

AQA NEWS LINK

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

AUGUST 2009



Information / Peer Support

RACV to the Rescue Again!!!!

Me and my Town
Kim Jago and Living in Hoppers Crossing



Travel

Thoughts on Accessible Travel

Plus much more...



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A.Q.A. NEWS LINK is the official newsletter of A.Q.A. Victoria Limited, 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.

A.Q.A. Victoria Limited always welcomes articles for News Link. Please feel free to send in your contribution. Articles will be published at the discretion of the Editor who also has the right to edit all submissions as it sees fit.

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From the CEO



National Disability Insurance Scheme

Members and News Link subscribers may have been following the case that is building to introduce a National Disability Insurance Scheme. AQA has joined with other disability groups to push for a scheme that will go some way to reduce the huge gap in Australia's social services network. As many of you will know intimately, for people with spinal cord injury this gap arises because access to funded services derives from the way in which an impairment is acquired rather than the specific needs of the individual as a result. This is most clearly the case in access to things like adequate levels of personal care, equipment and home modifications. In Victoria, people who acquire a disability through a workplace or a motor vehicle accident generally receive financial support. For those who acquire permanent disabilities in other accidents, are born with a permanent disability or acquire a permanent disability through a medical condition there is no automatic support to meet their needs. From small beginnings the case for a more equitable approach is gathering momentum.

In April 2009, the federal Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Bill Shorten, described a National Disability Insurance Scheme as "a simple yet visionary and exciting idea".

The recent Federal Government report Shut Out that will inform the development of a National Disability Strategy, identifies the need for a national disability insurance scheme that entitles people with severe disability to support services, whatever the cause of their disability.

AQA thinks it's time to change the way services for people with disabilities are funded and structured in Australia.

You can find out more about the thinking behind a National Disability Insurance Scheme and how you can express your views at www.ndis.org.au

Peter Trethewey
Chief Executive Officer
[petertrethewey@aqavic.org.au](mailto:peter@aqavic.org.au)

From the Editor

Welcome to the August issue of News Link. This issue is jam-packed with various notices and articles.

Support for family members of people who sustain a spinal cord injury can be difficult to access. On page 5 there is an invitation from Independence Australia, AQA Victoria and the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Hospital to attend a support group for family members of people with a spinal cord injury.

Accessibility continues to be a major focus for people with disabilities and accessing Melbourne's CBD, Docklands precinct or entertainment and sporting precincts is now easier than ever for people with mobility issues. The City of Melbourne has produced three "Access Maps" that can be downloaded online or ordered through the post.

Another initiative recently announced in a press release from the Minister for Public Transport is the introduction of an "Access Travel Pass". The "Pass" will allow those with a physical disability free travel on Victoria's public transport system. The Pass will be rolled out towards the end of the year.

What are you doing on the 3rd of October? If you answered nothing, why not consider attending StepAhead's annual fundraiser at the Flemington Race Course? You can spend a day at the races and support spinal cord research at the same time.

If you have a spinal cord injury and have hit a 'rut' why not come along to the next WOT Day (previously called "Life Skills Day"). What's Out There Day is held at the Royal Talbot every three months and provides panel discussion from people who have personal experience of spinal cord injury, options in life for people with SCI and is an opportunity to hear about what others are doing, as well as some personal networking.

We hope you find these and many more articles interesting and enjoyable and please keep sending in your stories or articles to share with our readers.

Simon Damevski
News Link Editor
simondamevski@aqavic.org.au





WOT Day

“What’s Out There” Day is held at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre every three months. It is mainly aimed at spinal cord injured patients going through the spinal unit, however it is also open to those who are further down the track.



It’s a great opportunity for people with SCI and their family and friends to see what other people with SCI are doing or have done, post injury.

The day starts off with a panel made up of people who have experience of SCI, followed by a BBQ lunch. The afternoon consists of networking and seeing the ‘Expo’. Displays for the Expo have included modified vehicles, sporting equipment, leisure equipment, adaptive technology, assistance dogs, travel information, etc.

If you are interested in attending the next WOT Day on the 23rd of September, please contact AQA Victoria on (03) 9489 0777 or email info@aqavic.org.au no later than the 16th of September.

Progress On National Parking Scheme

The Disabled Motorists Association (DMA) wrote in a recent newsletter that in a national ‘first’, the Australian government will introduce an Australia-wide disabled persons’ parking permit.

They have been informed that the Australian Government is closer to delivering its commitment to introduce the new, nationally consistent parking scheme. Work is progressing to harmonise accessible parking schemes across Australia, to establish nationally consistent eligibility criteria and a common parking permit. These improvements will be supported by a national website and communication campaign. There will also be the opportunity for the community to contribute to consultations about the harmonisation of accessible parking schemes. These consultations will be advertised publicly and at www.fahcsia.gov.au during 2009. DMA welcomes these long-awaited developments. We have worked for years to see progress on the parking schemes. We welcome in particular the introduction of a national website to assist all motorists with disabilities and all enquirers in general, one of the key recommendations that DMA has made to the Federal government. We have repeatedly been providing information to so many interstate and overseas visitors, and to Victorians preparing to travel beyond Victoria – all have made the point that they couldn’t find consistent information anywhere else! We look forward to taking part in the consultations and doing our bit to get the national scheme up and running.

Support Grows for a National Disability Insurance Scheme

Two new endorsements for the idea of a national disability insurance (or entitlement) scheme from very different places on the political spectrum indicate the scheme’s potential to build political momentum and win bipartisan support.

Meeting earlier this month, the ACTU Congress, which is the ACTU’s policy-making body, resolved that the unions will work closely with disability organisations, the private sector and State and Commonwealth governments to campaign for a national social insurance scheme for people with disability.

Congress noted that there is “a major unmet demand for services and a growing unmet liability to deliver those service entitlements.”

Its resolution says that a national entitlement scheme should go further than a no-fault catastrophic injury

scheme. “Congress notes that these initiatives will not deliver a national universal care and support based entitlement system covering all people with a disability, so that such people and their families can participate in ordinary lives that the non-disabled community takes for granted.”

Endorsement for a national disability insurance scheme has also come from well-known radio broadcaster Alan Jones. In a long and passionate introduction to a brief interview with Ken Baker (CEO of National Disability Services), Alan Jones lamented the lack of support for family carers and argued for the establishment of a national disability insurance scheme.

He recognised that the scheme would require significant public funding, but was adamant that most Australians would be willing to pay extra tax to fund such a scheme. He said that his next step would be to invite Bill Shorten onto his program to explain the Government’s position.



Support Group for Family Members of People with SCI

Independence Australia, with the support of AQA Victoria and the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Hospital, invites you to attend a Support Group for Family Members of People with a Spinal Cord Injury.

The Group is held every second Tuesday of each month between 1.30pm–3pm. The meetings are informal and relaxed and each month focuses on topics of interest to the group. Relevant speakers may be invited to cover specialty areas.

The group is facilitated by psychologist, Jenny Koadlow, from Independence Australia. Jenny Koadlow is a clinical psychologist who has facilitated a number of groups in the past and specialises in working with people with chronic illness and/or a disability (and their families). Jenny has also had considerable personal experience of disability within her own family.

Naz from AQA Peer Support assists in the sessions to strengthen peer support for family members. He offers the perspective of someone who has a spinal cord injury and who works with people with SCI.

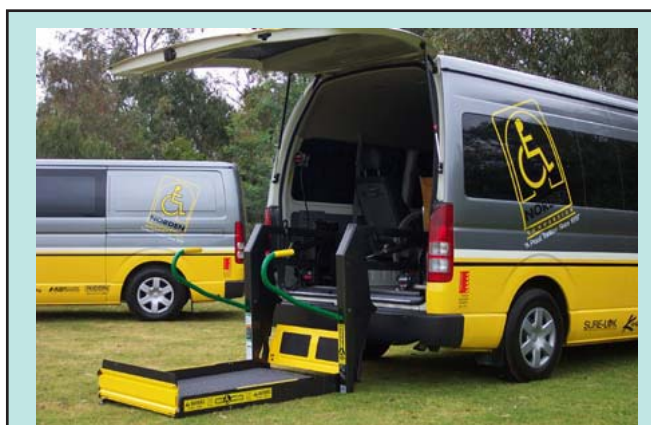
The group is a drop in group and is free to attend. Please contact Jenny for more details:

Phone: 9418 0410

Mobile: 0403 046 816

Email: jennykoadlow@independenceaustralia.com

Website: www.independenceaustralia.com



Specialising in Wheelchair Access, Norden Conversion creates solutions for all transport needs. From the family vehicle to community transport, all requirements are fulfilled.

Ph: (03) 9793 1066

www.norden.com.au

conversion@norden.com.au

Home Delivered Meals

Details below regarding a new advertiser we have in Tender Loving Cuisine. It may be beneficial to those out there who enjoy healthy nutritional meals. It's a great option if cooking is difficult, or impossible, and you are sick of 'take-away'.

Instead of resorting to unhealthy take-away food or tinned or frozen meals lacking taste or nutrition, Tender Loving Cuisine can provide you with dishes straight to your door. They are an independent organisation, initially funded by the Royal North Shore Hospital NSW, to provide a home delivery service to their discharged patients. They specialise in home delivered, calorie controlled, healthy meal plans and special dietary packages are available. Their meals are approved by the National Heart Foundation.

There is no obligation so clients can use the service for just one week or longer. As an example around \$80 will buy you 7 dinners (the more you order, the greater the discount). All meals have been blast frozen for transport and storage and will keep for up to 6 months in a freezer. The meals include heating instructions and serving suggestions and have been prepared so that you can heat and serve in around 6 minutes using a microwave or 30 minutes with a conventional oven. Their gourmet menu includes meat, poultry and seafood meals plus homestyle soups and desserts.

If you would like an information brochure and menu, or to ask questions on the service, just phone Freecall 1800 801 200 or visit their website www.tlc.org.au.

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Pension Changes Protect Current Entitlements

National Disability Services (NDS) welcomed the increased pension rates announced in the Federal Budget, but has been concerned about the effect of the increased pension withdrawal rate, eligibility for the new Pensioner Work Bonus and the transition arrangements for current pensioners. In correspondence to NDS, Parliamentary Secretary Shorten has responded to NDS's concerns.

The pension withdrawal rate will increase to 50 cents in the dollar (up from 40 cents) from 20th September 2009 for all income earned above the existing threshold of \$69 per week. The existing threshold amount will remain in place. Due to the effect of the increased pension withdrawal rate, the Government will apply a transitional safety net to current pensioners affected by these changes.

Current pensioners whose payments are reduced due to earned income will continue to be assessed at the 40 cent withdrawal rate – the new 50 cent withdrawal rate will initially only apply to new pensioners from 20th September. Current pensioners in employment will continue to receive their existing entitlements until they are better off under the new rules, including the effect of the 50 cent withdrawal rate. Once paid under the new rules, pensioners no longer have access to the transitional arrangements.

The current pension rate will also be indexed on 20th September and the Budget increases will then be added to the newly indexed rate. Part pensioners (including DSP recipients) will receive the equivalent of the increase for full rate pensioner couples of \$10.14 per week. Full rate single pensioners will receive the maximum increase of \$32.49 per week.

The Government has acknowledged NDS's concern that DSP recipients are ineligible for the Pensioner Work Bonus, but has not altered its position. NDS believes that denying the Work Bonus to DSP recipients creates a disincentive to work and is incompatible with the Government's stated aim of encouraging workforce participation by people with disability.

Extending eligibility to the Work Bonus for DSP recipients would remove this disincentive and represent a clear commitment from the Government to improved wage outcomes for workers with disability.

Contact Information: Ken Baker, NDS National Office, Phone (02) 6283 3200, ken.baker@nds.org.au or Paul Musso, Phone (02) 9263 3102, paul.musso@nds.org.au.

Mobility Maps For Melbourne

Accessing Melbourne's CBD, Docklands precinct or entertainment and sporting precincts will be easier than ever for people with mobility restrictions thanks to a new City of Melbourne map that outlines access facilities at some of the city's most popular attractions.

CBD - Mobility map

The mobility map helps people with disabilities to use and enjoy what the city has to offer. Information and facilities on the map include: wheelchair accessible toilets and telephones; disability designated car parking spots; accessible off street parking; train stations; accessible pathways; taxi ranks; public seating; and street gradients.

To order hard copies contact the City of Melbourne on (03) 9658 9658. *Download the CBD Area map:*

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/PDFs/Mobility/CBDMobilityMap2008.pdf

Entertainment and Sporting - Mobility Map

The City of Melbourne entertainment and sporting precinct map outlines access facilities at some of the city's most popular attractions. The map is useful for anyone, but especially for people with temporary or permanent mobility restrictions. It includes information regarding accessible paths of travel, wheelchair accessible toilets, telephones, street gradients, major taxi ranks and on-street accessible parking bays. This map was developed with the support of the Department of Human Services and Melway Publishing. *Download the Entertainment and Sporting Area Map*

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/PDFs/Mobility/MobilityMap2008.pdf

Melbourne Docklands Precinct - Mobility Map

Docklands is transforming the shape of the city in significant ways, and there is so much for everyone to get involved in. Whether you're interested in sports, arts, leisure, festivals or visiting tourist attractions, this mobility map has been developed to assist access for all community members visiting Docklands. It includes information on accessible paths of travel, wheelchair accessible toilets, street gradients, major taxis ranks and on-street accessible parking bays. This map will inform you on access provisions within the Docklands precinct making it easier for everyone to enjoy. *Download the Melbourne Docklands Precinct Area Map*

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/PDFs/Mobility/DocklandsMobilityMap1812.pdf

YMCA Camping

YMCA Camps have been delivering memorable camping experiences to people of all ages and abilities throughout our 150 years.



We recognise that access to positive recreation and leisure opportunities should not be a privilege but a part of community life.

YMCA Camping aims to strengthen communities, help build relationships and assist individuals to gain new skills and independence, whilst developing resilience.

Our staff are supportive, understanding and flexible in meeting your needs and will work closely with you to ensure the best outcome for your group is achieved.

We are flexible in our approach to accommodation, dietary requirements, program planning and delivery, activities, and accessibility to all of our facilities.

Our aim is to provide you with an experience that will last a lifetime.

Examples of just some activities your group can take part in:

- Fishing
- Canoeing
- Low ropes
- Bowling
- Beach activities
- Bush cooking
- Archery
- Giant Swing

A Universal Harness is available to provide wheelchair access to the Giant Swing, and a Beach Wheelchair is available for access to water based activities.

All activities can be modified to suit the specific needs of your group. We provide secure indoor activity spaces with entertainment facilities, and can also provide information on accessible tourist options in the local area of each camp.

As part of our commitment towards building strong people, families and communities, YMCA Victoria currently work with and provide Camps for families and people with disabilities such as our camping programs for people who experience mental illness, adults with a disability, and a growing range of therapeutic camping programs.

Contact details

Lady Northcote Recreation Camp:	(03) 5369 2224
Anglesea Recreation Camp:	(03) 5263 1512
Howmans Gap Alpine Centre:	(03) 5758 3228
Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp:	(03) 9736 2228
Camp Manyung Recreation Camp:	(03) 9788 1100
Lake Dewar Lodge YMCA:	(03) 5368 7459
Phillip Island Coastal Discovery Camp:	(03) 5952 2467

Visit www.camps.ymca.org.au to find out more

All YMCA Camps have been accredited through the Australian Campsite Accreditation Program.

If you need this information in another format please don't hesitate to contact us





Pass Delivers More Options For People With A Disability

Below is information from a Press Release from the Minister for Public Transport regarding the "Access Travel Pass". The "Pass" will allow those with a physical disability free travel on Victoria's public transport system.

People who have a severe and permanent disability and can travel independently on public transport will have access to a new travel pass.

Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said there have always been a small percentage of public transport users who have always been unable to use ticketing machines and the new pass would give them piece of mind.

"The Brumby Labor Government is taking action to stand up for vulnerable Victorians and to allow them access to public transport services and this pass will be made available to a small group of people who have a severe and permanent disability," Ms Kosky said.

"This includes people who are in a wheelchair and have limited fine hand movement, which stops them from being able to reach a ticket machine or barrier, as well as some people who have an intellectual disability.

"Following consultation with a number of special interest groups we have decided to close this gap by introducing the new Access Travel Pass.

"This new pass will be used in the same way that people currently use the Vision Impaired Travel Pass. Pass holders will need to carry it when ever they use public transport and it will entitle them to free travel."

The application process for the Access Travel Pass will include a number of steps:

- A registered health professional will need to certify that the applicant can travel independently but cannot use tickets; and
- All applications will be reviewed by an independent panel.

"While we anticipate that the number of people who will be eligible for this pass will be relatively small it is

important that we do all we can to make public transport accessible for all Victorians," Ms Kosky said.

"The Access Travel Pass will give more Victorians the freedom to travel when and how they want."

Ms Kosky said the introduction of the Access Travel Pass would be timed to coincide closely with the rollout of myki in Melbourne.

"By introducing the Access Travel Pass at the same time as myki we can ensure that it forms part of the extensive staff training program that is now getting underway."

Application forms for the Access Travel Pass will be administered by the Metlink Central Pass Office and be available from the office or from www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au in September.

StepAhead Australia Race Day

If you're into horse racing and want to support spinal cord research, book a seat or a table at Step Ahead Australia's annual race day.

For all those horse racing fans, organise yourself and get a ticket for a great days racing on one of the Marquee events of the Spring Carnival - The Turnbull Stakes Day.

Step Ahead Australia will be holding their third race day at Flemington Race Course on Saturday the 3rd of October.

The function will be held from 11.30am - 5pm at the Skyline Restaurant Level 3 Hill Stand and be hosted by Shawn Cosgrove.

The tickets include:

- Race course entry
- Parking at the course
- Buffet lunch (excluding drinks)
- Private tote facilities
- Race book and event pen

Tickets are available for \$90.00 per head.

For further information, contact Alan Franklin:

Phone: (03) 9874 2101

Email: jenala8@bigpond.net.au

Board Focus – Kerry talks about finance

Welcome again to the column that introduces you to AQA board members. We hope to provide members and readers with some information about AQA board and governance related items. Kerry currently works at



Ambulance Victoria as the Manager Commercial Services. She is a CPA with 14 years experience in administration and management in Australia and overseas, with a focus on budget and financial management. She has volunteered with CPA Australia to promote women's issues. Below, Kerry writes about her role on the Board.

Finance – surviving tough times

The past year has been tough for the world, financially speaking. Although we're in all different financial boats we all have been, or know people who have been, affected in some way: through superannuation, job uncertainty or job loss, stock market losses and so on.

The impact of the current climate on AQA falls into essentially two categories: the impact on our interest revenue and on donations.

AQA's investments

You may have noticed from the Annual Report that AQA holds a reasonable amount of cash on its balance sheet. Safe and strategic management of this cash is vital for AQA. In doing so we need to balance three important aspects: (a) investments and the associated revenue we could earn; (b) the strategic purchase of assets; and (c) ensuring we have the capacity to pay our liabilities when they fall due (such as paying out annual leave and long service leave).

AQA can't use its cash to pay our running costs such as salaries, because in an accounting sense only incoming revenue can fund outgoing expenses. Cash sitting on the balance sheet is not revenue, but if it is used wisely it can generate revenue or reduce expenses. In past years AQA

has invested its cash reserves prudently and in doing so has earned a decent amount of revenue. In some years this interest revenue has been the difference between us breaking even or making a loss.

In 2008/09 AQA managed to secure investment returns of over 8%. However, the economic downturn has meant that safe investments with returns of this size are no longer available.

AQA's investment policy

One of the basic rules of investing is that big returns generally only come by taking big risks – which may also result in big losses. Because of our past reliance on interest revenue, and the other reasons we need the cash, AQA is not in a position to put it at risk. Therefore, the Board has in place an investment policy which defines the risks we're prepared to accept. The Board believes that a conservative approach is in the best interests of AQA. While this will result in reduced interest revenue during tough times, it also means we face very little risk of losing our cash.

Donations

The second way AQA will almost certainly be affected is through donations: in tough economic times people tend to become more protective of their money and may be less likely to donate. While personal donations have not been large in dollar terms for AQA, they have helped our overall position and have on occasion ensured we have not made a loss.

There are a large number of worthwhile organisations (including AQA) which rely on donations from philanthropic foundations. It's likely there will be greater – and more forceful – requests to these foundations to access their pools of grant money. AQA will have to fight hard for this money but, given our solid financial position (built up over the years through good management), it may be that we are seen as financially less needy than others.

The impact on individuals

Our financial circumstances and needs are all different. There are a lot of “experts” sprouting their opinion and giving advice. It's important to consider our own financial circumstances and not rely on generic advice. It's also important to be flexible and recognise that circumstances will change over time.

I'll use my last paragraph to plagiarise Suze Orman (an entertaining and sensible financial adviser on CNBC). When it comes to spending money and living life, remember: “people first, then money, then things”.



Kim Jago and Living in Hoppers Crossing

Welcome to another edition of “Me and My Town” where we introduce you to members who talk about themselves and the town/suburb they live in. This time around, Kim Jago comes to us from Hoppers Crossing.

My name is Kim-Maree Jago although everyone calls me Kimmi. I am 34 years of age with the condition “Spinal Muscular Atrophy”.

I have a partner of 13 years who I love dearly. Bruce and I met at work. He is a System Administrator and spends his days working with computers (which I think would be really boring).

Bruce and I purchased our first home together in May 2005 in Hoppers Crossing and it’s close to my parents. This was a new experience for the both of us.

Hoppers Crossing is situated 30 kilometers south-west from Melbourne and now has a population in excess of 40,000. The main shopping centres in the district are Hoppers Crossing Shopping Centre, Werribee Plaza Shopping Centre, Woodville Park Shopping Centre and Sanctuary Lakes Shopping Centre. Nearby tourist attractions include Werribee Open Range Zoo, Werribee Park Mansion, Australian International Airshow at Avalon Airport in Lara and RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) Museum at Point Cook.

I worked full time at Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Department of Justice, for 11 years and I loved helping and resolving consumer issues. In May 2005, I got a



Werribee Park Mansion

new job with Infringement Management and Enforcement Services, the Department of Justice as a Compliance Officer. I currently love my job, especially the independence that comes with it, and the idea of earning my own money.

My main interest in life is to live life to the fullest as we all only get one chance. I’m also a MAD Collingwood supporter and attend all games and functions. All of the players are great but I particularly love Dale Thomas. My other interest is shopping and spending money that I don’t have (but who doesn’t love doing that?) and listening to BON JOVI (the best band in the world). As for my other vices, Kath & Kim, Home & Away and Australian Idol... well, I have to admit that I am a little bit of a TV junkie and all of my friends know not to call during these shows.

I also enjoy talking to groups (carer groups or young children) about my disability and what a normal day entails for me. Educating people about my disability and what it takes for me to spend a day in the workforce is extremely important to me. I often get asked, “why do you need carers, you look so normal?” (this always puts a smile on my face).

None of this would be possible to achieve if I didn’t have people care for me. My parents are my full time carers (who I love with all my heart) but I have two carers who come in every week morning at 5.45am & 6.30am to get me ready for my full time job. I enjoy having the girls come in every morning because it gives the family a break from each other. I cannot thank my AQA carers enough – especially my primary carer Karen Pirchan. She is my angel!

If I can give any sort of advice to a carer; please remember every disability is different and you should always find out about the person’s disability before working with them so you have some understanding about their physical needs. I always ask my carers if they know what Spinal Muscular Atrophy is? And, carer’s need to remember they are there for the client, therefore if the client likes or needs things done a particular way it should be done that way, not the carers way.

I have a motto in life: Always smile, because being negative and upset with the life you have been dealt is never going to change anything – unless of course, there is a miracle! And, there is always someone who is worse off than you!



Ladies Day Out

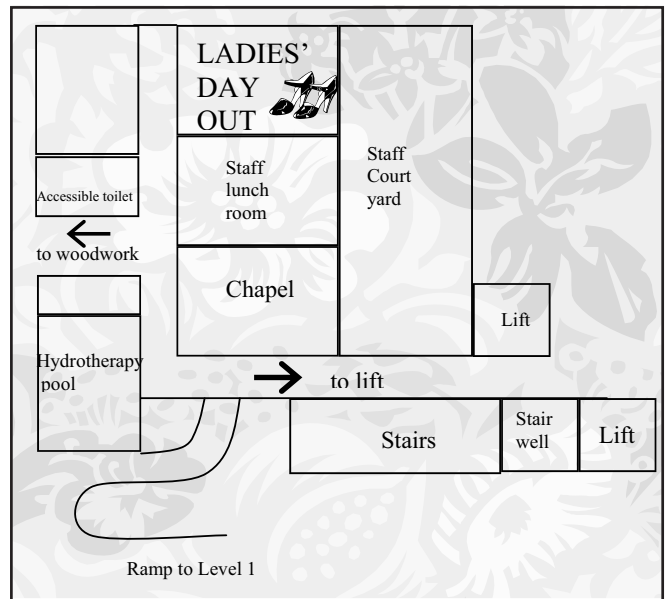
After speaking to many members on the phone in regard to keeping "From a Woman's Point of View" column active, I met Lynne Panayiotis who mentioned that herself, Sheree Palmer and Jasu Patel were trying to organize a ladies get together on a regular basis to share common interests. We discussed this at AQA and saw it as a great way of obtaining information for the column and enhancing our peer support.

We are inviting you to join us in a pampering day. If it is successful, we hope similar days will be organized in future. Come along (with a friend if you prefer) to meet, greet and share ideas while you are being pampered.

Debbie Galavodas - Information Officer

Phone: (03) 9489 0777

Email: debbiegavodas@aqavic.org.au



Ladies' Day Out

Date : 8th September 2009

Light refreshments provided

Place : *Resource room
Level 2 Royal Talbot
(down the hall from the chapel)*

Time : 11am onwards



Activities : *Hand Massage Night us day make up
What are your signature colours? Scarf tying
Buy, swap & sell (Proceeds to Royal Talbot)*

What to bring: *a friend
a scarf
things to buy, swap or sell*



RSVP: *Sheree - 0408 555 061
Lynne - 0419 873 956*



RACV to the Rescue Again!!!!

AQA Information / Peer Support Officer Wayne Bradshaw recently saw the benefits of being a member of RACV's Wheelchair Breakdown Service.

You might be familiar with my previous story (RACV to the Rescue). As part of my work as an AQA Peer Support worker I accompany one of our clients Bill, to the night games of AFL football involving his beloved Blues club. The Friday night Carlton v Collingwood blockbuster was our latest football adventure.

I met Bill in Mooroolbark and we made our way to the train station, about a kilometre away, with Bill on his scooter and me pushing frantically to keep up. On the train trip Bill was really upbeat and excited about going to the footy, and it was a great feeling to know that I could support Bill do the things that he really enjoys. In our conversation he told me that he had been trialling some new scooters as his current one was getting a bit old and becoming unreliable. He hoped to get his new one next week.

We disembarked at Richmond Station after the hour long trip and followed the path up the Swan St side of the station to the Rod Laver Arena where there is a lift that goes up to a walkway that takes you directly to the AFL members area. This is where we would spend the night hopefully watching a high class contest between two arch rivals. As only one wheelchair or scooter can fit at a time in the lift, Bill went first, but failed to disembark and returned. It appeared that he couldn't get out of the lift, so we then gave it a second try. The lift returned empty and I got in and arrived to find Bill waiting for me. To my horror Bill's scooter was not working. There seemed to be power but it wouldn't engage and drive the wheels. I jumped into action and started pushing Bill across the bridge to the AFL member's area of the G. It was slightly down hill so didn't seem a problem and just as well as the huge crowd, that was starting to move onto the bridge, didn't seem to notice the man in the wheelchair pushing another man on a scooter and no help was forthcoming!

Once we got into the ground, we moved towards a corner where we could leave the scooter. Bill has enough independent mobility for short distances and we caught the lift to the next level where Bill and I made our way to the area we usually sit and took our seats.

Collingwood came out firing and were doing a "touch up job" on Billy's Blues! At quarter time I rang my usual

lifeline, the RACV and explained the situation in regard to the scooter. The girl on the phone told me that the RACV cannot fix electrical faults in wheelchairs but Bill's membership will provide a taxi to help get us home (\$50 voucher). We just had to ring them when we needed the taxi. I also explained the situation to the MCG security guard in case we had any further trouble.



When I returned from making the phone call I discovered that Bill was unwell and in a bad way. He told me that he had pins and needles in his legs and that he was having a panic attack. He started falling forward and stopped breathing. I grabbed him by the scruff of the neck to hold his head up and spoke firmly to him, telling him to relax and start breathing. With all the commotion the security guard came over and asked if we needed the St. John's Ambulance guys. I said "yes please ASAP!" Thankfully Bill began breathing again quickly and the colour returned to his face. I kept telling him to relax and reassured him that everything was under control.

Half-time saw Collingwood giving the Blue boys a hiding and I suggested to Bill that because of the problem with his scooter, we should start thinking about leaving. Bill agreed and I asked the security guard if he could retrieve Bill's scooter as we were leaving early. However, once back on his scooter Bill became absorbed in the game again as the Blues were starting to make a surge. About this time the St John's Ambulance staff appeared and checked Bill out. They commended me for doing all the right things in regard to helping Bill get air back into his lungs. Just before three quarter time the security guard told us that a cab had been ordered and we should start making our way to Brunton Ave.

Continued on next page...

...from previous page

The security guards helped push Bill on his scooter, with me tagging along behind, to the cross over on Brunton Avenue where they said we should wait for the cab they had called. We listened to the roar of the crowd in the G as we waited and after a while I decided to ring the RACV to see how long the cab would be. I was told that no cab had been called for us and realised the security guards must have phoned the taxi company direct and not organised it through RACV, which was what we needed. The girl said she would organise the cab and ring back. I was quite concerned as the game was nearly over and the crowd would be all over the place soon.

The game finished, the blue boys had got a flogging, and my fears were realised - the crowd started leaving the ground and there were people everywhere. Brunton Avenue was then closed to traffic so we had to wait for it to be opened again before we had any chance of catching our cab. The RACV rang and told me that the cab was at Richmond Station and would be with us when the crowd had cleared and Brunton Avenue was open again. Once Brunton Avenue opened, I spotted the cab and waved frantically. He had thankfully waited for us and made his way over where we commenced our journey home.

We arrived at Bill's house where his overnight carer was waiting to help him inside. I thanked the cab driver for his patience in waiting for us and took his card as I thought we would use him again in the future. I had a coffee with Bill before leaving for home at around 12.30pm.



Before falling asleep I kept thinking about the night and what had taken place. I was happy I had been able to get Bill back home safely and also relieved to know there had been great back-up and help from the security staff at the MCG and that once again the RACV had provided a great service. Hopefully Bill will have his new scooter for our next outing and it won't be quite so eventful!

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For further information contact:

Mike De Santo

Tel: (03) 9548 8400

Fax: (03) 9548 8411

Email: dynamicw@hotmail.net.au



Thoughts on Accessible Tourism

This article regarding accessible tourism in the 21st century was written by Sheila King and was first published on the infoxchange website. Sheila King is the co-ordinator of 'Australia For All Alliance' and they provide information about accessible tourism and accommodation options. For further information please visit their website at www.australiaforall.com.



What is accessible tourism in the 21st century, and how is it designed?

Do the products and services currently available really cater for the demands and needs of a constantly evolving market? Is there a concrete dialogue between users and service providers that has developed sufficiently to guarantee an effective response? Is it possible to measure the accessibility of tourism services? And, ultimately, is this the sort of investment that pays?

These are questions that still confront us. Is the tourism industry listening? I am not sure that it is.

Is accessible tourism a viable size market to entice tourism providers to confront? At the end of 2008, it is a fact that accessible tourism was the fastest growing business opportunity in the tourism industry.

It is also a fact that the tourism industry needs to recognise that this business opportunity also includes the worldwide growing older population, and see this unique market of people with disabilities as being very profitable.

More than 54 million United States residents, or about 19 per cent of the population of the USA, have some sort of disability, the U.S. Census Bureau reported in December

2008. In Europe, there are approximately 50 million people with a disability. Sixty-three per cent of people with disabilities are older than 45 years. Is this a big enough market for the tourism industry to come to terms with?

Seventy per cent of people with disabilities are able to travel, but because of the lack of accessible tourism accommodation and other venues such as restaurants, museums and theme parks, they do not.

There is an enormous mismatch between the demand and what is being offered by tourism providers in the way of infrastructure and services, neither of which are meeting the needs of people with disabilities. All stakeholders in the tourism industry, including transport companies, need to make more effort to improve the quantity of accessible tourism facilities.

People with accessibility needs have the desire and the right to travel like everyone else. However their travel experiences are still highly restricted by physical barriers such as transport, inaccessible accommodation and other barriers such as a general lack of information or poorly designed websites.

A recent study undertaken by the Balearic Islands School of Catering in Spain found that 90 per cent of hotel chain websites and 75 per cent of individual hotel websites were inaccessible to certain groups of users. As a result, tourism providers lose market share.

Accessible business is big business and the market is growing fast – partly because the world is growing older. The tourism industry should realise that open access benefits all customers – accessibility is a competitive and economic advantage, not just a social or legal responsibility. Various providers in the tourism industry, both private and public, have started, although too slowly, to be aware of the importance that a substantial portion of potential customers pay for products and accessible services.

In many countries, legislation is in place, but its implementation is not mandatory, but this does not mean that accessibility should be ignored by the tourism industry. So let's return to the original question: is the tourism industry listening? It is very clear in relation to worldwide accessible tourism, the demand is increasing very rapidly. The demand is not only coming from people with disabilities, but also from elderly tourists, who do not see themselves as being in any way disabled, but who appreciate the fixtures and fittings in accessible accommodation, to aid their balance. There is also a lesser, but increasing, demand from families with young children for accessible facilities. So the answer to the question posed is "I fear not".



Kevin Heinze Garden Centre

This article on the Kevin Heinze Garden Centre in Doncaster was sourced from the May 2009 Issue of Edible Gardens Newsletter. The recreational gardening centre provides unique and personalized challenges for people of all ages with disabilities or special needs whilst also promoting awareness of the environment.



Winter is also a great time to head out on an excursion to be inspired by other people's gardens.

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre in Doncaster welcomes visitors from nursing homes and day care centres as well as other community groups.

These visits can take place between 9.30am and 4pm and bookings are essential.

You will need to bring along your own lunch as there is no food available onsite, however the \$4 per person entry fee includes a cup of tea or coffee.

Sometimes a short film of the centre in action is shown and weather permitting a tour round the garden is always a hit – participants may then enjoy potting up a plant to take home!

The centre provides a relaxed and safe environment with appropriate facilities for people with disabilities creating a great atmosphere for an enjoyable day out for all!

To book your group's visit call (03) 9848 3695 or visit www.kevinheinzegardencentre.com.

Equipment modifications: Garden equipment can be adapted in many ways to suit people with varying disabilities. Consult an occupational therapist for expert advice. Suggestions include:

- Use tape, foam padding, bicycle grips and PVC pipe to improve grip and handle length on tools.
- Find specific ergonomic and enabling tools – these are available at some hardware shops.
- Use gloves that have a sticky surface or gloves with gripper dots.
- Use of splints and supports may also be appropriate – consult an occupational therapist.
- Look for lightweight tools that are easier to handle.

LaTrobe University Market

Below is an email that Angela Snow sent us about the Greensborough Community Market at La Trobe University. Angela found the market to be quite accessible to wheelchair users as well as offering a large variety of items. We'd like to hear of similar places that appeal to our readers.



I thought some of the members should know about this market as a destination for people with a disability. It is quite accessible and the car park where it is held is sealed, there is plenty of parking in Car park 1, North Entry, and also an accessible toilet.

This is a wonderful market, where you can buy clothing; gifts; second hand books; fresh fruit & veg; flowers; gourmet bread; bric a brac; good food such as excellent cakes; Turkish Mountain Bread filled with fetta and spinach; dutch doughnuts; kransky sausages; lovely coffee and more!

The market is held each Sunday (except the last Sunday in August), from 9.00am to 1.00pm, at LaTrobe University, Bundoora. Enter from Kingsbury Drive, via the North Entry, into Car park 1.

The market is run by Community Information Diamond Valley (CIDV), a not-for-profit group which supports people in the local area. Also, their commitment is to ensure that everyone has equal access to information about their rights, responsibilities and services that are available. For further information please visit www.cidv.org.au.



Vital Research to Manage Bowel, Bladder and Blood Pressure dysfunction

While not as obvious an issue as paralysis, injury to the autonomic nervous system (ANS) due to a spinal cord injury can have severely debilitating impacts on people's lives.

The ANS regulates unconscious body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, bowel control, and bladder control. ANS dysfunction after spinal cord injury has significant impacts on the day to day lives of those affected, namely the ability to participate in the community, go out and meet friends, go to school, go work, or go on holiday. These everyday actions that provide enjoyment are restricted when the ANS has been damaged by injury. ANS dysfunction also results in recurring hospital re-admission and in some cases, premature death. The major cause of premature death after SCI are heart and blood vessel complications that result from disordered nerve regulation. Research to manage these dysfunctions is critical to enable people to get on with their lives and live longer.

The Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) recently announced the commitment of \$5 million for vital research into managing these dysfunctions. Led by Professor John Furness and carried out at the University of Melbourne and Austin Health, the research program will tackle three important issues: managing bowel control, blood pressure control, and bladder infection.

In terms of controlling bowel dysfunction, the researchers have discovered a new drug that would trigger bowel emptying at planned times allowing an individual to control this process, rather than having unpleasant surprises, blockages, or requiring manual assistance.

It is also common for individuals with spinal cord injury to have abnormally high blood pressure when lying down and low blood pressure to the point of losing consciousness when made upright. The researchers will trial in patients a treatment to reduce high night-time blood pressure and fainting when the patient becomes upright in the morning. This is expected to result in substantially improved cardiovascular health and increased life expectancy.

Thirdly, urinary tract infections are the most common cause of hospital re-admission. The researchers will develop original treatments to manage the bladder lining breakdown and identify potential methods for therapy, ultimately minimising time spent in hospital.

This five year program of research will lead to improvements that will no doubt have significant and immediate impacts for individuals living with spinal cord injury. For more information about this research visit www.vni.com.au.

Home Based Rehab for Spinal Cord Injury Patients

A new research project funded by the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative, gives hope to spinal cord injured patients of regaining movement in their hands.

An Australian first study will test live online rehabilitation with video gaming to give spinal cord injury patients the hope of regaining the movement of their hands.

The ReJoyce workstation is being used for the first time in Australia in tele-rehabilitation which allows patients to get real time specialist physiotherapy over the internet.

The patient wears a glove that enables electrical impulses to stimulate the muscles in the hand to grasp and release, in the hope of sprouting new connections in the spinal cord and re-establishing hand function.

"It's possible that stimulating both the brain and the muscles in the hand could create new nerve growth in the spinal cord," says Professor Mary Galea, a researcher at Austin Health and The University of Melbourne, who is coordinating the study.

"The majority of spinal cord injury patients in Australia are young men aged between 16 and 35. Giving them home-based access to computer games as part of their rehabilitation is a great motivator for them to practice hand exercises", she says.

Austin Health patient Mr Gabriel Moraitis is the first person in Australia to have a ReJoyce workstation in his home.

"I've noticed quite a bit of an improvement already. The way I grip and grab things is a lot stronger and firmer. It's quite amazing to see your hand go from having no movement at all to have it open and close," Mr Moraitis says.

"A lot of spinal cord injury patients live in regional and rural areas. Even for people who live in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, travelling to rehab centres can be difficult," Professor Galea says.

"The ReJoyce workstation enables better access to spinal rehabilitation specialists at Austin Health without having to travel long distances. It also enables spinal cord injury patients to get on with their lives and gain more independence."

For more information contact:

University of Melbourne, Rebecca Scott, 0417 164 791

Austin Health, Tessa Young, 0437 255 797

Editors Note: You can watch a video of the project on The University of Melbourne website <http://visions.unimelb.edu.au/episode/66>



Only a Golfer Would Understand

It was a sunny morning, a little before 8:00 AM, on the first hole of a busy course, and I was beginning my pre-shot routine, visualizing my upcoming shot when a piercing voice came over the clubhouse loudspeaker:

“Would the gentleman on the women’s tee please back up to the men’s tee, please?”

I could feel every eye on the course looking at me. I was still deep in my routine, seemingly impervious to the interruption.

Again the announcement: “Would the man on the women’s tee please back up to the men’s tee, please!”

I simply ignored the guy and kept concentrating, when once more the man yelled, “Would the man on the women’s tee please back up to the men’s tee, please!”

I finally stopped, turned, cupped my hands and shouted back....

“Would the moron with the microphone kindly keep quiet and let me play my second shot?!”

60, 70 or 80 Years

Sixty is the worst age to be,” said the 60-year-old man. “You always feel like you have to pee and most of the time you stand there and nothing comes out.”

“Ah, that’s nothin,” said the 70-year-old. “When you’re seventy, you don’t have a bowel movement any more... You take laxatives, eat bran, sit on the toilet all day and nothin’ comes out!”

“Actually,” said the 80-year-old, “Eighty is the worst age of all.”

“Do you have trouble peeing, too?” asked the 60-year old.

“No, I pee every morning at 6:00. I pee like a racehorse on a flat rock; no problem at all.”

“So, do you have a problem with your bowel movement?”

“No, I have one every morning at 6:30.”

Exasperated, the 60-year-old said, “You pee every morning at 6:00 and crap every morning at 6:30. So what’s so bad about being 80?”

“I don’t wake up until 7:00.”

Good Grandfather

A woman is in a grocery store and happens upon a grandpa and his poorly behaving 3 year-old grandson at every turn. It’s obvious gramps has his hands full with the kid screaming for candy in the candy aisle, cookies in the cookie aisle; same for fruit, cereal and soda.

Meanwhile, gramps is working his way around, saying in a controlled voice, ‘easy, Albert, we won’t be long - easy, boy.’ another outburst, and she hears gramps calmly say, ‘it’s okay, Albert, just a couple more minutes and we’ll be outta here - hang in there.’

At the checkout, the little terror is throwing items out of the cart, and gramps again in a controlled voice is saying, ‘Albert, Albert, relax buddy, don’t get upset. We’ll be home in five minutes; stay cool, Albert.’

Very impressed, the woman goes outside where gramps is loading his groceries and the boy into the car.

‘You know, sir, it’s none of my business, but you were amazing in there. I don’t know how you did it. That whole time, you kept your composure, and no matter how loud and disruptive he got, you just calmly kept saying things would be okay. Albert is very lucky to have you for his grandpa.’

Thanks, lady,’ said gramps, ‘but I’m Albert - the little rascal’s name is Stevie.’

The Vet

A man takes his Rottweiler to the vet.

“My dog’s cross-eyed, is there anything you can do for him?”

“Well,” says the vet, “let’s have a look at him”. So he picks the dog up and examines his eyes, then checks his teeth.

Finally, he says “I’m going to have to put him down.”

“What? Because he’s cross-eyed?” “No, because he’s really heavy”.

Swine Flu

If you receive an email from the Department of Health telling you not to eat tinned pork because of swine flu, ignore itits just spam.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

Roho Cushions X 8

8 x Roho cushions, 9 x 9 cells, very good condition, no cover.

Phone: (03) 9386 9818 (Colin)

Price: \$200 ono (for 1 Cushion)

Handcycle

Shadow handcycle, attaches to wheelchair, very good condition.

Phone: (03) 5871 2158 (Jennifer)

Price: \$700

Commodore Station Wagon

2001 VX, auto with hand controls, WYMO roof hoist, RWC and rego, metallic paint, factory mags, leather interior, electric drivers seat, wood grain dash. Owned from new and fully serviced as scheduled.

Phone: 0411 643 233 (Leigh)

Price: \$10,000.00 ono

CLOUDE CUSHION

18in x 18in, 9 Cell Gel Cushion, 3 spare Gel Cells, cost new \$699 plus \$99 extra cells. VGC.

Phone: 9756 0114 (Marion or Peter)

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2 Bedroom Unit - Brisbane

2 bedrooms, large tiled bathroom and laundry area, recently refurbished, airconditioned, cathedral ceilings, security shutters, courtyard, carport, photos available on request.

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Monaro CV8 series 111

Fitted with hand controls, 5.7ltr, 71,000kms, 4 speed auto, holden assist sat/nav, tinted windows, alarm, tow bar – only used as safety feature – no towing, reverse sensors, boot and bonnet protector, factory fitted hand controls, stretchmarks on take off are free.

Phone: 0419 871 576 (Emilio)

Price: \$28,000 ono

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Standing Frame, height 5Ft 6" Please call Jasu: 0410 563 941

For Sale

Pool Hoist

Hydro-workx Aqua Lift, Water Wheelchair provided, (hoist lifts aqua chair into water/pool), Rescue board & floatation aids. Used only once.

Phone: (03) 9813 5313 (Geoff)

Price: \$4,500 ono

Mercedes 1999 Vito Van

Yellow ex taxi low km's, 4 cylinder petrol, mechanically fine.

Phone: (03) 5852 1232 (Di)

Price: \$18,000

Electric Wheelchair

Trailblazer Invacare Rollerchair, Tilt in space with head rest and 2 electric leg rests, electric rear wheel drive with 2 gel 40 amp batteries, battery charger. Very good condition.

Phone: 0407 733 443 Karina

Price: \$1250 (neg)

Power Wheelchair

Aspire 10 Captain Seat, Very manoeuvrable, comfortable chair. Joystick control for user, or hand control for carer. External battery charger. Grey upholstery. Excellent condition.

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Price: \$2800 ono

Commode Shower Chair

Front opening, self propelled, anti-tip wheels, as new.

Phone: (03) 9386 9818

Price: \$800 (Colin)

Wheelchair MobilityPlus Glide

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Phone: (03) 9386 9818

Price: \$600 (Colin)

Eclipse Portable Ceiling Hoist System

Easy to use patient transfer system. Can be operated by single carer. 2 tracks and slings included in price. Installation of tracks required. Excellent Condition.

Phone: 0413 089 598

Price: \$1,900 ono Faye

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

1995 Nissan Pulsar

Hand controls, roof hoist, excellent condition, electric roof mounted hoist. The colour is grey, automatic gear box, Supplied with RWC, 12 months reg, regularly service and maintained.

Phone: 0408 806 841 (Grant)
Price: \$6,750 ono

Wheelchair Accessible Van

VW Transporter, 98 model, 9 seater + 2 wheelchairs, reconditioned engine and transmission, auto, dual fuel, RWC, ex-taxi.

Phone: 0419 881 473 (Maroon)
Price: \$8000 ono

Electric Bed

Engrit High/Low King Single Electric Bed, excellent condition, only used 6 months, mattress as new. Electric controls to raise head/foot/height.

Phone: 0400 107 197 (Debbie)
Price: \$850 ono

For Sale

Quickie LX Manual Folding Wheelchair

Quickie LX Manual Folding Wheelchair Wheels easily removed. Lightweight, fit into car boot. Purple frame, black upholstery. Left leg support customized and adjustable. Excellent condition.

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Any problem you have, whether your wheelchair or scooter is immobilised through a mechanical failure, flat tyre or even a flat battery, we can quickly come to your assistance and get you mobile again any time of day or night.

For more information on RACV Emergency Wheelchair & Scooter Assist call 13 RACV, visit racv.com.au or an RACV shop.

*Terms & conditions apply. RACV Emergency Wheelchair & Scooter Assist is available throughout Victoria, provided reasonable access is available for any RACV vehicle and equipment required is available. Please note that for safety reasons no lifting can be performed. \$45 establishment fee applies to new subscriptions. This does not apply for members with RACV Roadside Care, Extra Care or Total Care or if you are under 21.

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