

TRANSCRIPTION

Company: Spinal Life Australia
Date: 23 November 2023
Time: 11:00 AEST | 12:00 AEDT

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

Gerard O'Brien: Good morning, members and guests. My name's Gerard O'Brien, and I'm the Deputy Chair of the Board of Spinal Life Australia. I would like to show my respect and acknowledge the Turrbal and Yuggera People – the Traditional Owners of the Land on which this meeting is hosted. These people have cared for the land and waterways for thousands of years, and I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

I've been elected by the Directors to chair this year's annual general meeting. I'm filling in for our Chair, Gyl Stacey, who has recently undergone surgery and was concerned with not being able to stand up to the rigours of chairing such an important meeting. While Gyl is unable to attend, she will no doubt be listening in online. I'm sure all members join me in wishing Gyl a full and speedy recovery. On behalf of the Board, thank you for taking the time to attend today's AGM, either in person, by telephone or online, and have your voice heard as one of our valued members.

In the room today, we have Board Directors, Michelle Wilson and Cathy Russo. I welcome both of them, and particularly, recently appointed Director, Cathy. Cathy was appointed after the retirement of Mark Dillman. Cathy is a talented young lawyer with a very sharp commercial mind who is donating her time to our cause. She will be a great asset to Spinal Life Australia and to our Board and further enhances the wonderful diversity of our Board.

Due to personal clashes, both Directors, Professor Phil Morris and Carol Taylor are unable to attend in person but will be in attendance online. Unfortunately, Dr Dinesh Palipana is also unable to attend in person today due to his heavy workload. Hopefully Dinesh has been able to login online and I will speak more of Dinesh later in the meeting. Equally, unfortunately, due to a longstanding personal commitment, alternate Director, Rebecca Tweedy, is also unable to attend and sends her apologies.

Today, we're also joined by Company Secretary, Peta Perring, Spinal Life's CEO, Mark Townend, Chief Operating Officer, Natalie von Snarski, and our Chief Financial Officer, Danielle Ready, who are here to assist in answering any detailed questions that may arise today. Other key executives, including Ross Duncan, unfortunately, Frances Porter is also an apology due to ill health and other key staff are also in attendance

and I welcome them. Bronwyn Lovell, from our auditors, KMPG, is also attending in person should there be any questions relating to our financial statements.

Before I formally open the meeting, I wanted to share more about the procedures for today's meeting. Firstly, for those of you who are online, I'm pleased to confirm we have the ability for closed captions on today's video stream. Through this interactive platform, you can vote and submit written questions as well as listen to the presentations and view the slides as we progress through the meeting. Below the slides, you can see links to the meeting documents, including our notice of meeting and annual report.

You will also find an online meeting guide which contains step-by-step instructions on how to use this platform, including how to vote and ask questions. If you have trouble using the platform at any time, please check the guide or call Link Market Services' Support Team on 1800 990 363. In the unlikely event that we experience any technology issues during the meeting, we may need to take a short break. If there is a significant issue and the meeting needs to be adjourned to another time or date, please keep an eye on our website for further details.

A recording will be available on our website by the close of business today if any members lose connection during proceedings. Only authorised recordings are permitted of this meeting. We have a couple of guidelines to follow whether you are online, joining us over the phone, or in our Woolloongabba office. As this is a meeting of members of Spinal Life Australia, only members or proxy holders are entitled to formally participate in the meeting, which includes asking questions. By asking a question, you are also consenting to being part of the recording.

In the interests of good order and timeliness, I ask that questions posed are relevant to the nature of the business of the meeting as set out in the notice of meeting. While questions can be raised at any time during the meeting, questions will not be answered until the last order of business where relevant questions will be received and read by the Company's Secretary, to be answered by myself as Chair of the meeting and assisted by other Directors and/or the Executive if and as required.

We'll make sure that we respond directly to your question after the meeting if we can't answer the question fully or if we do not get to your question during the meeting. If you wish to ask a question and are onsite with us here today, please advise a staff member. If you are intending [sic] the meeting online and wish to ask a question, you can find this button at the top-right or at the bottom of your screen.

For those of you listening over the telephone, we will advise when questions are open towards the end of the meeting so please keep an ear out for this. If you have queries in relation to individual or personal matters, please contact us. These questions will not be put to the meeting. I'm sure it's not relevant, but any questions we consider offence, defamatory or that include coarse language will not be read out, nor responded to. Please start by submitting your questions online when you are ready or advise a staff member if you're

attending in person. We look forward to your comments and questions and answering them later in the meeting.

As there's a quorum present, I declare the meeting open and welcome you to Spinal Life Australia's 2023 annual general meeting. Please note that only members or their nominated proxies can vote on resolutions put to this meeting. Employees of Spinal Life Australia who are members are not eligible to vote today. Voting at today's meeting will be conducted online with computers available for people attending the meeting in person to use if required. I now ask Link Market Services to open the software for online voting by members or their proxies.

The notice of the meeting has been sent to all members either electronically or by post, as required under our Constitution and the *Corporations Act 2001*. If there are no objections, I propose that the notice of meeting be taken as read. I will now make a brief presentation on behalf of our Board Chair, Gyl, and share some more about the Board's activities over the past financial year. I will then handover to Mark Townend, our CEO, to provide more detailed insight into the organisation's performance and strategic priorities.

The past financial year continued to present some significant challenges to our organisation, particularly due to the shortage of suitably qualified or trained staff. Recruiting and retaining personal support workers and allied health professionals was one of our key focus areas of the year. By the end of 2023, we are seeing positive outcomes of this work and I commend all of the team members involved in these efforts. The Board has continued to work on achieving our short term objectives, including maintaining our financial surety and stability, growing our services and building our advocacy efforts. The Board has also looked towards long term growth and prosperity so we can continue to be a leader in our industry while staying true to our mission.

As part of our strategic initiatives, this year we made the decision to invest in an equipment supply business, Move Mobility. Move Mobility recently opened a large showroom at Shailer Park near the Logan Hyperdome, complementing a revamped and existing location in Robina on the Gold Coast with plans to expand into another regional area along with improving and expanding their online store.

By investing in Move Mobility, we can pursue our goal to change the dynamics in the mobility equipment supply industry by ensuring our members, clients and the public have the best possible experience when trialling, hiring and/or purchasing equipment. This includes having more products available, faster delivery times, and improved service post-delivery. This investment also allows Spinal Life to share our feedback and our members' feedback to create a better customer experience for everyone. We are excited to see what the new year brings.

Another key strategic initiative is our plans to build a bigger Brisbane precinct on a new site ideally close to the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Our goal is to provide more services and short term accommodation options, particularly for people transitioning home from hospital. To help fund this precinct, this year, we submitted a

development application to the Brisbane City Council which would enable a much larger multi-purpose building to be built on our site here in Woolloongabba near the main stadium for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We have no plans to develop this site ourselves as we have obvious limitations but we mean – we need to move elsewhere.

However, if we do sell this site in future, an approved DA would significantly increase the value for developers. This is all part of our forward planning that has considered feedback from our members and partners as well as looking at what's happening in the disability sector. We couldn't do this without a very strong and cohesive Board which encompasses a broad range of lived experience of spinal cord injury as well as professional skills from a range of backgrounds including law, finance, research and governance.

On behalf of Gyl, I'd like to thank my fellow Directors for their contribution over the past year as well as the CEO and Executive Management Team with whom we work so closely. Finally, thank you to our incredible staff and volunteers who are doing an exceptional job in helping us achieve our mission and supporting our clients and members to live life the way they choose. I'd now like to hand over to our CEO, Mark, to share more about Spinal Life's operations over the past financial year.

Mark Townend: Thanks, Gerard. I'm not sure there's anything left but we'll have a go. Certainly, look, I always enjoy going back and reflecting over the year what's happened in Spinal Life, and I think this year there are some achievements – under tough times as well. First of all, I need to say that personal support workers have been difficult to obtain in the current market. We read about it every day – that you can't get someone for a cup of coffee or a beer at a pub. Well, it's even harder to get good people to turn up to people's door every day to help that personal support.

Just as an idea, we've been 100 staff short within the sector for our particular organisation for nearly 12 months. We're down to under 50 now and that's working by having retention to ensure that we retain the staff we've got and the ones who are - only leave because they need to move for transfer reasons for the family or graduate and become another particular career and move on. Then also attracting them with good conditions.

The conditions we pay our personal support workers has cost millions of dollars over the last few years because we're investing in them and make sure that they're now properly trained and when they turn up at your door, you get the service and the technical skills you need to provide those services. I'm very proud of the team, both within the office and outside the office that have been able to achieve that.

The income at least, we're in the black this year overall which is a good thing but we'd certainly spent more money by ensuring that those people turned up and provide the services we need and the [advocacy], we needed to stick to our mission. We're a mission-driven organisation and that will be the difference between us and a commercial organisation which are now being bought out by private [equity] et cetera in the same

market. But we will always stick to our mission and the Board's very stern on that, that no matter what the cost, we will make sure we turn up and provide the services and advocacy what we need.

Move Mobility was one particular area we wanted to invest in, again linked to our mission. We had members that weren't getting the right service as far as their mobility aids and equipment or they weren't getting the right price or they weren't - had to wait a long time for it. There was no incentive because the NDIS and the way it's structured, there was no incentive for those businesses to perform.

So we want to disrupt that market and certainly by buying into Mobility business and the opening of the new store, we've already started that. I know the chatter amongst the industry, oh, all of a sudden, these guys are a bit different. They are going to cause us a bit of trouble and they'll need to perform. So we'll perform better, we'll lead the pack but the others will lift their game as well right across the country but particularly Queensland.

Access and inclusion. I need to say in this meeting, it was Ross Duncan and his team, actually who wrote to the government in 2022 and said we should have Year of Accessibility. That's exactly what the government announced and it was from the Spine Life Advocacy Team that made that happen.

There's many people in the community now that all of a sudden has heard the word accessibility. They couldn't even spell it before so it's a really big difference that our organisation has led that charge and the government adopted a policy and particularly now they're focusing on the tourism industry. On Friday night in Cairns, we've been nominated for our facility up there as an accessible tourism outlet so it's great to see.

Advocating for over 65s. Now, not that all of us are over 65 here but there's many people over 65 that if actually they had an accident and become a quadriplegic or paraplegic, they could not get the services they would need to live a humane and good life. We've been advocating very hard for the last couple of years to push that situation and make sure the government stand up and take note.

Now, the NDIS review will be out most [unclear] 7 December and it'll lightly touch that particular subject but I'm hoping, once they make some of those reforms, there will be money available to ensure that people over 65 can live a humane life.

As an example, you can only get out of bed one day a week with the funding provided for current pensioner funding. Whereas if you had a full package in NDIS, you can get out of bed and be treated humanely in Australia like you should be seven days a week. So it's really important.

Advocating also for over 65s to be able to work. So people on a pension, we know there's great people out there and I said to someone in the audience just earlier, you know, 80 is the new 60 and it's no different. When you're 60, you still a great contributor to society and the government shouldn't write you off and just

because you're a pensioner, you should be able to get back in the workforce without being penalised 50% of that pension.

We've worked very hard with others in the sector to try and convince the government to change. They have moved with some but now you can now claim just under \$12,000 without paying the tax. So you can do some shifts without paying 50% tax. That's out. That's been released again in the recent update from Jim Chalmers. So move from \$7,000 to just under \$12,000, which is a start. What we want to do is get them to at least \$20,000 and that'll be technical people being able to work as our support workers.

The other issue is to make sure that we've got that support in hospital and at the recent Spinal Unit media, you would see that there's quite a bit of attention on the quality of the service provided locally. Overall, it's pretty good but you're dealing with a Spinal Unit that's been there since the '80s. We've worked very closely with the government in the background and more recently, directly with the Minister to improve that Spinal Unit. Get the funding necessary and have it onsite at PA. I'm assured it will be onsite at PA and there's a business case being done at the moment. That'll be released within about 18-months to actually build that site at the Spinal Unit in PA where it currently is.

NDIS review, as I said, will come out on 7 December. We worked really hard, again with our advocacy group, to ensure that members who have trouble with NDIS, we advocate for them and get them the result they need and those plans improved.

I'd like to thank the Spinal Life Team, both from the Board - from the Chair to the Board to the Executive and the personal care workers, all the way through because we are a big machine. We've got lots of cogs and if one of those cogs don't work, the place doesn't work properly. So it's really important they're all on the same page. All gotten the goal to make sure we want to take life back with an injury and that's what I think we're focused on doing.

So to the Board, the Chair and all the Executive and then all the other staff and the members in supporting our activities, I'd like to thank you very much because it makes our job easier as we're working as one. That's really it. I think you said everything else, Chair.

Gerard O'Brien: Thanks, Mark. Okay, we'll now move on to the formal items of business set out in the notice of meeting. A copy of the minutes of last year's AGM, held on 14 November 2022, has been made available to members on our website. Unless there are any objections or questions, the minutes will be taken as read and approved.

Thank you. The minutes are approved. The next item of business is the receipt and consideration of the financial reports and the Director's and auditor's reports for the financial year ending 30 June 2023. Accounting firm, KPMG, were commissioned to complete an independent audit of the reports for this last financial period. These reports were made available to members on our website prior to today's meeting.

Members should note that these reports are not subject to a resolution today. Are there any formal comments or questions in relation to those financial reports or the management of the Company? Nothing in the room. Nothing online?

Okay, I'll keep moving on to item 4 which is the election of Directors. Director Dr Dinesh Palipana retires in accordance with the constitution and has not submitted himself for re-election. The Board wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dinesh over the past two years. Dinesh is an inspiring individual and an amazing advocate for people with disability.

Anyone who knows Dinesh knows he is an incredibly busy and capable individual with a diverse range of interests. Despite a fairly short tenure as Director, he's made a great contribution to Spinal Life Australia and will continue to support the organisation in more of an ambassadorial role into the future. On behalf of the membership, we wish Dinesh well for the future and thank him for his impact.

Following Dinesh's retirement and as there is one position available and two nominations received, according to our constitution, a ballot of members must be held. The candidate with the greatest number of votes cast in their favour at the AGM will be duly elected. From late October, members were contacted by email or post with information about how to participate in this online meeting or cast their ballots for Directors by nominating a proxy to vote on their behalf.

To assist members in their considerations, a profile of each of the candidates was provided in the notice of meeting and on our website. The two candidates standing for election to the Board are Mr Martin Hume and Ms Rebecca Tweedy. As the meeting this year is a hybrid meeting, the candidates for election will not be making any presentations.

To cast your vote in any of today's resolutions, you can click edit card below your name at the bottom of the screen. For resolutions 4(a) and (b) which is the election of Directors, please complete your vote by selecting for, against your chosen candidate and voting against or abstain for the other candidate. For all other resolutions, please complete your vote by selecting for, against or abstain. Proxy holder votes will only apply to discretionary or undirected votes. Directed votes will be applied as per the shareholder's voting instructions. Hopefully that's all clear.

Okay, so if you have another member in your household who also wishes to vote, you can click get a voting card at the bottom of the screen. They need to enter their separate member number to verify their membership. This online voting system will be available for use until the close of the meeting. If you're onsite here at Woolloongabba with us today, a staff member will assist you to access a computer if required.

I ask members and their proxies to cast their votes on this resolution now. The resolution will be left open until the voting closes at the end of today's meeting. After the close of the meeting, no more votes shall be able to be cast by members or their proxies. Following the close of this meeting, Link Market Services will

tally the ballots for each candidate for Director and make the results available on our website by the close of business today.

Okay, moving on to item 5. This year, members are also asked to vote on a special resolution to update one of the sentences in the constitution of Spinal Life Australia. The proposed change is described in more detail in the notice of meeting and on our website. The proposal relates to a minor amendment of the constitution, to update wording to ensure we're consistent with the requirements of section 149C, sub-paragraph 5 of the *Taxation Administration Act Queensland 2001*. I ask members and their proxies to cast their votes on this resolution now. The resolution will be left open until voting closes at the end of today's meeting.

Moving on to item 6 which is other business and the only item of other business is to advise that no changes are proposed to the annual subscription. Item 7. This year, we have a candidate for honorary life membership. Rule 22.1 of the constitution states that if, in the opinion of the Directors a person, whether or not they're a member of Spinal Life Australia, has made a significant contribution to the Company over a minimum period of five years, the Directors may nominate that person as an honorary life member.

The Board moves that Mark Dillman be recognised with this honour for exceptional service to and support of the organisation. Mark was part of the Spinal Life Board for 15 years including four years as Deputy Chair until he retired in September this year. During his time on the Board, Mark volunteered his time to share his invaluable legal expertise and experience, guiding Spinal Life Australia strategy and advising on key governance issues.

This period included the complex transition to the NDIS and subsequent initiatives to modernise the organisation. We thank Mark for his unwavering dedication to making a difference in the lives of our members and community. Under rule 22.2 of the constitution, Mark will become an honorary life member of Spinal Life Australia upon the nomination being approved by an ordinary resolution of members at the AGM.

The Directors unanimously recommend that members vote in favour of approving Mark's nomination as an honorary life member. I ask members and their proxies to cast their votes on Mark's nomination. As mentioned, this item will also be left open until voting closes at the end of today's meeting.

Okay, questions. So, as the official business has concluded, we'll now take questions. Are there any questions in the room? No? Shaking of heads. That's good. Are there any questions over the phone?

Operator: Chair, there are no phone questions.

Gerard O'Brien: Thank you. Are there any online questions? No?

Operator: There are no online questions.



Gerard O'Brien: Thank you, Peta. If there are no other questions, I'll move to close the voting platform and close the meeting. All voting results will be made available on our website by close of business today. As there is no further business, I declare the meeting is closed and voting has now ended. Thank you for joining us today, please stay safe and enjoy the upcoming Christmas and holiday period. That's it.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]