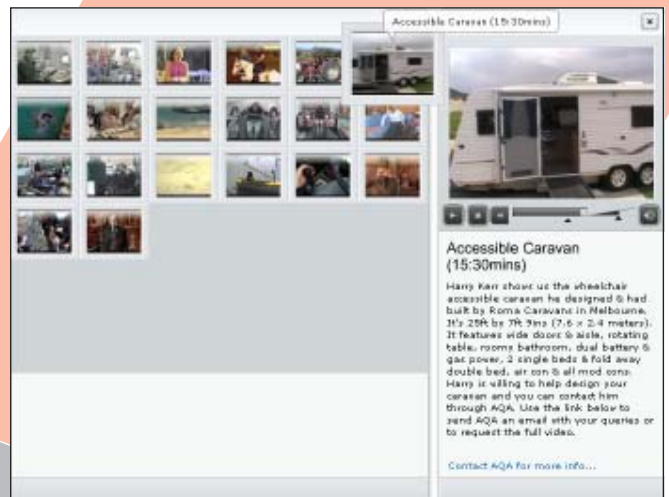


AQA NEWS LINK

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

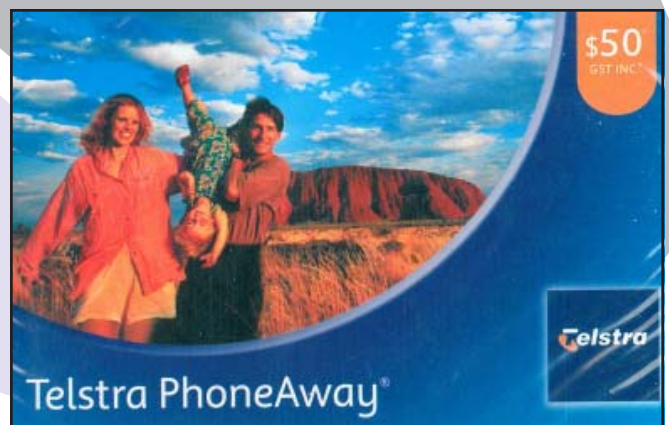
MAY 2009

AQA's Video Gallery Launch



Me and My Town - Bonbeach

News Link - Photo Competition



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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Volume 23, Number 2

From the CEO



Welcome to our latest issue of News Link.

As part of a proactive approach to engaging like minded organizations in order to pursue our mission and vision, AQA has formed an alliance with Spinal Injuries Association in Queensland and Spinal Cord Injury Australia in New South Wales which will allow us to work more closely together in the future. Under this alliance the three organisations have agreed to share information and resources, form a shared position on a range of issues, and work to create a single national voice in response to matters concerning spinal cord injury. We believe this approach will enhance our effectiveness in raising awareness of spinal cord injury and in advocating for change in our respective State Governments and with the Federal Government. We plan to invite organisations from other states to join us when they are ready. We look forward to keeping you informed about the progress of this cross state collaboration.

During May we will be holding the first of a number of focus groups with members, subscribers and other stakeholders with experience of living with spinal cord injury. These are an important opportunity for us to share some emerging ideas, test our thinking and priorities and to hear about the perspectives of others. We look forward to sharing a summary of the outcomes from these group meetings.

Our meetings with industry groups and our contacts in the Department of Human Services all point to the tightening of budgets as a result of the economic downturn and subsequent reduction in Government revenue. We are being prepared for several years of tight State budgets. What we need to do is to ensure in the reassessment of priorities that accompany this tightening, that the issues impacting on people with spinal cord injury and other physical disability do not get lost.

We noted with interest the announcement in the **State budget** of:

- Individual Support Packages – funding in 2009 -10 for an additional 179 Individual Support Packages.
- 13 purpose-built community-based accommodation options for 58 younger people with high support needs who are living in, or are at risk of entering, residential aged care.

We noted in the **Federal Budget**

Pensions - an increase in pensions, including Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment from 20 September 2009, single pensioners on the full rate will receive an additional \$32.49 a week and couples will receive an additional \$10.14. In addition, a \$600 supplement will be paid to people on Carer Payment and Carer Allowance. This supplement will be provided every year.

The rate at which the pension is withdrawn for each dollar of additional private income will increase from 40 cents to 50 cents. To counteract the disincentive this would pose to pensioners seeking employment, half of the first \$500 of fortnightly employment income will be excluded from the income test.

Currently only one in 10 DSP recipients gains any income from paid employment.

Parking Program and Companion Card - The National Disability Agreement includes commitments to introduce a nationally harmonised parking program and companion card scheme. The Budget provides \$3 million to assist with the introduction of a national disability parking permit scheme, with consistent eligibility criteria and entitlements and a national permit. It also commits \$1.8 million to the implementation of a national companion card scheme.

Aids - The Government will replace the Continence Aids Assistance Scheme with a Continence Aids Payment Scheme. The Continence Aids Payment Scheme will allow consumers to choose among products and suppliers, rather than rely on a sole provider as at present. The new payment starting from 1 July 2010 will be equivalent to the current subsidy of \$479.40. It will be indexed annually and eligibility will not change.

Peter Trethewey

Chief Executive Officer

petertrethewey@aqavic.org.au



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Influencing Outcomes

AQA's aim and mission is all about improving the quality of life of people with physical disabilities. A big part of this is advocacy and influencing outcomes. CEO Peter Trethewey writes about how AQA actively promotes the capacity, value and rights of people with spinal cord injury and other physical disabilities to participate in all aspects of community life.

Advocacy is about influencing outcomes. This can include public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, social systems and organisations, which directly affect people's lives. It is a deliberate process of exerting some influence on behalf of ideas or persons. This can include supporting an individual or family to recognise their own capacity and value in the face of spinal cord injury.

AQA is about improving the quality of life of people with physical disability and actively promoting the capacity, value and rights, people with spinal cord injury and other physical disabilities have to participate in all aspects of community life.

In order to determine what outcomes we seek to influence we look to our mission and vision, we seek to understand what our members and clients think and feel about issues and we seek to identify existing and emerging issues known to have an impact on people with physical disability.

Towards a National Disability Strategy: steps in the right direction

The Disabled Motorists Association welcomes the introduction of a National Disability Strategy, with its key aims of tackling the barriers to access and promoting social inclusion for all Australians with disabilities. The DMA has taken an active part in contributing towards the Strategy, with a submission as part of the public consultation in 2008 on the Strategy, attendance at the public forum held in Melbourne in 2008 and further comments in preparation, targeting particular aspects that need attention.

The Australian government has much work ahead in putting the Strategy into place, with its target of

In the last year this has taken us into project work looking at a sustainable model of formal peer support in Victoria. Staff have presented to research workshops and training programs regarding issues impacting on people with spinal cord injury. AQA has been invited onto steering committees of projects to improve the understanding of the impact of SCI. It is one of the drivers in AQA forming alliances with other like minded organisations to respond to emerging issues.

We have heard that for many of our members what's important is access to adequate levels of personal care, the right equipment, accommodation options and reliable information about products and services.

At an individual level we take our approach to influencing outcomes into our peer support work with clients preparing for life in the community, or supporting clients achieve a fund for care, equipment or an accommodation outcome. Our Qualcare team support our clients to influence outcomes in their review meetings in order to ensure the individual's goals are represented in their plans.

I encourage you to participate in any of our surveys, focus groups or online forums and at other times to contact the Information & Peer Support team about the issues that you consider important to quality of life and that enable people to participate in community life as these are the outcomes we seek to influence.

introducing the draft Strategy by 2009 and the final version in 2010. However, as they say, all journeys begin with a single step. At the recent launch of the Building Better Lives campaign, which is working to assist young people with disabilities move out of nursing homes into appropriate housing, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP reminded the gathering that Australia is a great nation, still with strong economic power, despite the current downturn and with opportunity to harness that power to benefit all Australians. We look forward to many more determined steps on the path to a better deal for people with disabilities.



AQA Launches a Whistleblower Policy

As part of a proactive approach to good governance the Board of AQA Victoria Ltd (AQA) have developed a Whistleblower Policy under the guidelines of the Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2001 (The Act). This policy recognises that in any organisation circumstances can arise where staff or members of the public may be concerned about corrupt or improper conduct of an AQA board director or staff member and the protections provided under a Whistleblower Policy will facilitate the reporting and investigation of such concerns or allegation.

The Act provides protection to persons who seek to make disclosures of improper conduct against a Board Chairperson or statutory office holders, public servants and staff. The Act makes disclosure of the identity of a whistleblower and undertaking action detrimental to a whistleblower, criminal offences. Just as government institutions have been required to establish procedures to facilitate the making of disclosures, this policy is designed to advance AQA's governance by voluntarily implementing the The Act in AQA.

This policy is designed specifically to address the investigation of matters where actions of AQA staff and/or board directors are suspected of alleged corrupt or improper conduct and where the complainant seeks protection. An aggrieved person may lodge a complaint with any designated officer who serves in the role of Protected Disclosure Officers (PDO).

This policy does not replace existing AQA grievance processes or complaints processes. It is to be followed only if a staff member, board director or member of the public elects to make a disclosure of suspected or alleged corrupt or improper conduct and seeks protection. Persons wishing to make disclosures of suspected or alleged improper conduct and receive protection under this policy, or persons receiving disclosures of improper conduct made, must refer to the detailed guidelines in this policy.

A copy of AQA's Whistleblower Policy is available on the AQA website at www.aqavic.org.au or alternatively if you would like a hard copy of the policy please contact the AQA office on (03) 9489 0777.

Volunteers at AQA – Improving quality of life of people affected by physical disability

We are looking to expand the opportunities for volunteers to work in various areas of the organisation.

We currently have five volunteers who work in our Fairfield office. Their skills, time and commitment is a valuable resource in the provision of quality services to clients and members.

By establishing a team of volunteers, rostered to best suit the time they have to offer, we can draw on their experience and skills and build capacity and improve services.

One position we would like assistance in is for reception/switchboard relief between the hours of 12-2pm weekdays. If you know of someone who might be suitable to volunteer their experience, skills and some of their time in this position, or someone who has a general interest in volunteering at the Fairfield office we would be interested to hear from them.

For more information please contact Peter Trethewey (CEO) or Robyn Canning (Executive Assistant) on (03) 9489 0777 to explore this opportunity further.



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Board Focus -Partnerships

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. In this issue we are introduced to Rosie Maddick who talks about the value and importance to AQA, its members, clients and staff of forming partnerships with other organisations.



Bio: Master of Social Work (Hlth), B.A., G. Dip. Soc. Stud, G. Dip. Crim, MAASW.

Appointed as an AQA Director in 2005, Rosie is a member of the fundraising sub committee. Her other Board role is that of a person with extensive experience

in the disability sector. She is currently employed as one of two rehab social workers on the spinal cord injury ward at Austin Health's Royal Talbot Rehab Centre in Kew. Rosie has 33 years experience in disability, health, human services management and child & family work. She is also an accredited loss and grief counsellor. She has a son and daughter. Her AQA involvement stems from an interest in advocacy and services for people with SCI.

This month's article is about the value to AQA, its members, clients and staff of forming partnerships with other organisations. For AQA as a community service organization, these working relationships bring mutual benefits to both partners. We believe that such collaboration with like-minded organizations can add considerable value to our vision, service provision and profile. This value is recognized in our Strategic Plan where Community Partnerships is included as one of our five strategic target areas as a means of strengthening the breadth, depth and reach of services.

AQA is very conscious of getting the most out of our valuable resources. We can all think of examples when organizations or departments reinvent the wheel or adopt a 'me too' approach to the development of services, resources or processes. By collaborating with like-minded organizations, agencies like AQA can reduce

costly duplication and share valuable information and experiences. Results are beyond what a single organization might achieve alone. Like any relationship, the key to any successful collaboration is being able to identify what values the respective organizations hold in common. Shared values form the basis for trust and respect between organizations the same as with people.

Current examples of such collaboration include AQA's strong and continuing relationship with the Victorian Spinal Cord Service at Austin Hospital and Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. The Peer Support team provides valuable peer support interventions to patients and their families on the spinal rehabilitation ward. Peer support staff help coordinate Life Skills Days at the Centre, and in 2009 they will participate in patient rehabilitation outings providing another opportunity to model positive solutions to people with a new spinal cord injury in a community setting. Peer support staff also attend spinal regional review clinics in order to provide continuing information and support. This service is underpinned by a memo of understanding between AQA and the Austin that outlines what each party agrees to contribute to the partnership.

Another recent example of collaboration involves a joint project with staff at Independence Australia (formerly ParaQuad Victoria) to design a peer support program and introduce spinal information kits in Victoria.

Our CEO, Peter Trethewey has also opened up liaison with the CEOs of Spinal Injury Association SIA (Qld) and Spinal Cord Injury Australia SCIA (NSW). This partnership includes the formation of an interstate alliance to facilitate the sharing of information and provide a national voice to Government and others about issues affecting people with spinal cord injury. In the future we can see such an alliance facilitating the introduction of new programs that have been piloted in other States.

Collaboration with like-minded organizations plays an important part in the strategic direction of most not for profit organizations. Shared values hold the key to ensure the interests of each organization are served. Members can be involved too - if members have any ideas on potential partners for AQA, we are only too happy to hear from you!



RACV To The Rescue?

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

I would like to share a story with you on the benefits of being a RACV member.

As well as my role as a peer support worker with AQA, I was asked to take on the job of being the carer for a man (Billy) who uses a scooter to attend AFL football matches. As I'm an avid fan of AFL I thought it was a great idea so I accepted the task. Billy and I got on really well and so we decided to attend other footy matches together as well as the races. I also didn't mind attending the races with Billy as I'm a keen punter.

Billy only requires me to attend night games with him as he can attend games during the day on his own. One Saturday night I was required to take Billy to the Carlton vs Brisbane game at Telstra Dome (changed to Etihad Stadium for this year). On the way to the station Billy complained that there was something wrong with his scooter so on a closer inspection I discovered that Billy had run over a screw and it was still in his wheel. I asked Billy whether he wanted to continue or go back home. He was extremely keen to continue but it had to be on three wheels. I told Billy we just needed to get to the station as quickly as possible and meanwhile I will have a think about a solution. I remembered reading somewhere that RACV members can get their chairs fixed as long as a carer is present. When we got to the station I asked Billy if he was a member and fortunately he was. I rang RACV explaining Billy had run over a screw and he needed his wheel fixed. I further explained we were on our way to the football and then asked whether we could meet up with an emergency roadside assistant outside the ground. The young lady over the phone asked to ring when we arrived at Telstra Dome. When we finally arrived at the Dome I rang again and explained the situation and asked the roadside assistant to meet us at Hungry Jack's on Spencer St. We made our way to the lift and headed for our pre-arranged spot. No sooner had we made our way down to the street the RACV roadside assistant arrived. He proceeded to take the wheel off and put a patch on the tube while Billy sat at the table eating a burger. The whole procedure took less than fifteen minutes and we even made the start of the game. Billy had a great night cheering his beloved Blues home and I had great satisfaction knowing that I had made it possible thanks to RACV emergency roadside assistance.

Senokot Granules 100g

We have recently had a great number of enquiries regarding the discontinuation of the laxative – 'Senokot Granules 100g'. We have made a few inquiries about the availability and found that Priceline stores still have very limited stock left.

If you are one of the many people desperate to locate some, we suggest calling the Priceline headquarters on 1300 88 44 11 and stating the "Product Skew Code: 111650". They will then be able to tell you which stores still have stock. All stores are willing to post the 'Senokot Granules 100g' for the price of the product and postage costs.

We have contacted the makers of Senokot Granules 'Reckitt Benckiser' to see if they were really discontinued and were told "unfortunately yes". They apologised but said that slow sales meant that they had no choice. They suggested people make the change to Senokot Tablets.

AQA would also like to hear from any member that has already substituted 'Senokot Granules 100g' with a new laxative. We would be interested in relaying your alternative product and its effect – whether it be positive or negative - to our members. For example, Austin Health recommends taking 2 Senokot tablets for each teaspoon of Senokot granules you previously took. If you have any information you think may be useful, please call (03) 9489 0777 or email info@aqavic.org.au.





AQA's Video Gallery Launch

There are more and more spinal cord injury related videos becoming available on the web. Last month's News Link referred to two such websites www.brainspinalcord.org and www.webbytalents.com. And if you are familiar with www.youtube.com you can find a large number of video clips about spinal cord injury and related topics.

The AQA Information/Peer Support Department is building a video gallery on our website and it is now officially open. You can find it via the main menu on the left-hand side of the AQA website or directly via www.aqavic.org.au/video-gallery. It currently has about 18 video clips but can have up to 36 covering a broad subject range. Examples of some clips are:

- ones dealing with spinal accident and awareness
- equipment adaptations at home and in the workplace
- ways of doing a common activities such as transfers, setting up a computer & domestic chores
- spinal accident prevention messages
- vehicle adaptations
- recreation & hobby activities
- and sports related

The videos come from many sources and vary from a few seconds up to almost 30 minutes. Some have been sourced from TV, some taken by AQA (from years past

and some more recently), and a few from the web. AQA have more being prepared and News Link readers are encouraged to submit ideas of what they would like to see or tell us where others can be found.

The video gallery is fairly simple to use. It is made for a broadband internet connection. It will work with a slow dial-up internet connection but it will be slow to initially display and then it will be slow to view a video. If this is a frustration for you we could put it on a DVD for you.

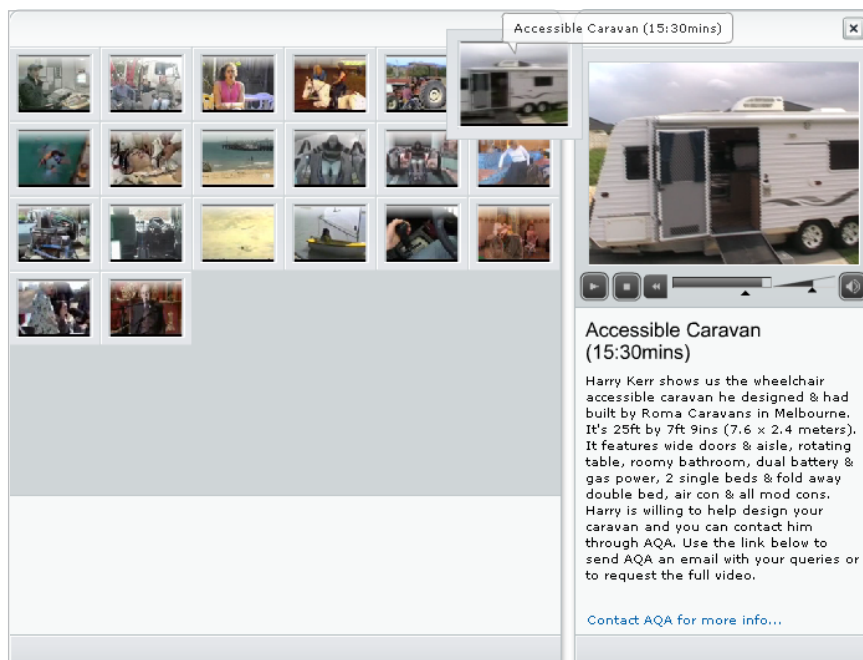
To see what the videos are about move your mouse pointer over each of the thumbnail images. To view a video click on its thumbnail and the right-hand panel will open with the viewer and a description of the video with a link to further information as shown in the image below. At the top of the right-hand panel is a cross (X) which if clicked will return the links to the right-hand panel.

AQA would like to thank the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and the Slater & Gordon Fund, a subfund of the Melbourne Community Foundation for help in funding the video gallery's development. We would also like to recognise the generosity of a number of sources who have allowed AQA to use their videos. Specifically television channels 7 & 9, your ABC, the Austin Spinal Service and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Everyone's support is much appreciated.

AQA would also like to acknowledge all those people who are video subjects who have so generously given their time telling their story. They have instructive and helpful messages to newly spinal cord injured and those

who have been around a few years in need of some information and inspiration. They can also help educate people about the causes and impact of spinal cord injury.

We would like readers to give us feedback about all aspects of the video gallery and you can do this through AQA's forum under the topic **Video Gallery & Websites to Check Out**. Give your ideas about the type of videos you would like to see and where to find videos you think may be of interest to others. Also tell us if you know of someone with an interesting story about their life, work, hobby or equipment.





Me and My Town - Bonbeach

Welcome to another edition of "Me and My Town". This time around Jerry Vajtauer introduces us to his suburb of Bonbeach. He discusses facilities in the area as well as the locals.

My name is Jerry Vajtauer and I reside in Bonbeach with my fiancé and son. I am a C4 quadriplegic and I have been in a manual wheelchair since 1991 following a diving accident. Living with my son David has its benefits as he does all the maintenance work around the house. I am looking forward to travelling around the world with my fiancé in the near future. I have been living in Bonbeach since 1998.



Bonbeach is a suburb in Melbourne, 31 km south-east from Melbourne's CBD. Its local government area is the City of Kingston. At the 2006 Census, Bonbeach had a population of 4,992. Bonbeach has a railway station on the Frankston line and a string of shops on the Nepean Highway. A long stretch of white sand beach on Port Phillip Bay extends from Chelsea southwards to the Patterson River. Bonbeach is located next to Chelsea, Seaford and very close to Frankston.

The neighbourhood is friendly and the locals are always willing to assist me if the need is required. Access to footpaths is fairly reasonable and the local council is aware of the accessibility needs of disabled people in the community. My fiancé and I drive along the coast in our Peugeot convertible and we do not seem to have any trouble accessing the local pubs, bars and restaurants. There are ample car parking spots at the back of the local shops if any cannot be found in the front.

I enjoy living in Bonbeach as it is very close to all the amenities that I require. There are many shopping centres, both small and large, within a twenty minute radius of Bonbeach: Karringal fifteen minutes; Frankston ten minutes; and even Southland is only approximately twenty minutes away. In summer I have the beach – literally a stone's throw away – where I go with my fiancé to watch the sun set and relax to the sound of the incoming waves. There is a concrete pathway that runs the length of the coast connecting Chelsea, Bonbeach, Seaford and Frankston which is also very accessible. There is a pier at Chelsea (the next suburb, five minutes away) that is frequented by many wheelchair users on a regular basis during both summer and winter.



Foreshore at Bonbeach Life Saving Club

The only problem that springs to mind as far as poor accessibility is concerned is that the Bonbeach railway crossing is a bit rough compared to the Chelsea railway crossing. Chelsea has rubber like mats stretched across the pedestrian crossing which is smoother, far more comfy and secure for us wheelchair users.

I would like to point out that I am passionate about spinal research. I have devoted much time and money raised from clothing towards spinal research which has been donated to the Austin Spinal Unit Royal Talbot help to find a cure, or at least get better recovery results from this debilitating injury.

Want Your Profile Published?

Member profiles are very welcome from any of our members and we'd especially like to see more of our female, Country or Tasmanian members profiled. Please contact the Information department on:

Phone: (03) 9489 0777

FreeCall: 1800 999 128 (Country
Victoria & Tasmania members)

Email: info@aqavic.org.au

Quadriplegic Reaches Geographic North Pole: A Historic First

Team Independence has reported the first known quadriplegic was documented reaching the North Pole, where he raised a blue disabled parking sign from his wheelchair.

David Shannon, 46, is quadriplegic from a spinal cord injury in a car accident 25 years ago, while Chris Watkins, 40, suffered injuries that left him with arthritis in 1988.

In order to cross the ice, Team Independence had designed a sled that allowed Shannon's wheelchair to be fastened in place. Shannon then self-propelled with adapted walking sticks with Watkins ahead pulling on a tether.

On planting the disabled parking spot sign at the pole, Shannon said it was meant as a symbol for others.

"This sign represents all people who have faced challenges or adversity in their lives and have dreamed of overcoming them," he said.

David and Chris have returned exhausted and with some minor injuries. Watkins suffered frostbite to his hands

and a cut to his foot, while Shannon experienced difficulty in maintaining body heat, which led to a major infection. They are recovering in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway with their Teammate Darren Lillington and will return to Canada in a few days.

For more information and to congratulate the team, please visit www.teamindependence.ca.



Photo: Dave Shannon, left, and Chris Watkins make it to the North Pole where they posted a disabled parking sign.

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Victory in Visual Media for No Limits

With a record breaking seven Antenna Award nominations (the Logies of community television), Grit Media, the production company behind 'No Limits' – a C31 program devoted to showing the real, the outrageous, the tragic and the downright hilarious sides of living with disability - celebrated victory, taking home the awards for 'Outstanding Interview Program' and 'Outstanding Male Presenter' (Steve Hurd) from the recent awards ceremony.

Steve, who is legally blind with very limited vision in his right eye only, has entertained audiences with daring stunts including ballooning, trapeze acts, climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and even driving at speed around the Calder Park race track.

Along with the rest of the show's ensemble cast, he also conducts punchy interviews and magazine style stories around improvement of the lives of people with disabilities.

About his role on 'No Limits', Steve says, "Just doing a show on access and what is wrong with the world is a real turn off for audiences. It is about engaging people on life's adventure and appreciating what you have got, not just moaning about what is wrong.

"There are a lot of things that need improvement in the disability field, but part of the victory over labels like 'disability' is to disempower those labels and the people who use them in order to justify what they do."

He added, "I was thrilled to win the award against such talented dudes, and our off camera people did a fantastic job. Erin McCuskey, our series producer, and our camera people like Larry and Tracy O'Brian were great. Tracy deserves a mention as she actually rode in the back of that car when I drove at speed around Calder - now that took guts."

Erin McCuskey, producer of 'No Limits' says, "What a fabulous result for us. Recognition and comparison to other mainstream shows for a change, not just up against other shows 'about disability'. And the competition was fierce - there were some good shows out there - which just highlights how far we have come in terms of our production values, our stories and our purpose."

The awards were adjudicated by panels from commercial television networks and other mainstream media outlets as well as their peers in community TV. This is the first time 'No Limits' has won an Antenna Award for Outstanding Interview Program and the first time a person with a disability has won one of the coveted Outstanding Presenter awards. As Steve Hurd said, "This wasn't special awards for special people, nor was it special categories: this was the main game and it's great that we can compete and win."



For more information about 'No Limits', visit the Grit Media website at www.gritmedia.org.au.

Note: Sourced from Infoxchange Australia at www.disabilitynews.infoxchange.net.au.



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Wheelie Good Guide

We have come across this useful information regarding accessible tourism in Tasmania. ParaQuad Tasmania have put together a guide on things like accessible accommodation, attractions, etc.

More than anywhere else in Australia, Tasmania enjoys four distinctly different seasons, each with its own special pleasures.

Summer is the season of fun and festivities at the Launceston Festival, -the Hobart Summer Festival, where the Taste of Tasmania is a must, and the North-West's athletic carnivals,

Autumn is a mellow season with calm, sunny days. It's the time when the native deciduous beach blazes with colour.

Winter is a dusting of snow on highland peaks and toasting your body by an open fireplace. Winter days are often crisp, clear and bracing.

Spring is cool and fresh. Gardens around the State come to life and Tasmania celebrates with the Blooming Tasmania festival.

Paraquad Tasmania have produced the 'Wheelie Good Guide of Tasmania'. The guide lists accessible accommodation, attractions, restaurants & services across all regions of Tasmania, as well as the accessible toilets available. Car, bus & taxi services are also included.

If you would like a copy of the Wheelie Good Guide, please contact ParaQuad Tasmania on (03) 6272 8816 or email info@paraquadtas.org.au.

Report: Spinal Cord Injury, Australia, 2006-2007

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has recently released a report Spinal cord injury, Australia, 2006-07.

There were 272 new cases of persisting traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI) in 2006-07, with the highest case count among males in the 15-24 years age group. In addition to the 272 cases due to trauma, there were an additional 76 new cases of persisting SCI that were due to disease.

Transport-related injuries (52%) and falls (29%) accounted for 81% of SCI cases due to trauma. About 78% of the transport-related SCI injuries cases were caused by traffic accidents - 110 cases in total. Of those transport-related cases, 65 were vehicle occupants and 49 were unprotected road users, predominately motorcyclists.

There were 17 fewer fall injury cases of SCI in 2006-07 than in the previous year (78 compared to 95). About half the falls resulting in SCI were from a height of 1 metre or more, but many falls occurred from a height of less than 1 metre or on the same level.

Falls on the same level, or from less than 1 metre, led to 40 spinal cord injury cases. Almost 60% of these involved people aged 65 years or older.

According to the report, water-related accidents accounted for fewer than 10% of cases, and accidents from sporting activities also made up fewer than 10% of cases.

The complete report is available at www.nisu.flinders.edu.au/pubs/reports/2009/injcat119.pdf.

Note: Sourced from Independence Australia website at www.independenceaustralia.com.

News Link Delivery

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Better Support For Carers Report Released

National Disability Services (NDS) reported recently that the Family, Community, Housing and Youth Committee launched its report entitled "Who Cares ...?: Report on the Inquiry Into Better Support for Carers". Many recommendations were brought to attention and a possible survey will be made.

The Federal Parliamentary inquiry into better support for carers has released a large report with 50 recommendations structured around six key themes:

- lack of recognition of the role and contribution of carers;
- difficulties in accessing information on the supports and services available, and a lack of assistance to develop the skills needed in their role;
- financial stresses;
- dissatisfaction with community care systems, particularly related to complexity, level of unmet need, cost, inflexibility and quality;
- lack of choice in relation to participation in the workforce or education due to service shortages and inflexible workplace practices; and
- the physical, emotional and social impacts of caring.

A significant number of recommendations aim for greater recognition of the contribution of carers and to alleviate some of their financial and emotional stresses. Of note are proposals to develop national carer recognition legislation and a national carer strategy.

Among the recommendations that have implications or interest for disability service providers are:

- increase funding for in-home assistance;
- extend the work to be done on access to aids and equipment to consider vehicle and home modifications;
- consider options for tax concessions or rebates for items associated with disability and caring such as medication, therapy, aids and equipment;
- increase the level of subsidy for the purchase of continence aids through the Continence Aids Assistance Scheme;
- increase funding for respite services; and
- improve support for employed carers by increasing the funding for disability support workers in long day care, out of hours care and school holiday care.

The Parliamentary Committee recommends that a survey be undertaken to measure the financial costs to households of caring for people with disability. NDS would like to see this extended to include the financial costs of living with a disability.

A more controversial recommendation is that the Government consider consolidating portfolio responsibilities for people with disabilities, people with mental illness, the frail aged and their carers into a single department.

You can download the full report at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/carers/report.htm.

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Making a complaint to the Disability Services Commissioner

It's
OK
to complain

The Disability Services Commissioner was established under the Disability Act 2006, as an independent complaints body to work with people with a disability and state funded registered disability service providers to resolve complaints. The Commissioner is independent of government, the Department of Human Services and disability service providers.

The Commissioner assists the resolution of complaints in a variety of ways including informal discussions, conciliation processes, or under certain circumstances, formal investigation.

Whilst people do not always like to complain when they are dissatisfied with a disability service they are receiving, doing so can lead to better services for everyone and can be a way to sort out issues quickly.

You can make a complaint directly to the people who provide assistance and support to you. If you do not feel comfortable complaining directly to the disability service or have already done so and are not satisfied with the outcome you can complain to the Disability Services Commissioner (the Commissioner).

There is no financial cost associated with bringing a complaint to the Commissioner. The staff from the office will listen to your complaint and work with you and your disability service provider in order to achieve an appropriate resolution.

A complaint: John's Story

John lives in a group home. He was very unhappy and wanted to complain about the fact that he never had any opportunities to make choices about what went on in the house.

He felt like he wasn't listened to and gave examples of how his individual support arrangements were changed to suit the house's staff roster without first discussing with him. He felt that the meals were not healthy or big

enough and often the staff would drink coffee in their area and talk about him rather than with him.

When he contacted the Disability Services Commissioner he found it really hard to talk about what was going on in the house. He didn't want the staff in the house to know that he was complaining because he thought that they would be upset with him and treat him badly.

Previously when he had told staff he wasn't happy he felt like they didn't want to listen and told him that things were done in that way to suit everyone in the house.

He told the Assessment Officer at the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner that he didn't have anywhere else to live. He wondered if things could get worse if he made a complaint.

As a result of building trust with John and planning strategies that would protect him, the Assessment Officer was able to ask the disability service to respond to the concerns which resulted in a satisfactory resolution for all concerned. (Note: Details of this story have been altered to protect privacy of the complainant).

Who can make a complaint?

Any person can make a complaint about disability services to the Commissioner. This includes people with a disability, their families and carers, staff working in disability services and any other person who wishes to make a complaint.

What can a complaint be about?

A complaint can be made to the Commissioner about:

The provision of a disability service;

The way a disability service provider has managed a complaint about a disability service.

For more information, contact the Commissioner:

Disability Services Commissioner

Level 30 570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VICTORIA 3000

Complaints: 1800 677 342 (free call)

General enquiries: 1300 728 187 (local call)

Facsimile: (03) 8608 5765

Email: complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au

Website: www.odsc.vic.gov.au



New Hope Through Rehab Given To People With Spinal Cord Injuries

Recently the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) announced, through a media release, that people with spinal cord injuries (SCI) could soon enjoy a better quality of life following the announcement of a study into minimising impairments due to SCI by promoting neural recovery through exercise.

People with spinal cord injuries (SCI) could soon enjoy a better quality of life following the announcement of a study into minimising impairments due to SCI by promoting neural recovery through exercise.

The announcement came as part of a Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) grant worth over \$4.6 million to the University of Melbourne.

A national team led by Professor Mary Galea from the University's School of Physiotherapy will complete a five-year program called 'SCIPA' – Spinal Cord Injury & Physical Activity. They were one of four Victorian research groups to receive a grant from the VNI.

While exercise is not a cure for SCI, Prof Galea says the study will have significant implications for how clinicians approach spinal cord rehabilitation.

“Currently, the best practice model for SCI rehabilitation involves strengthening the upper body above the level of injury in order to compensate for the loss of function and maximise independence.”

“However we know that forced inactivity through being in a wheelchair leads to loss of muscle mass and bone density in the paralysed limbs, with secondary complications such as poor circulation, pressure ulcers, fractures, obesity and diabetes. Furthermore, it can make neurological dysfunction worse over time.”

Prof Galea says that numerous animal and human studies have shown that exercising the paralysed limbs not only improves circulation and increases muscle mass but also activates the circuitry of the spinal cord below the level of injury.

The research program is aimed at using novel rehabilitation strategies directed at neuromuscular activation below the level of the injury and will involve 7 spinal Units in Australia and New Zealand.

Clinical trials will examine the effectiveness of very early intervention for lower limbs, task-specific training for

arms and hands, and an intensive activity-based therapy program for the whole body including the paralysed limbs. Individualised gym programs that can be undertaken in the community after the injured person is discharged from hospital will also be developed, along with a training program for community fitness instructors.

“The focus of the programs will be on promoting neurological recovery, maintaining health and wellness, and optimising independence.”

The University of Melbourne also had two other research projects receive grants:

- Professor John Furness, The University of Melbourne, \$4.9 million - Autonomic dysfunction in spinal cord injury: a strategy for improved treatment and understanding of bowel, blood pressure and bladder disorders;
- Associate Professor Russell Gruen, The University of Melbourne, \$4.4 million - Improving evidence-based care and the outcomes of patients with traumatic brain injury through a program to facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange.

About the VNI grants

The fourth round of the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative's research funding was launched in February 2008 and concluded in December 2008 with decision to award \$19M dollars for research in brain and spinal cord Injury.

Victorians will lead four teams of neurotrauma experts from 30 different research departments of universities and hospitals in Victoria, across Australia and in the United Kingdom and Canada.

These large scale programs of research have real potential to significantly improve health outcomes for individuals with brain and spinal cord injuries, and to reduce TAC liabilities, particularly in relation to attendant care costs.

There are approximately 290 new cases of severe SCI in Australia every year. As at 1997, there were nearly 10,000 Australian's living with SCI and it is predicted that this could increase to nearly 12,000 by 2021.

Recent estimates suggest that there are approximately 150 hospital admissions resulting from traumatic brain injury (TBI) per 100,000 population per year, or approximately 30,000 new admissions every year. The number of Australian's living with permanent disability following TBI is not well known.



News Link Photo Competition - WIN WIN WIN

In the last edition of News Link, we announced our new *News Link* Photo Competition.

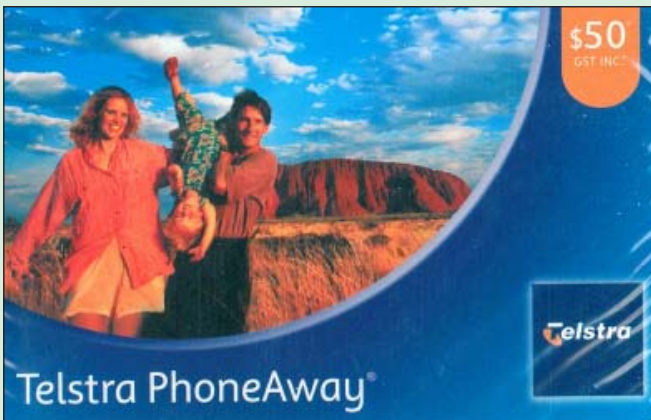
To enter the competition, all you need to do is send through a photo of yourself out and about, doing something fun or adventurous, if you're looking really sharp in your new suit, or even if you're just pulling a particularly hilarious face, we want to see it!

As you can see from the following pictures, the occasions can be anything – funny or serious. Don't forget to also let us know the description of the photo.

The competition has been extended to give people more time to send their 'snaps' in. The winner will be selected in the next issue of News Link.

And what is the prize I hear you say... ...a \$50 Telstra PhoneAway card.

You can email your pictures to info@aqavic.org.au or send them by snail mail to PO Box 219, Fairfield, 3078. Please tell us if you need us to send your photos back.



Above: "No problem" Strong and Big Guys to lift you from the Cartoon Museum.



Above: A bit of inspiration and knowledge from the Tusseau Museum.

Above: Tony Black at his niece Rebecca's wedding.



Handbags

This month we have an informative article from Lynne Panayiotis about finding the right handbag to suit her lifestyle. After trying out various styles, shapes, size and materials she decided that to carry a handbag just wasn't for her. She decided to contact a local sail maker and they designed various custom made pockets for her wheelchair.

Finding an appropriate handbag after my SCI was a challenge. Small handles meant I couldn't hold it and push at the same time. Too big and it wouldn't fit in the net under my chair. Too shiny and it would slide off my lap.

I ended up selecting matt leather with a long enough strap that would sit across my chest and place the bag in my lap without falling off, as I pushed. The bag itself needed to be small enough to fit in my lap; but big enough to fit all the things women like to have handy. I found that a bag that was about 5cm wide at the base sat comfortably.

Having said all that, I ended up tossing the idea of a handbag and had pockets made on the underneath side of my chair. As I sit on a pressure cushion that has a firm base I decided that, for me, pressure shouldn't be an issue (I have since been checked for pressure and confirmed my theory).

I contacted a local sail maker and asked if the pockets could be custom made. The sail maker was prepared to try. So she and I designed 4 pockets under my chair. The pockets are black making them difficult for others to see (this being a safety measure), made of vinyl (waterproof) with flaps secured with Velcro.

The pockets are deep and wide enough to hold a purse (even full of receipts!) my diary, phone, purse containing compact speedicaths, tissues, sunglasses, pill containers, comb and small container of hand cream.

I carry my chair on a roof hoist. Although I take out my purse and phone, the rest of the contents stay in the pockets. I have had no problems at all with losing things from the pockets.

So guys you now know what women (or one woman at least) carries around as ESSENTIAL material.

Editor's Note: Lynne mentioned that most, if not all wheelchair manufacturers, could also build the pockets into the wheelchairs upholstery if asked.

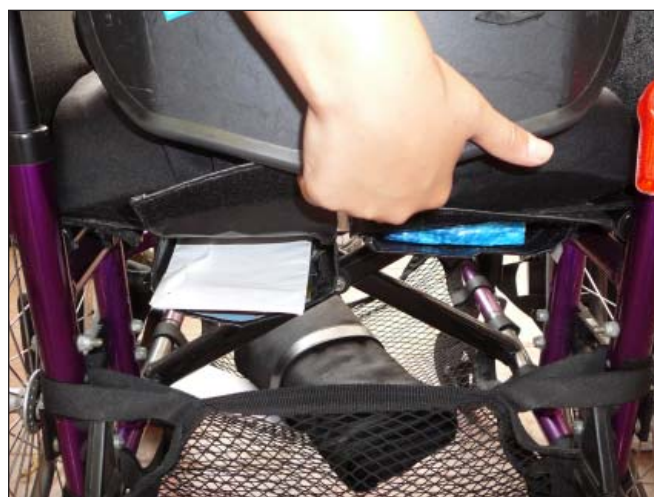
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AQA Forum - Women's Issues

Please come and join in on various topics regarding women's issues on AQA's Forum at www.aqavic.org.au/forums.

In order to be able to post or reply to messages on the AQA Forum, you must first register with a valid email and specify a username & password. The forum will then send you a confirmation link that you must click to complete the registration process.



No Need To Pay

The bartender asks the guy sitting at the bar, 'What'll you have?'

The guy answers, 'A scotch, please.'

The bartender hands him the drink, and says 'That'll be five dollars,' to which the guy replies, 'What are you talking about? I don't owe you anything for this.'

A lawyer, sitting nearby and overhearing the conversation, then says to the bartender, 'You know, he's got you there. In the original offer, which constitutes a binding contract upon acceptance, there was no stipulation of remuneration.'

The bartender was not impressed, but says to the guy, 'Okay, you beat me for a drink. But don't ever let me catch you in here again.' The next day, same guy walks into the bar. Bartender says, 'What the heck are you doing in here? I can't believe you've got the audacity to come back!'

The guy says, 'What are you talking about? I've never been in this place in my life!' The bartender replies, 'I'm very sorry, but this is uncanny. You must have a double.' To which the guy replies, 'Thank you. Make it a scotch.'

The Bottle Of Wine

For all of us who are married, were married, wish you were married, or wish you weren't married, this is something to smile about the next time you see a bottle of wine:

Dave was driving home from one of his business trips in Edmonton when he saw an elderly Navajo man walking on the side of the road.

As the trip was a long and quiet one, he stopped the car and asked the Navajo man if he would like a ride.

With a silent nod of thanks, the man got into the car.

Resuming the journey, Dave tried in vain to make a bit of small talk with the Navajo man. The old man just sat silently, looking intently at everything he saw, studying every little detail, until he noticed a brown bag on the seat next to Dave "What in bag?" asked the old man.

Dave looked down at the brown bag and said, "It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my wife."

The Navajo man was silent for another moment or two. Then speaking with the quiet wisdom of an elder, he said "Good trade . . ."

The Young Businessman

A young businessman had just started his own firm. He rented a beautiful office and had it furnished with antiques. Sitting there, he saw a man come into the outer office. Wishing to appear the hot shot, the businessman picked up the phone and started to pretend he had a big deal working.

He threw huge figures around and made giant commitments. Finally he hung up and asked the visitor, "Can I help you?"

The man said, "Yeah, I've come to activate your phone lines."

Funny Phone call

The phone rings and the lady of the house answers... "Hello".

"Mrs. Ward, please."

"Speaking."

"Mrs. Ward, this is Doctor Jones at the Medical Testing Laboratory. When your doctor sent your husband's specimen to the lab yesterday, a specimen from another Mr. Ward arrived as well, and we are now uncertain which one is your husband's. Frankly the results are either bad or terrible."

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Ward asks nervously.

"Well, one of the specimens tested positive for Alzheimer's and the other one tested positive for AIDS. We can't tell which is your husband's."

"That's dreadful! Can't you do the test again?" questioned Mrs. Ward.

"Normally we can, but Medicare will only pay for these expensive tests one time."

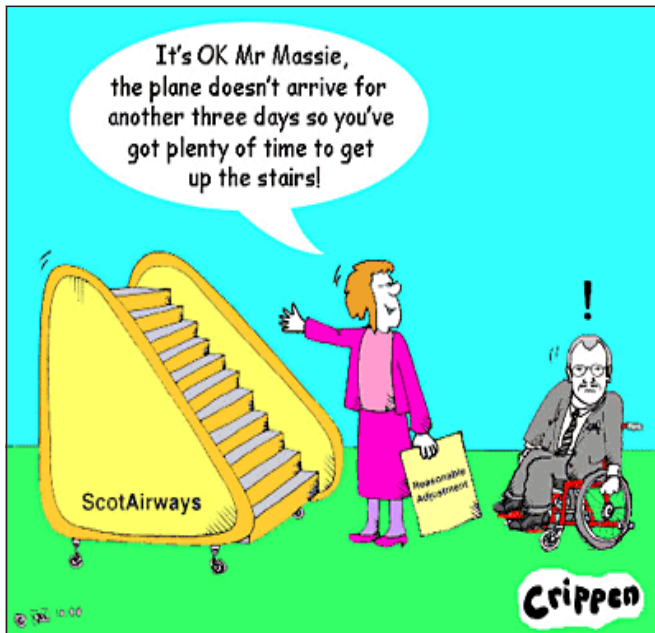
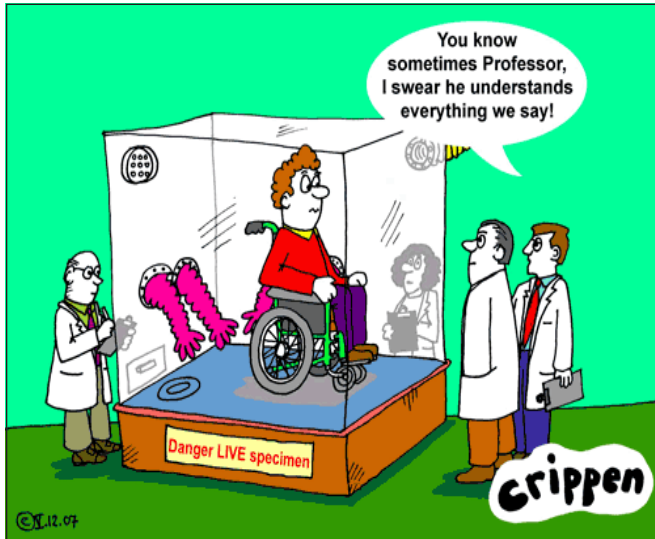
"Well, what am I supposed to do now?"

"The people at Medicare recommend that you drop your husband off somewhere in the middle of town. If he finds his way home, don't sleep with him."



If you have heard any good jokes lately, why don't you send them in and share them with others

CLASSIFIEDS



For Sale

5 bedroom House - Bonbeach

45 square residence, wheelchair user friendly, 5 bedrooms, 2 showers, 20 square living entertainment, cathedral ceiling, leadglass windows, roller shutters, huge outdoor verandah, old cottage bar, huge wood fire copper chimney, gym, swimming pool, double garage, double carport, security cameras through out, hydronic system, ducted heating and air-con, landscaped garden, massive land approx 12,000 sqm, 3 single swiss self-contained cabins on site, excellent return at \$600.per week rental, ideal bed & breakfast.

Phone: (03) 9774 2017

(Jerry)

Price: \$1,100,000

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

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Got anything to sell?

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CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

Magic Mobility Manual Wheelchair

Manual elevating legrests, height adjustable push handles, neck support cushion, seat belt, roho cushion, attendant propelled. Purchased last august and used by my mother for only 2 months, cost \$3,600.

Phone: 0417 014 433 (Sally)
Price: \$2,500 ono

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: \$2,000 ono

Power Wheelchair, Pronto M51 Invacare

Very good condition, only used indoors, blue in colour.

Phone: 0418 102 488 (Cheryle)
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

Prosthetic Parts for Amputee

Prosthetic parts for amputee, left arm.

Phone: (03) 9386 9818 (Colin)
Price: Nearest offer

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)

For Sale

Electric Wheelchair German E.Fix

Can be turned into a manual chair by turning centre wheel hubs, used 4 times, cost \$7000 when first purchased.

Phone: (03) 5482 6182 (Brendan)
Price: \$3,500 ono

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

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

Handcycle

Shadow handcycle, attaches to wheelchair, very good condition.

Phone: (03) 5873 4605 (Jennifer)
Price: \$800

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

... More Classifieds on page 19

You can also find the most up to date classifieds on our forum page
www.aqavic.org.au/forum