

AQA NEWS LINK

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

JUNE 2009



Home

**Adjusting to Different
Mobility Needs**

Travel
Jerry Visits Hong Kong



Travel

San Diego to Seattle

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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In this issue...

Page 3

- From the CEO page 3
- From the Editor page 3

Information

- Housing Options For People With Disability page 4
- Get Bold On 3CR Radio page 4
- Changes To Companion Card page 4
- Who Wants To Do An Amazing Dance Workshop? page 5
- Accessing A&EP after Rehabilitation page 7
- Volunteers who make a difference page 7
- Forest Hill Lions Club & Robert Rose Foundation Lend A Hand page 8
- Elderly & People With Disabilities in Major Emergencies page 8
- Submissions on Disability Parking Scheme page 9
- Internships For Uni Students With A Disability page 12
- ANZ Abilities Program page 13
- New Workforce Partnership - Independence for Living page 13

Travel

- San Diego to Seattle *By Tony Leggett* pages 10 & 11
- Jerry Visits Hong Kong *By Jerry Vajtauer* page 14

Competition

- News Link Photo Competition page 15

Spinal Research

- Good Sleep is Essential to a Good Life page 16
- Bone Marrow Stem Cell Injections May Help Cure page 16

Members Column

- Senokot Granule Alternatives page 17
- MFB's Disability Action Plan page 17

Supporting Services To People With Spinal Cord Injury

- Making a Bequest page 19
- Making a Donation page 20

Regular features

From a Woman's Point of View

- **Moving With The Times** page 6 & 7

Jokes Page

- Jokes page 18

Classifieds

- Various items for sale pages 19 & 20

Volume 23, Number 3

From the CEO



Welcome to our next issue of NewsLink.

Social activity including volunteering, active leisure, further study and paid employment are all factors that contribute to quality of life after

spinal cord injury. Their value appears to be about the particular social validation that comes from participating in meaningful, purposeful activities. AQA therefore has a keen interest in supporting people to achieve these activities in their lives. AQA staff recently participated in a forum that considered how best to enhance employment opportunities after spinal cord injury. We understand that for each person the path to meaningful activity can be highly individual and it is not one size fits all. Information, supports and services need to be introduced to people early after spinal cord injury but also need to recognise the various paths people will take and so be available when the time is right for that individual.

One of our goals is to see information and practical supports in place that informs people of their options and their potential and then assists people navigate their way to programs and services when that time is right. We will be working with like minded organisations to improve access to information and the linkages between services and programs and provide practical supports to those who are ready to pursue employment and other meaningful activity.

You will see this issue includes information about a couple of opportunities to pursue training and/or employment.

On page 7, we pay tribute to our own valuable volunteers.

I'd also like to thank all those who participated in our recent focus group sharing their perspective of what contributes to quality of life after spinal cord injury and sharing some ideas about future service development at AQA. We highly value these opportunities to hear the perspective of people living with spinal cord injury and we look forward to sharing the outcomes of this work in the next issue.

Peter Trethewey

Chief Executive Officer

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From the Editor



Welcome to the June issue of News Link. In this issue on pages 6 and 7, you can read about Sue Mancini and the changes she has made to her new home by understanding what didn't work in her old home. While having to change areas to suit her situation, Sue also wants her home to appeal to any market if she decides to sell at a later date.

It's terrific to know that now as part of the \$1 million Brumby Government initiative all Victorian seniors and people with disabilities will receive telephone check-up calls and personal visits before and during heatwaves, bushfires, floods and other significant emergencies. The welcome news must come as a relief for people with a disability and their families especially after the devastating bushfires that recently ravaged many parts of Victoria. You can read about the initiative in full on page 8.

The Australian Government has released a discussion paper and is seeking public comment on the proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme. A \$3 million Federal Budget commitment has been made to support the implementation of the Scheme across Australia by the end of 2010. For further details please turn to page 9.

On pages 10 and 11 Tony Leggett has written a wonderful article about his trip along the west coast of America. Tony's article was first published in the 2009 Autumn edition of Accord magazine and it gives a detailed description of his seven week travel from San Diego to Seattle.

On page 14 you can read about member Jerry Vajtauer's experience in Hong Kong with his fiancé Janet and great mate Paul. Jerry was especially impressed with the hospitality and accessibility in Hong Kong.

We would like to thank all members who have sent in photos of themselves for the "News Link Photo Competition". We have selected a winner amongst the many great photos and as you have seen with the few that have been published in the last couple of issues it hasn't been an easy decision. To see who the winner is please turn to page 19.

Simon Damevski

News Link Editor

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Housing Options For People With Disability

National Disability Services (NDS) reports that \$6 billion dollars will be provided in the next few years to update existing public housing and construction of new housing.

The Social Housing Initiative (part of the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan) will provide funding of \$6 billion over three-and-a-half years from 2008–09 to 2011–12 for the construction of new social housing and a further \$400 million over two years for repairs and maintenance to existing public housing dwellings. Approximately 20,000 new social housing dwellings will be built and approximately 45,000 existing public housing dwellings refurbished. Further information is available from the relevant housing department of all state and territory governments.

Two projects are currently underway to support this growth in social housing, and relate specifically to the community housing sector. The first has been commissioned by the Policy Working Group of the Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee and concerns the implementation of a national regulatory system.

The second project, being undertaken by KPMG for FaHCSIA, aims to identify the policy settings, industry development initiatives and strategies required to support a viable and sustainable community housing sector. NDS has been involved in consultations with KPMG to ensure the needs of people with disability are adequately

considered. Of particular concern to NDS is ensuring the government subsidies available to community housing operators for providing housing to low income people (or any proposed changes to these subsidies) do not disadvantage people with disability. Accessible design and the availability of funding for home modifications have also been stressed.

A growing interest in policies that separate the provision of housing from the provision of support for people with disability is being facilitated – in some jurisdictions – by the increased use of individualised support packages. The need to access social housing options for people with disability is likely to grow.

There is a strong case for expanding housing options for people with disability. A new AHURI report, The housing careers of people with a disability and carers of people with a disability, found that housing options for people with disability are restricted by the reduced availability of public and private housing, the high cost of relocation, limited earning capacity and general housing inflation. Households where a disability is present are less likely to be home purchasers and are more likely to experience housing stress (defined as paying more than 30 per cent of their gross income for housing). People with a psychiatric disability experience the greatest disadvantage in relation to inadequate accommodation and housing instability.

Get Bold On 3CR Radio

'The Boldness', a radio program which examines disability issues on Melbourne's 3CR, invites aspiring broadcasters to send in sound-bites, snippets, music or radio plays for potential broadcast. Please post examples on CD or in MP3 format to:

Ms Alex Grantham

Producer of The Boldness - Grit Media

Address: PO Box 571, Melbourne, VIC, 3001

Email: admin@gritmedia.org.au.

Tune into 'The Boldness', broadcasting the third Wednesday of each month between 6pm–6.30 pm on 3CR or download the latest podcasts at: [feed://www.gritmedia.org.au/boldnesspodcast1_rss.xml](http://www.gritmedia.org.au/boldnesspodcast1_rss.xml).

Changes To Companion Card

Companion Cards issued or renewed after March 1st 2009 will now be valid for 10 years. This is to reduce the burden for cardholders in renewing the card and proving eligibility.

The Companion Card has been redesigned to incorporate two additional security features: a watermark and micro text. To minimise confusion, the new card has been designed to resemble as much as possible as the previous Companion card

www.vic.companioncard.org.au/cc/index.htm.



Who Wants To Do An Amazing Dance Workshop?

If you are interested in dance and the performing arts, the following article/notice will benefit you. Megan will hold workshops if there is enough interest.

Hi my name is Megan Ibrahim, I'm a professional dancer and teacher. I am trying to put a program together for adults with disability. I am travelling around Australia holding Hip Hop workshops teaching hip hop, breaking, locking, funk and any other styles that are requested. If there is a lot of interest, I will be holding these monthly and be putting on a huge Battle where the students can put together their own crew and attend the competition and perform.

There will be live performance and bands, judges, prizes and we already have several T.V stations that are interested in filming it. The workshop is designed to not only teach people to dance but to inspire them in life. Dance is used as a form of self expression and release. This can be a very powerful gift to experience, and with the most energizing, committed, professional crew there

to help them achieve that, in a very safe and supportive environment.

Where: We will find a venue near you

When: When it suits you, day or night

Cost: \$12 includes insurance and hall hire

If there are any special requests for students please let us know so we can cater to them. We have teachers who use sign language if any students have a hearing disability. Please let us know if students need wheelchair access. If money is a problem for them to carry please call for other transfer bank details.

To book, please call Megan on 0421337849 or email meganleeibb@hotmail.com.

Must have 10 students to attend. Can't wait to dance with YOU!

Please bring towel, drink bottle, and wear sports clothing. Incorporated with FX Entertainment and Suitably Laced.

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Mike De Santo

Tel: (03) 9548 8400

Fax: (03) 9548 8411

Email: dynamicw@hotmail.com



Moving With The Times: Adjusting to different mobility needs within your home

Hi Ladies, this month we have a very informative story from Sue Mancini telling us all about the changes she has made to her new home by her understanding of what didn't work in her old home. While changing areas to suit her, she also wanted her home to appeal to any market if she decided to sell at a later date. This article was first published in "Good Life" written by Melinda Douloudis. Photo's by Christina Prochazka.

Designing a house to accommodate people of differing mobility needs is essential for many reasons and it can be stylish too – just take a look at this stunning home in Tatura and meet an inspiring and eternally positive woman, Sue Mancini.

After a farm accident in December 1997 left her reliant on a wheelchair to get around, Sue discovered the design of her home didn't allow the flexibility and independence she required.

The key to the success of her current home was her understanding of what didn't work in her old house. "We based the design on our old home, but utilised some easy design principles into the mix to ensure I could get around easily. Simple things, like making the hallways double width, have enabled me to turn around rather than hit the walls, and it also adds an element of spaciousness to the overall effect."

Sue noticed it was the everyday things that were sometimes hard to adjust to, tasks such as ironing or preparing coffee. "I found I was constantly knocking over the ironing board, so we have a specially designed ironing station, which alternatively could be used as, say a sewing bench. There is also, what is essentially a butler's pantry, which opens up from the dining room and is fully equipped with lowered preparation bench, sink, and all the things I need for making coffee, tea, after dinner drinks and snacks."

Other aspects of this home, which would not be out of place in any house, but make life so much easier for Sue, include the use of sliding doors throughout, drawers in the kitchen, and tiled flooring. "Where there is carpet, we have put in Axminster as this copes with the pressure of turning wheels. If it was normal carpet it would have worn out."



Another handy little feature which you probably wouldn't notice unless it was pointed out to you is that there are no steps, no lips in doorways and to the shower recess and one really special feature, which costs nothing at all, is the lowered running tracks on the sliding doors so that all floors are level allowing seamless access from the outside in.

Outside there are no lawns to maintain as Sue found traversing lawns a struggle, but as she points out the landscaping has worked out well. "If we had of put a lawn in, the drought would have claimed it anyway. This way there is a well-presented, easy to maintain wheelchair friendly space that looks fantastic – drought or no drought."

After being introduced to pastel painting during her recovery, Sue decided she needed an area for art and craft which could also be utilised for other purposes as the need arose.

"We designed the garage to accommodate different aspects of our lifestyle. We have a lot of family and friends to entertain and we thought "Why only use the garage for cars? It's a large space and converts easily into a games room, craft room or secondary entertaining area for larger functions."

Continued on next page...



...from previous page

The principles and ideas used in Sue’s home are ones which can be adapted to any home. At some stage in life, it will be essential to your well-being and ease of mobility to utilise such simple and effective measures.

“We also wanted a home that would appeal to any market if we decide to sell, so there are no ‘obvious’ wheelchair aspects. The adjustments would fit into any lifestyle or family requirements.”

This home is testament that those with reduced or different mobility needs can maintain their independence and remain in control of their daily tasks with just a little bit of imagination and a touch of style.

Debbie Galavodas

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The double width hallways allow more room for Sue to turn around



The use of more drawers and a lowered bench make food preparation easier

Accessing A&EP after Rehabilitation

There have been some significant changes in access to the Aids and Equipment Program for people with a new SCI. People who have suffered a spinal cord injury that has resulted in them having any form of quadriplegia or paraplegia and, therefore a permanent or long term disability and are non compensable, can submit applications to the Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP) for home modifications and any other type of aid or equipment, available through the current range of aids and equipment, before they are discharged from a hospital/rehabilitation service.

In the past people had to wait 30 days after discharge from hospital/rehabilitation. In order for an application for assistance through the A&EP to be accepted the client will need to have a completed discharge plan including an expected date of discharge and the usual assessment for home modifications and aids or equipment will be required.

The changes mean that people are now able to apply while they are progressing through their rehabilitation. However people still are ‘wait listed’ in order of priority as there are no extra dollars in the system.

Volunteers who make a difference

During the month of May Volunteer’s week saw AQA recognise the valuable contribution made by our own volunteers. We have a dedicated team of volunteers, who offer us their experience and skills to strengthen our capacity and improve our support services. Our volunteers help with office processes, help maintain our website, support our information service and contribute content to News Link.

If you are someone who might be interested in volunteering your experience, skills and some of your time, or if you have a general interest in volunteering, we are happy to hear from you.



Some of the AQA staff recognising the contribution of volunteers Simon and Debbie



Forest Hill Lions Club & Robert Rose Foundation Lend A Hand

Member Gary Allsop was presented with a donation from both the 'Forest Hill Lions Club' and 'Robert Rose Foundation' for recognition in public speaking and work with spinal cord research.

I recently had the pleasure of attending a Forest Hill Lions Club meeting with my father where we met a wonderful bunch of people who do fantastic work within the community raising money for people and organisations in need from all walks of life.



I was generously presented with a cheque from President Angelo Falcone. In particular I would like to acknowledge Les Jones who instigated the grant through the club committee. In recognition for my public speaking in the community and work with spinal cord research they supported me financially, as did the Robert Rose

Foundation, by paying for some substantial repairs to my van.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Forest Hill Lions Club or you feel you could help in any way contact Angelo Falcone at president@lionsclubofforesthill.org.au or call 0458 299 464, their web site is www.lionsclubofforesthill.org.au/staging.

Equally if you would like to make a donation to the Robert Rose Foundation who focus on helping people with spinal cord injuries call 9418 0426, or if you have a spinal injury and would like to make an application for a grant e-mail rosefoundation@independenceaustralia.com.

I sincerely appreciate this financial assistance from both organisations as their joint generosity has enabled me to continue these important community activities and I thank them whole-heartedly for this wonderful support.

Photo: Forest Hill Lions Club president Angelo Falcone presenting me the cheque.

Victorians Called On To Check Up On The Elderly & People With Disabilities in Major Emergencies

Victorian seniors and people with disabilities will receive telephone check-up calls and personal visits before and during heatwaves, bushfires, floods and other significant emergencies as part of a \$1 million Brumby Government initiative.

Senior Victorians Minister Lisa Neville today announced the funding boost which would see the roll out of a statewide Seniors Register program, with community volunteers to check up on elderly and people with disabilities who have registered with the program.

Ms Neville called on Victorians to sign up to become community volunteers and check up on elderly people in their communities, as part of the Victorian Government's Respect Strategy.

"Through the bushfires, we have seen the very best of the generous nature of Victorians. We need to make that last – and the best way to do that is to encourage young Victorians to get involved and look out for vulnerable members of our community."

Under the Seniors Register, elderly Victorians and people with disabilities can nominate to join the register. They provide contact details, their address and next of kin information. Each local register is securely held within a participating Victoria Police station. Approved volunteers can then enter the police station and contact registered people to check on their welfare.

In emergencies the registers are blitzed to ensure the safety, security and well being of registered people. If there are any concerns raised, emergency services are dispatched to the address and next of kin contacted.

People wishing to take part in the Register can call the Office of Senior Victorians on (03) 9208 3855.

Ms Neville said the Brumby Government would also spend \$1.4 million to help all local councils develop and implement heatwave strategies to better support local residents.

People wishing to take part in the Seniors Register can call the Office of Senior Victorians on 9208 3855.



Australian Government calls for submissions on Disability Parking Scheme

The Australian Government has released a discussion paper and is seeking public comment on the proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme. A \$3 million Federal Budget commitment has been made to support the implementation of the Scheme across Australia by the end of 2010.

The harmonisation of Disability Parking Permit Schemes in Australia is a Government election commitment. It aims to improve opportunities for eligible people with disability by providing consistent national accessible parking arrangements with reciprocal recognition of permits between jurisdictions.

NDS WA manages the parking scheme for people with disabilities in WA and has provided significant input into the new Australian Disability Parking Scheme. NDS welcomes the commitment to a national scheme.

The proposed scheme includes the following elements:

Part 1 - Nationally consistent eligibility criteria

A diverse range of eligibility criteria underpin the provision of disability parking permits across Australia. It is proposed that nationally consistent eligibility criteria would operate across all states and territories to:

- ensure disability parking permits are issued to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria;
- provide nationally consistent rules for administrators, disability parking permit holders, health professionals, and regulators;
- provide a common eligibility criteria when people change their place of residence to another state or territory; and
- improve information for the Australian community about who is entitled to a disability parking permit.

Part 2 - National minimum standards for parking permit concessions

Under the proposed scheme, disability parking permit holders would continue to be entitled to use the reserved parking spaces that are marked with the International Symbol of Access.

The proposed scheme aims to provide minimum standards for concessions for disability parking permit holders in all states and territories. This would allow jurisdictions across Australia to apply additional concessions above the minimum standard.

Part 3 - Nationally consistent parking permit design

Under the proposed scheme, one uniform style of disability parking permit would be available for eligible disability parking permit holders and eligible organisations throughout Australia.

Public consultations will be held during June in each capital city, plus Alice Springs, Cairns and Townsville. NDS WA will manage a national call centre to support the Australia-wide consultations.

To register for the consultations call 1800 630 740 or 1800 555 677 (TTY).

Further information is available at the www.fahcsia.gov.au.

Submissions must be received by Friday 31st July 2009. Members wishing to inform the NDS submission should contact Helen Granville, at helen.granville@nds.org.au or (08) 9208 9808 by 15th July.

Contact Information: Helen Granville, Manager, Community Services, NDS Western Australia, Phone: (08) 9208 9808, helen.granville@nds.org.au.



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San Diego to Seattle

Tony Leggett has written this great article about his trip along the west coast of America. The article was first published in the 2009 Autumn edition of Accord magazine.

I confess that when it comes to travel I am an absolute girly-man. I like the creature comforts, which means that I avoid travel when I can. Anything that involves me getting out of my own chair or not sleeping in my own bed had better be pretty damn interesting. I'm happy to report that the west coast of the U.S. is just that.

This was my first overseas trip in a wheelchair and, at seven weeks long, a pretty daunting one. The reasons that my partner and I chose the U.S. over Europe were: no foreign languages to master; better wheelchair access; and a shorter plane trip – 13 hours direct from Brisbane to Los Angeles (L.A.). Where possible I wanted to avoid travel by plane. There's enough drama flying domestically so I wanted to avoid the added fun of trying that in another country. So with a lot of planning via Google Maps and other internet resources we plotted our entire seven week, all rail or car, itinerary.

The first part of the trip is the most unpleasant part, getting through L.A. airport (now with complimentary fingerprinting and a retina scan as a welcome to the U.S.). Unless your luggage can bounce, remember to tip the cab driver who takes you away from the airport to the sanctuary of your hotel. L.A. has Hollywood, Disneyland and Santa Monica beach but it's a concrete jungle with nothing but bad traffic between all the good bits. It's the rest of the west coast you want to see.

Unfortunately I spent the first few days in bed due to a blister on my back from the wrinkled upholstery of a Qantas seat. Safety tip number one is put a sheepskin behind you as well as underneath you. While a combination of booze and sleeping pills may make the 13 hour trip a painless blur - it's not so good for pressure relief. Put up with the boredom and remember to lift!

Seattle by Coast Starlight

We travelled north from L.A. to Seattle on the Amtrak Coast Starlight train (www.amtrak.com). At 40 hours long, it's definitely not the quickest way to get there, but it's certainly the most scenic. Beaches, mountains, forests - it's got it all. There is a modified cabin for a reasonable price (and carers travel for almost nothing). While the bunk-bed is at a good wheelchair height the cabin isn't suitable for everyone. The toilet isn't commode-friendly

and there's no accessible shower so either time the trip for when you don't need the loo (unless you can transfer) or break it up into smaller chunks.

Seattle in August is a wonderful city. It rains for most of the year but we had a week of 15-hour-plus days of uninterrupted sunshine with temperatures in the high 20s. Must sees there are the Pike Place markets (and the Pike Brewery), the Space Needle and a cruise of the harbour. Also highly recommended is the three hour (and accessible) bus tour of the city - it took us to a lot of places we otherwise wouldn't have seen. Seattle is also the launching pad for ferry or bus trips into Canada. We had planned a stay in Vancouver but some logistical errors made us abandon the mission.



From Alcatraz

San Francisco

After the pleasant balminess of Seattle, we travelled 1,500 km south and were rather shocked to find San Francisco was freezing! San Francisco Bay has its own microclimate and while it can be quite warm, it has many foggy or windy summer days that are decidedly chilly. I'm talking about below 15°C here, so be warned! Aside from the weather I think I could quite happily live in San Francisco, it's a city of restaurants and nightclubs and a never-ending party. All of San Francisco's buses as well as their trams are wheelchair accessible. Alcatraz is fully accessible, runs a very informative tour and is a great way to see the bay. Golden Gate Bridge, Haight-Ashbury, the Castro, Golden Gate Park and the Embarcadero are all must-see attractions. We then picked up our modified Chrysler Voyager (over there they are called Dodge Caravans) as the rest of our journey was a road trip.

Lake Tahoe and Yosemite Valley

If you have a hire car and do nothing else, go and see Lake Tahoe and Yosemite Valley both on the eastern side of California.



Lake Tahoe sits more than 1,800 m above sea level and is one of the world's purest and second biggest alpine freshwater lakes. The lake straddles the border between California and Nevada, with the casinos starting about 10 m past the state line. There is a 160 km scenic drive around the entire lake which is well worth the trip. A boat trip across the lake to Emerald Bay is also a must. Yosemite Valley was probably the highlight of the trip for me with an accessible bus service loop that takes you to some of the highlights of the valley floor. My favourite part was Mariposa Grove, about an hour's drive from the valley centre, home of the largest living things on the planet-the Giant Sequoia trees. Only by standing next to one can you get an idea of how mind-blowingly big they are. If you have a disability you can follow the regular Grove tour in your own car with an audio guide-well worth it and full of strange facts ... did you know that a Giant Sequoia can drink up to 800 litres of water every day?



Mariposa Grove

Death Valley, Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon

From Yosemite Valley to Death Valley is quite a contrast. The surreal scenery was a real surprise. And yes, it is very hot. It goes without saying that you need to take plenty of water and have a reliable air-conditioned car.

We had lunch at Furnace Creek and stopped to take a look at Zabriskie Point's very cool rock formations, then drove up to Dante's View-a 1,500m high mountain with spectacular views of the valley below and a good 10°C cooler than the valley floor. Hunter S. Thompson got it right about Las Vegas. Two hours drive from Death Valley, Las Vegas is big, bright, beautiful and soulless. The size and extravagance of the place is overwhelming but it has some good points. The big casinos always have great shows (we went to Cirque du Soleil) and if you sit in front of a slot machine and tip, you'll get free drinks all night. Hoover Dam is also worth checking out on the way out of town heading towards the Grand Canyon.

It is hard to get accommodation close to the Grand Canyon. The Squire Inn (www.grandcanyonsquire.com),

on the south side, is the closest by far. The views from the lookouts are breathtaking but our joy was cut short by heavy showers 20 minutes after we got there. With the rain setting in for the day, we drove south to Phoenix a little disappointed but grateful we at least got some photographs.

San Diego and the Coast Drive

After the detour to Phoenix where I saw my first baseball game and visited a very tasty microbrewery (it's a myth that all U.S. beer is crap) we headed back to the coast. With San Diego being so close to the border I was expecting it to be full of touristy Mexican gimmicks. I was pleasantly surprised to find it to be anything but. The Gaslamp Quarter is fantastic for food and entertainment and it was a shame we only had two days there.

The coast drive along Highway One is highly recommended as a scenic way to get from San Diego to San Francisco. However, do not take it through L.A. unless you like traffic. Get onto Freeway 101 as soon as possible for the sake of your sanity. On the way up the coast take the time to see Hearst Castle (www.hearstcastle.com). There is a stunning wheelchair accessible tour. There are plenty of lovely coastal towns to stay at to break up the journey. We stopped at Santa Barbara, San Simeon and Santa Cruz.

Napa Valley and Back Home

From Santa Cruz we ducked up to the Napa Valley, an hour's drive north of San Francisco. It is a 50 km stretch of vineyards, restaurants and small towns-California's version of the Hunter Valley. Calistoga at the far end of the valley is the nicest of the towns. It's also home of the Old Faithful geyser which blows every hour or so (be patient, we missed it by minutes twice). Also highly recommended is dinner at the CIA, the Culinary Institute of America (www.ciachef.edu) After three glorious days of eating and drinking we had to drop off the hire car and catch the Amtrak train back to L.A. A broken down lift on the Metro Rail system meant we missed our flight out of L.A. The lesson here is to book an airport shuttle bus from the hotel (they're often accessible) and not rely on public transport just to be safe. And that was seven weeks travel in a nutshell. The planning phase seemed so long but the trip itself went so fast. If you do have the time, I highly recommend travelling the U.S. by hire car so you can do it at your own pace. For anyone thinking of going don't hesitate to email me tleggett@optusnet.com.au. No question too silly!



Internships For Uni Students With A Disability



The Australian Employers' Network on Disability
Employers Making A Difference

“Stepping into...” is a paid internship program designed specifically for university students with disability. The program provides a “step into” practical work experience for students with disability who may otherwise face significant barriers to finding employment.

The program is one of mutual benefit:

- Participating organisations benefit by identifying, gaining greater awareness of, and eliminating, some of the barriers faced by people with disability within their organisation, as well as by breaking down many of the myths and stereotypes that are often associated with people with disability in the workplace;
- Students benefit significantly through gaining experience of the job application and interview process, developing a network of contacts within a professional organisation, and gaining valuable hands-on work experience which they can include on their resumes, and having the opportunity to showcase their skills and knowledge.

The program:

“Stepping into...” runs for four weeks in either the summer or winter university semester breaks.

Due to the nature of some students’ disabilities they may require a longer period, with fewer days worked each week, however the total hours worked should equate to four weeks full time (152 hrs).

In 2009 the Employers’ Network are please to be able to offer the following opportunities:

- Stepping into Law - Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth
- Stepping into Accounting - Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth
- Stepping into I.T. - Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra
- Stepping into HR - Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra
- Stepping into Policy & Research - Canberra, Sydney
- Stepping into Marketing - Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane

Visit www.aend.org.au for forms and more information.

Testimonials - 2008 participating organisations:

“The Stepping into... program has been a very enriching process for our organisation to be involved in. So far we have interviewed fifteen candidates who all impressed our interview panel with their personalities, skills and experience. We see the Stepping into... program as genuinely strengthening our internal diversity objectives, and it contributes significantly to our graduate program as well. We have 10 candidates starting in the next quarter and have encouraged them to apply to our graduate program as well.”

Australian Taxation Office

“Our candidate brought a really fresh way of thinking to the firm. . . he looked at problems from new angles and was very solution focused. He had an excellent level of legal knowledge and understanding, and was a very engaging personality to have in the team... We would like to offer him an ongoing role in the firm.”

Sparke Helmore Lawyers

For more information, contact the Australian Employers’ Network on Disability on 1300 363 645 or visit www.aend.org.au.sourced Disability News



ANZ Abilities Program – Committed to the inclusion of a diverse workforce

ANZ have embarked on a program to provide a working environment that will cater to the needs of professional people with disabilities. ANZ appreciate that there are exceptionally talented people within their chosen profession who may have limited opportunities of employment due to constraints within the working environment. These could be physical constraints, or those that arise from less obvious disabilities.

ANZ Careers are currently seeking professionals that have disabilities, as we are committed to supporting inclusion in the workplace, making necessary changes to our standard working environment (or processes) where we need to accommodate.

If you know anyone within your network of friends, professional acquaintances, past or present colleagues with a disability who would like to work at ANZ, ask them to contact Joel Kilgour, the ANZ Abilities Program Manager, for a confidential discussion on:

Phone: (03) 8685 5368

Email: joel.kilgour@anz.com

This initiative is a genuine program and has the goal of recruiting more than 30 people by September 30th, 2009.

New Workforce Partnership – Independence for Living

Independence Australia has a contract with the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development for a New Workforce Partnership called Independence for Living.

They aim to place participants of the project (people with a disability) into a minimum of 15 hours a week paid employment in the customer contact field.

Participants will receive pre-employment training (Cert II in Customer Contact) and technical training concerning the actual work and will also have access to vocational counselling and a range of other supports as need arises.

Participants will be supported to register with Centrelink as voluntary job seekers and to then register with Sarina Russo Job Access.

The Vocational Co-ordinator at Independence Australia will be the contact person for each participant through all stages of the project i.e. from initial engagement through to commencement of employment.

For further information please contact Nazim Erdem at AQA Victoria on:

Phone: (03) 9489 0777.

Email: info@aqavic.org.au.

OZ Ramp



Only
\$2948

The OZ RAMP wheelchair and scooter ramp provides a practical and affordable alternative for vehicle loading that simply mounts onto your existing tow-bar. The ramp manually raises and lowers in seconds with minimal effort. It has a unique all weather slip resistant surface and requires virtually no ongoing maintenance. Australian designed and manufactured. The OZ RAMP fully complies to Australian standards AS/NZS3856.1&2:1998 for wheelchair use.

ALL METAL MAGIC

1/8 Bailey Crescent

Southport QLD 4215

Ph: 07 5528 6575

Fax: 07 5526 6056

Email: Sales@allmetalmagic.com.au

Distributor enquiries welcome



Jerry Visits Hong Kong

Member Jerry Vajtauer recently visited Hong Kong with his fiancé and great mate. Below is an article Jerry sent in about their experience in the Hongkers.

A few months ago in late April 2009, I had the opportunity to travel to Hong Kong for 10 days with my fiancé Janet and great mate Paul. We departed from Melbourne with Cathay Pacific for the long 10 hour journey. The seats on the airline were very narrow as were the aisles. I had to be transferred into an airline wheelchair which is very narrow, to be placed into my allocated seat. The flight was tiresome but the food was very acceptable.

The first thing I noticed, once the aircraft landed, about the Hong Kong International Airport – colloquially known as Chek Lap Kok Airport because it was built on the island of Chek Lap Kok – was its vibrancy and its energy. Everything and everyone seemed on the go. The airport operates one of the world's largest passenger terminal buildings and operates 24 hours a day. It is one of the world's busiest airports, especially in terms of international passengers, and the second busiest airport in the world in terms of cargo movements. It is also an important regional trans-shipment centre, passenger hub and gateway for destinations in Mainland China and the rest of Asia. No wonder it so fast paced compared to Melbourne's International Airport which is so laid back and relaxed.

The staff were so helpful and are always at hand to help in anyway they can.

The airport is very accessible. A simple layout and effective signage, moving walkways and the automated people mover allow quick and easy movement throughout the building. The airport also features an Automated People Mover, a driverless people mover system consisting of 3 stations to provide fast transportation from the check-in area to the gates (and vice versa). These trains travel at 62km/h and the service is provided for free to all passengers and crew.

Once out of the airport, we went to our hotel – the Royal Plaza Mong Kau East – which is located near the harbour which had exceptional views of Hong Kong town. What I found is that the beds were very hard, so next time I might bring my own air mattress. The staff at the Hotel

had never seen a lifting machine before, but they were eager to learn more about it and so they took many photos of it, and I guess if they like what they see they'll get it for future guests that are in the same position. The scenery was breathtaking, having the waters, the skyscrapers and the hills in the background all in one view. The buildings are like Leggo structures, so many and so tall.



Jerry & Paul in Hong Kong

We travelled on all public transports which were adequate for wheelchairs. We had to book for an accessible taxi which cost AUD\$50 an hour – not bad considering their petrol prices are \$2.50 a litre. In Hong Kong, it is so neat and tidy. Australia needs to wake up and be a lot stricter on their public transport system - no graffiti and no vandalism - enforce strict guidelines to people, after all it is our land - Australia Down Under.

Hong Kong's shopping centres, well the ones I went to, were all wheelchair friendly and similar to ours back home but on a grander scale with more expensive shops. There were no automatic doors, just pulling and pushing just like ours.

The people of Hong Kong are so friendly, polite and helpful. Hong Kong has a population of 7 million people plus 3. The weather was very warm and humid.

I was very impressed with the progress that the Chinese have made in Hong Kong and it seems in my opinion that they have set a standard that the rest of the world will try to achieve as far as structural engineering. I salute the Chinese for their wisdom and courage in this area.

I am looking forward to my next trip now, don't know where yet, but once I get back, I'll let you guys know about it. Cheers.



News Link Photo Competition - and the winner is...

Thank you to all of those people who have sent in pictures of themselves for the “News Link Photo Competition”.

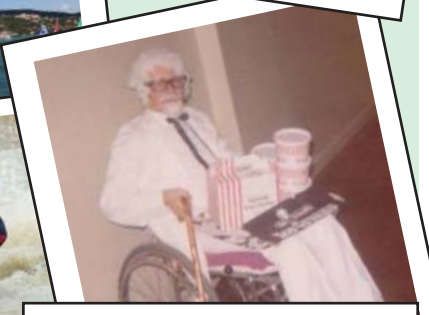
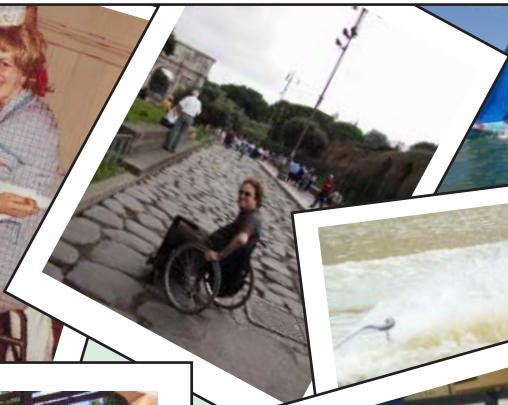
Anyone who sent in a photo of themselves out and about, doing something fun or adventurous, looking really sharp, pulling a funny face, etc, were eligible for the competition.

We are happy to announce that the lucky winner is Rocca Salcedo. Her picture was taken at the Madame Tussieu Museum in London next to a wax model of world renown scientist Stephen Hawkings. It's a great photo and the subtitle is “... looking for a bit of inspiration and knowledge.”

Now you don't have any excuse in catching up with friends over the phone with your \$50 Telstra PhoneAway card. Happy chatting!



“... looking for a bit of inspiration and knowledge.”





Good Sleep is Essential to a Good Life

The Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative reports about research into the effects of breathing and sleeping for people with quadriplegia.

The Sleep Health in Quadriplegia Research Program at the Institute for Breathing and Sleep offers hope for improved recovery from injury and participation in community life for people with quadriplegia.

Humans are asleep for almost one third of their lives, yet sleep in quadriplegia has received very little attention in research circles outside of Victoria. The research group at the Institute for Breathing and Sleep at Austin Health previously demonstrated that sleep disorders impair daytime functioning and compromise quality of life for those living with quadriplegia. They found that most patients with quadriplegia have poor sleep quality which impacts on their daily functioning, quality of life and recovery from injury.

As mentioned in the March edition of AQA News Link, the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) awarded \$4.9M for research that will systematically investigate the mechanisms and management of major causes and develop novel treatments to improve sleep health for individuals living with quadriplegia. Dr David Berlowitz of the Institute for Breathing and Sleep will lead the large research team that includes spinal researchers from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The research program will investigate the utility of pharmaceutical and physical treatments both immediately after injury and in chronic quadriplegia in order to develop innovative treatments. According to Dr. Berlowitz, “the treatments we are testing may yield dramatic benefits in rehabilitation and allow individuals to participate more fully in their community life.”

The program will work with individuals with quadriplegia, scientists and clinicians to ensure that this knowledge leads to improved care.

For more information about this research program and others funded by the VNI, visit their website at www.vni.com.au.

Bone Marrow Stem Cell Injections May Help Cure Spinal Cord Injury

Care Cure reports that scientific teams from DaVinci Biosciences, Costa Mesa, California, and Hospital Luis Vernaza in Ecuador claim that injecting a patient's own bone marrow-derived stem cells into the spinal column using multiple routes can be an effective treatment for spinal cord injury (SCI).

Revealing their findings in the journal Cell Transplantation, the researchers said that they administered bone marrow-derived stem cells (BMCs) directly into the spinal column, spinal canal and intravenously to eight patients with SCI—four acute and four chronic.

They say that such a treatment can return some quality of life for SCI patients without serious adverse events.

The corresponding author Dr. Francisco Silva revealed that several functional improvements, most importantly improved bladder control, were observed in the eight patients who received BMC transplants through various routes, and were followed for two years.

Researchers also observed that one of their cases suffered a gunshot wound, and that their study marked the first time a gunshot wound victim had received BMC transplants through multiple routes. BMCs can promote the growth of blood vessels and, therefore, represent an alternative therapy,” said Dr. Silva. Following primary trauma to the adult spinal cord there is evidence of haemorrhage and blood flow is attenuated, he said.

They revealed that the patients were followed for two years using MRI imaging to assess morphological changes in the spinal cord. “It is important to note that all of our patients with acute injuries improved significantly with no signs of deterioration or impediment of presumed spontaneous recovery,” concluded Dr. Silva.

For more information visit the Care Cure Community website on <http://sci.rutgers.edu/>.



Senokot Granule Alternatives

As you already know Senokot Granules are no longer available after the manufacturer discontinued production. We asked readers to let us know if they had found any alternatives to use as a substitute. Below is some feedback...

“Austin Health recommends taking 2 Senokot tablets for each teaspoon of Senokot granules you previously took.” JB (this is also recommended by the manufacturer)

“I have heard of a product called Movicol that works similarly to Senokot Granules but I am unaware of dosage amounts.” OA.

“Since starting my nursing training a laxative that I am finding works is Movicol.” AS.

“... I used Senokot Granules for 24 years and was told like every one else, that it was no longer available for purchase. Shock horror, what do I do?”

... I went for the Senokot tablets 100 in the green box. How many do I take,? Don't know, never used it before.

...it was trial and error - must admit though, there was some bad constipation till I got it right, but it did work for me.

... for every heaped teaspoon of granules I had taken, I eventually took 2 and half Senokot tablets.

... Once you've worked out how many you need, take half in the morning after eating, and the other half after dinner at night.

... The only thing I regret, is the last 24 years of using the granules, for I find the tablets a lot better for me. There's no use searching for that last tub of Senokot granules, you will eventually have to change your bowel routine. Hope this is of some use to those searching in vain.” HK

“... I'm trying a few things after consulting with my doctor and my local chemist.” NE.

“... I've been using Normacol Plus for a couple of months and didn't have any difficulties in the changeover. It is more gentle on my gut and the amount (2 to 3 teaspoons = 2 Senokot) is not as critical as Senokot. You can get Normacol Plus from chemists, Intouch Direct (CAAS) & Independence Solutions (Mediquip).” NS

MFB's Disability Action Plan

A few weeks back AQA staff members Naz and Wayne attended the launch of the MFB Disability Action Plan.

The Plan will enhance relationships between firefighters and people living with disabilities.

The MFB's Disability Action Plan was officially launched by Mr Graeme Innes, the Human Rights Commissioner and Disability Discrimination Commissioner. The document provides the framework for an organisational approach towards interaction and assistance between the MFB and people living with a disability.

The Disability Advisory Council of Victoria estimates that around 20 per cent of the states population is currently living with a disability, highlighting the need for the MFB to continue to connect with this group. This figure is expected to rise in the future.

Manager of MFB diversity development Dalal Smiley said that the MFB's work on the Disability Action Plan has been informed by extensive consultations with community disability groups, service providers, advocacy bodies and MFB staff.

“We are keen to work closely with disability groups to ensure that our fire safety messages, educational tools and community support programs reach people with various disabilities, as they can often be most at risk in times of fires, rescue and evacuation operations,” Dalal said.

“Furthermore, the plan will enable the MFB to identify and work towards removing barriers experienced by people with disabilities in accessing MFB services and employment opportunities, something we feel strongly about,” she said.

Ms Smiley said that the MFB is committed to developing sustainable relationships with the diverse communities that it serves. “Among other things, the Disability Action Plan will ensure that the MFB is inclusive of people with disabilities through the services we provide, information we produce, programs we design, events we organise and community engagement efforts we get involved in.”

“The plan also commits the MFB to develop a formal policy on support, redeployment and retraining for MFB employees who develop a disability,” she said.

After the presentation Naz and Wayne got the chance to talk to the MFB Directors and Managers about the organisation that we represent (AQA), the work that we do and the members that we can access.



Little Johnny on Christmas

Little Johnny came into the kitchen where his mother was making dinner. Christmas was coming up and he thought this was a good time to tell his mother what he wanted: “Mom, I would like a bike for Christmas.”

Little Johnny was a bit of a troublemaker. He had gotten into trouble at school and at home. Johnny’s mother asked him if he thought he deserved to get a bike for Christmas. Little Johnny, of course, thought he did. Johnny’s mother, being a Christian woman, wanted him to reflect on his behaviour over the last year and write a letter to God and tell him why he deserved a bike for Christmas. Little Johnny stomped up the steps to his room and sat down to write God a letter.

Letter 1: Dear God, I have been a very good boy this year and I would like a bike for Christmas. I want a red one. Your friend, Johnny.

Johnny knew this wasn’t true. He had not been a very good boy this year, so he tore up the letter and started over.

Letter 2: Dear God, This is your friend Johnny. I have been a pretty good boy this year, and I would like a red bike for Christmas. Thank you, Johnny.

Johnny knew this wasn’t true either. He tore up the letter and started again.

Letter 3: Dear God, I have been an OK boy this year and I would really like a red bike for Christmas. Your friend, Johnny. Johnny knew he could not send this letter to God either. Johnny was very upset. He went downstairs and told his mother he wanted to go to church. Johnny’s mother thought her plan had worked because Johnny looked very sad. “Just be home in time for dinner,” his mother said.

Johnny walked down the street to the church and up to the altar. He looked around to see if anyone was there. He picked up a statue of the Virgin Mary. He slipped it under his shirt and ran out of the church, down the street, into his house and up to his room. He shut the door to his room and sat down with a piece of paper and a pen. Johnny began to write his letter to God.

Letter 4: I’ve got your mum. if you want to see her again, send the red bike for Christmas. Signed, you know who.

Little Johnny on Aging

Little Johnny was sitting on a park bench munching on one candy bar after another.

After the 6th one a man on the bench across from him said, ‘Son, you know eating all that candy isn’t good for you. It will give you acne, rot your teeth, and make you fat.’

Little Johnny replied, ‘My grandfather lived to be 107 years old.’

The man asked, ‘Did your grandfather eat 6 candy bars at a time?’

Little Johnny answered, ‘No, he minded his own business.’

It Must Be The Drinking

A drunk goes to the doctor complaining of tiredness and headaches. “I feel tired all the time, my head hurts, and I’m not sleeping. What is it, Doc?”

The doctor examines him thoroughly and says, “I can’t find anything wrong. It must be the drinking.”

“Fair enough,” replied the patient. “I’ll come back when you sober up.”

Little Johnny

Little Johnny watched, fascinated, as his mother smoothed cold cream on her face. ‘Why do you do that, mummy?’ he asked. ‘To make myself beautiful,’ said his mother, who then began removing the cream with a tissue. ‘What’s the matter?’ asked Little Johnny. ‘Giving up?’

Miracle

One morning a crippled man came into the church on crutches. He stopped in front of the holy water, put some on both legs, and then threw away his crutches.

An alter boy witnessed the scene and then ran into the rectory to tell the priest what he’d just seen.

“Son, you’ve just witnessed a miracle!” the priest said.

“Tell me where is this man now?”

“Flat on his back over by the holy water,” the boy informed him.

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) 5873 4605 (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)

Price: \$250

WANTED

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

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.

Phone: (03) 5275 5445 (Jim)

Mobile: 0421 633 805

Price: \$215,000

Mercedes 1999 Vito Van

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

Phone: (03) 5852 1232 (Di)

Price: \$18,000

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

Supporting Services To People With Spinal Cord Injury

Making a bequest...

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

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

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

If you would like more information about making a bequest to AQA please contact Peter Trethewey CEO or Robyn Canning Executive Assistant on (03) 9489 0777.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

Karma KP-25 Electric Wheelchair

46 x 46 cm seat, folding frame, fold down bracket, aircraft grade aluminium frame, five year frame guarantee, swing back and height adjustable armrests, swing away height adjustable leg rests, height adjustable backrest, dynamic shark controller right side mounted, 12½ x 2¼ pneumatic rear wheels, 8 x 2" solid front castors. Purchased in mid January 2008.

Phone: (03) 9654 2466 (John or his secretary)
Price: \$1,500 ono

Commode Shower Chair

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

Phone: (03) 9386 9818 (Colin)
Price: \$800

Wheelchair MobilityPlus Glide

17 inch, rigid frame, excellent condition, red and yellow in colour, fold down back.

Phone: (03) 9386 9818 (Colin)
Price: \$600

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: \$7,250 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: 0400107197 (Debbie)

... More Classifieds on page 19

Supporting Services to People with Spinal Cord Injury

Making a donation...

With community support AQA continues to make a difference in the lives of people who sustain spinal cord injury and for the family that support them. You can provide support with a donation.

By Phone – please ring AQA on (03) 9489 0777 and have your credit card details available. (Mastercard, Visa, American Express)

By Mail (cheque or credit card) – fill in the slip below and send with your cheque to:

AQA Victoria Ltd
 P.O. Box 219
 Fairfield VICTORIA 3078

Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ P/Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

I'd like to donate: \$ _____

Card Type: Visa Mastercard Amex

Card Number:

Expiry Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____