

# amplified

edition 2 | 2023



Turning tragedy  
into triumph  
Meet Clayton Denny

Are you the partner or  
carer of an amputee?

Choosing the right  
wheelchair for you!

NDIS REVIEW  
Have your say



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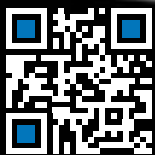
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**amplified**  
edition 2 | 2023



In this edition we profile three amputees who are getting on with life and meeting some of the challenges that amputation can bring. Upper limb amputee Alan shares some tips for daily living which make his life easier; Carl gives us some insights to the personal goals he has set for himself aiming to complete his bucket list, while Clay shares how his amputation led to self-evaluation, and a complete change in circumstances both personally and professionally.

There is a terrific article about Human Rights and how you can use your rights to get a better outcome. While Limbs 4 Life continue to advocate for people in our community who cannot access support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme, it's important for those of you in this situation to ensure that your rights are being met.

Finally, if you are the carer or partner of an amputee, then we want to hear from you!

Until next time, keep living your best life.

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# Turning tragedy into triumph



Sometimes the smallest thing can change the trajectory of your life forever. Whether that change is positive or negative is what you make of it.

Clayton Denny is at the peak of his career. He started off in the industry working as an operator for a contractor in a small mining town in Central Queensland, working and studying his way up the ranks all the way to Superintendent. He then took on a new challenge that landed him in the role he's had for the last five years, as Regional Manager for Epiroc. His career is a success story by any measure.

On Australia Day in 2021, Clayton's story was almost cut short, and his life was changed forever. Fishing at South Stradbroke Island, he cut his foot on a reef. It was a tiny cut, and he didn't think twice about it.

"It wasn't until I got back home that I started feeling pretty miserable. I thought I must have come down with a bout of food poisoning," said Clayton.

"It lasted all weekend and then when the kids, who were 14 and 15 at the time, went to school on Monday, I stayed home in bed. Sometime during the day, I got up and collapsed in the bathroom. That's where my kids found me, just lying there gasping for air."





Clayton was rushed to Maitland Hospital. No one knew what was wrong as they waited for an intensive care ambulance to transfer him to John Hunter Hospital.

“At John Hunter I was put into an induced coma and was on life support. The doctor told the family I had a 5% chance of survival and to prepare for the worst. No one thought I was going to make it.”

Clayton had septic shock from an infection caused from that tiny cut he got while fishing. Luckily, the doctors quickly identified the strain of the infection and administered the appropriate antibiotics. Clayton survived. 7 days later Clayton woke up. Not long after awakening he discovered his leg had been amputated from below his left knee.

“When I realised they had amputated my leg I had a real dark moment. I normally never have negative moments like that. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know what my future would hold. All I wanted to do was get out of there and kill myself.

**“That despair lasted maybe half a day, then something switched in my brain, and I accepted that this is the way I am now. I just have to deal with it.”**

In the following months, Clayton dedicated himself to rehabilitation while remaining in hospital, learning to walk again, and preparing himself physically for a prosthetic leg. He went

back to work in May, though he still struggled for months, constantly feeling tired.

“Epiroc were so great throughout all of it. They really looked after me and the family, I am so grateful to them. And it wasn’t just Epiroc, there were so many people in the industry that rang me up or came and saw me in hospital. People you wouldn’t expect to make the time and effort. I’m so thankful for all of the support I received.”

After he recovered, Clayton felt he owed a debt, especially to John Hunter Hospital who saved his life. He got involved with Limbs 4 Life, becoming an advocate.

“Being able to help other people navigate such a difficult time is important to me. I visit people from all over the world who have become amputees. It’s not counselling, you just rock up and be a friend. Someone they can talk to who has a shared experience. Because that’s what I needed in those early days. Someone who understood.”

“My advice to anyone who has gone through a traumatic, life changing event, is to reach out. Find someone who’s been through your experience and can help you navigate it. But make sure they have a positive attitude and can help you find yours.”

**Whilst the amputation changed Clayton’s life, he only sees all the ways it’s changed his life for the better.**

When Clayton woke up, he also found out he had Type 2 diabetes. It led him to completely change his lifestyle, prioritising his health for the first time. As a result, he recently found out he has completely reversed the diagnosis.

As he got back on his feet - or as Clayton would say, back on his foot - he took a long, hard look at his life, reevaluating what really mattered and what he truly cared about. He made the tough decision to leave a marriage of 20 years, that was no longer the happy marriage it once was. He also rekindled his passion for music, something he never imagined he would return to.

A long-time friend of Hilltop Hoods and other Australian Hip-Hop artists, he got back working



"It's skyrocketed," said Clayton. "It's been great getting my name out there and opening up for some big names. I love the new path my life has taken. I know I would never be on this ride if I hadn't gone through such a life changing event." While he will continue to pursue his passion for music, Clayton won't be leaving the mining industry any time soon.

"Mining has been my whole life. Even though I'm doing so well with music, I love my job. I love working with my team and our customers, and so I want that to continue. I might ease off DJing, as I'm getting a bit old for it, but I'm going to continue making music and collaborating with people, there's plenty of room in my life for both."

with them, which then led to working with other artists, helping produce music. He started DJing again, you may have even heard of him by his DJ name, 'Cheques One.' When he's not putting out his own beats, he's collaborating with others and has made a real name for himself on the Hip-Hop, House, Drum and Bass, and Techno scene.

**So, when life throws you a curve ball, take a leaf out of Clayton's book. With the right attitude, adversity doesn't have to be a stumbling block, it can be a stepping stone.**

*Check out Clayton's music by searching Cheques One on YouTube or Spotify!*



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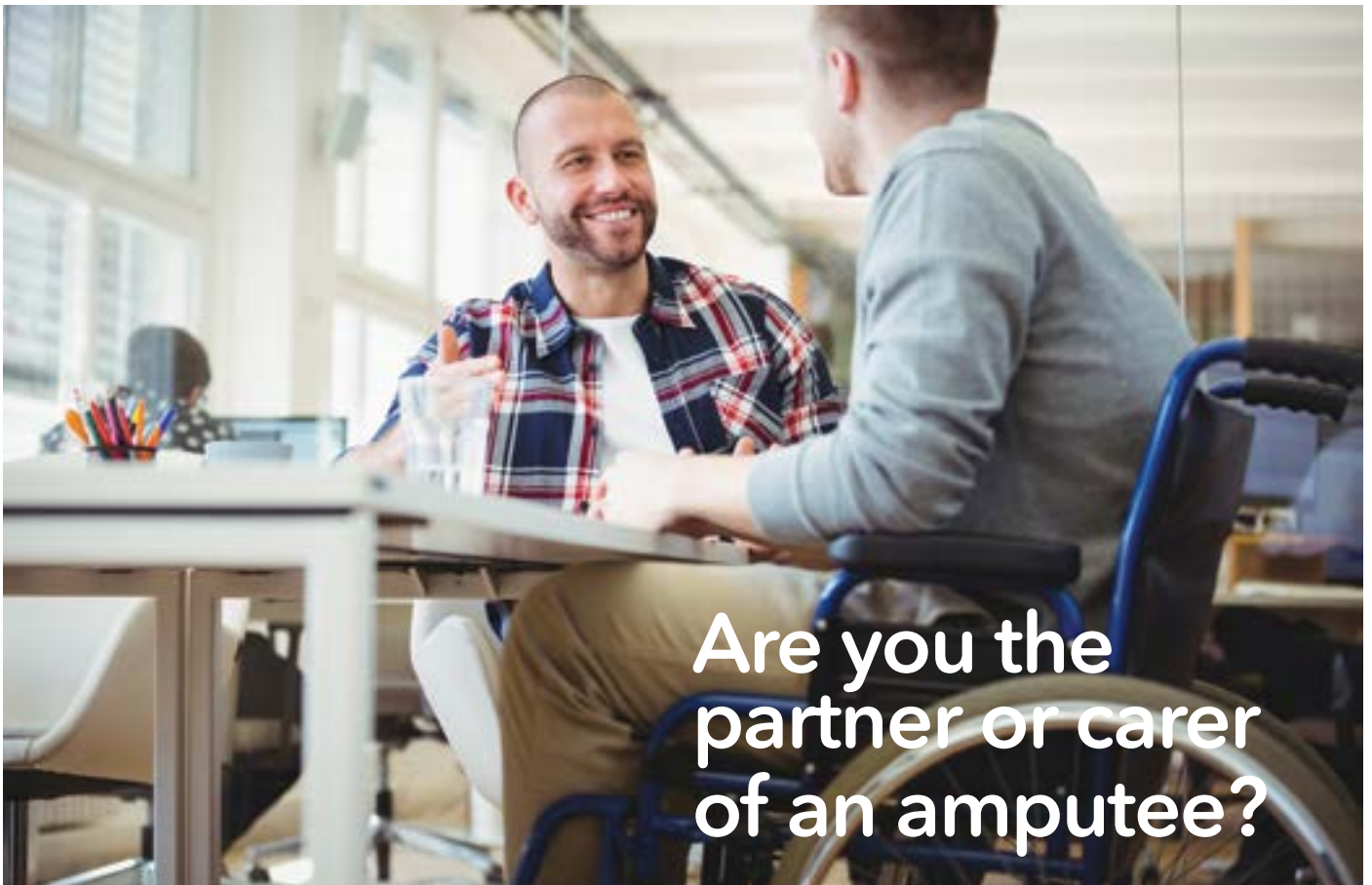
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Registered NDIS Provider



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## Are you the partner or carer of an amputee?

Limbs 4 Life is seeking your feedback. We'd like to know if and how you feel supported in your role as a partner/carer or family member of an amputee, and what kind of supports or resources could be useful to assist you? We are investigating options to develop specific supports for partners and carers and to expand the information and supports that we currently provide.

Some people need support helping their loved one to navigate funding streams such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or My Aged Care (MAC) system; knowing what supports are available to them; what prosthetic options or home modifications are available. But these are only some of the factors and challenges that people who care and support amputees are faced with, especially immediately after an amputation has occurred.

If you would like to share your feedback with us, then we would love to hear from you.

We need to know:

- what works;
- what doesn't work;
- what you need and what you need to know about;
- what gaps (if any) are there; and,
- how you think we could fill those gaps.

We want to hear from you, so please drop us a line, call or email us with your feedback and suggestions.

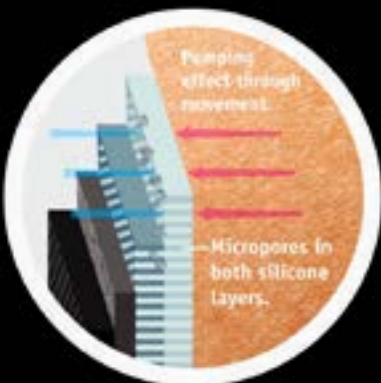


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*Ask your prosthetist about the Uniprox SoftskinAir Liner!*







## Left side, strong side - meet Alan

At the end of 2020, life threw me a major curve ball. I had been working as a teacher for about 3 years but had lived with constant pain and repeated procedures for 20 plus years. An internal infection aggressively took hold and began to shut my body down. I had to be flown down to St. Vincent's in Sydney, where I was told that, had I left things a week or two later, I would not have survived. They told me I had to make a decision about having my right arm, shoulder, and collarbone (forequarter amputation) removed to save my life. My chance of making it through the operation was 70 percent. I chose to go ahead.



To be honest, I had some really dark days leading up to the surgery. I can't explain how I turned that around, but I did think about what I had done in my life. I thought about my family, my job as a teacher at South Grafton High and how proud I was of myself. And then something clicked...I thought to myself, "OK, so I need to lose my right arm. My left side will now always be my strong side. Hang on a minute! 'Left Side Strong Side.' It's a quote from 'Remember the Titans,' one of my favourite movies! From then, those words became my thing.

When it was time for the operation, the doctors told me that I'd be asleep for the best part of a week. I was out for 16 days. When I woke up, I couldn't talk or eat anything. I had to learn to breathe by myself again. I had to learn how to walk and talk again. I had to train my throat how to swallow food again. My first meal after about 66 days was one of those '2 fruits' things and it was soooooo good! I even tried to bribe a nurse with \$50 for a can of Pepsi they were using to unblock my nasal feed tube.

I spent 88 days in hospital and got through it by setting small goals all the way through until I got home. Doctors told me that it could take up to a year until I'd be able to work again. I was back teaching in under six months. Towards the end of 2021 I had my thyroid removed for thyroid cancer. The good news is I am now cancer-free; it's all gone!

Getting back to teaching at South Grafton High was a major goal because I really did miss the students. I've had the privilege to share my story with our Year 11 students to promote resilience as they enter their final year. I am now pain free and I have never been healthier. When I relate my story to the students, I like to leave them with this;

***"When you can't control what is happening, challenge yourself to control the way you respond. That's where your power is."***



## Day-to-day living as an upper limb amputee

These are some of the things that help me:



- I no longer use an iron or ironing board to iron my clothes. Instead I use a clothes steamer.
- I have an all-purpose cutting board/food prep station, with grater/slicer, holder, spike to hold food in place for cutting and a brush. I can make sandwiches and prepare toast, all with one arm. I also have a battery-operated jar opener, bottle opener and can opener.
- My car has been fitted with a Bluetooth, 'Lodgesons' steering knob for driving purposes. This device took a bit of getting used to. I tell my students it kind of feels like I'm playing a video game. Because all the controls are positioned in way that makes it feel like I'm playing a Playstation, for example, the indicator lights, headlight switch etc. are all on this one device.
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme has assisted me with funding to access the supports and devices I need.

When I'm out and about I've found ways to adapt to different situations and keep moving forward.



## OUR GOAL

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At APC Prosthetics, we are dedicated to achieving the best outcome for you, aiming for the best possible comfort, the best possible function and the best possible lifestyle.

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# NDIS REVIEW

There is currently a review taking place into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The goal of the Review is to put people with disability back at the centre of the NDIS. It aims to help restore trust, confidence, and pride in the NDIS.

The NDIS Review team would like your feedback. You may take part in the review by visiting, [ndisreview.gov.au/have-your-say/have-your-say-online](https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/have-your-say/have-your-say-online)

Limbs 4 Life will also be submitting a report to the Review, and we're conducting our own survey to gather feedback from the amputee community. You have until close of business on Monday 31 July. You may complete our survey here: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDISREVIEW23](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDISREVIEW23).

So far, we've received some great feedback, so 'thank you' to those of you who have already taken the time to respond.

The Review team want to know, 'what your 3 main concerns with the NDIS are?'

Some responses have included, 'difficulty using the website, the constant turnover in Local Area Coordinators has made it impossible to build a relationship, lack of understanding regarding peoples' disabilities and how they choose to live their lives, unscrupulous service providers, and the length of time that it takes between applications and approvals'.

If you're a NDIS participant and you'd like to have your say, you can do so anonymously by completing our survey, or take some time to visit the NDIS Review site. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey to complete, we can post a copy out to you.



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## Choosing the right wheelchair for you!

A number of you have contacted us recently seeking information about wheelchairs and knowing which chair is right for you. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has just published a set of guidelines explaining the stages of Select, Fit, Train and Follow Up. You can download and read the WHO Wheelchair Provision Guide at the link below, but in the meantime, we've included some information which might be helpful.

Wheelchairs provide mobility, postural support and freedom to those who cannot walk or have difficulty walking, enabling them to move around, participate in everyday activities and to live life on their own terms.

As one of the most commonly used assistive products, wheelchairs are a vital asset, enabling access to places and activities that would otherwise be inaccessible. For older people, who make up a growing group of users, wheelchairs can enable continued participation in everyday activities, maintaining an active lifestyle, and living with dignity.

Mobility and movement are essential for human health and well-being. For people who rely on wheelchairs for mobility, an appropriate wheelchair is a primary need, necessary to ensure physical and mental health and development, function, participation and inclusion. Having access to a suitable wheelchair is a human right, recognises the right to personal mobility enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### WHO defines a wheelchair as appropriate when it:

- meets the user's needs and environmental conditions;
- provides proper fit and postural support;
- is safe and durable; and
- can be obtained, maintained and serviced



#### TIP

It's important that your chair is the right width, height and weight to meet your needs!

# Four wheelchair service steps

## 1 SELECT



The wheelchair user's specific needs and preferences are defined through an individual assessment, to select the most appropriate wheelchair(s) for them.

## 2 FIT



The wheelchair, wheelchair cushion, postural support devices and any other accessories are prepared and fitted for the wheelchair user.

## 3 TRAIN



The wheelchair user, along with those who will assist them, takes part in task-specific training in how to use and care for their wheelchair.

## 4 FOLLOW UP



Follow up is offered to all users, for as long as they require a wheelchair, with the frequency based on their individual needs.

## Test and trial

When you are choosing a wheelchair and/or any assistive technology device, it's important that you try before you buy. Make sure the features of the chair are what you need.

1. Do I need a chair to be lightweight so that it can be lifted in and out of a vehicle?
2. What kind of seating/cushion do I need and what are the options available to me?
3. Do I need a chair that is rigid or will fold up for transportation purposes?
4. What will best meet my needs, a manual or power wheelchair?

For more tips on selecting the right Wheelchair for you, download a copy of our **'Handy Tips for Wheelchair Users'** on our website or contact us and we will send you a copy.

Reference: Wheelchair provision guidelines. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240074521>



### TIP

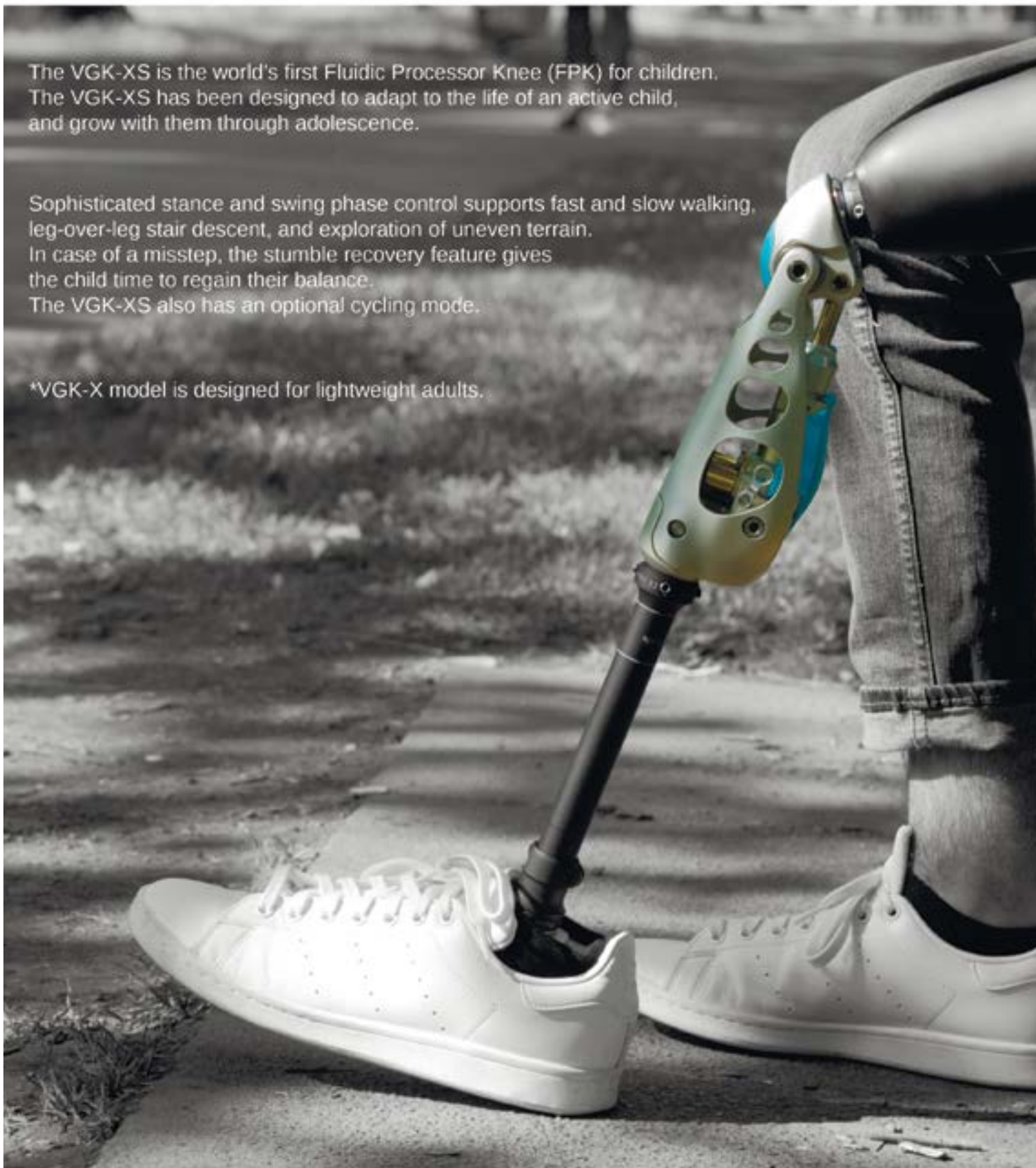
When speaking to wheelchair suppliers make sure you ask to trial a chair before you buy!

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\*VGK-X model is designed for lightweight adults.



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# Carl is doing everything he can



Climbing 77 flights of stairs inside Australia's tallest residential building is just one of the adventures 57-year-old Carl will soon be able to cross off his bucket list.

The amputee, who also plans to scuba dive and take dance lessons, has been training for months to walk the 1331 steps of the Gold Coast's iconic Q1 building to raise money for mental health charity, LIVIN.

"I want to do everything and anything I can do before I leave this world," said Carl, who received assistance to apply for and implement his National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding from Carers Queensland in 2020. "I've never been one

to accept help very well because I learned early in life from my mother that being able to help someone out is the best feelings you can possibly have, and that having to ask for help is one of the worst feelings. But I've eventually accepted I do need some help and really do appreciate the staff at Carers Queensland who've helped me access this."

"When I got my first NDIS plan, I went to the Ashmore office and dropped off some donuts, cupcakes and cookies to say thanks so much for everything the team had done for me. One lady almost started crying she was so grateful."

Carl said without the support of the NDIS, he would not feel as empowered as he does and



not as ready to take on any challenge. "I'm able to get out in the community and take part in social activities such as lawn bowls and work on my physical fitness. It's not the boxing and martial arts I used to do, but it's still fun. Being active is really important to me because it helps keep my mental health in good shape." Carl uses his NDIS funding to access assistive technology such as a wheelchair and a wet leg prosthesis, as well as an occupational therapist. The scheme also funded a ramp at his home and bathroom modifications to make it more accessible. He's also hoping to use his NDIS supports to help him get back into the workforce.

The Gold Coast resident, who was born in America, said rediscovering 10 years ago that his great, great grandmother was 'full-blooded Cherokee' had helped to 'ground him.' "At the time I asked my mum why she didn't tell me earlier. She immediately got up and found my Grade 3 project about Cherokee Indians and

said, "remember this?" Then I had a think and realised that I'd fallen away from my past, but once she showed me that, everything started falling into place, who I was, what I was made of." Carl, whose Native American name is Usvi Tskili, said he remembered his grandmother affectionately calling him "her little night owl". He said learning more about his family history had also helped him better navigate life as an amputee and manage the pain related to his other health conditions.

In 2001, Carl had a kidney and pancreas transplant and as a result of anti-rejection medication, he's had 12 eye surgeries, a brain haemorrhage and various other health conditions. He also lives with three deformed toes on his right foot. "I think waiting three days to get my leg cut off, and not being able to eat or drink during that time, was really the lowest I've ever been in my life," Carl said. "I remember one day, a year or so after my amputation, I was sitting at the lake and saw a



fun run take place and I thought to myself, "hell, I can do that." That was when I started training in my wheelchair as fast as I could." Carl has participated in many charity events using his wheelchair, and in 2022 his adaptive gym trainer helped him to set a new world record on the Concept 2 SkiErg, a Nordic skiing machine. He's also smashed an Australian rowing record.

Next on his bucket list, after the Skypoint Sea To Sky Q1 Stair Challenge, Carl plans to take part in the 21km half-marathon as part of the Brisbane Marathon in June. Carl's hoping to have a sports wheelchair to compete in by then because using his everyday wheelchair often results in him having accidents or incurring injuries to his hands and shoulders. "I'm a big supporter of gyms which provide adaptive training options. It's all about teaching amputees or people in wheelchairs that they can still get out and take part in charity runs and events if they want to," he said.

"I want other amputees to know that with NDIS supports there's no reason why you can't achieve anything you put your mind to. I also want to donate my time to speak to others who've had kidney or pancreas transplants, or amputations, to show them that you can live a full and happy life afterwards.

Limbs 4 Life acknowledges and thanks Emily Smith and Carers Queensland for sharing this story.



The Special Children's Christmas Parties have invited Limbs 4 Life to apply for Christmas Party tickets on behalf of children with limb difference in 2023. If you would like more information about these events, or to register email [kids@limbs4kids.org.au](mailto:kids@limbs4kids.org.au)



## CONNECT WITH THE ÖSSUR FAMILY HUB

Join Össur's *community* for amputees and elevate your learning experience. Connect with other amputees, access exclusive information and resources, and stay up to date with the latest advancements in prosthetic technology. Expand your horizons with captivating user stories, event announcements, webinars, clinics, and technology updates. Embrace the future of possibilities and join our Össur Family Hub community today.



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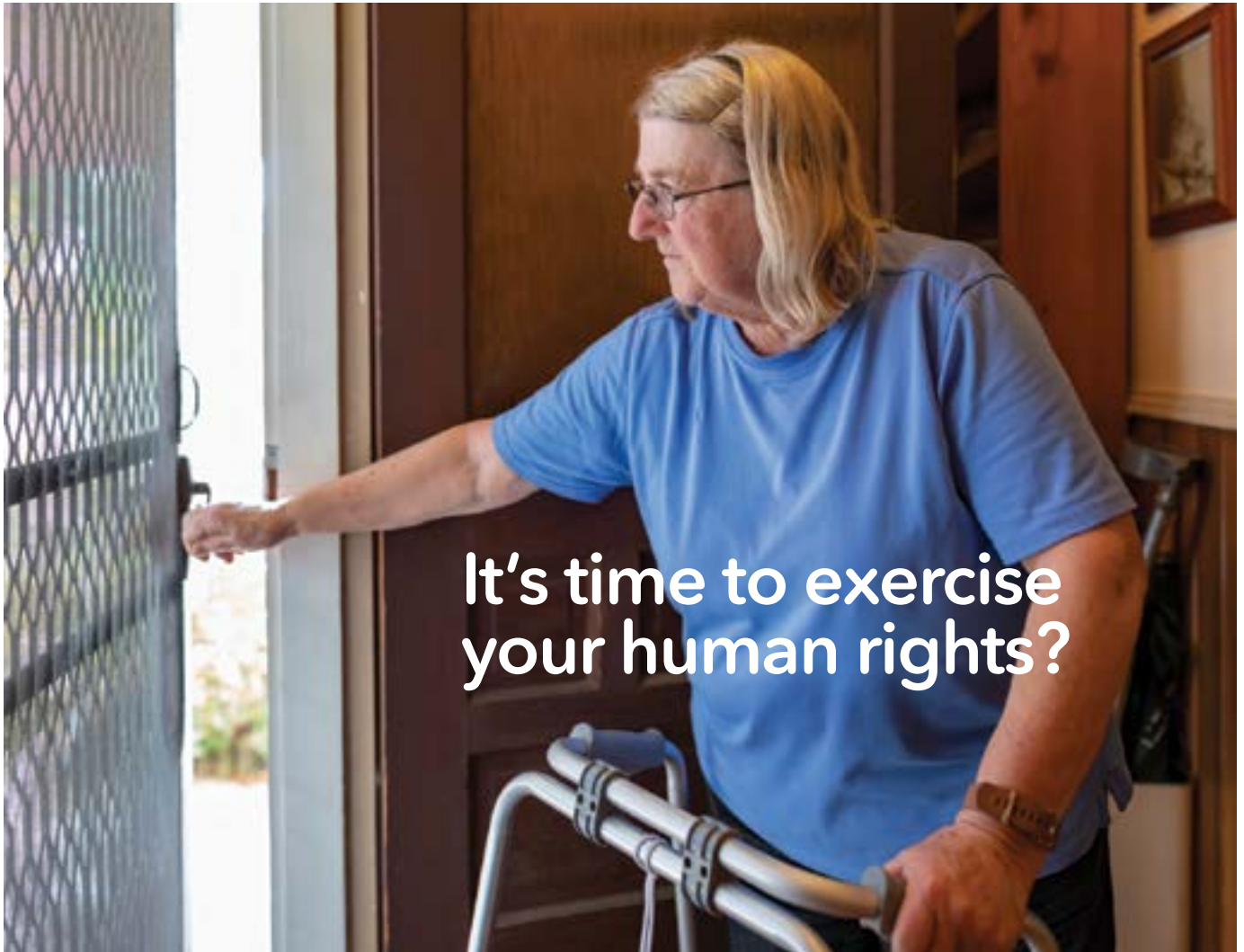


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## It's time to exercise your human rights?

Since the roll-out of the NDIS for amputees, Limbs 4 Life have been advocating for greater support and an increase in funding for people over the age of 65 who were unable to access the Scheme at the time of roll-out.

As most of you are aware, people with amputations are funded under the public health system in their respective state or territory, and funding for prosthetics has not really increased for years. Funding is not in line with the advances that have been made in technology, therefore people over 65 who missed out on the NDIS rarely have access to high-end and complex prosthetic devices. Over time, we have witnessed some small changes such as: Enable NSW funding microprocessor knees (MPK's) for some people with above knee amputations; however, this is not consistent throughout the country. Queensland Artificial Limb Service (QALS) are also reviewing costs/benefits associated with MPK's.

But what about a consistent approach for everyone? When reviewing funding for the disability sector, the famous words that came out of the Productivity Commissioner's report were daunting. They described the current funding system (back in 2010) as being "underfunded, fragmented, unfair and inefficient and gives people with disability little choice and no certainty." While the NDIS has changed support for many people, it still offers little hope for those thousands of Australians



who are too old to be eligible for the scheme. Depending on where you live will impact a number of things like; being able to access a shower leg (at no cost to you); being able to see the provider of your choice - some states/territories still only recognise some, but not all prosthetic providers to deliver services to publicly funded clients, leaving older consumers unable to exercise their choice and control.

How are we still in this space, it's 2023 after all? Surely the cost of a shower leg, which can last up to 10 years is not a budget constraint. Surely being able to access the provider of your choice should be achievable for all amputees - but that's not the case!

So how can you achieve a better outcome for yourself? Limbs 4 Life will continue to advocate for more funding in each state and territory, but maybe your voice can make a difference. Having said that, I wonder how many of you reading this are aware of your human rights as a person with disability. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed the agreement to adopt the UN Convention of

Human Rights back in 2008. This means that there is an agreement in place, and that as a human being you have certain rights, and those rights need to be met! I expect that if you are over 65 years and therefore ineligible for NDIS support, that your human rights may not be being met.

Did you know that the provision of Peer Support is actually a human right? The United Nation's Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD), Article 26 - habitation and rehabilitation, refers to accessing peer support - that is your human right!

Did you know that personal mobility and being able to safely walk around your community is a human right? Article 20 of the CRPD, 'Personal mobility,' states that it is your human right to be able to do just that.

So make your voice heard! Meet with your local member of parliament and start demanding change! We'll keep pushing for change at our end, but the more people who speak up, the more we can bring about the much-needed change that everyone deserves.

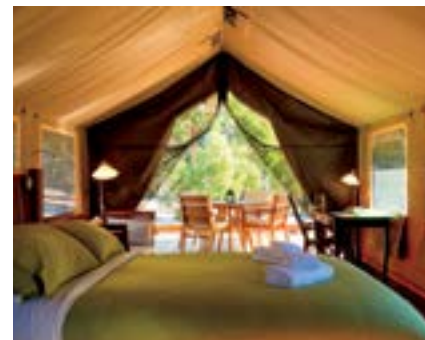


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# Victorian Amputee Empowerment Workshop

## *Don't miss it!*

Limbs 4 Life will be hosting the second Victorian Amputee Empowerment Workshop on Saturday 26 August as part of the Amputee Empowerment Project. The aim of this workshop is to help you to better understand your rights and know about the informed decision-making process. Naturally, we'll be having some fun too! We want to empower you to be your best self.

This second workshop will cover topics including exercising your human rights and knowing how important human rights are to everyone, understanding consumer law with our great friend Jamie Grant, and how to use the tools that you learn to get the best outcomes for yourself.

Like all Limbs 4 Life events, this is also going to be a day for getting together with peers and meeting new people in the amputee community. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon will provided - this is a free event.

Don't miss out, places are limited, book today. Partners, friends, or family members are welcome.

**To RSVP call 1300 78 2231 or email [info@limbs4life.org.au](mailto:info@limbs4life.org.au)**



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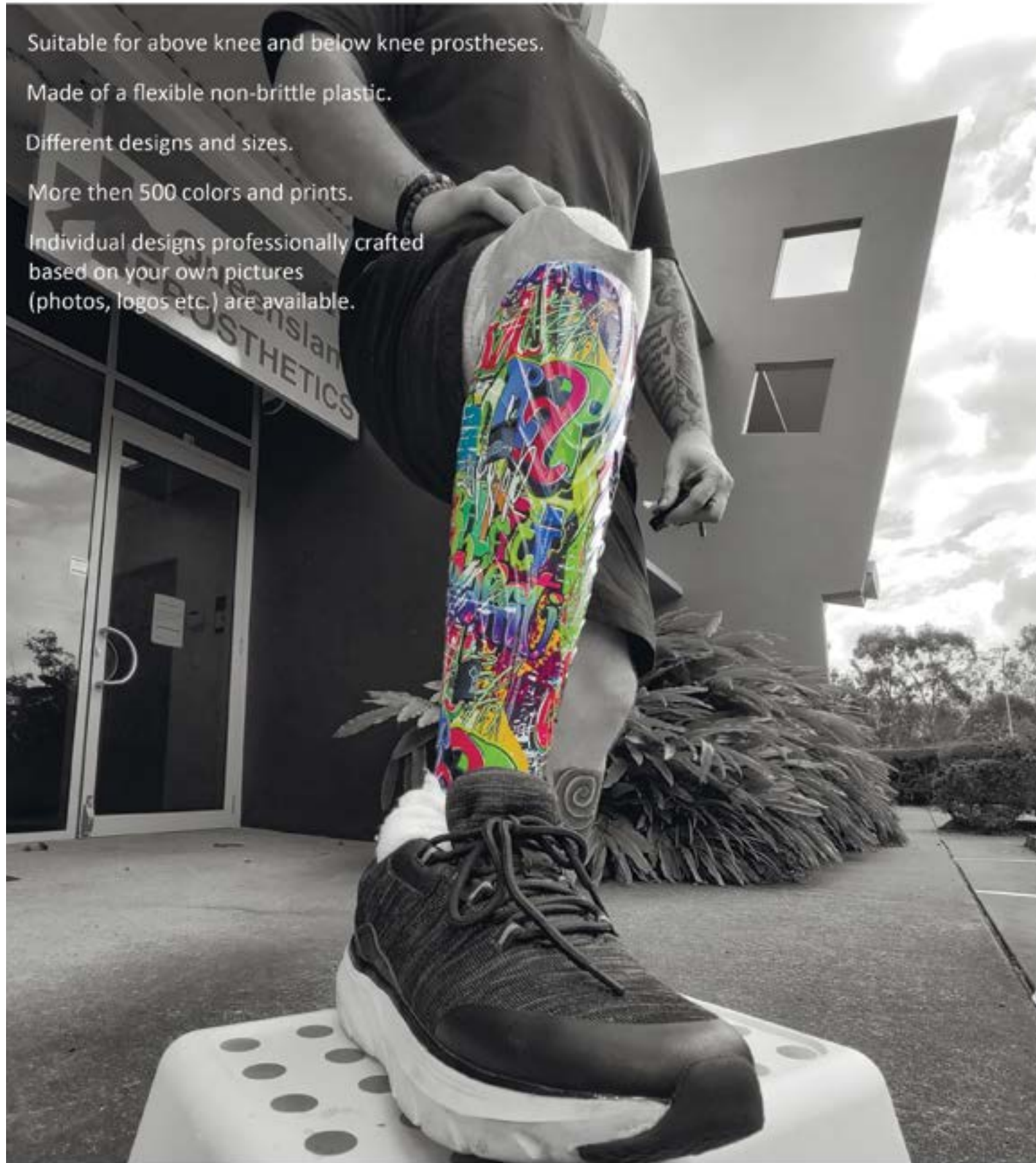
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## Caring for your skin

### How can I look after my skin?

Taking care of your skin is important. The skin around your stump will always be fragile and it needs to be looked after. Make sure you report any skin-related changes to your doctor or prosthetist immediately.

You should check your residual limb everyday for any changes. Any red marks or changes to your skin should be attended to if they do not fade after 15 minutes from the time you remove your prostheses.

There are a number of things that you should think about:

- **Skin hygiene** is very important; you should wash, clean and dry your residual limb (stump) daily, as part of your regular personal hygiene routine.
- **Stump socks** and prosthetic liners should be washed and changed daily with a gentle fragrant-free anti-bacterial soap, and rinsed well. You may need to change stump socks or liners more often if you sweat heavily during the warmer months. Always dry your socks and liners properly. Never wear a wet or damp liner or sock
- **Stop** wearing your prosthesis if you have any pain or discomfort.
- **Wear** safe and comfortable shoes.

### What is the best way to care for my residual limb?

Taking care of your residual limb (stump) is extremely important. You need to get into a regular routine and check your limb on a daily basis, including when you experience any pain or changes in the way your prosthesis fits.

- Use a hand mirror to check the back of your stump for changes before you put your prosthesis on.
- Check your stump for markings or changes when you take your prosthesis off.
- Check for skin breaks, ulcers, dryness or cracking. Any noticeable signs of change should be immediately seen to by your doctor.
- Remember: your prosthesis should not cause you pain. If you are experiencing pain make an appointment with your prosthetist immediately.



#### TIP

Your prosthesis should not cause you pain. If you are experiencing pain, make an appointment with your prosthetic provider immediately.



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## Amputee Support Group - connecting with your community

Getting together with other amputees (and their partners) can help with the adjustment of limb loss. Support groups can also provide a place for longer term amputees to share their experience with those just beginning on their journey.

Currently there are support groups operating in:

- Adelaide - SA
- Penrith - NSW
- Preston - VIC
- Brighton - VIC
- Geelong - VIC
- Wodonga - VIC
- Blackburn - VIC
- Bendigo - VIC
- Mildura - VIC
- Perth - WA

To find out when these groups are holding their next meeting contact us or visit our website.

*New group locations coming soon!*

## Connect with us today.



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