amongst all age groups with over 60,000 visitors attending.

Thank you to all the athletes and volunteers that gave up their time to attend this event and make it the success that it was.



International mouth painting group wants more Australian members

An international group of artists with a disability, who paint by holding the brush in their mouth or with their foot, wants more Australian members.

The Mouth and Foot Painting Artists was founded in Europe in 1956 when a group of artists with a disability who were not able to use their hands and painted by holding the brush in their mouth began to earn an income by selling their paintings. They pooled their resources and formed an organisation that started to sell products such as Christmas cards illustrated by their paintings to increase their income.

They stress that they are a self-help organisation as many of their members were institutionalised for many years following an accident or illness, and as a result emphasise that they are independent and earn their own income through their own endeavours.

The Mouth and Foot Painting Artists was established in Australia in 1971 and currently has five members around the country.

To become a student member an artist must qualify by painting using a brush held in either their mouth or foot, having lost the use of their hands through an illness or accident. Student members receive a stipend as well as scholarships for art supplies and tuition.

Once an artist becomes a full member they are guaranteed a salary for life, even if they are unable to continue painting.

Today the MFPA product range still includes Christmas cards, which was their first product, but they have a long list of other items such as illustrated calendars, children's puzzles, jigsaws, playing cards, serviettes and place mats, wrapping paper, and coffee mugs. Several of the artists have also written books for children which they have also illustrated with their own paintings.

The artist members are independent and are encouraged to stage their own exhibitions and sell their own paintings.

Simon Rigg is a student member of the MFPA on a stipend who lives in Warrnambool, Victoria and paints by holding the brush in his mouth. He is a very versatile painter and his work ranges from creative Christmas card illustrations to a self-portrait which he entered in the world-famous Archibald Prize for portraiture last year.

Simon has lived with quadriplegia since 1982 when he fell ten feet to the ground while he was repairing the roof of a shed. He learned to paint while he was in rehabilitation at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne.

"After my accident I was lying there thinking of what was I going to do with the rest of my life, when my Occupational Therapist Michelle Wineberger told me about an artist called Bill Mooney who was an MFPA member and painted by holding the brush in his mouth after suffering a spinal cord injury.

"Bill became my mentor and kept nagging me to keep trying and I gradually improved and started sporadically selling paintings and although I was attracted to join MFPA, it wasn't until 1990 that I applied for membership.

"My MFPA membership has been very beneficial for me and has given me a lot of options in life," Simon said.

A recent painting of the 'three wise men', a sunrise Christmas scene was used to illustrate a Christmas card that was included in the worldwide range.

For further information on the Mouth and Foot Painting Artists contact MFPA on (02) 9698 3933 or visit www.mfpa.com.au.



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Popping the Bubble! - Part 1

In his latest blog article, adventurer and disability advocate **Dave Jacka**, shares his 7-day voyage sailing around Port Phillip Bay upon the wheelchair accessible tall ship 'SV Tenacious'. Part 2 will be published in the June 2018 issue of NewsLink.

"Dave, there's an opportunity going that might be up your alley" said Pete on the phone.

"Really, what is it?" I ask suspiciously.

"There's a spot going for a 7-day trip sailing on a tall ship."

"A tall ship ay? They're not very wheelchair accessible."

"Yeah, but this one is. It was built by the Jubilee Sailing Trust and it's fully wheelchair accessible! But there's a catch... It leaves Monday!"

"This Monday!?" I said a little surprised (it was now Thursday). Running the cursor of my trackball over next week's commitments in my calendar, I couldn't see how I could manage it. "Nah, Pete. I have too much on next week. I doubt I could find a carer in time anyway. I'd love to mate, but I'll have to pass." I said with a feeling of disappointment.

"No worries mate, let me know if you change your mind" he said and hung up.

I typed in Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST) into the google search bar, and a magnificent square-rigged sailing ship from the turn of the century flashed up on my screen. With 12 permanent crew members on board, it could take up to forty voyage crew with mixed abilities to sail the ship. My adventurous soul twitched, with my heart speeding up as I read what the 7-day return

voyage entailed: Leave Melbourne, sail out through the heads into open ocean towards Flinders Island, then back. This looks awesome!

My imagination drifted, picturing myself on the deck, with sails full of wind, holding onto a rope with the ship swaying in the rolling sea, spray blasting onto my face as the waves crash on the deck. I smiled with the thought of being an old Sea Dog, just for a moment.

My gaze settled on a quote on the wall above my computer: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do, than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bow lines. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." (Mark Twain).

I sat for a moment re-reading the quote. I knew that I might never have this opportunity again. Sitting at my desk, encapsulated in my own little bubble focussed on all my "important" commitments, I had a moment of redefined perspective, that in the whole scheme of life, these "commitments" weren't really that important and if I was honest with myself, I could either reschedule, or do them when I got back. The world wasn't going to stop turning on my account! Life is about experiences and I didn't want to be wishing I had done this 20 years ago, when I had the opportunity. It was time to "pop the bubble" and grab the opportunity.

I called Pete back with a new-found urgency "Pete, is the offer still on?"

"Yep, sure is!" he said.

Focussed with a clear goal, the planets magically started aligning - family and friends were able to look after our dog and cat (my wife was away overseas), and Peter Garner, one of my support crew from my other trips, was in. I cancelled or rescheduled commitments, sorted insurance and, following a medical clearance from the JST panel of doctors in England, at 11pm on Saturday night, I received an email saying, "Congratulations!". I was now a voyage crew member!

Fliss, the 1st Mate, greeted Peter Garner and I at the Williamstown dock. Dressed in a white shirt and shorts, suited to the afternoon heat, with her English accent, she recited, with naval efficiency, the process to come on board. Michael, the bosun's mate, swiftly tied the rope around my footplates and with Fliss supporting me from behind, I was swept onboard the SV Tenacious.



The SV Tenacious

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Jenny, our group's Watch Leader, a stylish middle-aged woman with plenty of sailing experience, took us aside explaining our Watch Cards and the times for our two watches each day. With a quick rundown on how the lifts between decks worked, we found our way to our cabin on the lower level to store all our gear.

Although small, with narrow bunk beds and a small cupboard, and a curtain separating the room from the corridor, it was perfectly functional for sleeping. Although at 6' 4", my toes were hitting the wall. I had pictured the bathroom to be no bigger than a port-a-loo toilet, which it was, but I was particularly impressed with the compactness. It had an adjustable sink and shower providing enough space to get a wheelchair in and do what is needed, although a carer needs to be fairly nimble to squeeze around.

Following briefings and emergency drills, using pulleys and ropes to practice winching young Elise and myself, (the only two wheelchair users on board), up the stairs in our chairs to the upper deck, and a stern warning by the Engineer that if you block up the toilets with an oversized deposit requiring him to pull the pump apart to unblock it, he will find the culprit, we finally motored out of Williamstown late afternoon.

As the city skyline slowly drifted by in the clam afternoon warmth, to anchor off Altona for the night, I was itching to make the run through the heads into open ocean in the next day or two.

On the first night, Jenny only

needed two people on the midnight-to-4am watch, so Peter and I were able to sleep in, but had to be up for breakfast at 8am. Micah, the cook, made sure no one went hungry with great food catering for all diets, but if you weren't up, you didn't eat!

With light winds forecast and cloudless skies on the second day, the permanent crew made the most of the opportunity, patiently instructing us on the finer points of sailing a tall ship, heaving and easing (pulling & releasing) the ropes to raise and lower the sails, before we were faced with the real thing.

No matter what physical challenge a person had, everyone was involved utilizing their strengths and abilities, whether it was easing ropes or helming (steering the ship) for myself, or pulling the ropes like a hyperactive aerial rope performer. And somehow, out of the chaos, a functional and supportive team emerged.

Late spring is usually very windy, ideal conditions for the Tenacious,

providing it is in the right direction. However, this week, the weather turned out to be perfect for anything BUT sailing. The bay was like mirrored glass reflecting the blue sky. On Wednesday, at our daily morning briefing, the Captain broke the news. In his Scottish accent he said "Right everyone, we have a small problem with the generator, which means that we can't risk going out through the heads".

We were stuck in Port Philip Bay. My fantasy of living the life of an old Sea Dog on the high seas (albeit briefly) evaporated, leaving a feeling of quiet disappointment. But no matter how disappointed I or the rest of the voyage crew may have felt, this is what sailing is all about - taking the good with the not so good, relinquishing fate to dictate the path of our journey - it's all part of the adventure!

■ **Note: the remainder of this blog will be published in the June 2018 issue of NewsLink**



Hard at work helming (steering the ship)

Accessibility and inclusion in Victorian parks

Exploring the outdoors can be more of a challenge for people with mobility issues, however in Victoria there are a wide range of facilities to help people of all abilities enjoy our wonderful parks.

Parks around Melbourne

There are plenty of parks around Melbourne that have good access and toilets for all abilities including:

- **Albert Park**, Only three kilometres from the city - Albert Park features a picturesque lake, BBQ and picnic facilities, and an all-abilities Liberty Swing in the playground.
- **Jells Park**, Waverly Road, Wheelers Hill - Explore the nine kilometres of paths and trails that weave around 127 hectares of wide open spaces and the lake in this popular park.
- **Serendip Sanctuary**, Windermere Road, Lara - A wildlife oasis in the Western Volcanic Plains, this 250 hectare sanctuary is home to a rich array of birds and mammals.
- **Wattle Park**, Riversdale Road, Burwood - The huge gum trees, wattles, seasonal wildflowers and ponds in Wattle Park make this a great escape within the suburbs.
- **Karkarook Park**, Warrigal Road, Heatherton - Enjoy the accessible Wetlands Trail, the fifteen hectare lake, birdlife and natural surrounds.
- **Braeside Park**, Lower Dandenong Road, Braeside -

Nestled in a large expanse of native trees and plants, this park has many wonderful places to explore, including the wetlands and an adventure playground with disabled access.

Accommodation

Wilsons Promontory National Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park now offer modified cabins and all-terrain wheelchairs to make it easier for people with a disability, families and carers to stay and enjoy the spectacular natural beauty of the parks.

Specially modified cabins have entrance ramps, accessible bathrooms and parking close by. A personal hoist and specialised bathroom equipment, such as a shower commode chair, are also available to visitors free of charge.



All-terrain wheelchairs

All-terrain wheelchairs are now available in a number of Victoria's parks for visitors with significant physical disabilities to explore the great outdoors. The wheelchairs easily disassemble and fit in the back of a station wagon, and with the help of operators, you can experience Victoria's parks like never before.

The chairs are suited for sandy and semi-rough tracks, making it easier to access the many stunning trails in the Dandenong Ranges, Grampians and Lysterfield Park and beaches at Cape Conran, Wilsons Promontory and Point Nepean. Beach access wheelchairs, are also available at Wilsons Promontory National Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park. An all-terrain wheelchair called a Hippocampe is available at Brimbank Park (Maribyrnong Valley Parklands), Coolart Historic Area and for the Mornington Peninsula region.

Chairs can be booked free of charge. Please supply your own bike helmet at the Dandenong Ranges, Grampians and Wilsons Promontory.

Accessible canoe launcher

Victoria's first all-accessible floating pontoon and canoe launcher is at Psyche Bend in Kings Billabong in Mildura. The facility provides a stable platform on the static jetty and then a secure ramp to launch into the water for a person with mobility limitations, with hand rails and

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supportive rollers to guide them easily in and out of the water.

The accessible canoe launcher is located on the northern side of the King Billabong feeder channel, approximately 100 metres from Psyche Pumps. Easiest access to the canoe launcher is via Psyche Pumps Road.

Buchan Caves Stairclimber

The electric Stairclimber, provided by the Buchan Caves Reserve, allows children and light adults (up to 60kg) with mobility limitations access to one of the most spectacular viewing areas of Fairy Cave, which would normally be inaccessible due to the many steps and narrow passageways.

To use the Stairclimber, visitors who use wheelchairs are required to transfer from their personal wheelchair into the Stairclimber. The Stairclimber is operated by an experienced cave guide who will take the visitor down into Fairy Cave. Use of the Stairclimber is

free, however a cave tour fee still applies. Booking a tour of Fairy Cave using the Stairclimber is by appointment only and must be made in advance. Cave tours using the Stairclimber are not available at peak visitor periods, such as Easter weekend.

Sherpa Volunteers

Visitors with mobility limitations wishing to use the Parks Victoria TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair can now book wheelchair operators, or volunteer Sherpas, to assist them. The Sherpa Volunteer Program provides trained chair operators to assist in pushing/pulling the visitor in the TrailRider chair on many of the Dandenongs and Grampians spectacular park trails. The additional physical assistance provided by volunteers makes it possible for visitors to access park trails that would not be possible without several chair operators. The service is free for park visitors and a minimum of one week's notice is required for

booking Sherpa Volunteers.

Disability Action Plan

Parks Victoria is committed to providing parks that are inclusive for all Victorians and that enable all visitors to obtain health and wellbeing benefits from visiting a park. To read the Disability Action Plan 2017-2020 visit the website www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au.

Further information

There are many organisations which also provide information and resources to help people of all ages and abilities to get out into nature. These are:

- Accessible Gippsland: www.destinationgippsland.com.au/industry-development/accessibility.
- Disability Sport and Recreation: www.dsr.org.au.
- Divine – A community for and by people with a disability: www.divine.vic.gov.au.
- Independence Australia: www.independenceaustralia.com/info/useful-links/travel-and-accommodation.
- NICAN-Inclusive Recreation for Australians of all Abilities: www.nican.info.
- Riding for the Disabled: www.rdav.asn.au.
- Sailability Victoria: www.facebook.com/sailabilityvictoria.
- The National Public Toilet Map www.toiletmap.gov.au.

For more information or to book any of the equipment visit the website on www.parks.vic.gov.au or call Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 19 63.



Sherpa Program Starts in the Dandenong Ranges

Parks Victoria has commenced a Sherpa Volunteer Program in the Dandenong Ranges to assist park visitors with limited mobility using the TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair. The TrailRider is located at Grants Picnic Ground in Kallista.

A Parks Victoria Sherpa program is now underway in the Dandenong Ranges, making it easier for people of limited mobility to explore the natural beauty of the area.

The volunteer Sherpas guide an all-terrain wheelchair, and its passenger, over rugged terrain to places otherwise out of reach with normal wheelchairs.

The specially designed single-wheeled TrailRider chair weighs only 23kg, has a cushioned seat and an electric motor for steep climbs. It is now available for hire at Grants Picnic Ground, near Kallista.

Access and Inclusion Coordinator at Parks Victoria, John Kenwright, says it's a great way for people with limited mobility to travel in comfort and safety along the trails

in Sherbrooke forest.

"This is a particularly beautiful area with amazing scenery, birdlife and natural bush, so it's great that people who weren't previously able to do so, can now go and see, enjoy and share this experience.

It fits perfectly with the Parks Victoria philosophy of "providing access to our parks for all visitors."

Karen Fankhauser was the trial passenger at a recent Sherpa induction day at Grants Picnic Ground.

As someone with mobility limitations, she says travelling in the TrailRider is an amazing experience.

"It felt like I was bushwalking along these tracks and through the beautiful bush to places I'd

never be able to go to myself. It was wonderful, and so much better than just looking at these places from afar."

The Sherpa program is also available in the Grampians National Parks. For further information and Sherpa volunteer bookings contact Ashlee Hope, Volunteer Officer at Parks Victoria.

T 03 8427 3541

E volunteersherpa@parks.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria has TrailRider wheelchairs available for visitor use at a number of parks across Victoria and these are also available to borrow for free.

Visitors can borrow the TrailRider chairs on their own, provided they have enough reasonably fit people in their party to operate the chair.

Further information on chair locations please visit- <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/visit/improving-park-access-for-all>.



New ramp to bring all ability access to the Main Yarra Trail

Spire welcomes Parks Victoria's decision to improve access to the Main Yarra Trail at Abbotsford which will dramatically improve under a plan to bring existing infrastructure up to standard and in line with disability discrimination legislation.

For nearly thirty years people in wheelchairs and others with limited mobility have been blocked from accessing and enjoying the Yarra River environment on a stretch of river between the Collingwood Children's Farm and Gipps Street in Abbotsford.

Parks Victoria's Director Marine and Maritime, Jo Richards described the Gipps Street steps, which descend from street level down to the Yarra River alongside the Collins bridge, as an

unacceptable and unsafe barrier to access which have no place in a popular park in inner urban Melbourne.

The ramp will be approximately 150-metres long as it gradually descends from street level at Gipps Street to the Main Yarra Trail below at the bottom of the river embankment. It will gradually descend

half a metre every seven metres and include level landings every 6 metres.

All of these features are designed to support a range of users like mums with prams, people with mobility limitations, people using wheelchairs and bike riders with kids in tow.



ATSA Independent Living Expo - May 2018

Spire will once again have a stall at the upcoming ATSA Independent Living Expo at Melbourne Showgrounds, with our staff and volunteers sharing their experiences of life with spinal cord injury (SCI).

ATSA will hold an Independent Living Expo at Melbourne Showgrounds on Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th May 2018 between 8.30am-4pm.



The event will have over 100 exhibitors displaying a wide range of products and services in assistive technology, mobility solutions, pressure care, employment support, accessible recreation/holiday ideas, modified motor vehicles and a lot more.

Spire will once again have a stall on the exhibition floor. Department representatives and Spire volunteer mentors will be sharing their experiences of life with SCI and networks. Be sure to

look out for us if you come along!

ATSA Independent Living Expo is open to visitors of all ages, including those with a disability, seniors and their families, friends and carers.

A key feature of the Expo is the FREE Clinical Education Program – run over the two days in rooms conveniently located next to the exhibition floor.

Admission is FREE to the general public.

For further information please call ATSA on 1300 789 845 or 02 8586 6103 or visit their website at www.atsaindependentlivingexpo.com.au.

Spasms following spinal cord injury

Many people with SCI experience muscle spasms to some degree. Joe Green, Senior Physiotherapist at The Duke of Cornwall Spinal Injury Centre, has written an in-depth article published in the Forward magazine outlining the cause as well as management processes for problematic spasms.

Loss of control over muscles is one of the various consequences of spinal cord injury. This can lead to spasms which are jerky movements that occur due to involuntary muscle contractions, or spasticity which is an abnormal increase in muscle tone, experienced as stiffness and resistance when muscles are stretched. Spasms are often described as flexor or extensor depending on whether bending or straightening movements occur.

Researchers are making progress in understanding the process that takes place which cause spasms to occur. It seems that motor nerve cells in the spinal cord (ones which tell muscles to contract) become hypersensitive when deprived of normal signals from the brain, because of the spinal injury. As a result, nerve impulses entering the spinal cord below the level of injury, communicating sensations such as touch, stretch and pain, can activate the "hypersensitive" motor nerves. This may lead to brief muscle contractions or one which can last more than 10 seconds at a time. In addition, because the nerve cells in the spinal cord are interconnected, touching the chest of a person with a high neck injury could lead to spasms in the limbs, hands or feet.

Spasms can be useful to a person in a number of ways: they help to maintain muscle bulk, good circulation and the health of the body tissues. They can assist someone to cough effectively when they can't activate coughing muscles themselves. Spasms can also be harnessed to assist particular functional tasks, such as getting the legs up onto a bed when lying down. Another positive aspect of spasms is that they can be an indicator that something is not right in the body itself. The presence of an infection, a blocked catheter, constipation or a tissue injury often leads to an increase in spasm activity. This sign can prompt action to be taken.

Spasms can become problematic when they affect a person's balance, interfere with personal care and functional tasks, such as safe transfers. Severe spasms can sometimes lead to injury due to falls or through involuntary kicking during manual handling by carers. They can cause sleep disturbances and cause pain. Spasms occurring in one direction only can lead to muscles becoming contracted.

Why spasms may be mild in one individual and very severe in another is less well understood. Pain stimuli however are strong

drivers of spasms activity and therefore attending to the health of body tissues (joints, muscles and skin) through exercise, movement, stretching and careful positioning is advised. As an example, a person with osteoarthritis in their knees might not be able to feel pain after a spinal injury. The unpleasant signals will still however have an effect in the spinal cord causing a 'wind-up' of the hypersensitive motor nerves. Regular mobilization of the knees to help eliminate waste products and to supply oxygen and nutrients to the joint surfaces may therefore help decrease this "wind-up".

Some reports from people suffering from problematic spasms suggest that other internal and environmental factors can impact on the severity of the spasms. States of high anxiety and emotional distress seem to contribute negatively to spasm activity, possibly due to circulating hormones and other chemicals released during such stress. Activities such as relaxation exercises, meditation and counseling, which help calm the mind, may have a role to play in these circumstances. Moving out of the hospital environment into the calm, order and familiarity of home seems to make a big difference for some people.

Sensory stimulation through a variety of treatments such as Neuro Muscular Electrical Stimulation, TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve

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Stimulation), vibration therapy or massage can temporarily desensitise the reflex pathways which trigger spasms. The effects are, however, not long lasting. When an individual has an incomplete injury and potential to increase their voluntary control over their spinal cord, activities which stimulate and reinforce this through active posture, movement and function are likely to moderate spasm activity. When spasms affect quality of life, assessment by a specialist multi-disciplinary rehabilitation team, including doctors, therapists and nurses is necessary. Each individual is unique and will require a management plan tailored to their particular needs. This may involve a combination of interventions such as medication, physical treatments and a care plan to enable effective positioning and handling of a

person through each twenty four hour period. The most common drugs used to treat spasms are baclofen, tizanidine, dantrolene and diazepam. Unfortunately all these medications have side effects such as drowsiness. Each individual is unique and will require a management plan tailored to their particular needs. When spasm problems are not effectively managed by the above strategies, or when the side effects with the medication cannot be tolerated, the surgical insertion of an Intrathecal Baclofen (ITB) Pump can be helpful. This procedure involves an electronic pump being placed under the skin of the abdominal wall, usually on the right side. This delivers tiny doses of baclofen directly into the fluid around the spinal cord via a thin tube. The dose of baclofen required through

the pump is approximately 1000 times less than the oral dose and the side effects are minimal. The pump requires refilling once every few months by an injection into its reservoir. The person who is experiencing problematic spasms is the only one who really understands the impact on their quality of life, and how interventions may alter their experiences positively or negatively. Effective management of spasms is, therefore, facilitated best by the person experiencing them taking an assertive and active role in the management process.

COME AND BE PART OF SCIP!

SCIP (Spinal Cord Injury Network of Professionals) is looking for like-minded individuals who are interested in addressing the issues facing professionals with SCI, as well as to increase respect for and recognition of the value, influence and abilities that they offer.

SCIP is dedicated to maximizing the inclusion, job-retention and advancement of current and future professionals with SCI, and provides the opportunity to collaborate with others to discover and develop resources around **career development and progression**.

The group is solely and permanently committed to meeting the complex and emerging concerns and needs of professionals living with SCI and to **support all professionals regardless of their career field**, title, employment status or degree of success they have had in their careers. They may be beginning their career, undergoing rehabilitation, volunteering, unemployed, employed full-time, part-time or casually, self-employed, unable to work, on a pension, on welfare or retired.

If you are or aspire to be a professional living with SCI and interested in joining SCIP, please contact us at emmabloom@spire.org.au.

For further information please visit the SCIP website at www.scip.net.au.

How Many Cats

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?"

Little Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Little Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?"

Little Johnny: "Six."

Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Little Johnny: "Seven!"

Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!"

Little Johnny: "Because I've already got a freaking cat!"

Memory

There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor.

The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget.

They went home and the old lady told her husband to get her a bowl of ice cream. "You might want to write it down," she said. The husband said, "No, I can remember that you want a bowl of ice cream."

She then told her husband she wanted a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream. "Write it down," she told him, and again he said, "No, no, I can remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream."

Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top."

So he goes to get the ice cream and spends an unusually long time in the kitchen, over 30 minutes. He comes out to his wife and hands her a plate of eggs and bacon. The old wife stares at the plate for a moment, then looks at her husband and asks, "Where's the toast?"

Little Johnny Learns Maths

Little Johnny was not doing very well at all in his math class. Despite many attempts his parents could find nothing that would motivate him to study.

Exhausting all other hope they decided to take Johnny and enroll him in Catholic school.

Beginning even the first day, little Johnny immediately went to his room and started studying. His mother is shocked and of course excited that he is going straight to do his homework rather than playing outside.

As soon as he is done eating dinner, it is right back to studying. His mother can hardly believe it. What a dramatic turn around. Of course she expects that after a few days he would go back to his old ways. But he doesn't. Each day he seems to study harder than the day before. It is almost as if he doesn't even play anymore and instead just focuses all his effort on studying math.

After several months it is time for Johnny to show his report card. He walks in and lays the report card on the table and then immediately runs up to his room to study more. Johnny's mom opens the report card and sees he got an A in math. Wow! Even though he had been studying so much, it still came as a surprise considering all the trouble he had before.

Johnny's mom is now determined to find out exactly why he has changed so much. She walks to his room and says, Son, what caused you to start studying so hard in math? Was it the Catholic nuns? Little Johnny looks down for a second then back up at her and shakes his head no.

"Was it the extra discipline or do you just like your new school better? Why are you studying so hard now when you didn't before?", she asked.

Little Johnny looks up and says, Well, when I showed up on that first day, seeing that poor guy nailed to the plus sign, I knew they weren't fooling around.

H2O

Teacher: "What is the chemical formula for water?"

Little Johnny: "HIJKLMNO."

Teacher: "What are you talking about?"

Little Johnny: "Yesterday you said it's H to O!"

FOR SALE

Quickie QM-710 Power Chair Package

Suitable for indoor and outdoor footpaths and good roads only. This chair has a safety tilt and also a hydraulic lift. Also has an air pocket seat. Adjustments have been made to suit client and are easily altered. Has only been used in nursing home to transfer client to bed using electric lift. Purchased new \$12,600 and used up until end of 2016.

Price: \$5,000 Negotiable

Email: robynsholly@hotmail.com (Robyn in Gisborne) (01/18#a)

V6 Compact 40 Powered Wheelchair

ROHO Cushion QS 910; Solid 12" drive wheels; Solid castor wheels; Power tilt; Neoprene covers; Curved MPS Back; lumbar roll; Double memory foam Dartex cover; Dynamics control system; Attendant control, Whitmyre Cobra headrest, 6" pad; Forehead strap Very little use. Purchased in 2015 for \$14,000.

Price: \$7,750

Phone: 0421 331 955 (Jill) or 0408 003 536 (Rod) (12/17#a)

Mobility Scooter - Invacare Comet - 4 Wheel Electric

Onyx Blue; Modified Seat; Suit Larger Person; Minor Cosmetic Damage

Price: \$800 ono

Phone: 0403 021 822 (Judy) (12/17#a)

2015 Kia Rio Sports with Hand Controls

Registered in January 2016. 3 door hatch, 4,600 kms, Still has 5 years new car warranty. Bright yellow zippy sports model. Very good condition, Extremely low kms. Owner no longer able to drive. Great buy. Hand Controls from Frank's Engineering.

Price: \$14,900 ono

Phone: 0429 968 305 (Georgia) (11/17#a)

Quickie Manual Wheelchair 2 Lite

Frame Width 19", Seat depth 15", Frame length regular. 24" lite spoke wheel. Backrest tension adjust Ballistic. Cost \$4500. Includes Roho Cushion 48x41cm. 10 x 9 cells. Brand new - never used. Reduced for quick sale.

Price: \$1,800

Phone: 0419 342 015 (Judi) (09/17#a)

2003 Toyota Noah Van Wagon

5door; Auto 4sp 2.0i (Wheelchair) X Disabled Rear Access (Sloper); Located in Melbourne VIC. Owned for 3 years and only selling since I have modified another car to drive for myself instead of being just a passenger. Very compact and easy to drive and park. Rego until June 2018. 129,537 kms; Rear Access (Sloper) Vehicle; Auto Transmission; 5 Seats + Wheelchair; Rear Air Suspension; Climate Control; 4 Cylinder 1AZ. Too many features to list here.

Price: \$19,900

Phone: 0402 676 983 (Steven) (09/17#a)

Wheelchair Ramp

120cmx80cm; Folds to 23cm ONLY 12kgs; Will take up to 300kgs in weight; Brand new - never used

Price: \$250 ono

Phone: 0419 342 015 (Judi) (09/17#a)

FOR SALE

Van Hoist / Lifting Machine

Van Hoist / Lifting Machine for wheelchair. Good condition.

Price: \$1,600

Phone: 0403 375 824 (David) (03/18#a)

REGAL - Electric King Single Bed

Adjustable hi/low bed; king single extra length; brand new 1 week old; fully electric; feet, head and whole bed raises up and down; cost \$3,800 bed and pressurized mattress cost \$1,500.

Price: \$2,300 ono

Phone: 0410 481 315 (Shaun) (01/18#a)

SMDM SG50 - Lifting Vehicle Hoist

The SG50 Lifting Hoist is designed to be floor mounted and can be laid flat in the vehicle when not in use. This dual pivot provides greater manoeuvrability of the scooter or wheelchair within the vehicle.

Price: \$2,500 ono

Phone: 0490 047 419 (Karla) (12/17#a)

Roho Cushion

Large size. Original box; 62(cm) x 56(cm) x 11(cm); 1 x Black Cover; 1 x Blue Waterproof Cover; Also have a Gel Cushion; All in Good Condition.

Price: \$450 ono

Phone: 0403 021 822 (Judy) (11/17#a)

Alternating Air Mattress ARJOHUNTLEIGH Auto Logic 110

Recently fully sterilised, wash, serviced and inspected by Arjohuntleigh; Only used it twice; New approximately \$7000; 1 x Auto Logic ArjoHuntleigh Air Pump; 1 x Auto Logic 110 Air Mattress; Height12cm Length203cm Width86cm

Price: \$2,500 or Best Offer

Phone: 0403 072 102 (Bruno) (11/17#a)

Smart Drive MXI+

Wheelchair Power Assist; hardly used; excellent condition; Purchased in 2015; new \$8,500.

Price: \$3,500

Phone: 0429 968 305 (Georgia) (03/17#a)

Jomor - Electric Single Bed

Adjustable height, min/max height 250mm - 720mm. Mattress included. Removable head and foot panels, Mattress size 900mm x 2030mm. Cost \$2,900 - reduced for quick sale.

Price: \$900

Phone: 0419 342 015 (Judi) (09/17#a)

Air Mattress

Sweden CuroCell S.A.M; Single 850mm x 2000mm Air mattress. User weight to 200kg; Hygienic cover; Anti-shear inner cover; Washable and tumble dry; Only used for 2 months; Cost \$1,950.

Price: \$900 ono

Phone: 0419 342 015 (Judi) (09/17#a)

CLASSIFIEDS

ITEMS FOR FREE

FREE - LIFT - BRUNS AMF HUBMATIK Linearlift

Lift from a van requires a new home.

Phone: 0411 222 592 (Lachie) (11/17#a)

FREE - COMPACT NELATON CATHETERS

Compact Nelaton Catheters - 18 Boxes x 30 pieces per box. Brand new

Phone: 9489 0777 (AQA Spire) (03/18#a)

FREE - LoFric Hydro-Kit

Nelaton 40cm CH 12/4.0mm - 15 Boxes x 20 pieces per box. Brand new

Phone: 9489 0777 (AQA Spire) (03/18#a)

FREE - Layleh Lifter - Ceiling Hoist

Max: 130Kgs - It is an old one. I have been told that the brushes need to be replaced. I have also been told an electrician or someone like that would be able to do it. Comes with 2 batteries and a charger.

Phone: 9509 0363 (Con) (02/18#a)

FREE - MERITS MAVERICK 14 - Power Wheelchair

Robust and stylish light rehab power chair, suitable for indoor and outdoor use; top speed of 8km/h and a range of up to 40km. Mid-wheel drive; Swing away joy stick; Height and width adjustable armrests; Height adjustable seat with reclining back rest; The chair is.

Phone: 0452 384 550 (Sorayya in Geelong) (01/18#a)

FOR SALE

Custom Lightweight Alloy Wheelchair

Top End Crossfire T6; 19" x 16"; Quick release Spinergy 24" black spoked wheels; ROHO cushion to match chair, dimensions; Location - Shepparton

Price: \$1,400 plus freight

Phone: 0428 292 421 (Geoff) (09/17#a)

Power Wheelchair

Karma KP-25 Foldable; Over \$3,000 new. Great for holidays. A bit of rust as it's been outside, but it works fine. No cushion.

Price: \$ 350.00 - Very Negotiable - All Offers Considered

Phone: 0413 474 525 (Peter) (09/17#a)

MORE CLASSIFIEDS

For a full list of classifieds and items for free, please visit www.spire.org.au/community/classifieds or contact us on 03 9489 0777 or info@spire.org.au.

SUPPORTING SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

Making a donation... (Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible)

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 Spire 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

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Expiry Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____