

AQA NEWS LINK

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

AUGUST 2008



**Disabled Swimmers
Association
Coming to Victoria**

**Travel
Vancouver, Canada**



**Paralympics
2008 Beijing Paralympic
Games**

Plus much more...



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A.Q.A. NEWS LINK is the official newsletter of A.Q.A. Victoria Limited, and is published bimonthly. *NEWS LINK* seeks to publish material of interest to people with physical disabilities and their families, professional workers and other individuals and organisations concerned with the welfare of those who are physically disabled.

A.Q.A. Victoria Limited always welcomes articles for News Link. Please feel free to send in your contribution. Articles will be published at the discretion of the Editor who also has the right to edit all submissions as it sees fit.

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In this issue...

Page 3

- From the CEO page 3
- From the Editor page 3

Travel

- Trip to Vancouver, Canada page 4 & 5
- Travels in the USA - Part 3 page 14 & 15

Leisure

- Disabled Surfers Association page 5

Disability News

- Wheelchairs on ice page 7
- The Other Film Festival page 9
- News Link Delivery page 9
- Wheelchair Bandit page 9
- Darebin Access and Mobility maps now available... page 11
- Better Access Consulting page 11
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities page 13

Paralympics

- ABC TV Announces Presenters For Beijing Paralympics page 6
- 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games page 7

Members Column

- Trouble with Electricians page 17

Regular features

AQA survey

- Peer Support page 8

Me and My Town

- Alan Stevenson and Launceston Tasmania page 10

Board Focus

- Enhancing Board Governance - Stephen Huybens page 12

Info / Peer Support Team

- Our Miracle Baby – Three Years On page 16

Jokes Page

- Jokes page 18

Classifieds

- Various items for sale pages 19 - 20

Volume 22, Number 4

From the CEO



Welcome to this issue of NewsLink and welcome to Spring.

You will find enclosed in this issue a copy of our new Strategic plan including our new Mission and Vision statements. As mentioned last issue this document represents the broad strategic direction for the organisation over the next four years. It provides direction for the development of our annual business plans and of the individual performance plans of our staff.

The revised mission clearly identifies AQA as a member based organisation and recommits AQA to supporting people with physical disabilities to attain maximum independence. An important inclusion in our Mission is identifying the importance of supporting those who support people with physical disabilities.

Our Vision is our commitment to where we want to go and as you can see it commits the organisation to activities that improve quality of life of people with physical disabilities and that we do that through the active promotion of their capacity, their value and their right to participate in all aspects of community life.

Whether it's existing services such as AQA Qualcare, our Peer support and Information service or any new initiatives – the primary focus is on how these services support independence and participation in community life.

All new initiatives will be measured against 3 simple criteria:

- ✓ Will they contribute to our Mission and Vision
- ✓ Will they benefit our clients, members, staff and other stakeholders
- ✓ Are they sustainable

I encourage you to have a look over the Strategic Plan to see what's informing our thinking and planning.

I'd also like to welcome our Qualcare clients to this issue of NewsLink. In a recent survey, many Qualcare clients identified an interest in finding out more about the workings of AQA and of our Information Service. A good place to start is via an issue of NewsLink.

Peter Trethewey
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From the Editor



The Australian wheelchair rugby team made its way to Vancouver in Canada to compete in the Canada Cup, where each year, the world's best eight teams compete. It was the final chance for the team to prepare for the Beijing Paralympic Games in September. You can read how they went in the tournament and also about access and sites in Vancouver.

The Disabled Surfers Association is set up in many Australian States except for Victoria. On Wednesday the 22nd of October they will be taking the initial step of starting a DSA Victoria branch. Whether or not you're interested in surfing, but would like to support them, you can do so by attending their Geelong meeting. For further details, please read the article inside.

The Beijing Paralympic Games are just around the corner and the ABC has announced that they have exclusive coverage of the games. Here at AQA we are very pleased to hear that it will be the biggest coverage of a Paralympic Games ever. You can read more about this and other Paralympic details in our "Paralympic Games" section.

As part of feeding back to members and subscribers following our recent survey, a number of you requested more information as to what AQA provides in the way of peer support. We have included an article on the subject and hope you will make use of the program.

This issue we have a great "Me and My Town" article by Alan Stevenson from Launceston, Tasmania. We hope you enjoy it, and we'd love to hear from you if you would like others to know about your town.

Over the last two issues, you have read about Jenny Hill's adventures in the USA. In this issue, you can read the conclusion of her three part article.

Finally, most of you will remember when Wayne and Jodie Bradshaw proudly announced the safe arrival of their baby Ryan Bradshaw. Well three years has now gone by and Wayne would like to share with readers how much joy and happiness that Ryan has brought to his parents and big sister.

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Trip to Vancouver, Canada

In July, the Australian Wheelchair Rugby team made its way to Vancouver in Canada to compete in the Canada Cup. Each year, the worlds best eight teams play in the tournament. The teams were from USA, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Japan, New Zealand, Germany and China. Nazim Erdem reports on Vancouver and the rugby tournament.

Australia, ranked second in the world, were wanting to play the other teams to see how they lined up against them. It was an important tournament for the Australian team as they hadn't played against some of the top ranked teams for a number of years.

Vancouver is a dynamic, multicultural city set in a spectacular natural environment. No matter what time of the year you visit, there are indoor and outdoor activities to please adults, families, couples and friends. They are the proud hosts for the 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games.



The flight to Vancouver took 15 hours. It was summer in Vancouver, but mild (mid to high 20's), compared to the Victorian summer.

Vancouver has a vast multicultural population, very similar to Melbourne. Like Melbourne, it is known for its shopping. Popular shopping districts are, Burnaby, Chinatown, Downtown & Gastown, Granville Island Market and Yaletown, to name a few.

The team stayed at the Hilton Hotel in Burnaby which was across the road from Metropolis at Metrotown,

British Columbia's largest shopping centre. It's a destination in itself and as you can imagine we spent a lot of time there eating, shopping and just looking around.

On one of our 'free' days, we headed towards the city on the Sky Train. We were told by one of the passengers about the Vancouver Dragon Boat Championships. It was apparently a yearly event with a festive atmosphere, many food stalls, competitions, games stalls, and of course the Dragon Boats. Dragon Boats are very popular in Vancouver, due mainly to its large Asian population. There was so much to do and see, we ended up spending practically half the day there.

The public transport system was exceptional. TransLink, is made up of a network of buses and unique services such as the SeaBus and SkyTrain. It provides transit services covering over 1800 square kilometres of the Greater Mainland of Vancouver. Getting around the city is convenient, easily accessible and often provides beautiful views of the city and surroundings.

The SkyTrain is a completely automated light rail system, and as the name suggests, it travels on tracks above ground level, much like a mono-rail. It is a fast and very efficient service that runs every two to five minutes. The service runs between downtown Vancouver and the suburbs, with the stations and cars being wheelchair accessible. It is very well designed with no need for ramps and this includes each and every station. The SkyTrain is closely linked with bus services at almost all stations. The Victorian public transport system would do people a favour by seriously looking at implementing a similar network.

The SeaBus is a unique, passenger-only, wheelchair accessible ferry service that connects Vancouver from Waterfront Station to Lonsdale Quay on the North Shore. The scenic crossing of Burrard Inlet takes 12 minutes and offers a breathtaking perspective of the city, sea and mountains. Just like the SkyTrain, no additional ramps are necessary to get on or off. I wheeled on and off without any trouble at all.

I also found their buses wheelchair accessible, however I'm not sure if all the buses were accessible as I only used one route. The buses I used both had a hoist that went up over the four steps at the front of the bus. The bus had space for two wheelchairs, which had to be



Disabled Surfers Association

On Wednesday the 22nd of October, at the Geelong RSL, the initial step to setting up the first DSA (Disabled Surfers Association) Victorian branch will be taken. This will run in the Barwon Heads/ Ocean Grove area so if you are in the Geelong/ Torquay/ SW Melbourne region, go along at 7pm for the one hour presentation. All matters will be addressed from 'how a hands on day works' through to insurance cover already in place.



The sole aim of the DSA is to offer to any region's total disabled community the opportunity to have a safe surfing experience.



The DSA has grown enormously since its inception 23 years ago. The annual Collaroy 'Hands On Day' attracts between 75-150 people with disabilities and upwards of 200 able bodied helpers on a fine day.

They now have 12 branches around Australia, and more wanting to start.

They are a totally voluntary organisation, existing purely on the support of their members and the local community.

The degree of disability that they cater for is literally unlimited. For example Kelly McCann, who has a complete C2 injury, requiring breathing assistance, surfs regularly with their help.

Note: To read the rest of this article you need to be a current member. Please contact AQA Victoria or download a membership form.



Our Miracle Baby – Three Years On



Hopefully most of you will remember when Wayne and Jodie Bradshaw proudly announced the safe arrival of Ryan Bradshaw. They both wrote an article titled "Our Miracle Baby" that went into their preparation before, during and after their pregnancy. Well three years has now gone by and Wayne would like to share with you how much joy and happiness that Ryan has brought to his parents and big sister.

My little boy, I must say, the three years has flown by. Ryan has brought so much joy into our lives. He has such a gentle nature and loving personality that it is hard not to just love him. Being a paraplegic father, I was a little apprehensive about my parenting role. By that I mean, little things like changing his nappy, getting him out of his cot, feeding him, dressing him etc. The things I needed to do when Jodie wasn't home (she went back to school to do a short course recently). But I shouldn't have worried.

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Travels in the USA

Here is the conclusion to Jenny Hill's adventures in the USA after a three week holiday. In 'Part 1' we read about planning the trip and their flight across. In 'Part 2' we read about their time in Anaheim and Disneyland. In this third part of her travels, Jenny completes her trip in New York.

NEW YORK! NEW YORK!

Next morning we were on the go bright and early to leave the hotel at 8.00 am to go back to L.A airport for our flight to New York. Security procedures were very tight and chair people have to be patted down and have your chair swabbed for explosive residue just in case you plan to pack your chair with explosives. Even though this was still a Qantas flight they off load you to an American Airlines plane and they are not a patch on our Qantas planes. The planes are old, Business Class is really squashy and the seats don't recline as much, just a foot rest really, and the service is not nearly as good. I wouldn't pay the extra again for internal flights in America. One good thing though is that there is a cupboard at the front and if you ask at check in and you get in early they will often let you put your wheelchair in the cupboard in the cabin of the plane. It depends how full the plane is and if the 'Hosties' are nice, as the cupboard is really for their gear, but it is always worth asking.



Arrived at JFK airport about 6.00pm and once again had an hour limo ride through Brooklyn, over the Brooklyn Bridge and to our hotel in Manhattan, "The Helmsley Midtown" which is on 42 St. just around the corner from the Waldorf Astoria. Amazing! Amazing! Amazing!, is all you can say about this fabulous city. Our hotel cost a fortune and was defiantly a surprise after the modern luxury of the Sheraton at Anaheim but in New York you pay for location and this was right there, but shabby chic is the best way to describe it with the emphasis on shabby, rather than chic. Built in the 1930's and an Art Deco classic after we got over the shock we actually grew to love this 'Old dame' in the few days we were there. Surprisingly also, the bathroom was modified and although small, very user friendly. The staff were great and really helpful - there is a step up from the street but the doorman was always there with a little ramp to help. The streets of New York are pretty well navigable in a chair with some of the road crossings being a bit of a challenge but we got very good at spinning the chair around to go down backwards and ignoring the honking horns of the ceaseless traffic.

The first day we ambitiously decided we would go "downtown" and do about 4 major tourist attractions so caught the double-decker tourist bus that is a hop-on hop-off affair. These are really accessible and a great way to see New York but very slow as the traffic is horrendous. The rest of the crew were up the top but I could only stay on the bottom deck so the view was not as good, but it is air conditioned down stairs so that was a bonus as it was quite hot. After 3 hours on the bus, and seeing lots of the city icons- The Rockefeller Centre, the Empire State Building, Madison Square Gardens, Central Park, Macey's, Times Square, Soho, New York Stock Exchange we finally arrived at Ground Zero- the

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Please Note:

This copy of News Link is only a sample. The full version is 20 pages of great articles and other information. Current issues are available only to current members. Please contact AQA Victoria regarding membership or download a membership form.