

Spire is a service division of AQA Victoria



COVID-19: How I Kept Myself Sane During Lockdown

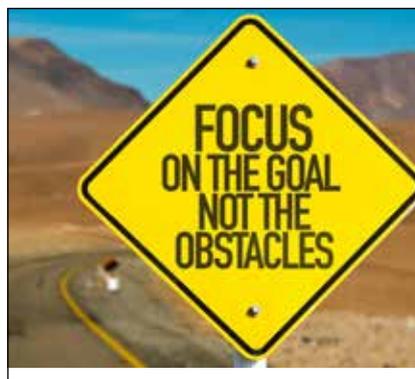
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Part 5: From sheltered workshop to service innovator

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Discovering the Power in Me Course

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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How a Drawing Turned into a Sculpture

COMMUNITY

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

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

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

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FROM THE CEO

Happy New Year... and in the blink of an eye we are in March 2021

2020 – 2023 represents an exciting investment phase in AQA's 33 year story and we look forward to keeping you informed and sharing experiences about new capabilities and services that we hope will empower our clients and community, empower our people and build our sustainability.

One component of this is our Living Well Project arising from a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional grant from the NDIA's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Program. Our project aims to develop a sustainable community, residential and online program of peer-led Skills for Independence and Skills for Life programs for people in Australia with spinal cord injury or similar physical disability.

The Living Well Project will be offering a peer-led, tailored approach to skill development that has proved successful in the UK and

will be developed to the Australian environment.

The project aims to invest in a "train the trainer" program for our peer mentors, both staff and volunteers, who can then design and deliver a range of innovative activities including half day, short and long courses that will build the confidence of people living with SCI to increase their capacity for community and social participation.

Specialist peer-coaches, with extensive experience of the UK program are assisting us implement the program, deliver the initial course and train other coaches so we can grow the team in ongoing cycle.

Our peer coaches will work with people to identify individual aspirations, needs and gaps; set goals and work to build specific skills to achieve those goals; be they mobility skills, community access skills, overcoming emotional barriers, community networking, travel, leisure, study and employment, etc.



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

The ongoing roll out of the program with courses being delivered across Victoria will result in increased community access; improved health and well-being, improved ongoing learning and skills and better informed, in control participants.

To hear more or express an interest please feel free to contact Naz, Peter or Josh here at the office.

HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to the first issue of NewsLink for 2021. We hope you were able to make the most of the eased Covid-19 restrictions, and made the most of your time off to get away and catch up with family & friends.

Beginning March 25, AQA will be holding a motivational/goal setting course called 'Discovering the Power in Me' (DPM), specifically designed for people with SCI. You can read more about this on page 9.

On page 10, you can read about Antonio Vecchio, who is the Consumer Engagement Lead at the Spinal Research Institute.

Antonio talks to us about the value of having people with SCI being involved in all the various stages of research. This applies to educating consumers and researchers, collaborating, prioritising, and being involved from conception.

In the last issue of NewsLink, we shared how Ben Winwood used his love of drawing to create a colouring-in book. Fellow artist and sculptor, Keith Chidzey, came across one of Ben's drawings and created a piece called "Victory", which is based on the drawing. You can read about this on page 14.

On page 16, you can read how Karen kept herself sane during

lockdown. Like everyone else, she faced Covid-19 restrictions and had to adapt to a new normal. She had to manage carers to help with daily living as well keeping her mental health strong. This meant learning and making use of technology including video conferencing.

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

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

Get involved in Para-sport!

Upcoming Para-sport Come & Try Day with para-badminton, para-table tennis and wheelchair tennis. This is a great opportunity to try your hand in these sports and see if it's for you. You may want to play at a grassroots level or even the highest possible level.

Come and Try Days are a great opportunity for you to have fun and have a go, meet new friends and connect with local clubs.

- There will be coaches and athletes there to support new participants
- Have fun and have a go
- Meet new friends
- Connect with local clubs

When: Saturday 13 March, 2021

Time: 10am – 1pm

Age: Suitable for ages 10+

Where: Melbourne Sports Centre (MSAC) 30 Aughtie Drive, Albert Park

Register: www.paralympic.org.au/get-involved



Youngcare's At Home Care Grants

Youngcare's At Home Care Grants program is critical in keeping people at home with their families, and preventing new admissions to inappropriate housing.

Youngcare's At Home Care Grants (AHCG) provide funding for equipment, home modifications and essential support/respite that is unable to be funded through other means (eg. NDIS). This funding is to both enhance the quality of life for people with high physical care needs and assist them to remain living in their own home with loved ones.

The grants provide one-off funding of up to \$10,000 to help those aged 16-65 with high physical care needs who are living at home, and are at risk of entering inappropriate housing.

Note - People who have NDIS Plans are required to have tried the NDIS first, and any other avenues of funding prior to applying.

Important Dates:

Round 1, 2021

- Applications Close: 17 March
- Applicants notified by 30 April

Round 2, 2021

Applications Close: 18 August
Applicants notified by 30 September

For further information:

Phone: 1800 844 727

Email: youngcareconnect@youngcare.com.au

Web: www.youngcare.com.au/what-we-do/grants/home-care-grants/



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

Evolving the Community Networks

Are you interested in connecting with people and sharing your lived experiences? Throughout 2020, we discovered that Zoom was a valuable teleconferencing platform that enabled the community to continue sharing experiences, staying socially connected, and getting to meet new people. These online meetings have provided informal support regardless of physical distance or Covid-19 restrictions.

For the next few months of 2021, we'll be discussing with each Network how AQA can better support and evolve these meetings. A few ideas already include alternating between face-to-face and Zoom meetings, combining a couple of Networks together for the same topic, and video recording guest speakers as a resource to share with everyone.

Our Community Networks include:

- Ballarat
- Bendigo
- Geelong
- Mornington
- Gippsland
- Shepparton & Echuca
- Melbourne
- Family & Friends of SCI
- Professionals with SCI

We would love to hear from you on how to



improve these meetings so they are as inclusive as possible. We recognise that these networks are driven by the community's involvement and commitment.

If you have ideas on how AQA can better support your Network, or if you would like to be involved in one way or another, contact us on 03 9489 0777 or info@aqavic.org.au

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. FishAbility and AQA will run some "Come & Try Days" in Melbourne in the coming weeks. Get in contact if you are interested.

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 experience 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.

Contact

Elysia Gustafson - FishAbility

Phone: 0423 588 345

Web: www.fishability.fishcare.org.au

Email: egustafson@fishcarevictoria.org.au

History of AQA 5: From sheltered workshop to service innovator

As he steers AQA into the NDIS era, Peter Trethewey has sought to build appreciation for what people living through disabling life events can bring to their peers and to the wider community.

When founding CEO Ian Bennett formed AQA Victoria in 1987, he formed it to save the jobs of his colleagues.

Alongside other people with quadriplegia, Bennet had been working for the Sydney-based Australian Quadriplegic Association from an office in the Melbourne suburb of Fairfield.

Sydney decided to close the Melbourne office. Bennett, who had been its book-keeper, fought to keep it open, driving his own car 880km north on the Hume Highway to plead with the CEO at the time, Bill Saville.

"My wife supported me," Bennett recalls. "I told her: 'I have to do this.' She asked why. I said: 'I'm an incomplete quad. If I was complete, I would be the same as about four of those guys who are working in the office. I have to give this a bash, for them.'

"I knew they were getting a lot of enjoyment out of working in the office. And there was no prospect of them getting any other work."

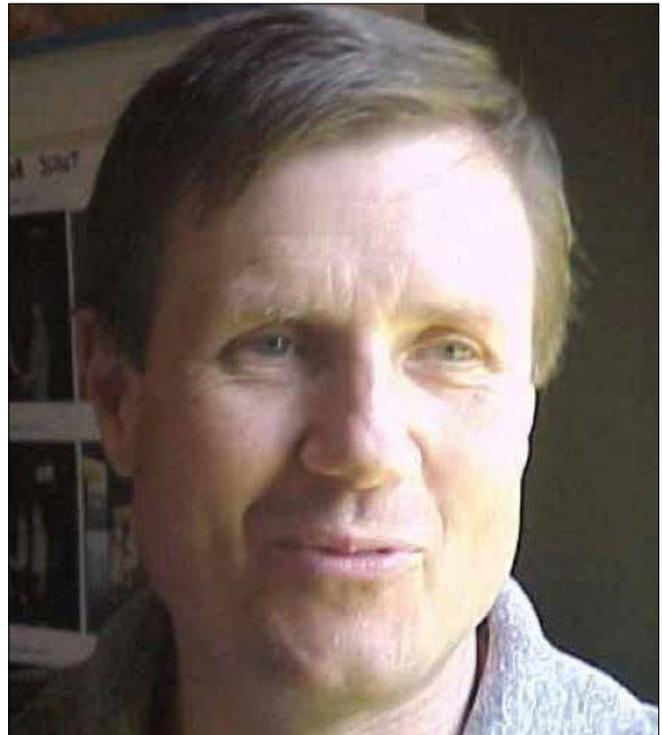
The opportunity to contribute

Bennett's rescue mission succeeded. Saville put him in charge, and gave him six months to show that the office could support itself. Having shown that, he was given only a further three months to sever formal ties with Sydney and go it alone. He formed AQA Victoria Limited, a not-for-profit company.

Its Annual Report explained in 1991:

"AQA Victoria Limited works with the objective of ensuring that physically disabled people have the opportunity to live and work as a contributing member of our community."

Bennett would lead AQA for the next 20 years. Keeping open the doors would remain a primary focus. The company had a contract to compile traffic accident statistics for the State Government authority VicRoads, and when that



Ian Bennett 2000

work dwindled Bennett built a desktop publishing business, Copies Plus. An attendant care business, AQA Qualcare, opened in 1991 and grew steadily.

Revenue from the successful businesses, and from a government grant that subsidized the employment of people with disabilities, funded an information service and newsletter for people with spinal cord injuries, and the coordinating of AQA's peer-support outreach to people recently injured.

Tragedy and misadventure

Bennett was a country boy whose can-do attitude had grown from tragedy and misadventure. He had been brought up in Newlyn, a small town near Ballarat. His mother had died when he was 11 months old, and his grandparents had cared for him and for his brother, who was two.

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"My mother had post-natal depression," Bennett reveals. "I learned eventually that she had shot herself, and my father found her. My father had come home from the war and built a trucking business and a sawmill. He had a nervous breakdown, became an alcoholic, and did a bit of work around the district. My grandparents, who were in their 60s, took on my brother and me, and tried to keep my father on track."

When Bennett was 15 his grandfather died, and he moved in with an aunt – "a fantastic lady" – in Ballarat. In 1975, when he was 21, he was asleep in the back of a panel van when it crashed. He emerged from 16 months of rehabilitation with incomplete quadriplegia: he could use his arms and hands and could walk, but with diminished strength and control.

He was a qualified toolmaker and had worked laying carpet. After his accident, acting on a chance opportunity, he bought a ride-on lawnmower and started a mowing and landscaping business. Then he moved the business to Melbourne.

"Eight years later I had about five guys working with me," he remembers. "At the same time I was studying book-keeping and accounting. I didn't like it, but I knew that to get on I had to do something that was indoors and sensible. I also had a partnership in a service station, and I did the books there."

Need for support

Bennett was recruited to AQA's forerunner, initially on a voluntary basis, when playing wheelchair sport. After his rescue mission established AQA Victoria, he had planned to move on. Persuaded to stay, he was appointed CEO and remained at the helm until he stepped away in 2007.

At the time he left, AQA Qualcare employed about 480 carers and had been adding about 20 clients a year, he says. The VicRoads contract was a distant memory, and Copies Plus had been closed. The newsletter and information service had endured, with its reach extended to Tasmania, and peer support had become a core service that was delivered pro bono.

Although he had saved AQA for the sake of his

co-workers with quadriplegia, Bennett had long understood that demand for the subsidized jobs it could offer was low.

"It was very hard to find people," he says. "We were looking for someone to work, all the time.

"But people with spinal cord injuries still needed support."

Popular appointment

Bennett's successor, Peter Trethewey, was a known face at AQA long before his appointment, having joined AQA's Board of Directors in 1992 and served until 2004, for four years as chair. He was a popular choice. Bennett recalls himself as having proposed to Trethewey that he apply to become CEO. Trethewey had also been sounded out by the serving Board chair.



Robyn and Fiona

Bennett's Executive Assistant, Robyn Canning, tells of having discussed the question of Bennett's successor informally with fellow long-serving employee Fiona Gologranc, at the time Accounts Supervisor. "Fiona and I said to each other: 'Wouldn't it be great if Peter went for the job!' Never thinking he would," Canning says. She would remain as Executive Assistant under Trethewey.

Trethewey's decision to run AQA was not obviously prudent. After two years in a graduate job with a family support organisation, he had

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HISTORY OF AQA

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stepped sideways to a bottom-rung social-work role with the Spinal Injuries Unit at the Austin Hospital. He had spent the past 19 years there: 12 of them in successively senior clinical posts, and seven leading the unit, by then named the Victorian Spinal Cord Service, as Business Manager.



Peter Trethewey

"I had heaps of people who looked at me and said, 'What on earth are you doing? You're talking about moving to a big position in a small organisation, without any support,'" Trethewey acknowledges.

"There has been a bit of a theme in my working life where I have got to a point of change, and then a decision has appealed to me that doesn't quite make sense to the people around me – in terms of the career trajectory that most people would have followed."

In the next issue of NewsLink, we'll have the conclusion of the "History of AQA". We'll continue our interview with Peter Trethewey as he talks to us about the opportunity he saw to sustain a direct connection with serving people who had sustained spinal cord injuries. There was also the contribution AQA was making with its peer support program, whose benefits he had seen in the course of his social work.

Vale - Mary Reid

At AQA we noted with sadness the passing away shortly after Christmas last year of the tireless activist and lobbyist Mary Reid OAM.

Mary was instrumental in the founding of the Qualcare Service Respite Program in 1991, and worked subsequently with AQA to develop the AQA Qualcare disability support service.

Former AQA board chair Cliff Wise has observed in recent correspondence that Mary also played a major prior role in convincing the federal government of the day that such programs were worthy of funding, through her role as convener of the Attendant Care Coalition Lobby.

In the August 2020 issue of NewsLink, as part of our "History of AQA" series, Mary told of her falling ill with polio shortly before her 11th birthday, and her passion for helping herself and others living with complex physical disabilities find ways to leave institutional care facilities and live independently.

Mary was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2006, for her service to people with disabilities.



Mary Reid (centre) with Ian Bennett (left) and Federal minister for health and community services Brian Howe

"I feel proud that I was able to do the work that I did," she said in her interview for the History of AQA series, "and that I was able to achieve a lot more than I thought I would. I got to learn quickly that you need to be persistent, and I have been dogged in my persistency."

At AQA we are grateful for Mary's persistency, and we offer our condolences to her family and friends.

Discovering the Power in Me (DPM)

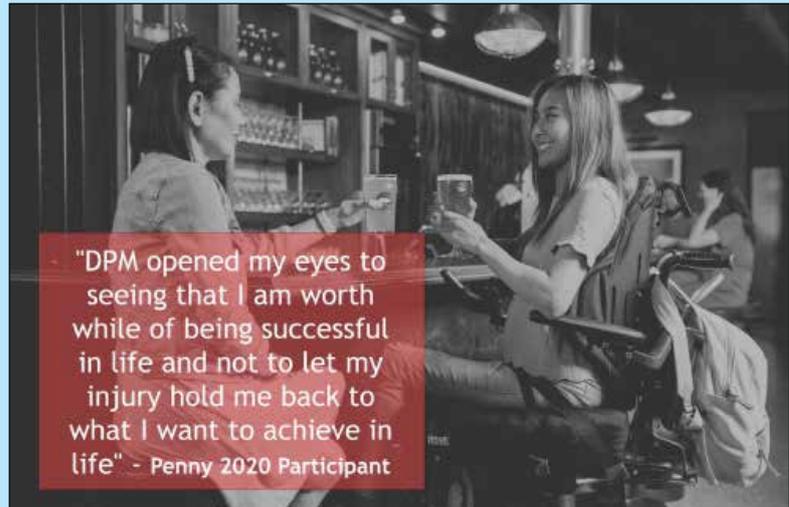
Beginning March 23, AQA will be holding a motivational/goal setting course called 'Discovering the Power in Me' (DPM), specifically designed for people with SCI.

The course consists of 12 units and brings together aspects of positive psychology specifically developed for people who experience traumatic injury. The purpose is to help build hope, inner strength, resiliency, and self-efficacy in people with disabilities and their family in order to re-assert control over their lives.

DPM is facilitated by people living with a spinal cord injury and combines video-based material with group discussion. DPM aims to achieve:

- setting and achieving goals
- finding creative solutions and possibilities;
- building a future of hope and resiliency;
- taking control of the way we think.

A unique part of DPM is each participant will have one-on-one sessions with their assigned peer coach. We have delivered this course for over 10 years. Here are some comments some past participants have made...



"DPM opened my eyes to seeing that I am worth while of being successful in life and not to let my injury hold me back to what I want to achieve in life" - Penny 2020 Participant

"I really appreciated the opportunity to step out of my life and evaluate where I am at and where I am going. I think the planning and positive thinking will stay with me and influence the way I talk with my son also."

"The course has given me the tools to help me identify where I need to make changes in my thoughts and behaviour to provide positive results in my life. I'm using positive self-talk and affirmations to transform my thinking and beliefs."

For further information visit our website <https://www.spire.org.au/resources/personal-development/>

Please let us know of your interest as places are limited for each session.

If you are interested in participating or would like to know more, contact our service engagement team at community@aqavic.org.au or call us on 9489 0777.

**There is a fee for participating in DPM
Please reach out if you would like to explore your funding options.**

Spinal Research Institute - Consumer Engagement Program

Research is a hugely important area for the quality-of-life of those of us who have a spinal cord injury (SCI). Antonio Vecchio, the Consumer Engagement Lead at the Spinal Research Institute, talks to us about the value of having people with SCI being involved in all the various stages of research. This applies to educating consumers and researchers, collaborating, prioritising, and being involved from conception.

Towards the end of last year, I was given the opportunity to join the Spinal Research Institute as the Consumer Engagement Lead. This position appealed to me because of the opportunity to help create a program where people with lived experience of spinal cord injuries, their families and the broader spinal community can get involved in the research process. To me, ensuring that members of the spinal community have a voice in research is vital. It ensures that what we want as a spinal community is reflected in the research being conducted. In the end, it is us who will feel the impact of positive research so we must be involved in the process.

However, once I started the role, it prompted a little self-reflection of my own. I found myself asking why I hadn't personally been involved in spinal research before? Like many of us, I have been reasonably active within the spinal cord injury community. The topic of research has come up in many discussions for many years, yet none of those conversations turned into my own involvement in research. This notion caused even more self-reflection; I found



Antonio spreading the message

myself asking why I wasn't taking action out of these conversations? The conclusion that I came to, is that although I have had many conversations about research, my overall spinal research knowledge was quite limited. This notion was then reinforced as I immersed myself into my new role, at times asking myself "why was I not aware of this" when reviewing the materials. I then started to have conversations with people in the spinal

community and established that I was not alone in my lack of research involvement. These conversations then reinforced my conviction in the Consumer Engagement Program that I'm working to establish.

So how will I take this self-reflection and use it in the development of the program? The critical step will be creating awareness of the research process itself, which aims to break down the barrier between researchers and consumers.

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As in anything, the more familiar we are as consumers with what is involved in research, the more likely we are to become more active in that area. I believe that education is the key to encouraging collaboration. This mindset includes educating not only consumers on the benefits of collaboration but also the research community.

As consumers, we should be driving the outcomes of the research. Researchers must be kept up-to-date and educated on what we as consumers need to enhance our quality-of-life. We must take the conversations that we are having amongst ourselves to the people that have the potential to turn those conversations into action.



Our program will be based on the following ideas. Firstly, as discussed above, will be to inform and educate consumers about spinal cord injury research. This stage forms the foundation for consumers to develop their skill set to be able to bring and communicate their lived experience to research conversations. The program then aims to connect researchers with consumers so that relationships are formed between the two groups. Once relationships are formed between consumers and researchers, we hope for greater collaboration and ultimately, greater research impact. Collaboration, ideally, will be achieved at all stages of the research cycle. The earlier that consumers are involved in the research process, the more likely the outcome of the research will benefit us consumers and our needs.

It is also important to remember that as consumers, we need to be providing feedback on the research that is occurring. Getting

involved in clinical trials provides a mechanism for consumers to provide such feedback directly to researchers. During the clinical trial stage, the data is collected, analysed and conclusions drawn on whether the research outcomes will have real benefits to the spinal cord community, and therefore to the wider community in which we live.

This year the Spinal Research Institute celebrates its 10th anniversary. Anniversaries are often a celebration of what has been achieved. Over the past ten years, the SRI has developed programs and initiatives that promote international collaboration and positive outcomes in spinal research. Anniversaries also provide a chance to look forward to the future and new opportunities. From a personal perspective, I feel excited about the future and the opportunities it brings. It's time to turn those casual conversations that we are all having into action.



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

Nerve transfer surgery to reanimate hand function

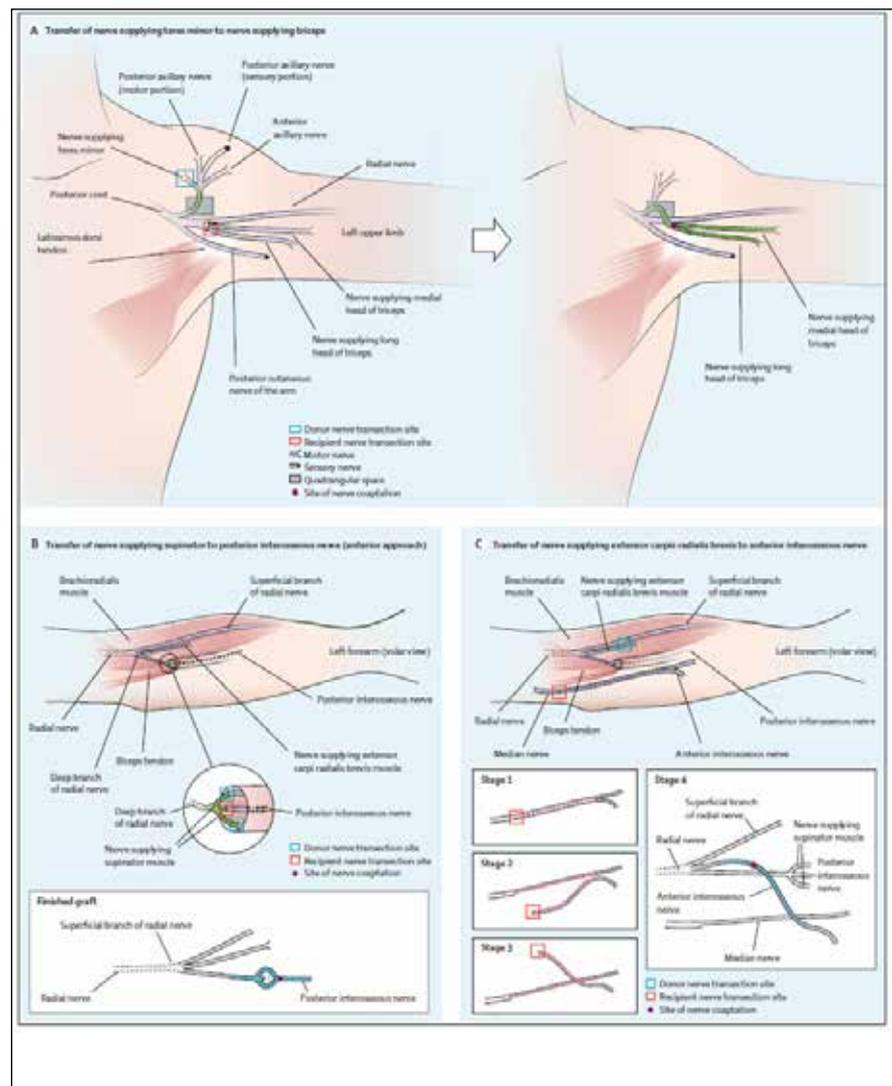
Regaining arm and hand function is the highest priority for people with quadriplegia. Recently, Professor Mary Galea, from the University of Melbourne, and Dr Natasha van Zyl, plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Austin Health, led a research group which completed the largest prospective, consecutive case series of nerve transfers undertaken at a single centre with people with quadriplegia. The findings are summarised below.

Loss of upper limb function impacts almost every aspect of a person's work, family and social life.

Regaining arm and hand function is the highest priority for people with quadriplegia. Traditionally, some arm and hand functions have been reconstructed using tendon transfers, which move the tendon of a functioning muscle to a new insertion site to recreate the function of a paralysed muscle. Nerve transfers are an attractive surgical option as they allow direct reanimation of the muscle anatomically and biomechanically designed to perform that function.

A research group led by Professor Mary Galea, from the Department of Medicine (Royal Melbourne Hospital) and the Victorian Spinal Cord Service at Austin Health, and Dr Natasha van Zyl, plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Austin Health, recently completed the largest prospective, consecutive case series of nerve transfers undertaken at a single centre in the quadriplegic population to date (The Lancet).

Sixteen participants (13 male, 3 female) with average age of 27 years and within 18 months of traumatic spinal cord injury affecting the mid-cervical region



(neck) were recruited from people referred to Austin Health for assessment in the Upper Limb Clinic. Most of the injuries were the result of motor vehicle accidents or sports injuries.

Participants underwent single or multiple nerve transfers in one or both upper limbs to

restore elbow extension, grasp, pinch, and hand opening. This involved taking working nerves to expendable muscles innervated above the spinal injury and attaching them to the nerves of paralysed muscles innervated below the injury to restore voluntary control and reanimate the paralysed

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muscle. For example, to restore grasp and pinch, the nerve to a spare wrist extensor muscle was transferred to the anterior interosseous nerve, which resulted in thumb and finger flexion. In ten participants, nerve transfers were performed in one hand to restore grasp and pinch while tendon transfers were performed on the other.

The clinical and functional outcomes of 59 nerve transfer procedures (27 limbs) were examined.

Participants completed assessments of their level of independence related to activities of daily living (e.g., self-care, toilet, upper limb function, muscle power, grasp and pinch strength, and hand opening ability) before surgery, one year after surgery, and again two years later.

At the two-year time-point, significant improvements were observed in the participants' ability to pick up and release objects of different sizes within a specified time and in their independence. Prior to surgery, none of the participants were able to perform the grasp or pinch strength tests, however two years later, pinch and grasp strength were sufficiently high enough to enable performance of most activities of daily living. The outcomes in hands where grasp and pinch had been reconstructed with nerve transfers were similar to those reconstructed with tendon transfers. However, a hand reconstructed with a nerve transfer for grasp and pinch had a more natural appearance and feel for social interactions and extended (opened) more easily for use of electronic devices. Participants were satisfied with outcomes, would have the surgery again and would recommend it to others. There were four failed nerve transfers in three participants, who later underwent tendon transfer to improve hand function. Minor adverse events included alteration in sensation and a temporary reduction in wrist strength which had resolved by the 12-month assessment. There were no serious adverse events related to the surgery.

Nerve transfer surgery is a safe and effective addition to the surgical techniques available for upper limb reanimation in quadriplegia and should be offered to eligible people, but long-term follow up of nerve transfer surgery is highly desirable.

For further info, including videos <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/reanimating-hand-movement-after-spinal-cord-injury>

NDIS Mobile App – Test Users Wanted

The NDIA is making an app for participants to make claiming and managing their budgets easier.

They are inviting you to download and use the app and give them your feedback.

They need people who:

- Are NDIS participants, nominees, or child representatives
- Self-manage part or all of their NDIS plan
- Use a smartphone
- Make claims in the myplace participant portal

What's involved?

- Download the pilot version of the App onto your smartphone
- Use the App to manage your NDIS budget
- Give them your feedback on how it works or what needs improving



Would you like to help?

Please fill out this short survey to tell them about you and what kind of phone you will be using. They will check your responses, then email you to let you know if you are able to take part in the testing.

If you have any problems with this survey, or need help filling it out please contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110

<http://survey.ndis.gov.au/portal/richmessage/t6bziAJG/v.prtl>

How a Drawing Turned into a Sculpture

In the last issue of NewsLink, we shared how Ben Winwood used his love of drawing to create a colouring-in book. Fellow artist and sculptor, Keith Chidzey, came across one of Ben's drawings and created a piece called "Victory", which is based on the drawing.

"The golden hour before dusk is glorious - the light bounces around all over the place. That's when I love to document my art," says sculptor Keith Chidzey.

In January, Keith was documenting his latest piece, "Victory", at Kurnell beach, on the southern shores of Sydney.

Documenting is a photoshoot for the artwork, so that it can be submitted to a potential exhibitor, or just shared.

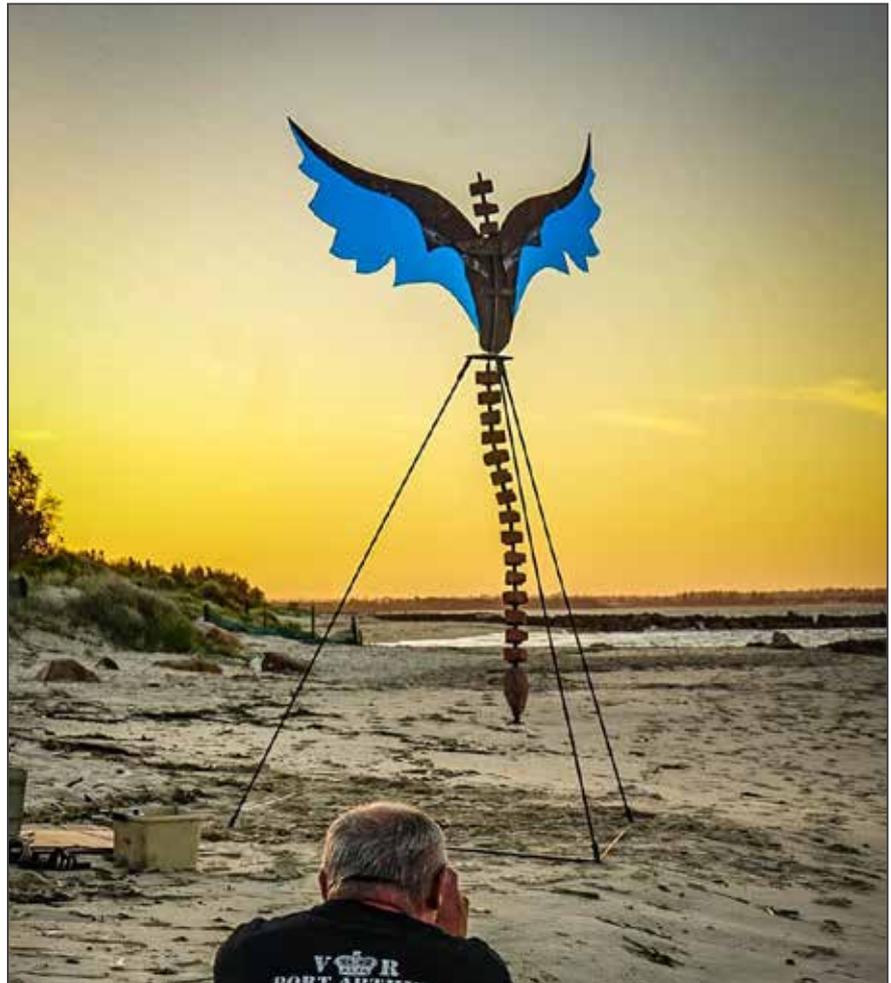
"I document a lot of art at Kurnell," Keith says. "It's a beautiful, big long beach."

Keith has been a sculptor for the past 20 years, working mostly with bronze and timber.

"Victory" develops a drawing shared by Tasmanian Ben Winwood, which grew from Ben's rehabilitation after a spinal cord injury.

Before sculpture, Keith's trade was dental surgery. After an injured wrist brought his surgical career to a close, he threw himself into his art.

Ben, based in Launceston, lives with an incomplete L2 injury received from a car accident in 2014. He had worked as a chaplain, but as he recovered he too focused on art. Last year he fulfilled a long-held dream of publishing a book: a colouring in book for kids, called Community Colours.



The two met at a faith-based artist retreat. They stayed in touch through an online artists' group, which is where Ben posted his drawing, "Victory".

"Initially I didn't connect with the significance of it, just its beauty," says Keith of that drawing.

"It was wonderful; soaring.

"I make art to show the beauty of this world, and that's what I

saw in Ben's drawing.

"So I asked Ben if I could work with it."

With Ben's blessing, a load of wooden offcuts scavenged from a lumber mill, some blue perspex, and some metal, Keith got to work.

"I've always been in love with fine Aussie timber," says Keith. "I love the character of it - the more knots and gnarls the better. Plus I've had long

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history in boat building, so it was familiar to work with."

Six months later, Ben got to see his artwork reaching skyward on a golden beach.

"It's pretty incredible, right!" exclaims Ben of the sculpture.



Work, prayer and luck

For Ben, "Victory" represents an attitude as well as the unfinished story of his physical, emotional and spiritual journey post-injury.

"It speaks of where I've been, where I am and where I'm going," he says.

When he entered rehab at the Royal Talbot in Kew, he could move a toe and jiggle a knee.

He told himself he'd be walking out of there. After three and half months of hard work, prayer, and some luck, he did.

Six years later, Ben says he can walk up stairs and around the block - capabilities he's working on expanding.

He sees a similar story of overcoming among his para-athlete friends: "The stuff they can do, it's honestly amazing."

Ben says his faith and a durable sense of humour have guided and protected him on his journey.

"After my injury I kept telling myself: If I don't laugh I'll cry," he reveals.

"Prayer has also been a huge part of my recovery; a sustaining force throughout."

"Victory" will be on display at the Sculpture Bermagui art exhibition, south of Sydney, alongside three other pieces by Keith, from 6 March to 14 March.

SUPPORTING SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY

Making a bequest...

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

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

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

If you would like more information about making a bequest to AQA please contact Peter Trethewey CEO on 03 9489 0777.



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

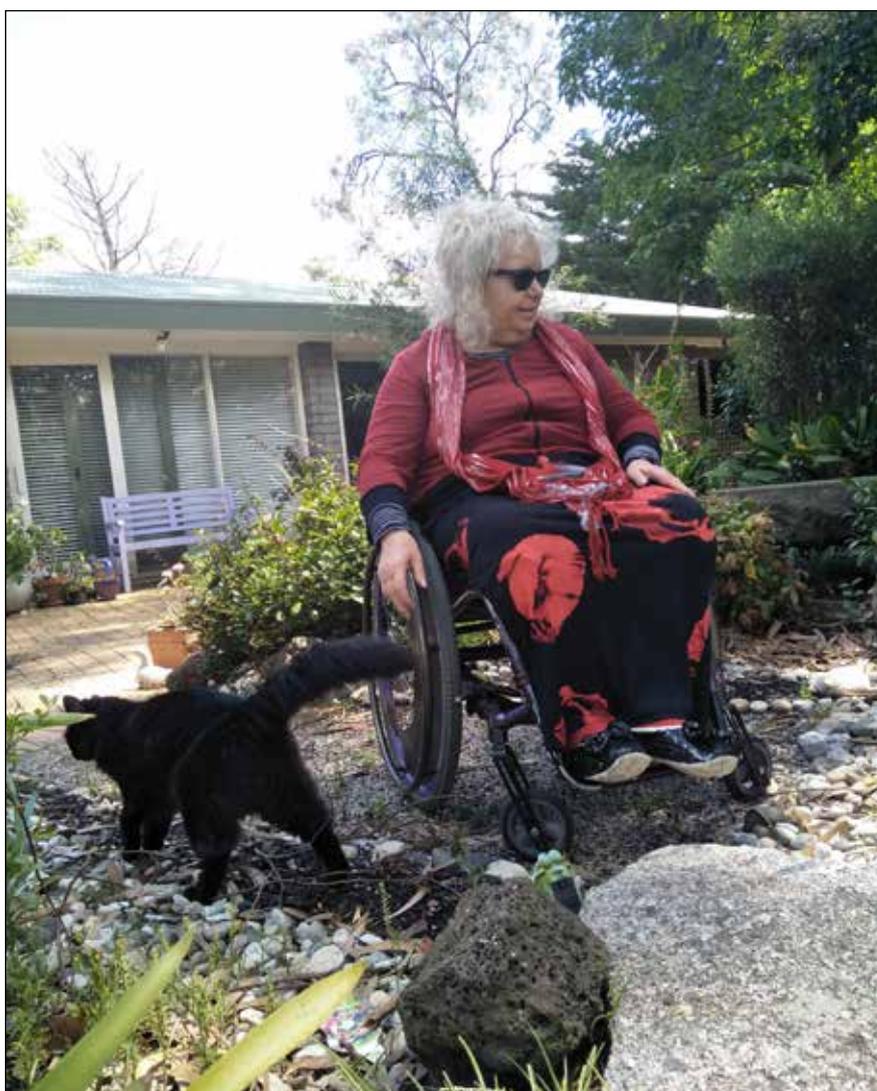
COVID-19: How I Kept Myself Sane During Lockdown

After months staying in the Austin Hospital to recover from a pressure sore, Karen was glad to get back home. However, like everyone else, she faced COVID-19 restrictions and had to adapt to a new normal. She had to manage carers to help with daily living as well keeping her mental health strong. This meant learning and making use of technology including video conferencing. Being able to connect with others on Zoom was a god-send.

The last 12 months have been very challenging for all of us in a number of ways. The world has been extremely different with a lot of changes in how we do things - using masks, sanitiser, social distancing, working from home and limited or no holidays. I keep thinking what I would have done without social media, Zoom, Messenger, Spotify, Netflix... and of course, online shopping!

Before Melbourne's second wave, I had just come out of the Austin hospital after a very long stay from a pressure area. It was so nice being back home after spending such a long time at the hospital. After returning home, things were suddenly very different for me. I needed carers to assist me with everyday activities while my skin was still healing. And then the second lockdown came around because of COVID-19. The restrictions were so strict that we could not have any visitors to our house, hospitality and businesses were closed, and we were only allowed outside for one hour per day.

I live on my own, so having carers around helped to keep me grounded and feeling "not so isolated" during this difficult



time. It was so important to have distractions.

During my 'normal', life I volunteer at the AQA Spire office, so I was fortunate to already have this connection with AQA Spire. My main role has been assisting with the

community network meetings.

At AQA, I was aware of, but did not have any involvement with the peer support program. One of the peer support mentors used to visit me regularly at the Austin. This mentor was wonderful to talk to

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as she could relate to the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) issues from a personal perspective. I certainly appreciated this program whilst in hospital.

One of the initiatives AQA adopted during COVID-19 was to have Zoom Social meetings on a Friday afternoon for mentors, and as I was a volunteer, I was included too.

These Zoom sessions have been a fabulous support for me, having regular social catch-ups with a great group of like-minded people. It was very relaxed and we would have our drinks and snacks in front of us whilst chatting. Our conversations would range from what we have been up to during the week, travel adventures, politics (yes that was always interesting!), COVID-19, and SCI issues to name a few.

Another event that AQA undertook during COVID-19 was to have the "What's Out There" (WOT) day on Zoom. One session topic was on Ageing and SCI. There was a panel of people with SCI sharing their experiences about getting older and the changes occurring with them. Spinal physiotherapists were also part of the panel giving their insight and knowledge about ageing and our bodies, particularly when we are unable to do things like we used to when we were younger. It was a very interesting and thought-provoking session.

The AQA network meetings have been another Zoom favourite of mine. Some of the activities included all

participants emailing photos, which were included into a PowerPoint presentation ready to share with each other during the meeting. The themes of the photos were:

- One memory of 2020
- What I am looking forward to in 2021
- What things help you or have special meaning in your lives

Another activity that has been

very positive for me particularly during lockdown. I have joined Dance&Roll again this year.

On reflection, our world is now different and hopefully we will get on top of COVID-19. Technology has certainly helped me stay more connected so that I don't feel as isolated. The skills that I have learnt both personally and with technology will assist me in the long term. Without getting



wonderful for my mental health during COVID-19 restrictions is Dance&Roll. Dance&Roll was also conducted on Zoom during lockdown, and will be continued throughout 2021 on zoom and in person. The dancing is great with lots of fun, energy, movement and music. The program is suitable for all abilities, and has been

too philosophical, I think we all have the potential to learn to be more resilient and take on new and different things in our lives... and come out on the other side okay.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

Glide Centro Mid Wheel Drive Powerchair

In excellent condition; Purchased in 2019 for \$17000 - Receipt attached; Rarely went outside and was used in the aged facility; Many additional extras.

Price: \$ - Reasonable Offer Accepted

Phone: 0436 010 284 (Val) (02/21#a)

Quickie Explore - Electric Wheelchair

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

Price: \$6,000 (Cash on pick-up)

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

2010 / 2011 VW Golf Wagon

Diesel; Very economical; Only 118,000kms; RWC Provided; Excellent condition throughout; Modified with Push/Pat & Spinner Knob; Great for storage in the back, as it can fit both a fixed frame wheelchair and a basketball wheelchair.

Price: \$14,999

Phone: 0417 581 709 (Meryl) (02/21#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)

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)

Jomor Mattress

Made in Melbourne; Custom Mattress – 1980x1070x150mm; Waterproof Layer; Breathable 2 way Stretch Cover; Very good order; Pick up only - Glengarry VIC 3854.

Price: \$175 ONO

Phone: 0438 718 384 (Ron) (01/21#a)

RECT MOTomed PICO - Leg Trainer

Works fine; Can be hooked to electrodes on muscles; Pick up only - Glengarry VIC 3854.

Price: \$175 ONO

Phone: 0438 718 384 (Ron) (01/21#a)

Monarch Hand Controls

Used; Very Good Condition; Purchased and fitted at Franks Engineering.

Price: \$600

Phone: 0402 204 992 (Colin) (01/21#a)

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)

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)

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)

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: \$5,500

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

FOR SALE

2011 VE Commodore Omega 6 Sp Auto. Sportwagon

Vehicle currently used by a Quadriplegic. Purchased secondhand in September 2018 and got E-Radial Hand Controls & SMDM Transfer Bench installed by Capital Special Vehicles. Would suit person in a wheelchair or similar. Hand Controls & Transfer Bench could be removed. Roof Racks (not currently fixed). Tow Bar. Regularly Serviced, Wheels/Tyres Size 245/40ZR19. New Battery. Rego till July 2021. Upgraded to a new Van. Vehicle also Advertised Elsewhere <https://www.gumtree.com.au/s-ad/welshpool/cars-vans-utes/2011-ve-series-ii-holden-commodore-omega-6-sp-auto-sportwagon/1269415393>

Price \$9000 neg. (Hedley) **Email:** aavery@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 0438 082 121 (Andrew)

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)

Bathroom Stool & All Purpose Trolley

Free to a good home.

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

AQA Spinal Injury Info & Support

For news, information, photos and more...



www.facebook.com/AQASpinalSupport

Desktop Publishing

Do you have skills in Desktop Publishing?

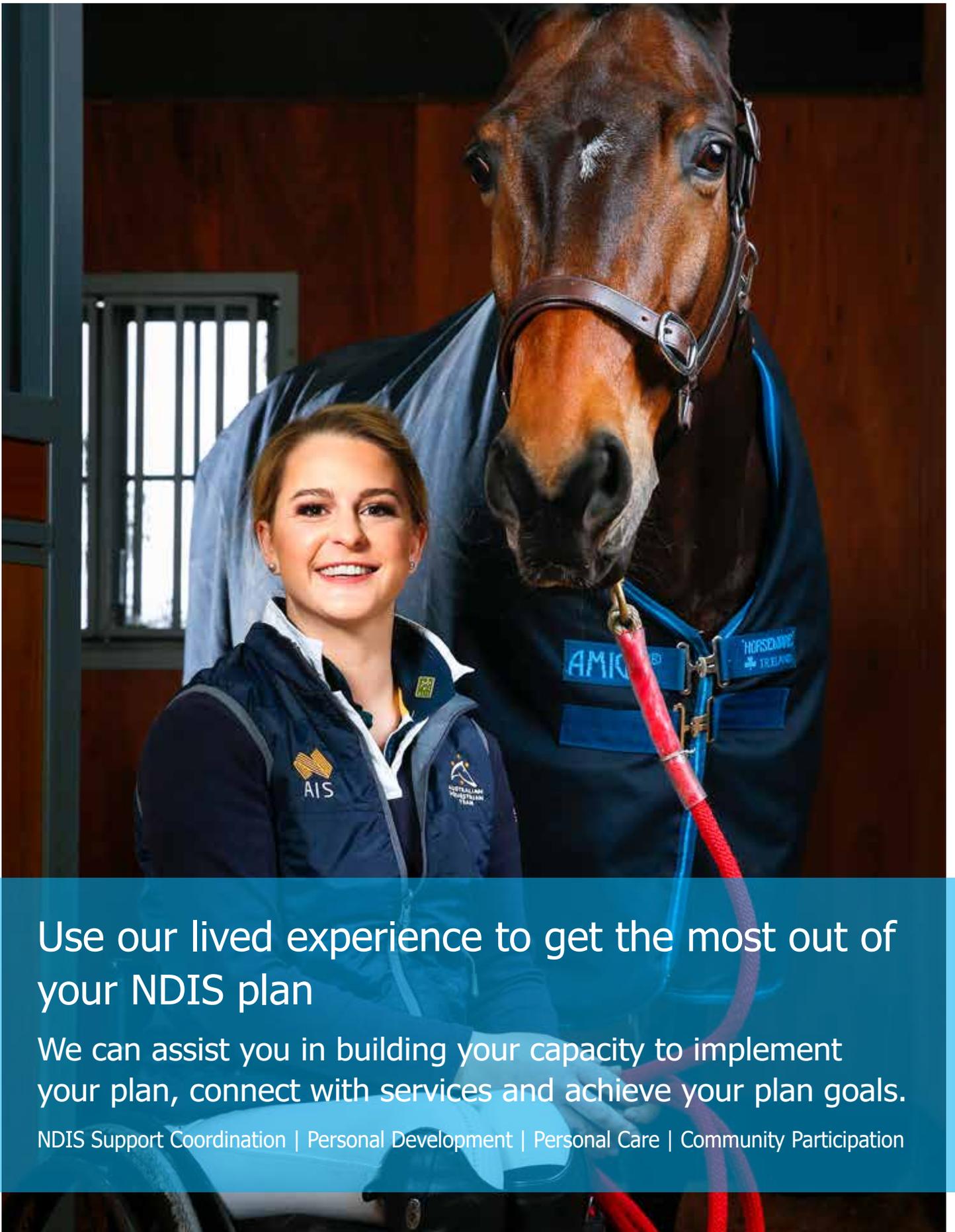
AQA is looking for a skilled volunteer (with the potential of P/T) to help with the design and publication of NewsLink. This opportunity will give you the chance to work within a team and put your skills to the test. We use the latest in software including In-Design and Photoshop.

If you are interested and want to find out more, please contact Naz on nazimerdem@aqavic.org.au or 03 9489 0777



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.



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

