



Family, friends, work and an active life.
Meet Adam Trankulov,
page 8.

Shine

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

Winter 2025

Rosey Morrow: step by step

Rosey is a Lifetime Care participant



Rosey on her recumbent bike.

Rosey cycled to work every day for over 7 years because it was faster than using public transport. After a car hit her in 2016, she tells her story about how “Everyone helped me adjust to the new ‘me’”.

When Rosey talks with speech pathology students about her accident she introduces herself this way, “In 2016 my life changed completely. I was T-boned by a car when I was riding my bicycle home from work. My helmet, with my head in it, smashed the windscreen of the car and the bike snapped in two.

“The first I knew that something had happened, I ‘woke up’ in RPA Hospital with my husband Mark beside my bed telling me I’d been hit by a car, and I had a brain injury. I’d had post-traumatic amnesia for 38 days. Even though I’d been physically awake, I wasn’t able to lay down memories, so to me that was when I ‘woke up’. My right side was numb, almost paralysed, and my speech was non-existent.”

“You need to give
back when you can.”

After 8 weeks, Rosey moved to Royal Rehab at Ryde. “Apart from speech difficulties,” she says, “I was in a wheelchair, slightly able to move my right side and I had difficulty picking up and handling objects.” She went home in January 2017 and says, “I spent about 15 months with a support worker constantly by my side, which is the polar opposite of the way I’d shaped my adult life.”

Nine years after her accident Rosey tells *Shine* about her yoga, travels, cycling, gardening and becoming a grandmother. It is clear that she has been very persistent and has tackled things step by step with support from family, friends and the brain injury team.

Goals

Rosey says it was important to get back to her life – to find ways to keep doing the things she enjoys and start doing the things she always wanted to do. Her big goals “at the back of my head” were talking and walking but she actively worked on more functional steps within those goals.

She now walks with an ankle orthosis and uses a walking stick when outside. When she has been sitting for any length of time she has to pause when she stands, to align herself before she moves, and she often loses balance when she walks: ‘self-correction’ has become her mantra.

Step by step

Rosey says, “It took a long time to imagine my life with a brain injury” but she tackled it step by step.

She is back cycling. Just 13 months after her accident she rode her recumbent bike in the 45 km Amy’s Medio Fondo event along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria, with family and friends as support. Her brother prepared her for this by building up the frequency and length of training rides around Centennial Park. She has also cycled overseas, including on a tandem bike where the front seat is recumbent. “I am so proud of myself.”

Rosey had always done yoga. She started back at yoga in her wheelchair and progressed to adapted yoga using a kitchen chair and supports. During Covid she continued this at home and has now found a *Gentle Yoga* group in her local community.



Adaptive chair yoga.

She and Mark first tested travel with a flight to Perth and a return to Sydney by train. They have now visited family interstate and overseas and done trips to Bali, Italy, England and a cruise through Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. For longer trips, they use daytime flights with breaks for a couple of days on the way. Rosey makes use of airlines' wheelchair facility to get to and from the aircraft and boarding gate. Rosey also keeps up her physio exercises every day, whether at home or away.

Work

At the time of her accident, Rosey was the production editor for the magazines inserted into *The Australian Financial Review*. She says her strengths were her eye for detail and super-reliable memory.

She started back at work part-time, blending days in the office and at home. Even though she still knew how to sub-edit stories she notes, "I'd lost the organisational skills to do the full job properly" and her memory was now "Like a colander instead of a steel trap". She needed the experience of the brain injury team to help her with techniques like lists of things to check for each story.



At the finish line.

"My efficiency improved when I used a paper diary. With the paper page, I get the big picture of the shape of the day." She still finds a paper diary invaluable.

Community roles

When she was recovering at home, Rosey wanted her speech to be clear and natural instead of whisper-quiet. At first she found it "weird and very frustrating" to find the right words, to keep a train of thought or get a point across. This still happens, particularly when she's tired and when there are lots of people in a conversation.

Rosey's speech pathologist put her onto the *TBI Connect Program* (with her daughter Inez as speech training partner) to help her develop clear, natural speech. She realised that her family made allowances for her limited speech abilities after the accident, but the *TBI Connect Program* grew her skills and confidence when talking in the broader community.

TBI Connect became the foundation of the *Social Brain Toolkit* (see page 20) and Rosey offered to edit the material. Later, she was co-author (Lived Experience Contributor) with Emma Power (speech pathologist) of an internationally published peer-reviewed academic paper about the implementation of such partner-focussed training programs.

“It took a long time to imagine my life with a brain injury.”

Looking forward

Rosey relies on structure as she tries new things. She strives to balance her energy across regular routines and travel, plus the new role of being a grandmother.

She repeatedly talks about how family, friends, colleagues and her brain injury team were crucial in her recovery from the very beginning: "I was so surprised when I was in Ryde Rehab: I was expecting one work friend to visit when half a dozen turned up for an impromptu Christmas party." She still relies on friends and family for everyday support: "Everyone has helped me adjust to the new 'me'."

Rosey retired from work in 2020 and now uses her experience differently, including presenting to speech pathology students. "You need to give back when you can."



Warren Parry: approaching challenges

Warren is a Lifetime Care participant



Warren recalls waking at 3 am after emergency surgery following his trail bike accident. He knew he was in Royal North Shore. He knew he'd damaged his spine. He thought he may not walk again. So, he drew on skills he had developed through his life – he started with meditation.

Warren has continued to apply the skills and experience of his working and personal life to what he now calls his “next life”. “Very early on I realised I wouldn't be able to play physically or do some things with my two young boys. But I knew that what I could do was to model how to handle adversity. This became my new mission in life.”

Work

Warren grew up in New Zealand where he completed an architecture degree and then did a Masters in Fine Arts. He wanted to explore the broad creative process required for both interests. He moved to Perth where he set up an architecture practice while also completing a psychology degree. He pursued training in psychodrama and studied eastern traditions in Asia.

“Looking more deeply into the challenges one faces doesn't heighten them, but lightens them.”

A big part of his life has become meditation and reflection on the personal experiences that people have; this has deepened since his accident.

Professionally, he began using these learnings with organisations, specifically mapping people's experiences so leaders and teams can track progress towards personal and organisational goals of change. He moved to Sydney and grew this business, running it for 20 years, including a couple of years post-accident before he sold it.

Learning

Warren's trail bike accident in Kangaroo Valley was in 2010 when he was in his late 50s, resulting in an incomplete spinal cord injury. He spent 8 weeks in Royal North Shore before being discharged home to Cremorne. As he did with most challenges, he decided to “Accept whatever happens and make it your friend”. This meant developing a deep understanding of his situation through research and plain curiosity.

He strongly believes that “Paradoxically, looking more deeply into the challenges one faces doesn't heighten them, but lightens them”.

He worked consistently on a program with a physio for 2 years, his goal moving from whether he could walk again to specific personal goals like walking through an airport. His physio describes him as “Very disciplined. He's used to having a goal that's years away and slowly working towards it, bit by bit. Whatever change he got, he managed to make the most of it.”

Warren's own perception is that his prior working life meant he could simultaneously see both the big picture and the smaller steps. He could visualise outcomes and believes his backgrounds in psychology and meditation were key to his steady progress.

Warren moved from wheelchair to crutches and now walks with carbon-fibre ankle foot orthoses, which he quite regularly breaks because of his active life bushwalking and swimming.

He says his biggest challenge is his pain. His research tells him that pain is not just a neurological concern, and he says that he now “Works *with* pain rather than trying to avoid it. Meditation is fundamental there”.



Swimming in the icy Nordic.



Outside his studio.

“Very early on I realised I wouldn’t be able to play physically or do some things with my two young boys. But I knew that what I could do was to model how to handle adversity.”

Reflecting

It is 15 years since his accident and Warren shares the things he believes have helped him and may help others.

An overriding thread of our conversation is his strong belief that more emphasis should be put on helping participants ‘process things’, meaning talk to others, seek information and reach out for help. He notes, “There is a helluva lot that can be done to minimise the impact of an accident that doesn’t require painkillers or equipment or exercises. X-ray results may provide some markers of progress, but you also need to find other markers so you feel you are building your confidence again. It can be really tough at times, particularly when you have had major challenges to self-esteem.”

He believes people underestimate the need to process what’s happening day-by-day and that this processing is not easy to do on your own. Everyone can see – and therefore want – physical things to help them with their recovery. But many also need help to pause and consider the emotional side of things that can make a huge difference to their psychological journey.

Warren knows that different personalities and life histories mean people approach challenges very differently. He believes that there’s more that could be done to help people build courage and resilience. He reflects on the many tough moments, and seemingly endless indignities, where he felt fragile and vulnerable. But says he has learnt humility through it all, and he hopes others can too. It is not about giving up; it’s about letting go and trusting others.

Precious interactions

He comments on the precious interactions he had in hospital with people he wouldn’t have met otherwise. Often these moments provide unexpected camaraderie, warmth and reassurance. He is concerned that there is a risk that these small but impactful personal moments get minimised or forgotten among the chaos of the initial recovery and the drama of the longer journey.

Warren is clear about the importance of support, relationships and social connections. For him this includes the strength of his family.

His boys were teenagers when the accident happened. The family lives in Cremorne but had bought an off-the-beaten-track property at

Kangaroo Valley so their boys could grow up in nature – as Warren had done in New Zealand and his wife had done in Finland. That property burnt down in the 2020 bushfires, and they rebuilt it with art studios for both Warren and his wife, art being their mutual passion.

Warren feels gratitude for the support of his family and many friends. More broadly he notes how much easier it is to really hear advice or suggestions from family, friends and medical professionals when people feel connected and understood.

The 15 years have been quite a journey for Warren. He sees his injury as part of his lifetime of thinking and learning, rather than as a disruption. He is soon to submit his PhD thesis on mapping psychological landscapes – which he considers a ‘culmination of my life’s work’.



Exploring work after a severe injury



Experiencing a severe injury can change your life in many ways. While your initial focus may be on recovering and adjusting to new routines, you may also be thinking about the future and what that looks like. It can feel daunting to start, change or return to work after a severe injury – and it can take time and more than one go to find the right situation.

Although daunting, these steps can also be a positive part of continuing your recovery and adjusting to your new ‘normal’.

There are many health and wellbeing benefits to engaging in ‘good work’ – benefits for you, your family and the wider community. ‘Good work’ is a term that means the work is meaningful to you and is suited to your capacity and abilities. Good work can provide you with positive benefits socially, mentally, physically and financially:

- Give your days structure and meaning
- Add to your confidence
- Help you feel part of a team
- Strengthen your relationships with family, friends and your community

Work can be many things

Work can look very different across various jobs, worksites and industries. If you are looking to return to work, it could be different to the work you did before your accident. Everyone’s circumstances are different. You may want to go back to the job you were doing before your injury. You may not have worked before and want to explore work options for the first time. You may have been off work for a long time; you may have been doing some part-time work but want to increase your hours. People’s interests differ. Your interests and abilities may have changed following your accident.

You might consider:

- Starting small – perhaps volunteering for a few hours per week or working part-time
- Vocational training, study or work experience to grow skills for a new job that suits your abilities
- Planning a return to your previous job, with modifications or equipment
- Considering something completely new, based on your strengths, interests and skills

Expertise around your injury

icare can help you find a Vocational Rehabilitation Provider that has expertise around your injury.

Vocational Rehabilitation Providers can help you navigate work after a severe injury, including assessing your readiness for different types of work or training. They can work with you, your doctor and rehabilitation team to help you identify your goals and develop a plan, exploring options to reach your goals. Discussion could cover what you would like to do, what you may be able to do and how you might start. Their advice can range across many matters from specific workplace adjustments to how to talk to other people about your injury.

“Everyone’s circumstances are different.”





“ Good work can provide you with positive benefits socially, mentally, physically and financially. ”

When is the right time to explore work and related activities?

There's no right or wrong time to start thinking about work or vocational opportunities; it's about what works best for you. You may be looking to start work, find work experience, return to your work or business, change careers, start a business, expand or reduce your work hours, or start volunteering. Even if you are still at school, vocational services can help you, your parents/guardian and your school explore work ideas.

You can use vocational services at different points in your life when there is need related to your injury. Understanding your expected recovery and the changes from your injury will help you know when you are ready for work or other vocational activities.

Want more information?

Reach out to your Lifetime Care or Workers Care contact or case manager to discuss exploring work related activities or vocational services. They can provide advice about options and how icare can support you.

icare works with Vocational Rehabilitation Providers that have specific expertise working with severe injuries like a spinal cord injury or brain injury. For information about the *EmployAbility* program see page 12.

Resources

Helpful resources and toolkits about returning to work after a brain injury can also be found on the website of the *NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation*. Visit aci.health.nsw.gov.au or scan the QR code.

SCAN ME



Starting back at work part-time

Rosey (see page 2) started back at work part-time after her brain injury, blending days in the office and at home. Even though she still knew how to sub-edit stories, she notes “I'd lost the organisational skills to do the full job properly” and her memory was now “Like a colander instead of a steel trap”. She needed the experience of the brain injury team to help her with techniques like lists of things to check for each story.

You are more likely to succeed if you take time to plan and prepare

Planning and preparation were important for Peter (see page 14). He completed a TAFE business management certificate after his accident. Then a former employer asked him to start work. He initially worked from home while modifications were being made at the workplace to both the driveway and some internal features. His workstation area was also set up with an adjustable desk and mouth-controlled mouse. Now he works onsite 3 days per week.

It can take time and more than one go to find work that suits you

Adam (see page 8) has had a winding path to an ‘awesome’ job. He completed his apprenticeship after his accident. He has made various moves over the 12 years or so since then – moved to a new employer, been made redundant, set up his own business, gained another trade certificate and undertaken contract work. He now has a full-time job – and “It’s awesome”.

Adam Trankulov: finding an awesome job

Adam is a Lifetime Care participant



Adam was part way through an apprenticeship when he had a major motor bike accident. He has experienced a winding employment path since then, has recently bought a house and is getting married. As he says, “Life is too good to stay stagnant.”

It is nearly 17 years since Adam had a motor bike accident (July 2008) which resulted in fractures to his jaw and wrist as well as a shattered pelvis and a brain injury. He was transferred from Canberra Hospital to the Liverpool Brain Injury Unit. He contracted a staphylococcus infection very early in hospital, so his recovery has had “many speed bumps” including memory loss.

Adam worked hard on his recovery, completed studies, stepped away from Lifetime Care case-management in 2011, built a career, worked across Australia and travelled overseas.

The brain injury community

He recently contacted *Shine* after some soul-searching, thinking about the relationship of his brain injury to some of his experiences including at work.

He reached out to the Goulburn regional *Brain Injury Service* to reconnect and see if he could help contribute to the brain injury community in any way. “I want to be around that more.” He is becoming more and more aware of how much people don’t know about brain injury.

Adam wondered if his story was “Good enough for the magazine”. As *Shine* readers know, everybody’s story is interesting and filled with memorable moments.

A life plan

Adam grew up in Goulburn and reckons he’s “An old soul”. He moved out of home when he was 16 and was in a relationship by 18. As a teenager he had a vision for his life; his accident didn’t change that. He always planned to move from Goulburn to seek better work opportunities in Canberra, to start his own business and to work around Australia. And that is what he has done.

Adam describes himself as being pretty driven, a bit head-strong and knows he asks a lot of himself. “I’m a ‘Take the next step’ type of guy. What’s next?” He sets high standards for himself – he had overseas travel plans so he studied Serbian, German and French before he set off. He likes keeping fit, cycling and camping. He’s not into team sports but enjoys pool and darts.

“Being a perfectionist helped me get through my injury and rehab but it probably means I am a bit impatient in relationships and the workplace.”

A winding path to ‘awesome’ work

Adam left school after year 10; he was a good student but wanted to move into the world of work. Initially “Mum had to drive me to work because I didn’t even have my P-plates.”

“ I know I have a particular personality. I’m not sure how much of this personality is innate or related to my brain injury. I can be brash and intense. I’m learning I don’t always have to be right. ”



Solid family support.

He had completed two years of an electrical apprenticeship with a small firm in Goulburn when he had the accident.

After rehab, he returned to work in January 2009, quickly building up to 5 full days per week. It took him an additional 2 years to complete his apprenticeship by which time he had also moved to Canberra to work with a different employer.

After 4 years, the work dried up and Adam was made redundant. He tried Queensland then came back to Canberra and set up his own business. He promptly got a contract with a Sydney-based company. He gained another ticket and became a qualified emergency lighting tester as well as an electrician.

He travelled Australia extensively. He was aged 24, largely working on his own, often in remote places like Kalgoorlie or Broome. Adam says, "I wasn't going to get this opportunity wrong."

Back in Canberra after 5 years, he was contracted to Australian National University (ANU) and eventually employed by them. Adam says, "My time at ANU was probably the best workplace with good challenges and a customer service role which I loved."



Adam on the job.

When *Shine* first met Adam in October 2024 he was between jobs, seeking to 'step up' and find work which was less 'on the tools' and more about management. He had taken on a temporary role in management that was a bit outside his comfort zone. He reflected, "I know I have a particular personality. I'm not sure how much of this personality is innate or related to my brain injury. I can be brash and intense. I'm learning I don't always have to be right."

When *Shine* talked to Adam again in April 2025, he is firmly settled into a full-time job in an international company with a big Australian footprint. "It's awesome. I'm doing maintenance for national clients working with large-scale equipment in different markets." He is also settling into a new house he has recently bought and is getting married.

Explaining brain injury

Adam reflects that, at some workplaces, he felt he "Can't say I've got a brain injury because you just get looked at funny". Sometimes he didn't take breaks when he really needed a rest. He doesn't want sympathy, doesn't want a free ride but is concerned for others with 'hidden disabilities' like brain injury.

“ Life is too good to stay stagnant... We need to pick ourselves up, ... and remember that tomorrow will bring new opportunities... if we let it. ”

Family, friends and life

Adam's mother is a nurse, and his dad is a truck driver. After his accident, they arranged their shifts so Adam was never alone in hospital. He is very grateful for this solid family support and feels sad that other people at the brain injury unit did not seem to have this.

In late 2024, Adam's uncle had a fall and spent time in ICU with a traumatic brain injury. Adam wants to remind everyone: "It can happen to anyone, any time."

Adam's message to other people is "My journey is not over, neither is yours. Life is too good to stay stagnant, even in hard times, injuries and sadness. We need to pick ourselves up, and remember we aren't alone, that tomorrow will bring new opportunities and happiness, if we let it."



Strength2Strength: Feeling lighter together

Eoin is a Lifetime Care participant



Clare and her husband had just begun sketching out their next chapter – more time with family, travel, and a slower rhythm to their days. Retirement was meant to unfold gently, not begin with a long-haul flight to Sydney and the sterile blur of a hospital ward, half a world away from home.

It was a quiet Saturday evening in Ireland when Clare's phone rang. She was at home, settling in, when the voice on the other end delivered news no parent expects: her son had been hit by an ambulance while crossing a street in Sydney.

By the time she arrived in Australia, doctors had already told the family to prepare for the worst.

An uncertain path

Eoin's injuries were life-altering: serious brain, spinal and orthopaedic injuries, and an uncertain path forward.

In the early days, Clare lived in a fog of hospital corridors and whispered updates. But as Eoin slowly began to recover, Clare's role shifted. She wasn't just Eoin's mother anymore. She became the scheduler, the advocate, the anchor. Part nurse, part navigator, part lifeline.

"No one understands your situation quite like someone who's living it too", she says. That's what the *Strength2Strength* program offered Clare – a room full of people who just got it. The workshop, run by Royal Rehab in Ryde, didn't promise solutions. But it created space for honesty, connection, and the relief of being truly understood.

Developed in partnership with the Ingham Institute and icare, the program is designed to support families and carers of people with a brain or spinal cord injury.

Shared experience

In that circle of shared experience, Clare found a space of true understanding. The room held people at every stage of the journey, offering different perspectives: some taking first steps and a few further down the road. There were stories that mirrored her own and advice no handbook would include. Somewhere in that shared space, something shifted.

"I just felt lighter," she said. "Like I'd been carrying so much without even knowing it".

That shift is at the heart of *Strength2Strength*, says Stephanie Tuck, a social worker who facilitates the program.

Program focus

The full-day workshop offers more than just information. It blends education and emotional support – strategies for coping and communication – with something less clinical, but just as crucial: connection.

"The focus of rehabilitation is on the injured person which is absolutely right," Stephanie said. "But carers carry their own weight, often in silence. *Strength2Strength* is about saying: we see you and are here to support you too."

"Sometimes just sitting in a room where people understand – where you don't have to explain – that's the thing that helps most", Stephanie said.

For Clare, the program didn't offer a solution – but it offered solidarity. "You're not alone," she said. "You sit in a room, and they're strangers, but they get it. That's powerful."

“No one understands your situation quite like someone who's living it too.”



“ Carers carry their own weight, often in silence. **Strength2Strength** is about saying: we see you and are here to support you. ”

Eoin with his mother Clare.

Now, when she meets others on the same path, Clare encourages them to join a *Strength2Strength* workshop.

“Even if you think it’s not for you,” she says, “you’ll come away with something. Because when everything else has changed, connection is the one thing that steadies you.”

Join in!

The full-day workshop offers more than just information:

- ✓ Education
- ✓ Emotional support
- ✓ Strategies for coping
- ✓ Connection through shared experience
- ✓ Recharging your batteries
- ✓ Managing tricky moments
- ✓ Strategies for communication
- ✓ Useful resources

Interested?

Are you interested in joining a *Strength2Strength* workshop? There are two face-to-face workshops scheduled (see below). Online groups are also being planned between July-November 2025.

FOCUS	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
SCI	Friday 12th September 2025	9:30-3:30pm	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW
TBI	Friday 14th November 2025	9:30-3:30pm	Royal Rehab 235 Morrison Road RYDE NSW

“ **Strength2Strength** is about saying: we see you and are here to support you too. ”

Contact us

To register for a session or express your interest in an online group, email strength2strength@royalrehab.com.au or call **(02) 9808 9205**.

Register here

You can also register on the *Strength2Strength* expression of interest form tinyurl.com/S2SEOI or scan the QR code.



SCAN ME

“ 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. ”
Workshop participant after attending *Strength2Strength*.

From setback to success: Binod's journey with EmployAbility

Binod is a Lifetime Care participant

In 2016, Binod arrived in Australia from Nepal with a clear goal to complete his bachelor's degree in information technology and explore life in this incredible country. After graduating in 2019, then 20-year-old Binod set off with his brothers and friends on a celebratory road trip to the Snowy Mountains. On the way back to Sydney, he was involved in a motor vehicle accident that resulted in a life-changing C6 quadriplegia spinal cord injury.

The journey that followed was long and difficult. During his hospital recovery, Binod met Dan from the Peer and Family Support team at Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA). His regular visits provided comfort and hope at a time when Binod was facing enormous challenges. "I felt so happy to see Dan and know this support was available for people like me", Binod said. "I had lost hope."

Looking for work

Before the accident, Binod had worked in customer service and IT technician roles. Now, basic tasks like lifting, driving, or managing daily routines became major barriers. "I have weakness in one arm, neuropathic pain, bladder and bowel issues – not to mention the mental health impact. It was daunting trying to find a job. I was losing confidence." Dan introduced him to SCIA's *EmployAbility* program, a turning point in Binod's recovery journey.

"When I first contacted *EmployAbility*, I was just looking for job vacancies. But after speaking with the team, I realised how much more they offered", Binod explained. "They helped build my confidence, identified my strengths, and connected me with disability-inclusive employers."

The *EmployAbility* program provided practical tools like resume development, interview preparation, and an understanding of disability rights and workplace adjustments. But just as importantly, it offered consistent, compassionate support.

"The coaches were incredible", Binod shared. "They really listened and made me feel like I wasn't alone. I learned so much – things I didn't even know I needed to know. I was struggling a lot, but this program gave me back my confidence."

Finding work

In 2022, through his own determination and help from the *EmployAbility* team, Binod secured a short-term role that was very meaningful for him.

"I was so happy in that role. It gave me purpose and flexibility to continue my rehab. I never thought I'd be back in the workforce."

Binod is currently working once again, thanks to the ongoing support of *EmployAbility*.

"The *EmployAbility* program changed my life. They go above and beyond; not just to help find a job, but to support you emotionally and practically. I wasn't aware of a number of things, such as my rights and options available to me. I'd recommend it to anyone living with a disability and unsure about their future."

“ I was struggling a lot, but this program gave me back my confidence. ”



A partnership

Binod's story is a powerful example of what's possible when personalised support meets resilience. His success reflects the impact of the *EmployAbility* program and the people behind it who genuinely believe in inclusion and equal opportunity.

At its core, *EmployAbility* is more than an employment service, it's a partnership built on trust, belief, and shared purpose. SCIA is incredibly proud of Binod and the entire *EmployAbility* team who supported him.

EmployAbility now supporting individuals with TBI

SCIA is proud to launch a new chapter for *EmployAbility* in 2025, with funding from icare to expand the current program to support people with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). This new TBI component has been developed to fill a gap and further support individuals with a brain injury – building their capacity to return or commence employment in the most accessible and supported way possible.

"We've seen excellent outcomes" said Jemma Smyth, Head of *EmployAbility*.

"Given some SCIA services already support people living with TBI, it's a natural next step to expand *EmployAbility* and employ specialist staff to support this community."

SCIA CEO Dianne Lucas echoed this excitement:

"We're proud to partner with icare to help individuals with TBI access meaningful employment. This collaboration reflects our commitment to inclusion and empowerment. Together, we're not just opening doors, we're building pathways to a brighter, more inclusive future."

The TBI pilot program is now underway, guided by an Advisory Group of TBI specialists, led by TBI Program Manager Samantha Clay.

"I'm excited to be working alongside the hardworking *EmployAbility* team to continue growing and developing this new program," said Samantha. "Our partnership with icare is the perfect mix of support and future planning."

“They go above and beyond; not just to help find a job, but to support you emotionally and practically.”

How it works

EmployAbility has employment coaches who have a lived experience of disability that can work with you. Whether you have a TBI or SCI, there will be someone with a lived experience supporting you to engage in the *EmployAbility* program, gain employment and achieve return-to-work outcomes. Participants in *EmployAbility* say it was a big relief to have the support of people with a lived experience who understand some of the barriers faced each day; they can provide support and guidance so you can work through the program at a pace that suits you. It's a big opportunity to grow your transferable skills, build your resume and develop your confidence while keeping focussed on accessing meaningful employment.

Reach out

If you or someone you know is living with a physical disability or TBI and ready to begin a new chapter in their employment journey, reach out to the *EmployAbility* coaches today.

employability.org.au

employability@scia.org.au

Peter Spickler: getting stuff done

Peter is in the Workers Care Program



Peter is back working in the transport industry after a workplace accident resulted in quadriplegia. His transportation interests extend outside the workplace to visiting truck and car shows, building his model car collection and a growing interest in remote-controlled cars.

Shine meets Peter on the back terrace of his apartment in Guildford. His cockatiel, named Gizmo, provides a squawking background while admiring its reflection in the birdcage mirror. A lot of Peter's current interests, like Gizmo, started well before his accident. He's had various pets through his life – birds, cats, dogs, fish and mice. He continues to enjoy gardening. Cars and transportation have always been at the centre of both his work life and his hobbies.

Early work

Peter tried a few jobs briefly when he left school, but got into transportation in his late teens and has stayed there, primarily in the trucking industry. He worked for several warehousing and logistic companies driving forklifts and picking orders and wanted a change.

In his mid-20s, Peter upgraded to a truck licence and started interstate driving, mostly east coast runs from Melbourne to Cairns but sometimes to Adelaide. "My truck had the bed, TV, microwave and fridge. I treated it like a holiday and saw all sorts of places and things."

Accident and recovery

Peter was working temporarily for a different employer in February 2017 when he fell from a truck onto concrete and sustained spinal injuries resulting in quadriplegia. After acute care at Royal North Shore he moved to Prince of Wales for rehab. He has had various periods in hospital since then and some very tough times medically. When *Shine* meets with him, Peter is home after recent surgery.

“ I'd ... like able-bodied people to read *Shine*, to help open their minds. ”

Housing and living arrangements

Peter moved from Prince of Wales to short-term accommodation in October 2017 for 18 months because his previous home was unsuitable. In 2019 he moved to his current purpose-built accessible home in Guildford. It's one in a block of 15 apartments for people who have significant physical support needs. It includes features like wider doorways and ceiling hoists, but Peter needed additional modifications before he could move in. Many of these modifications required installing or upgrading home automation technology that Peter manages from his motorised wheelchair using a mouth control.

More recently, Peter has had a ramp installed so that he can get onto the grassed area and garden. He describes himself as a "Get outside sort of guy" and enjoys both the garden beds and his many mature pot plants on the terrace.

Peter has 24-hour care but prides himself on his independence. "Telling people to do this or do that for me – that's not me." He knows it's technology that keeps him independent and he spends time learning how to use it properly. "There is no point in just looking at technology.



Peter's model car collection.

It's not going to do things itself." He draws heavily on the different expertise of his OTs for advice about home automation technology, workplace modifications and strengthening his community engagement.

At his Guildford home Peter says, "I can wake up on my own terms, go to bed when I want, eat food that I like. I can play music when I want to, I can enjoy a concert out till late".

Back working

Peter completed a TAFE business management certificate in 2020. Soon after that, a former employer wanted to get him back working for them. Initially he worked from home, partly due to Covid and while modifications were being made at the workplace to the driveway and some internal features. Peter's workstation area was also set up with an adjustable desk and mouth-controlled mouse. He's now in the office 3 days per week from 10 am to 3 pm as an Administrative Assistant/ Spare Parts co-ordinator, doing invoicing, preparing quotes and helping track finances. He has found it very helpful in the job to have both his TAFE certificate and such broad experience in transportation.



Keeping an eye on his cockatiel Gizmo.

He enjoys the social connection of working onsite; he also finds it more efficient when he needs to ask questions, solve issues and get work done.

Out and about

Peter's at-home interests are much as before – his X-box, bird and garden. He loves getting out and about too, saying it helps him put his medical challenges behind him. "I'm not one for staying at home and moping."

A motto he lives by is "Don't be lazy. Get off your butt and get stuff done."

His interest in cars and transportation extends beyond the workplace – he's got a model car collection at home and a growing interest in using remote-controlled (RC) cars on tracks in his local area. He's thinking of making a jump ramp on his terrace at home for the RC car. He's testing mouth controls for the RC cars to make sure they don't interfere with his other technology.

Peter likes going to music festivals but also motor racing, truck shows and car shows. "There are new models and fancy adaptations, but really, people just want to show off their pride."

“Disability is challenging. But you have to be confident. Set yourself a goal and then, both mentally and physically, you just have to get up and do it.”

Looking forward

Peter says he's not one to sit around and think of the 'What If's'. "Sure, disability is challenging. But you have to be confident. Set yourself a goal and then, both mentally and physically, you just have to get up and do it." Prior to his accident, Peter set a goal and got his truck licence. After his accident he set a goal to master new technology; he achieved that and continues to master technology upgrades.

Family is important to Peter – family stuck around while old friends have drifted away. He's also made new contacts at work and with his community interests.

Peter says, "Most days I feel my life is 8 out of 10." He feels *Shine* is a great opportunity to let people know that disability is OK, it's not going to deter him from doing things. "I'd also like able-bodied people to read *Shine*, to help open their minds."



Peter Sheather: back to volunteering

Peter is a Lifetime Care participant



Peter and his 1975 Ford Escort.

Peter was enjoying his retirement activities when he was knocked off his motorcycle by a kangaroo. He has worked hard to “find the new me” including resuming his volunteer work and joining new community groups.

Peter was raised around Maclean and Grafton in the Clarence Valley, part of the Northern Rivers region of NSW. He settled in Coutts Crossing, about 20km from Grafton, and has lived there for more than 30 years.

Working days

Soon after leaving school, Peter applied for a position with the sewer treatment team at Grafton Council. He says “Council found those positions difficult to fill because people don’t like the idea of sewers. But they were one of the highest paid jobs in council with lots of benefits. We weren’t allowed to bring our clothes home so there was a washer and dryer at work.”

Peter’s nickname was ‘Poo Diver’, and he eventually became Manager of the Sewer Treatment Works for Grafton Council. It was a tight-knit work group because sewerage is considered an ‘essential service’ and required 24/7 staffing, 365 days per year. He had 11 days on, 3 days off, working every second weekend. Work was important to Peter. He became a long-serving member of the United Services Union and was awarded a Life Membership.

After a fall at work and a persistent shoulder injury, Peter retired in 2013 aged 57. His solid work schedule meant he hadn’t developed many hobbies during his working years, though he always enjoyed home-based activities like listening to music on his hi-fi and watching 70s and 80s movies. And as a young man he used to ride his motorcycle to attend the dusk-to-dawn marathon sessions at the Grafton drive-in, watching the movies while sitting in his sidecar.

After retirement, he quickly filled his days with volunteer work, initially visiting men at a nursing home but then working at the South Grafton op-shop of the *Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service*, one of 6 operating across Northern NSW.

A kangaroo out of nowhere

In late 2018, Peter was on his motorcycle going into Grafton when he slowed for a kangaroo. It bounded across the road in front of him and then, unexpectedly, came around and jumped him from behind knocking him over the handlebars onto the road. He sustained multiple orthopaedic injuries and a brain injury.

He was airlifted to Gold Coast hospital by the *Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service*. He returned to Grafton hospital a few weeks later for a brief period before spending 6 weeks at Royal Rehab in Ryde. He came home in mid-January 2019. Peter says, “I found it a tough experience. I missed things. I couldn’t ride my motorbike because my balance is no good. I had to sell my boat. Missed my mates. But at least I’m here.” He says “I had to find the new me.”

After his accident, Peter resumed his Wednesday volunteer work with the *Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service* op-shop and says: “After my accident their ‘copter was what airlifted me to the best medical care. And I’m back volunteering there again. How good is that?”. He’s even thinking about adding another weekly volunteer shift.

Peter has also continued his interests in old movies and his hi-fi. His wife Carol says, “He has the music on nearly all day.” Peter laughs that he can now get old DVDs from the op-shop at half price: “Because I work there, I get them for 50 cents rather than \$1!”.



Inside his pride and joy.

Peter wanted to develop new interests and to meet new friends, so he joined the Grafton Vintage Motor Vehicle Club. He has purchased a bright orange 1975 Escort which was restored following its discovery in a barn. He has added venetian blinds to the back window and a crocheted rug to the interior. The car has a NSW Historical Vehicle licence which limits the number of occasions and annual km it can be driven. That suits Peter fine. He regained his driver licence after the accident and drives short distances independently, but has support for longer distances and events like visits to Motorfest or the Jacaranda Festival.



Peter with support worker Colleen and wife Carol.

Peter now walks using only a walking stick; he thanks the rehab team for getting him out of a wheelchair and back on his feet. As a result of his brain injury, he continues to have difficulty with his memory, and with fatigue.

Never give up

Peter's had various medical setbacks since his accident but his mindset is to always try to do things himself. His advice is, "Do what you can do. Never give up. Keep plodding away. Try to be as independent as possible. Ask for help if needed but always try to do it yourself first." He adds, "It's no good sitting in the corner sulking."

“Do what you can do. Never give up. Keep plodding away.”

Peter's biggest disappointment is that long-time friends have dropped away. "People see you have a bit of trouble walking but the brain injury bit is hidden. They don't understand. I think they thought it was catching."

One of Peter's joys is his volunteer friends from the op-shop. "Ten days after my accident, I was back in Grafton hospital for only 2 weeks before I went down to Royal Rehab in Ryde. But at least half of the op-shop staff came to see me during that time. They are really good friends."

Peter loves reading the stories in *Shine* and says, "If one sentence of my story helps someone, that is good."

“If one sentence of my story helps someone, that is good.”

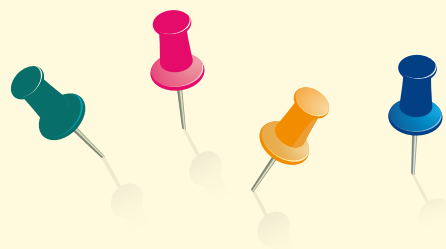


Peter, back left, and other volunteers outside the Grafton South Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service op-shop. As many *Shine* readers know, the service delivers aeromedical and rescue services to those in need.

Photo: Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service's Magazine – *Rescue*.



The notice board



Sharing news highlights, handy information and upcoming events.



Share your story

Have you thought about sharing your story with *Shine*?

Many icare participants have shared their stories through *Shine* over the last 13 years. Sharing stories can offer hope, strength, and connection to others going through similar experiences.

We would love to hear from you – express your interest by emailing us at shine@icare.nsw.gov.au

Share your shining moment

Have you got something you'd like to share with the *Shine* community but don't think a full story is right for you at this time?

Participants, workers, carers and family members are encouraged to send in photos of special events like birthdays, weddings, graduations, cultural ceremonies or significant moments to share with *Shine* readers, for our ongoing feature called "Shining moments".

Please send any photos and a brief description to shine@icare.nsw.gov.au



Shining moment – Joel's story

Joel was building a promising career in mechanical engineering with the Navy when a motorbike accident resulted in a spinal cord injury and altered the course of his life. Thirteen years on, he's built a fulfilling life – raising a family, working full-time, and nearing the completion of a Bachelor of Business Analytics with a major in Data Science.

Since sharing his story in the Summer 2020 edition of *Shine*, Joel has continued to inspire others through informal mentoring and coaching, particularly supporting fellow wheelchair users. Ever forward-thinking, he's now exploring further studies in artificial intelligence.

Joel encourages job seekers to focus on identifying opportunities and to proactively chart a path toward employment. Not every path will be the perfect fit, and he urges others not to be discouraged, to try new things and be willing to break down barriers.

Life at home has also grown busier. Joel and his wife welcomed twins in January, expanding their family to five. He describes this new chapter as both an adjustment and a gift.

His advice for managing a full and demanding life? "You don't eat an elephant in one bite – break things down, one thing at a time."

Shining moment – Kelly-Anne Kerley

Book review by the Shine team: **BREAKING UP WITH MY WHEELCHAIR** by Kelly-Anne Kerley

“I got hit by a car, true story”, Kelly-Anne’s story opens with unflinching honesty and humour. It is a story of recovery, staying strong and not giving up after a cycling accident in 2020. Kelly-Anne takes us with her from the moment she wakes up after 11 days in intensive care and grapples with her ‘new normal’. She has to learn again how to walk and care for herself. Nobody is thinking about whether Kelly-Anne will ever cycle again.

With the support of her parents, medical team and social workers, not to mention her cheerleaders, Kelly-Anne regains her independence and discovers that cycling is a passion that goes beyond fitness.

Becoming an advocate for her own rehab, Kelly-Anne refers to having “Hero Skills”: listening to her body, asking questions, and the courage to speak up.

Rather than mourning the old Kelly-Anne, she focuses on what’s possible if she just tries. That dialogue has helped Kelly-Anne understand that “The essence of me will always be within and will live on”.

Moment-by-moment Kelly-Anne’s journey unfolds in between reflections from the current day, notes from her mum’s diary, photos, and motivational quotes.

As Kelly-Anne says, “The difficult things don’t get easier, we just get stronger”.

Enabling scholarship

Kelly-Anne was awarded a \$5000 scholarship from *Forward Ability Support*. She used this monetary support to enrol in the *Authorpreneurs Boot Camp* at *Disruptive Publishing*.

From the Shine archives:

Catch up on Kelly-Anne’s story: *Kelly-Anne back on the bike*. See the Summer 2023 edition of *Shine*.

“My injuries are mostly invisible which means people generally think I’m OK, and often I am not.”



Get the book

- Paperback edition from Kelly-Anne’s [online shop](#), also available soon as an audiobook.
- ebook available through Amazon Kindle. You can use the Assistive Reader feature of the app or device to hear the words read out loud.
- Listen to Kelly-Anne on [The Simone Feiler Podcast](#).

SCAN ME



SCAN ME

Participants tell us about sharing their stories through *Shine* over the last 13 years.

“It was good to get things off my chest and feel that my story might help someone else.”

“If one sentence of my story helps someone, that is good.”

Social Brain Toolkit

An online program for people with a brain injury



The *Social Brain Toolkit* comprises three online programs designed to help improve communication after brain injury.

There is material suitable for people with a brain injury, family members, carers, clinicians and support people.

In particular, the Toolkit focuses on:

- conversations between people with brain injury and family members
- interactions with friends, health workers and others
- communication on social media

The 3 programs in the *Toolkit* were created with support from icare. **Interact-ABI-lity** and **Social-ABI-lity**, are self-guided and free online programs. **Convers-ABI-lity** is an online program supported by a speech pathologist.

Over 3500 people from around the world have signed up to take part. Research on the *Toolkit* has shown that people with brain injury, family members and health workers had improved confidence after participating. The research team are still testing and planning updates to continue improving this *Toolkit*.

Inez was a conversation partner with her mum, Rosey (page 2) and says:

“I learnt when to be patient and to give my mum time to think, when to jump in and help, and how to prompt her. It was as much about learning those skills as a journey of understanding how mum’s brain and communication now worked”



For more information

You can find out more and sign up for the programs by visiting bit.ly/social-brain-toolkit



or scan the QR code.

SCAN ME

icare acknowledges the clans of the Dharug, Eora and Ku-ring-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.

SCAN ME



Shine [online](#)

Scan the QR code to view the online edition.

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