

Spire is a service division of AQA Victoria



Lady With a Cucumber

16



AQA Celebration Event 2020

COMMUNITY

12



How DPM Helps Achieve & Maintain Positive Mindset

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

14



Colouring In with Ben

LEISURE / HOBBIES

18

AQA Victoria Ltd
ABN 90 006 691 185

Address
416 Heidelberg Road
Fairfield Victoria 3078

T 03 9489 0777
T 1800 999 128
F 03 9482 4371
E admin@aqavic.org.au
W www.aqavic.org.au

Postal Address
PO Box 219
Fairfield Victoria 3078

Board of Directors

Chairperson
Michelle O'Sullivan

Treasurer
Alasdair McMillan

Company Secretary
David Schreuder
Director

Dave Jacka

Director
Kylie Thitchener

Director
Joe Rose'Meyer

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.

Information in Spire NewsLink is furnished solely as a guide to the existence and availability of goods or services.

Any opinions expressed in Spire NewsLink are not necessarily those of AQA or the Editor. Original material in NewsLink can only be reproduced with permission from the editor. Donations towards production costs are greatly appreciated.

Copyright © Spire. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

INFORMATION

4 New Victoria State Government Incentive

4 CarePort Portable Bathroom Solution

COMMUNITY NETWORKS

5 Online Community Networks

HEALTH

10 Solving common bowel problems resource

LEISURE

11 FishAbility by Fishcare Victoria

COMMUNITY

12 AQA Celebration Event 2020

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

14 How "Discovering the Power in Me" Helps Achieve & Maintain Positive Mindset

LEISURE / HOBBIES

18 Colouring In with Ben

REGULAR FEATURES

HISTORY OF AQA

6 History of AQA 4: The pioneering of peer support

FEATURE ARTICLE

16 Lady With a Cucumber

CLASSIFIEDS

19 Various items for sale and items for free

ADVERTISEMENTS

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

Volume 34: Number 06 / December 2020

FROM THE CEO

In our Annual Report this year we opened by paraphrasing Charles Dickens; "It was the worst of times, it was the best of times, it was the winter of despair, it was the spring of hope", acknowledging that 2020 and its global pandemic has cost some people dearly, and for everyone else has changed the way we go about our lives and challenged our thinking about what's important and what's possible.

We repeated our heartfelt thanks to all our community based support workers, and we acknowledged the creativity and efforts of our people in coordinating, administration and leadership roles who coordinated our response to fast emerging and changing CoVid advice and requirements. AQA people have achieved remarkable things, often within impossible timelines, and have done so calmly and positively, seeking out the opportunity to play a part. In what has often felt like 'the winter of despair', our people have maintained momentum, and created the opportunity to emerge into 'the spring of hope'.

2019 – 2023 represents a strategic

window in which AQA is investing in the capabilities and capacity of the organisation in order to benefit those clients and community we will serve across the next 10 -15 years. In short, our Strategic Intent (2019 – 2023) is to Scale our Impact by Empowering Our People, Empowering our Clients and Building our Sustainability. We encourage you to look through our Annual Report 2020, available via the website, to get a sense of the progress made to our purpose.

At the AGM in November, it was great to see Dave Jacka re-elected as Director and we all look forward to working with Dave in 2021. Alexia Myrtle advised that she would not seek re-election and would stand down from the Board. Among a range of competing priorities, 2020 saw Alexia welcome her first child into the world. Alexia commenced in 2017 and has played an important part in strengthening the Board's approach to Govern strategically in a fast changing external environment. Alexia played a key role in supporting the Board and CEO at a formative time for AQA, including



Peter Trethewey
Chief Executive Officer
petertrethewey@aqavic.org.au

some significant investments in a new Office environment that will underpin our service culture, and a Digital Transformation Program, that will build our capacity to scale our impact and position the organisation for the future. Alexia always led by example, and was respected by all for her mix of clear and strategic thinking, practical advice and collaborative style. We all wish her well.

Finally, everyone at AQA wishes you and your loved ones a happy and safe summer season. We're looking forward to 2021 and to keeping connected with our community.

HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to the December 2020 issue of NewsLink. Well done Victoria... well done Australia for keeping Covid numbers to a minimum. Hopefully we can enjoy the festive season the way we have in the past.

On page 6, you can read part 4 in the series of AQA's history: The pioneering of peer support. The article talks about how informal visits to spinal-injury wards grew into a state-wide network of trained peer-support mentors and coaches.

On page 10, you can read about the new resource from The Continence Foundation of Australia. The resource aims to solve common bowel problems for people with spinal cord injuries.

On page 11, we introduce the FishAbility program. Their aim is to increase the active engagement of Victorians living with a disability into recreational

fishing. In February 2021, FishAbility and AQA will run a "Come & Try Day" in Melbourne. Contact us if you are interested.

This year AQA held our Celebration Event online for the very first time. It was great to look back at our achievements in the past year and talk about what we were looking forward to in 2021. We also acknowledged all our great people including staff, supporters and volunteers. Turn to page 12 to read more.

For the first time, we also held our Discovering the Power in Me course online. DPM is designed to motivate and help participants set achievable goals. You can read the article on page 14.

On page 16, you can read Emily Quattrocchi's experience of taking a train to Warrnambool independently for the first time. This was on her 'to do'

list before Covid put a spanner in the works.

With the support of his local community, Ben Winwood was encouraged to compile his love of art into a colouring book. Read the story on page 18.

Finally, we hope you enjoy the Festive Season and make use of the fantastic weather, to catch up on what we missed during 2020.

Below are next year's contribution deadlines for the upcoming editions of NewsLink:

February	1 st February 2021
April	1 st April 2021
June	1 st June 2021
August	1 st August 2021
October	1 st October 2021
December	1 st December 2021

New Victoria State Government Incentive

In an effort to boost regional tourism, and support regional restaurants, pubs, hotels, wineries and small businesses after a year of bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions, Premier Daniel Andrews has unveiled a \$465 million Victorian Tourism Recovery Package.

Aiming to attract more visitors to regional Victoria, the Victorian Budget 2020/21 has announced that up to 120,000 vouchers each worth \$200 will be available to entice more people to visit and stay in regional Victoria.

Under the new initiative, Victorians will be able to apply for the \$200 vouchers as long as they spend at least \$400 on accommodation, attractions or tours in regional Victoria.

The scheme is expected to be up and running in December, ensuring the benefits are felt this summer – when businesses need it most.

For further information, please visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/regional-travel-voucher-scheme>

HAVE YOU GOT A STORY TO TELL?

We're always on the lookout for interesting, inspiring or unusual stories from our community.

We are currently seeking volunteer contributors to share their lived experiences of SCI on our online community blog at <https://www.spire.org.au/community/blog>.

No blogging experience is necessary and if needed, one of Spire's skilled volunteers can help shape or edit your story.

For further information:

T 03 9489 0777

E info@aqavic.org.au

CarePort Portable Bathroom Solution

CarePort is an accessible portable bathroom solution that can be installed and removed quickly in any room of a home with minimal disruption. The freestanding unit is safe, easy to clean and complies with relevant Australian Electrical and Plumbing Standards.

The CarePort portable bathroom provides an invaluable short or long-term solution for those who are without an accessible toilet and shower for a number of weeks. It can be hired or purchased, and complies with relevant Australian Electrical and Plumbing Standards, ensuring safety and durability. It can be installed

on carpet, floorboards or tiles, and comes with fast-draining functionality to prevent overflow, built-in light, adjustable shower rail and an optional self-contained thermostatically controlled hot water service for extra safety.

When it's no longer needed, the unit can easily be dismantled and removed, leaving no signs that anything was there.

Website: www.haleberry.com.au

Phone: 1300 657 016 or

Email: pip@haleberry.com.au



Online Community Networks

Are you interested in connecting with people and sharing your lived experiences?

For most of the year, the Community Networks have successfully moved online because of Covid restrictions. The Networks have expanded to include people living across Victoria and along the NSW-Victoria border, offering a way of meeting new people regardless of distance or transport. As restrictions have eased, we are looking at rescheduling our meeting face-to-face in the new year. We are planning on combining and staggering these meetings with online versions.

Northern (Shepperton-Echuca) Network

The Northern Network meet on the first Wednesday of each month, with people joining in from Deniliquin, Echuca, Albury and Wodonga. Recently the group discussed Pain Management, Accessible Holidays and what to look forward to post Covid restrictions.

Central West (Bendigo) Network

The Central Network meets on the second Wednesday of the month, with people joining in from Bendigo, Mildura and Barham. Last month, we discussed resilience as well as how people can reach out. We also discussed Bendigo Community Health Service's counselling program.

Gippsland - Mornington Network

The Gippsland - Mornington Network welcomes people from all over southeast Victoria, and meet on the second Thursday of each month. Most recently, our special guest speaker, Bill Forrester from Travability <https://travability.travel/>, spoke to us about travel options, both locally and internationally.

South West (Geelong) Network

The South West Network meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month, with people joining in from Geelong and Warrnambool. Last month, we reflected on the topics we covered in 2020. It was also great to do some planning for the new year as well as discuss the pros and cons of online meetings.

Western (Ballarat) Network

The Western Network meet on the third Thursday of the month, with people joining in from Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and Kaniva. Recently, the group discussed "Pushing through the SCI bog", because we all can get stuck in a rut. It was fantastic to get everyone's tips on this important subject.

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. Most recently, the group shared their experiences as well as discussing the main topic "your tips on practical transitions to work/study".

Women with SCI Network

The Women with SCI Network is informed and led by women living with SCI. At the last meeting, the group shared a PowerPoint presentation of participants memorable moments for 2020 and what they'd like to do in 2021.

Family & Friends SCI Support Network

Together with Independence Australia and the support of Austin Health, we run a monthly group to support family members and friends of people with a spinal cord injury. It's an opportunity to have your questions answered in a confidential and supportive group. You can also share information, experiences, knowledge and support in a friendly and informal setting.

For further information, please visit www.spire.org.au/community/community-networks.

If you are interested in getting involved or for support on using Zoom, contact Spire 03 9489 0777 or info@aqavic.org.au

AQA Spinal Injury Info & Support
For news, information, photos and more...



Join us on
facebook

www.facebook.com/AQASpinalSupport

History of AQA 4: The pioneering of peer support

AQA staff with quadriplegia have always reached out to people they believe might benefit from their lived experience. Informal visits to spinal-injury wards grew into a state-wide network of trained peer-support mentors and coaches.

If a single theme has sustained AQA Victoria from its earliest days, it is the belief that a person living through a profoundly distressing change can benefit from a relationship with someone who has taken a similar journey.

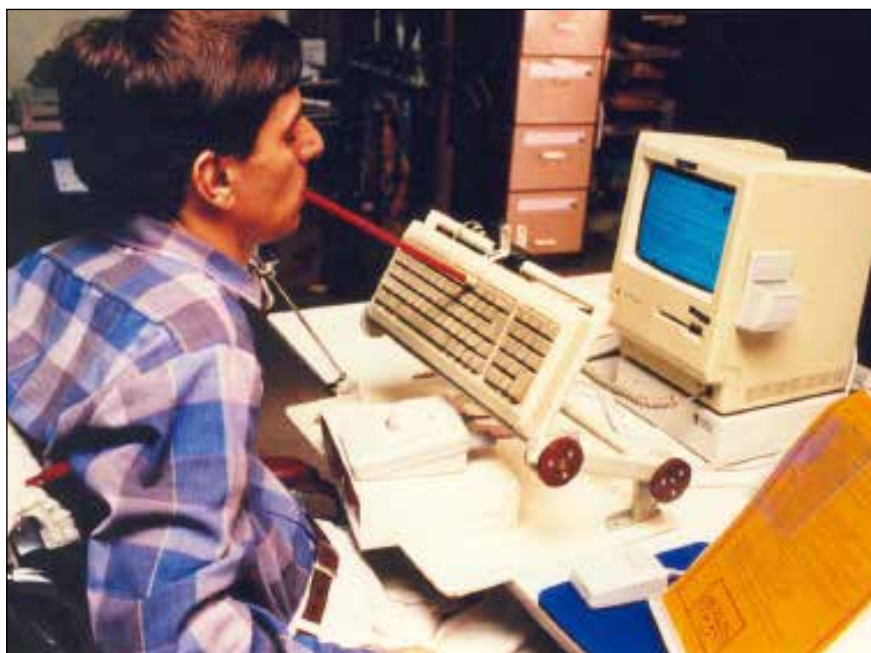
Expressed at first in compassionate visits from AQA staff members to Spinal Ward patients at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne, this outlook quickly became a defining feature of the organisation, developing and expanding under the broad title Peer Support.

Its appeal to head and heart was strong enough in 2007 to persuade board member Peter Trethewey to take on leadership of AQA as chief executive, departing Austin Health, where he had managed the Victorian Spinal Cord Service.

"I was ready for change," Trethewey reveals. "But the other thing was that in my prior clinical work as a social worker, I had worked alongside peer support people who came into the Austin from AQA and other organisations, and I saw the value of what they were doing."

Drawn to act

Like AQA's information and personal care services, Peer Support began as a twinkle in the eye of the organisation's founding CEO, Ian Bennett. Bennett recalls himself as having been drawn to act after he met a young Spinal Ward patient with paraplegia.



Greg Kidd at work in 2006

"I was visiting and there was a young guy there who was pretty upset," Bennett remembers. "He was about to be sent home and he didn't know whether he was going to be able to drive again – and do

other things for himself.

"I'm sitting there thinking: Hang on mate, you're a para. You can drive again.

"I drove away and I thought, there's something really missing here."

Bennett, who had spent 16 months with the Spinal Unit recovering from a car crash, arranged a meeting with its long-time director, Doug Brown, who acknowledged that regular visits from injured peers could be helpful.

Brown pointed out that it was important the visitors be selected for their ability to connect helpfully with patients. "I agreed," Bennett says. "We didn't want anyone to be making people feel worse."

■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

Breaking ground

Late in 1989, Bennett invited AQA employee Greg Kidd to coordinate a peer support program. Kidd, who had quadriplegia from a C4-level spinal cord injury, reported after two years in the role that his enthusiasm for the project had grown.

“Although I was initially intimidated by the ground-breaking it demanded,” Kidd wrote for AQA’s 1991 Annual Report, “I am delighted by the contacts that have been made and the interest that other service providers have shown. I particularly acknowledge acceptance by staff at the Austin Hospital Spinal Injuries Unit.

“I confess to [having been] very reluctant to frequent a [spinal] unit again, partly because of some lingering bad memories of my own hospitalisation (in another state), and partly because my New South Wales counterparts warned me not to expect much cooperation from hospitals,” Kidd wrote. He said he had been gratified that territorialism from professional caregivers in Victoria had been minimal.

Volunteer register

Kidd led Peer Support for nine years, and when he left AQA in 1998 he had built firm foundations for what was to come. His outreach extended well beyond the weekly visits he and his flamboyant colleague Ray Kennedy made to people recovering at the Spinal Unit or, after it opened in December 1993, the Royal

Talbot Rehabilitation Centre at Kew.

He sought to visit people recently discharged from hospital at their homes, and he extended the program’s reach to regional centres by appearing at spinal cord injury clinics run by the Austin.

Whitehead as “a passionate guy” and ideal for the job.

Whitehead reported, after a year in the role, that he had begun by assembling an information handout that listed service providers and useful organisations. Bennett credits Whitehead with founding the What’s Out There (WOT) days



Baden Whitehead, Day in the Park 1998

Kidd also began the register of volunteer peer support workers, both in Melbourne and regionally, that would grow stronger and more capable over the next 20 years.

The new wave

To succeed Kidd, AQA employed Baden Whitehead, a former shearer who had C6-7 quadriplegia. Bennett recalls

run by AQA at Royal Talbot – at which suppliers of disability supports showcase products and services, and a panel of former patients tells of life after rehab.

Trethewey, looking on at the time from his position on the AQA board, saw Whitehead as charismatic and “a really significant force in establishing what I would consider to be the new wave of peer support”.

■ *continued on next page*

HISTORY OF AQA

■ *continued from previous page*

When Whitehead moved to an Otways town in 2002 his work was taken up by Naz Erdem, who had arrived at AQA eight years earlier as a green 24-year-old volunteer. Erdem had been mentored by long-time NewsLink editor Ian Williams, and by Whitehead.

"Naz started helping Williams put the newsletter together, and then I employed him to work there and in our desktop publishing business, Copies Plus," Bennett says.

"Then I realised Naz had some other skills: he got on very well with people. Baden had worked that out, and he said he wanted Naz to work in the Peer Support department with him."

There was this kid...

"There was this kid who came in when he was 19, or 20-something," recalls Robyn Canning, who as Executive Assistant helped steer AQA over more than two decades. "He used to rock in and out of the office.

"One day someone said to me: 'Naz is going to do some work for us.'

"I said: 'What's this guy going to do? All he wants to do is sit around and have a chat, have a smoke, and have some laughs.'

"I never thought he'd be where he is today."

Appearances did deceive. By the time he arrived at AQA, former truck driver Erdem had completed a computer operating certificate and earned a diploma of computer programming. He had taken to study on the advice of Kidd, whom he had met at the Spinal Ward while recovering there from a diving accident.

Erdem inherited from Whitehead a department that had combined the Information Service and its newsletter with Peer Support, and over the next 18 years he would transform both components – and represent Australia at five Paralympics.

Trethewey says: "You can see Whitehead's thinking flowing through Naz's work today, and through Peter Van Benthem's work."

Van Benthem, a former electrician who has high-level quadriplegia from a 1999 motorbike crash, had been working with Erdem as an information officer. He was invited to coordinate and expand the Peer Support volunteer team.

Intensive training

"To begin with, we had maybe a dozen peer support volunteers," recalls Van Benthem. "They were people we had got to know personally, who we were sure would be helpful."

"It's a lot more formal now," Erdem observes, "but we try to come across as informal. We don't want to go in with suits and ties and computers, because I think it's not what people want to see and it's not the image we want to leave with them."



Naz with team Sydney Olympics 2000

Peer support volunteers are now trained Peer Mentors, and their number has swelled past 100, which gives the team considerable scope for pairing people by age, gender, or locality.

"We don't just say 'John, we like you, do you want to go and see this guy at Royal Talbot because he likes Fords same as you,'" Erdem explains. "It's not like that anymore.

"Now we've got a pretty intensive three-day training program for our mentors, and they're all documented and registered with us. The training covers communication skills, body language, psychology – a whole bunch of stuff.

"They can provide support in a rehab unit, over the phone, or with our regional networks, which we now have in Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton,

■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

Geelong, Mornington and Gippsland.

“We’ve also got a women’s group that meets on a regular basis, as well as a vocational group.”

Strength in partnerships

Partners at Austin Health work with AQA to connect patients at Royal Talbot with compatible mentors. And Erdem’s department, in 2015 branded Spire (Spinal Injury Support and Resource Network), supplies infrastructure for external events.

“We facilitate a WOT Day at Royal Talbot three or four times a year now,” Erdem says.

“We’ve been creating community awareness about disability as well, with the annual Arnold Sports Festival in Melbourne, which started out as a bodybuilding expo.

“Arnold Schwarzenegger’s personal bodyguard is an Australian, and we got connected with Arnold after the bodyguard’s brother became paraplegic from a car accident.

“We coordinate the exhibiting of inclusive sports at the festival. We’ve got tennis, basketball, soccer, AFL, badminton and rugby – all for people with disabilities.”

More generally, Erdem sees one-time rivalries with related organisations as having diminished.

“For example, we run a family-group peer support program for people who are closely connected with someone with a spinal cord injury, such as parents or friends. We

run that in conjunction with Independence Australia, which used to be called ParaQuad, and with whom historically we used to be quite competitive. But we both know this service is needed, and that it is better to have both resources for that.”

the lead in peer coaching.

“Peer Support and our attendant care service, AQA Qualcare, have grown up as distinct departments, but that is changing, and connecting our service provision in these two areas is deliberate.

“Traditionally, AQA services



Wheelchair coaching

The next step: Peer coaching

Erdem sees as his next step the fostering of peer coaching, offered as a service that a National Disability Insurance Scheme participant could select as a component of their annual plan.

“That might be wheelchair skills coaching, it might be personal development, it might be peer health coaching, it might be employment coaching or something else,” he explains. “We’re doing workshops with mentors who we want to take

meant AQA personal care, and then there were these other things we would do as outreach.

“Now we need to present all our services as part of a spectrum that AQA offers. People who use our attendant care need to know about other programs AQA runs, so they can be involved in those if they want to be, and vice versa. That includes our peer support. Everyone should know about what the organisation does as a whole.”

Story by Ian Baker

Solving common bowel problems - A resource tool for persons with spinal cord injury

The Continence Foundation of Australia offers a wide range of free information resources for individuals, carers and professionals available to order or view as PDF. All of the resources are free of charge, which includes postage and delivery.

Solving common bowel problems - A resource tool for persons

This resource booklet is one of the resources available.

The level and completeness of your spinal cord injury affects the amount of control you have over your bowel and determines which bowel care method will work best for you. Persons with a high level injury usually find that a reflex method works well; the reflex is triggered by stimulation, straining or pressure. Persons with a low level injury may require abdominal pressure or straining to assist bowel evacuation.

All persons who have had a spinal cord injury require an individually tailored bowel program. A bowel program is a plan for regaining control of bowel function. The plan incorporates diet and fluids, physical activity, medications and bowel care techniques as well as the frequency and duration of bowel care.

The majority of people find that their bowel program is most effective and reliable when they maintain a degree of regularity in their general day to day activities.

Try to have:

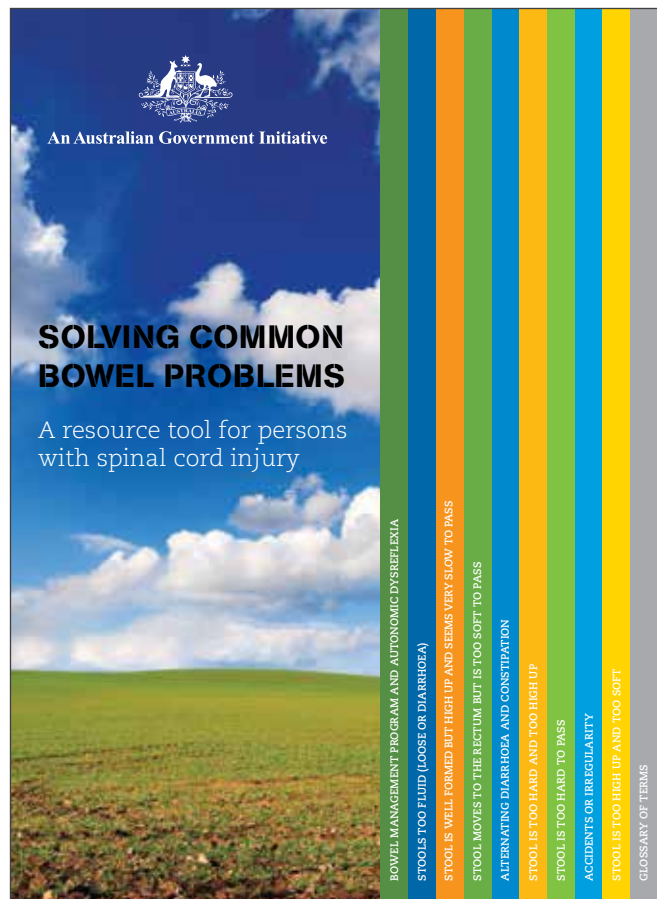
- a well-balanced healthy diet and eat regularly
- daily fibre intake of at least 15g (see booklet for information)
- consistent high fluid intake
- regular medication times
- a consistent and competent team of carers
- a set protocol for your bowel care routine
- regular exercise, movement or a degree of general activity, and
- a relaxed and consistent lifestyle.

Any significant change to any of the above may result in a change in the outcome of your bowel

care. If you need to change any aspect of your bowel program, change only one component at a time, and then allow yourself 3 bowel care cycles with that change in place. Only then decide if the change has helped or not.

This booklet covers other areas such as:

- Bowel management program and autonomic dysreflexia
- Stools too fluid (loose or diarrhoea)
- Stool is well formed but high up and seems very slow to pass
- Stool moves to the rectum but is too soft to pass
- Alternating diarrhoea and constipation



■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

- Stool is too hard and too high up
- Stool is too hard to pass
- Accidents or irregularity
- Stool is too high up and too soft
- Glossary of terms

This resource can be ordered via the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 or by visiting the Browse resources section of the website www.continence.org.au. To find this specific booklet go to Advanced search, type

spinal in the key words section. If you wish to order online, you will be required to register as an online user. Simply search for and select the resources you would like to order then select 'Complete order' and follow the prompts.

There are a wide range of resources under the topic section or you can type in key words to narrow your search. The website also has a wide range of information which may be of interest to you.

FishAbility by Fishcare Victoria

Fishing is one of the most popular recreational activities in Australia and now with improved access to jetties and piers, FishAbility by Fishcare Victoria, hopes to increase the active engagement of Victorians living with a disability into recreational fishing. In February 2021, FishAbility and AQA will run a "Come & Try Day" in Melbourne. Get in contact if you are interested.

The Organisation

Fishcare Victoria is a community based not-for-profit organisation founded in 1995 with the aim of promoting responsible and sustainable fishing practices. Fishcare is funded through the revenue generated from the sales of recreational fishing licenses in Victoria.

FishAbility

The FishAbility program will provide regular and coordinated fishing events to Melbourne's piers and jetties, starting in Port Phillip, Kingston, Bayside and Hobsons City councils with the intention of expanding across Melbourne and into Regional areas including Geelong and Gippsland.

Adaptive Fishing

FishAbility is designed to cater to all abilities, ages, and experiences levels. The program comes equipped with standard fishing rods, which can be adapted to suit the needs of

each participant. Adaptations include a motorized reel which can wind line in with the press of a button and the option of a left handed or right handed 'strong arm' fishing rod holder which attaches to forearm and holds rod in place to enable individuals with limited mobility to enjoy the sport of fishing without assistance.

Volunteering

As a volunteer organisation they are always seeking new recruits to help deliver their program! You may have experience working in this field, have a disability yourself or are seeking further opportunities to advance your career. A FishAbility fishing Assistant is anyone who naturally enjoy the outdoors, helping others and will provide

practical support to participants living with mild, moderate, or severe disabilities experience the magic of fishing.



Contact

Elysia Gustafson - FishAbility

Phone: 0423 588 345

Web: www.fishability.fishcare.org.au

Email: egustafson@fishcarevictoria.org.au

AQA Celebration Event 2020

To plan, support, promote, coordinate and deliver the AQA 2020 AGM and staff celebrations was a unique opportunity that generated many questions including how, when, why, what, and who.

This year the entire nation has been impacted by a global pandemic, something many of us had never experienced. It has challenged each and every one of us, forcing us to look at how we did things and how we have needed to approach things differently.

When it came to planning this year's AGM and staff celebrations we too needed to look at everything differently. One thing AQA was able to do was look at the silver lining and embrace the talents within the AQA community.

By holding this year's celebrations online, we were able to reach people who were never able to attend previous celebrations or who chose not to attend in the past for whatever reason. We needed to capture everything we had done over the past year (and there has been a lot!) whilst ensuring we continued to be genuine and engaging. For the one-hour online event on 19 November (and many hours behind the scenes!), our team stepped up to support, direct, present, collate, coordinate, reflect and to celebrate.

What we achieved

The year's celebration existed through AQA resourcing, both people and technology, being inclusive, working in partnership, and being

challenged.

Upon reflection we were naturally meeting change with courage, an AQA theme that we have been developing over this year. We were demonstrating our renewed sense of purpose, that AQA exists to resource people to live well. And we were building our reimagined vision, an inclusive community where people have access to the resources they need to



meet the challenges of change and live fully. I am proud to be part of a fantastic team that overcame barriers to celebrate the tremendous outcomes of so many. Go Team AQA!

The voiceover script for our 2020 Highlights video, read warmly by peer coach Georgina Fiorentino, reviewed some features of this unusual year.

"Who would have believed that we would need masks to go shopping? That we would

need a permit just to go out at night?"

"We had begun to reassess the way we presented ourselves to the public."

"We had embarked upon our Digital Transformation, moving into the new age of smartphones and clouds.

"And we had begun to extend the range of our services, building up our Peer Coaching and moving into allied health."

"The digital transformation means automating many of our manual processes, eliminating paperwork, and bringing them all into one place online."

"Lockdown also meant we could no longer hold our What's Out There (WOT) days in person, or offer peer coaching in person, or host get-togethers in person for our Community Networks. So, we took these online too.

"For the WOT days, we assembled panels from guests who could talk from experience on our theme for each day. We hosted these discussions live on Zoom, for people recovering at the Royal Talbot and others.

"We conducted our four-

■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

day motivational workshop, Discovering the Power in Me, online, for the first time as a fundable service. Paralympian and two-time gold medallist Ryley Batt, OAM, was a special guest, sharing how goal-setting helps him follow his dreams.

"And after beginning the year meeting in person, we brought together our community networks remotely."

"As we come out of lockdown, and enjoy more freedom of movement, we can be proud of the way we have supported one another through the hazards of 2020 - and we can look forward to sustaining our momentum as we meet the challenges of 2021."

Finally, we got to share some tremendous milestones for both employees and volunteers, and behind the scenes see people step up, coordinate and work in a way that was new for them.

5 Year Milestone Award

Sharon Devlin
Courtney Brennan
Ingrid Von Moger
Anna Nagaratnam
Maninder Kaur
Anisa Hassan
Melly Falemanu
Maria Mitsakis
Maria Lazanas
Pam Bayya
Karen Patterson
Christine Gohner
Kayoko Nagato
Michael Thornburn
Marie Riley
Yvette Knight

Deanna Bailey
Isagani Baluyos
Natalie Morris
Tracy Dorrofield
Josephine Muteswa
Elisa Mascitti
Bau Azad
Lorraine McCalmont
Elle Beach-Theodorakis
Kerry Lee-Muller
Sandra Origua Rios
Moni Lohani
Christie Merry
Joyslyn Vincent
Charu Dhondiyal
Liz Angerame
Joy Heenan
Alan Hoare
Richard Balsillie
Emmanuel Tissera
Susana Valdes
Jude Antony
Jodie McGregor
Michelle Pilkington
Retta Eitel

10 Year Milestone Award

Shaoying Lin
Igor Labarga
Lisa Jamieson
Jatinder Kaur
Eseta Feau
Eryn Flynn
Cemile Erdem
Aya Koubakji
Yan Xu
Yolanda Molina
Hana Ajrawi

Shinta Arimbi
Tanya Clarke
David Jacka
Mario D'Cruz
Richard Lee
Georgina Fiorentino
Pradeep Hewavitharana
Marty Korytowski
Geoff Dossetor
Trevor Carroll

15 Year Milestone Award

Anne Mulhall
Juana Sanchez
Olga Mavromoustakakis
Beverley King
Paul Velasco

20 Year Milestone Award

John Theodoropoulos
Peter Van Bentham

25 Year Milestone Award

Kathy Power

AQA Community Award

Lenny Redrose
Mario D'Cruz
Pradeep Hewavitharana
Maya Dove
Duke Trench-Thiedeman
Susana Valdes
Anthony Bartl
Hue Kwan

AQA Volunteer Award

Richard Balsillie
Antonio Vecchio

Nigel Steele Award:

Ben Gruter

How “Discovering the Power in Me” Helps Achieve and Maintain Positive Mindset

Discovering the Power in Me (DPM) is a 12-unit course developed by Seattle-based global consultancy The Pacific Institute. The program is tailored to people with a spinal cord injury or similar physical disability, and AQA has been delivering it since 2010.

“DPM draws upon what makes AQA special – lived experience,” says Naz Erdem, a facilitator of the course for AQA.

“It’s a refreshing approach to positive psychology, controlling your mind set and moving forward in your life.”

Shared experience

Changes arising from Covid-19 created an opportunity for AQA to deliver the course virtually in September 2020, providing access for people across Victoria to take part together.

For the first time also, we offered DPM as a fundable support - a course people could access from funding allocated to them under the NDIS (and possibly other sources).

Participants attended daily group sessions together online, and afterwards joined AQA peer coaches remotely for one-on-one sessions.

Even meeting online, people reported a helpful sense of shared experience.

“Learning alongside other spinal-cord injured people was a highlight of this course,” one of the nine participants said in responding to a post-program survey.

“DPM opened my eyes to seeing that I am worthy of being successful in life & not to let my

injury hold me back to what I want to achieve in my life,” said another.

“I thought the course was really valuable, and I could see how valuable it was for others as well,” she reported.

“At the start and at the end of the course, we completed a locus-of-control questionnaire, where you rated how strongly you agreed with a set of statements.



Ben completed DPM to help people he works with

Valuable techniques

Two participants, Rosemary and Ben, shared their experiences of the course in more detail.

Rosemary, a retired primary school teacher, had been living with a T9 injury since June 2019. She said she had been familiar already with elements of the course, such as goal-setting techniques, and had even presented them to her pupils.

Discovering the Power in Me had connected her much more intimately with how helpful these could be for her.

“For example, ‘I believe that if life events impact me adversely I can respond satisfactorily,’ and ‘I believe that I am responsible for my own happiness.’

“I was amazed how many agrees I had at the start of the course, and then when I filled them in at the end, how many of my responses had moved from agree to strongly agree.”

Growth of confidence

Rosemary has a daughter who has been living in New Zealand. She had hoped to visit her, but the prospect of negotiating

■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

flights and accommodation, and convincing her husband that she could manage the trip, had seemed daunting.

Affirmation, visualisation and goal-setting techniques that she explored in the course, and worked on with her peer coach, had helped her break down the project into small steps that each seemed achievable.



Rosemary found DPM to be really valuable

"I knew it was possible, but this course has made me realise it is possible and that really anything is possible," Rosemary said.

"I'm really confident now that I will be able to make that journey when the time comes."

Ben too had previously been familiar with many techniques presented during the program. A former academic and policy advisor to government, he has been living with an incomplete T5 injury from a spinal bleed since 2012.

Positive reinforcement

Ben is a peer mentor with AQA, and said his participation in DPM arose in part from curiosity about how it might help people he works with in that role.

"I have a background in philosophy and a bit of psychology," Ben explained. "In parts I found DPM

a little bit simplistic.

"I think the course has affected me positively. It reinforced other things.

"They are big on affirmations: statements of intent that you repeat to yourself throughout the course of the day. I found that interesting.

"I have used that sort of technique in the past in difficult times, and I am sure it is a technique that I will use again in the future."

Other elements were less effective for Ben.

"They have a lot about thinking in pictures, and I don't think in pictures. It was that sort of naivety that I found a little bit off-putting from time to time," he reported.

Introducing new skills

Ben said he saw the course as particularly valuable for people who came to it with little prior awareness of the motivational skills it presents.

"Would I recommend the course to other people? Yes. But I would say to them that it is very much an introduction," Ben said.

"I see it as very useful for people who haven't been exposed to these techniques.

"I've been talking to about half a dozen people today, and I can think of two or three of them who could really benefit from the course.

"These are people who are going through a particularly hard time, recently injured. I think it would help them a lot through recovery."

Exploring what works

Naz says DPM can provide space to explore what works and what might not for an individual, relative to their experience and exposure.

"Shared experience is a highlight of the course," he observes. "Tapping into knowledge from the facilitator, other course participants or your peer coach can enrich the take-home learning.

"I've seen the benefits it has had for people's motivation and improving their lives in a deliberate way.

"It's fantastic to see people light up as they appreciate the tools they gain from each unit."

AQA is preparing to present its next DPM program in early 2021. If you are interested in doing the course and would like more information, email community@aqavic.org.au.

Lady With a Cucumber

A lot of us had plans for 2020, but Covid put a spanner in the works. We had to put so many things on hold, especially trips away and seeing friends and family. The self-isolation not only affected our mental health but also gave us bad habits. When restrictions were lifted, Emily Quattrocchi decided it was time to see her friends who lived in Warrnambool, something she planned to do earlier in the year. It was the first time since her injury that she travelled independently alone. She took a V/Line train, however everything didn't go as smoothly as expected. Would she do it again? Definitely.

This time, last year, I was getting ready to go home for the first time since my injury and get back to my new normal life. This year, I am ready and starting to get back to my new normal life, post Covid.

I will admit it has been a little difficult to get back to life. I am a person that got into a bit of a slump being home too much, with wearing comfy clothes, not having to wear a bra and eating myself into the covid curve.

Time to get out

It was time I picked myself up and rolled myself away from Netflix and the chocolate and enter real life, where you could see if people hadn't done their makeup, or brushed their teeth.

Rolling down the main street of Euroa, seeing big smiles, businesses thriving with customers and people coming up to chat to me, made me so happy. Since being in a wheelchair, this was something I was so scared of at the beginning of the year, but now I am actually doing it and just think to myself "what was I so scared about".

A good thing about leaving my house also meant I could see my friends and family. A place I was hoping to go this year

was Warrnambool, to stay with friends. Warrnambool is a 4 ½ hour drive. As I don't drive, I would need to take the train which takes four hours from Melbourne to Warrnambool.

I thought I would be smart and fit it in with a medical appointment in Melbourne... I should have known better. I was trying to save coming to

carer. I had a carer with me up until this point.

First time on my own

I was on my own for the rest of the journey, the first time ever without a carer or my mum. It was a long train ride, and I'll be honest, the train accessibility could have been a lot better. The aisle separating



Melbourne twice. The medical appointment took much longer than expected because the doctor had to take a call and was rather slow and too chatty. Eventually, I roll out of there as quick as I can to get to Southern Cross Station. I made it on the train just in time with the help of lovely staff and my

the seats was too narrow for my wheelchair, which meant I couldn't sit on any of the comfy V/Line seats... oh how I wish I could have got out of my chair. I was stuck in a corner area. Luckily I had access to Netflix to reduce boredom.

Before my injury, I was a common user of V/Line trains,

■ *continued on next page*

■ *continued from previous page*

and have seen my fair share of public transport loonies... but seeing one since being paralysed was a whole new experience. Sitting right next to me was a young lady who was crying and yelling out the window, which I wasn't too worried about. I chuckled to myself.

I wasn't worried until she looked and pointed her finger at me while ranting that she hated me and was going to kill me. The only other people on the train were a couple at the other end. I grasped that I was vulnerable, stuck in this small space and I can't get away. I started thinking what I should do if she does come at me.

Who could help?

I texted my mum, which really wasn't the best thing to do in hindsight, because mum was already worried about me as it was the first time away by myself. Receiving a message that a crazy lady is threatening to kill me is not the most reassuring message to get. But I wanted to just let someone know what was happening and my mum is always the first person I call.

I then thought about pressing the assist button, but she would clearly see that, and I think that would make things worse. Next thing, she was walking past me to where all her bags were

and, in that moment, I was frozen. What was she going to do? She then turns around with a cucumber in her hand looks at me and says, "do you want some?"

I am still frozen, thinking what's going on right now, but manage to shake my head. She goes back to sitting down. Soon after she got off the train, but not before finishing her

time. Sometimes I still needed assistance due to my spasticity. It was such a fun few nights away. I was able to check out the beautiful Warrnambool scenery, have some laughs, make homemade pasta and have a cheeky wine.

As well as getting back to spending good times in person with friends and family, instead of on group zoom chats, I was excited to get back into trying



cucumber. The rest of the trip I was a lot less anxious and sat enjoying my Netflix.

Such a nice break

Spending a couple of nights in Warrnambool with my friends, away from therapy and carers, was such a nice break and I really got to see how much my independence had improved. I even used a public toilet by myself for the first

different leisure activities, one being karate. I thought, karate, after my recent train trip, could be a beneficial thing to learn in case I ever come across a lady with a cucumber. I will take comfort in knowing a few handy techniques of how to defend myself.

I wonder what this time next year will bring after what I hope to be a fun, exciting, social 2021.



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

Colouring In with Ben

Ben Winwood, who is an L2 para, used his art during lockdown as a way of strengthening and inspiring his community. He ended up with a precious gift in return.

'When I draw for other people I feel alive', says Ben.

Ben Winwood lives in Launceston. Before his spinal cord injury in 2014 he worked as a school chaplain. He weaved in his life-long love of drawing by using cartooning as a support tool.

After his accident, drawing became the main act. At festivals and markets he sold everything from portraits to dinosaurs.

When Tasmania went in to lockdown Ben decided he wanted to do something for his community, online. He started drawing a colouring-in page a day and posting them on his Facebook page.

He also wanted it to be interactive, so he asked for requests. From there it quickly took off.

'There weren't many days I didn't know what to draw', says Ben.

'Friends would get in touch and say 'my four old would really love this, can you do it?'

'It was such a thrill! Especially with the more challenging requests, like drawing essential workers. "How do you make truck drivers and warehouse workers look fun? People stacking shelves - not super fun. But I managed to get a fork lift in there, and a truck, and people stacking toilet paper.'

He did sixty days in a row.

Ben's a man about town and had also been designing signage and artwork for a local food co-op, set up during COVID-19 for people to share what they could, and take what they needed. He met a woman there who ran a skill-sharing project called the Waverley Community Skills Cafe.

One day she got in touch. The cafe had been following what Ben had been doing online. She remembered that he'd once shared his dream of publishing a children's book - the cafe wanted to help Ben turn his posts into that book.

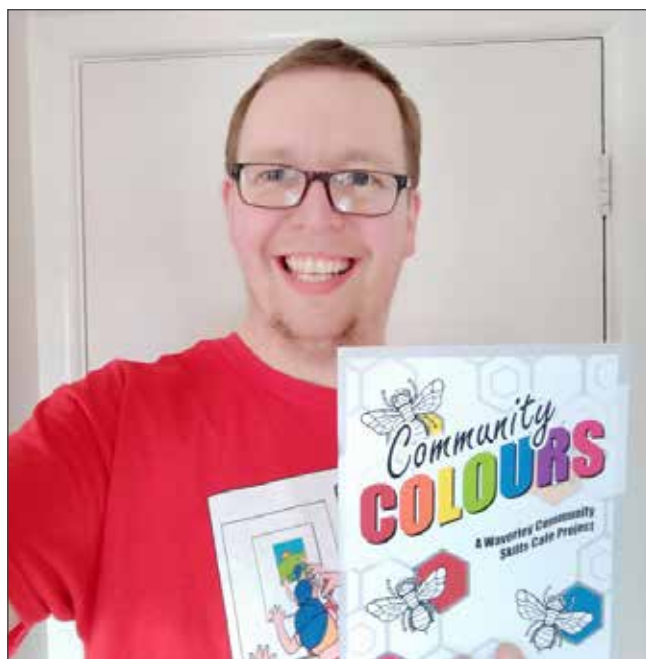
'It was like a covid miracle,' Ben said.

'I approached my local book store and said this is what I've done, this is the story behind it, would you be interested in selling it? And they said yes.

'I'd said to a friend at the start of the year - this year I'm going to do a book, I've been told so many

times I should do my own children's book, and I've wanted to do it for so long. This year I'm going to do it - and because of covid it actually happened.'

Not only did the drawing-a-day project fulfil his dream of publishing a book, it also made the daily reality of covid more than bearable for Ben. The structure of it, the creativity and the social connection it offered, through friends and family making requests, commenting on the work or posting their coloured-in copies.



Ben has had excited reports of kids colouring in pages from his book from as far away as Western Australia and an orphanage in India.

While he misses being able to sing as loud as he liked for online church services in his lounge room, he's glad to be seeing his community in person again. He's still making art for them. His next project is illustrating a friend's children's book.

To buy his colouring in book, 'Community Colours', find him on Facebook: Art by Ben, or email him at artbyben@outlook.com.au. It costs \$25, and \$5 goes to the Waverley Community co-op.

By Dan Nathan

FOR SALE

Smart Drive MK2

3 years old, not used a lot; Selling because I have an electric wheelchair now;

These will give you the independence you need; Comes with the watch; New to buy... \$6,000

Price: \$2,500 ONO

Phone: 0409 544 015 (Sue) (11/20#a)

Coraille – Tilt Mobile Aged Care Chair

Excellent Condition; Used only for a short time; Seat width 48cm / Head rest; Double footplate; Located in Reservoir.

Price: \$2,200 Negotiable

Phone: 0403 597 477 (Alfina) (11/20#a)

Quantum QR Edge – Power Wheelchair

Model: 3SP-SS; Odometer reads 00002; Purchased in 2015 for \$16,795.00; Has Warranty; Used very little; Warranty Information and Product Registration Sheets provided.

Price: \$2,500

Email: stevee.waynes@gmail.com (Stevee) (11/20#a)

Electric Standing Hoist

Oxford JourneyStanding machine is in excellent condition sold and serviced by Fisher Lane (Abbotsford) 10/ 2017.

Purchased for (\$3,780). Also includes a large sized sling, battery & battery charger.

Price: \$2,400 (Coburg)

Phone: 0419 884 106 (Lou) (07/20#a)

Standing Frame – Easy Stand

Comes with strap; Excellent condition; Hardly used.

Price: \$2,500 (Cash on pick-up)

Phone: 0449 881 200 (Hadyn) (07/20#a)

2017 Mercedes Benz Valante 116 BlueTEC

Auto; 2.1L Turbo Diesel ; 24,000 kms; Rego until April 2021; RWC Supplied;

Service History; Flint Grey Metallic; Includes: Fiorella Wheelchair Lift with seatbelt and 4 Q'straints;

Capacity for 6 passengers plus wheelchair passenger; Electrical Operation of Sliding Doors;

3rd Row Seats; Privacy Black Glass; every possible extras are fitted.

Price: \$62,900 ONO (coburg)

Phone: 0419 884 106 (Lou) (07/20#a)

Wymo Wheelchair Hoist

Used; Good Condition.

Price: \$600

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

FOR SALE

Mattress – Oska Pressure Relief

Dimensions 200cm x 105 x 18; In excellent condition; Mattress type (Swedish) Oska CuroCell Area Zone with Heel function; Will need to be collected or could be couriered at receivers cost.

Price: \$200

Phone: 0408 213 847 (Patrick) (06/20#a)

Quickie Explore - Electric Wheelchair

Height adjustable; Tilt in space function; Comes with backpack; Very good condition.

Price: \$8,000 (Cash on pick-up)

Phone: 0449 881 200 (Hadyn) (07/20#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: \$18,000

Phone: 5756 2016 (Phil) (06/20#a)

Apollo Residential Hydraulic Lift

Apollo lifts are a brilliant concept that makes installation a very simple project; Complete with own prefabricated shaft; Only needs a recess of 80 mm; Easy to plumb with the supplied control cabinet; Only requires a single phase 20 amp power supply and is suitable for internal or external installation. Lift is a few years old but has never been installed or used; The Apollo Lifts are sold new through Aussie Lifts.

Price: \$5,500

Phone: 0414 593 790 (Mal) (05/20#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: \$5,900

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

WANTED

Mobility Equipment / Aides / Accessible Vehicle

If you have any mobility equipment / aides that you either no longer need or have upgraded from, we would love to hear from you. Also looking for a wheelchair accessible vehicle with a minimum of 4 regular seats.

Phone: 0403 515 605 (Christine)

(05/20#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@aqavic.org.au.

ADVERTISEMENTS

ITEMS FOR FREE

Bathroom Stool & All Purpose Trolley

Free to a good home.

Phone: 0479 066 712 (Darren) (08/20#a)

Top Form Omega 2 Maxi Lift Chair

Triple Tier; 4 Button, 2 Motors; In black leather; Original cost \$2,400: Includes a message mat: Suit a large person

Phone: 0407 332 761 (Carol) (05/20#a)

Freebies - Quantum 6000Z - Electric Wheelchair

10 years old; Still runs OK; Batteries removed; Battery Charger; Control screen 1 year old; Really only good for spare parts; I intend to dispose of the wheelchair after 2 months if no interest is shown.

Phone: 9509 0363 (Con) (10/20#a)

ITEMS FOR FREE

Freebies – Wheelchair Manual

Mobility Plus Manual Wheelchair; 16' x 17'; 24 Inch wheels; Can use for Lawn Bowls; Pick up from Mansfield.

Phone: 0477 011 153 (Kevin) (09/20#a)

Freebies - WYMO Car Hoist

WYMO Car Hoist; Works well; Includes all parts for installation; Pick up from Mansfield.

Phone: 0477 011 153 (Kevin) (09/20#a)



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

