



**I want to inspire people, and to say never give up.
Meet Daniel Perinich, page 8**

Shine

Sharing stories, ideas and news across
the Lifetime Care and Workers Care
Program networks.

Winter 2018



Dear all,

Welcome to the winter edition of *Shine* for 2018. *Shine* was initially created for Lifetime Care participants to share stories about life after a motor accident injury and to foster connections between other participants and families in similar circumstances. Now in its seventh year, I'm pleased to be introducing this edition of *Shine* to both Lifetime Care and Workers Care Program participants.

Workers Care was established following the creation of Insurance and Care NSW (icare) to provide the best support to people who are severely injured at work. Participants who are severely injured in the workplace can have similar injuries and support needs to those injured on roads, and so Workers Care uses the same model of support that Lifetime Care participants have been receiving for almost 12 years.

By creating *Shine* for both Lifetime Care and Workers Care participants, we aim to provide an even greater opportunity to share stories and build connections. Every one of the 1,300 participants now in the Lifetime Care scheme and 290 participants in the Workers Care Program has a unique background and experiences which can be shared.

In this edition, you will hear stories from Lisa and Denise, Workers Care participants who attended our first Workers Care Reference Groups and Linda van Impelen, a Lifetime Care participant who recently won a silver medal in Giant Slalom at the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games. See pages 3 and 10 for the full stories.

I hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as I did.

Regards,

Don Ferguson,
Group Executive, Integrated Care

icare is always open to receiving feedback from the community and our customers.

One way we've been getting feedback for the last few years is by engaging Lifetime Care participants and their families in regular consultation through our reference groups. The groups provide a forum for participants, and families to share experiences and insights, discuss topics of concern and offer opinions about the way we provide support and services.

They are a great opportunity for information sharing and connecting with other people in similar circumstances. During the meetings we provide an update on what's happening in the local region, and any major updates from icare. We then leave the agenda open to discuss what's important to group members. Through group discussion, members can play a part in solving 'big picture' issues and help to represent the needs of other participants, workers and families.

Meetings are informal and allow for conversations between presentations. There is also plenty of opportunity to chat to other members of the group over lunch.

If you are interested in providing feedback or being involved in any of our reference groups, please speak with your icare coordinator.

Engaging with our customers

Expanding our Lifetime Care Participant Reference Groups

In 2016, we moved away from a central single group meeting in Sydney to three regional groups. Lifetime Care Participant Reference groups (PRGs) have since been held three to four times a year in Sydney, Parramatta and Newcastle.

We are now expanding the PRGs to include more rural locations and members. Our first rural PRG was held in Dubbo on 31 July. Planning is underway for a further PRG in northern NSW.

Regional and rural programs have allowed us to ensure we are hearing from local voices and having local involvement. The groups are well attended and have provided invaluable feedback to help us continually improve our services and supports.

Workers Care Reference Groups

In June we held our first Workers Care Reference Group (WRG) in Sydney.

Topics covered included:

- general facts and figures about the Workers Care Program
- current initiatives and improvements, and
- early feedback from our first Workers Care Survey.

The group also discussed the sort of information they would like included in future sessions. Feedback from the workers and family members who attended was very positive and a second meeting is planned for later this year.

In this issue of *Shine* two members of the reference group at the first meeting describe what prompted them to join the group, how they found the first meeting and what they hope to achieve by being part of the groups.

Lisa: giving something back

Lisa is a participant in the Workers Care Program and a member of the new Workers Care Reference Group.

A work injury a decade ago left her with low vision and unable to continue her career as an architect. In the years since, Lisa has retrained as a lawyer but is still supported by icare.

“I’ve only had positive experiences with icare,” said Lisa. “When they asked me to be on this reference group, I said yes.”

“It was partly to give something back, but I was also eager to meet more of the people who were helping me. I knew Lily Shen [Lisa’s icare coordinator] and had met a couple of others, but I hadn’t really had much other interaction with the organisation. I’d never been to their office.

“I also wanted to meet other participants – people in the icare system all coping in their own way with their disabilities.”

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”



Peter, Denise and brother Jason

A big deal

At the first meeting of the group, Lisa was surprised to find that icare was bigger than she'd expected – “It felt like a big deal – a whole organisation to support people like me.”

“The meeting was very supportive and open – icare staffers gave a summary of what they wanted to achieve with the group but they weren't prescriptive – more throwing ideas up there to see how they fell. And it wasn't just a passive forum where we listened to the experts – it was very two-way. Some of the other participants were very knowledgeable about the system and had smart things to contribute.”

Lisa was impressed as to how ambitious icare was for their organisation.

“I'm interested in the ‘Remarkable’ program [a disability technology-focused impact accelerator supported by the icare foundation] – about ideas to help people with disabilities so they can interact with the world more effectively. I want to stay involved at that level.”

Lisa finished her law degree a year ago and has recently completed her practical legal training. “I'd really like to use my skills to work in the disability area,” she says.

For more information about Remarkable, see: www.remarkable.org.au

Denise: changing the misconceptions

Denise Carter is a member of the new reference group. Eight years ago her son Peter was injured on the way to work leaving him with a traumatic brain injury and spinal fractures. Peter lives with Denise and his brother Jason, and Denise is his main carer.

“Peter's icare coordinator, Scott Maguire, asked me if I'd like to join the reference group,” says Denise, “and I thought ‘Why not?’”

“I don't have any complaints about icare – when Peter needs something I can talk to Scott and it's normally sorted out – but a lot of people don't understand what the system is about. There're a lot of misconceptions.”

Finding out more

“Another thing that got me interested in joining was that a lot of people who are injured don't realise what supports are out there and the sort of help they can get. I know myself that I was reluctant at first to have anything to do with workers comp, but the more people know right from the beginning – from the time they leave hospital – the better.”

Denise says that the first meeting of the reference group was really just an introduction. “But it was good to meet other icare staff – apart from Scott, I hadn't met any of them before.”

“There was only one other carer at the meeting, and we haven't had the chance of any one-on-one conversations yet. But getting to know other participants and carers and sharing our stories will be invaluable.”

One issue Denise is keen to pursue at future meetings is how icare-approved care providers recruit and train care workers. “I find it hard to get decent carers for Peter. So I'm keen to find out more about how that process works.”

“

Another thing that got me interested in joining was that a lot of people who are injured don't realise what supports are out there and the sort of help they can get.

”

Getting back to work keeps him going

Lucas is a Workers Care Program participant



Lucas Mackenzie is in his late 50s. He has a twinkle in his eye and a lovely gentle chuckle. He lives with his wife Karen and their Maltese Shih Tzu cross called Bosch in a neat house at Lennox Head on the NSW North Coast.

Country boy

He grew up in the Blue Mountains – “a country boy” he says – and worked in Sydney for 16 years as a fireman, mainly around Penrith where he lived with Karen and their two daughters. After retiring from the fire brigade due to post-traumatic stress, he bought into a car spare parts business and from time to time also worked as a truckie.

In 2003 he and Karen moved up to the North Coast so they could be closer to her dad. Lucas had qualified as a mechanic while with the fire brigade and he got a job with a motorcycle shop in Lismore. Things were good for 18 months until a ride into the bush in 2004. “We were doing trail bike rides for our customers,” says Lucas. “We’d take them into the bush – two days riding and camping overnight. It was the second day of a trip. I let my guard down and rode straight into a tree.”

Lucas broke his left leg, both arms, his shoulder blade, his collarbone and his neck in two places. He also had internal injuries and sustained a severe brain trauma.

“That’s about it!” he chuckles as he finishes the list of injuries. “I was out to it and didn’t remember anything until about two hours later when I came to in the back of an ambulance.”

They told him they were going to helicopter him out of the bush. “My first thought was ‘You beauty. I’ve always wanted to be in a helicopter’.”

However the first attempt to winch him up didn’t work, there wasn’t enough fuel to try again, and Lucas had to endure a bumpy trip through the bush in the ambulance. “I never did get that helicopter ride!” he laughs.

“I was lucky that I was covered by workers comp. I wasn’t being paid for the trip, but I was looking after the bikes and representing the business.”

He spent three weeks in Lismore Hospital where he had numerous operations. He was flown to Royal North Shore for a week before going back to Lismore. Karen was with him every day he was in hospital and when he came home she looked after him 24/7. A school assistant principal, she specialises in learning and support. “She works with kids with learning needs,” says Lucas. “She sure got some hands-on training with me.”

Lengthy operations

Lucas had torn four nerves from his left brachial plexus, the network of nerves that run from the spinal cord to his armpit. This has left him with paralysis in his left arm which he had to keep in a sling for four years. Lengthy operations taking muscle from his leg and putting it in his shoulder have given him some movement in the arm and a lot more comfort. “But really it’s only useful as a paperweight!” he jokes.

“One day I was at work and I came home and I had massive blisters on my left hand. I’d placed it on something hot and of course never felt it.”

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“While there’s a lot wrong with me, there’s also not a lot wrong with me.”



“

I still suffer from a lot of pain so sometimes I just have to sit down and look after myself.

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The biggest ongoing problem is nerve pain from the paralysis and subluxation [partial dislocation] of the arm. He also feels pain from plates he has in both arms. “And I also overwork the right shoulder,” says Lucas, “because now I do everything with that one.”

Lucas also sustained a traumatic brain injury from the accident. “A massive concussion really. I don’t remember much of the first couple of years. I was silly as a rabbit and not knowing it! I was on morphine for six months. When people used to ask me what I did all day I’d say ‘I look at trees’.” In fact Lucas reckons it was a good six or seven years before he could say he was mentally back to where he was before the accident.

Lucky

“You know I was that blessed, that lucky. Firstly I was right-handed and still had the use of my right arm. And when I hit the tree I was standing up. If I’d been sitting down I would have lost my legs. I was real lucky.”

He was off work for 12 months, but when he was ready to work part-time his employer in Lismore couldn’t take him back unless he was full-time.

A lot of people suggested that he retrain to do something else. “Someone suggested that I could be a ‘secret shopper’ – one of those people who walk around supermarkets and note down the prices. But while there’s a lot wrong with me, there’s also not a lot wrong with me, if you know what I mean.”

Lucas wanted to stay in the industry he had trained for and understands. So he got a job 20 hours a week with someone he’d met through his previous job in a mechanical workshop in Lismore. “It’s a mix of mechanical stuff on bikes, cars, tracks, quad bikes – the jobs that I can do with my damaged arm – and front of house work. I still suffer from a lot of pain so sometimes I just have to sit down and look after myself. To do a five-hour day might take six or seven hours. There’s only two of us there, but if I come to a point where I can’t do something I just ask. It’s a good arrangement.”

“I don’t have any trouble going to work, but sometimes I struggle at the end of the day. The work keeps this going” – Lucas points to his head – “otherwise I’d be at home watching TV and getting fat.”

“

I thought, wow if I can keep that sort of attitude going in my head that will help me massively.

”

Lucas says that his icare coordinator Damien D’Cruz who looked after him for the first six months was fantastic. “He was so good in the way he treats you. He trained Nina Andrews [his current coordinator] and eventually asked me if it was OK if she could take over. He didn’t just hand over one day. It was managed well.”

Flexible

He appreciates the flexible way icare lets him employ a handyman a few hours a week to work with him on odd jobs around the house. “I was always a doer,” he says. “So I’ve got people in place who come in and say ‘OK Luke what are we doing today’ and we do it together. I mow the grass. I like doing it. But I can’t do the hedge, so they do that.”

“What icare are doing is fantastic in helping Karen and I have a good life.”

Making the most of life



Lucas and Karen now have four grandchildren, two in Brisbane and two in Sydney. “Aged from three to seven,” says Lucas. “We had them all here on the weekend – it fills the house up!” Bosch, named after the sparkplug, is now 14 years old. “We got him when I was in hospital – much to my disagreement at the time,” he laughs.

Support

Lucas says the greatest gift throughout his recovery has been Karen’s ‘incredible strength and support’. Encouragement from friends, his Christian beliefs and a positive attitude have also helped a lot.

“About a year after the accident I was picking up my daughter from work in Ballina and there was an old lady walking down the street and she was using a walker and I said to her ‘How you going love?’ and she turns around and looks at me and says ‘By the look of it, better than you!’ And I thought, wow if I can keep that sort of attitude going in my head that will help me massively.”

“I was diving past a church in Brisbane once and the sign outside said ‘God promises a safe arrival, not a smooth journey’ and I thought ... that’s it, that’s pretty right!”

Brock Warren featured in our very first edition of *Shine* in 2012, and we recently caught up to find out how he’s getting on.

Brock was injured in a motorbike accident in 2010 when he was 21. He spent time in the Royal North Shore Spinal Unit doing rehabilitation after his incomplete C7 spinal cord injury. Before his accident Brock had just qualified to be an electrician. As he gradually returned to work he began looking at ways he could continue in his chosen field.

Retraining

With assistance from Lifetime Care, Brock retrained in thermal imaging which allowed him to work as a specialist electrician. “I started off with just half days, every second day, which grew into full-time work. Then I started the thermal imaging as a way to work with the limitations I have.” The thermal camera he uses looks at infrared radiation, so that loose connections in switchboards can be easily found.

In the eight years since his accident, Brock has often reflected on what has happened. “Once I woke up from the coma, they said I’d never walk again, which my parents kept from me for a bit. The thought never crossed my mind that I’d never walk, even though I couldn’t feel my legs at the time. I just kept thinking

about moving my legs, and then one day I got a bit of movement.”

These days, Brock has recovered well from the accident, with some loss of grip strength in his left hand which doesn’t move the way it used to. “I have adapted to the way it is and I am used to it, but I think about it sometime and I’ve learnt to cope.”

Last year Brock pursued a long-time passion by completing his helicopter training. He now holds a Commercial Helicopter Pilot Licence, training regularly and doing jobs in Sydney. “It’s pretty amazing to think that is something I can do. Always wanted to, and life’s a bit short so make the most of it.” He also recently proposed to his girlfriend, and she said yes.

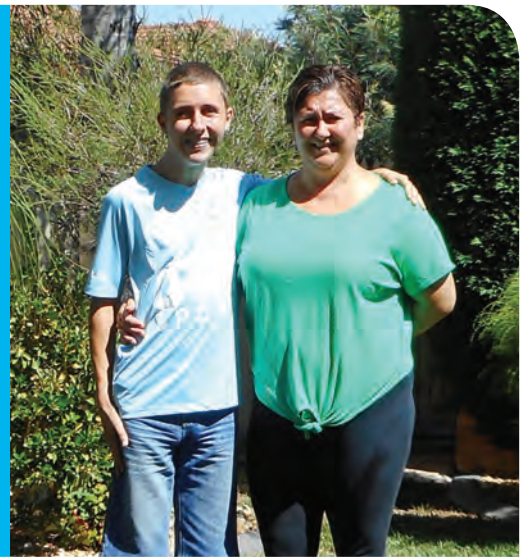
Brock says that the accident was a big change in direction for the better as he matured sooner than he thought he would.

Keep trying

“icare have been really helpful with physio in particular, and a training machine for my hand to build strength in the beginning. The exercises were the biggest thing. You have to keep up the exercises even if you don’t think you can. Keep trying.”

Daniel's passion for life

Daniel is a Lifetime Care participant



Daniel with his mum Marica.

Daniel Perinich is a passionate footballer, playing regularly and training with the NSW squad of the national Paralympic Football Team, the Pararoos.

Being in the Pararoos is awesome, says 16-year-old Daniel. "I've played in defence, but to get into the NSW squad I had to try to play towards the front so it's a bit of a transition from defence to the forwards. If I want to make it in the NSW reps squad, I have to be able to play up front and be versatile as a player."

Training

He trains and plays several times a week, in both mixed and disability-specific competitions, including the teams his mum, Marica, and dad, Robert, play with. "This gives him a chance to have a good run out on the field three nights a week," says Marica.

Daniel also attends the regular Pararoos camps, where players from across NSW with neurological conditions come together for intensive training.

Team player

"Those camps are so much fun," Daniel grins widely. The players arrive on a Friday night and stay for the whole weekend till lunchtime Sunday, doing training drills. "It's a chance for them to get together as a team, live together and get to know each other on a personal level. They get a lot out of being with other kids with disability too," says Marica.

"It's watching them play as a team which is so impressive. Able-bodied players can be more individualistic, but these players help and understand each other," notes Marica.

"Ronaldinho is my hero, basically the greatest football player of all time," says Daniel. "My biggest dream, which I know will happen, is to play for Australia and be out there playing the game I love, with my family and friends supporting me."

Daniel was nine when his injury happened, in a car accident which also took the life of his brother, Sam. Daniel sustained a severe brain injury.

"He is remarkable. Very few people know how close to death he came with that particular injury, where his brain was lifted and twisted inside his skull – most people never recover," says Marica.

Daniel is now in Year 11 at a local Catholic college, where he is studying a wide range of subjects, including some vocational education courses. He is supported with a teacher's aide, and has assistance with taking notes for all his classes due to right side hemiplegia and limitations with his right hand.

"There was always talk from the professionals around us that there may be a lag with his peers but that hasn't happened – he is keeping up," says Marica.

"There has been good support from OTs [occupational therapists] and physiotherapy particularly in the beginning, but now the supports Daniel needs are more around his schooling."

Currently, Daniel is also working towards getting his driver licence, and has passed the online practice learner licence test.

In 2015, the whole family went to Croatia and Bosnia to visit extended family. "We met the family, and went to Dubrovnik, and my uncle's farm," said Daniel.

“My biggest dream, which I know will happen, is to play for Australia and be out there playing the game I love.”



“ I want to inspire people, and to say never give up. In whatever you do, there will always be struggles but keep going. ”

Daniel receives his Premier's Award with his family – from left, Luke, Robert and Gabriel, NSW Premier Mike Baird, Marica and Daniel.

They visited the pilgrimage site of Medugorje which included climbing over boulders and rocks. “Every time I looked up and tried to keep up, he was even further away, I was amazed by him. He didn't fall or stumble or trip – he was great,” said Marica.

Bonding as a family

“It was the anniversary day of the accident and when we lost Sam, so it was very special to be with the extended family. We really needed to do that as a family and to bond and for the kids to know their heritage.”

After the accident, it took seven weeks for Daniel to be able to talk again. “While he was still in hospital, he said to me ‘so Mum, how do you like your new Daniel’. It was incredible that he was so aware,” says Marica.

Daniel has had a severe stutter at times, and still has some difficulties with his speech. icare provides a speech therapist who has been working with Daniel to help him speak freely. “We do it all on Skype so there is no need to travel, which is great with all our other commitments,” says Marica. For the last six to nine months, Daniel has been doing his speech therapy in his room after school.

In the early stages, icare funded the various physiotherapy, OT interventions, and speech assessments that Daniel needed. They provided a case manager to plan all the different aspects

of his rehabilitation, such as liaising with the school and doctors, which has made life easier for Marica, Daniel and the whole family. “I am very grateful that he has access to that kind of help,” says Marica.

“You know, he has never ever complained about anything. Everything he has gone through, all the different therapies, treatments, injections, everything, he has never complained. It has made it a lot easier for us that he has been able to accept and adjust to his new life.”

At the moment, Daniel goes to counselling sessions with a clinical neuropsychologist which helps in a holistic way with all aspects of his life.

Courageous

Daniel has received two awards in recognition of his injuries and the courage he has shown in his recovery. He was a NSW finalist for the Child of Courage category in the Pride of Australia awards in 2013, then in 2016 received a Premier's Award from the then NSW Premier, Mike Baird.

“That morning, when you were putting aftershave on me and fixing my hair, I knew something was happening,” says Daniel. “We were trying to keep it a secret!” says Marica.

“I want to inspire people, and to say never give up. In whatever you do, there will always be struggles but keep going,” he says.

Power to overcome

“One day, I was asking how school was going, and he mentioned that there were some kids who didn't want him hanging around with them. Daniel saw that this upset me and he said ‘Mum, you know there are always going to be struggles, it's how you overcome them that shows who you are’”, says Marica. “I could see all that counselling and work was coming to fruition. I just knew that he's really so resilient in every way. Truly inspiring.”

“For people who find themselves in the thick of all the calamity that is involved with an accident like this, everything ends, both good and bad times. There is a circle of life. Nothing ever stays the same and nothing is permanent. Even if you can't see the future ahead, it doesn't mean there isn't one there.”

“Take it day-by-day. Faith and hope helps. Love and support from friends and family is crucial, and not just after the accident but ongoing as well. It's a very difficult journey but Lifetime Care does make it easier, especially the case managers who are very understanding and empathetic. It's a whole new world that is thrust upon you,” says Marica.

“Life goes on,” says Daniel.

Triumph on the snow

Linda is a Lifetime Care overseas participant



Linda van Impelen, grew up in the Netherlands with a love of sports and a great sense of adventure which she attributes to her father.

She regularly played field hockey and loved snow sports. She learnt to ski with her family on regular trips to the European snow fields. “The skiing was something that I did as a child with my family.”

Trip of a lifetime

Nine years ago when she was 23 she came to Australia with her boyfriend. It was to be the trip of a lifetime, driving a campervan around the country and camping beside the road each night.

But driving through the NSW North Coast, near Byron Bay, they were both seriously injured when their van was hit by another car.

Linda remembers that she had an “awareness of something being wrong, [and it] gave me this strange sense of tranquillity. I knew then, everything would be alright. Even if I’d end up in a wheelchair. That is so bizarre.”

Linda was flown to Lismore, the closest hospital, then transferred to Brisbane for surgery. “The rescue workers told me, I survived because I had my feet on the dashboard. I traded my legs in to be alive. Which is fine, I’ll hand them in.”

“I know it sounds strange. But for me it was an essential part in accepting the situation.”

Linda had a T12 complete spinal cord injury. After three weeks, she returned to the Netherlands for rehabilitation. She is now a paraplegic who uses a wheelchair for mobility.

“Before the accident, I’d wakeboarded – a type of snowboarding on water – and skied of course. I was dead set on doing that again. I went wakeboarding again three months after the accident. That was so cool.”

Special day

She met Kees-Jan van der Klooster, a former Paralympian, who introduced her to sit-wakeboarding and sit-skiing. “The first day I tried skiing was a special day. It was organised especially to help people with a physical limitation to start skiing again. I thought it was fantastic to be able to ski again.”

Meeting Kees helped Linda understand what was possible after a major injury. “I believe people in rehabilitation centres should be exposed to people like that. People that live life to the fullest.”

“Now I can go on the mountain, really fast and it feels like you are free again.”

“After the accident I didn’t know I wanted to do it as a sport at first, but I was looking for one I could do every week. You need to drive pretty far to do wheelchair sport. But Kees said there were lessons in an indoor hall where I could train in slalom on Saturdays and then I became more competitive and wanted to race in proper races, like international,” she says. “It was so much fun, to learn how to ski again in this way.”

Linda competes in slalom skiing, using a mono-ski which is a ski attached to a sitting base. She uses two poles to help with the balance as she goes down the mountain at up to 80km/hour. “The ski is pulling you through the G-forces because you are going so fast. It’s hard to learn in the beginning, but once you have the trick then it is easy.”

Linda started competing in competitions across Europe, winning several times. “I wanted to make sacrifices,” she says. “I wanted to train. I wanted to go abroad.” She worked her way through the different levels of competition to become eligible to qualify for the Paralympics.



Lifetime Care abroad

Did you know about the support we provide our participants who live overseas?

40 Lifetime Care participants live overseas

31 Had an accident that resulted in a brain injury

12 Age of the youngest participant, who lives in Tonga

91 Age of the oldest participant, who lives in China

9 Participants live in New Zealand

7 Participants live in the United Kingdom

4 Participants live in Korea

4 Participants live in China

3 Participants live in the United States of America

3 Participants live in Ireland

2 Participants live in Indonesia

1 Participant living in each of the following countries: Brazil, Columbia, France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Slovakia and Tonga.

Linda competed in five events for the Netherlands at the PyeongChang Paralympics earlier this year, winning silver in the Giant Slalom.

One with the mountain

"I really love it. It is so fast. Now I can go on the mountain, really fast and it feels like you are free again. I can compete with able-bodied people on the slope and the disability is gone. You are one with the mountain. When I go with friends I am the fastest one, while in my wheelchair, I can never compete with them running or whatever."

After the accident, Linda used a variety of equipment from icare. "They provided my wheelchair and all the things I need for living with my disability. For me, the sport thing was really important, so they have been able to help with a hand bike so I can cycle which is attached on the front of my wheelchair so I can go to rural areas for example," she said. "When you are first in your wheelchair, you don't know what all the adjustments there are, but now they are part of life and help you get back to your normal life before the accident."

Access to this kind of support has been important for her recovery. "The things I did before with friends and family, I could do again, but in a different way. If I was sitting on the sidelines and not being able to do these things I think it would tear you apart. But now you can do it again in a different way."

Linda qualified for the Netherlands Paralympics ski team for the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games. Before the

Games, she told *Shine* that "it is going to be hard, but the most special thing is that I am standing there with my family and friends who have supported me this whole time and I can show them my skiing at this huge event."

Competing in five events at the Games, Linda won a silver medal in the Giant Slalom.

She says that she has really valued pushing herself, and those around her, in terms of what she can do. "Other people, when you are in wheelchair, they are really careful for you because of the accident, and they want to put you in a mattress and in a corner so you can't do anything dangerous, because they are afraid of you being hurt again. But you have to tell the people around you that you can do things and don't be afraid and I'm fine. Fight hard to get yourself through it."

Adjustments

She has been able to do things similar to what she did before the accident, with adjustments and supports. "Everything is possible still, maybe in another way or you have to fight hard for it, but it is a beautiful road. It feels really good when you figure out how to do that."

"Maybe, someday I will be able to help a girl who is in a wheelchair to see the possibilities. That Linda can do it, so why can't I?"

Skiing for Australia

update



Sam with his family after his Super G race at the Paralympics.

We met Sam two years in *Shine #8*. The then 25-year-old with T10 complete paraplegia had a goal – to ski for Australia in the Paralympics.

Sam had been in a motorcycle accident in 2013 and lost the use of the lower half of his body. Three months in hospital gave him time to think. He'd been an experienced skier before the accident and he wanted to get back on the snow. His parents owned a ski lodge in Perisher and Sam was soon using a single ski with a specially fitted chair.

Realistic goal

By early 2016, Sam was in Colorado with the Paralympic development team and returned to Australia more motivated than ever. When we spoke to him later that year, Sam had set his sights on competing in the Winter Paralympics. He wasn't sure however whether he'd be ready for this year's games in South Korea and thought that

maybe Beijing in 2022 was a more realistic goal.

But Sam's trajectory was faster than he realised. For the next two years he was competing in Europe, Canada and America during the northern winter and training back here in the Australian ski season.

When the Australian Paralympic Committee announced its team for the March games in PyeongChang, South Korea, earlier this year, Sam was chosen to represent his country as a competitor in all five alpine skiing events: Downhill, Super G, Super-Combi, Giant Slalom and Slalom.

"It didn't become real until I'd picked up my accreditation in Korea and arrived at the Athletes Village. At that moment it hit me – I was at the Games!"

Sam's parents, his twin brother and younger sister all managed to come to Korea to watch him. "My first race was the Downhill skiing. To have all my family there watching my first race was one of my greatest moments ever."

Sam finished a very creditable 11th in the Downhill, and 17th in the Giant Slalom. In both events he was the top-finishing Australian.

New strength

Currently he's at Perisher, training during the day and working behind the bar at night. He's got a new strength and conditioning coach who he reckons will make a big difference. He's thinking of doing some study later in the year, but then there's a World Championship in 2019.

The longer-term focus is the next winter games in Beijing in 2022. And Sam wants to be on the podium.

Do you have feedback or a story for *Shine*?
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