

amplified

edition 1 | 2024



Meet George,
living his best life

Gearing up for **AMPed UP!**

**How to choose the right
prosthetist for you**

NDIS Review
Updates, plus much more



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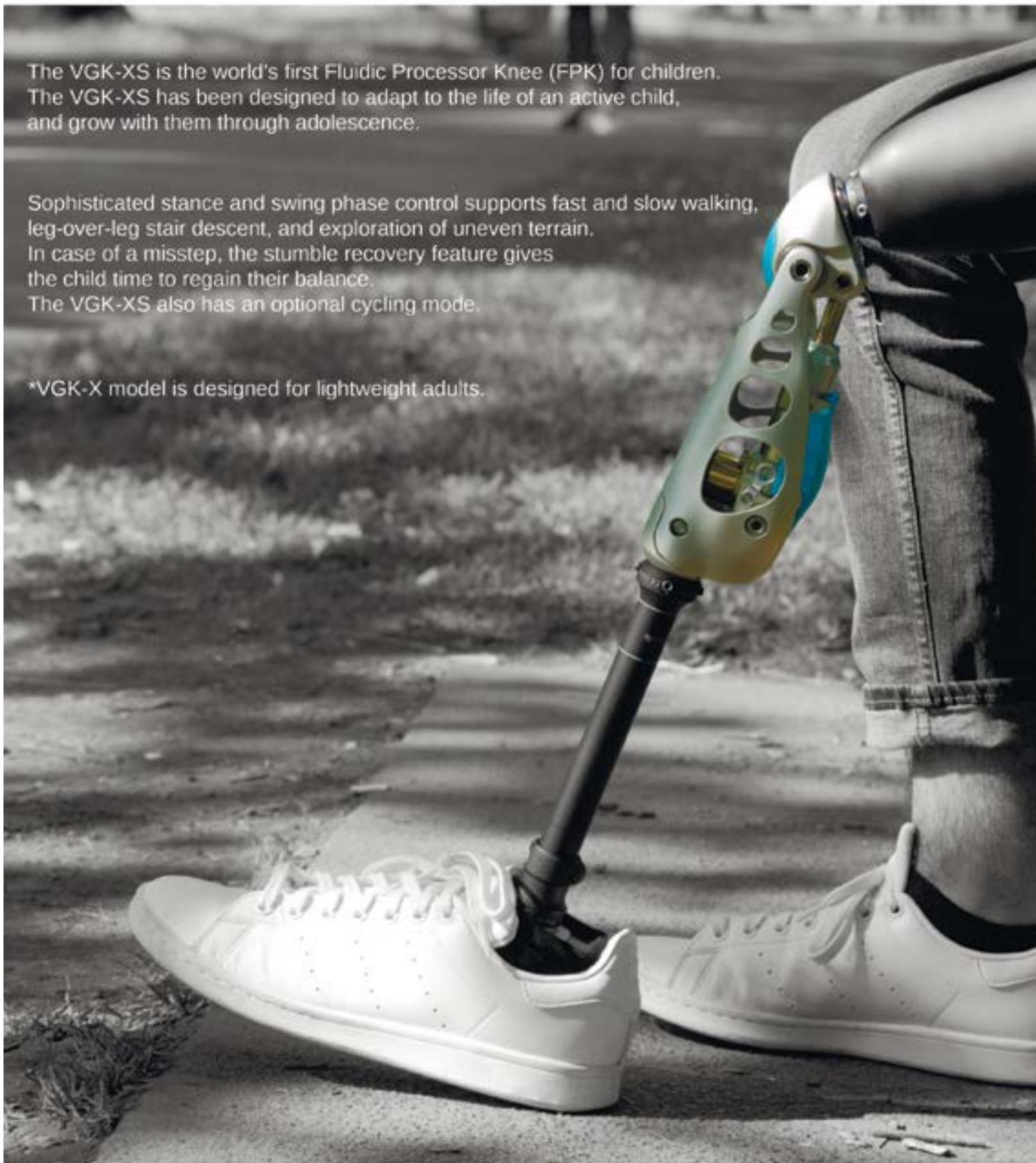
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Is your prosthetist and your prosthesis allowing you to be your best?

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Inside this edition

As we kick off the first edition of Amplified, it's wonderful to share some exciting news. Firstly, if you haven't heard, Limbs 4 Life will be bringing AMPed Up the national amputee conference to the gorgeous city of Adelaide. The 2025 conference venue is near the heart of Adelaide city and is situated on the vibrant riverbank. Start saving now so that you can join us early next year for what will be the biggest amputee event in the southern hemisphere.

Secondly, is the launch of the partners and carers program. We all know the vital role family, friends, and significant others play in our recovery. You can find out more information about this program in the pages that follow and please make sure that you share this information with the special people in your life who support you in your journey to recovery.

And finally, for those of you who are members of our closed Facebook group you can get some insights into the man who hosts the weekly and much anticipated Friday Wrap. As Bruce says, "do the best you can, in your circumstances". Until next time...

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Meet George, peer support volunteer and support group leader



Over the past three years, Limbs 4 Life with the assistance of some of our dedicated peer support volunteers, have established local area support groups to give amputees the opportunity to connect with others in their local community. Both George and Cheryl share their stories.

The path in which your life heads is in your own hands!

"I should have been a left below knee amputee 41 years ago at the age of 13 after a collision with a sliding glass door. I was extremely lucky that surgeons were able to save and repair my leg," shared George.

I'm George, a right below knee amputee and this is my story.

George, the second eldest of four children born to Greek immigrant parents, is a 54-year-old divorced father of Alicia 14, and Damon 10. George lives in Tempe, a suburb in Sydney's inner west.

Growing up for George wasn't all strawberries and cream. After completing a school certificate at Tempe High School he went on to do an apprenticeship in his father's cabinet making business, a business that George went on to run for a little while after his father's passing in 1996. The business closed three years later, and George worked as a contractor to several builders using the skills and qualifications he gained under the tutelage of his late father.

Fast forward fifteen years, and at the age of forty, George became a father himself to Alicia, and three years later he was also blessed with the arrival of Damon. On Christmas Eve 2018, during a marriage breakdown, serious health issues arose leading to an infected ulcer in his right foot which resulted in the loss of two toes.

On July 16 2021, the same day as Damon's birthday, infection took hold again which resulted in a complete forefoot amputation. Shortly after healing from this amputation, a new pressure ulcer developed which did not heal for 18 months and resulted in many visits to the high-risk foot clinic and multiple conversations with podiatrists and doctors. Finally, George



faced a life or limb decision, and decided to have his leg amputated below the knee.

"I had my amputation on the February 23, 2023. Even though there are many before me who have had amputations, whether elective, due to infection or trauma, I can say with hand on heart it is the best decision I have ever made," he shared. "Amputation has given me a new lease on life" George said.

George acknowledges that the company he works for have been very supportive and gave him time away from work to go and have his surgery. He has been back at work in an office environment within the cabinet making industry since June 2023. George also has a number of passions including golf, water and motor sports, rugby league and many other outdoor activities such as camping, fishing and stand-up paddle boarding. "And with gods graces have been able to participate in many of these activities since losing my leg," said George. Since joining Amputee Golf NSW, he has had the opportunity to play golf alongside many talented amputee golfers.

The decision to become an amputee was made easier with conversations that George had with the amputee team at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA) along with Limbs 4 Life peer support conversations with Jeff Green and Andrew Fairbairn, both trained amputee peer support volunteers.

It is because of the great work that Limbs 4 Life does with the amputee community and the resources that are available to people facing amputation, that George decided to become a Peer Support Volunteer.

George was invited and pleased to join the Nepean Amputee Support group gatherings to meet other amputees and gain new knowledge on amputee life, something that George says is invaluable. It became clearer to George, that while the Nepean Amputee Support group in Penrith is terrific, that it can be difficult for amputees who live closer to Sydney city to attend. This is reason that George wanted to establish a support group closer to Sydney's CBD.

"Everything I do amputee related is simply because I want to pass on the knowledge and empowerment I received," reflected George. "I want to help anyone considering the thought of amputation less burdensome and easier," he said.

Many people ask me if I was 'sure' about going through with my amputation and how I would cope post-surgery. For a little while I had doubts of my own but I can now say that I'm glad I did. I am often told (when I am wearing long pants) that people who don't know me, wouldn't even know that I'm an amputee. You just couldn't tell.

I'm now also in a fantastic relationship and am unstoppable in any challenge I set myself. It is without a doubt that the team at Limbs 4 Life, the RPA Amputee Clinic / Allied healthcare staff and other clinicians have made my life as an amputee an enlightening and incredible journey for which I am forever grateful.

Don't let anyone tell you can't because you have a limb missing. I tell them that it's because of my limb deficiency I'll show you, that I can do it better!



Partners, loved ones or amputee carers

Due to popular demand, Limbs 4 Life have recently developed 5 information sheets tailored specifically to the needs of people providing support to, or are the partner of an amputee. Often partners want to know how they can best provide support, what information they should know and where to access that information.

Information sheets can be downloaded from our website, or we can post them out to you.

In addition, we have just launched a closed Facebook group - Amputee Partners | Caregivers Limbs 4 Life Australia. If you want to speak with others in a similar situation, why not request to join this group today and start a conversation.



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Support group leader Cheryl

Cheryl operates an amputee support group in Penrith NSW and has been doing so for quite some time. Cheryl has been an above knee amputee for 22 years and trained as a Peer Support Volunteer with Limbs 4 Life four years ago.

"I started peer support and advocacy for amputees by accident eighteen years ago when I attended the local clinic, said Cheryl. "Back then there were counsellors present on those days for amputees to be able to speak to, then the service was cut," she shared. "It was then I realised that people just need to speak to someone about issues and be given the opportunity to share concerns," Cheryl said. "Most amputees want to chat about their journey," she said.

Cheryl is a very active community member volunteering her time for a range of different causes. Cheryl found giving back to the amputee community to be very rewarding.

The Penrith group meet in a local café once a month. Being a Limbs 4 Life Support Group Leader for the amputee community and bringing people together is a great way to reduce social isolation and create community connections. The chatter we share happens once a month during our Amputee Support Group. It's a great way to help people to navigate their journey forward and answer some of the difficult questions people often face. I look forward to continuing to share my knowledge and information about My Aged Care (MAC) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) along with other areas of interest with Support Group attendees.

If you are unable to attend a local area support group gathering, why not become part of the online support community and join the Limbs 4 Life 'closed' Facebook Group?

You can find this group online at:
Amputees - Limbs 4 Life Australia.



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Local area support groups

Locally based amputee support groups operate in various locations around the country. Support groups provide an informal setting for amputees and their partners to get together in a comfortable and relaxed environment. For people who have never met with another amputee or missed out on the opportunity of peer support, support group

members can help to answer your questions, respond to topics of interest or generally provide a social opportunity for peers to get together. For more information about support groups you can visit our website or call the office directly to find out if there is an amputee support group in a location close to you.

Local area support groups can be found in:

Adelaide
Blackburn
Brighton
Geelong
Launceston
Marrickville/Sydney

Mildura
Mornington Peninsula
Penrith
Perth
Preston
Wodonga

To find out when the groups meet, visit our website or call the office.

Local area support groups usually meet three times per year. To find out where and when a group close to you will be meeting contact the office today or visit the website.



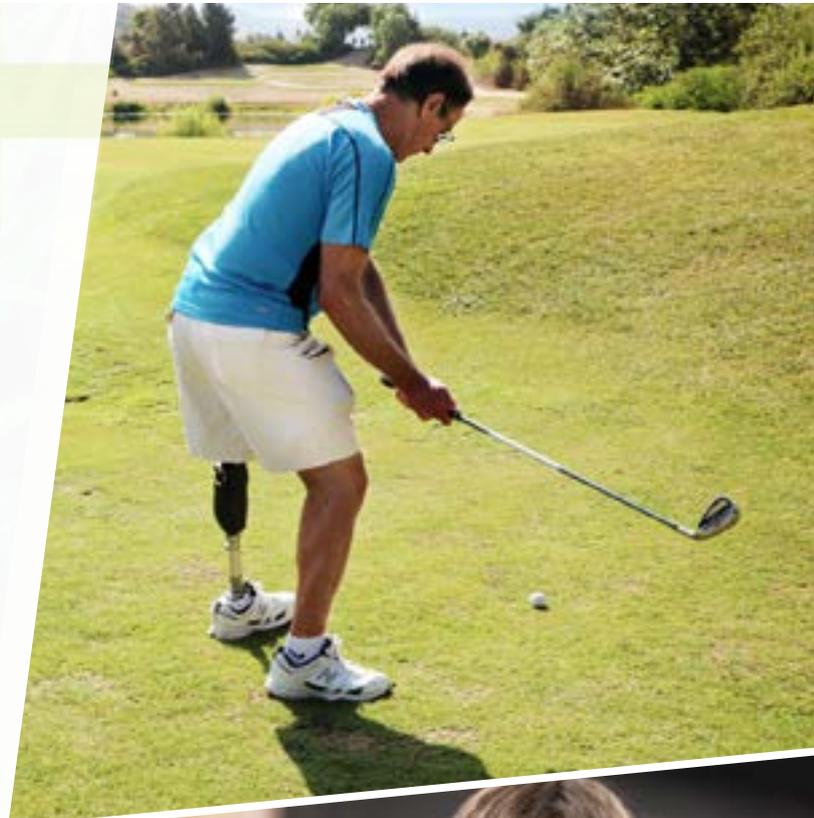
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The Friday Wrap - Unwrapped!

The Friday Wrap has become a routine feature of our closed Facebook Group. We thought it was time to dig a little deeper on what's behind Bruce Jacques, who delivers the wrap each week. We asked him to start at the beginning.

"My life as an amputee began about 33 years ago at the age of 26. I was on a motorcycle and a car that had stopped at the give way sign suddenly pulled out, not seeing me approach. My leg took the impact and an hour or so later I found myself heading for surgery at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. That one chance moment changed everything that then followed through my whole adult life. Fast forward I had a pretty good recovery, but not without its moments as all amputees could relate to. Some difficult times punctuated a drive to get "back to normal" however that might look. On reflection, something I do

lots of a month before my 60th birthday, it actually has been fairly normal. I feel grateful every day as I read of the experiences of those in the Facebook group and the circumstances they sometimes face. I've regained a career in offshore oil and gas, rising to command some quite specialised ships. My leg has never really caused me to change much about what I do, or want to do, a bit easier being below knee.

Many people I encounter have no clue I'm an amputee. Along the way I got married, 3 kids are now in University or year 12, it's been great and my wife has been very pragmatic in some ways, since I'm so mobile, along the lines of "come on, it's not like you've lost a leg...oh wait, you have!". My work has enabled global travel both as part of the job and also for pleasure, plus I have some consuming hobbies in Music and Model Aircraft. Once again in May, the Wrap will be coming from Paris.

I can't quite remember how I first encountered Limbs 4 Life, but since that time it's been so satisfying to be able to contribute along the way. The work of the organisation is unique, wide ranging across the nation and really quite astonishing given the small cohort of people involved. The Facebook group as I routinely say is a wonderful repository of lived experience and possibly unique in the world (like Limbs 4 Life!). It has matured into a place where people can be safely open and discuss the highs and lows of a life changing amputation. The group members bring an incredible array of tips, experience, ideas and caring support when it's needed, fulfilling an important connection and social need also. These days I look forward to scaling back my work over the next few years, but there's always things going on in my sector that I could do. If you watch the Friday Wrap, thanks for checking in, always great to receive your comments on that and all the group posts. As I like to say "do the best you can, in your circumstances".



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How to choose the right
prosthetist for you

The right prosthetist will do all they can to help you reach your goals, keep you informed as things change, and build a long term relationship with you.

Making sure your prosthesis works well can be a time-consuming process. For this reason, you will need the right Prosthetist to work with you to achieve the best outcomes, for you.

What should I consider?

What are the most important things for you to consider in relation to where you get your prosthesis and the prosthetist you work with?

The location or type of facility. For example:

- Do you need a facility that operates outside of regular business hours?
- Do you need fast turn-around times for service and repairs?
- Do you care if the facility is old or new?
- Do you need a facility which is close to home, work or transport?
- Does it matter if it's a public or private facility?

The type of relationship you want with a prosthetist. For example:

- Do you want to be involved in the decision-making process about the type of prosthesis you have, or are you happy for the prosthetist to make all the decisions?
- Do you want someone who offers you lots of information or only answers the questions you ask?
- Would you prefer to work with a male or female prosthetist, if you have the choice?

How do I find the right prosthetist for me?

A recommendation from another person with an amputation or another health professional involved in your care can be a good starting point to narrowing a list to choose from. If you speak to another amputee, remember to ask why they do, or don't prefer their prosthetist. Everyone has different needs, experiences and expectations, so the right prosthetist is not always the same for everyone.

Limbs 4 Life do not provide recommendations about which prosthetist will be best for you, however they can help identify facilities that might meet your needs.

A national list of providers can be found on our website. If you don't have access to the internet, then just give us a call.

Are all prosthetists created equal? Or do qualifications matter?

Not all prosthetist's have the same level of qualifications or knowledge. It's important to note that some prosthetists specialise in certain areas such as upper limb prosthetics or osseointegration, so it's good to investigate who might specialise in your areas of need.

What should I tell my prosthetist when I meet them?

When you met with your prosthetist for the first time, make sure you:

- Discuss your goals and expectations
- Tell them about your history and any information that you think will be relevant to your lifestyle
- Talk about the things that you would like to do, but are having trouble doing
- Share any concerns you have
- Make sure they are listening to you and that you listen to them
- Ask questions





If you are worried that you may forget something make a list of all of the questions you have prior to your appointment.

Checklist

To help you decide if your prosthetist is right for you, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel comfortable asking questions?
- Do I feel respected and listened to when I talk about my experience, thoughts and concerns?
- Do I get answers to my questions?
- Do they give me the time that is needed or make time in the future?
- Do I feel like I am understood?
- Do they talk to me in a way I can understand them?
- Do they know what my goals are?
- Do they provide me with information to think about in a way that is easy for me to understand and remember?
- Do they understand how involved I want to be in making decisions?
- Do they make me feel comfortable both physically and emotionally?
- Can I get an appointment when I need to?
- Did they clearly outline costs or any out of pocket expenses?
- Is this someone I think can help me achieve my goals?
- Is this someone I will enjoy working with?

It may take time to find the right prosthetist. Help your prosthetist to understand what it is you need. Making a checklist might help you get the most out of your relationship with your prosthetist, or refer to our information sheet, 'Talking to your prosthetist'.



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28 - 29 MARCH 2025
NATIONAL AMPUTEE CONFERENCE
ADELAIDE CONVENTION CENTRE



Limbs 4 Life is thrilled to announce that it will be hosting AMPed Up 2025 in Adelaide, 28 - 29 March. The Adelaide Conference and Convention Centre will be the home of AMPed Up over what will be an amazing two days.

The Adelaide Conference and Convention Centre is a purpose-built accessible facility on the bank of the River Torrens in the entertainment precinct of South Australia. For those of you who attended the last AMPed Up conference, the 2025 venue boasts an exhibitor hall more than twice the size of the venue in Melbourne. Limbs 4 Life is extremely grateful to our major partners Ossur and Ottobock for their continued support and we are thrilled to welcome OPC Health as our third major partner for this event. There will also be many new exhibitors joining the conference for the first time.

Tickets and registration

Registrations are now open, and your ticket covers the cost of two-day attendance, morning and afternoon tea, lunch and entry to the official welcome event, along with a free registration bag on arrival.

Early bird amputee ticket: \$200.00

Early bird ticket sales will be available until 30 September 2024 so don't miss out on the discounted price.

With a huge exhibitor hall, this two-day action-packed conference will showcase Australian prosthetic manufacturing companies, assistive technology suppliers and devices, community and disability organisations, so come along and speak to company representatives.



NDIS participants

If you are a NDIS participant, you can claim the cost of the registration in your plan. AMPed Up is about social inclusion and community participation, education and support and can form a part of your capacity building budget.

What if I am not funded by the NDIS?

We haven't forgotten about you! Limbs 4 Life will apply for National Disability Conference funding when grants are released in April. We will let you know if Limbs 4 Life is successful with the application. If you need financial assistance to attend AMPed Up, please contact us today so that we can add you to the request for assistance register.

Payment plan

Limbs 4 Life can offer a payment plan to assist you to attend. If you would like to learn more about this opportunity, please contact our office today.

Conference program

The conference committee are currently working on the program to engage speakers, plan workshops and panel sessions. You won't be disappointed; the program will feature something for everyone.

'Missing bits'

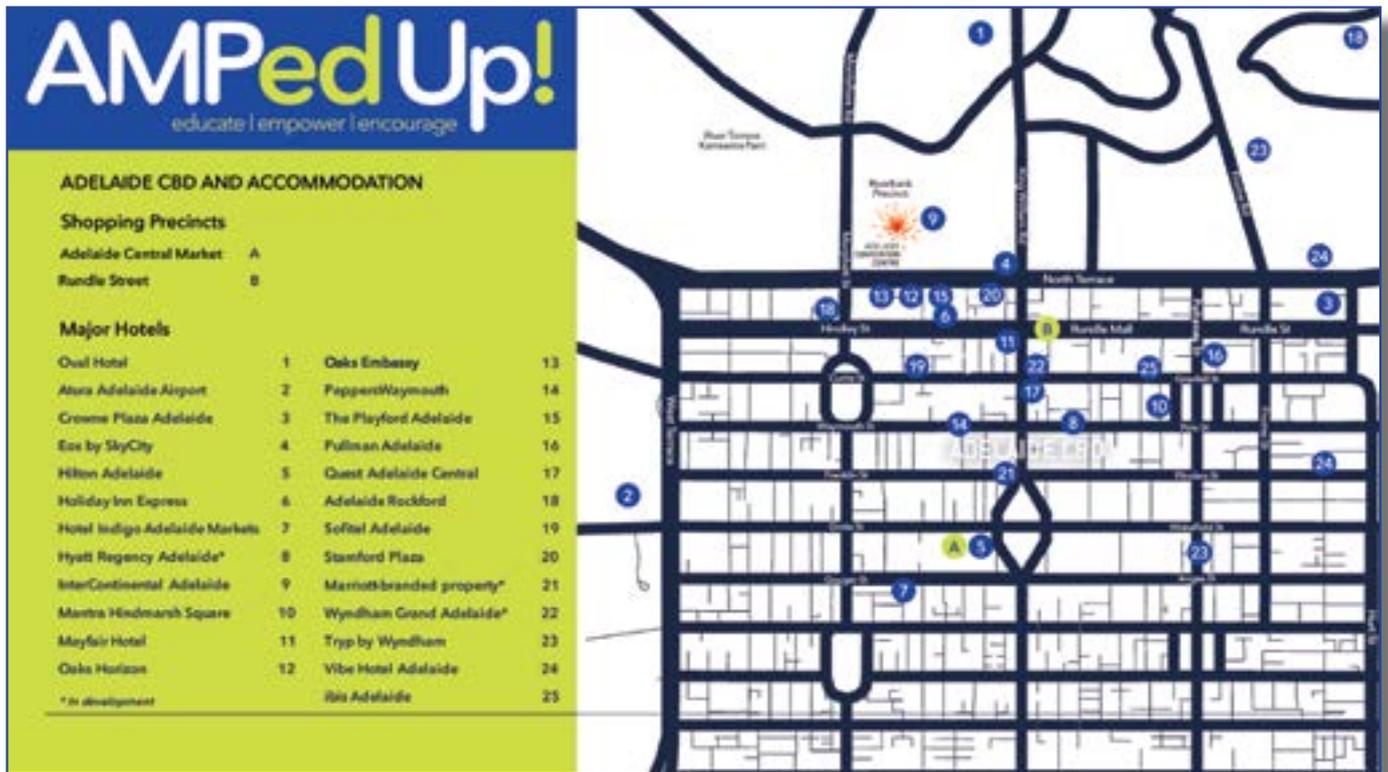
Due to popular demand, Limbs 4 Life's very own band Missing Bits will once again entertain you with their dulcet tones and musical genius at the official welcome event. You won't want to miss that!

Getting there

The Adelaide Convention Centre is conveniently located 15 minutes drive from Adelaide airport and only a brief walk from the Adelaide train station and tram stop. It is also on the outskirts of the CBD.

The Convention Centre is an accessible venue with lift and ramp access for delegates and exhibitors and on-site parking is available.





Accommodation

Adelaide boasts a wide range of accommodation options close to the venue. Should you require an accessible room, or you have specific requirements, make sure that you speak with hotel booking staff before making your reservation.

March is a very busy month in Adelaide with a range of festivals and events. We suggest that you secure accommodation as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

For accommodation information, visit the Limbs 4 Life website for hotel offers.

Things to consider

Where you choose to stay will depend on what you need, so a good place to start your search may be accessible options. Do you need a room that is wheelchair accessible? Is there an accessible entrance to the property? Do you need a roll-in shower or a shower chair? Are there any other requirements that you need to be able to stay in a hotel? Can the hotel arrange the hire of assistive technology items and have

them delivered to the property? Will there be a charge for such items? It's imperative that you check directly with the hotel before you book, to see if it's suitable for you to stay there.

The other thing to consider is the distance between your hotel and the conference venue and how you will be getting to and from AMPed Up.

What's on in South Australia

If you're making the trip to Adelaide, why not consider taking an extra day or two to discover what's happening in and around South Australia.

March is a great time to visit Adelaide with The Fringe Festival, WOMADelaide, and the Motor Sport Festival, not to mention the abundant number of wineries in the north - Barossa Valley or McLaren Vale in the south; you might like to visit the German town of Hahndorf or relax at Henley or Glenelg beach.

You can find out more information by visiting [Experience Adelaide](http://ExperienceAdelaide.com.au) or email enquiries@aedasa.com.au



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Unicorns
are blessings!
Meet Ali

Hi, I'm Alison and am the ripe young age of almost 49. I am a wife to Tony and a mum to Ethan 14 and Amelia 8 and a half. My journey of being a LBKA only came about 8 years ago. In November of 2009, when I was eight weeks pregnant, I was diagnosed with a DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) then two weeks later my DVT broke off and travelled to my lungs and caused me to get 5 PE's (Pulmonary Embolism). To save my life and my unborn baby, I had to start injecting myself with Clexane a blood thinner. One stunning Saturday morning in January of 2010 I wasn't feeling the best with all that I had going on with my pregnancy and the blood clots, so thought I should get myself to my GP just for a check-up and to put my mind at rest.

My husband had his car, and my dad was over from Tasmania and had my car so when I couldn't get a car to drive to the doctors, I decided that I would go on my 50cc Vespa. When I wasn't too far away from the doctors, a lady that appeared to be talking on her mobile phone did a U-turn and collected me with her 4wd car. I sustained a degloving and compound fractures to my left leg, a broken right ankle and just some gravel rash. I was very blessed that I didn't end up with any head or internal injuries and I was still pregnant.

I needed emergency surgery to repair my leg to have initially an external fixator put on my leg, then later having that removed and having an Ilizarov frame applied. Over the next 6 years I had 13 operations to save my leg and to try and give me and my little family some sort of normality.



Decision day, or maybe it was I'm done day. March 2016, I couldn't exercise, play sport, work, or go shopping or even carry my 5-month-old daughter and that's when I came to the conclusion that I would like to have my leg amputated. I went and saw the surgeon that saved my leg initially on that fateful Saturday in 2010 and told him my thoughts and wishes. Thursday 30 June 2016 I became an elective LBKA, and I haven't looked back. Being an amputee isn't all rainbows and butterflies, and we must work on these things. When life gives you lemons you must perfect the recipe and make lemonade rather than just producing lemon juice.

In May of 2018 I had just gotten my definitive leg when I was able to compete in a 4km fun run. It was the first time in 8 years that I was able to wear a pair of matching shoes, I was able to exercise and be out doing something on two legs and not in my wheelchair with my family for the first time in a very long time.

Fun Fact: Did you know that a collective noun for unicorns is a Blessing? All my sockets that I have had over the last 8 years have had unicorns on it and I will keep having unicorns. I believe that having my amputation has been a blessing.



The NDIS Review

As you may be aware there has been a federal government review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The overarching goal of the NDIS Review was to put people with disabilities back at centre of the NDIS. The Review began in 2022 and since that time the Review has looked into the design, operations and sustainability of the Scheme.

“The objectives of the Review were to restore trust, ensure sustainability and give participants a better experience and more control, by making the NDIS more about people and less about bureaucracy through greater equity, transparency and consistency.”

The NDIS was designed to support people with permanent and significant disability.

The Independent Review panel received almost 4,000 submissions - including from people with disability, NDIS participants, their families and carers, as well as the providers and workers who support them.

The report makes 26 recommendations and 139 supporting actions that aim to restore trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS through:

- developing a unified system of support for people with disability
- an NDIS experience centred on the whole person and their support needs
- better support for children and adolescents through mainstream services and a significant expansion of services outside the NDIS
- more active government involvement and stewardship of NDIS markets to make them more efficient and effective
- improving service quality and ensuring appropriate safeguards and risk proportionate regulation.

The Australian Government is carefully considering the recommendations in the final reports of both the NDIS Review and the Disability Royal Commission before providing its full response.

Town Hall meetings discussing the recommendations for the review have been held around Australia. Some of the community recommendations include:

- Removing support coordinators and local area coordinators and replacing them with navigators;
- The introduction of navigators to help you to find services;
- Expanding the role of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission;
- People with psycho-social disabilities accessing better supports outside of the scheme;

- The introduction of longer-term plans;
- Linking people to foundational supports, such as peer-based supports and advocacy services, along with assistance to navigate systems;
- Increasing support outside of the NDIS; and,
- Removal of the funding structure; capital, core and capacity building supports.

Limbs 4 Life received 118 responses to our consultation and made a submission to the review based on the feedback from amputees around Australia. Thank you to everyone who made the effort to provide feedback. If you would like to read our submission you can do so by visiting our website.



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Getting back in the saddle after amputation

In the serene countryside of Boyanup WA, lives a remarkable Para Equestrian named Suzin Wells. Suzin had a deep passion for horses and a fierce determination to excel in the world of equestrian sports. From a young age, she had a natural connection with these majestic creatures, finding solace and joy in their presence.

Suzin's journey into Para Equestrian sports began when she was diagnosed with a rare infection that affected her mobility, resulting in having both her legs amputated below the knee. Despite facing physical challenges, Suzin refused to let her condition define her. Instead, she saw it as an opportunity to defy

expectations and showcase her strength and resilience.

With unwavering support from her family and coaches, Suzin embarked on a rigorous training regimen to hone her riding skills. She spent countless hours at the stables, bonding with her horse, Kendall Park Odyssey (Odie), and correctly working on her riding techniques. Through hard work and dedication, Suzin gradually honed her abilities and began competing in Para Equestrian events. This competition was 10 weeks after becoming a bilateral below knee amputee.

As Suzin's reputation grew in the equestrian community, she also became a vocal advocate for sports inclusivity. She believes that everyone, regardless of their abilities, should have the opportunity to experience the joy and thrill of competitive sports. Suzin works tirelessly to raise awareness about Para Equestrian sports and promote accessibility for athletes with disabilities.

Suzin wanted to participate in the prestigious National Australian Para Equestrian competition. The stakes were high, but Suzin remained focused and determined to give her best performance. With Odie by her side, she entered the arena with grace and confidence, ready to showcase her skills to the world.

The competition was intense, with skilled riders from all over the country vying for top honours. Despite the tough competition, Suzin's talent and dedication shone through as she navigated the intricate Para Dressage tests with precision and finesse. The crowd was captivated by her riding style and the bond she shared with Odie.

In a heart-pounding finale, Suzin and Odie delivered a performance that left the judges and spectators applauding. As the final scores were tallied, it was announced that Suzin had

emerged victorious, clinching the reserve Champion prize in the competition. The crowd rose into cheers and applause, celebrating Suzin's triumph and the spirit of inclusivity she embodied.

From that day on, Suzin Wells became an icon in the Para Equestrian community, inspiring aspiring riders, and advocates for sports inclusivity. Her story served as a testament to the power of determination, resilience, and the unbreakable bond between a rider and her horse. Suzin's legacy continued to inspire athletes to break barriers, defy expectations, and pursue their dreams with unwavering passion and courage.

Images with thanks to Christie Lyn Photography



A young woman with blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt and black shorts, is leaning against a stone wall. She has a prosthetic left leg. In the foreground, a golden retriever is sitting on the ground, looking towards the camera. The background shows green foliage and a stone wall.

Is your prosthetist
and your prosthesis
allowing you to be
your best?

When was the last time you thought about what you would like to do in life but are having trouble doing it? You probably think about this a lot when things are not working out the way you planned.

Chances are it's annoying you. So let's pose the question 'when was the last time you discussed the things you want to do with your Prosthetist and asked if they could help you to achieve these things?'

As a Prosthetist I often found that my clients didn't always discuss what they wanted to achieve. Having goals doesn't mean that they have to be visions of grandeur - it could be basic things such as wanting to be able to shower more easily when you're away from home or having the ability to stand up in your own shower. This may not have been something that you thought about, or even thought was necessary in the early stages after your amputation, but it might be something that you would like now.

Have you tried to do something like riding your bike on your current prosthesis? You might be finding it difficult because you are trying to hold on with one arm or you can't bend your knee enough because your socket is causing you pain. Does not being able to do these things make you question if it is possible? Maybe you feel defeated. Perhaps it makes you think 'maybe I can't do this activity anymore?' rather than asking your Prosthetist if something can be done (to your prosthesis) to make it easier and/or pain free. There might be things your Prosthetist can help you with that you didn't realise. Perhaps technology has changed and now there are solutions available that didn't exist before.

Discuss your needs with your Prosthetist. People's bodies and lifestyles change over time, as does prosthetic technology and funding. It's a good idea to make sure you talk with your Prosthetist about what you need and to ensure you are up to date with any changes in technology or funding.

When meeting with your Prosthetist it's also a good idea to discuss your current prosthesis and what you do or don't like about it, as well as

talking about other options that would better suit you and your lifestyle.

When talking to your Prosthetist about your current prosthesis think about what you already know, which may include:

- that you know your skin reacts to a silicone liner, you sweat too much to wear a liner so you might like to talk about other suspension options
- that you need to kneel down to do your job and this often ruins your prosthesis
- that you need your prosthesis to be as light as possible and you don't care what it looks like as long as it lets you do everything you need to
- the things you like or don't like about your prosthesis and what is important for you (eg. look, feel, weight, length, function, type).
- When speaking with your Prosthetist ensure that you talk about yourself more broadly, which may include:
 - changes to your financial situation which may impact on your ability to pay for prosthetics (or parts) you have used in the past.
 - any other health issues you might be experiencing.
 - goals you would like to achieve (eg. return to work, driving, sport and recreation activities).
 - difficulties in attending your prosthetic clinic for regular checks.



- that you need a prosthesis which requires minimal maintenance.
- Before meeting with your Prosthetist also think about the activities you need to undertake or would like to be able to do in the future. It is a good idea to discuss these during your appointment as this will help to guide the decisions you can make with your Prosthetist. Such activities may include:
 - changing a baby's nappy,
 - mowing the lawn,
 - getting up and down stairs,
 - cooking, showering, driving a car or anything else you may need or want to start doing on your own, or,
 - playing golf, going surfing, gardening or walking up and down a hill.

You also may want to:

- learn about different prosthetics, prosthetic componentry and new technology that you have heard about, and ask whether any of these would suit you and your situation,
- ask to trial new prosthetic devices.

Think of working with your Prosthetist as a 'team effort', one can't work effectively without the other.

To help you to make decisions and get the best outcomes:

- take time to read about the componentry recommended for you before you go ahead and approve it
- discuss possible prosthetic options and their advantages and disadvantages of each part
- ask questions about any other expectations you have of your Prosthetist and/or the facility they work in, for example: "how long will it take from the time funding is approved until I receive my prosthesis?" or "I need to know about my appointments at least two weeks in advance so I can arrange to take time off from work" or "can we please book the next appointment now?"
- similarly, if you are having a check socket made, book the follow up appointment before you leave, or make the appointment in advance.
- ask for any information in writing and/or take some notes yourself so that you can discuss these matters with family members or friends.

Having more specific discussions with your Prosthetist

Sometimes there are specific things that you might be worried about discussing for fear of offending your Prosthetist in some way.

You should know that all health practitioners are required to be approachable about anything that you need to discuss and a good Prosthetist won't be upset if you ask questions!

Most likely he or she will enjoy the opportunity to work with someone who is motivated to get the most out of their prosthesis.

A Prosthetist's skill is being able to discuss whether a component is suitable for you, and if not, why not. A Prosthetist should also be able to assess and discuss whether the benefits listed in an advertising brochure are things that you will be able to take advantage of. Ask your Prosthetist as many questions as you need so that you can understand.



Talking to others if you can't talk to your Prosthetist

If you ever feel that your Prosthetist has said something inappropriate, makes you feel uncomfortable or unhappy, or you don't feel that you can talk about something important related to your care you should consider who else you can talk to. It is important to raise the concerns you have because speaking up can help prevent it from happening again, either to you or to someone else. Should this ever happen you should consider:

- Speaking to the manager of the clinic where you receive treatment. Raise your concerns in a factual way and consider what you would like the result of your discussion to be, for example:
- do you want an apology?
- do you want reassurance that the manager will speak to the Prosthetist?

- do you want to make sure you remain anonymous?
- do you want to change clinics?

You can also ask about the clinic's formal complaint policy. Every organisation is required to have this type of policy and explain the process involved in lodging a complaint.

Check to see if your Prosthetist is a member of the Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association (AOPA). You can contact AOPA directly or conduct your own search on their website to see if the practitioner is an AOPA member. If your Prosthetist is an AOPA member, and you feel it is appropriate, you can make a complaint through AOPA. This will mean that AOPA will investigate whether the Prosthetist is practicing at the required standard.

Exert taken from the original article by Jackie O'Conner BPO (Bachelor Prosthetics Orthotics with Hons) - MAOPA

Why not become a peer support volunteer today?

Cairns, Newcastle and Perth - we're heading your way!

Limbs 4 Life will be hosting Peer Support Volunteer training sessions in a range of locations around Australia kicking off in Cairns, Perth and Newcastle. If you are an amputee and would like to give back to your community, share your knowledge and experience with those just beginning their journey, then consider taking part in training today! You can complete a volunteer application form online or request a form from our office.



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