



Advocacy Position Statement

Health

What we believe:

- People with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability.¹
- Australia has one of the better health systems in the developed world, and Spinal Life Australia believes continuous improvement is both beneficial and expected.
- Spinal cord damage, in most cases, causes permanent disability, and the interaction between disability, health and other mainstream services is complex and ongoing for the life of the individual.
- Regional and remote health services face unique challenges and people with spinal cord damage outside major cities often do not have access to the same facilities and expertise.

The current situation:

- A purpose-built Spinal Injuries Unit was completed in 1985 at the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH). To maximise quality of care, Queensland Health has a medium-term plan to assess current operations to identify opportunities for improvement to acute and rehabilitation facilities, in line with future infrastructure planning of the PAH.²
- Pressure injuries are largely preventable but consume billions of dollars in healthcare spending. Treatment costs across all states and severity in 2012-13 was estimated to be \$983 million per annum, representing approximately 1.9% of all public hospital expenditure or 0.6% of the public recurrent health expenditure. The opportunity cost was valued at an additional \$820 million per annum. These estimates were associated with a total number of 121,645 pressure injury cases in 2012-13 and a total number of 524,661 bed days lost.³
- Queensland Health, as well as the World Health Organisation, highlight that inter-sectoral relationships between health and other sectors enables the achievement of health outcomes in a way that is more effective, efficient and sustainable than could be achieved by the health sector working alone.⁴
- In regional and remote regions of Australia, providers of healthcare in less populated areas are affected by the fragmentation of care that can result from attitudinal differences, limitations in physical and staff resources and transportation deficiencies, which may all hinder access to quality community-based care.⁵

¹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 25.

² Queensland Health, November 2016, Statewide adult spinal cord injury health service plan 2016-2026 – System, Policy and Planning Division, p17.

³ K.-H. Nguyen, W. Chaboyer, Whitty, J. Pressure injury in Australian public hospitals: a cost-of-illness study, Australian Health Review, 2015, 39, 329-336, p329.

⁴ Queensland Health, November 2016, Statewide adult spinal cord injury health service plan 2016-2026 – System, Policy and Planning Division, p13.

⁵ Ibid, p11.

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- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 1.5 times as likely as non-Indigenous people to be living with a profound/severe core activity limitation (7.8% compared to 5.2%).⁶

Spinal Life Australia will:

- Advocate to the Queensland Government to continue improving Queensland's primary Spinal Injuries Unit facility and related services.
- Continue to advocate for increased accessibility and inclusiveness of mainstream health services.
- Advocate for the enhancement of regional and remote health services for people with spinal cord damage.
- Work towards improving health outcomes for Indigenous people with spinal cord damage, focussing on rehabilitation and ongoing care in Far North Queensland.
- Advocate for an accurate and reasonable distinction between health conditions and disability within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), ensuring that the NDIS funds disability specific needs where appropriate, such as catheter changes and air-conditioning.
- Advocate for improved transitions from hospital to home including advocating for efficient and effective communication and processes with all parties involved, including Queensland Health, National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland and the NDIS.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4433.0.55.005 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with a Disability, 2012.