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australia's
national
disability
magazine

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author and
philanthropist

Dylan Alcott



In this issue: Relationships and Wellbeing / Car Conversion and Equipment plus more!

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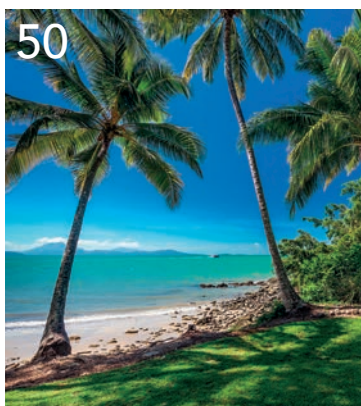


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from the editor



Welcome to our June 2019 edition of *Link*, in which we're stoked to feature Dylan Alcott as our cover story.

Dylan has had a huge 12 months – so busy it was hard to mention everything in our five-page feature story which starts on page 18!

What we love most about Dylan is the fact he is proud of who he is and his disability. He is one of Australia's most successful athletes – who also just happens to be in a wheelchair. Dylan is also nominated as best new talent in the TV Week Logie Awards for his work on ABC-TV music special 'The Set' with Linda Marigliano and ABC's coverage of the Invictus Games.

The Grand Slam tennis champion, author and philanthropist approaches everything he does with heart and soul, living by the motto that 'for every one thing you can't do, there are 10,000 things that you can'. We hope you enjoy reading Dylan's story as much as we've enjoyed telling it.

Also in this edition are great stories from Paralympian Sam Tait, who is chasing a dream to skydive solo; and US actor Paul Ford, who is part of the #Allin movement in Hollywood.

Our special features are on Car Conversion and Equipment, and Relationships and Wellbeing.

In this feature, we speak to Deakin University's Associate Professor of Disability and Inclusion, Patsie Frawley, and Associate Professor Michael Gill from the Disability Studies Program at Syracuse University, New York, on the sexual rights of people with intellectual disability.

We also visit the Adelaide headquarters of SA Care, a family run and owned disability support organisation which believes employee wellbeing is paramount.

There's also our regular NDIS, Employment and Travel sections, and much more.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Link* and be sure to connect with us on Facebook or email – we'd love to hear from you!

Kelly

Kelly Stone

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Therapist Madeleine Flynn, with Justice Chaplin, miniature horse 'Spidey' and Support Worker Sally Clay.

Sunshine Butterflies has a menagerie of furry and feathered friends helping children with disability reach their goals on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

The disability support charity offers animal assisted therapy with qualified therapists at its 'Our Backyard' hobby farm in Cooroibah.

A first for disability services in the region, the one-on-one therapy offers sessions conducted by qualified Animal Assisted Therapist Madeleine Flynn, who has a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, Masters in Environmental Science (Animal Behaviour/Ecology), and a Certificate III in dog training/behaviour.

She is assisted by equine specialist Sally Clay, who is a qualified carer with a certificate three in community care, as well as Parelli Natural Horsemanship level one and two qualifications, and a certificate in agriculture and dairy.

According to Madeleine, people with disability often respond to animals in ways they might find difficult with people.

"Animal assisted therapy is a great way to deliver therapy for those who find it difficult to open up to people. The benefits are endless and the results, often, outstanding," Madeleine said.

"Many people find it easier to form a relationship with an animal,

developing empathy and a rapport with the animal very quickly. This tendency to bond with an animal is the basis of animal-assisted therapy."

Madeleine said cuddling a duckling, feeding the ducks, grooming a miniature cow or sheep, or walking a goat, is a great way to deliver therapy. She said it relaxes the customer, allowing them to drop their inhibitions and open up more with the therapist.

"Learning to care for animals can help to develop empathy and a sense of responsibility and caring among those who may not have experienced that themselves," Madeleine said.

Sally said that in the case of equine-assisted therapy, horses are very sensitive to human behaviour and respond to subtle changes in a person's behaviour or mood. This feedback helps the person and the horse to work together to achieve the customer's goals.

Sunshine Butterflies hopes its menagerie of furry and feathered friends can help children under the guidance of a qualified therapist.

"Human-animal contact, in a peaceful, natural environment, can have a profound effect on people," Madeleine said.

"Sunshine Butterflies' beautiful five-acre peaceful oasis at Cooroibah provides the perfect environment to deliver these therapy services."

www.sunshinebutterflies.com.au

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Specialist Disability Accommodation



Special Olympics Australia has proudly welcomed home Team Australia after its successful visit to the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi.

Special Olympics Australia Chief Executive Officer Corene Strauss welcomed home the 139 members of Team Australia along with the family members and fans who travelled in support.

"Our athletes, coaches, families and fans came together to not only celebrate successes on the field of play, but to also look forward to exciting future achievements," Ms Strauss said.

"It is a tremendous honour for our athletes and a culmination of many years of effort and achievement from them, their families and their coaches to represent Australia at the largest sports and humanitarian event in the world during 2019.

"There have been so many individual and team achievements. We celebrated each with a huge outpouring of happiness and joy from every athlete, coach and spectator."

Ms Strauss said the 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi was one of the largest, most inclusive, most unified, most diverse and most successful World Games in the history of Special Olympics.



She said on returning from Abu Dhabi, the Special Olympics community enjoyed celebrating the team's achievements with local clubs around the country, before getting back to its mission of providing weekly, community-based, sporting and movement opportunities for people with intellectual disability.

"We are so grateful to our partners and supporters who have been able to help our team's journey to the games; Sport Australia, Melbourne Cricket Club, SAS, Metcash and IGA, Law Enforcement Torch Run, Goodman and Clubs NSW, along with so many private supporters from our local communities," Ms Strauss said.

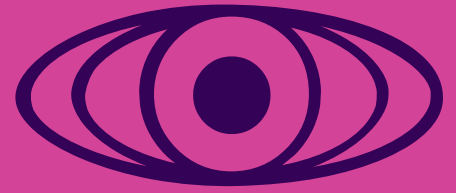
Special Olympics Australia is part of a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disability.

www.specialolympics.com.au

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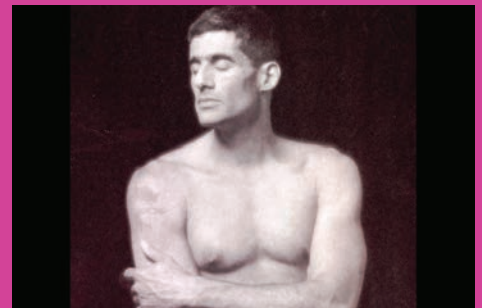
Sydney Film Festival welcomes back the Screenability program, presented in partnership with Create NSW, showcasing filmmakers with disability and their provocative and startling films.



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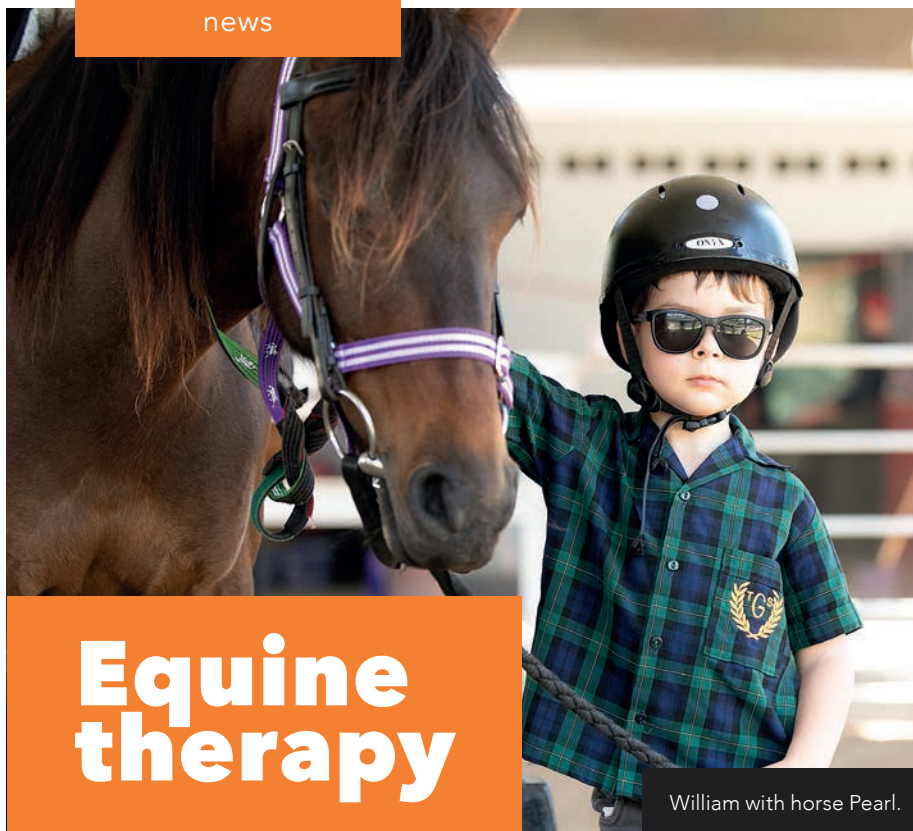
Screenability is funded by the NSW
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Equine therapy

William with horse Pearl.

More children with disability in south-east Queensland will have access to equine therapy with a \$2.4 million upgrade to Australia's largest horse riding therapy centre in Brisbane's west.

The multi-million-dollar revamp of The McIntyre Centre in Pinjarra Hills includes a plan to add a new farm stay respite centre to support families by providing short-term accommodation.

HELP Enterprises, a Brisbane-based not-for-profit that supports people with disability, began work on the McIntyre Centre upgrade about a year ago.

Work to date has included a new barn, vet room, a second wheelchair lift and extension of the main riding arena.

HELP's Managing Director Kerry Browne said the upgrade meant an additional 50 children could now be enrolled.

"We've seen the benefits first hand of therapeutic riding, which actively engages participants while also enhancing their physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and educational learning," Mr Browne said.

"Horse riding is a therapy that activates many areas of the brain and body simultaneously. Physically it also assists in the development of core muscles while also improving posture, balance and coordination – the benefits can't be understated."

Work is still underway on the new farm stay respite centre and there are plans for an onsite café to provide parents with a place they can meet and find support.

"It's an exciting time for the McIntyre Centre and HELP, and we're happy we are able to ensure this valuable facility can be open to more clients and continue to operate for many years into the future," Mr Browne said.

www.helpdisabilitycare.com.au



Social enterprise cleans up

Clean Force has won the first national cleaning contract to be awarded to a social enterprise – and 25 new jobs are set to be created.

Clean Force is a non-profit commercial cleaning company employing people with disability and people living with mental illness. Under the contract, it will provide cleaning services for 46 Mind Australia sites across Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

The partnership is part of an ongoing relationship between Clean Force and Mind Australia.

Clean Force employee Linda Port has been cleaning several of the Victorian Mind Australia sites.

She has worked at Clean Force for 10 years and said she has made new friends along the way.

"If I wasn't working, I'd be sitting at home. I like going to work and seeing everyone at the Mind offices. The people are like friends; they treat me well and look out for me," said Linda (pictured above).

www.cleanforce.com.au

www.mindaustralia.org.au

Funding boost to library services

Vision Australia's library service will receive \$500,000 funding per year, starting next year, from the NSW Government.

The funding, administered by the State Library of NSW, will allow Vision Australia to deliver a greater selection of audio and braille books to the 126,000 people who are blind or have low vision in NSW.

Through portable and accessible devices such as the DAISY player, Envoy Connect and the Vision Australia connect app, library members can access the library 24/7.

Vision Australia CEO Ron Hooton said the organisation is thrilled the

NSW Government recognises the importance of inclusivity in society.

"As the only library of its kind in the nation, we provide people with blindness, low vision or a print disability access to more than 43,000 book titles in either audio or braille," Mr Hooton said.

"For many thousands of our clients, access to the library is what helps keep them informed, entertained and educated."

NSW State Librarian Dr John Vallance welcomed the partnership with Vision Australia that complements the programs and services provided by the State Library.

"Providing equal access to



A young child explores a Feelix Kit at the Vision Australia Library.

information services to all residents of NSW is at the heart of the Library's purpose," Dr Vallance said.

The Vision Australia Library offers fiction and non-fiction book titles as well as access to hundreds of newspapers including all national daily papers, access to electronic journals and reference books, podcasts, sport fixtures and a wide range of magazines.

www.visionaustralia.org



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Lacey Amos with her mum Sharon Whitfield and brother Matthew.

Finding independence

Sharon Whitfield and Lacey Amos have the closest of mother-daughter relationships.

Lacey, 32, joined the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in February 2018. The Barcaldine woman now receives funding for support workers who visit the house for four hours a day, five days a week.

Sharon said previously, she would have thought support was not available in the Outback Queensland region, however she said “we just didn’t know they were there ... it’s all there”.

“The support workers have just opened Lacey up, she’s out this morning with people in town, she goes to bingo and goes to the library

and plays virtual reality games on their television,” Sharon said.

Along with support workers, Lacey also receives funding for occupational therapy, physiotherapists to help with her breathing and posture, and speech therapy to help with her communication as she has been non-verbal for the past 10 years.

“We’ve used some low-tech devices in the past to help her communicate, but with the speech therapist, they’re going to help us with a speech program so Lacey will be able to use her eyes to work an iPad to speak to us,” Sharon said.

Lacey’s NDIS funding has also allowed a new pathway to be built in their home, to allow easy access from a ramp through the front garden.

“This has been brilliant – we call it Lacey’s run way!” Sharon said.

In addition to the physical and social benefits for Lacey, having extra support around the home has fostered independence for Lacey, and strengthened the relationship between Lacey and Sharon.

“I honestly can’t tell you how much of a difference it’s made to Lacey and my relationship,” Sharon said.

“I get to go out and have a coffee with friends and we come back and have lunch together and have a beautiful afternoon. I can’t describe it, we’re enjoying each other’s company a whole lot more.”

Lacey’s support workers will also be on hand this year when Sharon heads to Western Australia to help her daughter Neliska as she welcomes her fifth child.

Sharon would normally rely on family to take care of Lacey, but she will now be able to find support workers to be with her throughout the day.

“Someone has your back now, and we’ve got this lovely little support group behind you if something isn’t going right,” she said.

“It gives me peace of mind to know I can go away and not have to worry.

“To know that Lacey has funding behind her if we actually need something and we don’t have to put it on hold, I just love that.”

www.ndis.gov.au 

Changes benefit deaf children

Updates to the National Disability Insurance Scheme's (NDIS) eligibility and referral processes will change the lives of thousands of Australian children with hearing loss, according to First Voice.

The organisation said the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has implemented a new approach to improve access to support via the NDIS.

Key features include: a nationally consistent eligibility criteria; an Australia-wide rapid referral pathway and an appropriate level of initial 'first plan' funding.

Seven-month-old Heath Hurrell (pictured with his sister Willow), who was born with a mild-moderate

hearing loss in both ears, has benefitted from the changes to the NDIS processes. The Hurrell family, from Copacabana in NSW, have been accessing The Shepherd Centre's early intervention services via the scheme after the NDIS recognised their eligibility and processed a plan when Heath was just a few weeks old.

Mum Katharine Hurrell said the ease of access was incredibly helpful.

"At a time when we were still shocked and confused by Heath's hearing loss, the speed with which we



were able to access an appropriate plan on the NDIS was a blessing. We didn't really know how much we would need NDIS funding and I believe that without this, we would not be able to access The Shepherd Centre's services and support, which have already been life changing for Heath and our family," said Katharine.

www.firstvoice.org.au 

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Ryan Walker (right) and his brother Blair (left).

Top Talker Ryan

When Melbourne High School student Ryan Walker chose the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) subject Extended Investigation last year, he was keen to explore a topic very close to home. Ryan has younger twin siblings, one of whom – Blair – is on the autism spectrum, who he says has made great inroads in increasing his independence thanks to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). By Carole Lander

According to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), VCE Extended Investigation students “develop, refine and extend their knowledge and skills in independent research while investigating a rigorous research question”.

Ryan’s research question was: ‘What difference has the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) made to families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) attempting to access therapy and what opportunities are there to further develop this scheme?’

Ryan, 17, said he noticed that the majority of research to date has looked at the administrative implications of the scheme, so he set out to identify the actual impact on individuals and their families.

Two surveys were administered; the first before the individualised NDIS system was rolled out, and the second when the case-by-case format was providing families with more choice about their therapeutic practices.

He also conducted interviews with participants and with a strategic adviser from the NDIA.

His results demonstrated that the NDIS had been successful in providing more therapy for children with ASD. Before the NDIS was implemented, only 62 per cent of his participants undertook more than two hours per week of therapy, contrasting with post-implementation results where the percentage grew to 85 per cent.

“It was also observable that the NDIS recorded significant improvements in alleviating financial burden, and supplying more choice,” he said.

“Despite these positive findings, I discovered three areas where improvements could be made – administration of therapy practices, staffing, and the application process.”

Ryan’s investigation also found persistent shortages in some areas of therapy, with parents experiencing long waiting lists due to the increased demand, and a desire for the application process to be simplified.

Ryan was selected to present his findings at Top Talks, an event in the VCE Season of Excellence administered by the VCAA at the Victorian State Library.

www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

Alliance20 welcomes price increase

An alliance of Australia's largest disability service providers, Alliance20, welcomed the announcement of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) price increases by the Federal Government recently.

Alliance20 sees the increases in the price of therapy and one-to-one personal supports under the NDIS as one of several urgent measures required to strengthen the scheme.

Alliance20 spokesperson and Chief Executive Officer of House with No Steps, Andrew Richardson, said that while there is more to do to ensure NDIS sustainability, this was an important step forward.

"We congratulate the Federal Government and the National Disability Insurance Agency for

recognising and responding to the severe financial pressures being experienced by not-for-profit service providers under the NDIS," Mr Richardson said.

"We have been staring down the barrel of NDIS market failure, large-scale service closures and people with disability being unable to access support services, so this is a very welcome announcement.

"We are also relieved that the announcement includes improved purchasing power for participants, who will have their plan values



Alliance20 spokesperson Andrew Richardson.

increased to cover these higher prices. The last thing we want is for people with disability to be forced to cut back on the supports they need."

Mr Richardson said Alliance20 is pushing the NDIA to continue adjusting to meet the requirements of NDIS participants and the service providers that support them.

<https://alliance20.org.au> 

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Forecasting improvements



Disability service providers must comply with registration requirements set out by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to deliver NDIS supports and services. SAI Global Assurance is an approved quality auditor of disability service providers seeking to gain registration by the NDIS Commission. SAI Global's Nathan Temple (pictured) forecasts six major improvements the disability sector will make this year.

A National Human Services Program Manager for SAI Global, Mr Temple said his forecast is based on the systems and processes that providers are now setting in place, after their audits, to gain registration by the NDIS Commission.

"Most providers who are audited make significant improvements to go to the next stage – certification. Overall, the auditing, certification and verification process ensures providers fully understand their responsibilities and the regulations that govern them. We believe this is good news for people with disability and their families, and for the industry as a whole," Mr Temple said.

He said his first forecast improvement is more accurate worker screening records, such as working with children and police checks.

"Through their audits, providers are understanding the regulations around these checks," he said.

"The definition of 'working with children' or 'vulnerable person' can catch employers out. Staff who have only occasional interaction with children and people with disability need checks. Volunteers and interns need checks, in addition to paid employees. Police checks are state-based, and are needed in each state in which an employee works. Some checks expire and need renewal. Finally, there are lots of workers from overseas in the sector, and they need a check of their history overseas before they can work in Victoria."

Mr Temple said the second improvement was better recording of incidents.

"Each state has rigid reporting requirements for the disability sector when incidents occur. The pre-certification audits require that disability service providers understand the state-specific incident recording and reporting requirements," he said.

He said the third improvement is helping people with disability to

understand and exercise their rights.

"Service providers are now providing people with disability the relevant information to enable them to exercise their rights. An example might be a service provider seeking their client's permission to discuss their plan, activities or costs with any other party. It is also important that people are given information in a way that they can understand," he said.

Mr Temple's fourth forecast improvement is ensuring people with disability receive a high standard of continued support. He said disability service providers are putting in place strong procedures to ensure that when key staff are absent, a replacement carer will give the customer the same level of support.

Documenting the requirements and outcomes of participants, and detailed procedures for high risk activities, are the final two forecast improvements.

www.saiglobal.com/en-au/ndis 

Darling Downs Deaf Hub

The Darling Downs deaf community has received a major grant which will be used to establish a Darling Downs Deaf Hub.



YellowBridge CEO Penny Hamilton with Megan Telford.

The \$95,000 grant through the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grant program, is the first grant of its type and size for the Toowoomba deaf community.

The grant will be used to formalise the Darling Downs Deaf Hub, improve community and employer opportunities, and provide skills for deaf people.

Toowoomba not-for-profit organisation YellowBridge QLD

assisted with the grant application and will provide support to help the deaf community establish the Darling Downs Deaf Hub and implement their plans over the next 12 months.

YellowBridge CEO Penny Hamilton said many in the deaf community experienced isolation.

"A lack of meaningful employment and adequate support services means people are often financially and socially vulnerable," she said.

"Part of our role as a leading disability support organisation is to

advocate on behalf of people with disability and open doors to more opportunities."

There are approximately 100 deaf people who live on the Darling Downs. Megan Telford, a spokesperson for the deaf community, will be part of establishing the hub to increase community participation.

"This grant is a major achievement for our deaf community and will enable us to provide the services and support they need," Ms Telford said.

www.yellowbridgeqld.com.au

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interview

SMASHING IT

Dylan Alcott is proud of who he is and his disability. One of Australia's most successful athletes - who also happens to be in a wheelchair - Dylan has had a huge year, becoming a mainstream TV presenter and being nominated as best new talent in the TV Week Logie Awards. The Grand Slam tennis champion, author and philanthropist approaches everything he does with heart and soul, living by the motto that 'for every one thing you can't do, there are 10,000 things that you can'. He speaks to *Link* about his passion for mainstreaming disability and what's in store next.

One of Dylan's life-long goals was always to become a presenter in the mainstream media.

"When I was growing up, one of the biggest hurdles for me to overcome was that when I turned on

the TV or watched a movie, I never saw anyone like me," said Dylan.

Late last year, Dylan co-hosted series one of ABC-TV's music special 'The Set' with Triple J colleague Linda Marigliano. It is this hosting gig, as well as his work on ABC's coverage of

The Invictus Games, which resulted in his Logies nomination for the Graham Kennedy Award for Most Popular New Talent. In addition, Dylan was part of the commentary team for Channel 9's coverage of the Australian Open in January and has also appeared on Channel 10's 'The Project'.

In addition to his mainstream media work, Dylan is big on social media, with more than 103,000 Instagram followers. He believes social media has done a lot in making disability more visible, with younger generations now seeing people with disability in their news feeds.

"For kids and young adults now, I know that seeing people on their screens, on their phones, would really help inspire them to kick on, and if I can have even the smallest impact on that, that's my job done," he said.

"I know I've made a difference when I see five to six-year-olds in mini wheelchairs smiling watching me at tennis training, or playing doubles with Heath (Davidson). That's a real goose bump-worthy moment for me.



Dylan Alcott at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games (image courtesy Paralympics Australia).

"My manager was watching me train at the Australian Open and overheard this young girl ask her mum, 'Mummy, why is that boy playing tennis in a wheelbarrow?'. The mum

responded, 'That's a wheelchair sweetie, that's Dylan Alcott'."

As an elite athlete, Dylan has won three gold medals in two different sports (tennis and basketball) at the

Paralympic Games. Last year he won his fifth consecutive Australian Open wheelchair quad singles tennis title and became a World Champion, winning the ITF World Team Cup – the wheelchair tennis equivalent of the Davis and Fed Cup.

Dylan's athletic achievements earned him the 2016 Newcombe Medal – the highest honour in Australian tennis and the first time it was awarded to a wheelchair tennis athlete.

Dylan recalls this moment in his book, 'Able', writing about his acceptance speech, in which he said: "I see myself as an elite athlete, first and foremost, who just happens to have a disability, who uses a wheelchair to play ... to have this award given to a disabled athlete in an able-bodied dominated world, it means a lot ...".

Just as disability sport and Paralympic sport is gradually becoming more mainstream, Dylan believes the past year or so has been 'huge' for inclusion generally.

"This is something I have really enjoyed watching and being a part of," Dylan said.

"I think there is always going to be improvements we can all make, but that's with everything. As society becomes more aware of how easy it is to include everyone, anywhere, I think things will rapidly change.

"Personally, I saw a huge change at the Australian Open this year when Channel 9 gave me the chance to interview the big stars like Rafa and Federer (Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer) on court and we were able to conduct an interview just like



Right: Dylan and Heath Davidson at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games (image courtesy Paralympics Australia).

Below: Dylan in Melbourne (image by Little Red Jet).

Opposite page: Dylan with Linda Marigliano on ABC TV's The Set, (photo credit Georgia Maloney).

anyone else, no matter my chair – and therefore height deficit – or disability.”

Dylan said he loves his life, wheelchair and all.

“I have a great life. In fact, I’d go as far to say one of the best,” he said.

“Sure, there are days where I’m sure it could be easier, but I don’t know any different and I’m not interested in it either. Everyone has the choice to decide how they approach and act on their situation and personal circumstance, and I’m very much in the mindset that you make your own opportunities and it’s how you act on them that matters.”

As well as changing perceptions around disability, Dylan has another passion that is close to his heart – music.

The Dylan Alcott Foundation’s second annual Ability Fest music festival was held at Coburg Velodrome in Melbourne on April 7. With a gold-medal line up of live Australian music, Ability Fest 2019 aimed to use music as an inclusive platform to normalise disability.



“I see myself as an elite athlete, first and foremost, who just happens to have a disability, who uses a wheelchair to play ...”

“Music Festivals were the first place I felt truly accepted, and they are just so bloody fun,” Dylan said.

“I am lucky enough to have friends around me who would give me a lift or push when needed, but some people don’t have that network or opportunity or the physical conditions simply don’t allow it.

“Creating Ability Fest, the first accessible music festival in the world, has been a dream of mine for a while and so when my great mates at The Untitled Group volunteered their expertise and time, a dream became a reality.





Dylan's focus in coming months is on his tennis (image courtesy Paralympics Australia).

"I'm just enjoying everything that's thrown at me. When you love what you do and the people you get to do it with, no matter what happens, life is pretty sweet."

"For everyone to come together with their family and friends and be able to see/hear/feel the lyrics together via AUSLAN interpreters and beacons, all connected via accessible pathways, brings me the biggest joy."

The 2018 Ability Fest raised just under \$200,000 for the Foundation, with the first grant from money raised going to eight-year-old Jin, who received a customised tennis wheelchair.

"Giving our first grant to young Jin was a huge moment for my family and I. We had worked so hard to create a foundation that truly reflected the

single thing that was a pivotal moment for me in my teens – something or someone to believe in you and your dream," Dylan said.

"Being able to grant Jin with a custom tennis chair that will truly enable him to take his tennis and his confidence on the court to the next level, is exactly what the foundation was set up for."

Dylan enjoyed writing his book 'Able' as a way of getting some of the hardest and funniest moments of his life 'out there', and he's already in talks with his publisher about other opportunities.

For now, Dylan's focus is on tennis, competing in the French Open (at time of publication) and Wimbledon in July.

Once he returns from Europe, Dylan heads into training for his final grand slam of the year in New York City.

"I've been working with my team on finding that all elusive work-life balance but for now, I'm just enjoying everything that's thrown at me. When you love what you do and the people you get to do it with, no matter what happens, life is pretty sweet," he said.

www.dylanalcottfoundation.com.au 🌀



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Learning to fly

Sam Tait is best known as a Paralympic alpine skier but the 28-year-old Sydney man has another dream he wants to achieve - skydiving solo.

Paralympic skier Sam Tait learning to fly at iFly Indoor Skydiving in Sydney.

Sam has been a keen participant at iFly Indoor Skydiving in Sydney in recent months, as he works towards realising his skydiving dream.

Five years ago, Sam had a motorbike accident and became a T-10 complete paraplegic.

An experience skier before his accident, Sam turned to sit-skiing to maintain his love of the sport he had enjoyed all his life.

Sam first competed professionally in 2016, qualifying for the 2017 IPC Alpine Skiing Europa Cup in Veysonnaz, Switzerland. He then competed in the 2018 Winter Paralympics held in South Korea, where he came 11th in the Men's Downhill Sitting and 17th in the Men's Giant Slalom Sitting events.

He competed in the 2019 World Para Alpine Skiing Championships in

Slovenia, where he finished sixth in the Men's Downhill Sitting and 10th in the Men's Giant Slalom Sitting.

He is currently working towards qualification for the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing. In addition to his skiing success, Sam is also ranked sixth in the world in CrossFit.

Sam said while he had always loved skiing, with his family owning the Corroboree Ski Lodge at Perisher, he had also wanted to try skydiving since he was a child.

"I thought that my accident had shattered my dream to fly," Sam said.

"But with iFly Indoor Skydiving, I'm able to prepare for the day I really do get to jump out of a plane!"

iFly Indoor Skydiving Downunder, located in Penrith, recently installed a disability harness which allows easy entry into the simulation tunnel for all abilities.

Sam said having a facility like iFly Indoor Skydiving gives him the unique opportunity to learn to fly in a safe, secure and all-ability friendly environment.

"My dream is to jump out of a plane and I am so thrilled that the team at iFly Indoor Skydiving can help me achieve this goal," he said.

"No matter what your ability you can still get out there and have fun and experience all that the world has to offer."

iFly Indoor Skydiving has been in Australia since 2013. Sydney plays host annually to the Australian Indoor Skydiving Championship, the country's only all-ability competition, which Sam is currently in training to compete in.

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#Allin for change, in Hollywood and beyond

When actor Paul Ford was a child, he spent a lot of time watching TV—in a hospital, as he recovered from broken bones and surgeries to repair them. And he never saw actors who were like him.



Paul (pictured below) was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, which means his bones are extremely fragile. His brother, father, and youngest daughter have it as well, though his daughter receives treatments to keep it in check.

"My brother and I were lucky to have our mum, because no matter what I told her I wanted to do, my mum always said, 'yes you can do that, go do it!' My mum was bold. She's my hero," said Paul, who lives in southern California in the United States.

But even with supportive parents, Paul said without role models in certain career paths, children are subconsciously shown that they have limits.

"As a child, the only way that I thought someone with disability could be on TV was in a commercial like the ones I did for disability service provider Easterseals when I was six or seven," he said.

In the mid-1990s, Paul and his brother were professional musicians touring the country together.

"We saw a lot of discrimination, so we took our professional photos from the chest up so people wouldn't know we had a disability until we had a contract," he said.

Then in 1998, Paul was married with a child on the way, so he went into finance and settled in Kansas where he did a few small films, including a horror film in 2009 that "re-sparked my acting bug."

But he didn't have the opportunity to fully focus on acting until about three years ago, when Paul moved back to California because his daughter wanted to attend UCLA

"We saw a lot of discrimination, so we took our professional photos from the chest up so people wouldn't know we had a disability until we had a contract."

(University of California, Los Angeles). He relished the opportunity.

Paul worked a part-time job and began acting classes while he applied for roles, many in finance or at a bank, an industry he knows well. But he hasn't had much luck. A film with Eileen Grubba in 2018, *What About The Boy*, is one of the few projects he has been able to do since focussing on his acting talent.

"I only get called in for someone to play a gnome, for example. I can be lawn décor, but I can't be a financial planner, which I actually did for my career?" he said.

Paul believes that Hollywood needs to take the lead to start showing people of all abilities doing different jobs especially, he said, because children see it and believe

things about themselves and their potential career paths based on how people are portrayed.

Recently, Paul decided that he wanted to help actors with disability to get ahead.

"It's expensive to be an actor. You need classes, headshots, demo reels, memberships, etc. If I could help alleviate those costs, it would give them a greater chance," he said.

Late last year, Paul teamed up with actress and disability advocate Eileen Grubba to hold their first free workshop for 20 people in Los Angeles. Photographer Peggy Warny joined them to teach how to get the perfect headshot and provide a free headshot to each attendee.


Paul, Eileen, and others are part of the #Allin movement to include



people with disability in all industries.

"We're all in to make a change. I don't want any kid to sit in a hospital watching TV and think, 'I don't see anyone like me. How do I fit in?' And I want my kids to see that Dad's not crazy trying to chase a dream, and that 'if my dad can do it, so can I'," Paul said.

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Jamboxx: hands-free music making

Making music is fun, educational, social and a great creative outlet, but people with disability often struggle to find ways to fully participate in music making. The Jamboxx is a new, midi-controlled wind instrument which is perfect for people with minimal head movement or breath control. Jamboxx player and co-founder Dave Whalen speaks to Music Writer Anthea Skinner from his headquarters in the United States.

The Jamboxx looks like an electronic harmonica, which is played by sipping or puffing into the mouthpiece, and moving it left or right to change the note.

"The Jamboxx is actually a computer controller and it's been designed so that you could interface with different types of musical software," said Dave, who was paralysed in a skiing accident aged 19.

Jamboxx is the brainchild of Dave, who had a passion for music but found his options were limited because of his disability, and his musician neighbour Mike DiCesare.

"The idea behind Jamboxx was to be able to use technology to overcome some of the disadvantages of traditional instruments when it comes to relying on someone's use of their hands to strum a guitar or play a piano," Dave said.

"Users on ventilators with very little head movement and very little breath control are able to achieve maximum volume very quickly."

One of the great strengths of the Jamboxx is that it allows people to learn an instrument in the same way as traditional learners, by learning to read sheet music

and participating in mainstream school or community bands.

"I find the pleasure of the project has been the ability to learn about traditional musical instruments with technology and to translate that to learning with the Jamboxx," Dave said.

"The controller translates head movement and breath control into piano keystrokes, into high-quality digital electric samples that imitate those traditional sounds in countless ways."

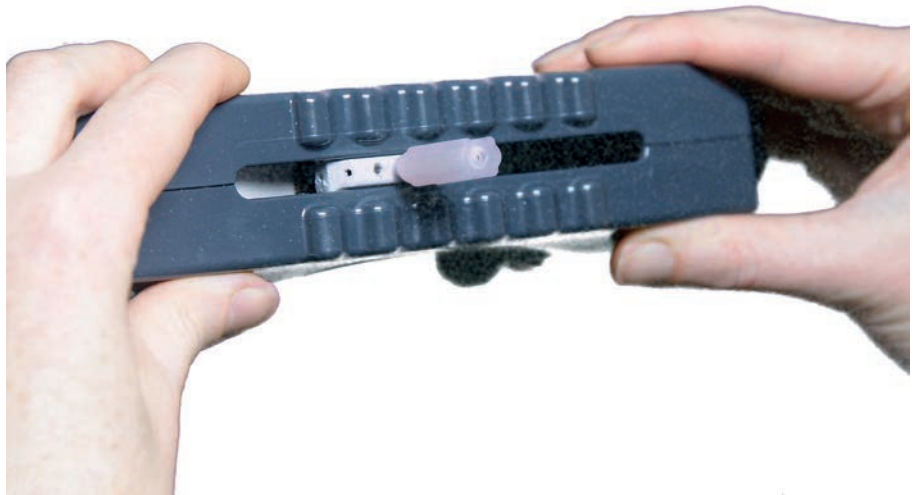
However, as a midi-controlled instrument, the Jamboxx can also do things that traditional instruments can't.

At left, Dave Whalen performs, and right, the Jamboxx.

"You can trigger samples and you can play them back at different speeds and different pitch sounds," Dave said.

"You can trigger people's singing or all kinds of electronic synthesizer sounds and these can be looped, so very quickly you can start doing all kinds of crazy musical sounds through electronics and through the computer which can be recorded and shared with others and even played over the Internet."

Despite this, you only need basic computer skills to get started and Dave has found that one of the



most common problems is people forgetting to turn their speakers up! The Jamboxx comes with a learning game, similar to Guitar Hero, to help get new players started.

"Music in general delivers such a wonderful experience just being able to participate," Dave said.

"For me that's very special because it had been over 30 years and I really had no other alternatives. I wanted to be part of it but I had given up. Now to see other individuals using the Jamboxx and exploring music, it's rewarding."

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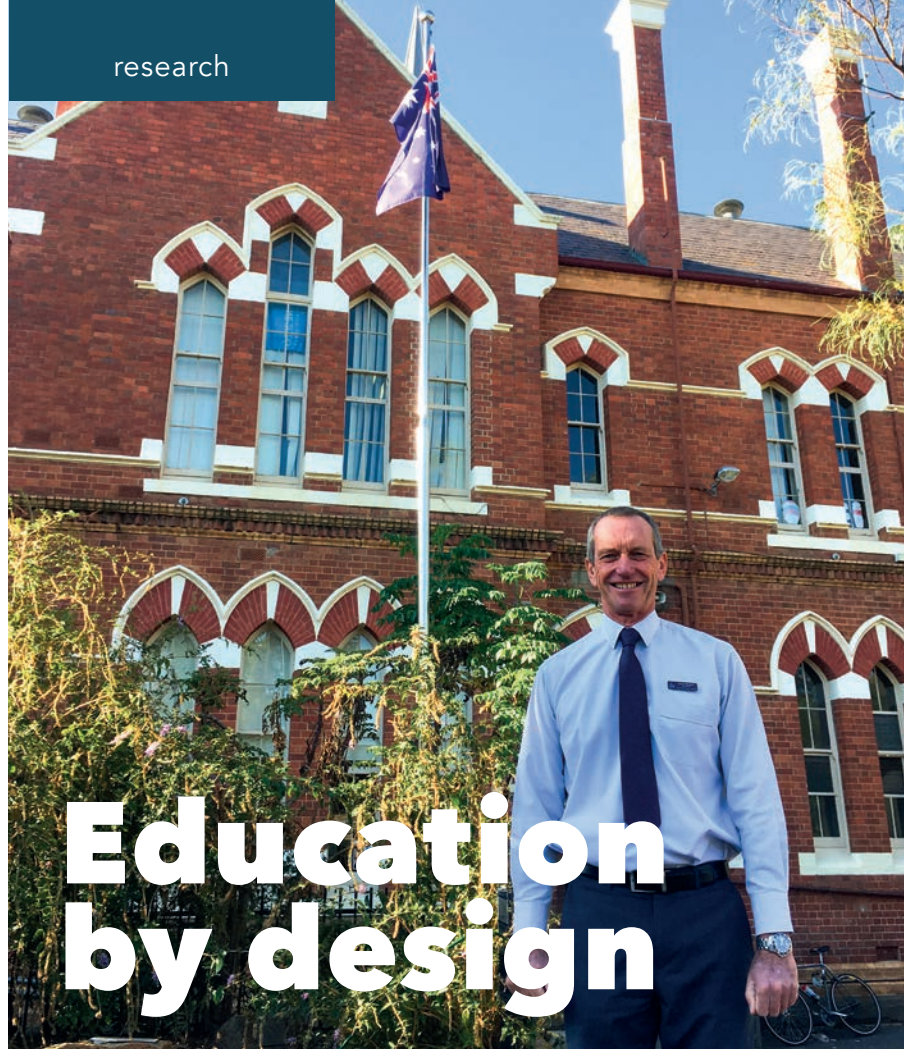


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Principal Chris Barker at Camp Hill Primary School, Bendigo.

Education by design

Link writer Dave Fagg reports on an initiative which is successfully co-designing continuous supports for students with disability in mainstream education.

The inclusion of children with disability in mainstream schools often comes with a desire for inclusion to happen, but do the necessary skills exist to match this desire?

This is the challenge that Dr Teresa Iacono is tackling, along with her team at the La Trobe University Rural Health School. They bring together teachers from special development schools, allied health professionals, and primary schools in Bendigo, and then develop ways to truly include children with disability in mainstream education.

Asked about the aim of the project, Dr Iacono said: "We would like schools and families to know what 'good' would look like. What would

the possibilities be? We would like people to get a better view of what inclusion of children with disability in education could look like, beyond just placing them with an education support worker."

To do that, Dr Iacono's team used a co-design model. This involves getting the relevant people around a table to design educational supports and interventions for a child, whether or not they have NDIS support. These people include parents, disability consultants, mainstream teaching staff, allied health professionals, and teachers from special development schools.


Chris Barker, principal at Bendigo's Camp Hill Primary School, is a keen supporter of this approach. With

increasing numbers of children at Camp Hill with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis, he put his school forward to be a participant in the research.

"We are seeing more children with a formal diagnosis coming into our school. We constantly find that demand exceeds our ability to provide. One significant challenge is that we don't always have the necessary expertise within our teaching staff. That's where the co-design research has been so helpful," Mr Barker said.

Mr Barker puts in a referral to one of the specialist schools in Bendigo to gain assistance.

"Their staff will come out and give our staff recommendations and strategies for supporting a particular student. This is not just a one-off; it's an ongoing model of support," he said.

Dr Iacono is keen to recruit more schools for ongoing research projects. Interested readers can get in touch with her at T.iacono@latrobe.edu.au. <http://fea-inclusiveschools.org.au> 

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People with disability are too often seen as inherently vulnerable, without agency in relation to sexuality and relationships, according to the convenor of a masterclass in sexuality and intellectual disability held recently at Deakin University.

The Disability and Inclusion Unit within Deakin's School of Health and Social Development brought together leading researchers, including researchers with lived experience of intellectual disability, in a unique masterclass on sexuality and intellectual disability.

The masterclass convenor, Deakin Associate Professor of Disability and Inclusion Patsie Frawley, said the event explored the way sexuality and disability is understood and responded to by researchers, service providers and policy makers, and how this work can be done in partnership with people with intellectual disability.

"As part of the upcoming royal commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people

with disability, we must engage with these issues and see the complexity of developing strong prevention approaches that also acknowledge the sexuality and relationship rights of people with disability," Associate Professor Frawley said.

"It's important that sex and relationships can be discussed in a way that acknowledges the full experience for people with intellectual disabilities. We want sexuality in the lives of people with an intellectual disability to be understood from their perspective."

Associate Professor Frawley said the newly-announced royal commission into disability abuse was an opportunity for research like hers to join with advocacy to help pave the way for greater sexual autonomy for people with disability.

"Sexual abuse is an ever-present issue in the lives of people with intellectual disability. We do not know the full extent of this abuse," she said.

"So, unfortunately, by necessity any conversations about sexuality for those living with disability will overlap with discussions about violence and abuse. But we want to frame that conversation in an authentic and balanced way.

"Services are improving all the time in responding to the sexual abuse of people with disability, but we need to get the response right. These services are only effective if people are heard and believed when they disclose abuse."

Associate Professor Frawley said people with intellectual disability were most silenced in this space, but

L-R: Sarina Rakidzic, international presenter Associate Professor Michael Gill, Deakin University Associate Professor Patsie Frawley, Rhys Nagas, Cameron Bloomfield and Linda Stokoe. Photo courtesy Simon Fox, Deakin University.

programs like Deakin's 'Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships' aimed to provide tools of empowerment.

"This is a peer education program, which means it's facilitated by people with intellectual disability who engage with their peers around issues of sexuality and enable them to share their stories," she said.

"Our research and work with nearly 60 peer educators across Australia has shown that being a peer educator itself is an empowering and positive step towards changing the story about sexuality, sexual violence and abuse in the lives of people with intellectual disability."

"It's important that sex and relationships can be discussed in a way that acknowledges the full experience for people with intellectual disabilities.

Linda Stokoe, a peer educator, researcher and trainer in the Deakin program, said it was important for her to be able to change attitudes about sexuality and intellectual disability.

"I'm in their shoes," Ms Stokoe said.

Associate Professor Frawley said people with intellectual disability were people like anyone else.

"People with intellectual disability, like anyone else, have all sorts of feelings, needs, experiences and questions, and we have to be ready to hear those," she said.

Associate Professor Michael Gill, one of the international presenters

at the masterclass, spoke about how society has developed an 'extraordinary' sexuality for people with intellectual disability that is without intimacy, without choices, and without reproductive rights.

"This understanding also goes some way to explaining what underpins the experiences of abuse of people with intellectual disability that might come to light in the royal commission. It's crucial we dismantle those systemic issues of power, control and isolation," Associate Professor Frawley said.

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Associate Professor Michael Gill at the sex and intellectual disability masterclass at Deakin University. Photo courtesy Simon Fox, Deakin University.

masterclass was the work we've done with people with intellectual disability telling their stories to inform us how to gather around them in a way that supports their rights," she said.

"We're used to coming from a place of regulation. For too long, where there has been any work done on sex and intellectual disability, it has been about the changing, the stopping, the regulating, and really that is such a ridiculous point to start from.

"Michael talks about this in his book as an 'extraordinary' sexuality and that's not in a good way ... we've just got to keep breaking down the barriers and working directly with people with intellectual disability is an important part of the process."

Associate Professor Gill said what he found most impressive about Deakin's 'Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships' program was its focus on peer educators – people with intellectual disability who engaged with their peers around issues of sexuality.

"The peer educators' aspect is not symbolic, it's not for show ... they are the experts, the creatives, the ones doing the peer education. I think the international community needs to pay attention to what's happening at Deakin, because this is the kind of work that's going to help with not only less violent futures but also the right to sexual expression and sexual agency," he said.

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Already doing it

People with intellectual disability have a right to sexual expression, according to international expert Associate Professor Michael Gill from the Disability Studies Program at Syracuse University, New York.

"It's time, it's well beyond time, for people with disability to have their sexual rights recognised," said Associate Professor Gill, who was in Australia recently as keynote speaker at a masterclass on sexuality and intellectual disability at Deakin University.

The author of 'Already Doing It: Intellectual disability and sexual agency', Associate Professor Gill spoke to *Link* along with masterclass convenor Deakin Associate Professor, Disability and Inclusion, Patsie Frawley.

"From my perspective, any time you can get 70-plus people in a room wanting to talk about sex and disability, it's an exciting space," Associate Professor Gill said.

"What was particularly motivating for me, was the fact we were able to highlight some key messages, one of which was that all people, including

people with intellectual disability, have a right to sexual expression.

"We can have conversations around sexual assault and violence when it comes to intellectual disability, but if we're not also embracing issues around sexual identity, gender identity and sexual pleasure, then we're having an incomplete conversation.

"We need to get a little bit more aspirational, where people with intellectual disability can have complete lives, and sexuality and reproduction are an important part of that conversation."

Associate Professor Frawley said an important message from the masterclass was to "start with the person".

"Often, we start with the policy or the restrictions, what we can or can't do, but what we talked about at the

Love blossoms at work

Love blossoms for some people at work and this was certainly the case for two couples at House with No Steps' Medical Packs and Supplies, a workplace which provides employment opportunities for people with disability in Lambton, New South Wales.

Elizabeth and Michael Matherson have been together for 15 years. They have worked together at the medical packaging service for seven years.



"He was a bit shy when we first met," said Elizabeth.

"It's nice to work together. He's a hard worker and I like that about him. We are a really good team – both in and out of work."

Adam and Alison Porter have been together for 18 years. They first laid eyes on each other back in 2000, when the House with No Steps packaging business was run by another service provider.

"When we first met, I thought Alison

was a very nice and beautiful young lady. She's still that today," said Adam.

"While we work together, we do have different responsibilities. We're not together all the time, which helps keep the romance alive."

So, what's their secret to a happy union?

"Happy wife, happy life," laughed Adam, "in all seriousness, we help each other out quite a lot. That's what makes our relationship great."

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If it's not fun, don't come

Staff wellbeing is paramount at SA Care, an Adelaide family run and owned disability support organisation which believes its employees including support workers must be happy and healthy to provide the best quality care to their clients.

SA Care has its own head office gym complete with a personal trainer who runs fitness sessions open to support workers and corporate staff. The office is dog-friendly, with employees bringing their dogs to work in the aim of helping the wellbeing of both staff and clients.

General Manager, Client Relations and Service Delivery, Chloe Kempe said the company recognises that its employees are at the heart of everything it does.

"It starts with our people being the most important part of our business," Ms Kempe said.

"We can't operate without our team being physically and emotionally fit. Working in this sector has its challenges as well as its rewards, so we really looked at how we could support our employees to be at

their best both personally and professionally."

SA Care has its roots as a family business, and Ms Kempe said the family had always loved dogs.

"We introduced dogs to the workplace 15 years ago now and the wellbeing aspect of having dogs in the office has grown organically," she said.

"But it highlighted to us along the way how incredibly important the emotional support of animals is in the workplace, particularly during those times of pressure, or traumatic times if you're confronted with something unexpected.

"People often prefer animals, rather than depending on other people, for support. And animals know when something is wrong, the dogs really do; they bring you a toy and come up to you because they are sensing something's not right. If

At left: Chloe Kempe (left) with team members and personal trainer Salli Toovey (front) and some of the dogs in the office. Right: Salli takes Milly through a work out, and Stanley the English Bulldog.

anyone in the office is having a tough day, there's always a dog that will go to them."

SA Care introduced gym sessions three years ago and staff can work out with personal trainer and wellness coach Salli Toovey in the full-scale gym every day of the week.

"When we first started the gym, sometimes it was just me working out, but now we have around 10 people every lunch time and sometimes whole teams do a session together in the evenings," Ms Kempe said.

In addition to the gym, SA Care has a 'healthy choices' staff fridge delivered weekly from family grocer

Schinella's, as well as a bar facility for staff and client celebrations.

Ms Kempe said there is a direct correlation between the company's health and wellbeing program and the attraction of "really great quality staff".

"Attracting the right people is so important in our business, and it's so important to make sure we keep our people engaged and we retain our

employees," Ms Kempe said.

"The value of salary shouldn't be the only thing motivating your employees; we want our staff to look forward to coming to work every day.

"We've got a value here, 'if it's not fun, don't come', and we're really proud to promote positivity in the workplace with animals and exercise."

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Getting social

Social connection is important for everyone, and for 25-year-old Alice Waterman, seeing friends and going out are among her favourite activities.



“I like going to movies and going out for lunch,” Alice said.

“My favourite event that I went to recently was the Adelaide Fringe. I also like reading comic books, reading gossip magazines and playing board games.”

Alice, from Adelaide, is supported by SA Care, and works two half-days a week as a graphic designer at Blend Creative, publisher of *Link* magazine.

“I love my job and I do enjoy the social aspect of work, as all the staff are very nice,” Alice said.

“I also love the staff at SA Care.

When I go out, my carers and my nurses go out with me and we have a wonderful time.”

Alice (pictured left) encourages people with disability to go out as much as they can.

“If you don’t go out, you should give it a go; you may just love it,” she said.

“For me, going out is really important because I love getting out in the community. I would say never give up; you can do anything if you just put your mind to it.”

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Virtual centre for women and girls

A new virtual centre for women and girls with disability will be launched early next year.

The virtual centre is being established by Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), and aims to improve rights and wellbeing for women and girls.

WWDA received funding from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Information Linkages and Capacity Building program to design and develop the centre, with women and girls with disability across Australia leading development of the centre at every stage.

WWDA project manager Naomi Thomson said there is a project steering committee and expert advisory panel comprising a diverse group of women with disability with expertise across a range of areas.

"The virtual centre is very much being developed by women and girls with disability, for women and girls with disability," Naomi said.

"WWDA is currently undertaking a range of stakeholder engagement activities including a wide-reaching online survey, various meetings and focus groups, and will also ensure the virtual centre undergoes rigorous user-testing by women and girls with disability later in the year."

The virtual centre will be a one-



WWDA's Heidi La Paglia and Naomi Thomson working on the Virtual Centre.

"The virtual centre is very much being developed by women and girls with disability, for women and girls with disability."

stop website that provides accessible, inclusive and practical resources and information for women and girls with disability, their families, friends, support persons, and carers.

Naomi said the virtual centre will focus on providing information and supporting the rights of women and girls with disability in four key areas: decision-making; leadership and participation; sexual and reproductive health; and safety from all forms of violence.

"These four areas have been identified as priorities by women with disability in Australia through community-wide consultation and engagement processes, backed by an extensive and growing body of evidence-based research," she said.

"There is currently a lack of information available on these four priority areas in formats that are

inclusive and accessible to women and girls with disability. The virtual centre will attempt to address this gap by providing a range of resources including, for example, guides to basic human rights, 'how-to' toolkits, videos, links and personal stories."

The virtual centre will also provide information that may assist front-line workers, services and policy workers to make referral pathways and mainstream services more inclusive of, and accessible to, women and girls with disability.

"The longer-term goal of the virtual centre is that by providing needed information and resources, it will contribute to building and strengthening the capacity of women and girls with disability to enjoy their human rights on an equal basis as others," Naomi said.

www.wwda.org.au 



stop shop for high-level assessment, driver training, equipment selection and vehicle modification.

This is the aim of PME's DREAM facility.

Bill said the facility aims to cater for drivers with significant physical disabilities, for whom off-the-shelf solutions are not available.

"Our DREAM facility culminates experience gained over 30 years of modifying vehicles and building networks within the industry," Bill said.

"We have partnered with a select group of focussed industry professionals who are dedicated to restoring people's independence.

"If you have satisfied the Australian medical guidelines to drive, we aim to have most clients driving on the day with one of our highly versatile evaluation vehicles that can be rapidly modified to suit a plethora of disabilities.

"You will have our state-of-the-art engineering workshop and team of highly skilled technicians at your disposal to make any adjustments or even fabricate solutions on the spot to maximise your ability and get you behind the wheel. A specialist driving instructor will be available to take you for a lesson tailored to your learning pace and capabilities."

The DREAM facility's fleet of vehicles include SPACEDRIVE electronic mobility control technology with an array of digital input devices catering for high-level requirements, along with an instructor's dual control console. The controls are certified to the highest European standards,

A DREAM FACILITY

Problem Management Engineering (PME) has capitalised on 30 years' experience in the vehicle conversion industry by launching its Driver Rehab Engineering Assessment and Management (DREAM) facility.

The new specialist division of PME provides a one-stop shop for high-level assessment, driver training, equipment selection and vehicle modification.

PME was founded in 1989 by Bill Georgas, who has built the Sydney-based company into a leading vehicle modifier for disability driving controls in Australia, as well as being respected internationally.

Bill said drivers with disability faced a number of challenges to get on the road.

"If you are a driver with disability, you will know that it is no easy task navigating the bureaucratic red tape to get your licence," Bill said.

"Whether you held your full licence prior to acquiring a disability, or need to start from scratch, the

assessment, training and licencing process can be long, drawn out and downright frustrating. Not to mention all the different parties you need to co-ordinate to make it all happen ... occupational therapists (OTs), driving instructors, vehicle modifiers, licencing authorities and funding bodies are just a few of the professionals involved.

"Most funding bodies also require that you have trialled the equipment being prescribed which means tracking down a vehicle with the most suitable modifications and reviewing those modifications with your OT."

The team at PME asked themselves, what if all the industry professionals, assessment vehicles and knowledge was housed under the one roof? Or as Bill describes, a one-

Right: Mechanical interface foot steering with direct feedback. Opposite page: The Spacedrive Evaluator in action.

the same standards motor vehicle manufacturers have to comply to.

Other vehicle configurations available to assess clients with physical challenges include a lowered floor wheelchair self-drive evaluation vehicle, sensitised low effort steering evaluation vehicle, mechanical interface foot steering with direct feedback, complex short stature seating alignment and control configurations, direct mechanical linkage to prosthesis interfacing systems and an array of high-tech secondary function control systems.

The DREAM facility is the only centre of its type in Australia and has assisted in getting drivers back



behind the wheel across Australia and even New Zealand.

"If you think you may have been previously fobbed off into the too hard basket, or never even considered getting behind the wheel, don't give up until you have been in touch with us," Bill said.

"Our accolades speak for themselves. Some of our previous

clients who have undergone assessment, training, had their vehicle modified and regained their licence include a quadruple above-joint amputee and multiple clients with a wide range of complex disabilities.

"Driving for them began only as a dream, and we assisted in making it a reality."

www.pme.com.au 



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Athena Pavlis-Goard is the latest happy customer of Sydney-based Freedom Motors Australia, which has been converting vehicles for wheelchair access for more than 20 years.



Athena Pavlis-Goard with the team at Freedom Motors Australia.

board so I can hang my shopping and other items safely without them falling all over the place while I'm driving. My portable folding ramp and fire extinguisher also have their own spots.

"The team also placed some of the emergency release functions at a level in the van I could reach myself and not have to depend on someone else to come along."

Athena said she was most impressed that Freedom really listened to her needs and delivered exactly what she asked for.

"During the modification process, they continually checked in with me along the way. More importantly, this team really get that my van is not just a modified van they worked on. They know it is a van that significantly gives me the freedom and independence to go where I want to go with ease and convenience," she said.

"I have named my new van 'Aquila Freedom'. Aquila is Latin for eagle and it certainly does feel like I am flying when I am driving! I can participate within my community, participate in employment and socialise with friends and family. And the team at Freedom really understands how important this is!"

www.freedommotorsaustralia.com.au

A personal touch

Athena has used Freedom for two vehicle conversions, in 2008 and 2019, and said while both times were like working with family, this time she was especially impressed with the company's approach to meeting her personal requests.

Converting her second Hyundai i-Load because she "loves the way they run", Athena said the "real magic is when the team at Freedom gets in and reconfigures the inside".

"I now have a different and updated set of hand controls. Instead of the push brake and pull accelerator functions, I now have a push for brake and the light pull of a trigger for the accelerator. This function has put less stress on my right shoulder and driving on the motorway is now a real pleasure," she said.

"The team then got creative by meeting some of my personal requests. They installed an umbrella stand, a storage space and a hook

Vehicle Modifications and the NDIS

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports may include funding for vehicle modifications.

Vehicle modifications are changes to a vehicle, or the installation of equipment to enable a participant to access a vehicle and, in some cases, operate one.

The National Disability Insurance Agency may also fund supports related to personal transport and vehicle modifications such as assistance with getting an endorsed licence or driving lessons to use the modified vehicle.

To assess whether vehicle modifications will provide the

necessary and appropriate support, people will need to discuss their needs and goals with their NDIS planner and may need to provide information from their allied health team, such as an occupational therapist.

For a participant to receive funding for the modifications, they also need to have a licence for the vehicle at the time of the request, or be assessed as having the capacity to obtain a licence.

Other factors such as the suitability and anticipated use of the vehicle as well as alternative transport



options will also help determine which supports are most appropriate for any individual.

People can discuss their transport options including vehicle modifications as part of the NDIS planning process.

www.ndis.gov.au/participants/home-equipment-and-supports/equipmentassitive-technologies/vehicle-modifications 

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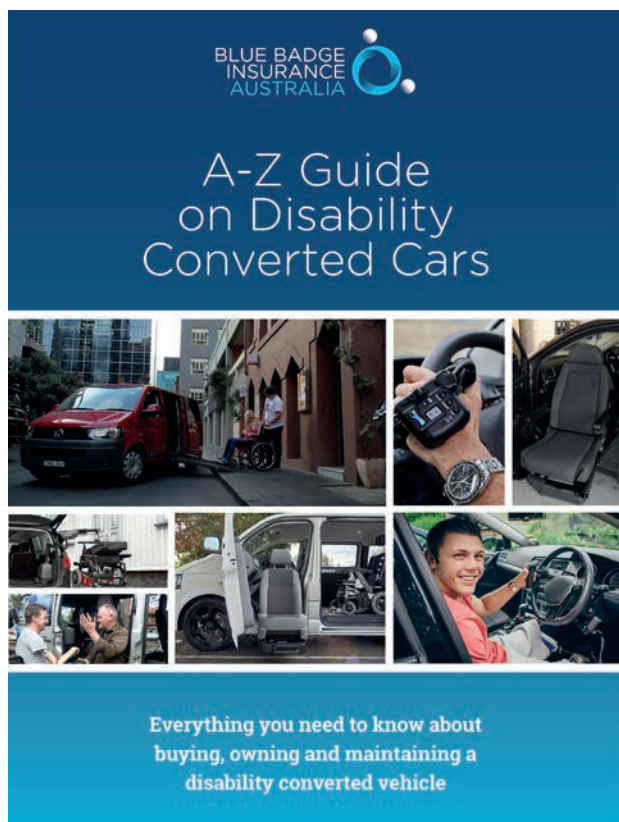
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Blue Badge Insurance Australia has developed a comprehensive guide on car conversions.

THE A-Z OF CAR CONVERSIONS

As Australia's first mobility and independence insurance specialist, Blue Badge Insurance is focussed on delivering tailored and comprehensive insurance products for Australians with disability.

Blue Badge Insurance Chief Executive Officer Nik Witcombe said the business developed its A-Z Guide on Disability Converted Cars to help people with disability with relevant information on buying, converting and insuring a vehicle.

"Disability converted cars can be complicated and the purchase process is often stressful and overwhelming. But if you do your homework, you can get a vehicle that meets all your needs both

now and well into the future," Mr Witcombe said.

"Our A-Z Guide has everything you need to know about buying, owning and maintaining a disability converted vehicle."

Some of the topics covered in the guide include accelerators, driving controls and braking systems; driver assessments; accessing funding; imported wheelchair accessible vehicles; specialised insurance for disability converted vehicles; lifting systems; mobility equipment storage; ramps; buying second-hand vehicles; vehicle certification and compliance, and more.

Mr Witcombe said after a vehicle is purchased, it is vital to secure a suitable insurance policy.

"Owners of converted vehicles face some unique challenges when it comes to finding the right insurance policy," he said.

"Insurers who are not familiar with the disability market often treat conversions in the same way as performance or luxury modifications, which can create two issues for the customer."

Mr Witcombe said that firstly, because people with performance and luxury modifications pose a higher insurance risk, they are charged higher premiums. This meant people with disability-modified vehicles are often charged higher premiums too, despite generally being safer drivers.

He said the second issue was mainstream insurers typically depreciate the value of modifications at the same rate as the vehicle.

"For example, a driver may spend \$50,000 on vehicle modifications, only to discover that they are only insured for \$10,000 a few years later. This can be devastating news to discover if you're unlucky enough to have an accident," he said.

"Blue Badge understands the importance of mobility to people with disability and we know that drivers with disability are typically very safe drivers, which is why we offer exclusive discounts to disability parking permit holders and owners of disability converted vehicles."

Further information, and the A-Z Guide on Disability Converted Cars, is available on the Blue Badge website.

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


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Buy right

Automobility specialises in wheelchair access vehicle conversions and mobility adapted vehicles. Director Jeff Watters offers advice on how to buy the right wheelchair access vehicle to meet individual needs.

According to Jeff, a wheelchair access vehicle is generally the second biggest purchase you'll make aside from buying a house, so it is important to select carefully, and make a considered and objective decision.

"The biggest mistake you'll make is buying on price as this does not allow you to consider the functional suitability of the vehicle for the long-term needs of the wheelchair user," he said.

Jeff said it is important to choose the specification of wheelchair access you need first, rather than starting with price.

He said the first specification that needs to be considered is line of sight.

"The wheelchair user needs to have a horizontal line of sight from the vehicle," he said.

"This helps prevent motion sickness but also helps to provide stimulation for the wheelchair user

and lets them enjoy the sights and provide directions."

He said wheelchair occupant safety is a crucial factor, with Australian standards requiring a correctly positioned lap-sash seat belt and head-torso support.

"Lap-sash seat belts should pass comfortably over the shoulder of the wheelchair user and must not ride up around the neck or face, or drop down around the upper chest," he said.

"Lap seat belts are only permitted with supporting medical evidence in exceptional circumstances.

"Wheelchair users with low back wheelchairs should be provided with a head-torso support device to reduce the likelihood of injury from rear collision. Head restraints are a design requirement for seating positions and this same level of safety needs to be provided for wheelchair users."

Jeff said internal head clearance is important. He said the vehicle should

be configured so the wheelchair user has at least 50mm clearance between the top of their head and the head lining or roof structure of the vehicle.

Other factors to consider are making sure the vehicle complies with Australian standards relating to mobility vehicles, with an engineering certificate provided to support compliance.

Jeff said it was important to choose the specification of wheelchair access vehicle you need first – and to ignore the price at this point.

"Once you understand and agree on the specification, this is the type of wheelchair access vehicle that you need," he said.

"If your budget is finite and you cannot afford a new vehicle of this specification, then start looking for a good used vehicle of this specification – don't get drawn into the 'but it was cheap' scenario."

www.automobility.com.au

On the road again

Tania Shirgwin is a marketing professional who shares her story of returning to driving after having had a stroke.

Tania awoke on Christmas Day 2014 to find her left side was numb with little movement, and that she had diminished eyesight. She was diagnosed as having suffered an Ischaemic stroke during her sleep.

"To be told I would probably never drive again was soul crushing, as driving wasn't just a way to get from A to B, it was independence, it was freedom," she said.

Tania said concentrating on regaining her licence was what kept her sane in the early stages of her recovery. Then, six months after her stroke, her ophthalmologist gave her the all clear to try to regain her licence.

The next step was to be assessed by a specialist driving Occupational Therapist (OT).

"Fortunately, they have dealt with the anxiety, stress and concerns before," Tania said.

"Leading up to the assessment, I think I called them about eight times and possibly emailed triple that.

"On assessment day, I was a bundle of nerves."

Tania's OT, Brad Williams from



Tania Shirgwin worked with Brad Williams from Williams OT in Adelaide to regain her licence after having a stroke.

Williams OT in Adelaide, took her through visual tests on a lap top, before taking a car for a drive.

"After the assessment, I was informed that I could possibly regain my licence, but would need a few driver OT lessons before I could sit my final driving test," she said.

"OT driver lessons were fun – we took it slow at first and Brad built up my confidence enough to drive in traffic, park and learn to compensate for my visual field defect by using mirrors.

"The lessons were all really about resetting habits to accommodate for the side effects of the stroke and seeing how I could cope in common driving situations.

"By the time I sat for my actual driving test, I felt comfortable on the road.

"The driving test was not about reverse parking or hill climb starts. It's not a Learner's Driving Test, but an assessment to see how well a driver with disability or a medical condition can adjust to the circumstances of the road and their capabilities.

"After the test, the driving assessor said I had passed and explained the next steps of regaining the licence. It was as simple as waiting for the paperwork to come through."

Tania is now back driving and enjoying her regained sense of freedom.

"What seemed like an insurmountable life challenge has turned out pretty well," she said.

www.williamsot.com

www.otaus.com.au

www.bizeez.com



Meret behind the wheel.

progress assessment, Meret was on her way to learning to drive with a left-sided steering aid and left foot accelerator pedal. Under the guidance of Peter, Meret progressed her driving from quiet streets onto dual lane roads and busy intersections.

Being a learner driver, Meret needed to complete at least 120 hours of on-road driving in her RMS logbook.

A further occupational therapy on-road assessment with Meret's mother in the car, allowed her family to learn how Meret was controlling the vehicle, so they could continue her driving practice.

Meret was then able to have her own vehicle modified. Meret said driving with her mum and dad was a new experience, but "once we were all used to it, it didn't take long to get my hours up".

In April 2019, having completed 130 hours of driving practice, Meret successfully passed the RMS practical driving test to obtain her provisional licence. Meret no longer has to rely on public transport and said she feels a sense of freedom when she drives. She will be able to drive herself to university and go out with friends all over Sydney.

Meret's advice to others who want to drive is "not to give up when things get complicated, because if it is something you really want, you can achieve it".

www.driverrehabsolutions.com.au

www.otaus.com.au 

Learning to drive is a big task for any teenager. Learning to drive using modified controls can be even more challenging.

Meret Hassanen, who has cerebral palsy, commenced her learning to drive journey aged 19 in October 2016 with Lyndall Cook, driver trained occupational therapist and Peter Karkoulas, rehabilitation driving instructor, in Kellyville, New South Wales.

"Meret has significantly increased muscle tone in her right upper limb with involuntary movements, which made it not functional for driving," Lyndall said.

"Her lower limb function was also a challenge with her right leg not functional for driving and her left ankle having increased muscle tone which impacted speed and smoothness of movement."

After completing clinical testing, Meret went on-road with Lyndall and Peter, in a modified vehicle that was fitted with a steering aid with electronic indicators on the left side of the steering wheel.

Meret was also trialled using a left foot accelerator, with the standard right accelerator pedal flipped up for safety.

"The on-road drive was completed in very quiet streets," Lyndall said.

"Our focus was on determining how Meret could best physically control the vehicle."

The occupational therapy assessment completed with a rehabilitation driving instructor allows the occupational therapist to focus on the driver and observe their function, while the driving instructor keeps the vehicle safe. Despite being able to learn steering control with the steering aid, Meret's left foot placement on the accelerator and brake pedal was not consistent.

Meret actively participated in simulated pedal activities outside of the vehicle and with a short burst of driving lessons focussing on pedal control, and a further on-road

I would like to introduce our two companies; Freedom Motors Australia & Freedom Access Vehicles.

Freedom Motors modify vehicles for Wheelchair accessibility via a low floor rear access conversion. The vehicles are modified at our major production facility in Sydney, and we modify those vehicles for clients all over Australia whether it be for Private, Community Transport or Taxi use.

We also have sale managers in Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria/Tasmania for all our out of state demo's and inquiries.

Our sister company **Freedom Access** is also a very well respected modifier of vehicles such as LDV, Toyota, Mercedes Benz, Mitsubishi plus many other van and bus type vehicles. These vehicles have varying fit outs dictated by the customers requirements and are generally used for transporting more than one wheelchair occupants at a time. The fit-outs consist of Braun Electro/Hydraulic lifter plus a full range of products which include seating, hand rails and side steps for easy entry plus many other innovative products such as a range of products from **The Focaccia Group Italy** for sales Australia wide.



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Garry J Dale
National Group Sales Manager



A vibrant tropical beach scene. In the foreground, a large palm tree trunk leans from the left, its fronds reaching across the top of the frame. Another palm tree trunk is visible on the right. The ground is covered in green grass and shadows. The middle ground shows a rocky beach with white foam from waves washing onto the shore. The water is a brilliant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. In the distance, a small white boat is visible on the horizon. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds near the horizon. The overall atmosphere is sunny and idyllic.

travel

the lure of the **TROPICS**

Bursting at the seams with both natural
and man-made attractions, Tropical North
Queensland is the perfect holiday destination,
writes Craig Sheather.

Cairns

Cairns is the bustling heart and commercial hub of Tropical North Queensland. The city is a popular tourist destination for Australians and international travellers given its tropical climate and close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef, Atherton Tableland and Daintree Rainforest. It also has the greatest range of accommodation and tour operators in the region.

Despite the constant influx of tourists, Cairns maintains a small-town vibe. It offers distinctive multicultural influences and is teeming with innovative cafes and restaurants, trendy bars and classic pubs, stylish shopping boutiques and galleries.



Above: Night time on the Cairns Esplanade. Opposite page: Rex Smeal Park in Port Douglas.

The Cairns Esplanade covers 12 hectares of public open space and is bordered by the city centre and the Coral Sea. The highlight is the 4800-square-metre saltwater lagoon pool with sandy edges and shallow

areas for children. The Esplanade precinct also includes shady banyan trees, boardwalks and barbecues, cafes, restaurants and bars, a huge skate park, beach volleyball courts and fitness equipment.



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Accessible travel

The Cairns Holiday Specialists are the limited mobility and disability travel experts in Cairns and Tropical North Queensland. They have compiled a list of helpful contacts, local facilities and easily accessible hot spots to help you plan your holiday. Refer to www.thetourspecialists.com.au for further information. Beach friendly wheelchairs are available at Palm Cove beach in Cairns and Four Mile beach in Port Douglas.

kilometres along Queensland's coastline. It is made up of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands and sustains an extraordinary variety of plants, birds and marine life. Some species are vulnerable or endangered. The Reef can be seen from outer space and is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms.

Unfortunately, the reef is under threat from coral bleaching as a result of warming ocean temperatures. However, given its status as one of the seven natural wonders of the world it continues to attract visitors from all over the globe. There are plenty of ways to explore the reef including snorkelling, scuba diving, sailing, kayaking, scenic flights, ferries and glass bottomed boats.

Port Douglas

Port Douglas is well known for its many restaurants, walks, golf courses, fishing and five star resorts. Macrossan Street is the town's main thoroughfare, with more than 60 restaurants and cafes within walking distance.

The famous Four Mile Beach runs along the edge of Port Douglas, a beautiful expanse of golden sand that is largely undeveloped. Here you can relax on the sand, swim in the warm waters of the Coral Sea or explore the rock pools at the northern end of the beach.

Don't miss the markets held every Sunday morning. Producers come from all over the region to sell jewellery, crafts, clothes, pottery, fresh fruit and more.

Five kilometres from town, Wildlife Habitat is a leading environmental

Cairns tours and attractions such as Cairns Tropical Zoo, The Dome, Rainforestation, The Rainforest Habitat, Cairns Wildlife Safari, Hartleys Crocodiles Adventures and Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park are all wheelchair accessible.

Kuranda

Just 27km from Cairns and at an altitude of about 330m, Kuranda's cool mountain climate makes for an ideal escape from the heat of the coast. The town became popular with the hippie crowd in the 1960s and '70s, and they have left an artistic and musical legacy that is still its heart and soul.

Kuranda has a variety of wildlife experiences including the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary, Birdworld, the Koala Gardens, Rainforestation Nature Park and the Australian Venom Zoo.

Other attractions include the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway and historic Kuranda Scenic Railway which

runs to Cairns on the edge of the rainforest through 15 hand-cut tunnels and across 37 bridges.

Great Barrier Reef

One of the world's greatest natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef stretches for more than 2,300



Below left: Snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef. Right: A red and blue parrot in the Daintree Rainforest.

wildlife experience, providing visitors with a chance to get up close to a huge range of iconic Australian animals in enclosures that replicate their natural environment. You can cuddle a koala, hand-feed kangaroos and meet crocodiles, pythons and the endangered Southern Cassowary. The latest addition is the Predator Plank – a walkway across the saltwater croc enclosure.

Daintree Rainforest

One of the most complex ecosystems on earth, the Daintree Rainforest covers 1,200 square kilometres between the Mossman Gorge and Bloomfield River. The region features a unique combination

of tropical rainforest, white sandy beaches, and fringing offshore reefs.

Estimated to be 180 million years old, it is older than the Amazon Rainforest and supports living examples of rare ancient plants plus thousands of species of birds, animals and reptiles.

The Daintree is easily accessible on a day-trip and driving is often the best way to navigate between the attractions. You can walk through the

forest on hiking trails and wooden boardwalks, climb high above the canopy on ziplines, take a dip in the Emmagen Creek swimming hole or paddleboard along the Mossman River.

The Kuku Yalanji people have inhabited this region for 50,000 years and you can also take a tour with a local Indigenous guide to learn about the history of the rainforest, bush tucker and traditional medicine.

www.queensland.com



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By Kate Hill

Meet David Wilsmore

David Wilsmore at work at Bedford Industries in Mount Gambier.

When David Wilsmore became legally blind at the age of 30, he feared his hard-earned upholstery trade experience would become redundant.

Now aged 68 and in his 13th year at Mount Gambier's Bedford Industries workshop in South Australia, David's skills have proved invaluable in his role as manager of the busy winebox production line, which ships products across Australia and internationally.

Watching David confidently use industrial machinery such as band saws and nail guns, you wouldn't know he has only five per cent sight in each eye.

Macular degeneration affects everyone differently and nearly 40 years dealing with vision impairment has taught David to utilise what little sight he has.

"I learned through the years to use my peripheral vision, rather than central," he said.

He can't drive but he can walk past a picture and straighten it to perfection. Walking into a supermarket, he can see the items, but can't make out the prices.

The hardest thing, David said, was losing his independence as he used to know it.

"But you have to accept some things in life and I have learned to live with it," he said, philosophically.

David has never used National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services but when he hit the age of 65, big changes to his income awaited.

Asked by Centrelink if he wanted to remain on the blind pension, or change to the aged pension, David elected to stay with the former.

But, for the first time in nearly 40 years, he found himself paying taxes.

Challenges also presented themselves at work, where he was asked to complete a course to become the workshop's work health and safety representative.

Unsure about how he would go viewing the course's PowerPoint presentations, the only concession David asked for was to be sent the

presentations beforehand, so he could read them on his ViewPoint device.

He passed the course with flying colours and took on the role.

Another role David takes seriously is running the Bedford Social Club, with the help of his wife Gaylene.

Arranging outings for a group of around 35 people with different abilities and skillsets is more complex than it might seem, according to David.

"We try to arrange things that caters to everyone's interests and Gay and I will 'suss out' venues beforehand for wheelchair access," he said.

Whether it's a pub lunch at Robe or a Christmas barbecue, David said he loves to watch his work colleagues have a good time, whatever their ability.

"You get to see everyone participating and they all thoroughly enjoy themselves," he said.

www.bedfordgroup.com.au

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Below: Dr Rebecca Flower from La Trobe University. Left: Rise@DHHS employee Adam Walton.

A rising success

Results of a pilot study into the Victorian Government's first employment initiative for people with autism have been published by La Trobe University.



The Rise@DHHS program – created by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with autism non-profit social enterprise Specialisterne Australia – has been evaluated by a team of researchers from La Trobe's Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) and the La Trobe Business School.

The award-winning program is the first example of the State Government providing leadership in its own employment practices by employing people on the autism spectrum. This was one of the recommendations from the 2017 Victorian Government Inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder.

Eight people were hired for the pilot program, to work as records management officers under two-year, full-time contracts.

One of the lead researchers, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow from OTARC, Dr Rebecca Flower, said the study identified the most successful aspects of the program.

"Employees with autism said that the alternative recruitment method used in this program, which included a half-day workshop and a paid three-week training and assessment program for shortlisted candidates, had been beneficial for them compared to more traditional selection processes, as it provided additional information about the organisation and roles," Dr Flower said.

"The traditional job interview is a common barrier for people with autism, who may communicate differently to people without autism. Candidates with autism in the Rise@DHHS program were given a chance to showcase their skills in a supportive environment, as opposed to talking about them.

"Our one-on-one interviews with employees with autism also revealed that taking the time to understand and support the needs of each individual, and training that increased autism knowledge for existing DHHS staff – particularly managers and supervisors – contributed to their work success."

Prior to working as a Rise@DHHS employee, Adam Walton had spent long periods of time either unemployed, or in short-term, casual roles.

"This is the first time I've been able to secure a full-time job," Mr Walton said. "It's been a lifechanging experience for me, being able to have a routine and more structure in my life. I feel like I'm finally contributing to society."

Mr Walton said DHHS has been accepting of feedback and suggestions for change.

"We've had many opportunities to spread awareness and knowledge of autism," Mr Walton said.

"Public speaking is a new skill I've really been able to develop at DHHS, in my aim to better employment systems for people with autism."

www.latrobe.edu.au 



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Blindness no barrier

A Turkish migrant who came to Australia with no knowledge of the English language and completely blind, is proof that you can overcome any obstacles to have a successful career.

Zel Iscel is a keen traveller and a successful businesswoman who leads a busy and fulfilling life.

A disability advocate in Western Australia, Zel's story has been captured in a film produced by local disability service provider VisAbility as part of its Visionaries series, which aims to inspire young people who are blind or partially sighted.

A turning point for Zel was realising she had to accept herself before anyone else would. She spent her early years isolated and withdrawn at school as she had no friends. By her late teens, she knew that the situation had to change.

"At school in Kalgoorlie I was virtually ignored in the classroom, there were no specialist services in

the 1980s. I couldn't speak to others and no one spoke to me. Their idea of teaching was to give me a piece of playdough to play with," Zel said.

"Our biggest limitations are often ourselves. I spent my younger years feeling quite miserable and isolated. By my teens I realised that I had to change or I'd be stuck in this despair.

"It was a lightbulb moment but it was a turning point. From then on, I tried to engage with others, start a conversation and encourage people to talk to me."

When her family moved to Perth, Zel became a client of VisAbility. She went to university, and while it took her eight years to complete her degree, her determination shone through.

Zel now works as a disability consultant. Her role is varied and no two days are ever the same. She's the first to admit her career has only been made possible because of advances in technology.

"I have a laptop with a screen reader so it reads out what's there on the screen. It is verbal so this technology has helped me enormously," she said.

Zel has worked with organisations including the Independent Living Centre and the Centre for Accessibility and the Women's Community Health Network.

Her story in the 'Visionaries' series can be found on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/319647023>

www.visability.com.au

Employable Me

ABC-TV's documentary series **Employable Me** recently followed nine more people with disability in their quest to finding employment.

Employable Me aims to showcase the skills and talents of people with disability and help them find jobs that harness their strengths.

The first series aired in 2018, with series two airing two months ago.

Series one participants Marty and Jonathan (pictured) both had positive outcomes from the show.

Marty was offered work at Mitre 10 during filming of the series. He has continued in the job and has now been at Mitre 10 for more than a year.

Marty has also taken up Muay Thai

kick boxing and has moved out of home to live in his own apartment. He said the bills aren't fun though!

He also went travelling to Canada with his mum and step dad last year.

He said people sometimes recognise him when they come into Mitre 10 and he believes it was great to be part of the series.

Jonathan, who has autism, is now part way through a cadetship program with accounting firm Ernst and Young. He is working full time, while studying accounting part time at university.








He says he is finding it very busy and stressful at times, but is doing well and is determined to push on with reaching his goals.

www.abc.net.au/tv

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Donation drive

This month, the Vision Australia Radio network is asking the community to dig deep and support the work they do to create reading content for those who are blind, low-vision or have a print disability, by donating at www.varadio.org

The service is delivered by an enthusiastic and passionate team of 800-plus volunteers nationally – with the support of a small team of dedicated staff – who through their time and skills help keep costs down, but it doesn't cover all expenses.

National Audio Business Development Manager for Vision Australia Radio Jason Gipps said volunteers are the backbone of community radio.

"Without them we'd likely be off-air tomorrow," he said.

"The hours our volunteers give to the service are extraordinary, but running a network of stations which provide an essential service to the blind and low-vision community has its share of overheads.

"There are transmitting costs, rental expenses, broadcast licences, everything down to tea and coffee to keep our volunteer radio presenters energised each day and able to give back to a community that is often isolated, forgotten about and left behind by the wider community.

"Supporting Vision Australia Radio's donation drive today helps to keep our service on-air tomorrow, with 15 AM radio services in Melbourne,

Adelaide and Perth and seven services in Regional Victoria and five digital radio services people can tune in to online or on digital radio."

An estimated 176,000 people aged 15-plus listen to Vision Australia Radio nationally at some time in a week and an estimated 701,000 people aged 15-plus listen to Vision Australia Radio nationally at some time in a month, according to data provided by the McNair Yellow Squares national listener surveys undertaken in January this year.

Approximately 35 per cent of those surveyed in the same report identified as living with a disability across the combined broadcast regions covering communities in Perth, Adelaide,

Melbourne and regional Victoria. This includes members of the community who are hearing and/or sight impaired and people with mobility restrictions.

"The report also suggests that approximately 321,000 listeners across our network speak a language other than English at home which suggests there is a benefit in hearing our news and current affairs reading programs to those with English as a second language, a statistic we are also very proud of," Jason said.

Those wishing to support Vision Australia Radio can visit the website to make a donation to the 2019 drive.

Donations over \$2 or more are tax deductible.

www.varadio.org.au 



Right: Sam is one of the newest members of the Vision Australia Radio team. Above: Vision Australia radio team members who produce, record and present radio for the blind and low-vision communities across Australia.



SOCIAL SCENE



Send your social pics to editor@linkonline.com.au with a caption and short description of the event.



Interaction celebrates 40 years

Interaction Disability Services has celebrated its 40th anniversary and the official opening of its new premises in Bella Vista in northern Sydney.



Kaleidoscope

Victorian artists with disability have exhibited their artworks to the public at the annual Kaleidoscope Exhibition, an initiative of disability service provider Scope.

Pictured L-R are Scope CEO Dr Jennifer Fitzgerald, artist Greg Muir and Scope Director Barbara Hingston.

Memory walk and jog

Dementia Australia has held its Memory Walk & Jog events around Australia over the past few months. Pictured here are participants in the Adelaide event held in March. There is one more event to go this year, with the Sunshine Coast Memory Walk & Jog to be held on June 9.



WHAT'S ON?

To view the full 'What's On' calendar visit Link Online at linkonline.com.au/whats-on. If you have an upcoming event and would like to be included in 'What's On' please email whatson@linkonline.com.au

June 2019

20 Central Coast Future Choices Expo

The Central Coast Future Choices Expo for Students with Disability will be held at the Mingara Recreation Club in Tumby Umbi, New South Wales. It will focus on everything that high school students, families, carers, schools and service providers need to know about life after school, including further study, employment opportunities, apprenticeships and traineeships for people with disability.

<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/community-and-alumni/community-engagement/community-and-school-programs/national-disability-coordination-officer/events/school-leaver-expos/central-coast-expo>

20 Disability at Work Summit 2019

This national conference, being held in Adelaide from June 20-21, will examine innovative ways to inform people with disability about employment opportunities. Aimed at employment service providers (open, supported and social enterprises) and professionals interested in the design and promotion of a broad range of employment opportunities for people with disability.

<https://www.nds.org.au/events-and-training/conferences/disability-at-work-2019-3212>

July 2019

7 Gold Coast Wheelchair Marathon and 15km

Famous for its flat, fast and scenic course located alongside the city's renowned surf beaches and broad water, this world-class international wheelchair marathon will attract over 20,000 participants of all ages and abilities from over 50 countries.

<https://goldcoastmarathon.com.au>

10 Occupational Therapy Australia National Conference

Held at the International Convention Centre, Sydney, New South Wales, it will take place from July 10-12, with an anticipated audience of over 1,000 delegates. The theme is 'Together towards tomorrow' and is aimed to reflect the vibrant nature of modern occupational therapy practice.

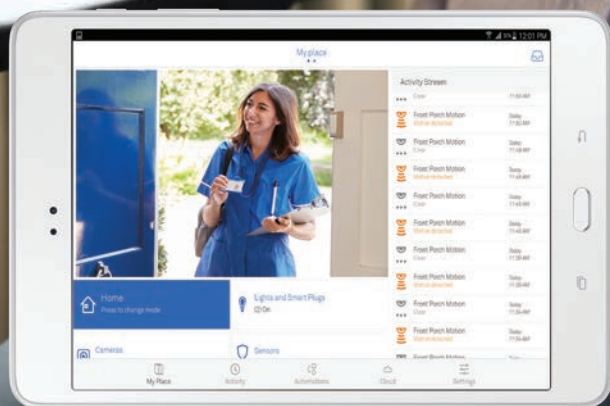
<http://www.otaus2019.com.au/events/occupational-therapy-australia-28th-national-conference-and-exhibition-2019/event-summary-de4c35633e774e10beab607c7ad481cf.aspx>

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