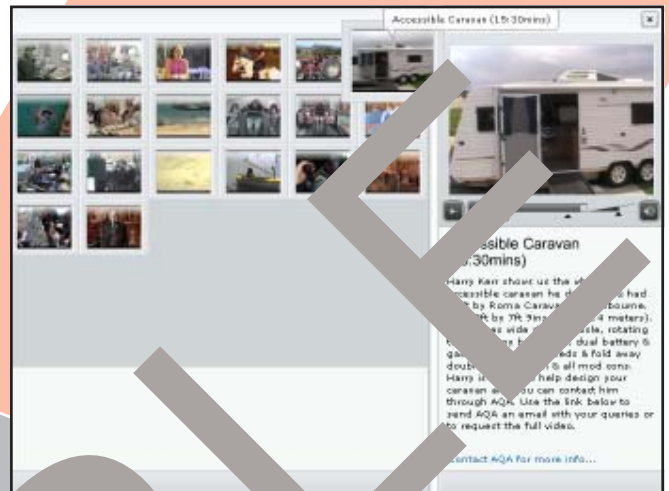


# AQA NEWS LINK

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

MAY 2009

## AQA's Video Gallery Launch



## Me and My Town - Bonbeach

## News Link - Photo Competition



*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

**AQA Victoria News**

- Influencing Outcomes .....page 4
- Towards a National Disability Strategy: steps in the right direction .....page 4
- AQA Launches a Whistleblower Policy .....page 5
- Volunteers at AQA .....page 5

**Info / Peer Support Team**

- RACV To The Rescue? .....page 7
- Senokot Granules 100g .....page 7
- AQA's Video Gallery Launch .....page 8

**Disability News**

- Quadriplegic Reaches Geographic North Pole .....page 10
- Victory in Visual Media for No Limits .....page 11
- Wheelie Good Guide .....page 12
- Report: Spinal Cord Injury, Australia, 2006-2007 .....page 12
- Better Support For Carers Report Released.....page 13
- Making a complaint to the Disability Services Commissioner.....page 14

**Spinal Research**

- New Hope Through Rehab Given To People With Spinal Cord Injuries ... page 15

**Competitions**

- News Link Photo Competition .....page 16

## Regular features

**Board Focus**

- Board Focus – Partnerships .....page 6

**Members Profile**

- Me and My Town *By Jerry Vajtauer – Bonbeach* .....page 9

**From a Woman's Point of View**

- Handbags .....page 17

**Jokes Page**

- Jokes .....page 18

**Classifieds**

- Various items for sale .....pages 19 & 20

**Volume 23, Number 2**

## From the CEO



Welcome to our latest issue of News Link.

As part of a proactive approach to engaging like minded organizations in order to pursue our mission and vision, AQA has formed an alliance with Spinal Injuries Association in Queensland and Spinal Cord Injury Australia in New South Wales which will allow us to work more closely together in the future. Under this alliance the three organisations have agreed to share information and resources, form a shared position on a range of issues, and work to create a single national voice in response to matters concerning spinal cord injury. We believe this approach will enhance our effectiveness in raising awareness of spinal cord injury and in advocating for change in our respective State Governments and with the Federal Government. We plan to invite organisations from other states to join us when they are ready. We look forward to keeping you informed about the progress of this cross state collaboration.

During May we will be holding the first of a number of focus groups with members, subscribers and other stakeholders with experience of living with spinal cord injury. These are an important opportunity for us to share some emerging ideas, test our thinking and priorities and to hear about the perspectives of others. We look forward to sharing a summary of the outcomes from these group meetings.

Our meetings with industry groups and our contacts in the Department of Human Services all point to the tightening of budgets as a result of the economic downturn and subsequent reduction in Government revenue. We are being prepared for several years of tight State budgets. What we need to do is to ensure in the reassessment of priorities that accompany this tightening, that the issues impacting on people with spinal cord injury and other physical disability do not get lost.

We noted with interest the announcement in the **State budget** of:

- Individual Support Packages – funding in 2009 -10 for an additional 179 Individual Support Packages.
- 13 purpose-built community-based accommodation options for 58 younger people with high support needs who are living in, or are at risk of entering, residential aged care.

We noted in the **Federal Budget**

**Pensions** - an increase in pensions, including Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment from 20 September 2009, single pensioners on the full rate will receive an additional \$32.49 a week and couples will receive an additional \$10.14. In addition, a \$600 supplement will be paid to people on Carer Payment and Carer Allowance. This supplement will be provided every year.

The rate at which the pension is withdrawn for each dollar of additional private income will increase from 40 cents to 50 cents. To counteract the disincentive this would pose to pensioners seeking employment, half of the first \$500 of fortnightly employment income will be excluded from the income test.

Currently only one in 10 DSP recipients gains any income from paid employment.

**Parking Program and Companion Card** - The National Disability Agreement includes commitments to introduce a nationally harmonised parking program and companion card scheme. The Budget provides \$3 million to assist with the introduction of a national disability parking permit scheme, with consistent eligibility criteria and entitlements and a national permit. It also commits \$1.8 million to the implementation of a national companion card scheme.

**Aids** - The Government will replace the Continence Aids Assistance Scheme with a Continence Aids Payment Scheme. The Continence Aids Payment Scheme will allow consumers to choose among products and suppliers, rather than rely on a sole provider as at present. The new payment starting from 1 July 2010 will be equivalent to the current subsidy of \$479.40. It will be indexed annually and eligibility will not change.

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### Me and My Town - Bonbeach

*Welcome to another edition of "Me and My Town". This time around Jerry Vajtauer introduces us to his suburb of Bonbeach. He discusses facilities in the area as well as the locals.*

My name is Jerry Vajtauer and I reside in Bonbeach with my fiancé and son. I am a C4 quadriplegic and I have been in a manual wheelchair since 1991 following a diving accident. Living with my son David has its benefits as he does all the maintenance work around the house. I am looking forward to travelling around the world with my fiancé in the near future. I have been living in Bonbeach since 1998.



Bonbeach is a suburb in Melbourne, 31 km south-east from Melbourne's CBD. Its local government area is the City of Kingston. At the 2006 Census, Bonbeach had a population of 4,992. Bonbeach has a railway station on the Frankston line and a string of shops on the Nepean Highway. A long stretch of white sand beach on Port Phillip Bay extends from Chelsea southwards to the Patterson River. Bonbeach is located next to Chelsea, Seaford and very close to Frankston.

The neighbourhood is friendly and the locals are always willing to assist me if the need is required. Access to footpaths is fairly reasonable and the local council is aware of the accessibility needs of disabled people in the community. My fiancé and I drive along the coast in our Peugeot convertible and we do not seem to have any trouble accessing the local pubs, bars and restaurants. There are ample car parking spots at the back of the local shops if any cannot be found in the front.

I enjoy living in Bonbeach as it is very close to all the amenities that I require. There are many shopping centres, both small and large, within a twenty minute radius of Bonbeach.

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



### RACV To The Rescue?

*AQA Information / Peer Support Officer Wayne Bradshaw recently saw the benefits of being a member of RACV's Wheelchair Breakdown Service.*

I would like to share a story with you on the benefits of being a RACV member.

As well as my role as a peer support worker with AQA, I was asked to take on the job of being the carer for a man (Billy) who uses a scooter to attend AFL football matches. As I'm an avid fan of AFL I thought it was a great idea so I accepted the task. Billy and I got on really well and so we decided to attend other footy matches together as well as the races. I also didn't mind attending the races with Billy as I'm a keen punter.

Billy only requires me to attend night games with him as he can attend games during the day on his own. One Saturday night I was required to take Billy to the Carlton vs Brisbane game at Telstra Dome (changed to Etihad Stadium for this year). On the way to the station Billy complained that there was something wrong with his scooter so on a closer inspection I discovered that Billy had run over a screw and it was still in his wheel. I asked Billy whether he wanted to continue or go back home. He was extremely keen to continue but it had to be on three wheels. I told Billy we just needed to get to the station as quickly as possible and meanwhile I will have a think about a solution.

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## Handbags

*This month we have an informative article from Lynne Panayiotis about finding the right handbag to suit her lifestyle. After trying out various styles, shapes, size and materials she decided that to carry a handbag just wasn't for her. She decided to contact a local sail maker and they designed various custom made pockets for her wheelchair.*

Finding an appropriate handbag after my SCI was a challenge. Small handles meant I couldn't hold it and push at the same time. Too big and it wouldn't fit in the net under my chair. Too shiny and it would slide off my lap.

I ended up selecting matt leather with a long enough strap that would sit across my chest and place the bag in my lap without falling off, as I pushed. The bag itself needed to be small enough to fit in my lap; but big enough to fit all the things women like to have handy. I found that a bag that was about 5cm wide at the base sat comfortably.

Having said all that, I ended up tossing the idea of a handbag and had pockets made on the underneath side of my chair. As I sit on a pressure cushion that has a firm

base I decided that, for me, pressure shouldn't be an issue (I have since been checked for pressure and confirmed my theory).

I contacted a local sail maker and asked if the pockets could be custom made. The sail maker was prepared to try. So she and I designed 4 pockets under my chair. The pockets are black making them difficult for others to see (this being a safety measure), made of vinyl (waterproof) with flaps secured with Velcro.



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## INFO / PEER SUPPORT TEAM



### AQA's Video Gallery Launch

*There are more and more spinal cord injury related videos becoming available on the web. Last month's News Link referred to two such websites [www.brainspinalcord.org](http://www.brainspinalcord.org) and [www.webbytalents.com](http://www.webbytalents.com). And if you are familiar with [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) you can find a large number of video clips about spinal cord injury and related topics.*

The AQA Information/Peer Support Department is building a video gallery on our website and it is now officially open. You can find it via the main menu on the left-hand side of the AQA website or directly via [www.aqavic.org.au/videogallery](http://www.aqavic.org.au/videogallery). It currently has about 18 video clips but can have up to 36 covering a broad subject range. Examples of some clips are:

- ones dealing with spinal accident and awareness

- equipment adaptations at home and in the workplace
- ways of doing a common activities such as transfers, setting up a computer & domestic chores
- spinal accident prevention messages
- vehicle adaptations
- recreation & hobby activities
- and sports related

The videos come from many sources and vary from a few seconds up to almost 30 minutes. Some have been sourced from TV, some taken by AQA (from years past and some more recently), and a few from the web. AQA have more being prepared and News Link readers are encouraged to submit ideas of what they would like to see or tell us where others can be found.

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## New Hope Through Rehab Given To People With Spinal Cord Injuries

*Recently the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) announced, through a media release, that people with spinal cord injuries (SCI) could soon enjoy a better quality of life following the announcement of a study into minimising impairments due to SCI by promoting neural recovery through exercise.*

People with spinal cord injuries (SCI) could soon enjoy a better quality of life following the announcement of a study into minimising impairments due to SCI by promoting neural recovery through exercise.

The announcement came as part of a Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) grant worth over \$4.6 million to the University of Melbourne.

A national team led by Professor Mary Galea from the University's School of Physiotherapy will complete a five-year program called 'SCIPA' – Spinal Cord Injury & Physical Activity. They were one of four Victorian research groups to receive a grant from the VNI.

While exercise is not a cure for SCI, Prof Galea says the study will have significant implications for how clinicians approach spinal cord rehabilitation.

“Currently, the best practice model for SCI rehabilitation involves strengthening the upper body above the level of injury in order to compensate for the loss of function and maximise independence.”

“However we know that forced inactivity through being in a wheelchair leads to loss of muscle mass and bone density in the paralysed limbs, with secondary complications such as poor circulation, pressure ulcers, fractures, obesity and diabetes. Furthermore, it can make neurological dysfunction worse over time.”

Prof Galea says that numerous animal and human studies have shown that exercising the paralysed limbs not only

improves circulation and increases muscle mass but also activates the circuitry of the spinal cord below the level of injury.

The research program is aimed at using novel rehabilitation strategies directed at neuromuscular activation below the level of the injury and will involve 7 spinal Units in Australia and New Zealand.

Clinical trials will examine the effectiveness of very early intervention for lower limbs, task-specific training for arms and hands, and an intensive activity-based therapy program for the whole body including the paralysed limbs. Individualised gym programs that can be undertaken in the community after the injured person is discharged from hospital will also be developed, along with a training program for community fitness instructors.

“The focus of the programs will be on promoting neurological recovery, maintaining health and wellness, and optimising independence.”

The University of Melbourne also had two other research projects receive grants:

- Professor John Furness, The University of Melbourne, \$4.9 million - Autonomic dysfunction in spinal cord injury: a strategy for improved treatment and understanding of bowel, blood pressure and bladder disorders;
- Associate Professor Russell Gruen, The University of Melbourne, \$4.4 million - Improving evidence-based care and the outcomes of patients with traumatic brain

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