

the advocate

A voice for accessible, equitable and empowered lives Spring 2019

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Editor in Chief

Jaclyn McKeown

Senior Editor

Rachel Toune

Deputy Editor

Callum Johnson

Design and Production Manager

Stephen Lawrence

Advertising Coordinator

Samantha James

Publishing and Printing

VRC Printing

Contact The Advocate:

theadvocate@spinal.com.au

PO Box 5651, West End QLD 4101

1300 SPINAL

spinal.com.au  

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Cover photo of Gamini Samarakoon by Stephen Lawrence.

CEO's message

Respected CEO joins Spinal Life



It's a pleasure to welcome Mark Townend AM as Spinal Life's new CEO, who was chosen for the role after an extensive national search.

Throughout his impressive career, Mark has demonstrated the invaluable ability to grow an organisation while ensuring it remains true to its mission and purpose, which is a vision that is shared by our Board.

Mark will be commencing in the role in late September and is very much looking forward to meeting our members, clients and volunteers across Queensland and in Western Australia. In the meantime, you can read more about him on Page 9.

As we welcome Mark to the organisation, we also say farewell to Chairman Alan Ashford, who has made the decision to resign from his role on the Board after completing his 10-year tenure.

We have been very fortunate to have Alan's knowledge and experience to guide our organisation, including during his five years as Chairman.

Thank you to Alan for his many years of dedication and we look forward to seeing him at future member events and activities.

The end of the financial year on 30 June also marked the official completion of the NDIS transition in Queensland, after a three-year roll out across the state.

To coincide with this date, the independent NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission was also launched in Queensland from 1 July.

The NDIS Commission aims to improve the quality and safety of all NDIS

supports and services, which includes receiving feedback and complaints directly from participants, and introducing new NDIS Practice Standards.

You can read more about the NDIS Commission and other key NDIS changes from Page 6.

It's also been fantastic to see construction progressing so quickly on our Healthy Living Centre in Cairns, which will bring specialist services to North Queensland residents as well as holidaymakers.

We have appointed a new Regional Manager – Queensland North, Margaret McDonald, who is based in Cairns and will be leading our services from Mackay northwards, as well as the Healthy Living Centre. You can read more about the Centre, and Margaret, from Page 16.

In Western Australia, we are working to grow our Personal Support and Home Care Services to provide high-quality, specialist support in Perth and surrounds.

We are also providing opportunities for members to connect with us and each other through community catch-ups, which are also a chance to discuss any advocacy issues and how these could potentially be addressed.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me in my role as Acting CEO, and I look forward to continuing to work with you as Executive Manager – Commercial Services.

Pauline Davis
Acting Chief Executive Officer



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David Conway

Mackay member David Conway finds his vision is clearest when he's looking at the bright side of life.

After sustaining a spinal cord injury and vision impairment in a sporting accident in 2004, David has used the power of positive thinking and his love of painting to help him through the harder times in life.

He recently combined his passions of art and positive thinking in a self-published book of his own inspirational quotes and artwork, titled *Early Morning Inspiration*.

"During those early mornings when my pain keeps me awake, I try to focus on positive thoughts and writing down the ones that inspire me," David said.

"I've also been using art for years as a form of pain management and one of my friends had the idea of combining my positive thoughts and my artwork into a book."

Starting off with black and white drawings of shadows and shapes, David slowly started to incorporate more colours and definition as his vision improved over time and has now sold more than 450 of his artworks.

He recently shared his post-injury journey and the importance of positive thinking and choices at a TEDx talk in Mackay in April.

"It went really well; I received some great feedback," he said about his presentation.

"My injury does have one positive – I'm no longer nervous about public speaking as I can barely see the audience!"

David's confidence in public speaking has also served him well as a presenter for Spinal Life's SEAT program, sharing his personal story and safety messages to school students across his local region.

- › Completed an Environmental Studies degree at Griffith University in 2009, five years after his injury
- › Loves volunteering and helping the community
- › Has been creating art since high school but only became passionate about it after his injury
- › Besides art, David is also interested in exercising and technology
- › Joined Spinal Life's SEAT team as a presenter in 2017.

You can contact David on artfromtheblindsides@gmail.com to order a copy of his book, or follow him at facebook.com/artfromtheblindsides.

Visit spinal.com.au/seat for more information about our SEAT program.

"Our WA team can assist you with pre-planning"

Western Australia NDIS roll out continues



The Australia-wide NDIS is being introduced progressively across Western Australia.

Previously two schemes were being trialled in WA – the national NDIS (Commonwealth) and WA NDIS (delivered by the State Government). The decision was then made for the national NDIS program delivered by the Commonwealth Government to roll out across WA.

Participants who are already part of the WA NDIS will be contacted by their Local Coordinator to attend a transfer meeting with a National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) planner from the national scheme.

To prepare for the transfer meeting, ensure you have information about the supports you are currently being provided, and whether you are planning to change service providers for any of these services.

The NDIA will be contacting anyone else who is not on the WA NDIS yet and is receiving disability support funding from other State or Commonwealth programs, when their region is set to transition.

If you have not previously received WA or Commonwealth disability support funding, visit ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply to find out more about the access requirements.

Our WA team can assist you to prepare for your transfer meeting or first planning meeting with the NDIS.

WA residents can access a range of our services including community catch-ups to connect with others, along with advocacy assistance.

We also have personal support services available in WA, with a team who has been trained to provide specialist assistance for people with spinal cord damage at home, at work and in the community.

Contact Community Engagement & Service Establishment Manager Debbie Nobre on 0420 985 734 or dnobre@spinal.com.au, or visit spinal.com.au/wa to find out more.

Queensland completes NDIS transition

From 1 July 2019, the NDIS became available across all areas of Queensland, with around 50,000 participants already accessing the scheme.

The Queensland Government has now reached a full scheme agreement with the Australian Government about long-term funding and governance arrangements.

"This is a great day for Queenslanders. It means they can rest assured the NDIS will be there to support them if they need it now, and into the future," Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, The Hon Stuart Robert, said when the agreement was finalised.

The Queensland and Australian governments will continue with current transitional arrangements until 1 July 2020.

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission now available

NDIS participants across most of Australia now have access to an independent agency that will help improve the quality and safety of all supports and services they access under the scheme.

From 1 July 2019, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission became available in Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

It was first launched in New South Wales and South Australia on 1 July 2018, in line with the NDIS roll out schedule.

Led by NDIS Commissioner Graeme Head AO, the Commission is aimed at promoting safe, quality, consistent services for NDIS participants.

This means:

- › a new NDIS Code of Conduct now applies to NDIS providers and workers
- › registered providers need to meet new NDIS Practice Standards, report certain types of incidents, report restrictive practices, and have a strong complaints system in place
- › participants can contact the NDIS Commission to raise a concern or make a complaint for issues arising on or after 1 July 2019.

Spinal Life Acting Chief Executive Officer Pauline Davis encouraged all NDIS participants to learn more about the NDIS Commission and how they can share feedback.



“As a registered NDIS provider, we have reviewed all our policies and processes to ensure they meet the new NDIS Practice Standards, including our current Code of Conduct for all employees,” she said.

Western Australia will have access to the NDIS Commission from 1 July 2020. Until the NDIS Commission starts operating in WA, current state requirements for quality and safeguards continue to apply.

Visit ndiscommission.gov.au to find out more.

Providers offered additional support for scheme transition

The NDIA has introduced an additional payment to assist service providers with the costs of transitioning to the NDIS. The Temporary Transformation Payment (TTP) is available for eligible service providers, including Spinal Life, and will be gradually reduced over the coming years.

This payment is reflected in a higher support price limit, to assist service providers with the complexities and significant costs associated with transitioning to the NDIS.

The TTP was introduced as part of the NDIA's updated NDIS Price Guide and Support Catalogue 2019–20 on 1 July 2019, which also increased support rates in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Existing plans before 1 July 2019 were automatically adjusted to reflect the TTP rates and CPI changes, with no impact on NDIS participants.

At the time of plan reviews (or when commencing an NDIS plan for the first time), participants will need to discuss TTP price rates to ensure they are included in their allocated funds. You will need to advise your planner that your chosen organisation is eligible to charge this additional temporary payment.

Visit ndis.gov.au/providers/price-guides-and-information/annual-price-review to find out more.



Royal Commission aims to better protect people with disability

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has held its first workshops, with more planned throughout Australia.

The Royal Commission was established on 4 April 2019, with the initial workshops involving advocacy groups, legal practitioners and disability service providers.

The Royal Commission's Terms of Reference cover what should be done to:

- › prevent, and better protect, people

with disability from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

- › achieve best practice in reporting and investigating of, and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- › promote a more inclusive society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The findings will help inform Australian

governments, institutions and the wider community on how to prevent, and better protect, people with disability.

At Spinal Life, ensuring people with a disability are protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation remains our highest priority.

This includes providing individual advocacy assistance and empowering our members and clients to become self-advocates to raise any challenges they are experiencing.

As part of the Royal Commission's activities, community forums and public hearings will be held throughout Australia, with dates to be announced soon.

Submissions are also open on the Commission's website for people to share their experiences and feedback as part of the process.

We will be preparing a submission, both as a service provider and an advocate for people with spinal cord damage, sharing the experiences of our members, clients and staff and ensure their voices are heard.

Visit disability.royalcommission.gov.au to read more about the Royal Commission.



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New CEO looks forward to leading Spinal Life

As Spinal Life Australia's new Chief Executive Officer, Mark Townend AM is excited about navigating both the opportunities and challenges that will come his way.

Having been the CEO of RSPCA Queensland for 19 years, Mark has been looking for a change, where he can share and grow his extensive skills and experience.

He said he was familiar with Spinal Life before taking on the role, and knew people who worked with the organisation previously.

"I have always thought highly of the organisation and considered its work and services important," he said.

Mark also knows firsthand the challenges of having spinal cord damage, with a friend from school sustaining quadriplegia 40 years ago in a diving accident.

"Importantly, his injury didn't stop my friend from living and achieving in life," he said.

"I read recently of my friend achieving what many would have thought impossible, reaching the heights of Machu Picchu in Peru – a tremendous feat for anyone."

Mark said he saw Spinal Life as an organisation with strong foundations and a focused purpose.

"I believe my leadership style, creative thinking, energy and ability to turn challenges into opportunities can help to bring about some significant changes to the sustainability and evolution of the organisation," he said.

"Together with Spinal Life's team of experienced and dedicated staff and volunteers, I believe we can become the sector leader in both advocacy and service provision, for the benefit and empowerment of those living with spinal cord injury."

Mark said he was most looking forward to meeting Spinal Life's members, clients, staff and volunteers to hear their stories, along with learning more about their challenges and goals.

"I am also looking forward to sharing my knowledge, skills and ideas to continue the important work of Spinal Life while ensuring its sustainability and future success."

Mark has been recognised with a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) and is a recipient of the Prime Minister's Federation Medal for significant services to the community.

He has also been the CEO of Shelterbuddy software, providing an invaluable database for animal shelters, along with Patron of Queensland's largest RSL Club, a Board member of Regional Development Australia by ministerial appointment, the Chairperson of an aged care facility and a former local councillor.

Mark will be commencing with Spinal Life in late September.



"I have always thought highly of the organisation and considered its work and services important"

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Brian, *SpeediCath*® Flex user

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Message from the Chair

Have your voice heard at our Annual General Meeting

Our AGM is coming up soon on Thursday 28 November, which provides an opportunity to reflect on the past financial year.

It's also an opportunity for financial members to have their say on the future direction of our organisation, including the election of Board Directors, with all details in the official notice that is sent out in early November with a copy of our Annual Report.

This year we will also be presenting proposed changes to the Constitution around the composition of the Board that have been previously discussed with members.

If approved, the proposed change will see members elect the majority of Board Directors from the 2020 AGM onwards.

All of these Elected Directors must have lived experience.

These Elected Directors would bring professional skills to the Board as well as share their firsthand knowledge and experiences, and may include a family member of someone who has spinal cord damage.

Under the amended Constitution, the Board would appoint the remaining Directors, to be called Appointed Directors, with particular professional skills and specialist expertise specifically needed to strengthen the Board and complement the skills of the Elected Directors.

It is important to note that the maximum number of Directors remains at nine and the number of Elected Directors must always be more than the number of Appointed Directors.

If you have any questions about these proposed changes, or the AGM, please contact companysecretary@spinal.com.au or call 1300 774 625.

This issue of The Advocate also marks my last in the position of Board Chair, in completion of my 10 year term with the Board.

Deputy Chair Gyl Stacey has been appointed as the new Board Chair and I know the position has been left in very capable hands. Long-serving Board Director Mark Dillman has also accepted the position of Deputy Chair.

It's been a pleasure to be part of the Spinal Life Australia Board and I look forward to the organisation's continued efforts to support its members, clients and people with spinal cord damage.



Farewell to respected Board Director

We were deeply saddened by the news that Board Director Dr Ben Lawson passed away unexpectedly on Sunday 23 June, due to illness.

Ben (pictured) had been a member and client of Spinal Life since the late 1990s, with high-level quadriplegia as the result of muscular dystrophy.

He joined the Board in November 2016, bringing his invaluable professional skills and knowledge, as well as his personal lived experience with disability and a strong history of advocating for change in the community.

Ben generously gave up his time to contribute to Spinal Life, with a passion for improving the lives of people with physical disabilities, and he will be very much missed.

You can read our tribute to Ben on Page 32. Our thoughts are with Ben's family at this time.

Alan Ashford
Chairman



Gamini continues
life-long passion
after injury
with help from
Back2Work

Before he sustained a spinal cord injury, member Gamini Samarakoon spent seven days a week in his workshop, working around the clock as a diesel fitter.

After his injury, Gamini now spends seven days a week in his workshop, working around the clock as a diesel fitter.

With help from the Spinal Life Australia Back2Work program, and his new Permobil F5 wheelchair, Gamini has been able to continue his parts sourcing and vehicle repair business at his self-built workshop on his Morayfield property.

"After my injury, I thought I would have to sell my business," Gamini said.

"I have more than 2,000 customers who depend on me for parts, so I wasn't the only one hoping I'd be able to return to work!"

Gamini is one of Australia's top importers of parts for the Mitsubishi Delica, a Japanese-based range of vans and pickup trucks.

After Gamini met with Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor Tania Goossen from the Back2Work program, Tania secured funding to source a special chair that allows Gamini to stand in the upright position.

"The chair has been a life saver – I can still do nearly everything I did before my injury, and it's all because I can stand up in my chair," Gamini said.

"Tania was amazing; without her I'd have no idea how to get a chair like this or how to afford it.

"Now I have so many opportunities."

Gamini said he was working with Tania on installing an accessible home office as well as a much-needed storage place for all his spare parts.

"Tania was amazing; without her I'd have no idea how to get a chair like this or how to afford it"

"I have car parts all through the home, covering the kitchen and dining room table, so I'm sure the rest of the family are just excited for the storage shed to be built," Gamini said.

Tania assisted Gamini to secure funding for his chair through the Australian Government's Employment Assistance Fund.

The Spinal Life Australia Back2Work program provides early vocational intervention to patients of the Spinal Injuries Unit in Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital. Visit spinal.com.au/back2work to find out more.

New lift a boom to business for Paul

There's nothing like a 12-metre-tall trailer-mounted boom lift to take your career to new heights.

Just ask Paul Gauci, who worked with our Back2Work and Allied Health teams to secure a boom lift to help him continue his work in building and repairing sheds.

Paul got in touch with Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor Tania Goossen from the Back2Work program after he sustained a spinal cord injury from falling off a ladder last year.

"My job involves me getting to high places but since my injury, I haven't had the same grip or stability to be able to use ladders safely," the Brisbane-based builder said.

"Eventually I got in touch with Tania from Back2Work and Joanne Ede from the Allied Health team who helped me find an alternative solution."

Tania and Joanne helped Paul successfully apply for a Genie TZ34/20 boom lift, which allows him to feel secure and safe while he manoeuvres around heights several metres in the air.

"It's made my life so much easier," Paul said. "I love my job and often work every day of the week so to have something like this is such a huge help."

Paul isn't exaggerating about how much he loves his work – just three days after leaving the Princess Alexandra Hospital's Spinal Injuries Unit, he was back working on site.

"While my fall was quite catastrophic,

it was probably good to have a bit of a break for a while," Paul joked.

"But I was still very keen to get back to work and I'm grateful to Tania and Joanne for helping to make that happen."

Tania and Joanne presented Paul's case to the Australian Government's JobAccess service and received approval for funding for the boom lift through the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).

The EAF provides funding to eligible people with disability for work-related modifications, equipment and support.

Visit spinal.com.au/back2work to find out more.

"I'm grateful to Tania and Joanne for helping to make that happen"



Tania aims to inspire hope for people with newly acquired injury



Even after three years working with the Spinal Life Australia Back2Work program, Tania Goossen still gets goosebumps when thinking about her success stories.

"When you can see that moment of hope when people realise that a spinal cord injury doesn't mean their career is over, I really do get goosebumps thinking about it," Tania said.

As the Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor for the pilot project, Tania works closely with patients of the Spinal Injuries Unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital who have newly acquired injuries, to help them return to work or study.

"Many of my clients are keen to get back to work post-injury but have no idea how to go about it," she said.

"My role is to work through their options, whether it's making some adjustments or getting new equipment to help return to their previous role, looking at ways they can use their skills and knowledge in other areas or even returning to study to do something completely different."

Tania said the program has had more than 150 referrals since it began, eventually taking on a second Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor, Lisa Moore, in 2018.

"A big part of the program is giving people hope for the future – it may not be overnight, but something will happen," Tania said.

"You can see that moment of hope when people realise that a spinal cord injury doesn't mean their career is over"

"I've worked with people who were on the verge of selling their business, or who have been working in the same industry for years and didn't think they'd ever be able to return.

"Some of the results we've been most proud of are with clients who have been able to return to roles that are traditionally physically demanding, such as building, maintenance, correctional services and transport, just to name a few."

Griffith University are conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Back2Work program in providing vocational rehabilitation assistance early in the journey of people with a spinal cord injury. A summary of these findings will be available in early 2020.

The Spinal Life Australia Back2Work program is a pilot project and is proudly supported by the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, in partnership with the Princess Alexandra Hospital – Metro South Health and The Hopkins Centre – Griffith University.

Visit spinal.com.au/back2work to find out more.

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Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre brings latest rehabilitation equipment to Cairns

Our Healthy Living Centre is under construction now in Cairns, bringing a range of specialist services to the region including a fully accessible gym with the latest technology and equipment.

The gym will be a valuable resource for people with spinal cord damage and other physical disabilities who live locally, or are visiting Cairns, with accommodation also available at the Centre.

The gym is a key feature of the Centre and has been developed through feedback from members about their needs, as part of a holistic approach that includes access to occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

The Healthy Living Centre is made possible with funding from the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund, which provides grants for projects that will create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities.

Spinal Life Executive Manager – Business Development, Frances Porter, said the team would work in partnership with clients to discuss

their individual goals, and how the facilities in the Centre can help to achieve these goals.

"The Centre will include the latest technology in rehabilitation exercise equipment for people who need to remain in their wheelchairs during sessions, or for seniors and people with physical disabilities or injuries who require low-impact strength training."

"There will be rehabilitation equipment such as parallel bars and an outdoor wheelchair and mobility skills area with ramps and different surfaces for newly-injured people to practise using."

"The Centre will also include a hydrotherapy pool so that people can experience the benefits that this therapy has to offer."

The Centre has also been supported by the 2018/19 Walter and Eliza Hall Trust Memorial Grant, which has provided \$99,400 for the purchase of specialised rehabilitation, gym and hydrotherapy pool equipment for the Healthy Living Centre.

About the Centre

Located across from the Esplanade, the Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre is in the final stages of construction, on the corner of Lake and Smith Streets.

The Centre's ground floor includes:

- › occupational and physiotherapy rooms
- › a fully accessible gym with specialist equipment
- › an indoor hydrotherapy pool for individuals and small group sessions
- › versatile community meeting spaces
- › an accessible café.

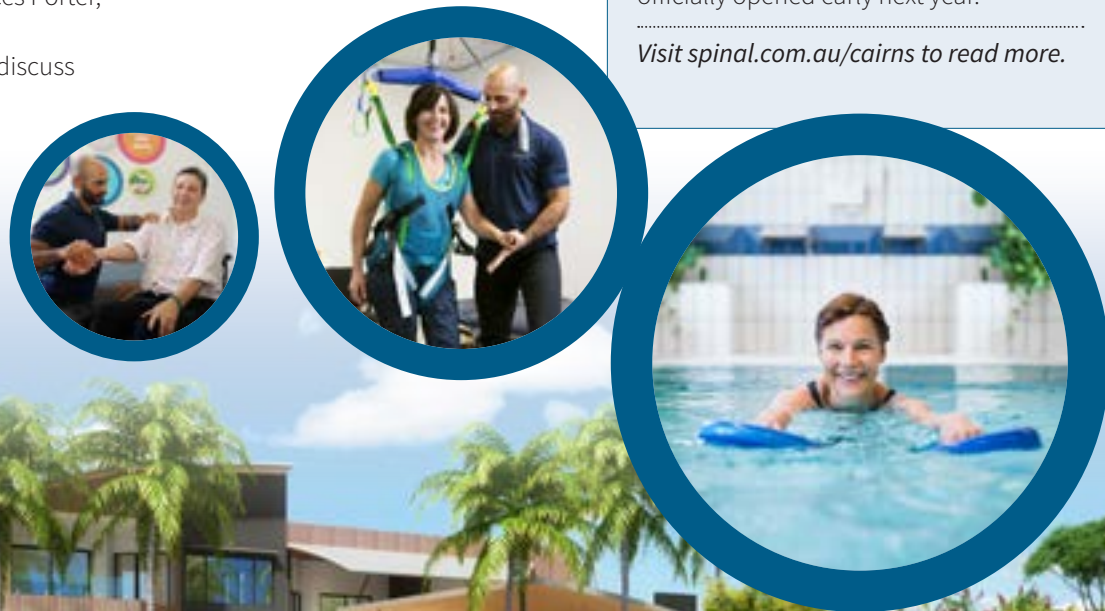
The first floor features fully accessible accommodation suites for:

- › transitional stays
- › short-term stays while accessing specialist services
- › holidaying in the region.

There will be five two-bedroom suites and two one-bedroom suites available.

Construction is set for completion in December before the Centre will be officially opened early next year.

Visit spinal.com.au/cairns to read more.



Artist impression

Regional Manager joins Spinal Life team



Our new Regional Manager for Queensland North, Margaret McDonald, began in the role in May.

With the construction of the Healthy Living Centre in Cairns, we've never been busier in this region and Margaret will lead the delivery of day-to-day Spinal Life services as well as management of the upcoming Centre.

Margaret is no stranger to Far North Queensland, having lived in and around Cairns for the last 25 years, and loves the beautiful environment and laid back Cairns lifestyle.

"Being from Far North Queensland, it's exciting to be part of something like the Healthy Living Centre, right here in our backyard," she said.

"It's an exciting opportunity to bring services closer to home for people in Cairns"

"It's not just great for Cairns residents, as Cairns is a popular holiday destination, it's good to have somewhere where people can access fully accessible accommodation with the supports they need when visiting the region.

"As well as seeing the completion and management of the Healthy Living Centre, I'm hoping to also boost the voice of regional Queensland and make sure our members and clients here are being heard."

Margaret is based in our Cairns office and oversees all North Queensland and south as far as Mackay.

Margaret is taking part in our 'Take My Seat Shopping Challenge' in Cairns. See the next page for details.



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Take My Seat event to give entrants a new perspective on shopping

On 18 September, Coles Regional Manager Dale Wagner will be grocery shopping from a completely new perspective.

Dale (pictured) is one of several entrants in our 'Take My Seat Shopping Challenge' in Cairns, which will see participants use a wheelchair to complete a grocery list and get an insight into the day-to-day challenges faced by people with spinal cord damage.

Participants will also be raising funds for the Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre in Cairns to provide specialist services and accessible accommodation for people with a physical disability.

Dale said he was hoping to raise \$1000 to help support the Healthy Living Centre.

"I can only imagine the challenges being in a wheelchair creates, things I take for granted every day, so I'm looking forward to getting a different perspective," he said.

"I'm also hopefully learning a thing or two about improving our shopping experience for wheelchair users."

Fellow entrant and former Cairns-based Senator Jan McLucas said she was taking part to support the Centre and bring attention to the importance of accessibility.

"It's important to raise awareness of how we design our communities so everyone can participate at the level they want to – even the regular grocery shop shopping can be greatly impacted by inclusive design," she said.

The Take My Seat Shopping Challenge Cairns event will be held at Coles, Stockland Earlville on 18 September during Disability Action Week (15 to 22 September).

Spinal Life members and other people from the Cairns community are invited to come along from 7am to enjoy breakfast on us and cheer on the entrants as they race around the store.

Disability Action Week aims to empower people with disability and raise awareness of disability issues and the importance of access and inclusion in the community.

Visit takemyseat.raisely.com to support your favourite entrant.

"I'm proud to represent Coles and support Spinal Life Australia in such a unique event"



Spinal Life
AUSTRALIA



TakeMySeat SHOPPING CHALLENGE

CAIRNS

**18 SEPTEMBER 2019
COLES, STOCKLAND CAIRNS**

Take My Seat entrants:

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Senior Manager Tourism and Travel Safety for Queensland Rail
- › **CAMBELL BALDERSON**
Director of Keir Queensland
- › **CATHY ZEIGER**
Councillor for Cairns Regional Council
- › **DALE WAGNER**
Regional Manager for Coles
- › **GARRY RUMLER**
Sales Manager for Bunzl Australia
- › **JAN MCLUCAS**
Former Cairns-based Senator
- › **JOHN GREGG**
CEO of Northern Queensland Primary Health Network
- › **JULES STEER**
Managing Director of Oasis Magazine
- › **LEUT REBECCA MACPHERSON**
Executive Manager FSU-NE for HMAS Cairns
- › **MARGARET McDONALD**
Regional Manager North Queensland for Spinal Life Australia
- › **BRINA KEATING**
Operations Centre Manager for Queensland Ambulance Service

Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week focuses on NDIS success

Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week, running this year from 2 to 8 September, highlighted current issues impacting people living with spinal cord injury.

The week is a national initiative of the Australian Spinal Injury Alliance, representing eight of the country's leading spinal cord injury organisations, including Spinal Life Australia.

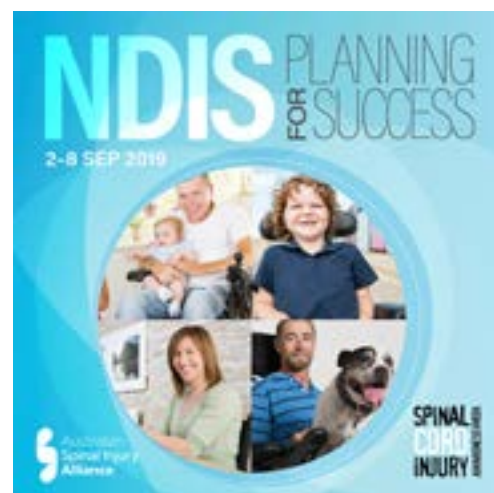
After feedback from people with spinal cord injuries about challenges and key issues that need to be addressed, the theme for the 2019 Awareness Week was chosen as NDIS – Planning for Success.

With the NDIS having a significant impact on the lives of Australians with spinal cord injury, this year's Awareness

Week aimed to promote effective and comprehensive plans and the development of a national scheme that can meet the many complex needs of people with spinal cord damage.

As part of Spinal Life Australia's ongoing state and national advocacy campaigns, we've pushed for a more flexible NDIS which funds air conditioning for people who cannot regulate their body temperature, commonly experienced by people with spinal cord damage.

We have also advocated for funding to be provided for disability-related nursing services, amid a lack of clarity about whether this was the responsibility of the NDIS or state-based health systems.



We also regularly work with our members and clients on individual planning and advocacy assistance with the NDIS to make sure they can make the most of their plan to live an independent and empowered life.

Visit spinal.com.au/sciaw to watch the campaign video and find out more.

Are you entering the NDIS or renewing your plan?

BrightSky Australia supports people with disability and their NDIS needs by providing healthcare products and claiming directly with the portal or working with plan managers so you are not out-of-pocket or over budget.

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Health

Lachy focuses on health services as new member of Advocacy team



Lachy Chapman has had his share of challenges in accessing the health system as a person with spinal cord injury, and he still considers himself one of the lucky ones.

"I still have my upper body strength so I can only imagine how difficult it would be for someone without it, especially when transferring to beds or x-ray tables," Lachy said.

As the newest member of Spinal Life's Advocacy team, Lachy will be exploring ways to improve the state and national health system to be more inclusive for people with physical disabilities.

"Through my work with the Advocacy team, I'm hoping to identify the challenges faced by people with physical disability in mainstream health services, then look at potential solutions," Lachy said.

"This will include things like exploring accessibility of radiology and x-ray services and accessibility of regional services, just to name a few."

In his role, Lachy will be talking to members and clients and other people with a physical disability about their experiences and challenges in accessing mainstream health services.

"There is definitely room for improvement in our health services for people with a physical disability," Lachy said.

"There seems to be a lack of understanding in the health community as far as the capabilities of people with a physical disability."

The campaign will build on research conducted by The Hopkins Centre, Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University and our organisation, which saw members and clients share

their feedback on accessing health services and places in the community they visit regularly.

The study involved a survey to discover more about the physical barriers as well as the knowledge of health professionals, and how these impacted a person's perceived ability to participate in their community.

The health services that were explored included GP clinics, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dentists, hospitals, pharmacies and other specialist services.

Our members and clients have also shared feedback with researchers from Swinburne University as part of a study to identify the priorities in improving access to all mainstream services.

The study found that the priority sectors to be improved are health, environment (the built environment and community attitudes) as well as transport.

These findings were recently presented to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to inform planning of future activities and programs, and are also guiding our advocacy activities.

Visit spinal.com.au/advocacy to find out more about our current campaigns, and how you can become involved.

"There is definitely room for improvement in our health services for people with a physical disability"

NDIS to fund nursing services from October 2019



Brisbane member Jodie Bliss is one of thousands of Australians with a disability who will be able to access NDIS funding for disability-related health supports from 1 October 2019.

The decision to move responsibility of funding health supports (including nursing services) from the state-based health system to the NDIS was made by the Council of Australian Governments' Disability Reform Council in late June.

Jodie said the move would benefit many NDIS participants such as herself.

"This decision will hopefully help make nursing services more

"This decision will hopefully help make nursing services more affordable and accessible for many"

affordable and accessible for many," Jodie said.

"I'm hoping to benefit myself, as I'm currently paying out of pocket for catheter changes."

From October 2019, NDIS participants will be able to access funding for:

- › Catheter changes and cleaning
- › Wound care support and dressings
- › Development of care plans and swallowing therapy for people with dysphagia
- › Respiratory supports including tracheostomy equipment and management, CPAP and BiPAP equipment, ventilators and more.

Spinal Life Executive Manager – Member Services, Ross Duncan, said the news was welcomed after the organisation had previously expressed their concerns to the Queensland Government on the issue.

"There has been a lot of concern and uncertainty around funding responsibility for disability-related health services for quite some time," Ross said.

"With this recent decision, our members and clients who are NDIS participants can now have that extra bit of confidence in accessing funding for their nursing services and health needs."

For more information on making the most of your NDIS plan reviews, contact us on ndis@spinal.com.au or 1300 774 625.

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Transport

Chair donation helps spinal cord injury patients gain travel confidence



"It's good to get a better idea of what to expect when travelling"

"I'm a bit of a traveller myself so this will help to build confidence for the next time I fly," Luke said.

Spinal Life Executive Manager – Member Services, Ross Duncan, said the donation was part of an ongoing collaboration with Swissport to share feedback on airline and airport services.

"We recognised the need for an aisle chair to be available to assist people to better prepare for travel before leaving hospital and approached Swissport who were only too happy to assist," Ross said.

Swissport Senior Vice President Pacific Rob D'Alessio said the company was currently operating at 32 airports across Australia and New Zealand, partnering with all major domestic airlines and many international carriers.

"Through our role representing airlines as ground services provider, we are committed to doing all we can to ensure a positive experience for air travellers," Rob said.

Spinal Life members also recently met with Swissport's Brisbane Airport leadership team to improve awareness around various injuries, as well as the needs of people with a physical disability.

This has included providing feedback on the processes and procedures for passengers requiring mobility assistance, along with airport wheelchair design.

Swissport has also donated an aisle chair to Spinal Life in Perth, which has been provided to the Spinal Injuries Unit of the Fiona Stanley Hospital.

Patients who have recently sustained life-changing spinal cord injuries can now be more prepared for airline travel when they leave hospital, with direct access to equipment that is used on aircraft.

Swissport, the world's leading provider of airport ground services and air cargo handling, recently donated an aisle chair to the Princess Alexandra Hospital's Spinal Injuries Unit to help with transfer practise as part of the physiotherapy rehabilitation program.

The wheelchair is used when boarding aircraft to navigate the narrow aisle, so that people with mobility challenges can access their assigned seat.

Patients who have been practising with the chair include Luke Rampal, who has been in the SIU since October last year after sustaining quadriplegia in a motorcycle accident in Vietnam, where he had been volunteering.

Luke said it was important to be able to practise with equipment such as the aisle chair, to improve his confidence.

\$21m funding announced for accessible taxis



Minister Mark Bailey with 13 CABS driver Karl McDonald, Spinal Life Executive Manager – Member Services Ross Duncan and NDIS Supports Coordinator Jocelyn Stocker.

In late May, we welcomed the Queensland Government's announcement of a \$21 million fund to update and modernise the state's fleet of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WAT) over the next four years.

More than 600 WATs currently operate across Queensland, however 35 per cent are now older than eight years.

The funding will be available to taxi owners to subsidise the cost of replacing their older vehicles or for new vehicles entering the market.

Spinal Life Chief Advisor – Government, John Mayo, said the funding was essential, especially in regional Queensland.

John has prepared a submission to the Queensland Government relating to the implementation of the fund, with recommendations including:

- › making the funding applicable for new vehicles only, not second-hand vehicles
- › ensuring vehicles have space for two wheelchairs to ensure people can travel together and do not have to wait for separate vehicles (in line with previous Maxi Taxi licensing requirements from the Department of Transport and Main Roads)

- › making it mandatory for equipment such as hoists and wheelchair restraints to be new, not second-hand or re-conditioned
- › providing a fold-out entry step and grab handles to the side opening sliding door for elderly passengers, given that the latest model of Toyota HiAce vehicle used for Maxi Taxis is higher off the ground
- › setting out clear documentation requirements for operators and installers to provide evidence that modifications meet all the necessary standards
- › having the above documentation kept in a database so all modifications are appropriately recorded and can be reviewed, as part of the funding application

"We need to put sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that people with a disability can access safe, reliable, predictable services now and into the future," John said.

The \$21 million fund follows an announcement earlier in May that the Queensland Government would pledge \$6 million towards extending the Taxi Subsidy Scheme for the state's NDIS participants for another 12 months, after it was initially set to end on 30 June 2019.

National Accessible Transport Taskforce established

We're proud to be part of the newly established National Accessible Transport Taskforce (NATT) which aims to transform the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*.

Our Chief Advisor – Government, John Mayo, has been invited to be part of the NATT as a subject matter expert.

The NATT has been established by the Queensland Government's Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Commonwealth Government's Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

The objective is to deliver a modernised set of disability standards for public transport providers and operators, drawn from current standards, National Construction Code (NCC) requirements and proposed new standards.

Cairns members advocate for better crossing access

Spinal Life Australia members and our Advocacy team recently worked with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to increase accessibility at the crossing of Sheridan and Arthur Streets in Cairns.

The issue was originally raised by member Jaye Hinchcliffe, who noted that a steep bump on the traffic island made it very difficult for wheelchair users to manoeuvre around or wait at the crossing.

Our Advocacy team member Jeanette Kretschmann wrote to Cairns Regional Council and Transport and Main Roads, who advised they will work on making the entire intersection more accessible for wheelchair users over the next few months.



Accessible accommodation

Robert finds a new home with help from Spinal Life



"I would never have been able to find a place like this without the help of Spinal Life and the Department of Housing"



Inala member Robert Van Wyk may have just moved down the road but, in terms of accessibility, he's in a whole new world.

After the late effects of polio caused his mobility to deteriorate, the inaccessibility of his old home seemed to get worse by the day.

"I couldn't even get to the front door – I had to use the back entrance," Robert said.

"I barely had room to move around myself, let alone use any sort of mobility equipment, and all my requests to install a ramp for easier access were ignored by the property managers."

Robert eventually met with Spinal Life Executive Manager – Member Services, Ross Duncan, who helped him find a new accessible place to live.

"I was talking with a representative from My Aged Care who mentioned that Spinal Life Australia was an advocate for people with the late effects of polio," Robert said.

"That's how I got in touch with Ross and became a member."

"During a conversation about housing, I told him about my situation and how my requests to improve accessibility were rejected."

"He told me that wasn't good enough and sent a letter to my local member, who also happens to be the Queensland Premier, telling her about my circumstances."

Ross said he was happy to help and was impressed with the response.

"The Premier referred the issue to the Department of Housing and in just a few weeks, they had found an accessible unit, just down the road from where Robert used to live," Ross said.

Robert said he was delighted with the change in his living conditions.

"I now have room to move around and I've been able to stay in Inala, just minutes away from family," he said.

"My condition means I will eventually need to use a wheelchair and when that day comes, I know I'll still be able to access my home."

"I would never have been able to find a place like this without the help of Spinal Life Australia and the Department of Housing."

Robert's new unit meets the Platinum level of accessibility, which is the highest possible rating set by Livable Housing Australia, the national not-for-profit organisation on accessible housing design in Australia.

Visit spinal.com.au/advocacy for more information on our advocacy services. You can also visit spinal.com.au/polio to find out more on the late effects of polio.

Accessible. The way travel should be

Dane joins Spinal Life team to advocate for inclusive tourism

Dane Cross believes there is a huge untapped resource in Australia worth potential billions each year, and it doesn't require a single piece of mining equipment.

The Brisbane member has joined Spinal Life's Advocacy team to campaign for inclusive and accessible tourism across Queensland and the rest of Australia.

Dane said inclusive tourism isn't just a responsibility, it's an opportunity.

"One recent piece of research calculated that the inclusive tourism market in Australia, domestic and international combined, is worth around \$10.8 billion per annum," he said.

"I'm excited to see the future of tourism for Australians with a disability and hope we can help change the industry's thinking from accessibility being a matter of compliance to what it really is – an opportunity."

Dane is a qualified Access Consultant and also travels regularly with his young family, giving him valuable insight into the challenges faced by people with a physical disability while on holiday.

"In my first few weeks I've already met with the Queensland Tourism Council Chief Executive, contributed to an awareness article that appeared in The Courier Mail and delivered training

at Brisbane Airport on best practice for travellers with spinal cord damage," he said.

"Essentially, we're aiming to encourage the industry to realise the huge market potential that inclusive tourism holds for tourism providers, while also raising some disability awareness along the way."

One of Dane's primary goals is to see the introduction of an "Excellence in Inclusive Tourism" award category in both the Queensland and Australian Tourism Awards programs to provide recognition and incentives for tourism operators to implement strategies for greater inclusion and innovation.

Over the coming months, Dane and the Advocacy team will also be working towards increasing awareness among tourism operators about how to make their activities more inclusive.

This includes providing resources for operators to access, along with encouraging all Australian governments to promote and incentivise inclusive tourism practices.

There will be opportunities for Spinal Life members to become more involved in accessible tourism activities, including raising awareness in your local communities. Stay tuned for updates!

Planning your holiday should be as exciting as your time away.



Hi, I'm Fiona, a personal travel manager with over 20 years' experience in the travel industry.

I can help anyone with their travel plans, but as a wheelchair user myself, I have insight into the travel needs of a person with a disability. I'll take on extra research required to ensure your peace of mind and I'm on hand 24/7 while you're travelling in case something doesn't go to plan.

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Accessible local communities

Advocacy skills developed at workshops



Bribie Island Advocacy workshop

Our members have been learning more about how they can make a difference in their communities using their firsthand experiences and local knowledge.

As part of our Self-Advocacy workshops, which are being held throughout 2019, our Advocacy team has shared tips on how members can play an active role in improving access and inclusion.

During the events, members have had the opportunity to discuss key issues in their local communities, using a toolkit to guide their actions which they can take home and use in the future.

We've held workshops across Queensland, with plans to host an event in Western Australia soon.

At an event for our Gold Coast Post Polio network on 8 July, the discussion included booking cruises, after a member was told he could not access an early bird special price because it did not apply to accessible cabins.

The member spoke with a supervisor, feeling this was discrimination, and was able to access the discounted price.

Members also spoke about access to parking at shopping centres, especially not having enough at busy times close to entry doors.

Gold Coast Post Polio Network Co-Facilitator Joan Radanovic (pictured) said the workshop was a positive experience for all attendees.

"It seems important with regard to stress management that emotions are expressed and frustrations made known to a person who has authority to change the situation," she said.

"Access to facilities would seem the main focus of our group, especially those with mobility problems – access to car parking and access to well-designed disability toilets.

"Travelling by plane has also been frustrating for our members."

Joan said she and Facilitator Lyn Glover would be raising topics discussed at all network meetings in future, to see how issues are progressing.

In Bribie Island on 17 June, the discussions centred around My Aged Care and the NDIS, while in Hervey Bay on 18 June, the focus included affordable

"We don't want anyone to suffer in silence"

community transport and accessible toilet facilities in older buildings.

In Maryborough on 19 June, attendees spoke about the NDIS and seeking assistance from their Local Area Coordinator, while in Cairns on 16 July the topics included issues with footpaths and bus stops.

In Toowoomba on 18 July, members discussed the NDIS and access issues at a local shopping precinct.

We have also held events in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Moreton Bay, Mackay and Ipswich earlier this year.

Follow-up workshops are planned to discuss how advocacy efforts are progressing, based on the initial discussions and advice provided.

Visit spinal.com.au/advocacy to find a Self-Advocacy workshop in your region, or to download a copy of our toolkit.

Peer Support program expands with new casual team members



Reece Wallen knows that when you have a spinal cord injury, it's important to have someone who can lend a helping hand, an ear to listen or a shoulder to cry on.

Reece is one of Spinal Life's newest casual Peer Support Officers in Queensland who will be assisting in supporting members in one-on-one discussions and advice.

All the Peer Support team have lived experience with spinal cord damage and will be using those experiences to connect with others in their community.

"I joined the team because I wanted to be able to help and support others who are in similar situations to where I've been," Reece said.

"It's not just about being able to share my experiences, I'm hoping to also learn from others in the community."

"One important thing I've learnt about spinal cord injury is that everybody is different and no matter what situation people are in, or the extent of their disability, everyone has their good days and bad days and having someone to talk to always helps."

Spinal Life Executive Manager – Member Services, Ross Duncan, said the new team members all had different experiences to share, bringing more depth and diversity to the team.

"This recruitment and training will also help us offer more reliable and frequent peer support services to members in North Queensland, the Gold Coast and other areas of Queensland," Ross said.

"They'll also be able to assist in the expansion of community-based peer support activities while also being available to help our existing Peer Support team, including potential support at the Spinal Injuries Unit."

Visit spinal.com.au/peer-support to read more about our Peer Support program.

Catch up with members in your community

Join us to hear from guest speakers, share your experiences and connect with others on the issues that matter to you. Come along to one of our peer support groups across Queensland and Western Australia.

Spinal Life Peer Support Catch-ups

Bribie Island: Contact Bill Peacock on 0403 686 998. Combined with Post Polio Network.

Brisbane: 11am, first Wednesday of the month. Contact Bill Simpson on 0412 729 843.

Bundaberg: 10.30am, third Tuesday of the month. Contact Pat Allison on 4153 1005.

FNQ (Cairns): Contact Del Childs on 4032 5379. Combined with Post Polio Network.

Fraser Coast: 12pm, third Wednesday of the month. Contact Simone Hathaway on 1300 774 625.

Mackay: 12pm, first Friday of the month. Contact Debra Reaves on 0487 021 735.

Moreton Bay: 1pm, first Wednesday of the month. Contact Tom Dutton on 0448 949 910.

Rockhampton: Combined with below Post Polio Network.

Toowoomba: Contact Wendy Adams on 0422 799 580. Combined with Post Polio Network.

Western Australia: Contact Debbie Nobre on 0420 985 734.

Post Polio Networks

Brisbane: Combined with above Peer Support group.

FNQ (Cairns): Contact Joy Hay on 4055 5795. Combined with above Peer Support group.

Gold Coast: 10.30am, second Monday of the month. Contact Lyn Glover on 0448 206 856 or Joan Radanovic on 0413 178 073.

Rockhampton: first Thursday of the month. Contact Robynne Clifton on 0473 576 107 or Anne Guthrie on 0407 116 035.

Sunshine Coast: 10am, second Friday of the month. Contact Cathy Newman on 5447 6608.

Toowoomba: Combined with above Peer Support group.

Townsville: Contact Eric Collins on 4729 0275.

Transverse Myelitis Network

Contact Louise Remilton on 0414 254 531.

Join our member community today at spinal.com.au/membership or call 1300 774 625 to find out more.



TiLite and TiFit

I have been a wheelchair user for 39 years as a result of a complete SCI at level T5. It is impossible to underestimate how important a wheelchair is to my life. My wheelchair is the most important piece of Assistive Technology in my life and plays a critical role in my ability to do all the things I want to do. So, what are the critical things I look for when deciding what wheelchair I will use?

I want my wheelchair to look great! I live an active lifestyle, and travel both domestically and internationally. I need my chair to be strong, yet super lightweight and to look good for the lifespan of the chair. That is a big ask, and I have been using TiLite® titanium wheelchairs for a couple of decades now. Titanium has the strongest strength to weight ratio of any metal, which means thin lightweight tubing can be used without compromising strength. It does not need to be coated so stays

looking great.

I want my wheelchair to fit me perfectly, and that means it needs to be custom built – from the ground up. TiLite call this process TiFit™. My TiFit wheelchair feels like it is a part of me, rather than something I sit on. My TiLite wheelchair started its life as a Computer Aided Design (CAD) drawing with every angle and dimension specified. It was hand built exactly to those dimensions. This is important because it improves the performance of my wheelchair, and also helps people see me not the wheelchair.

As I said previously, I want my chair to be super lightweight. I have minimised the adjustment and number of components on my wheelchair. I have a rigid backrest and side guards made from carbon fibre which look great and are super light. This means my wheelchair is easy to lift in and out of my car, and again easy to push.

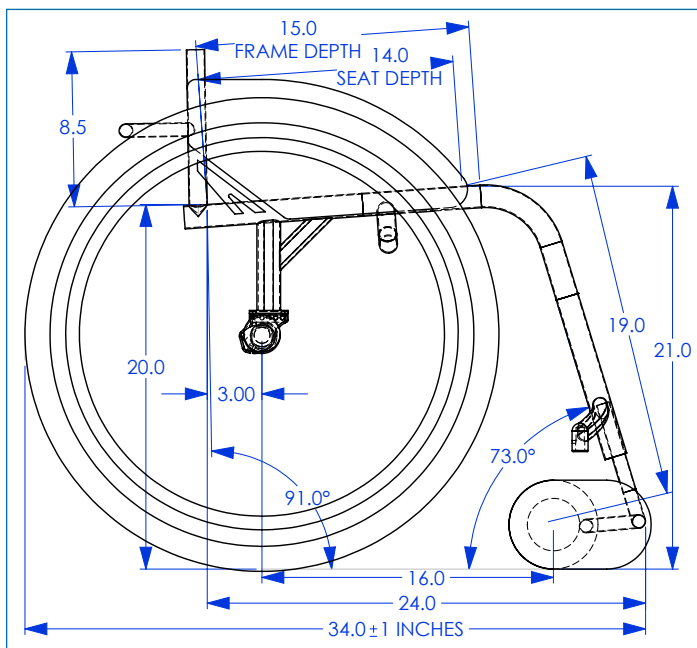
I want my wheelchair to feel good when I am pushing it. The way a wheelchair feels is a combination of a lot of things. The design of the wheelchair, the setup of the wheelchair (eg. placement of the rear axle), the components use (eg. tyres and front castors), the type of material it is made from, the fit of the wheelchair. All these things come together to determine how the wheelchair feels. I love the feel of the ride I get in my TiLite wheelchair, it is smoother than any other chair I have used.

By having the wheelchair best suited to me I am able to be actively involved in all areas of my life that are important to me – including work, recreation and socialising.

– Malcolm Turnbull

TiFit and the TiLite chairs are available at Permobil. For more information please call our office on 1300 845 483, email us: info.au@permobil.com or visit our website: www.permobil.com.au.

TiFit



TiFit by TiLite is the art of building the ergonomics of the wheelchair around you, the rider. How you sit and fit in the chair is the greatest predictor of comfort and independence, and, over the long-term, will impact the likelihood of secondary injuries.

The difference between a TiFit chair and all other chairs is that a TiFit chair is tailored specifically to the person: Every chair is a made-to-measure, optimally fitted, wheeled prosthetic. The more you understand TiFit, the more you will realise that no other manufacturer does what we do at TiLite.

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Michelle Wilson, Director



Michelle Wilson is one of Spinal Life Australia's newest Board members, having joined in April 2019. She brings with her extensive accounting and taxation expertise, as well as experience with the community and disability sector.

What made you want to get involved with Spinal Life?

Having come from another Board working within the mental health NDIS space, I was keen to share my experience as well as assist from a financial perspective.

What do Spinal Life's values mean to you?

Empowering people with spinal cord damage to live their best life is a heartfelt value and one we should all be striving for.

What personal or professional achievement are you most proud of?

Walking the 96km Kokoda track in 2018 and successfully completing a dance routine in front of a packed house at City Hall to raise money for the Women's Legal Service – a significant achievement for someone of my age!

How do you define effective advocacy?

Achieving the desired result from your representation on behalf of others.

What's the best piece of advice you've received?

Always tell the truth.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Renovating old houses and trekking in as many interesting places as possible.

What would you like to see Spinal Life achieve in the future?

To continue to improve services and provide additional services to members which they will value and will improve their daily lives.

Describe your dream holiday.

Trekking in Patagonia in South America, away from mobile phone and internet access.

Finish this sentence: "I'm passionate about Spinal Life Australia because..."

Its values, from personal support to advocacy, are just as important today as they were when the organisation started back in 1960.

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Gerard O'Brien, Director



Gerard O'Brien joined the Spinal Life Australia Board in April this year after 30 years in management roles in the Agribusiness and Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industries in Australia and overseas, along with an extensive involvement with the Surf Lifesaving movement.

What made you want to get involved with Spinal Life?

I have enjoyed a long and successful executive career and I believed I could utilise my skills and experience to help drive Spinal Life Australia to be more effective in its critical mission.

What do Spinal Life's values mean to you?

The organisation's goal to facilitate accessible, equitable and empowered lives for people with spinal cord damage is incredibly important and I hope I can provide some positive contribution towards achieving this goal.

What personal or professional achievement are you most proud of?

Over the course of 10 years as Managing Director and Chief Executive of Buderim Ginger Limited, I oversaw a transformation of the business which yielded a turnaround of the core ginger business as well as a diversification program that delivered a three-fold growth in revenue and strong profit growth, despite challenging global markets for our products.

How do you define effective advocacy?

Not being afraid to discuss the tricky issues and focusing on achieving good outcomes in a way that everyone benefits.

What is the best piece of advice you've received?

"Seek first to understand."

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Swimming, surf sports, golf, caravanning.

What would you like Spinal Life to achieve in the future?

Recognition as a national leader in its mission and continuing to provide first-class services to its client base with a strong level of financial security.

Describe your dream holiday.

A year-long lap around Australia with my wife, Felicity, in our caravan.

Finish this sentence: "I'm passionate about Spinal Life Australia because..."

It can achieve so much for so many deserving members and clients.



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Vale Ben Lawson

28 August 1976 - 23 June 2019

Board member Ben Lawson passed away suddenly in June. He was just 42 but left an extraordinary legacy of service and contribution. Having used a motorised wheelchair since high school, Ben had extensive lived experience with disability, which he used to advocate for change wherever necessary. While studying at the University of Queensland, Ben challenged the Schonell Cinema over its lack of accessible seating. With Spinal Life's support, at 25 he took on the Queensland Government which owns Lang Park and Queensland Rugby League in court, because their seating did not permit him to sit with his friends at a State of Origin match. He won.

Ben was a scientist with a PhD in Conservation Planning, and a Public

Service career in the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines. He worked on policy reform regarding vegetation management (including land clearing), land valuation, and strategic cropping land. With a mix of passion, political savvy, and good humour, Ben drove policy reforms and moderated stakeholder interests. Notably, he developed a matrix of science and policy about the quality of soil and applied a set of criteria for farmers and miners to utilise for decision making in order to ensure miners and farmers could not interfere with each other.

Part of Ben's legacy are the scientific papers he wrote or contributed to, which have three main focus areas: mapping the potential distribution of

weeds of national significance, and also mapping their bio-control agents (insects); the utility of site-based data sets and regional ecosystem mapping for biodiversity conservation; and integrated environmental monitoring of biodiversity.

Having travelled through Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Europe for science and pleasure, Ben didn't hesitate when asked to be a guest of the Brazilian government to do research in the Amazon. The science body that hosted him (INPA) is similar to Australia's CSIRO. A large photo of Ben now hangs from the INPA atrium in Brasilia. This work was described as a strategic framework for long term ecological research involving the listing of site data sets of flora and fauna to compare past and present change at various sites. Wife Sara just smiles when asked how they managed that trip.

Ben used public transport often and turned mishaps into advocacy. He became involved in fare gate consultation at Roma St Station following an altercation between Ben's chair controller and the automatically closing gates (and Ben's teeth vs the wall). In a separate incident, he fell out of his chair and was injured when a bus went too fast around a corner in 2014 and this saw him advocate for wheelchair restraints in buses.

Ben relished his role as a father, his daughter Grace is nearly seven. He loved taking Grace to and from school. Exploring the world through the eyes of his daughter and the world of play helped motivate him through times of difficult health.

In another role, he was a Lifetime awardee of the Royal Society of Queensland. It was an aspect of Ben's community contribution that saw him provide considerable skills and administrative assistance. He also served for over nine years on the CODA Disability Support Services board (as the participant representative) before stepping up to the Spinal Life Board in 2017. He told Sara recently he hoped he would be re-elected at the AGM in November this year because he would like to have at least another year in the role.

Affable, intelligent, determined, capable, full of quiet courage, commanding through a quiet voice, Ben was one of a few good men.

By John Mayo
Chief Advisor - Government

Queensland Human Rights Commission introduced



From 1 July 2019, the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland became known as the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

The change follows the introduction of a *Human Rights Act* for Queensland, which was passed by the state's parliament in February.

The Act recognises the protection of 23 human rights under law, including freedom of movement, property rights, equality before the law and right to education and health services.

From 1 January 2020, the Queensland Human Rights Commission will receive feedback from members of the community about human rights concerns and assist with dispute resolution. The Commission will continue their complaint handling and training functions under the *Anti-Discrimination Act* as well as their new human rights remit.

In Western Australia, there have been calls for a similar Human Rights Act, which currently only exists in Queensland, Victoria and the Australia Capital Territory. However, WA has the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, which is similar to Queensland's anti-discrimination legislation.

Visit qhrc.qld.gov.au to find out more about the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

Registrations open for research symposium

The Hopkins Centre invites clinicians, researchers, industry partners, people with disability and lived rehabilitation experience to attend the *Bold ideas, better solutions 2019 symposium* on Friday 18 October 2019 at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane.

With the theme of 'Discovery and Design in Disability and Rehabilitation', the symposium will feature the latest research on improving therapies and practices, services and policies that address the wellbeing of people with complex needs, and the emerging ideas driving new innovations in design in disability and rehabilitation.

The day-long free symposium will feature a program of presentations, international keynote speakers and a panel session on inclusive technological discovery and design for people with disability.

Visit hopkinscentre.edu.au/bibs19registration to register.



Grant received for citizen-led project

The Hopkins Centre was recently a successful recipient in Queensland's Citizen Science Grants program, for a project that will allow people with disabilities to create meaningful change.

Called The Dignity Project, the research asks people to share their experiences and stories to improve services they need and use. Focused on learning from the past in re-imagining the future, The Dignity Project is a digital engagement platform where users can share, reinterpret and analyse their collective experiences.

Deputy Director of The Hopkins Centre, Professor Tim Geraghty, said the project would tell stories of dignity or inclusion and would result in recommendations for change that can improve future experiences of rehabilitation.

Visit hopkinscentre.edu.au/project/the-dignity-project-26 to find out how to get involved.

Spinal Life visit teaches PNG students about disability support



Twenty-five counsellors from across Papua New Guinea came together at Spinal Life's Brisbane office in mid-June and left with the knowledge of how to be a better advocate for people with disability in their communities.

As part of an intensive Griffith University training course on counselling, the attendees heard from members of our Peer Support, Advocacy, Back2Work and Allied Health teams about effective advocacy, peer support and community services for people with spinal cord damage.

They also heard from Ruth Javati (above left), a fellow PNG resident with medically caused spinal cord damage who had the opportunity to study in Australia back in 2014-15 and receive support from Spinal Life.

Joanne Ede (right) from our Allied Health team worked closely with Ruth during her visit, assisting in learning effective transfer techniques, continence care, equipment prescriptions and more.

Ruth was able to take these skills and knowledge back to PNG, where accessibility and resources for people with disability are often scarce.



"It's great to see all these people in counselling roles learn more about disability and the importance of inclusion"

"Outside of the capital of Port Moresby, there are very little services for people with disability," Ruth said.

"We still have a long way to go in many areas – even finding peer support services is difficult – which is why it's great to see all these people in counselling roles learn more about disability and the importance of inclusion.

"I hope they can take what they learned today and use it to better support people with disabilities in their own communities."

Ruth is currently back in Australia undertaking a double degree in Human Services and Public Health.

Ruth said she hopes to use her degree to work with the PNG community or health departments and provide more disability representation.

"It will be a challenge, but representation is something that we need to see more of in PNG," she said.

Visit spinal.com.au/alliedhealth for more information on our Allied Health services.

Order of Australia medal for valued Spinal Life supporter

Judge Robert Pack was recently awarded an Order of Australia medal in the Queen's Birthday honours, for his service to health and the community of Townsville.

Along with serving his community through 20 years as a Judge of the District Court of Queensland,

Judge Pack also worked tirelessly to secure valuable services for North Queenslanders with spinal cord damage.

After his son sustained a spinal cord injury in a road accident, Judge Pack experienced firsthand the difficulty of finding disability support and assistance close to home in regional Queensland, with many services based in Brisbane.

Judge Pack's interest in bringing accessible services to North Queensland was something shared by Spinal Life

Australia (then known as the Spinal Injuries Association).

When the Board and CEO showed interest in establishing an office in Townsville, Judge Pack volunteered his time to lead the Supporter's Committee for the North Queensland Building Appeal.

This included coordinating fundraising efforts and raising awareness of spinal injuries and the need for support services in the community.

The local response was tremendous, with people donating money, building materials and their time to help ensure the project would become a reality.

Judge Pack's fundraising efforts paid off in 2004 when Spinal Life Australia's Townsville office was officially opened.



Judge Robert Pack, pictured with wife Wendy and son Steven.

Since then, the office has grown and now delivers vital services such as personal support at home, at work and in the community, access to allied health professionals and occupational therapists, member networks to connect and share experiences, advocacy assistance and more. Congratulations to Judge Pack on this well-deserved honour.

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Western Australia members who have transverse myelitis and their families recently held a catch-up socialise and share their experiences. Pictured is Jodi Gallon, Bob Gilbert, Jean Gilbert, Kendra Wilson, Amanda Wilson and Darcy Wilson.



Mackay members enjoyed a community catch-up barbecue. Pictured is Mick and Peta Hancock, Carol Smith, Debra Reaves, Karen Johnson, John Lovi, Don Johnson and Debbie and Mark Leibie.

Congratulations to our member competition winners!

A big congratulations to the winners of our recent member renewal competition:

- › Two lucky winners, Renee and Gregory, each won an accommodation package at the new SuzanneStays two-bedroom accessible apartment, which features spectacular panoramic views of the Story Bridge and Brisbane River.
- › Three lucky winners won an iFly indoor skydiving experience voucher; a state-of-the-art, fully-controlled, ultra-safe environment that is accessible for people of any ability.
- › Ten lucky winners also won a double pass to the Brisbane Broncos vs Penrith Panthers game on Friday 16 August!

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership and thank you to our generous prize donors.



Accomplished New Zealand artists Grant Sharman and Kerrin Tilley paid a visit to the Spinal Injuries Unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital recently to demonstrate their unusual painting technique – using only their mouths.

Grant and Kerrin, who both have spinal cord injuries, have travelled the world as part of the international Mouth and Foot Painting Artist (MFPA) organisation and were exhibiting at the 2019 Ekka in Brisbane.

During a demonstration facilitated by our Peer Support Program at the Spinal Injuries Unit, the artists showcased their painting techniques and held an art session with patients including Nick Roma (pictured above).

Visit mfpa.com.au for more information.



Deb Reaves, Kathy Allen and Robynne Clifton undertaking mapping for the new Navability software in Rockhampton.

Winner sees green as Broncos raffle raises funds for Spinal Life

During the Broncos vs Storm game on 2 August, the excitement levels were high, the stands were packed, and the aprons were bright neon green.

Spinal Life staff and volunteers put fashion aside as they donned their colourful aprons to sell tickets in the 50-50 Charity Raffle, with a portion of ticket sales going towards our Peer Support program.

With assistance from our volunteers, an impressive \$26,080 in ticket sales were made on the night, with half the total prize pool awarded to the raffle winner.

While the Brisbane Broncos were soundly defeated by the Melbourne Storm on the night, one Broncos supporter was left with a smile on his face after his winning ticket earned him a cheque for \$13,040.

Acting Chief Executive Officer Pauline Davis appeared on the big screen before the game as she was interviewed about Spinal Life and how the Peer Support program provides mentorship and guidance to people with spinal cord damage.

Spinal Life's involvement in the 50-50 Charity Raffle was part of a partnership formed with the Broncos Charity Partner Program earlier in 2019.

Funds raised from ticket sales will go towards our Peer Support program – visit spinal.com.au/peer-support to learn more.



Spinal Life staff member Rachel Taune helps to sell raffle tickets at the game.

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CALENDAR of events

SEPTEMBER

2-8 September

Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week

5 September

World Spinal Cord Injury Day

18 September

Take My Seat Shopping Challenge, Cairns

15-22 September

Disability Action Week

OCTOBER

10 October

Exclusive Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre
'Sneak Peek' for members and clients in Cairns

18 October

The Hopkins Centre *Bold ideas,
better solutions 2019* symposium, Brisbane



24 October

World Polio Day

NOVEMBER

2 November

Wellbeing Series event, Brisbane

Don't miss out on the latest
news and events!



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About our services

We are here to support you to find 'your more,' as part of your trusted team for life.

NDIS Pre-planning and Supports Coordination

Our experienced team can help you navigate the NDIS and assist with pre-planning and coordinating your supports.

Member Services

Our members can access a range of services including peer support, individual advocacy assistance, events and activities, research and innovation projects, high-quality advice, volunteering opportunities and more. You can also help set our course and have an active voice in our organisation.

Allied Health Services

Our dedicated professionals include physiotherapists and occupational therapists, who can assist with:

- › Access to expertise and funding schemes
- › Mobility, seating and equipment solutions and prescriptions
- › Specialist personal advice and assessments, including driving assessments
- › Workplace assessments, home modifications and pressure mapping
- › Continence and wound assessment and management
- › Specialised physiotherapy.

Allied Health Services are currently available in Queensland only. Contact us for more information.

Personal Support and Home Care Services

Our team provides reliable services seven days a week* including:

- › Personal care at home and work
- › Specialist complex personal care
- › Domestic assistance around the home
- › Lifestyle support to attend appointments, activities, holidays and events
- › Transition support from hospital to home.

**Seven-day service available in most locations. Contact us for more information.*

Employment, study and workplace assistance

The Spinal Life Australia Back2Work® program supports patients in the Princess Alexandra Hospital's Spinal Injuries Unit to return to work or study, while our Allied Health team also provides detailed workplace assessments and equipment solutions.

Plus, we deliver disability awareness workshops to educate staff on inclusiveness, conducted by our Training Solutions facilitators.

Contact us today on 1300 774 625 or enquiries@spinal.com.au
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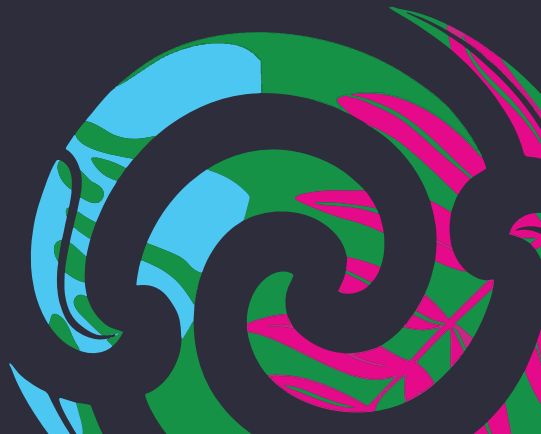
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