

Spire is a service division of AQA Victoria



Coronavirus - COVID 19

04



Finally Home

COMMUNITY

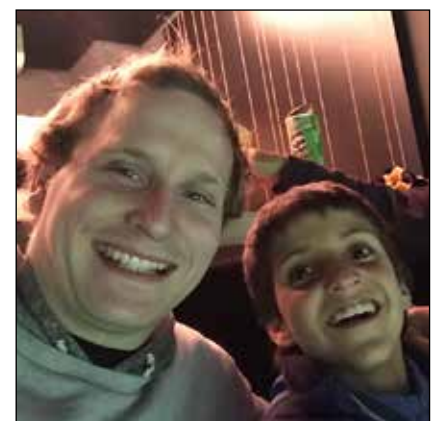
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Paraplegic to Parent

COMMUNITY

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Mexican Wedding

TRAVEL

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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

Looking through the last issue of NewsLink, there is a term that you will not find on any page – that term is CoVid19. How extraordinary that within just one cycle of NewsLink this global pandemic has disrupted so much of our lives, dominates the news and is generating great uncertainty and anxiety.

For those of you who have completed the Discovering the Power of Me short course facilitated by our team you will recall that part of a positive growth mindset is to be aware of the limitations in 'either / or' thinking and the importance of fostering 'options thinking'. One of the mottos we adopted in the context of the waves of uncertainty, anxiety and fear surrounding this CoVid19 pandemic is that we **Maintain Momentum - Emerge stronger**. This simple motto is keeping us in 'options thinking' mode and I'd like to acknowledge the work of all our staff, volunteers and our clients in adjusting the way we do things and in looking for new ways we can respond to and support our clients and community. In this issue you'll see lots of examples of this approach.

Maintain Momentum includes continuing to make investments in building our capability to deliver

on our purpose and this month we welcome Emma O'Brien to our team. Emma is an OT and has taken up a new position as Allied Health & Community Engagement Team Leader. Emma will contribute to all service and activity areas within our business and support the development of our Service Engagement, Support Coordination, and Information Services as well as supporting our peer and lived experience teams in developing peer led services to our community.

Finally I want to give a heartfelt shout out to our community based support workers. As we moved into Stage 3 social distancing restrictions, when the community's anxiety was high, and the message to the general community was to 'Stay at Home', our support workers continued to step outside their homes to deliver essential supports to our clients. The services our support workers provide are recognised essential and as such our support workers can feel comfortable that their travel to and from their clients is also essential. As is their accompanying clients to shopping, appointments or getting out to get some fresh air and exercise.

We are hearing a lot of love being



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expressed in the media & on social media for hospital & health workers. Our support workers are standing up and delivering support for the same reasons that healthcare workers are standing up and delivering care: because they know their services are needed by the people they support. While our staff are not getting a mention in public announcements, I encourage all of us to hear some of the love for hospital & health workers as being directed to our support workers.

HIGHLIGHTS

We hope you are coping well with the new world of coronavirus and all that comes with it including self isolation and distancing.

We have lots of content around COVID-19 starting on page 4. As with everyone else, we are learning to provide our services in a new way. On page 9 you can read how we have temporarily ceased all our face-to-face contact and moved our community networks online. By doing this, it has given some people, who couldn't usually join

us, the opportunity interact.

On page 10, Katherine Reed talks to us about how the general community perceives mothers who have a disability.

For those who have forgotten about what it's like to travel, Lachie O'Brien tells us about his extended holiday to South America. You can read his article on page 12.

On page 14, Emily Quattrocchi talks to us about her excitement of finally getting home after many months of rehab and staying in temporary

accommodation while her home was modified.

Remember to let us know if you'd like something included in future issues of NewsLink

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

June	1 st June 2020
August	1 st August 2020
October	1 st October 2020
December	1 st December 2020

COVID-19

We are living in unprecedented times, something which is new to us all. Below we have general information about what is COVID-19, how it spreads, what it all means for people with spinal cord injuries, how to protect yourself and your carers, and what to do if you are ill.

What you need to know about coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms include fever, coughing, a sore throat and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person, but good hygiene can prevent infection.

Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly.

People with coronavirus may experience:

- fever
- symptoms such as coughing, a sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath

How it spreads

The virus can spread from person to person through:

- close contact with an infectious person (including in the 24 hours before they had symptoms)
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

COVID-19 is a new disease, so there is no existing immunity in our community. This means that COVID-19 could spread widely and quickly.

Am I more at risk because I have a Spinal Cord Injury?

There isn't much known about how COVID-19 affects people with spinal cord injury.

We do know that people with health problems (like high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, or weak immune systems) may be at a higher risk of getting very sick if they get COVID-19.

We also know that people with quadriplegia or high paraplegia can get very sick if they get pneumonia or the flu.



We think that some (but not all) people with spinal cord injury may be at a higher risk of getting very sick if they are infected with COVID-19.

Protect yourself and others

Good hygiene and social distancing are two extremely important ways you can follow to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect those who are most at risk.

The more space between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

We want to try and prevent people getting COVID-19 infections. There are things we can all do to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

- Stay at least 1.5 metres away from others if possible.
- Cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze. Throw out used tissues.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitiser OR wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. (Try to do this before you eat, after coughing or sneezing, after using the toilet, or when you have been out of your home).
- Have your support workers wash their hands when they arrive at your home, and before they help you.

- Regularly clean items that are touched often (such as your phone, doorknobs, wheelchair controls, tables and remote controls).
- You should stay at home. Keep in touch with family and friends by the phone or computer.
- Do not spend time with anyone who has travelled overseas within the last 14 days.
- You don't need to wear a surgical mask if you are well.
- Ventilating your home or workplace

How to seek medical attention

If you are sick and think you have symptoms of COVID-19, seek medical advice. If you want to talk to someone about your symptoms, call the National Coronavirus Helpline (24 hours a day, seven days a week) for advice on 1800 020 080.

To seek medical help from a doctor or hospital, call ahead of time to book an appointment.

- Many cases of coronavirus infection can be managed safely at home. Not everyone needs to be in hospital.
- Please let your spinal cord service contact know if you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you have any other problem that you need help with.
- If you are concerned that you are becoming sick very quickly or are having breathing difficulty, you should call 000 straight away.
- If you need to go to hospital, tell the staff what your special care or equipment needs are (e.g. pressure care, appropriate shower chair and mattress etc).

My carer or support worker is sick and cannot help me

- If your carers or support workers are sick they should not have contact with you.
- Talk to your support provider about what will happen if a number of your carers need to take sick leave at the same time.
- Further useful information can be found at National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) - <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus>.

What else can I do?

- It is important to have a flu vaccination this year.
- Stop smoking if you can.

- Keep active. Eat well. Look after your mental health.
- Please contact your GP, your local spinal cord injury unit or community therapy team if you need any advice.



Updates

As AQA operates in the State of Victoria, the most relevant online resource for us is the Health and Human Services website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>. The website has a huge amount of information including daily updates. At the time of writing this article, we are on Stage 3 restrictions which generally means there are only 4 reasons to be out:

- shopping for what you need - food and essential supplies
- medical, care or compassionate needs
- exercise in compliance with the public gathering requirements
- work and study if you can't work or learn remotely

Wheelchair hygiene

For people with disabilities, and especially wheelchair users, the coronavirus poses unique challenges because wheelchairs are touched frequently and in many places. We've compiled the following coronavirus tips for wheelchair users to keep in mind when taking care of their mobility equipment and the environment around them. The following information was sent to us by one of our Qualcare clients.

In addition to taking care of your equipment, be sure to also take care of you! Wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds, especially before and after cleaning equipment, as well as anytime you arrive back at your home after being outside.

What to Clean With

Because the coronavirus can live for up to 72 hours on hard surfaces, it's important to conduct regular cleaning. To protect against the coronavirus, surfaces need to be both cleaned and disinfected. Beyond any type of cleaning you may already do to your chair you should also disinfect areas that are frequently touched.

- Surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water.
- Disinfect with EPA-approved wipes that contain at least a 70% alcohol solution, or other approved store-bought solutions. Do NOT use baby wipes.
- If you need to make a disinfectant solution, a suggestion is to use a spray bottle with one litre of water and four teaspoons of bleach.

Cleaning Components of your Chair

There are many, many components on a chair that are

touched frequently – by users and carers. Here's some items to keep in mind that should be disinfected anytime a new person comes in contact with your chair, or you leave and return to your home.

- Joystick
- Head controls
- Mouth controls
- Head rest
- Arm rests
- Side guards
- Back of the wheelchair
- Push handles
- Pushrims

Cleaning Other Assistive Equipment

Beyond your wheelchair, other frequently touched equipment and medical supplies should also be disinfected. These include:

- Any equipment that you handle or put near your mouth
- Oxygen tanks
- Steering wheel and door buttons on vehicles
- Transfer seats
- Medication or other items in your home
- A backpack or purse that touches your chair

Staying Safe When Going Out

If you are leaving the house, here are some extra

precautions to consider.

- If you have plastic gloves wear them when you are out of your home.
- DO NOT Touch your face with the plastic gloves and always clean anything you have touched after you dispose of the gloves.
- If you travel in a taxi, do not touch anything metal and avoid touching anything except your wheelchair.

If you have a carer

For those that rely on a carer, they should follow the same precautions and can help if you are unable to clean and disinfect surfaces yourself.

- Make sure carers have gloves on or are washing their hands when around you.
- Ask them to wipe down your wheelchair.
- If they are in your home, make sure they are disinfecting counters or places your (or their) hands touch.
- If the person assists you in personal care, be aware the virus is also in faecal matter. Gloves should be worn and disposed of when being assisted with bathroom use.
- If you are catheterizing, make sure you and your carer wash hands before and after catheterizing.

Mental Health during Self-Isolation

Some of the restrictions imposed on us like self-isolation, can have some serious implications to our health and wellbeing. Below are some ideas that can help relieve the situation, improve your skills, and improve your physical and mental health.

Structure Your Day and Keep Routines: Aim to get plenty of sleep, maintain physical activity, eat healthy foods and allocate specific work hours and breaks.

Media Coverage: Find a healthy balance and limit news and social media if you and your family find the constant bombardment of information about coronavirus too distressing.

Stay Connected and/or Seek Support: Keep in touch with your family, friends, colleagues or professional support services by phone, video call, social media or email.

Get Some Fresh Air: Just because your self-isolating doesn't mean you can't go outside. Make sure you get outside as much as possible, find a nice quiet park to get some fresh air and sunshine.

Sources of information: Access credible information from government and health authorities (i.e. Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Australian Government and World Health Organisation (WHO)).

Start a Garden: If you're lucky enough to have a bit of yard space, there's plenty of reasons to get a garden going. While we're not exactly at food shortage panic stations, you'll feel good knowing you're growing some veggies.

Learn a New Language: It's easier than ever to pick up a new language. There's plenty of options with online websites to learn a new language like Duolingo and Babel.

Read a Book: The benefits of reading books are countless. It's another thing that gets thrown by the way side in our fast-paced world. Mindlessly scrolling down Facebook isn't stimulating anything besides a heart attack.

Work on Your Fitness: While we understand the temptation to sit around the house and binge watch Netflix is going to be great, that makes it all the more important to try and establish some kind of fitness regime.

Become a MasterChef: Try your hand at cooking if you haven't already. Experiment with different

ingredients. You'll surprise yourself how good you are.

Organise Your Photos: Go down memory lane by reviewing your photos. Your phone's photo folder is probably scattered with thousands of snaps documenting your life in the past few years. Sort them into folders and delete the rubbish ones.

Clean The House: Now is the perfect opportunity to finally get your house in clean order. Not only is it essential for hygiene, it's essential for piece of mind that the place your spending the most time in looks and feels clean and tidy.

Take an Online Course: There are online courses for literally everything these days, so if there's a hobby or particular skill you've always thought you wanted to try, there is no time like the present.

Take virtual tours of museums: Even though museums are closed and we aren't able to travel, you can visit 500 museums around the world <https://archpaper.com/2020/03/google-arts-culture-over-500-virtual-museums/#gallery-0-slide-0>

Victorian Zoos livestream: Watch live-stream cameras from Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee Open Range Zoo. The keepers have brought their talks to life through video <https://www.zoo.org.au/animals-at-home/>.



Flu Shot

Each year the elderly and people with disabilities are encouraged to get the flu vaccine to protect them as their immune systems are reduced compared to others in the community. AQA staff member John Theodoropoulos has had a C5 incomplete spinal injury for over 20 years. In the past, he has never felt the need to get vaccinated against the flu, however this year he thought twice, especially because of the complications the coronavirus can cause.

When I had my injury, I was only 24 years of age. I was encouraged by my doctors (both Spinal & local G.P.s) to vaccinate against the seasonal influenza (flu) during the winter months when it is at its most rampant stage. For individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) at any age, immunosuppression or the way your body responds to bacteria and viruses is not as strong. This is because after a SCI, messages about viruses and bacteria may not be transmitted to the brain correctly for the body to initiate an early response.

Until this year I had resisted the flu shot as I believed my immune system had stood me firm. I would generally battle through the winter months with a sore throat, heavy cough and constant runny nose and know that it was not a big deal as it would pass. I was not particularly worried about having those symptoms again this year and overcoming another winter with the flu – that was until a little virus by the name of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) entered the scene.

The COVID-19 attaches itself in your respiratory system particularly in the lungs. In many individuals with high-level SCI, their breathing and ability to cough is affected mainly because of the lack of or reduction of the abdominal muscles.

Having the knowledge about how COVID-19 can affect my body if contaminated, made me question my previous thoughts about the flu vaccine and what positive effect it may have on me this year.

I envisaged two scenarios for myself before making my final decision:

1. Having the flu shot: The flu vaccine would protect me from the winter flu allowing my immune system to stay stronger in case I also got the COVID-19 and had to fight that.

2. Not having the flu shot: I could possibly get the flu. But if I got both the flu and COVID-19, my body could suffer enormously trying to recover. My immune system will take a battering that it may lose.

The Flu vaccine DOES NOT in any way cure, suppress or ease the COVID-19 virus. If you contract the COVID-19, you are in for a battle no matter what.

Thus, last week, I made the decision to vaccinate so as to place myself in a stronger and better position to protect and fend off any foreign invaders that may take a fancy to my respiratory system.



Community Networks moving online

For the timebeing, AQA Spire has ceased all face-to-face community network meetings because of the need to self-distance brought on by the coronavirus. We have moved them to an online video conferencing platform called "Zoom". You can participate in the meetings using your computer or smartphone, and choose to connect with video or just audio.

So far, all of our Community Networks have adapted well to their first video conferencing in place of their regular physical meetings. We are excited to bring online meetings to all of our Community Networks to continue engaging with different members of the community. In fact, it has expanded the options for those who usually can't attend because of distance or transport issues.

Geelong Network

The Geelong Network meets on the third Wednesday of each month. The Network was the first group to try video conferencing since AQA Spire went online. For many people, it was their first time video conferencing or first time being a part of the group. Everyone found it easy to get online and enjoyed being a part of the discussion.

Shepparton-Echuca Network

The Shepparton-Echuca Network meet on the first Wednesday of each month. The network is targeted at people from Echuca, Shepparton, Rochester and Alexandra.

Gippsland Network

The Gippsland Network typically meets on the second Tuesday of each month to engage in different activities and events. The network is open to all but targeted at people mainly from the Gippsland area.

Bendigo Network

The Bendigo Network meet on the second Thursday of the month. In March, the Network met with the City of Greater Bendigo Council. The network is targeted at people from the Bendigo and surrounding areas.

Mornington Network

The Mornington Network meets on the third Monday of each month for a fun and informal gathering. The network is welcoming to all but attract people from the Mornington area.

Ballarat-Bacchus Marsh Network

The Ballarat Network meet on the third Thursday of the month and alternates meeting between Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh. The network enjoyed their first online meeting. They look forward to welcoming people from all over the Central Highlands, Bacchus Marsh and Melton areas.

Professionals with SCI network

The SCIP network meets every three months and aims to support people with SCI or similar physical complex disability in all aspects of career development. The first meeting of the year has been postponed due to changes in circumstances by the TAC.

Women with SCI Network

The Women with SCI Network is informed and led by women living with SCI. In April, the network had their first online meeting and shared their lived experience on women-specific issues in a safe, honest and open space.

If you are interested in joining any of the Community Networks online, please let us know and we will give you all the details to join the meeting using Zoom.

For further information, please visit www.spire.org.au/community/community-networks. If you're interested in getting involved, please contact us on 03 9489 0777 or info@spire.org.au.



Paraplegic to Parent

Kathrine Reed had a traumatic spinal injury a few years ago at the age of 19. She has done a lot since including getting married and having two beautiful babies. She is a very open person and enjoys talking to people, hoping to educate them along the way. However she is amused and angered at some of the inappropriate questions people ask her.

I was talking to a friend recently about parenting with a disability. Shelley and I have both spent many years using wheelchairs in order to lead a full life (in her case for her whole life). We talked about how ingrained ableist attitudes are in our society, so much so that we even contribute to them ourselves.

I met Shelley when we were both playing wheelchair basketball, a lifestyle that led both of us to really underestimate just how difficult it can be for people in Australia living with a disability. We were both young and fit athletes, often traveling in a team.

Now, as mums, less young, less fit, with a whole lot more responsibility and a whole lot less support. We are seeing things from a different point of view.

While Shelley used to be able to handle a couple of small steps with a baby on her lap, those two steps are suddenly a whole lot bigger now. We both find ourselves in situations where we have had to hand our babies to complete strangers (something that is a risk in itself), in order to access parts of our communities. A third friend, also an old team-mate, recently shared a post on social media about the way

able bodied people talk to us about our disabilities. Now I am someone who has always been quite comfortable talking about my disability. I've always taken the attitude that the more people know, the better equipped they are to treat you appropriately. This post though, addressed the fact that what is actually happening, if a complete stranger is asking you a whole heap of incredibly personal and often invasive questions, with barely a 'hello' to preface it. How would we consider this appropriate behaviour in any other situation? Shelley shared how she was doing groceries one day when a woman stopped to say hello to her baby, before turning and asking her if she had a caesarean or vaginal delivery. I've had many people ask me when I was pregnant

if I'd have to have a caesarean delivery. Now yes, women often share our birth stories, but usually with people we know, or at the very least, within context (God knows I probably share mine more than people want me to lol!).

By answering these questions, I've been reinforcing this behaviour. I don't know how the next person they ask these questions to will feel about it. We accept that sexual assault is a traumatic and personal experience and treat people accordingly. For many people with an acquired injury, their story can be just as traumatic (and it's nigh on impossible to tell from looking at someone how long they've had their disability). For these people to be asked 'what happened to you?', while going about their business, can be just very distressing. And don't get me started on 'what's wrong with you?' I actually lead a very full and happy life. The only thing 'wrong' is society's perception of my ability.

I find it secretly amusing when someone sees me out alone and



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offers me some encouraging words, telling me I do a good job getting my chair out of the car or some other mediocre task. I know they mean well, but it just shows how little we expect of people with disabilities. I'm capable of so much more. I find it amusing because I wonder what those same people will think next time they see me, with my two small children where we live in a small town.

I think my disability makes me a better parent. I know it makes me a more considerate, patient and empathetic person. I know I can take an extra breath (most of the time) when I watch my toddler struggle to get dressed, because I have a very real understanding and memory of how frustrating it is learning to do those things. Learning to dress yourself again as a 19-year-old is a very humbling experience. I am reminded of myself trying to learn to sit up again, to roll over, and to shuffle across the floor reach for something out of my grasp, as I watch my babies struggle to do the same.

I will still answer peoples questions, because I still believe that the more we know, the better we can respond, but I feel the need now to also gently remind people to consider if they would ask an able bodied person such intimate details, or how they'd feel if a stranger approached them to ask them such personal questions.

Now, I'm off to go fill out a highly invasive, totally irrelevant NDIS questionnaire...

How to Make Your Own Hand Sanitizer

When it comes to preventing the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19, nothing beats good old-fashioned hand washing. But if water and soap aren't available, your next best option is to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Unless you have a stockpile of store-bought hand sanitizer, you'll likely have a hard time finding any at a store or online right now. Due to the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus, most retailers can't keep up with the demand for hand sanitizer.

The good news? All it takes is three ingredients to make your own hand sanitizer at home. Read on to find out how.

What you'll need:

- 3/4 cup of isopropyl or rubbing alcohol (99 percent)
- 1/4 cup of aloe vera gel

(to help keep your hands smooth and to counteract the harshness of alcohol)

- 10 drops of essential oil, such as lavender oil, or you can use lemon juice instead

Directions:

- Pour all ingredients into a bowl, ideally one with a pouring spout like a glass measuring container.
- Mix with a spoon and then beat with a whisk to turn the sanitizer into a gel.
- Pour the ingredients into an empty bottle for easy use, and label it "hand sanitizer."



Mexican Wedding

Mentor Lachie O'Brien has been a C7 Quad for 10 years and is very independent and lives on his own. He took up hand cycling after being discharged from hospital, and currently spends most of his time training and competing. He also works in a market research centre. As you can see he likes to keep himself busy. Below he speaks to us about his recent trip to Mexico for his sister's wedding.

My trip got off to a trying start due to my plane sitting on the tarmac for an agonizing three hours before finally taking off. I sat there thinking about sipping margaritas on the beach, just to pass the time.

The plan was to fly to LA Airport, where I would take a connecting flight to Cancun in Mexico. My changeover was originally meant to be four hours but when I landed in LA, due to the time zone and the delay, there was only one hour until my next flight.

Given that people in wheelchairs are last to leave the plane, and my baggage would have to be checked in again, it would be impossible to make my next flight.

Luckily Qantas had organized new flights to allow me enough time to make my next flight... problem being that instead of going straight to Cancun, I had to fly to San Francisco then down to Cancun. And there was a 10-hour wait between flights (sounds like an episode of *The Amazing Race*).

As I always remain positive, I looked at it as an adventure, even if it may be just exploring the airport terminals and lounges. It's amazing how quickly time passes when you are just enjoying pushing around and exploring shops

and coffee lounges. Plus the Americans love the sound of a good old Aussie accent.

After a 10 hour wait, I was finally back on the plane and heading towards Mexico. I could practically taste the Margaritas and smell the surf and sand of Envision Beach.

I arrived at the Cancun International Airport at 6.30 am and was met there by my sister. She had organized an accessible van but it was not accessible.

No problem: I transferred in the side door, bummed up two steps then up into the van seat. Due to my track cycle training and competing I had developed the strength needed to complete these actions.

I was the first of all the guests invited to the wedding to arrive at the Akumal Principe resort. Everyone else arrived three days later. I finally got my Margherita by the beach. I was in paradise! What an absolutely stunning place.

The wedding ceremony was so beautiful, with Amando (my sister's husband) and his family - who were mostly Mexican and Americans - all in tears.

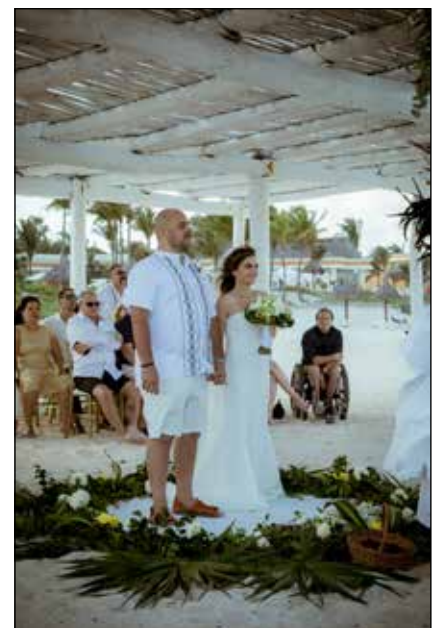
We spent the rest of the week eating and drinking by the pool with some sight-seeing thrown in. Special mention goes to my brother carrying me down a

huge amount of steps to get to the cenote (a really clear pool of naturally formed water).

After an amazing week at the resort mingling with the wedding guests, it was time to part ways. Amando and his parents, as well as my mum, sister and I, hopped into a rental van and drove to Merida, after viewing the amazing scenery and stopping in Cuba to check out a 40 metre high pyramid. It was surreal to see police officers casually stopping people with their machine guns just hanging around their necks. Luckily we were fine!

After driving a further four hours, we arrived in Merida. Merida is different than most places in Mexico as it is very accessible and a lot calmer. While there, I learnt to make Ceviche from Amando's mum and learnt to speak Spanish, not fluently but enough to be understood.

After a week of delicious food we headed back to Cancun



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International where I would depart on my own for my New Orleans leg of my adventure.

Thankfully my flights went smoothly and I got to my hostel safe and sound. I shared a room with three others. Amazingly, the bathroom was accessible -- which just made things so much more comfortable.

Once I was settled in, it was time to hit the bright lights and music of New Orleans. I pushed the two kilometres to Bourbon St in the French quarter. I could not believe my eyes when I arrived. There are so many bars, clubs, and restaurants with people everywhere. It was just crazy. I had an insane night.

Unfortunately I lost my wallet, which created so many problems. I had to spend the next day fixing the problems of losing my wallet.

Thankfully I still managed to go out and experience the rest of the French quarter of town. It was very quiet compared to Bourbon St, with so many beautiful French style homes lit up with gorgeous lanterns. Such incredible architecture. That was the night I fell in love with New Orleans.

The next day I was back on my feet so to speak. I'd sorted myself out financially and spent the next week eating some of the world's best foods and listening to amazing Jazz music. Before I knew it, it was time to gather my belongings and get ready for the next leg, South America.

The Louis Armstrong International Airport was the

departure point of the last leg of my journey. I waited at the departure gate for an assistant to arrive with my aisle chair. I transferred into it and was pushed onto the plane, where I transferred into an aisle seat.

I was planning on spending most of my time in Uruguay and a few weeks in Argentina, four months in total. As part of the program from the school I attended, I volunteered to talk to the students about Australia and my life. I really enjoyed talking and connecting with the students.

Throughout the whole trip, the biggest challenge that I faced was speaking the language and the inaccessible environment of Uruguay. But where there is a will, there is a way. So I managed to travel on transport with the help of a lady friend that I had met.

She would often carry my chair as I bummed myself upstairs. We ate some incredible food and experienced a different culture. I met amazing people who now are great friends - some I even call my family.

This trip really helped me break down the physical and mental barriers, and most of all FIND a way to travel where I wanted, when I wanted.



Get dancing in your own home

Dance & Roll has a great new venue – your house!

The weekly dance group is now hosting online classes using Zoom.

You can join in every Thursday night from 6-7pm from the comfort of your own home.

If you'd like more information, including the details of how to join the class online, you can contact Rocca by –

- P: 0408 523 742
- E: roccasalcedo@hotmail.com



Finally home

Having a traumatic injury is a major life changing situation. Patients just want to complete their rehab and return to their community as soon as they can. But as you'll see below, things don't happen as quickly as you want them. Emily Quattrocchi gives us an insight in her journey to get home after her SCI and self-isolate because of the coronavirus.

364 days... Not quite a year but almost. That's the amount of time I spent at Quest Bundoora in temporary accommodation waiting for my home in Euroa (180 km from Melbourne) to be modified. This was after spending 207 days in hospital.

So after 571 days I am finally home, I have never been so happy to be home.

To be in my hometown where my family is, where my friends are and where I am in a home that is modified to work with me and the way I do things, is the best feeling.

Although there are parts of Melbourne, I miss, such as the friends I made, different activities I was a part of and my beloved sport cheerleading. Little old Euroa doesn't have a cheerleading team. I know one day I will be back doing all those things, but for now I am enjoying home, there really is no place like home.

After coming home, I was finally ready to get back to the life I knew before my accident; of spending time with friends, lunch at cafes, a hit of tennis or a few too many at the pub. But this was quickly cut short.

As you and everyone will have heard, there's a virus that affected our way of living this year. Those of us with spinal cord injuries have to be careful and cautious about

COVID-19, or otherwise known as coronavirus. This means no catching up with friends, no lunch at cafes and no drinks at the pub.

This did put a damper on my return home and getting back to what I thought would be a normal life because I am now in isolation. But as much as I love chatting to the nurses, I do not want to go back to hospital. So, I'm being careful.

I am stuck in my beautiful modified home. Being isolated is difficult and it is not what I was expecting or hoping for this year. Yes, there are things I can't do, but there are things I can do. What I can do is what I am focussing on.

I can strengthen my muscles with some old equipment that was lying around the house. So that by the time I can cheerlead again, I will be stronger and ready to try the skills I want to try. I tell you now, one day I am



going to hold a person up by myself again.

I can learn and study my passion and the thing I love which is filmmaking. I am learning so much and am even going to try and make a short film by myself while I'm in self isolation.

I can make more YouTube videos for my YouTube channel. I hope my honest videos help at least someone, plus I have so much fun making them. I wouldn't be a real YouTuber if I didn't tell you to check out my channel Em Quattrocchi.

I am practising my wheelchair



■ *continued on next page*

Volunteer BBQ

Volunteers play a huge part in all aspects of what we do as an organisation from peer support to video journalism. Earlier this year, we held our annual Volunteer BBQ at Altona beach to show our appreciation and to share our experiences.

The BBQ was a huge success with well over 50 people attending. Other than AQA staff, participants included our volunteer mentors, people from the Royal Talbot, and people recently discharged from rehab. Many also came along with their family and friends.

We had people come from all around Victoria, with one person driving over 4 hours to get there... what a great effort. This person is very isolated and is still coming to terms with their spinal injury. Taking part in the BBQ was the best thing they had done in over four years.

It was also fantastic to see others from our community, who again are isolated for various reasons, come and take the opportunity to share stories, get some motivation and socialise with our mentors.

The weather was perfect and we had a great BBQ as you can see from the pictures. Altona beach has a number of beach



wheelchairs and a beach mat that allows you to get over the sand and into the water.

Special thanks to Altona Life Saving club as well as Hobsons Bay City Council for helping put everything together.



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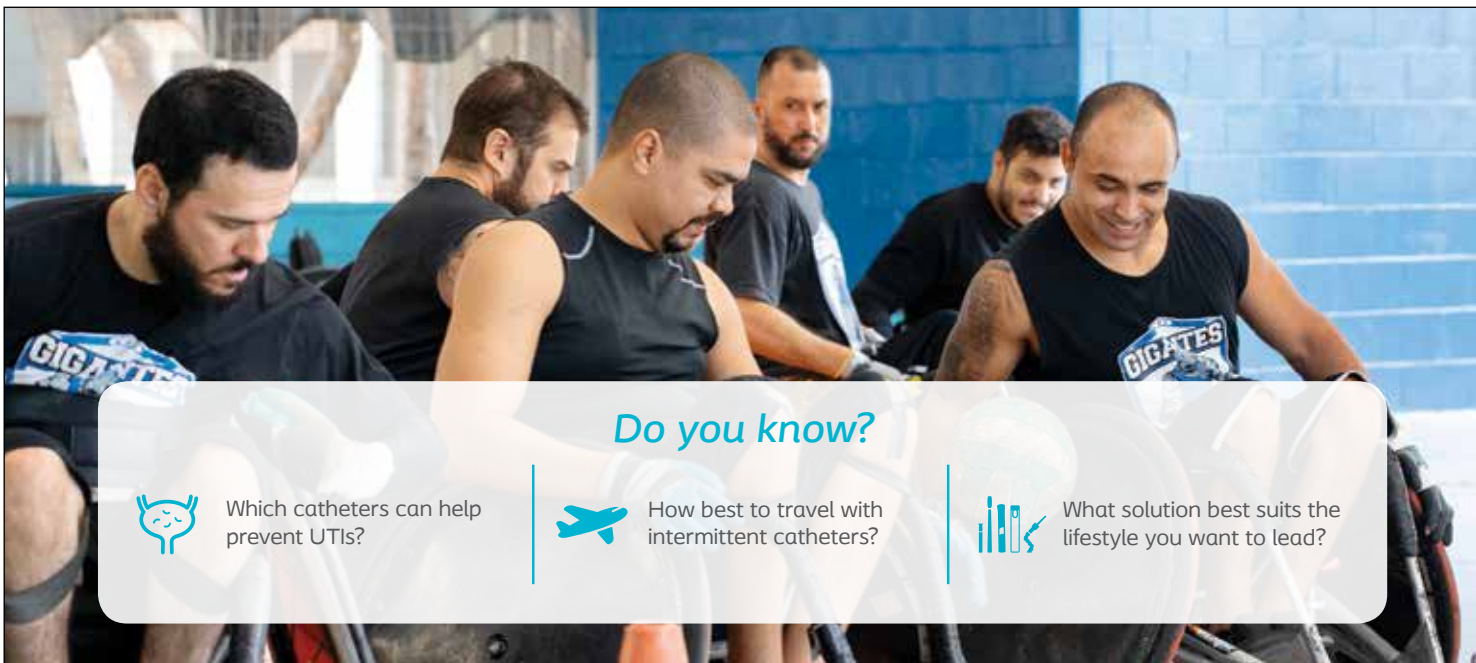
skills, one day I will be able to get up and down stairs by myself in my wheelchair.

I get to spend some quality time with mum. Yes, I moved back in with mum, but right now I am so grateful I did. Luckily we have a door in between the two parts of the house that can be locked from both sides. This will come in handy when I can invite people over for parties again.

The things I am doing might not interest you,

but they are some things that I love doing and they are helping me reach my goals this year. Sure I might not check off my going overseas goal but there's plenty of other goals that I can.

Although we are going through something that can be annoying or a little scary, I can definitely say that I am so happy to finally be home and I am going to enjoy every day I can in my beautiful little home... well in my modified garage that's connected to mum's house.



Do you know?



Which catheters can help prevent UTIs?



How best to travel with intermittent catheters?



What solution best suits the lifestyle you want to lead?

Coloplast IC Care Program

Helping you get where you want to be

The IC Care Program can help answer your questions!

With IC Care you get:



Website

Dedicated website with articles and reliable advice



Continence Check

Exclusive Continence Check self-assessment tool to track your bladder health



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Advisers ready to answer questions and provide support over the phone



Welcome Kit

A welcome kit with helpful products to keep good hygiene



Funding expertise

Support with the NDIS and funding for Continence needs

Our Care specialist team are experts in conversations about



Continence products



Lifestyle questions



Support with funding

...and are able to continue these conversations after the consultation with you

To register for the IC Care Program:

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VALE - THELMA LILLIAN SPICE

AQA relies on the huge support our volunteers play in supporting many of our projects. Sadly earlier in April, one of our long time mentors Thelma Lillian Spice passed away. Thelma was one of our original Peer Support volunteers.

Thelma was a warm, well respected, and a generous woman who listened and shared her life's journey with the view of motivating and encouraging others with SCI.

Condolences to all her family and friends. Rest In Peace Thelma 28/1/32 - 12/4/20.

Below is a picture of her receiving an award for 10 years of volunteering service with us during our Celebration event at the end of



WOMEN WITH SCI NETWORK

Every woman living with a SCI has great knowledge, experiences and skills that could be shared to help form strong community and networking opportunities. At Spire, our aim is to facilitate the development and continuity of network groups that can eventually take ownership and coordinate themselves, while still being supported by Spire's people and resources.

The women's network is passionate and enthusiastic about providing a safe, honest and open space that is informed and led by women living with a spinal injury. The group meets on the first Saturday every two months, participates in information sessions and practical classes, and provides the opportunity to share views, ideas and opinions.

If you would like to commit to this group but have other life commitments, or you are interested in just attending or contributing to specific events (e.g. workshops, seminars or information sessions), you can pick and choose what suits you!

If you are a women living with a spinal injury and interested in joining the group, please get in touch with us at info@spire.org.au. We would love to have you involved, and have you help us continue to build and make this network successful.

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 with a spinal cord injury and their family that support them.

Spire uses the value of people with lived experience of SCI to provide peer-facilitated and peer-informed services & supports to others living with SCI to help them deal with the issues of life.

We invite you to consider making a donation to help maintain and grow Spire's resources and services. Whatever sum you donate will assist us to provide services to people with Spinal Cord Injury.

Online: www.spire.org.au/support-us/donate

By Phone: 03 9489 0777, please have your credit card available (Mastercard, Visa, American Express).

By Mail Please call us and we will post you a Donation Form.

Use our lived experience to get the most out of your NDIS plan

We can assist you in building your capacity to implement your plan, connect with services and achieve your plan goals.

NDIS Support Coordination | Personal Development | Personal Care | Community Participation



03 9489 0777
ndis@aqavic.org.au
www.aqavic.org.au



FOR SALE

Ti-Lite Manual Wheelchair

Titanium; Light weight; Fold Up; Swing Away & Detachable Footplates

Price: Best Offer

Phone: 5263 2150 (Kevin) (10/18#a)

2004 Chrysler Grand Voyager

211,500 Kms; Good Condition; RWC; Fitted out by Capital Conversions; Auto Side Door & Ramp; Docking System to Drive from Chair; Suit C5 /C6.

Price: \$20,000

Phone: 5756 2016 (Phil) (02/20#a)

2014 Renault Kangoo

Black in colour; Only 22,000 kms; Bought in 2014. At the time if underwent \$30,000 in modifications to allow for the back of the car to house a wheelchair; Full service history; Receipts of any work/modifications done to the car; Air conditioned; Automatic; Cruise control; Electric windows etc... Recently went to be checked out by a mechanic in Malvern who said the car is roadworthy and no work is needed; Rego has only been paid recently, so the purchaser won't need to pay this till the end of next year; Very comfortable to drive; Asking \$28,000 (negotiable); This which is extremely good value given the amount of kms and original investment (over 60k)

Price: \$28,000 Negotiable

Email: steve@escor.com.au (Steve) (12/19#a)

2003 Toyota Noah Van Wagon

6st 5door; Auto 4sp 2.0i (Wheelchair) X Disabled Rear Access (Sloper); Located in Melbourne VIC. Owned for 4 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. Cosy spacious interior with beige velour. Recently serviced. Very clean and well looked after vehicle. Previous non-smoker owner. Ramp unfolds and car lowers down within seconds. It will come with a roadworthy certificate so you don't have to do the running around. The vehicle registration is paid for until June 2019. It represents great value at \$16,500. Details: Travelled 135,537 kms; Rear Access (Sloper) Vehicle; Auto Transmission; 5 Seats + Wheelchair; Rear Seats can lift up (3rd Row); (5th Seat not shown in pics as it was removed for fastener/easier access but will re-attach before sold); Electric Rear Ramp - Fully Operate By Button: Up / Down; Rear Air Suspension; Auto Climate Control; Economical 2.0lt - 4 Cylinder 1AZ Engine Bonus!!!!; Aftermarket - Built In Eonon M1 Head Unit; Features: - 6.2" Digital Touchscreen, GPS Navigation (Included Maps on 4GB Micro SD Card), AM/FM Radio/CD/DVD Player, Micro SD Slot, Bluetooth For MP3/Calls (Never used), Mobile Screen Mirroring - (Never used); Automatic Reverse Camera - (Displays when car is put into R Gear); Proximity Sensors; Registration Nos: 1EV 5WP; Registration Expires: 19/06/18; VIN: 6U900AZR600232480; Engine Nos: 1AZ4644660; Serial Nos: 1878673; Tare: 1,530kg; Length: 4560mm; Width: 1690mm; Height: 1850mm.

Price: \$16,500

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

Trailer for Electric Wheelchairs

Trailer holds two large electric wheelchairs or the smaller electric Wheelchairs; Specially made for me by TRIK Trailers in 2017; Features Include: Two hand winches; Ramps; Front stabilizers; Spare Tyre; 3 months registration until June 20; Wheel Lock; Size of tray: 2.4 x 1.5 metres; Overall size: 3.9 x 2.0 metres; Can be attached to any car with a tow bar; Used 4 times, like new.

Price: \$3,000 - Negotiable

Phone: 0408 594 129(Philomena) (02/20#a)

FOR SALE

Bruno Wheelchair Lift

Bruno Out-rider PUL-1100 lifts - Manual chair into back of ute; Only used 6 months; Installed by Mobility Plus; Stored indoors; Manual and parts

Price: \$1,800

Phone: 0418 314 006 (Kate) (02/20#a)

Wymo Wheelchair Hoist

Used; Good Condition.

Price: \$600

Phone: 0402 204 992 (Colin) (01/20#a)

Theraquatics Aquafit

Posture Pillow; Adult Size

Price: \$10

Phone: (03) 9792 5321 (Gwyneth) (11/19#a)

Monark Rehab Trainer with Adjustable Stand

Monark Rehab Trainer 881E with Adjustable Stand

Price: \$1,500 ONO

Phone: 0432 566 930 (Selina) (10/19#a)

Tyres (x13)

13 of 12 " Wheels with new bearings; Never used. Sell as package. Pick up only from Strathfieldsay.

Price: \$10 Each

Phone: 0439 553 380 (Graeme) (09/19#a)

Portable Ramp

Folding; 3 Foot long; 28Inch wide.

Price: Best Offer

Phone: 5263 2150 (Kevin) (08/19#a)

Easylift Liftboy II

Manufactured by Lehner in Germany and tested to all Australian specifications and approvals; Virtually brand new - Used for 1 week only; Suitable for indoor and outdoor use - fully waterproof; 240V plug in - no hard wiring or hydraulics required; Suitable for a max. lift height of 830mm, or any required height in between, maximum lift weight of 300kg, user and attendant capable; This lift can be packed up and moved in less than 10 minutes! A fully mobile or permanent solution for the home or business; The unit was \$12,000 brand new.

Price: \$6,500

Phone: 0438 008 584 (Gerard) (06/19#a)

ITEMS FOR FREE

Wheels (x2)

No axles; Used; To be picked up - Strathfieldsay.

Phone: 0439 553 380 (Graeme) (09/19#a)

Tyres & Rims (x2)

26 Inch; Schwable tyres; No axles; Used; Pick up - Strathfieldsay.

Phone: 0439 553 380 (Graeme) (09/19#a)



Did you know AQA is registered not only to provide standard needs assistance with self-care activities and community participation but also high intensity?



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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