



**Keeping busy with family,
outdoors and community life.**
Meet Des Cross, page 6.

Shine

Sharing stories, ideas and news across
Lifetime Care and Workers Care.

Winter 2024

Anthony Antonas: not giving up

Anthony is a Lifetime Care participant

Anthony is nothing if not determined. A supportive family and positive attitude have helped the 46-year-old return to many of his previous activities after a traumatic brain injury.

When *Shine* first meets Anthony at the door of his family home in Mortdale, he is sounding a bit frustrated.

"I've been looking for my shaving gear for 2 days now. We went away for the weekend and I know it's here somewhere but it's going to drive me crazy until I find it!

"Short-term memory loss is one of the problems I've still got from the brain injury. And also tiredness. Problem-solving is tiring! And having to search for things all the time makes me even more tired."

A car accident

Anthony doesn't remember anything of the car accident almost 3 years ago when he sustained the brain injury.

"I was in a coma for 9 days, in St George Hospital for a month and a half then in the Liverpool brain injury unit for another month and a half."

Apart from the brain injury, Anthony suffered no major physical injuries beyond a few cracked ribs.

"My first memory after I woke from the coma was that the doctors must have misdiagnosed me because my thinking was clear, the way I was talking to myself was clear. The only pain I felt was a toothache.

"It was only after I started talking or trying to do things that I realised the connections from my head to my body and my mouth had been damaged."

Anthony's speech was very slurred, and he had to learn to walk again.

"I cried a lot in hospital and in rehab. All I could think about was trying to get back to my old life again and what I had to do to get there. One of the things that used to play on my mind a lot was whether I could ever return to my job."

A bayside childhood

Anthony grew up in Brighton Le Sands with a twin brother and older sister. His parents were Australian-born but both their families were from the Greek island of Castellorizo and his Greek heritage remains a large part of Anthony's identity.

The family moved to nearby Kogarah Bay when Anthony was 12. "I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left school but I was offered a job with Zurich Insurance. I ended up doing diplomas in general insurance and in broking and I now work in construction insurance – providing advice on risk and insurance for big building jobs. I've been in the insurance business now for almost 30 years.

"My brother and I played a lot of soccer growing up – I call it football, it's real name. We kept on playing as adults – for a team in the St George district – until I had the accident.

"I was also a shooter – just target work, not game. I really like the rigorous process of it."

At a work function in his late 20s, Anthony met his wife, Michelle, and they married 3 years later. "I bought this house just before we got engaged," he laughs. "I like to be organised!"

Their son, Leo, has started playing football just like his dad.

Going home

Anthony says "I had fatigue and short-term memory issues when I came home from hospital. Noises were very piercing and the effort

“ Make health
your top priority. ”



“ I’m trying to show my kids that, whatever comes your way in life ... if you fall off the horse you just have to get back on. ”

Anthony at home with his family in Mortdale.

of filtering them out was tiring. And I had some anger problems too. Most of it was frustration but some was not dealing with situations properly.”

He adds “I had physio to work on my neck problems from the accident, at home to do general rehab and to help me specifically at the gym for about 2 months.

“Going to the gym has been massively important in my recovery. I’d schedule my gym visits each week and I’ve stuck to that schedule for more than 2 years now. I go at least 3 or 4 times a week because I’ve scheduled it even though it’s the hardest thing I’ve had to do physically, mentally and emotionally because often I’m feeling just too tired. I’m trying to show my kids that, whatever comes your way in life, everyone goes through hardships but if you fall off the horse you just have to get back on.”

Back to work

Anthony was keen to return to work as soon as he could and his employer, Marsh, a large global insurance firm, was keen to have him back. “I finally got the OK from my doctors to go back to work 9 months after the accident. And Marsh has been great. I had to pace my return. I started at the office 2 mornings a week and then gradually increased. Since the beginning

of this year I’ve been on a 9-day fortnight. I think I can do the same work as before but I just can’t do it as fast.”

Setting goals

Anthony loves setting goals. It was something instilled in him during rehab at Liverpool.

“I’ve got 7 goals for this year,” he says. “The first is to make Michelle feel special on her birthday in a few weeks. The second is to christen Emelie. Because she was born a few months before the accident, the christening hasn’t happened yet.”

Regaining his shooting licence is another goal for this year. And “My sister will be going back to Greece for her 50th birthday in 2026. I want to take the family over there to celebrate with her.”

Anthony says if he could give advice to anyone in a similar situation to his, it would be to “make health your top priority”.

“Don’t think about anything else. If you don’t have your health you can’t look after your wife, your husband, your partner, your kids, your parents.

“And remember that anything – work, sports, chores – they become easier for you if you enjoy them.”

Three years on from the accident, Anthony has come a long way. His slurred speech is barely noticeable and his fatigue is more manageable.

“I’m definitely making progress. I’m still forgetting things a lot but I have strategies. For example, when I go to the shops I take a picture of where the car is parked. I keep reminders on my phone of what I’ve got on every day.”

Anthony knows the support of his family has been a major part of his improvement.

“My wife especially. She would run through a wall for me. And my parents – they’re in their 80s – and my brother and my sister. They’ve been so supportive and that’s the reason why I want to get back to normal again. I don’t want to let them down.

“But I will know that I’m back to my best,” says Anthony, “when my boy Leo comes to me and says ‘Let’s go to the park and kick the ball’ and I feel I’ve got enough energy to do it and can say ‘Yeah, sure!’

“I’m still on my way to that place. I haven’t given up.”



Courtney O'Shea: pride in her work

Courtney is a Lifetime Care participant

Courtney always loved animals. After life-changing injuries from a car accident, her cat Oliver is now her steady companion. She speaks up about work and life.

Courtney has always loved animals. At age 20, she'd completed a Certificate IV in vet nursing and was loving her work at the Campbelltown Petbarn. She quickly moved from being a sales assistant to helping in the grooming salon and being responsible for end-of-day closing. She also organised cat adoptions for the RSPCA – keeping the cats near her at the cash register so she could keep an eye on their interactions with potential owners.

She says "It's really lovely watching customers come in for pet supplies, falling in love and going home with a second cat."

Courtney's employer offered her the opportunity to run puppy preschool classes. This involved training with an inspiring teacher in Wollongong.

In October 2020, Courtney was driving back from Wollongong to her family's home at Mt Annan when she had a motor vehicle accident which resulted in life-changing injuries.

She was hospitalised with a C4 spinal injury. For a time, she could only blink to communicate. She made steady progress, and after a few weeks in ICU was moved to the spinal injury ward to start rehab.

"I was lucky. It could have been worse."

Living independently

The family home couldn't accommodate Courtney's needs. After some interim arrangements, she now lives independently in a unit while waiting for a more wheelchair-accessible property. She has artistically arranged photographs of her friends and family on the wall and has set up a play area for her curious cat, Oliver. Oliver has a cat tree to climb but prefers exploring the toys strung up around the unit and nestling into the warm spot across Courtney's sheepskin slippers.

Self-reliance

Courtney's parents always fostered a can-do spirit in her and her brothers. That independence became a test when she had to learn to accept help. "Learning to interact with my environment is a massive thing. I've learnt to open and close the balcony doors and the fridge on my own. But the rest of the world can still be a challenge."

At first, she had only slight movement in her arms and the ability to flick her right wrist. But in 2022 and 2023, she had operations to transfer a tendon from her biceps to her triceps, which has given her more movement in her right hand and improved reach. That means more independence.

"I always try to do things on my own first and then work out what level of help I need."

Courtney advises others to be proactive in knowing what's going on in the services they rely on. She says, "Everyone wants a slice of Courtney so I have to get the balance right between the OT, physio, carers. I work out the importance of an issue and then decide who the best person is to help me."

“ I always try to do things on my own first and then work out what level of help I need. ”



Oliver snuggles on Courtney's feet.



Courtney at home.

She is buoyed by her improved self-reliance. "I take responsibility for shaping my care program and make sure everyone's on the same page and working towards the same goal." Her advice to others who receive attendant care is "Speak up and don't let your voice be drowned out. Some support workers get fixated on an idea and forget to check what the participant wants."

Interstate travel

Last year, Courtney travelled to Dalby (2 hours inland from Brisbane) to attend a baby shower for Kaitlin, her best friend since school days. With only short notice, she needed to organise the trip herself, with all its challenges. Fly or drive? Would her skin tolerate the travel? Could she hire the equipment she needed? Would carers be available to travel with her?

Planning was one thing but executing the plan was another. A hiccup was airline crew who didn't know how to use their own hoist to move her from wheelchair to airline seat. The plane eventually took off, 90 minutes late. But Courtney was onboard.

Courtney beams when picturing Kaitlin's face on arrival. "It was surreal to be in Queensland. Yes, there were issues. But we got there." Now Courtney is keen to get to

America one day. "You've just got to will it to happen and be willing to fight for what you want. I now know it's possible."

An internship

Travel isn't Courtney's only goal. She heard about a 3-month work internship at Sargood, an organisation providing services for people with spinal cord injury. Immediately, she set about researching Sargood's values, what they were looking for in an intern, drafting interview questions, devising answers – to address her concern about her capability to manage the business' systems and equipment. "I take pride in my work and was worried I wouldn't be able to deliver."

But deliver she did. After being offered the internship, Courtney took 2 weeks to learn their systems. She then devised and delivered her own project to re-design the guest compendium explaining the services available to each guest.

The internship has been life-changing for Courtney. "I am very proud of what I produced and I'm far more confident in advocating for my needs in any workplace. I know I can be productive!"

Courtney now sees herself doing more courses and part-time work. "It's hard to choose: public speaking would be fun; peer and family support – really enjoyable; advocacy – I like that.

"I'm far more confident in advocating for my needs in any workplace. I know I can be productive!"

"I wouldn't have had these opportunities before the accident. I still think animals are cooler than people. But now I'm more interested in helping people and teaching them – and not just through their animals. Perhaps I'm now more people-centred?"

Before she starts tackling her next challenge, Courtney has a weekly cooking project. She and her extended family remain close, meeting weekly. She's become the designated dessert maker.

"Normally I scope out what I'm going to make before a catchup. I research what someone's craving, look up the ingredients using voice activation on my phone, and direct my carers as to how I want things displayed."

Her brothers love her no-bake Tim Tam cheesecake. Her cousin loves her white Christmas rocky road. "I'll do that for his 21st coming up."



Des Cross: always has goals

Des is in the Workers Care Program



Des was living in a small town with a family of four daughters when he had an accident at work. He's since moved to a larger town, had another daughter and broadened his sporting interests.

In 2016, Des was living in Manildra working as an electrician at the canola processing factory. He was a busy family man with four daughters. Manildra is a small country town (population under 1000) near Orange. As Des says "Everyone in small towns is into sport, clubs and competitions. That's what you do." He was involved with cricket, tennis, lawn bowls and golf and was a regular at the gym. One of his proudest moments was being part of the winning lawn bowls team in the local area competition. His particular joy was that an older team member finally gained the win after striving for years. "It's the people that make you enjoy sport."

In late 2016, Des fell from a ladder at work which resulted in an incomplete spinal cord injury. He now has weakness on his left side but pain and altered sensation on his right side.

Today, Des lives in Tamworth and his family is even busier than 3 years ago, with the birth of his fifth daughter. He uses a wheelchair to get around, drives his car to his various activities and also helps with school drop-offs and his kids' after-school activities. He is at the gym 5 days per week and back playing lawn bowls. He has taken up wheelchair basketball as well as mountain biking using an adaptive bike. He and the family enjoy time away with their camper trailer, often with their boat.

You gotta have goals

Des puts great importance on having goals and emphasises how these have helped him over the last 7 years. "You gotta have a goal to work to. Goals are very, very important in life whether for work or play. You need to have them so you can tick them off. It doesn't matter if they are big or small. In fact, you are probably better off having lots of small goals to start with."

One of Des' goals was to get back to lawn bowls which he quickly achieved, driving himself to tournaments across the state. His lawn bowls' goals keep expanding – he was part of the winning pennant team in Tamworth; he then won the NSW multi-disability lawn bowls pairs and was a reserve on the NSW state team. His goal now is to get a place in the NSW multi-disciplinary lawn bowls team and compete in the nationals against other states. "That's my dream."

Prior to his accident, Des had often thought about having a boat. He says "Don't let your accident put your plans on hold". Since moving to Tamworth, he has got a boat and says he loves being out on the water, the fishing, the peace and quiet. He laughs as he channels Dale Kerrigan from the movie The Castle, saying he loves the "serenity" on the water. One other unexpected pleasure is, on his boat he can go anywhere that other people go, just as easily as they do. "In boats, we are all the same, just floating on the water."

“In boats, we
are all the same, just
floating on the water.”





Working hard.

Not only does Des like having goals but he really likes a challenge. He has completed a pool-based scuba diving course which was “awesome”. He is now rated as a ‘classified diver’ and must dive with a ‘classified dive buddy’ who has particular skills. Another upcoming challenge is joining some local races on Tamworth tracks using his hand-operated mountain bike.

A joint effort

Des moved to Tamworth (population 65,000 plus) in 2018 – a much bigger community than Manildra. He has made the most of the move, accessing more supports and new opportunities which have helped embed him in the community.

Des regularly talks ideas through with his local case manager and his OT. He puts importance on local people who have local contacts and understand his local Tamworth community and surrounds. “I take an idea to them and have a yarn” long before considering a request for funding. In recent years this approach has helped with home modifications, trialling different sports, and a hand-operated mountain bike which he can use on Tamworth’s local tracks.



NSW multi-disability lawn bowls pairs champions, Des with James Reynolds.

Many members of his extended family now live in Tamworth; this is particularly helpful while Des’ family of 7 lives in temporary accommodation so home modifications can be completed.

In the sporting community, Des is a competitor but also does some work in secondary schools through Wheelchair Sports NSW. He is pleased at how the students respond to playing basketball from a wheelchair. He is particularly proud of the impact of the serious messages he shares with the students – about how easily accidents can occur at work or in cars, about taking responsibility for what you do and for what happens.

Get the help you need

Des is very clear that “One of the really hard parts of all that has happened is not working”. Work is important to him and he hopes to find the right job again. He notes that things have changed for both he and his wife. She now works and, as he sees it, his injury “took my wife away from what she loved, being at home with the kids”.

He says not being at work still hurts a lot and 18 months ago, “It got the better of me and I was in a dark place”. There was a crisis point that his wife helped him through and “I got a doctor and got the help I needed”.

“You gotta have a goal to work to. Goals are very, very important in life whether for work or play. You need to have them so you can tick them off.”

Des is clear that ‘work on yourself’ is much broader than just ‘work in the gym’; but when *Shine* meets him in the gym he is very focused there too. He initially used the gym’s heated pool but now does gym sessions 5 days per week for about 50-60 minutes. He has support helping him work to a plan, reviewed regularly by his physiotherapist in line with his goals. He has noticed a lot of strength improvement in his left arm. One of his goals is to get a specialised leg brace so he can walk better. “I want to be able to carry my own coffee from the kitchen to the lounge room with no spills.”

As Des says “you gotta have goals.”

“Don’t let your accident put your plans on hold.”



Buck Cooper: kickboxing again

Buck is a Lifetime Care Participant



Buck in action using his sports blade prosthesis.

Buck had 10 'lost years' before he found kickboxing again. He tells *Shine* about the importance of discipline and consistency and how he had to 'relearn' not just 'adjust'.

Shine meets with Buck on the crest of his hobby farm, inland from Milton in the Shoalhaven area of NSW. His 29 acres are hilly with valleys, mountains and the coast all on show. He finds it peaceful living alone here and is keen to talk about the last 2 years, particularly the 12 months since he returned to mixed martial arts.

Buck moved to his hobby farm in 2018, 5 years after his accident. His dream was always to live sustainably. He'd grown up and done his apprenticeship in the southern Shoalhaven area, and was running his own carpentry business when he had a motorcycle accident in October 2013. He sustained multiple fractures and abdominal injuries, and was airlifted to hospital where he spent 8 weeks undergoing major surgeries. He had a left below-knee amputation and was diagnosed with a left brachial plexus injury. The result is, he now walks with a prosthetic left leg, and his left arm and hand have no functional movement.

Kickboxing

Despite his injuries, and after a 10-year break, Buck got back to kickboxing 12 months ago. He was into karate as a kid and mixed martial arts as an adult. Before his accident he and his young children enjoyed doing karate together. On 1 June 2023 Buck watched his teenage son sparring at a gym and decided he'd stay on and join an adult class.

This was a turning point after what he describes as a 'lost' 10 years, and his training regime quickly moved to 7 days per week – 4 at the gym and 3 at home. Buck would prefer to train at the gym 6-7 days per week but the costs are high. "Paying for the trainer and running the car 50 km into town and back is hard when my income is the disability support pension." The right healthy, fresh foods for a competitive athlete are also expensive. Buck is clear that one of the side-effects of competitive training is that he is much healthier and stronger in all areas of his life. "I have had to get healthy and stay healthy. I have had to get fit and stay fit."

Buck's goal is to be the best professional amputee kickboxer and he is training hard. He can do 1500 push-ups in an hour – essentially one-armed pushups, only using his left arm as a balance point for stability. Buck is single-minded about the discipline of training but he finds the hardest part is discipline around food. "Walking past the pizza shop is a challenge."

Buck tells *Shine* that the timing of our meeting is good: a sports promotion company is paying expenses so he and his trainer can fly to Cairns for a one-on-one meet on 1 June 2024 with a top-level kickboxer who is also an amputee.

"My opponent has an above-knee amputation so people think I have an advantage with my below-knee amputation. But he is over 6 foot tall, has two good arms and is playing in front of his home crowd. My goal is to get to Cairns in my best physical and mental state." Buck is confident that whatever happens it will be 'awesome' and a turning point.

A sports blade is a prosthesis with a curved blade instead of a foot. The material in the blade compresses and stores potential energy, rebounding in a natural way as the athlete moves.



Buck at home on his property.

Buck has a specialised prosthesis for kickboxing, like a sports blade. (See box on page 8.) He discussed the functions and capabilities he wanted in the blade, and the prosthetist then designed the leg and used a 3D printer to make it out of foam. Buck stands on his prosthetic left leg blade (wrapped in padding) while kicking with his right leg. These precautions prevent damage to himself, opponents or training partners. The design and materials are now being used by prosthetists in similar situations – Buck’s needs have helped progress the technology.

Breaking news: Buck won the fight!

Buck always liked to push the boundaries a bit, believing you shouldn’t play it too safe. He describes it as “I tell myself impossible lies.” He’s confident that his win on 1 June is showing kids with disability that they can dream big too.

Recent years

The gym has given Buck a sense of community in the last 12 months. He describes himself as not really a social person but kickboxing is a real community thing. “And I have respect from the gym now. When I first started I am sure they were thinking ‘Poor guy, I guess he wants to have a go’. Now their view is ‘He’s strong; he’s competitive; he’s one of us’.”



Buck and his children always enjoyed karate.

Buck has been single for the last 2 years and comments that he had never had a chance to find out who he was till then. He has had partners since he was 15 and had never really spent time just with himself. Since his accident 11 years ago, he’d been “drinking a lot and still dealing with other people’s stuff”. He describes living alone as a spiritual awakening. “You don’t fully realise your problems till you sit with your thoughts alone and sober for a long time.

“You only get one life in this body. I have had to grab it with both hands. There are lots of turning points and it would have been easy to turn back but I see setbacks as stepping stones.”

He notes it was 1 June 2023 that he got back to kick-boxing after a 10-year break following his accident. It was 1 June 2024 – exactly a year – when the Cairns gig was live streamed by News Corp Sports and Buck won.

Buck at home

Buck prioritises his training at the gym and home, but he is also doing some building work on his house and slowly developing the property.

In late 2019, the property sustained bushfire damage when the surrounding forest fires came within 100 m of his house. Buck had stayed to defend his home which the fire did not damage. Plenty of forest regrowth can

“ You only get one life in this body. I have had to grab it with both hands. There are lots of turning points and it would have been easy to turn back but I see setbacks as stepping stones. ”

be seen in the valley, along with areas that are still scarred by the bushfires. Buck has planted fruit trees in the cleared flatter areas around his house and has restored rock retaining walls. He is quietly self-reliant and resourceful managing the farm and his daily routine, finding ways to work around his limitations. “There are a couple more limitations but life is certainly not over.”

Outdoors he has found solutions to some big challenges – devising techniques and sourcing equipment which allows him to work independently. “Some things are still hard. Try getting started hammering a nail with one hand; try cutting a tomato with one hand” he comments.

Buck says he has had to ‘relearn’ not just ‘adjust’. He says it is totally different. “I couldn’t take the skills I had and adjust them. I have had to relearn a new set of skills”. He is proud of his new skills and ready with an open mind to awesome experiences ahead.



Sport: get involved



Australia will be cheering our competitors when the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games begin in Paris in July. icare is an Official Partner of the Australian Paralympic Team.

Brett Stibners is an elite para athlete, but he is clear that “sport is so much more than competing and winning”. (See more about icare’s sponsorship and about Brett on page 19.)

Winning a game or performing better than last week is a real boost. But getting engaged with sport has many other benefits. It’s a great way to keep healthy and well, whether you are a competitor, coach, spectator or supporter. Being involved with sport means you join a community.

Shine talked with four icare participants whose interests in sport range from community recreational activity to international competition. They are involved in team sports, individual events and setting personal challenges.

Brad Grove: Captain of Australian World Cup Wheelchair Rugby League team, the Wheelaroos

Brad’s proudest sporting moment was captaining the Australian Wheelaroos at the 2021 Rugby League World Cup.

For Brad, participating in sports has been life-changing not only for his health but also for his community connections. “Getting involved in sport has made me more independent, improved my health and taught me crucial life skills. It has also helped me create meaningful connections within communities worldwide.

“Following my spinal cord injury, I explored many disability sports through ‘come and try’ events. But wheelchair rugby league really captivated me. It’s fast-paced, strategic and welcomes players of all abilities.”

Brad’s advice is to explore many adaptive sports with an open mind. “Patience is key; skill development takes time. Embrace the process, and don’t be discouraged – each sport offers unique challenges and rewards.”

“Getting involved in sport has made me more independent, improved my health and taught me crucial life skills.”

Joel Vanderzwan: Invictus Games all-rounder

Sport was always a big part of Joel’s life. A motorcycle accident left him with T6 complete paraplegia, and sport then became the foundation on which Joel rebuilt his purpose in life and achieved his rehabilitation goals.

“Sport enriches my life. I have used the power of sport to recover and rebuild, fostering a sense of community through participation and spectating alike,” said Joel.

Joel’s proudest sporting moment was competing in the Invictus Games (2022, Sydney) in not one but 4 sports: archery, indoor rowing, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby.

“The sporting community is full of great people with great stories. I say find and relish a sport you love. All sports can be adapted.”

While Joel’s focus is now on adaptive mountain biking and wheelchair basketball, he is also giving back to the community through coaching and serving as an inclusion advisor on boards.

“I have used the power of sport to recover and rebuild.”



Eva Lena Koslowski: Triathlete

Eva was not into organised sport as a child though she enjoyed horse riding, cycling and swimming. Her rehab after a brain injury drew her towards the highly competitive sport of triathlon.

"I always loved to swim and cycle, and I could run. My exercise physio at the time taught me how to swim freestyle and helped me prepare to participate in my first triathlon," said Eva.

Sport has been the means for Eva to find her purpose, achieve her goals and make new friends. "Sport gives me purpose, and I really enjoy it. It's the best natural antidepressant I've found, and it has also created many friendships.

"It has been great for my physical and mental well-being and key in making social connections," said Eva.

"The only limits are the ones you set for yourself. Aim high, keep trying and never give up."

A can-do attitude has seen her on the podium at a number of regular community triathlon events including a first for females at Hawks Nest. Her next goal is to qualify for the Ironman 70.3 world champions in December. (Ironman 70.3 refers to the total 113 km distance in miles.)

"Sport gives me purpose ... It's the best natural antidepressant I've found."

Check out The Adaptive Movement website

Search for adaptive sport and recreation activities in NSW and ACT. A one-stop shop for anyone who wants to get more active or have their sport adapted just for them. See page 18 for more information or visit www.theadaptivemovement.com

Adrian Birrer: Wakeboarder

Adrian did not think he could do sport. He can't sit up independently and needs help for everyday activities like getting dressed. But a weekend at Sargood, where he got to try different sports, helped him see his abilities differently.

"That's when my eyes opened up and I saw all the sports I could do. I do extreme sports like wakeboarding and mountain bike riding. I've got my scuba diving ticket, I've done canoeing, deep sea fishing, driving AWD chairs on the beach, swimming, and surfing," Adrian said.

Adrian loves the independence that wakeboarding gives him, and the chance to be silly and push himself out of his comfort zone. "I like to do jumps and extreme stuff, silly stuff. I'll get out of the water and hear people say 'Wow, look at that wheelchair guy, look what he's doing. It's amazing!'"

"Your life isn't over just because you can't sit up. You just have to find the right device and be willing to get out there and take some risks."

What's your interest? Join in!

Sport is so much more than just competing and winning. You can join in by being a:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spectator | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cheerleader |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competitor | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Score keeper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee member |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Training partner | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and more! |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach | |

Mark Schofield: a forward focus

Mark is a Lifetime Care Participant



Mark managing pool equipment.

Mark was busy with work, family and outdoor activities when he had a life-altering stroke after a car accident. He introduces himself and shares his ideas for continuing his adventures and living his best life possible, his way.

Mark introduces himself

Mark entered his story in the *Shine* Writers' Prize in 2023 (see *Shine* edition Summer 2023) introducing himself as follows:

"I am a 51-year-old husband and father of two boys, so have always led a pretty active and adventurous life when I wasn't working long hours in a job that I loved. I have always enjoyed the great outdoors and had plans to travel extensively when I retired and see as much of Australia as I could. I thought retirement was a long way off and that I had many years of work ahead of me before I hit the open road in my twilight years.

“The things I want to do before I die, I've got to do now.”

"In January 2017, my life took a major unexpected turn when I was involved in a car accident. I thought I had gotten out of it pretty much unscathed, but a few days later I suffered a stroke from an internal carotid artery dissection. My left side was paralysed. Whilst my leg has recovered quite well, my arm has not been as cooperative, unfortunately, despite some pretty major surgeries and intensive therapy."

Then and now

It was soon after his stroke that Mark first heard the words 'Lifetime Care'. He and his wife found the words very, very scary. And it was "terrifying not knowing what's happening to your body and what this means to your life".

That was then. Now, Mark lives a busy and adventurous life.

Between 'Then' and 'Now' Mark worked intensively with his rehab team at the Hunter Brain Injury Transitional Living Unit. He now works closely with Jacqui O'Brien, his Lifetime Care contact.

Mark draws heavily on his strengths. He believes his stubborn streak, impatience and focus on independence have been strengths, though he smiles, knowing these tendencies can irritate other people. At his work, he was a troubleshooter, problem-solving all sorts of challenges and applying different approaches to find practical solutions. He continues to apply this problem-solving approach to his current challenges.

Mark's pool, yard and garden

Mark had always taken great pride in maintaining his yard, pool and garden. Following his injury, he had a goal to get back to managing this independently. He has tried some modified equipment but often uses off-the-shelf products in novel ways, and then trial and error to learn new techniques (see some examples on pages 14, 15). "With great satisfaction I was able to sack my mowing services and take back my own home maintenance, once I worked out how to do this with a lot of problem-solving, some modified equipment and one good arm."



The scuba diving group.



Mark using the automated access step.

“Life changes and you’ve still got to enjoy it. I am living my best life even if it is sort of not my best life.”

On the road

Mark had always planned to drive around Australia when he retired. After his injury, he moved these plans forward but found reversing a towed caravan was beyond his cognitive ability.

After much research he decided a ‘drivable caravan’ – a motorhome – was the best solution. It required specialist adaptations like automating the access steps and swapping out the wind-out awning with a battery-powered replacement. Mark has enjoyed a few shorter test trips away and is now planning for the big trip around Australia.

On the water

Mark and his family always enjoyed boating, fishing and sharing good times on the water. He was keen to get back driving his boat. This included many separate skills like towing, launching, driving and retrieving the boat. Each required a detailed approach to assessment, new techniques, safety and practice.

Some electronic components helped him manage loading the boat onto the trailer and using the anchor. Repositioning ladder railings provided feasible, safer access following a ‘test and try it out’ process using the ladder at the local ocean baths.

Under the water

Once Mark mastered driving his boat, he set a new goal to try scuba diving. After much upfront problem-solving and practice around equipment, water skills and buoyancy, Mark joined the first day of a standard 3-day open water scuba course. This experience made him realise that he needed to change over to an adaptive course to accommodate his physical limitations.

He worked very hard for 6 months improving his buoyancy under water and modifying his wetsuit. He then completed the modified course and is now rated a ‘classified diver’ – he must dive with a ‘classified dive buddy’ who has particular skills. Mark’s current plan is that his son will do the course, become his classified dive buddy, fly to North Queensland (after Mark has driven up there in his motorhome) and have some scuba diving adventures together.

Mark remarks on how different his body feels while scuba diving. “It’s the most relaxing time where I don’t notice my hand doing nothing.”

Read more about Mark’s Case Management on pages 14, 15.

A forward focus

Mark notes that the life he has rebuilt for himself has arisen from a huge team effort and from his forward-focussed mindset. “The things I want to do before I die, I’ve got to do now.”

He says “Life changes and you’ve still got to enjoy it. I am living my best life even if it is sort of not my best life.”

Mark has always had big bold goals, but he has also treasured all the small wins for himself and others. He has joined a Lifetime Care Participant Reference Group and volunteered to participate in research where this can help. “If my story helps others then that is my goal.”

Mark is certainly focussed on getting the most out of life and reaping the benefits of his hard work. And he is looking forward to many more exciting adventures along the way.



A case management role that supports Mark to achieve his goals



Mark shows Jacqui activation of the automated access step.

Case management has worked well for Mark Schofield, a participant in Lifetime Care.

Shine meets with Mark and his Lifetime Care contact (Jacqui) at his home. It is a relaxed setting and their conversation includes banter and joking, showing their mutual trust and respect. Mark also shows us some of the equipment, modifications and techniques he and Jacqui have developed to help him enjoy his home life and to get out and about on his adventures.

Jacqui and Mark met in 2017 soon after Mark had his accident. Jacqui, as his Lifetime Care contact at the time, worked with Mark to assist him to apply to become a participant in Lifetime Care so he could get the help he needed to access services. Jacqui currently supports Mark as both his Lifetime Care contact and his case manager.

In the early stage, case management can help participants focus primarily on their recovery and rehabilitation, as well as their adjustment to their injury. The case management role can change as the participant's health, abilities, needs, interests and goals change.

When Jacqui and Mark first met, he thought "I won't need you for long". Looking back, Mark can laugh about that now. They clearly have a strong relationship that has changed over time but has always focussed on helping Mark get the best outcomes he can from his engagement with Lifetime Care.

Strong working relationship

The way Jacqui and Mark work together may have changed over time to best suit his goals, needs and abilities but the relationship continues its strong basis of mutual respect. Mark says "I'm very lucky to have Jacqui on my side, to have her on my journey. When I send her pics or ring her up with good news, I know she totally understands the work behind the achievement."

Jacqui says "I admire Mark's determination and resilience. He was initially hellbent on getting back to work. When he realised he wasn't going to return to his old job, he reinvented his life and planned out a new journey. He now does regular 'pitstop check-ins' with me when needed, to make sure he has everything he needs to help him keep going."

Plan and problem-solve together

In practical terms, Jacqui and Mark review how his services are going and his plan for the next 12 months using the **My Plan planning tool**. (See box on page 15.) They identify clear goals and then problem-solve together.

Where new services, products or adaptations are needed, Mark usually does the initial research. Then Jacqui considers Lifetime Care's funding criteria, finds the evidence and the therapists to ensure that activities and modifications are safe and effective.

Mark admits he often has ideas between plans. "I surprise Jacqui with my ideas and then she plays catch-up."

“Mark knows that teamwork and lots of practice are key ingredients in his success.”



Trailer modifications.



Chest harness holds whippersnapper weight.

Some goals need a lot of planning and require many small steps, like Mark managing his boat or trying scuba diving. Others require specialised solutions like modifying and automating the access step to Mark's motorhome. Other goals may simply require off-the-shelf products that Mark would not have otherwise needed – like the chest harness to hold the weight of the whippersnapper so Mark can operate it one-handed. Some goals just need a different technique or particular positioning, like Mark's solution to one-handed emptying of the mower catcher. Mark knows that teamwork and lots of practice are key ingredients in his success.

Mutual sounding board

In addition to joint planning and problem-solving, Jacqui says they are sounding boards for each other. She is a sounding board for Mark's ideas and will help him map them out. What are the steps? What comes first? Are the right people involved? How safe is that? How can we check? How could we practise?

“Some goals need a lot of planning and require many small steps ...or specialised solutions ... or off-the-shelf products ... or just need a different technique.”

Mark is a sounding board for Jacqui's proposed and alternative processes. His project management experience makes him particularly alert to practical matters and timeframes though he laughingly acknowledges his impatience.

Mark trusts Jacqui's views – he asked her to join him at key medical appointments so she could support him through questions and answers. She heard the answers directly from the specialist and could report back to his rehab team and, as Mark says, “Nothing was missed in translation because of me”.

Getting back on the road

One of Mark's early goals was to get back to driving his car. Jacqui arranged his mandatory driving assessment with a specialist OT. An assessor's report is vital to show links between any request, Mark's goals and Lifetime Care's framework for funding 'reasonable and necessary' supports. Once agreed and approved, Jacqui organised the car modifications. She, Mark

and the assessor then checked the modifications to ensure they met standards, were safe and easy for Mark to use. The next step was practice.

Living his best life

As Mark says, goals change and grow. Initially he wanted to drive his car as a key step in restoring his independence. He has now expanded that goal to the big one of 'driving around Australia'. Similarly, once he had mastered driving his boat he set a new goal to trial scuba diving.

I'm sure Mark has lots of other ideas and surprises to jointly problem-solve with Jacqui in the years ahead.

Mark says he is living his best life – in the circumstances. It wasn't the life he planned. However, through working closely with his Lifetime Care contact he has managed to rebuild a busy life he enjoys. There's a lot to look forward to.

My Plan planning tool

For more information about the My Plan planning tool visit: www.icare.nsw.gov.au/injured-or-ill-people/motor-accident-injuries/planning-for-the-future

icare
Insurance and Care NSW

My Plan

Co-designing resources: ageing well with a brain injury

Tailored resources for older people with a traumatic brain injury



Research shows that people living with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) have significant health needs and that these needs become more complex as they age. Yet there are limited resources to assist people with TBI who are ageing.

To address this gap, icare is part of a project developing specific, tailored resources for older people with TBI, their families and carers. In Sydney, the project group includes icare and the John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research; in Victoria it includes both the Transport Accident Commission and Monash University. Importantly, the project process focuses on working directly with older people living with a TBI, their families and carers. They are key partners, and their experiences, views and ideas will be critical to the successful co-design of the final resource, to be called 'Tools for Ageing Well with Traumatic Brain Injury'.

“I learnt a lot through this process. It was a good experience with people from different backgrounds, each bringing different ideas.”

The workshops

Bernard recently participated in one of the co-design workshops. He acquired a TBI in 2012 as a result of falling down some stairs at work and became a participant in the Workers Care Program. Bernard's brain injury caused aphasia, which means that he sometimes has difficulty understanding and communicating words and written information. Bernard is now in his 70s and over the years he has had direct experience with many different therapists, carers and support workers.

The workshops included people with TBI, families and carers with a focus on the needs of participants aged over 55 with a TBI. They shared their experience of ageing with a TBI and what was important to them.

Bernard describes the workshop. “The group discussed hobbies, interests and some of the health struggles we deal with. By chatting with the group, I picked up some ideas from others about what works for them, tips like making notes to help with memory and appointments.”

Bernard also noted “I learnt a lot through this process. It was a good experience with people from different backgrounds, each bringing different ideas. Being involved in the group discussions helped me connecting with others, navigating the system, and feeling supported.”

The resources

Bernard clearly gained a great deal personally from attending the workshop. More broadly, the feedback from the co-design workshops will help the project team to identify the health priorities and needs of people ageing with TBI. In turn, this will help them develop a range of resources relevant to different aspects of ageing with TBI. The resource '**Tools for Ageing Well with Traumatic Brain Injury**' will be launched later in 2024.

If you are interested in taking part in any future projects or research, please speak to your Lifetime Care contact who can pass along your details to one of icare's service development teams.

Strength2Strength workshops in 2024

Register now



Strength2Strength is a program to assist families supporting relatives who have sustained a brain injury (TBI) or spinal cord injury (SCI).

The program usually runs as a one-day face-to-face workshop from 9.30am to 3.00pm. It aims to build resilience in families through drawing on their skills and strengths.

The program offers:

- a safe and friendly space to share lived experiences and stories
- time to hear and explore ideas that other families have found helpful – perhaps about ‘recharging your batteries’ or ‘managing tricky moments’
- useful resources about things like services, financial information, social connections.

Strength2Strength workshops in 2024 (face-to-face)

Two face-to-face Strength2Strength workshops have been held this year, and 4 more are planned for the remainder of 2024.

Face-to-face workshops:

FOCUS	DATE	LOCATION
SCI	26 July 2024	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW
TBI	23 August 2024	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW
SCI	27 September 2024	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW
TBI	22 November 2024	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW

Interested in online Strength2Strength workshops?

The Strength2Strength program is keen to hear your interest in a weekly online group relevant to SCI. They have already run this short session online format for TBI in 2023 over 6 weeks.

Register now!

Registration for each of the 4 face-to-face workshops closes a week before the session. Register now for the workshops or send through an expression of interest for the SCI online group.

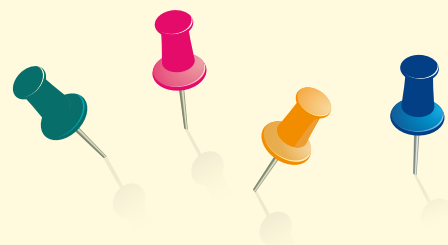
Contact Nicole Robinson: nicole.robinson@royalrehab.com.au or Stephanie Tuck: stephanie.tuck@royalrehab.com.au

“ Thank you.
Keep this program as
accessible as you can.
These resources are so
valuable to carers and
families at all stages
of their journey.”

Family member supporting
a Lifetime Care participant.

The notice board

Sharing your news highlights, handy information and upcoming events.



Introducing icare's support worker Reward and Recognition Program

icare is thrilled to invite you to join the new initiative to recognise support workers who are providing outstanding service in supporting you to achieve your goals at home or in your community.

Why nominate your support worker?

The Reward and Recognition Program is your chance to express appreciation when you receive exceptional service from your support worker. This might be their contagious positivity, unwavering support, or going above and beyond their role. Every nomination lets your support worker be recognised and rewarded for their exceptional efforts.

How does it work?

It's simple! As someone who receives support services, you can nominate your support worker. To be eligible, the support worker must be from one of icare's contracted attendant care panel providers and working with a person in Lifetime Care, Workers Care or Dust Diseases Care.

Step 1: Complete the online nomination form by using the QR code below. The form lets you share the story about how the exceptional service of your support worker has made a difference in your life.

Step 2: Sit back and smile secretively knowing your support worker will be recognised by icare. Or maybe celebrate the nomination together?

Step 3: All nominated support workers receive an official certificate from icare, confirming their nomination.

Step 4: Support Workers will be judged by a panel of 3 including a participant. The top 10 nominees will receive a gift voucher.



SCAN ME

Nominate now

Nominations are always open. The first round will take place in July 2024. If you miss the cut-off for the July round, your nomination will automatically go in the next round. Scan the QR code or [visit](#).

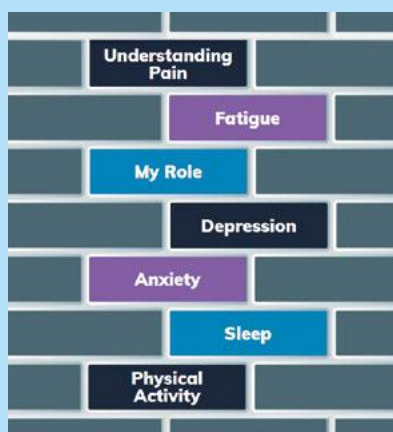


The Adaptive Movement

The Adaptive Movement is a website where you can search for adaptive sport and recreation activities in NSW and the ACT. It's a one-stop shop for anyone who wants to get more active or have their sport adapted just for them. From the website, you can send an email directly to any of the adaptive sports and recreation providers that interest you.

You can search The Adaptive Movement website www.theadaptivemovement.com by different features like type of activity or type of adaptation or location. Activities include boccia, cricket, remote control sports, AFL, hockey, dance, swimming, frisbee, netball, sailing, judo, gymnastics, surfing, golf, bowling, scuba diving, skiing, boxing and many more.

The website is a joint initiative of Wheelchair Sports NSW/ACT and icare with the support of a committee of disability advocacy organisations. The site is fully accessible so you can make screen adjustments and use it with other software and technologies.



Be Pain Smart Program update

The Be Pain Smart Program has moved to a new location. It is now at the Royal North Shore Hospital in St Leonards, easily accessible by public transport.

The Be Pain Smart Program can help you manage chronic pain following a brain injury or spinal cord injury. When you attend the program, you will have an assessment by a multidisciplinary team of health professionals who will design a pain management program specifically for you.

Talk to your icare contact or case manager if you or a family member would like to know more about the program.

icare sponsors Australia at Paralympic Games

The Olympic and Paralympic Games offer the world's greatest stage for sporting achievement. And icare is an Official Partner of the Australian Paralympic Team.

Four icare participants on pages 10-11 describe how getting engaged with sport is a great way to keep healthy and well, whether you are a competitor, coach, spectator or supporter. Being involved with sport means you join a community.

The impact of sport

But Brett Stibners describes the impact of sport at the elite level.

"Sport was a massive part of my life before my accident, it's what I lived for. I loved to compete, and I loved to win."

He is an Australian champion wheelchair basketball player and coach - introduced to the sport 18 months after a serious accident left him with significant disabilities.

"Being involved with wheelchair basketball helped me realise that sport is so much more than competing and winning. What is most important is the camaraderie, pushing your personal limits, and finding your place within the sport. Wheelchair basketball gave me all of this and more."

"I've competed at 4 Paralympic Games and 3 world championships. I've played as a professional for 4 years in Spain, and now, with all of my experiences, I'm able to give back to the sport at all levels," said Brett.

Brett brings his love of the game to his coaching roles. "I coach my kid's community basketball teams, and I'm the head coach of the Junior u23 men's national team. I also have the privilege of being part of the coaching team for the Rollers (Australian men's national wheelchair basketball team) for the upcoming Paralympic Games in Paris, which is really exciting."

*Paralympic Wheelchair Basketballer and Coach:
Brett Stibners.*



Get involved!

Let's support Australia's Paralympians. You can send a message of support education.paralympic.org.au/paralympic-pen-pal/

Or you can join the Australian Paralympic Cheer Squad www.paralympic.org.au/aussquad/

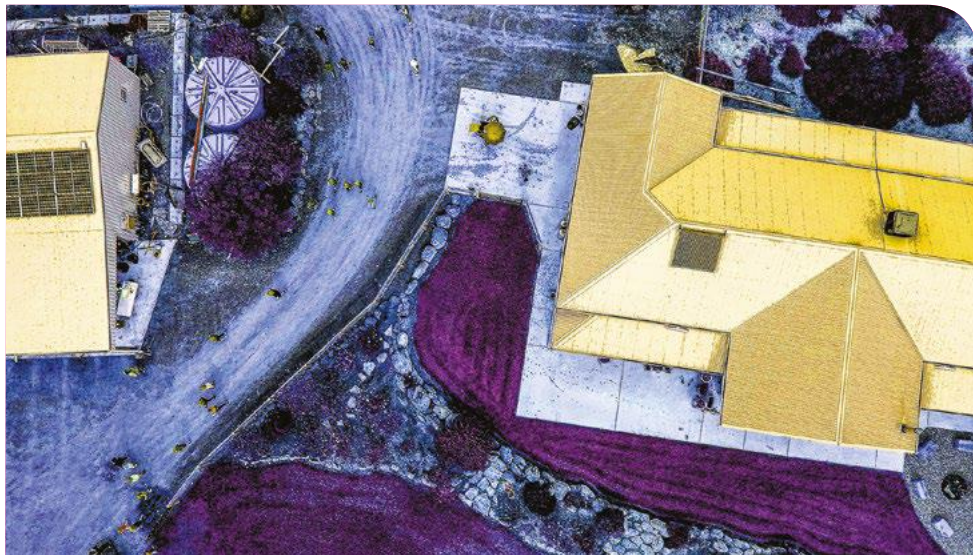


"Sport is so much more than competing and winning."



Shine

ARTS PRIZE
2024
Arts and Music



Shine Arts Prize 2022 overall winner, Purple and Yellow by Huntah Hawkins.

Shine Arts Prize 2024 is open for entries!

The *Shine* Arts Prize recognises and encourages artistic practice, and highlights the role of the arts in maintaining wellbeing and engaging with communities. The prize is open to Lifetime Care participants and those in the Workers Care Program.

The three categories for 2024 are:

- **visual arts** – including photography, digital, painting, drawing, sculpture/3D and film or video art
- **music** – including singing, instrumental and audio
- **children under 15 years** (any art form).

Theme: My Favourite Things

The theme for 2024 is 'My Favourite Things'. Do you have something you can't live without? Something that you really like or that is special to you? This could be related to an activity you enjoy doing or that you consider your 'thing'.

Prizes and recognition

The overall winner of the *Shine* Arts Prize will receive \$2000 and will be offered an optional mentoring package through Accessible Arts NSW. The winners of the other two categories above will each receive \$1000.

This year there is also a People's Choice award where people can vote for their favourite artwork. The winner will receive \$500.

Exhibitions

All submitted artworks will feature in an online exhibition. Short-listed artworks will be hung and exhibited at the icare office in Sydney at the end of 2024.

How do you enter?

Entries close at 5pm on 31 July 2024 via the *Shine* Arts Prize webpage www.icare.nsw.gov.au/injured-or-ill-people/shine-arts-prize.

You don't need to have any prior art experience and you can submit up to 2 artworks.

On the webpage you will find links to the entry form and:

- inspiring short videos (provided by Accessible Arts NSW) to help with your entries and your art practice, interviews with professional artists, information about transforming ideas into an artwork, advice about turning art practice into a business
- terms and conditions for entry
- frequently asked questions, tips for photographing artworks, using video
- past entries from the *Shine* Arts Prize.

Got a question?

Contact Nerita on (02) 7922 1115 or shineartsprize@icare.nsw.gov.au

icare acknowledges the clans of the Dharug, Eora and Kuring-gai nations as traditional owners of the land on which *Shine* was created.

We'd love to hear from you!
Would you like to share your story or news in *Shine*?
Email shine@icare.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 738 586.

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Shine online

Scan the QR code to view the online edition.

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Insurance and Care NSW