

AQA NEWS LINK

The Official Newsletter of AQA Victoria Ltd., & AQA Tasmania

June 2002



Quad's Overseas

Ari's Brave New World



Computers

AQA's Improved Website



Trams

Accessible Tram Ride



Inside

- Petrol Station Services
- Accessible Accommodation / Retreats
- Sexuality and Disability
- PLUS More...



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VICTORIAN BRANCH

440 Heidelberg Road
FAIRFIELD Vic. 3078

Ph: (03) 9489 0777

Fax: (03) 9482 4371

E-mail: admin@aqavic.org.au

POSTAL ADDRESS:

PO Box 219

FAIRFIELD Vic. 3078

TASMANIAN BRANCH

Ph: (03) 6428 4300

Fax: (03) 6428 4301

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Trethewey

Zac Carr

Bernie Bartels

Dr. Meredith Wallace

Kevin Bailey

A.Q.A. NEWS LINK is the official newsletter of A.Q.A. Victoria Limited, Australian Quadriplegic Association - Victoria, and is published bimonthly.

NEWS LINK seeks to publish material of interest to people with physical disabilities and their families, professional workers and other individuals and organisations concerned with the welfare of those who are physically disabled. ARTICLES and items of interest are welcome from any individual or organisation.

NEWS LINK reserves the right to edit all submissions as it sees fit. Published articles do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of A.Q.A. or its members.

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From the CEO

In recent issues of News Link we have included an article by A.Q.A. Qualcare regarding attendant care issues. We are now re-introducing Qually News which will be forwarded to all clients and attendant carers of A.Q.A. Qualcare on a bi-monthly basis. If anyone has any information that is relevant to Qually News regarding the attendant care industry please fax us on 9482 7933 or email: qualcare@aqavic.org.au



I am happy to announce that our Web Page has now been updated (www.aqavic.org.au) Please check this page regularly for some exciting changes. While we now have included general information on disability issues, in the future members will be able to access further information that will cover areas of accessibility, travel etc, that is currently available in News Link. Also coming up will be a notice board and chat room so don't forget to check regularly for additions that can benefit you. You will also be able to pay your News Link subscriptions via this Web Page. We would appreciate an email from you about your thoughts on the changes to our Web Page.

Many thanks to Phil Butterworth for his hard work.

Ian Bennett
Chief Executive Officer
ianbennett@aqavic.org.au

From the Editor

With Naz away playing rugby in Sweden, the job of editing this issue was up to me. Although Naz had started putting this issue together, it was a bit of work completing it. I must thank Rees, Peter, Nathan, Nigel, Phil and Meredith with their contributions.



I hope you find some interesting reading in this issue of News Link. There is a wide variety of articles on different subject matters.

We all know how difficult it is being a quad in general, but for a different perspective, read the article on page 8 & 9 by Ari about life in South Africa.

Jason Hunt

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AQA NEWS LINK

Copy deadlines 2002

NEWS LINK is issued bi-monthly. The deadlines for AQA NEWS LINK 2002 are:

Issue	Deadline
August	31st July
October	30th September
December	30th November



Special Needs Housing

www.accesshousing.com

is a free website to allow buyers and sellers of modified properties to easily access houses for sale that have been modified. If you know of someone in this situation, please tell them (or their estate agent) about the site.

The service is **FREE**. If you have any questions on Real Estate, please feel free to ring Geoff Buck from Special Needs Housing on 0418 306 588

ACCESSIBLE TRAM RIDE

Tram 109

On a cold wet Friday, two intrepid AQA members – Rees Houston and Meredith Wallace - set out to road test the new low floor trams which run on route 109 (Port Melbourne to Box Hill). The Citadis 300, designed in France, is advertised as “one of the most advanced trams in the world” with a low floor, wide doors and space on board for wheelchairs. We found the trams (not without difficulty) and travelled on one. How well does it work for a wheelie? Well, there are two sides to that question:

Access and Service

Access

The articulated tram has two wide opening doors in the middle of the tram. The distance from the ground is 33 cm, described as ‘single step access’, but a height which would be daunting for most manual chair users, even with a super strong carer.



The usefulness of this tram, then, is dependant on the provision of a platform by Yarra Trams. (See below.) The door nearer the front has a wheelchair symbol on it and when open, the driver can extend a very small flap which bridges the gap between tram and platform. Platforms will be marked to indicate where you should wait to gain access.

We tried out a motorized wheel chair (MW) and a manual chair (RH) and found both were workable at the door with the ramp. The second door, without a ramp, had a slight gap (about 4 cm’s) and the floor was slightly raised above platform level. This would be more difficult for a higher level quad to handle in a manual chair, but Rees was able to enter without help.

Once inside the tram there is a ticket dispensing machine at ‘stand up’ height, unusable for most quads. The ticket validating machine is low and well placed. There are also two well marked buttons at an easy height – one for ‘stop’ and one to indicate a need for wheelchair access (or off-loading). There seem to be two spaces in the middle of the tram where a wheelchair user can face front, keep out of the aisle and hold a rail for support. The tram acceleration and deceleration was smooth (maybe we had a good driver).



Special Superstops are being built along the route, but not at every stop. The city ones are beside the tram track in the middle of the road, a little wider than the conventional waiting areas, with a ramp at each end (gradient about 1:12) and some shelter from rain. In the city these ramps are entered from the normal pedestrian crossings.

Tram 109 begins its run at Port Melbourne (Beacon Cove) along the light rail track and there are three or four stops on this stretch with raised wooden platforms. There seems to be a



*Accessible buttons and plenty of room
Picture: Access Audits Australia*

slightly bigger difference between platform and tram floor here, and the beginning of the ramp is not a smooth transition. This was tested in drizzling rain, with a very tolerant driver watching us get in and out several times.

Service

The drivers on the special trams were helpful. At Swanston & Collins Street the ‘trammie’ at the stop showed me where to wait and advised the driver of my presence (the stop was so crowded the driver would probably not have seen me.) The driver got out and supervised my enforced entry into a densely packed tram: “Move back, now. Move along there...let her in” People were remarkable tolerant of having their ankles lacerated by my footplates and disembarked on either side of my chair at the next stop. Rees tackled the other door and managed to get to the wheelchair parking area in the tram. No one managed to get to a ticket validating machine.

Three stops later we tumbled out.

How can you join in a fun day like this? So far, you can ride between Beacon Hill and the City. You can ride *up* Collins Street from Swanston to Spring, or you can ride *down* from Spring to Swanston. Or you could get on at any of these stops and ride round on a long trip all the way to the end of the line at Mont Albert (don’t expect to get off) and then you could come back.

Some time soon there will be another Superstop at Victoria Parade/Brunswick Street.

When do the trams run? Yarra Trams has about 30 of these, not far short of the total 36 on order, however, they decline to issue a timetable. Seems to be in the too-hard basket. We found by ringing the Information number

Continued next page...

What's new in PEER SUPPORT

By Peter V. Benthem

What's new in PEER SUPPORT

G'day members. On the 19th of June, Royal Talbot's Life Skills Committee, along with AQA's Peer Support Department ran another "Life Skills Day" at Royal Talbot. Life Skills Days are a great place to meet people, help people and learn more about life after a spinal cord injury (SCI). **Special thanks go to the Life Skills Panel. The panel members who attended the day were Andrea, Meredith, Kevin, Michael, Rod and Terry.** All have a SCI and shared their valuable knowledge with those who attended the day. Special thanks must also be said to the people who held exhibitions after the panel. Without these people giving their time and dedication, events like these would never be the success that they are.

The Royal Talbot Physio Department ran a clinic in the afternoon of Life Skills Day called "Shoulder Care After SCI" where there were different types of exercises for different types of shoulder related pain and good stretching exercises. The clinic was very popular and well done.

Country Clinics - where AQA gets a chance to catch up with our country members to see how they are doing - were held in Bairsdale, Warragul and Mildura in the last couple of months. The next Country Clinics will be held

in Albury, Wangaratta and Warrnambool. So if you will be attending these up-coming Country Clinics, look out for AQA's peer support people and have a chat.

Well winter is here and it's that time of the year when the flu starts to creep around so if you feel you are vulnerable, you seriously need to think about getting that flu shot, especially if you're prone to getting colds and your lungs aren't as good as they should be. So don't put it off any longer, have chat to your doctor and tell him/her about your concerns. Remember, prevention is better than the cure with the flu!

Sexuality with SCI can be a grey area but there is no need for this, there is fantastic support out there. Royal Talbot has two great Sexuality Counsellors, Annie and Alexa, who run sexuality sessions with AQA. These sessions cater for all issues from relationships, understanding and body image to sexual understanding. There are also group talks with SCI people who share their knowledge. This is a fantastic resource, so if you're interested, give AQA's Peer Support Department a call. You can also call Annie or Alexa on 9496 4732 at the Royal Talbot.

...from previous page

(9619 3406) that we could coax them to give us a few times (2 hours apart) ex Port Melbourne. They recommended ringing Operations (9619 3522) to confirm. Frequency of route 109 between 9.30 and 4.30 is 8 minutes. On the day of the Big Tram Ride we noticed about one in three or four trams were the new accessible type. Trams will be scheduled when the extension to Box Hill is finished.

Superstops:

Spring / Collins
Swanston / Collins

Light rail section stops are at:
Port Melb terminus,
Northport station,
Montague Street,
Southbank depot

Under construction:
Brunswick / Victoria Pde



Summary

Access - Generally, very good.

Assistance on the spot - good

Service - Not much use until they schedule the trams and build more Superstops

Information - a bit difficult to obtain, but try ringing 9619 3406

Web: www.yarratrams.com.au/fe/projects/access

Meredith Wallace

Footnote: Photographs shown in the article have been sourced elsewhere. We were going to get some photographs (to use in News Link) taken with the assistance of Yarra Trams on the day. Meredith and Rees had arranged with the Publicity Officer (from Yarra Trams) to meet them at Port Melbourne to take the photographs. Long after the tram had left, they were still waiting in the rain for the Publicity Officer. They're still waiting...

Wheelchair Friendly Colonial Stadium

I recently toured Colonial Stadium to assess its accessibility for wheelchairs. I met with Jill Lindsay who is the AFL Ground Manager. Jill was a very obliging lady who showed me, my father and Attendant Carer Lenore around the magnificent complex. I really enjoyed the playing surface, which was awesome.

There are many convenient viewing areas for wheelchair patrons and their carers right around the whole stadium at both level 1 and level 2. These designated areas are spacious and are very close to the action, unlike the MCG where similar spots are somewhat distant from the actual playing surface.

There are many lifts throughout the stadium to take you from the carpark to either level 1 or 2. Car parking can be arranged either at the time you phone to purchase your ticket, or by contacting the AFL.

The only drawback is that many of the wheelchair viewing areas back onto an entrance, so on a cold and windy day there is something of a draught at your back. If you go, rug up appropriately.

All in all, if you want to view the great game of Aussie Rules close up and personal, get along to Colonial Stadium to catch all the action.

Gary Allsop

Sexuality & Women With Spinal Cord Injury

There are many changes that can affect your quality of life following a spinal cord injury. The changes to sexuality, as a result of changes to sexual function, can have a major impact on quality of life. The Victorian Spinal Cord Service is currently involved in a drug trial to look at sexual function in spinal cord injured women. If you are more than twelve months post injury, over 18 years old and interested in participating in the trial, please contact any of the following people.

- Dr. Doug Brown – Principal Investigator – 9496 4220
- Dr. Steve Hill – Co-Investigator – 9496 4220
- Annie Norrish – Study Co-ordinator – 9496 4732, Mobile 0408 035 849

Wheelchair Accessible Property For Rent

- Bayside suburb in Mentone
- 1-2 bedroom property
- Features Kitchen, Bathroom, Separate Laundry, living area, small decking at rear, air-conditioning & central heating
- Fully accessible for quadriplegic level of injury
- Close to shops and train station, short distance to beach (which has WC access)
- Well maintained property in a block of 4 units
- Current rent is \$180 per week.

For further details contact Andrew Jennings (landlord) on Ph: 0418 995 772

Campaign targets more nurses

Specialist nurses are targeted in a State Government funded campaign to entice them back to specialist areas like neonatal intensive care, psychiatric, aged care, emergency and spinal.

Hopefully this campaign will see more dedicated and committed nurses at the Austin hospital's and Royal Talbot's Spinal wards.

Initiatives like this will make nursing an attractive profession again. So next time you have to visit the Austin or Royal Talbot, you may not have to worry about inexperienced 'temps'.

Nazim Erdem

SURVIVAL TIPS: 'BLADDER INFECTIONS'

I know I'm probably telling you things you already know, but at the risk of preaching to the converted, I'd like to say a few words on the delightful subject of bladder infections.

As most of you would know, there is nothing more annoying and uncomfortable than coming down with one of these little beauties, not to mention the nasty things that can happen if left untreated.

Prevention is always better than cure and the unnecessary overuse of antibiotics can lead to resistant infections. One of the first means of prevention is keeping your fluids up. Eight or more glasses a day is very important. The other thing that can be done without too much fuss is to try and make your bladder too acidic or alkaline for the bugs to live in. A natural way to do this is to drink a glass of lemon juice. If this doesn't tickle your taste buds, try cranberry juice or tablets (the tablets are supposed to be much better for prevention). Recent research provides good evidence for the effectiveness of cranberry.

There are also a couple of tablets designed for this, Hiprex and Ammonium Chloride (known as bullets and smarties while I was in rehab). Hiprex (bullets) is a urinary tract antibacterial, which requires an acidic 'environment' to work well. The Ammonium Chloride (smarties) will maintain the urine at an acidic pH level. If you're going to be serious about this, ask the chemist for some pH test strips to keep track of acidity and adjust the dose of Ammonium Chloride to keep your urine slightly acidic.

If you give these a try, you might save yourself a trip to the doc and a dose of antibiotics. If you find you're still coming down with infections or an existing one is getting worse, don't hesitate to get down to your GP. These infections can get bad, fast! Till next time, stay healthy.

Rees Houston

AQA'S IMPROVED WEBSITE

<http://www.aqavic.org.au>

AQA Victoria have a new web site. The address is the same (www.aqavic.org), but the content has changed.

Our improved site now has an emphasis on interactivity. Featured on the site is a section for our members called 'Members' - this is where all the interactivity is. I'm hoping that this interactivity will encourage members to visit frequently.

Once you are in the members section, you have two options. The first option is the 'Chat Room', the second option is the 'Message Board'.

Shortly you will also be able to renew your membership, notify us of changes to your personal details, visit other recommended sites, etc.

Note: To ensure you have the most up to date page on the screen, it is necessary to "refresh" the site by clicking on the "Refresh" button of your browser.

PASSWORD PROTECTION

The password to get into the Members Page is "aqavic" (all lower case).

The Members section will shortly be password protected. Every member will have their own unique password - probably membership numbers. There are many

reasons for this - as well as the comfort of anonymity, knowing sensitive communication will be received by other members only.

CHATROOM & CONFERENCES

There is a chat room which will be open all the time. Here you will be able to communicate (in real time) with other members. You will be asked for a name and some URL's. Just put in a name/nickname and press "OK Connect". Feel free to use the chat room whenever you like - unless a conference had been organised earlier. These conferences/discussions will be preceded by an article on a subject matter in News Link, hopefully found interesting by most members.

Also you can use the "private chat" function which is a really good messenger, like ICQ or AOL Messenger.

You are most welcome to offer suggestions for conference/discussion meetings.

MESSAGE BOARD

The message board/bulletin board would be a great place to buy or sell, ask or answer questions. All you do is type a message or question to be posted on the

site. These messages/questions will be seen by all members and if they have a response to your message/question, they will post it on the site to be seen by all. Any questions for AQA will be answered ASAP.

INFORMATION PAGE

There are two forms here that are deactivated for the moment. They both involve financial transactions and this demands both legal and executive considerations. The other forms are for change of address and an e-booklet which is a copy of AQA's Information Booklet 2002.

Please go and take a look and then, if you feel something could be done, or, in fact needs to be done, please email info@aqavic.org.au.

Note: The message board and chat room are both java based and have a lot of pop-up windows. I realise they are annoying and ask you to be patient. We will have our own functions soon, which will run without ads.

The Members pages are for us and will only be a success if we use it. Take a look and feel free to tell me what you think.

Phil Butterworth

NEW DSP BILL EXEMPTING EXISTING RECIPIENTS FAILS TO WIN SUPPORT

Federal Minister Amanda Vanstone announced 27/6/02 that the Government would introduce a new Bill to the Senate exempting existing Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients from the proposed changes to DSP eligibility.

The tighter eligibility criteria - reducing the work capacity test from 30 hours a week at full award wages to 15 hours - *would apply to new DSP applicants only, and would come into effect on 1 July 2003.*

But the last-ditch attempt to slash the costs of the \$7 billion pension was rejected in the Senate by the opposition parties yesterday (1/7/02). Labor, the Democrats and welfare groups said the changes did not go far enough, signalling that the Government would have to offer further concessions to secure legislative backing. Parliament broke for the seven-week winter recess.

(Information courtesy ACROD Ltd)

PETROL STATION SERVICES

AQA, along with many people with disabilities throughout Australia has been concerned for some time about the increasing trend towards 'self serve' at petrol stations. This issue has created difficulties for people with disabilities, particularly in being able to fill their petrol tanks. We are pleased to hear that the Sussex Street Community Law Service in Perth is now intending to request the HREOC to initiate a public inquiry into the accessibility of Petrol Station Services for customers with disabilities. As part of this process, they need to hear from as many people with disabilities as possible about their experiences at petrol stations. Quad Wrangle readers who are concerned about this issue should contact the Law Service with any relevant information they can provide. The Sussex Street Community Law Service particularly welcomes accounts of any incidents of refusal of service from petrol stations. If you would like a copy of the report form to complete detailing your own experiences, please contact AQA! on (02) 9661 8855; 1800 819 775 or Disability Discrimination Unit, Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc., Locked Bag 2, East Victoria Park WA 6981; Phone: (08) 9470 2676; E-mail: k.choules@sscls.asn.au

(Courtesy of Quad Wrangle Winter 2002)

Ari's Brave New World

Ari Seirlis, National Director of the Quadriplegics Association in South Africa and a quadriplegic himself, gave this following address, outlining the fate of South African quadriplegics at the International Medical Society of Paraplegia Congress in Melbourne late last year. Being a quadriplegic in any situation is a challenge in itself, but if you happen to be a quadriplegic in South Africa, it is a lot more than a challenge. Quadriplegics there are basically trying to survive from day to day because of sparse funding from government, but his organisation is making a huge difference.

THE CHANCES of surviving a spinal cord injury (SCI) in South Africa are less than 50%. The divide that decides your chance of survival is whether you are on medical aid or not. No medical aid; very little chance of survival and very little rehabilitation and if you some rehab and get through, very little chance of being discharged from hospital with a wheelchair, never mind a cushion or mattress.

So then the vicious circle starts. You will be back with bed sores and then probably die from other complications as the staff in these hospitals have very little knowledge of how to deal with SCI and what comes with it.

I wish you well on this "survivor" series. There is certainly no \$1-million prize for this feat.

You will probably only be on medical aid if you are employed and 50% of our population is not employed.

Should you get an SCI and be on medical aid, you will have the choice of about eight spinal/rehab units to go to. All provide a reasonable rehabilitation service.

We are short of specialized health professionals. Sure, many units still have not been able to deal with the sexuality issue or don't bother to do the home visit or forget to rehabilitate the family unit, but people survive and some even return to work or start their own income-generating projects to live off.

Marriages and relationships seldom survive the trauma of an SCI in South Africa as the partners are often left out of the programme. However, we do have committed health professionals who go beyond the call of duty to ensure some sort of lifestyle for their clients.

I use the word "client" when referring to those with SCI and on medical aid, because rehab is a big, profitable business in South Africa and the opposition health care companies market furiously for this business.

So in a government hospital you are a patient and in a private hospital the client. Oh, make sure you have a good medical aid, or you might be discharged when it runs out.



I believe in our new and ambitious government and pray that the health services will improve. Until then your worst fear must be becoming a SCI victim in our country.

Should you survive the ordeal of an SCI in South Africa, whether being on medical aid or not, your chances of getting employment are very slim.

We have wonderful new legislation including an Employment Equity Act which gives business five years within which to have a complement of disabled people on board.

We have a Constitution that protects the rights of disabled people and prevents discrimination. However, there is no public transport system that can carry a wheelchair, very few buildings are accessible, the cheapest vehicle costs more than twice an ordinary person's annual salary and there is no policing of transgressors of facilities put into place to cater for the disabled.

As a result, very few people with SCI are employed. Only those who can afford their own vehicle are employed and often in menial jobs which are far below their skill level. Business employs their disability-the so-called "window dressing" – often, not their skills.

And still, I must tell you, I have hope, we will survive.

The Quadriplegics Association of South Africa was started 20 years ago, mainly to provide what we call self-help centers to accommodate quadriplegics.

A self-help center is a house, similar to a commune, where between eight and 12 quadriplegics live independently, making their own staffing choices, choosing their own house mates and writing their own house rules. Self governance at it's best.

The association sets up the buildings, ensures that the house has income generating projects and the quads take it from there.



Continued next page...

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Expanding here, there is no Government assistance for this type of living and we depend on the residents to generate enough income to run the house and pay the salaries of the approximately nine to 11 staff.

An average size self-help centre housing 10 quadriplegics runs on a budget of about R5000 (5000 Rand = \$500 Australian) a month. We presently have 13 such self-help centers in the country, housing 101 quadriplegics.

The types of business chosen to sustain are diverse and unique. Shangri La has a shopping center whereby the shop rentals are income and some shops offer the quadriplegics employment.

Ashley House owns a car wash at a busy supermarket and employs a quadriplegic there. Tokologo in Soweto runs a laundry and supply shop servicing the neighbouring community. All staffed by the quads. Ry-Ma-In has a home industry shop and is a collecting point for glass, paper and plastics. Quaser packs and posts all the marketing material for the biggest insurance company in South Africa.

The association is made up of seven regions autonomous in management and goals, but affiliated to the national body. The national body, for whom I am the director, has a number of other projects. A sports fund, an education fund, our own Aurora Rehab center. We identified some buildings in Port Elizabeth and signed a lease for a two-year period to give us time to do the research for the need and viability of a rehab unit. We then tendered out the running of the unit to a group of health professionals and sold them an investment in the concept. Aurora was born.

We offer selected quadriplegics free rehab and the rest of the 35 beds generate income which in return funds the Association. Selected means being someone who will maximize the benefit of the rehab, a demonstration of a partnership between us and health professionals as well as providing the best rehab in the region and the profits funding our other projects which service quadriplegics.

Our Strategic Plan has just been launched with goals or results for the next three years. We have called it rolling out Vision and Success for Quadriplegics.

Yes, funding is our huge hurdle and we get no Government funding and surprisingly we have never received any funds from our new National Lottery, even though the public may now feel all charities are being funded by their lottery tickets.



We serve the needs of about 2000 quadriplegics and this association has as it's main focus the aim to improve the lives of quadriplegics in South Africa. A hard task considering the Government grant for a quadriplegic is \$114.00 (R1300) per month. We will survive and we will improve lives and lifestyles.

The Dali Lama of Tibet says that "the purpose in life is to help others, and if you can't help them will you at least not hurt them".

I broke my neck in a driving accident 16 years ago. I spent six months in very primitive rehabilitation and was eventually expelled for suggesting sexual rehab sessions instead of sport.

I had and have a great support system of family and friends, and this is the same group retained from day one. How did I do this? I'll give you an example of my tennis group.

Quoting Thoreau-"birds can't sing in cages"-I don't like to be confined. I swim regularly, scuba dive, drive my own vehicle, fly fish, paddle a canoe, type 100 words a minute, have mastered my sexuality and dealt with my height disadvantage.

All this with the use of some interesting assistive devices. My wheelchair is my tool of freedom, not confinement. It allows me to participate. It allows me to be mobile and employed. It is often perceived as the symbol of how

disabled you are when, with a bit of lateral thinking, you will realize that it is the very symbol of how able you are. I cannot imagine life without my wheelchair. I need it to participate. My passion and hobby is the Quadriplegic Association and this has now become my career.

I have had wonderful opportunities through the association and my disability. Yes, I decided to exploit all the opportunities that quadriplegia had to offer, instead of thinking of what opportunities it had taken away.

I have spent some time with Christopher Reeve, had lunch with the great Nelson Mandela, am consulted by all health professional sectors and government in all policy change and I have witnessed the improvement in the lives of quadriplegics through some of my programmes.

I have attended many seminars and congresses and have spoken at many, too. I compare serving the disabled community to playing a round of golf. I play many rounds of golf a week and today, I can honestly say, for the honour of being here and addressing this congress, I hit a hole in one.

From Tassie

By Scott King



Footpaths and Curbs – Speak up

Lately, in my local area (Burnie and Wynyard), there have been a lot of upgrades being done on footpaths and curb crossings. The concrete and paved footpaths are slowly being replaced with smoother, more even pavers, and even in places, the camber is being reduced. Also, the street crossings are being made with less gradient and a smoother transition from footpath to street. Suffering a fairly high degree of spasm in my legs, these new pavers are a bit of a godsend, as are the new curbs. It's great not having to ask for help to cross the road. Apart from making life easier, it gives the ego a bit of a boost.

Admittedly, a lot of these changes have been made for aesthetic purposes, which are also good, but it definitely helps us wheelies out too.

The disabled access argument is really getting through to councils and such, which is fantastic. Yes, there is legislation in place to ensure areas are now accessible for wheelchair users, but there are existing things that need to be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities. If there is somewhere that you have difficulty with, please **speak up**, tell your local council, and explain exactly what the problem is, even give some suggestions as to what

could be done to rectify it. These people are becoming more and more receptive to us and our needs.

As well as this, there are shop entrances, and inside shops that are difficult. If you have trouble getting around inside shops, say something to the owners, be diplomatic about it and you may be surprised at their reaction. Don't shut yourself at home because you can't get to certain places. There are things we can't change (like dirty big hills we have in Tassie), but there is so much we can.

AQA Victoria Member Profile

Name: Philip Butterworth

Age: 54

Disability & Level? Paraplegic T12

Are you Married/Single? Single

Do you have children? I have twin daughters

How did you acquire your disability? I was involved in a truck accident in 1986

What is your living situation?

I am living independently in a unit

You're Survival Tip for others?

Don't be nervous about asking for help

What has been your most embarrassing moment since you have been using a wheelchair for mobility?

Being introduced to a lady and having her shout at me as though I was deaf, (sound familiar to you as well?)

Your greatest achievement?

Fixing the starter motor of my car on the side of the road when the flywheel was stuck (if you think that sounds easy, give it a try next time you break down)



What do you do with your time?

I spend a lot of time on the computer and work part time at AQA

Why did you choose to live in the Country/City? (Draw backs/Positives)

I live in Fairfield because it is close to the Austin Hospital

Your best holiday spot and why?

North Queensland because of the weather

What food do you like best?

Ethnic stuff

If money was no object what would you buy/do?

Travel and design and build my own house and fix my teeth

Do you have an internet site you would recommend to others? NASA.gov

Embracing my "Other" Self: Sexuality and Disability

This is a very personal and honest account of my thoughts and feelings about sexuality and disability. I have MS (Multiple Sclerosis) and I consider it important for my health to have a healthy sexuality.

Sex or sexuality is essential to health! Well, that's my conclusion anyway. I don't think people should deny their sexuality at all, even though some people think it's a bit scary to go down that way.

Sexuality is about being me, and for most of the time you're told to separate yourself from your body. However, I believe your body needs caressing, needs love and therefore sex. To me sexuality has been so important for my journey to enlightenment. It's a continual re-assertion or reawakening of the self and for me it has a lot to do with sexuality.

People with disabilities have a strange relationship with their bodies. They may be awe inspired by their bodies, or they're very angry with them, or their bodies cause them pain. All of this has an impact on how people feel about their sexuality.

When your body becomes an enemy, if you distrust or dislike your body, you often lose your sense of self. The affirmation of the self is so important, especially if you've got a body that's maybe not beautiful or you have all those emotions directed at it that I mentioned. You have to reclaim your body. Sexuality is so important for this - pleasuring your body can be part of the reclamation.

I think in some ways I'm pretty lucky, my tremor is fairly bad but getting better, with which sexually has had its problems, but there are always ways around everything difficult. My self esteem has been pretty good, and I'm pretty confident in myself, which is important if you want an active sex life, which I do.

I also need to say that people take a lot of comfort in sexual things, which can mean anything from touching to actually having intercourse. For some people, sexuality means different things to what it actually is. It can cause perverse behaviour and obsessive behaviour, and I think that can be quite common.

I believe some medications can decrease your ability to lubricate or can stop you having an erection, and this is something that your doctor can alter, and it would make a whole heap of difference to your health overall.

Naomi McCormick, in an interview with Norman Swan from the ABC talked about sexuality/sensuality for people with disabilities as a health issue. Naomi made the point that sexuality is not just intercourse, because intercourse itself can in fact be really painful, but it is the other things, the touching, the caressing, the sensuality, that can be so important. She speaks of the feeling it gives you, it makes you feel like an adult, and that's a reaffirmation of the self, which is so important.

My next point is important. As a young person with MS, I grew up with being told to dissociate myself from my body so that the MS is, as somebody called it, 'the monster'. I don't believe that it should be like that.

I believe the MS is in my body and that's the way it is. OK, I'm not going to hate it for that. Sexuality is important, to feel somebody touching it is important for self esteem, and my body is not ugly, I am not a monster.

George Talepros, at a seminar given at the Sex Expo '99, argued that there are numerous barriers to sex for disabled people. The biggest barriers are the attitudes of the wider society, which may be absorbed by the person with the disability. I think these views are influenced by the fact that disability reminds people of their mortality. People have some very strong views on disabled people and whether it's OK for them to undertake sex.

The able-bodied person who has sex with a disabled person can also cop a lot of flak from people who are willing to judge him/her for various reasons. The stigma is predominantly a fear of the unknown.

I want to make a note that the disability community is as diverse as the wider community in terms of sexualities. Of course a person with a disability is going to pursue what is necessary. If you're transsexual, you're a transsexual, and people need to keep that in mind.

Often disabled people are segregated from the supposedly "normal" community. This creates problems in itself, because not only is it a physical segregation, but there comes about a social segregation that is particularly difficult for sexual relationships.

I think that it's fair to say I'm not easy to classify. I am a woman, but I'm also a bit of man. I have a really high libido which some people attribute to being more like a man. I shy away from commitment, I cannot undertake monogamy, so far; I believe that a lot of my difficulties are due to society and its attitudes to my behaviour. So I must say that this article can only be a personal account but it should show the diversity of attitudes and experiences that have to do with disability and sexuality.

I have focused on some negative things about disability and sexuality, but I believe that there are some positive things about my condition and sexuality. For example I believe *my* sexuality is enhanced by my condition: although I lose some sensitivity, in other areas my nerves are actually intensified.

The one thing we can do is dream. No matter how obstructed we are by our disabilities, it's still essential to dream. Nobody can take that away.

By Samantha Hodgkins

Footnote: *Sam is a 32 year old Multiple Sclerosis sufferer, who was diagnosed in 1991. She finished an Arts degree and studied Social Studies until her eyesight deteriorated. Typical of the uncertainties of MS, her eyesight is better now Sam is living in a boarding house and has been using a scooter for mobility for the past 4 years.*

She hasn't got a partner at the moment. She will be moving into a 3 bedroom house in Northcote shortly and will be looking to sub-let the other rooms. She is also interested in finding a live-in carer.

Accessible Accommodation / Retreats

Need A Break???

...Poppy Cottage

Poppy Cottage is situated on 150 acres, set in the quiet solitude of the bush. Clients can experience the beauty of the bush on the wheelchair accessible walking tracks.

Hosts, Bev & Sandy Fraser invite you to come and spend time with them relaxing and revitalising in unique pleasant surrounds with wide expansive verandahs, inviting country lounge including a log fire, comprehensive library and an "at-home" family environment.

Poppy Cottage is a privately owned and operated Respite Centre with Bev and Sandy living on the premises. This ensures personal attention at all times. Nothing is a problem as they are your Personal Service Providers. Our registered Nursing team are health professionals who understand dignity, independence and privacy.



The bathrooms are user friendly, fully wheelchair accessible and



feature no steps, no hobs, grab rails at toilet & shower, sheet vinyl non-slip flooring, accessible hand basin, and raised toilet.

There is three spacious, warmly decorated bedrooms, accommodating up to six clients to ensure personal care and attention for those needing to convalesce or just have time out. All rooms have a view, built-in wardrobes, private telephone, bedside table and lamp, and a remote bell for discreet attendant care.

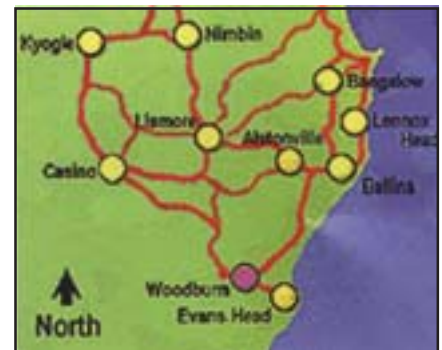
There is also equipment and aids available:

- electric hoist with various slings
- adjustable hospital bed
- electric & manual wheelchairs
- various shower and toilet chairs
- bed sticks and monkey bars
- commode chairs

Included in your stay is all accommodation, all meals (morning and afternoon tea), laundry, catering for special dietary requirements, assistance with toileting and eating

as required, wheelchair accessible bush walks, local tours including picnic lunches, fishing and touring along the local beach, a night out at the local Bowling Club, and access to special beach wheelchairs.

Podiatry and massage visits can also be arranged on request. Special excursions can also be arranged to suit individual requirements.



Poppy Cottage is located at Nortons Road, Woodburn N.S.W. 2472. They can be contacted on; Phone (02) 6682 2722, Fax (02) 6682 2727 or Email poppycottage@bigpond.com

Laugh Out LOUD!!!



Old Habits Die Hard

The story goes that the Dakota Indian who discovered he was riding a dead horse, was taught the best strategy was to dismount.

The philosophy of Western business has improved beyond such a fundamental approach. Alternatives could be;

- change the riders.
- appoint a committee to study the problem.
- examine the company manual for details on how to ride a dead horse.
- contact other departments to see if they have had a similar experience.
- establish exactly why the horse died. It may be due to an internal problem, (staffing, food, housing etc.)
- appoint external consultant to revive the horse.
- revise all training manuals.

Continued next page...

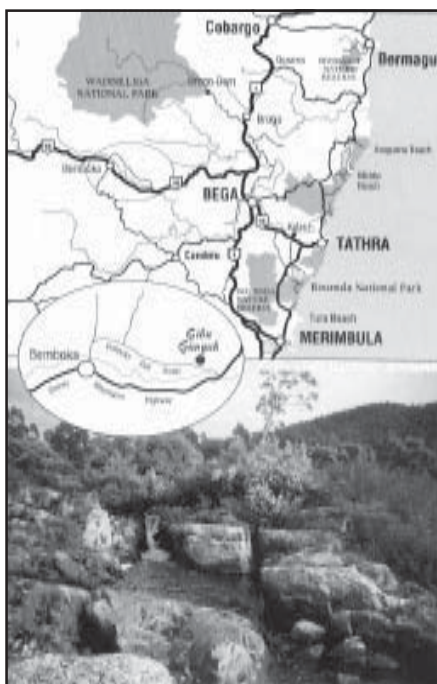
GIBA GUNYAH,

Giba Gunyah is an 80 acre property near the town of Bemboka in the beautiful Bega Valley on the New South Wales south coast, about 600 km from Melbourne if you take the scenic route along the Princes Highway to Bega then out along the Snowy River Highway to the property. There are two cottages for guests on Giba Gunyah, but the one we are interested in for this article is the new purpose built wheelchair access cottage, built out

of pine in a hexagon shape with a large living-dining area as well as two bedrooms, and an accessible bathroom all set in a fenced private native garden. The cottage is furnished in a rustic country style and warmed by a wood fire for those chilly winter evenings, fully self-contained with a well equipped

kitchen, all linen supplied and provisions made for well mannered pets (including horses). You want for nothing staying on this beautiful place, there is tons to do without even leaving the property. Explore the Bemboka River which runs through the place, have a picnic and a swim, feed the colourful Japanese Koi, discover the local birds and wildlife while rolling around the bush tracks and fern gullies, go spotlighting at night or just kick back relax and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

If you do decide to leave the peace and tranquility of Giba Gunyah the whole Bega Valley and Sapphire Coast is at your fingertips. I will be fairly brief as describing all there is



to do in this region would take a lot more space than I have available. I will start with the town closest to Giba Gunyah, Bemboka is a small dairy town 451 km south of Sydney and

36km west of Bega via the Princes and Snowy Mountain Highways. Bemboka was established around 1876 to serve the needs of local dairy farmers and travellers through the region, by the start of this century Bemboka had cheese and butter factories operating as well as shops and hotels. These days it is noted as a classic Australian timber town with nearly all the buildings being made of timber.

Heading towards the coast from Bemboka is the town of Bega, nestled in the heart of a rich and fertile valley where the Bega and Brogo rivers and the Princes and Snowy Mountains Highways meet. The town was settled in 1851 when cattle, sheep, corn, fruit and vegetables were all flourishing in the district but it wasn't until 1864 when James Manning moved to Bega that the cheese industry the town is famous for, started. Bega is an historic town with many of its old buildings still intact and open to the public, in the general area there is more to do than is possible to list here, national parks, lookouts, nearby historic towns as well as more wineries and restaurants than you can poke a stick at.

Head a bit further towards the coast and Tathra, Merimbula and Bermagui are all within easy reach, whale watching, fishing and the magnificent Sapphire Coast beaches are just a few of the things you may indulge in while staying at Giba Gunyah. On the off chance you do find yourself bored in the area give Sapphire Coast Tourism a ring on (02) 6492 3313 and they have more accessible things to do and see than you could get through in a week... I know I say it every travel article I write, PLEASE get out and support these places or they just won't get built and we'd be stuck at home. Till next time, happy travelling.

Rees Houston

...from previous page

Puns

1. There was a person who sent ten different puns to friends, in the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh... Unfortunately, no pun in ten did.
2. I went to the butchers the other day and I bet him 50 quid that he could reach the meat from the top shelf. He said "No the steaks are too high"
3. A man walked into the doctors, The doctor said " I haven't seen you in a long time " The man replied "I know I've been ill"

Little Johnny's Goldfish

Little Johnny was in the garden filling in a hole when his neighbour peered over the fence.

Interested in what the cheeky-faced youngster was up to, he politely asked, "What are you doing, there, Johnny?"

"My goldfish died," replied Johnny tearfully without looking up, "and I've just buried him."

The neighbour was very concerned. "That's an awfully big hole for a goldfish, isn't it?"

Johnny patted down the last heap of dirt then replied, "That's because he's inside your cat."



YOU ASKED A QUESTION???

A SOLUTION THAT ALLOWS ANYONE TO USE A MOBILE PHONE

COMPLETE HANDS FREE MOBILE PHONE

Finally there is a way to control mobile phones without finger function. The solution is by using a "Prog Gewa III" environmental control unit (ECU).

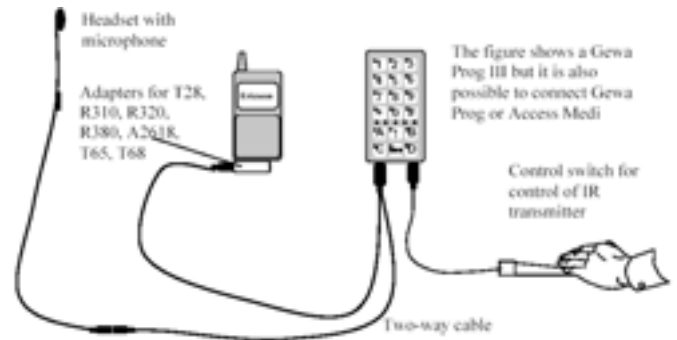
The Prog Gewa III (ECU) is an infra red remote control unit that learns to read all your remote controls around the house e.g. TV, video. This means that the need to have different remote control units for different appliances is no longer necessary. I use my ECU to control my TV, video, heating and cooling, Hi-Fi system, lights, house telephone and auto doors. The ECU is about the size of a packet of smokes, maybe a little bigger.

Controlling a mobile phone was a problem to me because I have no finger function. Mobile phones were never true hands free or voice controlled because you would have to push a small button to prompt the function you needed.

You can control a mobile phone through the Prog Gewa III (ECU), it is possible to activate voice control, pre-programmed numbers, Telstra Call Connect and answer and end telephone calls without finger function.

The Prog Gewa III utilises a special 2-way cable from the ECU to connect to the mobile phone. This cable also has an ear piece with a microphone and a control switch (the control switch is set the individual's requirements e.g. bump switch, head switch. Then you scan through the ECU to the function you wish to control on the mobile phone.

Note: 2-way cables for the Prog III are only compatible with Ericsson T28, R310, R320, R380, A2618, T65, T68 with built in voice control.



Connection of mobile phone to Prog Gewa III (ECU)

You connect the different parts of the Prog Gewa III according to the figure. Note that there are different adapters for the different models of mobile phones.

There is a lot you can control with this Prog III environmental control unit when you think about it. ONE remote control for all your needs, be it for a mobile phone, TV, video, stereo, ect.

Check out their website and improve your control in your environment - <http://www.gewa.se>. You can also contact the Australian distributor, ZYGO AUSTRALIA, PO Box 190, SOUTH MELBOURNE, VIC 3205, Tel 9696 2944, E-mail: zygoaus@bigpond.net.au

Peter V. Benthem

CELEBRITY SHIRTS



Can you help? Do you know anyone famous? Do you know anyone who knows anyone famous? Maybe

they can help. The Australasian Spinal Research Trust is going to hold a fundraiser for spinal cord research in March 2003. Part of that function will be

the auctioning of Celebrity Shirts, signed by celebrities to raise money. If you know anyone famous or have a friend who may have a contact who could help, I would appreciate your assistance.

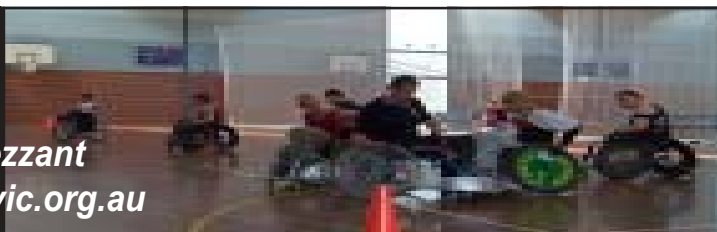
Don't hesitate to give me a call on 98783249 or madge@alphalink.com.au if you have any contacts.

Gary Allsop (Honorary Director, Australasian Spinal Research Trust)

Wheelchair

Rugby

Nathan Bezzant
info@aqavic.org.au



Wheelchair Rugby Season 1 2002,

As we drew to a close in wheelchair rugby for season one, there was a big upset to see what team was going to play the "Harley Eagles" in the gold medal game. The semi final was between the "Spoke Busters" and the "Country Vikings", two good sides that are consistent though the outcome was a surprise to all involved. Before the game got underway, we actually thought that the "Spoke Busters" might have to forfeit as they were looking like they didn't have enough players (Naz was overseas gallivanting around) and two of their other players didn't turn up (for what reasons who knows?????????). Anyway it turned out they had enough players to play which is 3, and what a game we witnessed, as on paper we would say that the "Country Vikings" would win easy, but the "Spoke Busters" had other ideas, led by Glenn Alman, who is Bryce's brother and is an able body (each team has 1), well anyway Glenn had a blinder and along with Andy B and Kevin ummmm kanif from Connecticut (only joking Kev) teamed together and beat the "Country Vikings" by a couple of goals to make it through to the gold medal game and the "Country Vikings" were left to play for the bronze medal against the "red backs".

O.K then, the BRONZE MEDAL GAME, well what can I say about the bronze medal game? Other than it was a blow out and seeing the "Country

Vikings" win with ease, led by Mark (able body), Gordo (Gordon) and Christian, with Darrell and our own Rees, changing every quarter, giving the side good support in defence, well done "Vikings".

Now the GOLD MEDAL GAME, what a good game it was once again, it had the pace, hard hits and full of excitement as expected between these two teams and they really entertained the massive crowd that was in attendance, the "Spoke Busters" and the "Harley Eagles" match up so well against each other, it always seems to be close between the two sides, though the "Harley Eagles" pulled away at the end to win by 5 goals led by Bernie (able body), Terry (the old bloke), Steve (ginger megs), Con (super man) and Nathan. I think the result could have been closer, if not reversed, if our own Naz was here playing for the "Spoke Busters" but what a pity for the "Harley Eagles" that he was overseas representing Australia in the world cup wheelchair rugby. Good on you Naz, it is good to see you have your priorities right mate ha ha ha ha.

So, at the end of season one, we have the "Harley Eagles" as the champions, "Spoke Busters" runners up and silver medallist, the "Country Vikings" took home bronze and the poor "Red Backs" left lagging behind with ummmmm nothing, maybe things might be different next season when all players are back.

The award for season one for the "Most Valuable Able Body" saw a tie between Mark and Bernie, with the most

prestigious award "MOST VALUABLE PLAYER" going to Terry Serong - well done Tez. The most valuable lower pointer award went to Christian Brackerley. Once again well done Christian, keep up the good work buddy and last but not least was the "Encouragement Award" given out to Rod McLean.

Well a great night was had by all at the Box Hill Aquatic Centre and the spectators were entertained by two great games of wheelchair rugby. So for those who didn't make it out there, but would like to see it for themselves, I would really push for you all to get out and come and watch the most exciting game in a wheelchair which has everything you can imagine.

2002 World Championship Results - Sweden

The Australian Steelers wheelchair rugby team returned back to Australia from the World Championships in Sweden with a bronze medal. They beat the most improved team since the 2000 Paralympics, Belgium 45 to 38.

Canada played and beat the US team for the gold medal position by one goal. It is the first time that the US hasn't held the number one position - hopefully it will be us with the number one position at the Athens Paralympics.

New Zealand was the most disappointing team of the tournament. They finished in sixth position after being ranked third in the world..

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Post this form & the \$5 fee to : **AQA Victoria Ltd., P.O. Box 219, FAIRFIED 3078**

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

• Electric Wheelchair (Roller)

Brand new, only used a couple of times, right hand drive, charger

PRICE: \$1,500

PHONE: Barbara (03) 9436 9664

• Manual Wheelchair

14 wide, mobility plus wheelchair, lightweight folding, 16 inch back but can be adjusted higher or lower. Burgundy with gold alloy wheels, push handles. Very good condition

PRICE: \$300 ono

PHONE: Rees (03) 9489 0777

• 86 2 lt Star Wagon Mitsubishi van

5 speed, Bruan hydraulic hoist, front and rear air conditioning, 105,000 km, full service history, as new condition, gas shockers, updated suspension, bull bar, mags, RWC & registered until 8/2002, accommodated 4 passengers and wheelchair, dark blue

PRICE: \$10,500 ono

PHONE: Terry 5978 6062

• Adventurer Electric Wheelchair

Reclining back, Good condition, Height adjustable

PRICE: \$1,000 ono

• Hil-Rom Electric Bed

good condition, a few years old

PRICE: Any offers considered

• Low Profile Roho Cushion

very good condition

PRICE: \$200

PHONE: Joan Morrison (03) 5881 2769 Deniliquin

• SAAB 900i 1993

2.1 litre auto with everything, air pwr steer, cruise control, tinted windows, best car for easy chair to car transfers and tons of boot room. Very solid and safe car

PRICE: \$10,900 ono

PHONE: Colin on (03) 9399 8000

E-mail: gizbytes@optusnet.com.au

• Mobility Seat (swivel seat):

German built seat (was installed in VL Commodore by Freedom Access, Melbourne). Seat rotates & extends out of car for easy transfer in and out of cars. Has head-rest with Velcro for head support attachments. New condition - only used twice

PRICE: \$800 ono

PHONE: Annette Barkley 5823-2086 (0201/3)

• STANNAH Chair Lift - seat

- to fit side of stair case

2.6 metre lift. As new condition. Cost \$10,000,

PRICE: \$895 ONO

PHONE: Malcolm (03) 5974 8125,

business (03) 5984 2247

• Apartments for sale

Off the plan, 6 all accessible, ocean or garden views, luxury apartments, to be finished this year. Angourie North, NSW - via Yamba

PHONE: (02) 6645 8190

or visit the web www.accessiblehousing.com.au

For Sale

• Gazelle Motorised Wheelchair

4 yrs Old, very good condition

PRICE: \$5,000 neg.

PHONE: Sue 9878 2947

• **Wheelchair trailer**, Manufactured by RAL in Bendigo trailer with ramp on board, suitable for carrying Scooter or Power chair, hooks onto tow-bar, near new, single wheel, cost \$1850 new

PRICE: \$1100 ono

CONTACT: Chris Jolly 5258 2698 (Queenscliff)

• Plega Life & Massage Chair

(similar to a Jason recliner), lays back & takes to standing, electronically operated with a massage function, velour material, excellent condition 3 yo,

PRICE: \$1800 neg.

CONTACT: Kim 9748 7776

• Toyota Hiace/Commuter - Dec. 1998

60,000 km's, Tieman hoist, dual air conditioning, 5 speed manual, 2.4 fuel injected motor, can take 2 wheelchairs + 5 adults inc. driver, excellent condition, RWC + Registration,

PRICE: \$30,500

CONTACT: Peter 9489 0777

• Gazelle motorised wheelchair

very good condition, 4 years old

PRICE: \$5000 neg.

CONTACT: Sue 9878 2947

• Flocon Hoist

Attaches to roof of car to transfer person in and out of car, manual, good condition

PRICE: \$100 ono

PHONE: Joy Casson (03)5027 4399 Dareton (near Mildura)

• Hydraulic Bath Lift

'Minor Aqua Tech' - made in Germany, as new condition, cost \$2100 new

PRICE: \$1,200 ono

PHONE: Heather 9380 4467

• Scooter - Shop Rider

Model TE888, 4 wheeler, shopping basket, flag, walking stick holder, battery charger, grey & green in colour

PRICE: \$1,100

PHONE: David Beer 5974 2955 Mt. Martha

WANTED

• Small caravan suitable to transport wheelchair

Mary Whelan O.T. Ripplebrook 0408 055867

• A hoist and or sling (with neck support) wanted for a C4/5 quad. PHONE: 5526 7181

FREEBIES

• Sling for lifting hoist.

"Kerry Equipment" brand. Full size with head and neck support. Lifts up to 150kg. Mesh material suitable for bathing. Soft for permanent sitting. Machine washable. Blue. 3 months old. Excellent condition.

PHONE: Sandra Gough (03) 9876 2072