ISSUE 4 2025

ROLLING INSPIRATION

The leading magazine for people with mobility impairments

Trapped with no transport

The fight for Dial-a-Ride

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A deep dive

Accessible Gaming

Konke Gamers level the playing field

Adaptive Padel

A truly inclusive experience

Ease lower back pain

Practical exercises

Super Singapore

An accessible city

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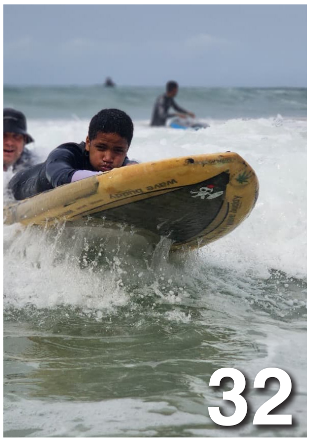

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Transport enables access

Reliable, safe, accessible transport is crucial to ensuring people with disabilities can fully participate in society

October is recognised as Transport Month in South Africa. It's a crucial reminder that accessible transport is not a luxury; it's a necessity and a human right. Without it, participation in society becomes a daily struggle. That is the stark reality.

Accessible transport enables access to healthcare, education, skills development, places of worship, entertainment venues and sporting facilities. Most importantly, it allows us to get to work and back.

It also empowers our freedom to visit family and friends, explore the country and enjoy rich tourism offerings in South Africa. Without it, people with mobility impairments are left dependent on others just to move around.

When we talk about accessible transport, we're not just referring to metro buses. It includes minibus taxis, metered taxis, Uber, Metrorail and long-distance trains, long-haul buses, maritime transport (both large ships and small craft) and air travel. Each of these modes must be accessible if we are to build an inclusive society.

> **Each of these modes must be accessible if we are to build an inclusive society**

There is also a significant urban–rural divide. In rural areas, transport options are even more limited, and there's a clear lack of planning for fully accessible, corner-to-corner transport services.

Even for those fortunate enough to own private vehicles equipped with assistive driving devices, inequality persists. Accessible (wheelchair) parking bays are frequently abused by the general public and delivery services. This underscores the urgent need to finalise and implement a national parking disc policy – a process currently being championed by the South African Disability Alliance (SADA).

When transport is not inclusive, mobility-impaired individuals are unable to fully participate in or benefit from the economy. This exclusion only deepens poverty and inequality, which remains a persistent challenges in our country. So, what tools do we have to demand change?

Our Constitution and laws like the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) protect the rights of persons with disabilities. South Africa is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which mandates accessible transport as a human right. Further support is found in the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which calls for these principles to be integrated into national legislation.

Accessible transport is more than a convenience. It is a fundamental enabler of human rights. It allows people with mobility impairments to live independently, contribute to society and uphold their dignity. Without it, inequality widens and the vision of a just, inclusive South Africa slips further from reach.

We must stand united, boldly and consistently, to accelerate the integration of accessible transport into every aspect of our built environment. As we know all too well, it is not the wheelchair that disables us. We are mobile with the right mobility aids. Rather, it is the inaccessible environment, especially the transport environment, that renders us immobile. R

Ari Seirlis is the former CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa and now serves as the Treasurer of QASA. He is also, presently, a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disability. He is a wheelchair user and disability activist. Ari has recently published his biography, which can be found at **www.wheelsoffire.co.za**.

Get in touch: aris@iafrica.com

Future drivers learn about road safety

The QASA Road Safety Early Intervention and Prevention Programme is raising awareness among high school learners about road safety and the prevention of spinal cord injuries caused by car crashes.

Through interactive presentations, learners are educated on safe behaviour as passengers and future drivers. Key topics include the importance of wearing seatbelts, avoiding distracted driving, crossing roads safely, wearing reflective clothing in low light and never travelling with intoxicated drivers.

To date, the programme has reached over 2 000 learners. The sessions also promote disability awareness and inclusion as QASA members share their personal experiences and educate learners on respectful engagement with persons with disabilities.

This impactful initiative continues to empower young people to make safer choices and contribute to a future with fewer injuries and greater inclusion on South Africa's roads. R

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The **QuadPara Association of South Africa** (QASA) is a non-profit organisation established and managed by quadriplegics and paraplegics that aim to empower quadriplegics and paraplegics to live their lives to their full potential.

Get in touch: info@qasa.co.za

Trapped with no transport

People with disabilities are fighting to keep accessible transport services running

Transport is your ticket to the world. It allows you to study, work, visit the clinic, go to church, see friends and so much more. With it, you are able to build community, which improves your quality of life and mental health.

But what happens when you can't walk and the roads are too rough for your wheelchair? What if the taxi won't pick you up? No bus or car can take you? You find yourself stranded and isolated.

For many people with disabilities, this is a lived reality. With no access to transport, let alone accessible transport, they are stuck at home, unable to participate meaningfully in their communities. It feels like a denial of a basic constitutional right – the right to freedom of movement.

For people with disabilities, their right to move feely is infringed on, not by passes or law, but by poorly built environments, inaccessible transport and prejudice. Services like Dial-a-Ride offer some relief to a very small group. But for how long?

In August, the City of Cape Town announced that the Dial-a-Ride service will be scaled back. The service is running at a significant loss. The city expects a deficit of R12 million for this year alone.

This is a big economic burden for the city that, according to Mayoral Committee Member for Urban Mobility, Rob Quintas, is receiving minimal support from national government.

"Every month we are about a million rand short. We have been able to resuscitate, rescue and prolong the service; running the way it was. But every year, it is a challenge to find where the funding will come from," he said during an interview in August.

> **Every month we are about a million rand short ... it is a challenge to find where the funding will come from.**

"We have the same static figure that we receive from provincial government and our rates here in Cape Town," he added. While the city receives funding through grants, those usually come with very strict conditions that prevent the city from using it for operational services. If the city breaks the conditions of the grant, they lose the funding.

Thus, operational services like Dial-a-Ride need alternative funding. The Western Cape government contributes roughly a third of the budget for Dial-a-Ride while the rest of comes from the rates paid by residents in Cape Town. This rates budget is shared with other rates-based operations like water and sanitation.

To address the shortfall, the city reached out to the national Department of Social Development (twice) with no response. The city even encouraged the private sector, organisations or universities to partner to help fund the service.

With seemingly no solution, the city announced that the service will scale back to only transporting wheelchair users to work in September.

"We have roughly 2 000 ad hoc users who occasionally use the service. It is being used to go to church, visit friends, shops, etc. Initially, the core function was to take people with severe mobility impairments (wheelchair users) to and from work," councillor Quintas explained.

ABOVE: (From the left) Michelle Botha, former chairperson of the Western Cape Network on Disability (WCND), and Marlene Le Roux, CEO of the Artscape, address the protestors in August.
MAIN: Anthony Ghillino, newly appointed WCND chairperson, speaking at the Dial-a-Ride protest.

The announcement resulted in uproar from the community as the decision was made without consulting key disability groups and will leave many stranded. In response, numerous disability organisations gathered at the Cape Town Civic Centre on 25 August 2025 in protest.

During the protest, QASA board member and newly appointed chairperson for the Western Cape Network on Disability (WCND), Anthony Ghillino, addressing the councillor,

ABOVE: The disability community gathered at the Cape Town Civic Centre on 25 August 2025 to protest planned cuts to the Dial-a-Ride service.

argued: “We are not a maths problem. We are people with rights. It is not about budget. It is about human rights. I’m sure that we can sit down with you and find the extra R12 million in the budget to keep the service going.”

“In your radio interview, you said that you sent two e-mails to your national colleagues. Councillor, I get two e-mails from Checkers Sixty60 when I buy groceries. That is hardly a concerted effort. Please, we need to get around the table with the people who matter, with the decision makers at national.”

On a similar note, Marlene Le Roux, CEO of the Artscape, called for equal resources for people with disabilities: “We are not the stepchildren of our society.”

“We need to be treated with dignity. If we talk about equality, it should be part of resources as well. We can’t talk about equality, but not be given resources to get to the opportunity.”

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> **We love our city, but don’t treat us like second-class citizens.**

“If it is a money problem, why don’t you cut the privileges of other citizens, and rather concentrate on our most vulnerable. This is not a privilege, this is a right. We love our city, but don’t treat us like second-class citizens,” she added.

As a final act of protest and a commentary on exclusion, the WCND handed its memorandum, written entirely in Braille, to councillor Quintas. The organisation was to meet with government the next day.

However, in an interview following the protest, it seemed as if all the effort was in vain. Councillor Quintas explained that even after the demonstration, the decision wouldn’t be overturned.

"We haven't gotten to this place easily. We have already looked at what is possible in this financial year and we are heading towards a million rand a month deficit," he simply stated.

When the news was shared with the WCND, social media manager Lilley Berrington noted the frustration felt by the community. She shared: "We made all the effort to come here today. We are trying to make a strong statement only for him to say, 'Well, it probably won't be reversed'. He hasn't even spoken to us yet. It makes one feel very hopeless. It makes us angry."

She continued to highlight the irony that councillor Quintas was so set on these cuts after promoting the service very publicly only a mere three years earlier. In a video by the City of Cape Town published to Youtube, the councillor describes the service as a "commitment to being part of an inclusive and caring city".

As the councillor predicted, the city held its ground even after meeting with stakeholders. It pushed to cut back on the service. So, a few days before the official cuts were meant to take place, the WCND made an urgent application at the Western Cape High Court for an interim interdict to stop the decision.

The city intended to oppose the WCND, but instead discussed a settlement that was made a court order. The WCND submitted a review application mid-October with the city now needing to submit the records of the decision before proceedings can continue. The entire process can take up to two years.

In the meantime, the city is court-ordered to provide uninterrupted service to commuters, which many report has not been the case. Most recently, the service has started requesting that users upload their employment contracts as a way to verify their employment. In a Facebook post, the WCND described it as "deeply invasive and discriminatory".

The WCND continues to fight the City on its service delivery – or lack thereof. They

TOP: Various disability organisations came together to demonstrate in August.

ABOVE: Also in attendance was Anthony Ghillino who serves on the QASA board.

TOP: (From the left) Mayoral Committee Member for Urban Mobility Rob Quintas was handed a memorandum from the Western Cape Network on Disability by former chairperson Dr Michelle Botha. **ABOVE**: Councillor Rob Quintas with the memorandum entirely written in Braille.

are encouraging Dial-a-Ride users to log complaints through the City channels and with their secure evidence form. The WCND is also calling on the community to assist with covering legal and advocacy fees through its BackaBuddy campaign.

There is a small glimmer of hope. Councillor Quintas might still get his wish for government to come to the party. At the QASA Annual General Meeting held at the end of October, member of the Western Cape provincial parliament Nomafrench Mbombo shared that additional funding will be made available so that the service can run as normal.

She further urged disability groups to show their presence when budget meetings are taking place: “When there are budgets, when there are public hearings in parliament, you should have representation although the access is difficult.”

“Where it might be inaccessible, you might be able to make a lot of noise on the steps of the parliament. We need your voice to be part of that.”

Although grateful for the financial relief, Anthony did critique the provincial government for not adjusting its contribution to the service sooner so that these cuts might have been avoided completely.

Even in their privileged position of having some dedicated accessible transport, Capetonians are battling to continue exercising their basic right to freedom of movement with seemingly little commitment from government. It doesn’t provide much hope to other communities with far fewer resources.

There is at least one small lesson to be learned. When the disability community stands together, there is progress, even if it is simply inching forward.

So, in the words of the former chairperson for WCND Dr Michelle Botha: “As a community, we stand together. If it is inaccessible for you, it is inaccessible for all of us. We need to stand for all of us.”

ADVERTORIAL

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Managing caregiver guilt

Frustration and guilt are normal, common and important signals. When approached correctly, these can make you a better caregiver

Non-professional caregivers such as spouses, family members or close friends take on the caregiver role out of necessity and compassion. Usually when full-time caregivers cannot be afforded or the family does not want to sacrifice personal privacy by contracting a live-in stranger.

This voluntary commitment is therefore a choice. Such a choice, however, comes with baggage that underlies the compassion and financial constraints that drove the initial decision to serve as caregiver.

Initially, the associated baggage is contained. As the stresses and strains of long hours, closely intimate care requirements, and the loss of personal time start to take its toll, the baggage start to surface.

Your physical inability to do what is required is frustrating and scary. The need to periodically call on friends and neighbours to help when you become truly stuck is embarrassing. The heartache of daily seeing your loved one reduced to a shell of what they once were is emotionally draining. The pent-up resentment of having to live with the situation at the expense of your me-time starts to bubble over.

In times of deep distress, anxiety and depression, you wish your loved one would just die so that all of this would go away and you can live your life again… All of this culminates in guilt, "I am not this person, how could I be so heartless and callous?".

When you meet with your support group of other caregivers, the others seem to cope better than you so you also put up a brave front, but inside of you the guilt is gnawing away.

Be assured, you are not alone in this. There are literally tens of thousands people across the globe who are in similar positions, who share your agony and guilt. As proof, visit the website www.caregiver.com, and check out the large array of support articles on this and related topics. I have selected a batch of articles from the website as resource material on the management of caregiver guilt.

FINDING ACCEPTANCE

In "Dealing with caregiver guilt", Malika Brown lists a number of ways to deal with guilt. Three stand out to me:

- "Know that you have made the best decision possible for you and your loved one". You explored your options and, although it is exceptionally tough, it is what it is. If circumstances change, rethink your new situation and make a new best decision.
- "Accept that you are human and that you have flaws". We all make mistakes. We have different strengths and weaknesses. Learn from your mistakes, build on your strengths and don't mope about your weaknesses, find ways to deal with it.
- "Deal with unresolved issues or accept them for what they are". Work through issues that bother you with your loved one and with other relevant people. If a workable solution can be found, great. If not, accept it for what it is and work around the issue.

GUILT IS A GUIDE

Dr Vicky Rackner, in her article "Eight tips to managing caregiver guilt", explains: "For caregivers, painful feelings – such as guilt, sadness and anger – are like any other pain. It's your body's way of saying, 'Pay attention'. Just as the pain of a burned finger pulls your hand from the stove, so too guilt guides your actions and optimises your health."

If guilt is making you feel miserable, Dr Rackner advises to look into yourself and recognise the guilt for what it is. Unrecognised guilt can eat into your soul. Once it is recognised and the source identified, you have a new perspective to work with.

If you need "me"-time, find someone to stand in for you and take time out for yourself. If you feel your behaviour is in conflict with your values, change your behaviour. Reinvent yourself to become the "ideal you" by balancing your needs with your commitment to your loved one.

She further advises that you should be compassionate with yourself. If you are feeling down, recognise it, but don't let it control your actions. She concludes: "Understand that you will be a more effective caregiver when you care for [yourself] first.

"Loved ones neither want nor expect selfless servants. As a caregiver, when you care for yourself, you increase and improve your own caring. Yes, guilt is part of caregiving, but this guilt can help you become the caregiver you and your loved one want you to be."

Remember the airplane safety speeches before take-off, "Place the oxygen mask on your own face before helping others".

COUNT ON YOUR COMMUNITY

Carolyn Schultz takes a more proactive pragmatic approach in her article: "Lessen The Squeeze: Caregiver Coping Skills". She notes how planning ahead can help lessen the chances of guilt setting in. Have an open, honest discussion with your loved one and those who support your commitment to care; family and friends.

Work out a system that will cover your care responsibilities and your normal activities of daily life from work and home to social and me-time. This will help you to take control of your caregiving commitments and your "normal" life.

(I find that a "year-plan" tick-list that lists daily, weekly and monthly routines helps to prevent things falling through the cracks, which means less chance for guilt to set in. Note that such a year plan is a living document that must be updated as needs and routines change.)

To help keep your head above water, know your resources including available time, financial affordability, stand-in support from friends and family, and so on. When planning ahead, do so with due consideration to the availability and constraints of your resources.

CHERISH THE WINS

Recognise and celebrate achievements; your own as well as those of your loved one. Small things make a difference. A pat on the back, a congratulatory card, a special treat or even a celebratory get-together lifts spirits and negates guilt and dejection.

Be aware that the more you give of yourself, the higher you set the bar of the "expected normal". So set your limits. Never do for your loved one what they can still do for themselves, no matter how difficult.

> **Never do for your loved one what they can still do for themselves, no matter how difficult.**

FRUSTRATION IS A SIGNAL

In her article "Releasing Resentment", Lisa Hutchinson's opening paragraph cuts to the chase: "Caregivers love to help people. It is a good feeling to comfort and give aid to someone in need. This support can also take its toll. There is a great responsibility, and at times a burden, that is felt in the caregiver role."

"It is important to find a way to express and channel the frustration that naturally occurs in helping relationships over time. Resentment is the caregiver's dirty little secret. There can be a sense of shame and guilt when anger develops."

We want to be seen in our best, most giving light. To ease your stress, I want to let you know that even the most loving and compassionate caregivers experience frustration and resentment because it is a part of our human experience."

Lisa explains that venting our anger and frustration is difficult and she proposes a change in mindset. Rather, see your anger and frustration as signals to restore balance to your life. Take a step back from your emotions and look for ways other than venting to release your pent up emotions.

Over and above taking time out to spoil yourself and making a point to connect with friends, Lisa adds two vital recommendations: Forgive yourself for the anger, frustration and consequent guilt that built up inside of you and take your negative emotions to God (whatever is appropriate for your religious or spiritual beliefs).

THE VALUE OF NO

Deborah Colgan, in her article "When and How to Say No to Caregiving", admits that saying "No" may seem like a harsh statement to a caregiver who prides herself on being a helpful, kind and loving person. But saying no is not a cop-out. It is setting reasonable limits that you and your loved one agree to in order to make caregiving more sustainable.

Saying no takes into consideration your own (in)abilities and your emotional wellbeing. Healthy emotional boundaries are important in helping you as caregiver distinguish between your own needs and the needs of the person being cared for. Set these boundaries as early as possible. Do not wait for emotions to boil over. Objective boundaries work better than highly emotional ones.

A FINAL WORD

Don't see caregiver guilt as a negative. See it as a warning that something is wrong and needs to be dealt with. Examine your feelings and find the source of your guilt. Discuss it openly with your loved one and seek solutions together. Well-managed guilt will bring progress and sustainability to caregiving. R

George Louw qualified as a medical doctor, but, due to a progressing spastic paralysis, chose a career in health administration. The column is named after Ida Hlongwa, who worked as caregiver for Ari Seirlis for 20 years. Her charm, smile, commitment, quality care and sacrifice set the bar incredibly high for the caregiving fraternity.

Get in touch: yorslo@icloud.com

BOOKLET

Caregiver Wellness

We take a deep dive into caregiver wellness and the ways in which caregivers can better care for themselves while supporting their loved one with a disability

Persons with mobility impairment draw attention (often unintentionally) to themselves. They receive compassion, sympathy (a useless emotion), empathy (much more constructive) and even admiration for perceived fortitude, courage and resilience.

On the other hand, those who care for us, including professional caregivers, spouses, family or friends, live on the fringes of the mobility-impairment drama and their needs, more often than not, remain unrecognised. However, their needs are very real and, if ignored, may have dire consequences.

Possibly the greatest asset of a competent caregiver is a compassionate mindset. But compassion is born from agony and sorrow for the person cared for. This agony can impact the mindset of the caregiver destructively in many ways.

Caregivers and those they care for need to be aware of the influences that can derail the caregiver’s mindset and must actively strive to remedy the situation.

Taking care of a person with mobility impairments is very “up close and personal” from dressing, toilet routines, feeding, transferring in and out of wheelchairs to many other activities of daily living that are largely taken over by the caregiver.

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> **Their needs are very real and, if ignored, may have dire consequences.**

A healthy mindset and a mutually trusting, positive and respectful relationship must be developed, nurtured and cherished from both sides. One way traffic will not work, the relationship must be reciprocal.

This deep dive addresses selected aspects and circumstances that impact the psyche of caregivers and the consequences thereof. It is by no means comprehensive but I trust that it will provide insight. R

Download the booklet here

New guidelines on benefits for bladder management

A significant achievement for the QASA community and all with spinal cord injuries (SCI) as the funding of care for bladder management, including catheterisation, changes

Historically, those relying on medical aids have been challenged with uncertainty regarding health care benefits, which was further complicated by medical aid interpreting these benefits differently. This resulted in inconsistent coverage and, worse still, potential complications. Now, through the Clinical Advisory Panel (CAP) set up by QASA a decade ago, a breakthrough has been achieved!

The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) regulates the activities of medical aids, determines overall policy and coordinates the development of benefit definition guidelines for each Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) package. With the participation of CAP, the CMS has published a new Benefit Definition Guideline covering the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management of Neurogenic Bladder Dysfunction, and makes recommendations and suggestions to enhance the overall care of individuals with SCI-related bladder dysfunction.

The primary objective of these guidelines is to improve clarity in the funding decisions by medical schemes and provide clear, comprehensive descriptions of your benefits to ensure that all medical aid members have access to certain minimum health services – the aim of which is to provide continuous and affordable care to improve and maintain health.

These guidelines are based on the best available evidence of clinical and cost effectiveness in the context of South Africa, and intended to guide interpretation by relevant stakeholders, which include the beneficiary (patient), provider (doctor) and payer (medical aid), of these benefit provisions.

What this means to you is clarity and certainty with respect receiving the care and coverage that you need and deserve, provided for under the medical aid plan that you currently have. You can find the new CMS Benefit Guideline on Neurogenic Bladder Management here. R

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Konke Gamers levelling the playing field

A local initiative is making gaming more accessible for people with disabilities in South Africa

For many South Africans with disabilities, the world of gaming can feel just out of reach. Physical, sensory or cognitive limitations often mean traditional gaming setups aren't accessible. For Konke Gamers, a local volunteer-driven initiative working with Able Gamers, that's exactly the challenge they are here to tackle.

HOW KONKE GAMERS BEGAN

David Williams, founder of Konke Gamers, was born without legs. Growing up, he often faced isolation and exclusion because of his disability.

For him, Nintendo and the world of gaming became more than just a hobby. It was a safe haven, a space where real-world limitations disappeared. As he grew older, David discovered adaptive sports, where he thrived.

His dedication and talent saw him selected as a Protea athlete four times, proudly representing South Africa in Adaptive Surfing on the world stage. Eventually, his journey came full circle.

He wanted to unite his lifelong passion for gaming with a cause deeply personal to him. His research revealed a hard truth: The gaming world that had once given him freedom was still inaccessible to many.

Some had never experienced gaming at all, while others had been forced to give it up due to illness, injury or changing circumstances.

Determined to change this, David connected with Able Gamers, an American and Brazilian non-profit dedicated to improving accessibility in the gaming space, promoting inclusion and combating social isolation.

With their support, he began bringing adaptive controllers and inclusive gaming solutions to South Africa to bridge the gap so that everyone, regardless of ability, can experience the joy and belonging that gaming offers.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE VISION

David now continues his mission alongside a small but passionate team. Karen Veldsman draws on her healthcare background to identify and connect people who could benefit most.

Along the way, she's discovered her own love for gaming, channelling creativity into shaping ideas and visuals that amplify the initiative's message.

Bruce Cardoso, who leads PlayStation (PS) and visual impairment outreach, explains his motivation: "I joined Konke to do whatever I can to enhance someone's life and open the door to a world I've long taken for granted."

"It's about welcoming others into a community of like-minded souls who share the same joy and passion. For me, being part of Konke means contributing to an organisation whose purpose is simple yet powerful: Bringing happiness to others."

Liesl Gerber, joined the team to assist with fundraising and raising the visibility of accessibility in gaming.

She shares: "Gaming is often seen as a fun but rather frivolous hobby. Through Konke Gamers, we get to show people the true power of gaming: Freedom, self-expression, connection and discovery through interactive storytelling."

"It is an often overlooked tool that we hope to bring into more people's lives, so that they too can benefit from all that gaming has to offer."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In a short space of time, Konke Gamers has already made a tangible difference. Two local players have received peer-to-peer counselling and the chance to game on PS5 and Nintendo Switch consoles using adaptive technology such as the PS5 Access Controller and the Hori Flex for Nintendo Switch, both customised to meet their unique needs.

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> **Gaming is often seen as a fun but rather frivolous hobby. Through Konke Gamers, we get to show people the true power of gaming.**

ABOVE: Allister Glenn is once again able to play console games thanks to Konke Gamers.
MAIN: The Konke Gamers team with (front left) founder David Williams, (left back) Karen Veldsman, (middle) Liesl Gerber and (right) Bruce Cardoso.

> **The most meaningful part is witnessing the impact, seeing how gaming creates connection, sparks joy and opens doors to inclusion.**

These devices have unlocked experiences they never thought possible from competing online with friends to exploring open worlds without barriers.

Karen reflects: “The most meaningful part is witnessing the impact, seeing how gaming creates connection, sparks joy and opens doors to inclusion. Nothing beats the feeling of getting feedback from a new player and celebrating every small victory together as a team.”

Allister Glenn was injured in a head-on collision that left him without a right leg and with limited use of his right arm. He had adapted to PC gaming, but could no longer comfortably hold a console controller.

Konke Gamers provided him with a PS5 Access Controller, along with foot pedals and adaptive triggers, configured to replace the need for a second hand.

The flat design of the controller made it suitable for one-handed play, which restored his ability to enjoy console gaming.

Lusanda Mbonambi was born with underdeveloped fingers on his right hand, making it difficult to hold a controller. Konke Gamers introduced him to the Hori Flex Arcade Stick, donated by Able Gamers Brazil, and supplemented it with 3D-printed mounts and an additional analogue stick.

Once set up, Lusanda was laughing and smiling his way through Mario Kart and Semblance.

ABOVE: Lusanda Mbonambi is able to enjoy gaming with the help of adapted technology donated by Able Gamers Brazil and the work done by Konke Gamers.

> **These controllers aren’t just pieces of technology. They’re keys to freedom.**

As David explains: “These controllers aren’t just pieces of technology. They’re keys to freedom. They allow players to be part of a community, to compete and to express themselves without limitations.”

Bruce adds: “We hope giving more exposure to these technologies will help increase their availability in South Africa. I would love for anyone who needs to be able to go get hold of these items in a shorter span of time.”

GAMING AS INCLUSION

For the Konke Gamers team, gaming is far more than entertainment. It’s a platform for building friendships, breaking isolation and proving that disability does not define ability.

In South Africa, where adaptive technology is still rare and often prohibitively expensive, Konke Gamers is pushing to change perceptions and establish accessibility as a standard, not a luxury.

Karen puts it simply: “Discovering gaming through David has opened up an entire new world for me, as a way to connect, but also as a space where I can contribute meaningfully.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Konke Gamers is now focused on increasing visibility and sparking a national conversation about adaptive gaming. Their plans for the coming year include:

- Partnering with schools, rehabilitation centres and community organisations to introduce adaptive gaming tech;
- Collaborating with local and international game studios and adaptive software organisations;
- Launching social media campaigns to spotlight South African gamers with disabilities and share their stories; and
- Hosting inclusive tournaments where able-bodied and disabled gamers compete side by side.

GETTING INVOLVED

Konke Gamers thrives on community support and partnerships. Whether it’s sponsoring adaptive equipment, offering technical expertise or simply spreading the word, every contribution helps create a gaming world where everyone is welcome. Contact Konke Gamers on e-mail at konkegamers@gmail.com.

As the team says: “In South Africa, we know how to make a plan. Adaptive controllers are our way of saying: ‘Here’s your seat at the table. You belong here’.”

ADVERTORIAL

Science-backed medical cannabis from AKOS BIO

AKOS BIO Pharmacy is dedicated to providing high-grade, evidence-based, compliant medical cannabis products

Cannabis has been known to assist with conditions like chronic pain, insomnia and even muscle spasms. Since its decriminalisation, cannabis and cannabis products have become more readily available, however, for many there are still concerns over the quality and safety of the products available in the market.

AKOS BIO aims to provide you peace of mind. The licenced online pharmacy aims to provide high-grade medical cannabis products that consumers can trust.

Launched this year, the pharmacy works in partnership with certified cultivators and manufacturers as well as regulators to ensure each of their products are compliant so that patients can enjoy the highest standards of safety, efficacy, and legal transparency.

“We’re proud to be offering patients safe access to cannabis-based medicines,” says co-founder Connor Davis. “We’re showing that cannabis can exist within the legitimate medical space, guided by science, regulated processes and professional oversight.”

> “
> **We’re proud to be offering patients safe access to cannabis-based medicines.**

The pharmacy is a deeply personal mission for Connor who witnessed the life-changing effects of cannabis oil on his father who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He partnered with Anton Ofield-Kerr who has an expansive career in medicine from ICU nurse to health policy advocate.

“For too long, South Africa has produced world-class, export-grade medical cannabis, while local patients have been unable to access it,” says Anton. “We’re working with regulators, local producers, and healthcare professionals to change that.”

So, how does it work?

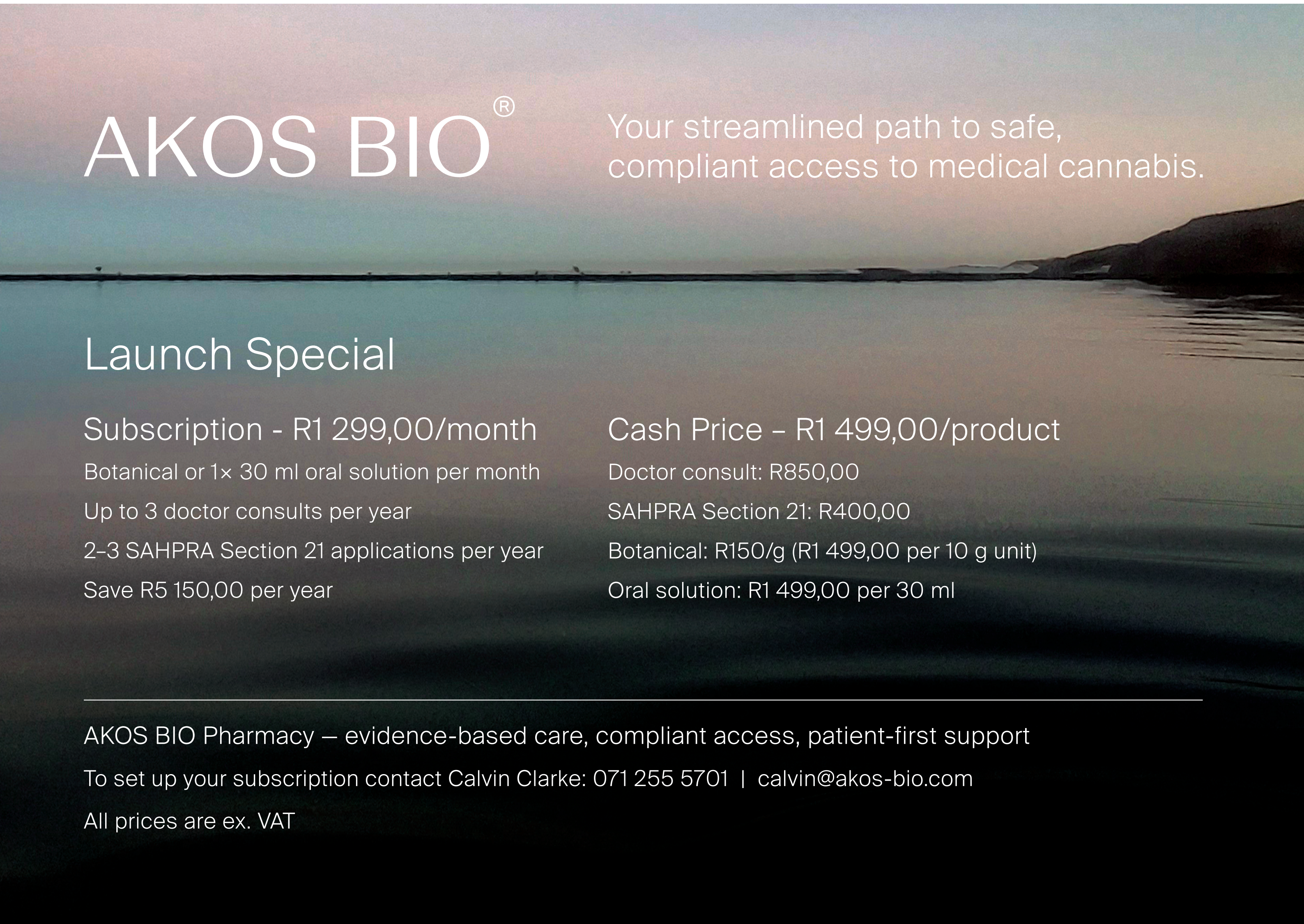
As AKOS BIO is an online pharmacy, the entire process takes place from the comfort of your home. Patients book a virtual consultation with a doctor through the website. A personalised treatment plan is created with the right medication dispensed and delivered directly to your door, discreetly, securely and efficiently.

The medication can be inhaled with the use of a vaporiser or taken as an oil. When inhaled, the medication will give an instant relief, but the effects wear off soon. The oil offers a slower release and lasts longer. Whichever treatment is prescribed, patients are encouraged to start with a low dosage and slowly build to the perfect balance.

As the AKOS BIO team offers continued support throughout your treatment, you can rest assured that you will have all the guidance and professional advice to find that perfect balance.

To create even better access, AKOS BIO is introducing a subscription model that will make it more affordable to access its cannabis-based medicines, especially for chronic users.

Join us as we learn more about the benefits of medical cannabis in the treatment of chronic pain, muscle spasms, insomnia, anxiety and epilepsy in the coming issues. In the meantime, check out the AKOS BIO Pharmacy website for more information, or follow along on their Facebook or Instagram pages.



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Oral solution: R1 499,00 per 30 ml

AKOS BIO Pharmacy — evidence-based care, compliant access, patient-first support

To set up your subscription contact Calvin Clarke: 071 255 5701 | calvin@akos-bio.com

All prices are ex. VAT

Prevent patient harm

Initial rehabilitation that is sub-standard can do a lot of damage to patients physically and psychologically

Starting this very controversial article, the disclaimer is important. The following is all personal (informed) opinion. I built my first prosthesis at the age of 19, so it's been 35 years, and have treated thousands of amputees locally and from around the globe in one of the biggest rehab hospitals in the world.

For us, optimal treatment includes a multi-disciplinary team of at least the referring or rehab doctor, a physio or occupational therapist, or both, and a psychologist. The social worker and nursing staff often also play a part.

Then of course, the prosthetic fitting procedure. It should be done with the utmost care and professionalism. The process takes at least three to six months, sometimes longer, to ensure that the patient walks away with a product that they can use to the best of their ability.

> **For us, optimal treatment includes a multi-disciplinary team.**

Quick fixes are not sustainable. Creating a prosthesis that adds value to a patient's life without causing pain, skin breakdown or injury is of the utmost importance. And it is not always easy. Sometimes, it's like forging with fire.

A prosthesis is expensive. But if you cannot use the product afterwards it becomes unbelievably expensive. You have just wasted precious funds!

We often treat patients who weren't properly rehabilitated the first-time round. The psychological and physical damages caused by initial sub-standard rehabilitation protocols are far reaching:

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Damages caused by initial sub-standard rehabilitation protocols are far-reaching.

- Patients become despondent and sometimes lose hope.
- Patients lose trust in their treating practitioner and in their own ability to bounce back.
- Patients stagnate.
- Falls and injuries occur.
- Secondary complications set in like skin breakdown, muscle weakness, flexion contractures and wound infections to name but a few.
- Post traumatic stress disorder rears its head.
- Patients think of a prosthesis as a hit or miss rather than a journey solving the possible complications along the way.
- The lack of patient education means patients are unable to help themselves and sort out the little complications and adjustments at home.

The list of complications is much longer. Fixing the problems can be very challenging. As a rule of thumb, the longer the period of sub-standard treatment continues from the date of amputation, the more complex it becomes to pull the patient back on track. And I can say without a doubt the psychological damage is the biggest hurdle to jump.

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The psychological damage is the biggest hurdle to jump.

We have covered sub-standard initial rehabilitation in very broad strokes painting a doom and gloom picture.

But rest assured, when you find the practitioner who sees you as a whole, and recognises where it's gone wrong; the practitioner who can identify your insecurities and fears will take your hand and lead you on a different path. A path of solutions, a path with a bright future, and most important of all, a path of hope!

Heinrich Grimsehl is a prosthetist in private practice and a member of the South African Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (SAOPA).

Get in touch: info@hgprosthetics.co.za

Super Singapore

With dedicated disability spaces and truly accessible cities, Singapore is a must-visit destination for people with disabilities

Recently, my travels took me to Singapore where I attended the Zero Project Asia Pacific Symposium to speak on accessible tourism. I last visited this amazing city over 20 years ago and was eager to see how it had changed. I was not disappointed! It is a modern, multi-cultural vibrant metropolis that has iconic landmarks and world-class infrastructure.

Singapore prides itself on being one of most accessible cities in Asia, but accessibility goes far beyond ramps and elevators. True accessibility is about inclusion, a seamless experience for everyone, regardless of ability.

TRAVELLING

It started with the airline. Singapore Airlines have excellent assistance service for persons with disabilities both in the air and at the airport. I was assisted to the adapted bathroom during the 10-hour flight by caring and attentive crew.

The facilities at Changi International airport are really inclusive with access to all areas, even the fantastic Jewel which extends over 10 storeys with accommodation, gardens, retail outlets, restaurants and airport facilities that connect to all the airport terminals via accessible trains. I made time to visit this phenomenal space before my departure flight home.

My transfer from the airport to the Mecure Singapore Bugis hotel was booked with one

of the many accessible transfer companies and I chose the vehicle with a hoist so that I didn't have to transfer out of my wheelchair. The Metro and busses are all accessible, which makes travel easy and cheap.

ACCOMMODATION

There is an amazing website that has been developed by Yong Sock Law of Ludus Lab and his colleagues which offers comprehensive information on all aspects of accessible life in Singapore. The Mecure Singapore Bugis hotel that I was booked into was not on his list. The hotel stated that there were accessible rooms, but had not put any photos on their website.

I had to e-mail them to ensure the layout and shower facilities are truly accessible before I booked. Fortunately, the reservations team were very quick to respond with the photos and I was able to make my reservation without much trouble.

THE GARDEN CITY

Singapore is often referred to as the "Garden City" as there is plenty of greenery throughout, but also because of the iconic Gardens by the Bay – a 105 hectare botanical garden park situated in the central region of Singapore next to the Marina Reservoir. It comprises three distinctive waterfront gardens namely Bay South, Bay East and Bay Central.

Home to over 1,5 million plants, this national garden and horticultural attraction

MAIN: The Jewel at Changi Airport.
TOP AND MIDDLE: The Mecure Singapore Bugis hotel boasts very accessible rooms with helpful staff.
BOTTOM: Clear signage and tactile indicators throughout the Metro stations assist with positioning for boarding.

ABOVE LEFT: The Supertree Observatory.
ABOVE RIGHT: Tech Able has a range of assistive technology on display that can be tested to find your right fit.

presents the plant kingdom in a whole new way with plants species ranging from cool and temperate climates to tropical forests and habitats.

From the Flower Dome, Cloud Forest, Floral Fantasy, Garden Pos and Art sculptures to the Supertree Observatory, you will be enthralled at these areas.

You also have a spectacular overview from the OCBC Skyway, which is suspended between two Supertrees at 22 metres above the ground. The 128-metre-long walkway offers a wonderful overview of the Gardens. There is even an app that you can download to optimise your visit.

SENSORYSCAPE IN SENTOSA

Sentosa Island is the playground of Singapore. Linked to central Singapore by causeway, tunnel, boardwalk, monorail and cable car, and home to hotels, beach bars and a casino, it is the main destination for leisure and entertainment with the Universal Studios, Madame Tussauds, Skyline Luge Sentosa, S.E.A. Aquarium and Adventure Cove water park.

You can also try your hand at kayaking, fishing and cruising or tour the historic Fort Siloso.

The Sentosa Sensoryscape experience combines sight, sound, smell and touch to create a truly immersive and memorable journey through the nature and art through interactive installations.

Whether you want to go for a relaxing day on the beach, a fun filled weekend, or just a five-hour tour with accessible guides, this is certainly a “must do” to add to your itinerary when visiting Singapore.

DEDICATED ACCESSIBLE SPACES

Our conference was held at the SG Enable Village, which is run as a registered charity.

They enable persons with disabilities to live, learn, work and play within an inclusive society and create equitable opportunities though leadership, social innovation and impactful partnership.

Open to the public to move through, the village boasts an inclusive accessible kindergarten, swimming pool for learning to swim and the Pet Café, which employs

ABOVE LEFT: The accessible walkways in the public housing area.

ABOVE RIGHT: A tour guide with a hearing impairment makes use of text-to-speech technology.

people with disabilities to groom pets and serve customers.

My favourite place is a fantastic tech hub called Tech Able, which is an interactive centre for people to test various assistive technologies from wheelchairs to advanced devices. I came away with so many fantastic ideas of technology to include in our disability sector!

TOUR GUIDES WITH DISABILITIES

We had an amazing full-day city tour with three different guides with various abilities, starting at the city centre with our guide who was hearing impaired and used the text-to-speech option.

We were all issued earpieces and small microphones which converted our voices into text on his phone when we wanted to ask questions.

This was fantastic for me as I had to wander away a few times to watch them erecting the stands and barricades for the Singapore F1 Grand Prix (which was happening just after I returned home!), and was still able to hear what was being said about the historic sites.

After ice cream and a visit to the iconic Lion in Marina Bay, we boarded a bus to Little India where we had lunch and a tour before heading to Little China with a guide who had a mobility impairment. These are the older areas of the city.

From here we used the Metro to visit the public housing area where we met our third guide. We were able to visit Yong Sok's personal apartment within this area, which has wide walkways, parks, restaurants and shops below the apartments.

It was a whirlwind trip for me, but I made so many new contacts that I'm definitely going to be returning to visit this safe, clean, beautiful and accessible place. Happy Travels! R

Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access.

Get in touch: mandy@noveltravel.co.za

Reflecting on the adjusted Equity Act

With changes to the Employment Equity Act, Ari Seirlis reflects on whether this will lead to greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities

On 1 January 2025, we witnessed the deployment of the amended South African Employment Equity Act (EEA). As persons with disabilities, we must ask: What has changed for us? Are these changes in our favour? Will we benefit, or will this be another well-intentioned policy that misses the mark? And how does it differ from the original EEA?

MY PERSPECTIVE

I have had a disability for 41 years, after sustained a spinal cord injury in a diving accident in August 1985. Life as a quadriplegic is challenging – navigating inaccessible environments, managing the unintended consequences of spinal cord injury, and confronting societal barriers and inequitable attitudes.

Over the years, I've worn many hats – employee, serial entrepreneur and advocacy champion in the NPO sector. I've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly. One truth remains: Society often reduces our value to our "hardware" or fails to see us at all, especially those with invisible disabilities, whether physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, mental or developmental.

We're celebrated every four years during the Paralympics, but once the medals are packed away, we return to a world where prejudice and exclusion in the workplace remain the norm.

PROMISE AND PITFALLS OF THE NEW EEA

The EEA continues to include persons with disabilities as a designated group, regardless of race – a positive step. The introduction of a three percent target for disability representation in workplaces is ambitious. But, is it realistic?

Historically, few employers, public or private, have come close to even one percent. To reach three percent, something must change.

Disclosure remains a major hurdle. Many with invisible disabilities choose not to disclose, fearing it will hinder career advancement. While employers may deny this bias, the fear is real. Yet non-disclosure can backfire when reasonable accommodation is needed.

BOLD PROPOSAL TO LET THE TAX HURT

To drive real change, I propose a system where employers who fail to meet the three percent target pay a higher tax rate on profits.

This would incentivise them to actively seek out and support persons with disabilities through partnerships with disability agencies and skills development centres.

Fines don't work, people avoid them. But taxes? People pay them. SARS penalties are no joke. The state sector may require a different approach, but the principle remains: Accountability must be built into the system.

INCLUSION STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM

If children with and without disabilities were educated together from the start, we'd raise a generation who doesn't see disability as "other", not through segregated special classes, but through shared spaces, especially on the sports field where friendships and mutual respect are forged. This would normalise disability and embed inclusion into the DNA of future employers and employees.

THE VALUE IN EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

The value proposition of persons with disabilities shouldn't be recognised only during the Paralympics. It should be visible every day. We bring resilience, loyalty and life experience to the workplace. Here's a bonus, our presence often reduces absenteeism among non-disabled staff. That's a powerful byproduct.

GREY AREAS AND HARD TRUTHS

There are dilemmas. Employers may struggle with whether to recognise conditions like mild bipolar disorder or Tourette's syndrome as disabilities. The definitions are broad and sometimes those of us with more visible or traditionally understood disabilities feel sidelined.

I'll admit. I'm protective of the space we've fought for. It's disheartening to lose opportunities to individuals whose disabilities are less understood or more easily masked. Was that the Act's intention? I'm sure not!

While we strive to embrace all disabilities, we must also ensure that inclusion doesn't become a loophole that disadvantages those who've long been excluded.

SKILLS, INTERNSHIPS, AND THE PATH TO EMPLOYMENT

Employers should invest in developing the skills they need from persons with disabilities. We, in turn, must pursue training in areas where there are skills shortages. Sometime this might mean inconvenient and virgin territory, but we must play our part in paving a way to permanent employment.

I'm a strong advocate for internships and apprenticeships. Some call it "slave labour," but I believe it's a practical way to get a foot in the door, especially for persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, learnerships often fail to lead to permanent employment. Worse, some individuals become "serial learners" collecting multiple stipends. This undermines the system and must stop.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Disability-focused NPOs and employers need to engage, before job ads go out. Dialogue, workshops and mutual understanding are essential to meeting targets meaningfully. This Act has the potential to be more equitable than the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 2003 (BBBEE), which has sometimes created division within the disability sector.

We are all disabled by the same barriers in South Africa, regardless of race. But that's a conversation for another day.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Employers who take the leap and hire persons with disabilities will be surprised by the value we bring. We don't just fill a quota, we enrich the workplace with resilience, perspective and purpose. Let's make sure the new EEA doesn't just raise the bar, it opens the door. R

Ari Seirlis is the former CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa and now serves as the Treasurer of QASA. He is also, presently, a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disability. He is a wheelchair user and disability activist. Ari has recently published his biography, which can be found at **www.wheelsoffire.co.za**.

Get in touch: aris@iafrica.com

Hosting learners with disabilities
the ultimate B-BBEE lever

A learnership programme for people with disabilities is one of the easiest ways for companies to score big on B-BBEE

In the complex landscape of B-BBEE compliance, companies are constantly searching for a single, powerful lever that delivers maximum impact and efficiency. That lever exists and is one of the most overlooked strategies in skills development, namely, hosting learnerships for persons with disabilities.

I've sat in countless boardrooms where B-BBEE is discussed as a frustrating cost. My mission is to show businesses that it is the most powerful tool for growth when used properly.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

A learnership for a black person with a disability is unique in its ability to impact multiple priority elements of the B-BBEE scorecard with a single, focused investment. Instead of chasing disparate points across the scorecard, this single action creates a multiplier effect.

An enterprise can earn two crucial points under management control for meeting the two percent disability employment target and a further four points under skills development for spending just 0,3 percent of payroll on training for black persons with disabilities. When the learner is successfully absorbed into employment, a further five bonus points can be unlocked.

This makes learnerships one of the highest-impact initiatives available. In total, a single, well-structured learnership programme can directly contribute over 10 points on the priority elements of the scorecard, a significant and efficient gain.

"ZERO-COST" MODEL

Beyond the scorecard, the financial architecture supporting these learnerships is designed to be self-funding.

> **The financial architecture supporting these learnerships is designed to be self-funding.**

The government has created a compelling business case that transforms the cost of a learnership from an expense into a net-zero event. The primary tool is the Section 12H Tax Allowance, which provides a substantial tax deduction for employers.

For a person with a disability, this allowance is a remarkable R120 000. When this powerful incentive is combined with the monthly Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) and other provincial grants, the total "cash" benefit to a company can often fully cover the costs of both learner stipends and training fees.

This allows a business to build a powerful talent pipeline and achieve critical B-BBEE compliance at a minimal net cost.

BEYOND THE SCORECARD

While the points and financial returns are compelling, the ultimate benefit is strategic.

Learnerships dismantle stereotypes by allowing individuals to demonstrate their capabilities directly within a business, fostering a culture of genuine understanding and inclusion.

> **Learnerships dismantle stereotypes ... fostering a culture of genuine understanding.**

Companies that embrace disability inclusion are not just ticking a compliance box, they are accessing a loyal, innovative and resilient talent pool that brings new perspectives and problem-solving skills to the table. This is how a simple compliance target is transformed into a true competitive advantage.

The evidence is clear. Hosting learnerships for persons with disabilities is the ultimate B-BBEE lever.

It offers a direct, financially optimised path to securing over 10 priority and bonus points, turning a compliance requirement into a self-funding talent development strategy.

I've seen firsthand how a single learnership can transform a balance sheet and, more importantly, a life. For companies serious about achieving their transformation goals while building a more innovative and resilient workforce, the question is no longer whether this is a viable option, but how quickly it can be implemented.

Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert who assists businesses to "let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility" through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.

Get in touch: rustim@rustimariefdienconsultants.onmicrosoft.com

Riding the wave with purpose

After a devasting wipe out in his life, Dries Millard found his purpose among the waves

Nearly two decades ago, Dries Millard was an eighteen-year-old jock representing Boland in Craven Week rugby for three consecutive years and excelling in shotput and discus. After Craven Week in his matric year, he received a bursary to study at and play rugby for the North-West University. He also obtained his driver's licence, which gave him new freedoms. The world was his oyster.

Then, one day, the life he knew was taken from him in one traumatic moment. Two weeks after signing the contract with North-West University, Dries and his friends were traveling back from Stellenbosch where they had attended an open day. He was driving.

By his own admission, while driving distracted on the Du Toits Kloof Pass, he suddenly saw a truck headed toward him head-on. He swerved and lost control of the car.

As he was not wearing a seatbelt, he was flung out of the car. He ended up with a broken back. Only one vertebra was broken, but it was enough to leave him paralysed from his chest down.

With the loss of his stomach muscles, his core stability was severely compromised. He also came to know the joys of a neurogenic bladder and bowel as well as other hidden demons of spinal cord injury. His rugby days were a thing of the past…

The first few years were not good for Dries. He lost all confidence and faith in himself. For a long time, he agonised over why all this happened to him. What was the point of it all?

By chance he watched a video of an American paraplegic surfer taking on maverick waves and he became enthused: "If he can do it, so can I – to regain my freedom". He started surfing with the assistance of a paraplegic surf coach.

In 2011, Dries and his brother Albert created the non-profit organisation, Extreme Abilities, with the aim of teaching children with disabilities to surf. The surfer became a surfing coach. Dries had found his life's purpose.

Albert proved to be the ideal partner. He is endowed with loads of empathy, but very little sympathy: "I do not want to be in a position where I do everything for him."

I want to help, but he must help himself first.

"I want to help, but he must help himself first. For instance, when we have our surfing sessions, I set up the necessary infrastructure to enable him to do the training. But where the wheelchair cannot go, I carry him on my back."

Extreme Abilities' vision is to use the sea to enthuse persons with disabilities; teaching them to surf as a way for them to gain confidence in themselves.

Their motto is: "You are only as limited as you allow yourself to be". The sea is a place where persons with disabilities and the able-bodied can get together and learn from one another.

MAIN PHOTO: Dries Millard speaking with the participants of the surf clinic held by Extreme Abilities in September of this year.
ABOVE: The participants of the surf clinic in the water at Victoria Bay.

ABOVE: The dedicated team at Extreme Abilities assist people with disabilities and children from disadvantaged backgrounds learn to surf to gain confidence.

They took their cue from videos where war veterans with post-traumatic stress, injuries or anxieties are taken into the sea and taught to surf as a form of therapy. They decided to adopt the same ethos and apply it to persons with disabilities.

Based in Saldana on the west coast, they reached out to underprivileged children and teenagers as well as persons with disabilities for weekly gatherings to surf and train newcomers.

They also travel further afield to other surfing spots all over the country, such as Jeffrey's Bay and Victoria Bay, to run adaptive surfing clinics. In particular, the surfing community of Victoria Bay were very supportive with the surfing clinic becoming an annual event.

Dries has also become a highly proficient motivational speaker as is evident during his motivational talk at Hopefield Highschool this year. His urges people to pay attention: To yourself, your surroundings, your opportunities, and interesting things that bring joy to life. Always pay attention. If you don't, you miss out on opportunities and the subsequent rewards of achievement and joy.

Using himself as example, Dries explains that by paying attention, he figured out that a wetsuit with full leg zips would allow him to surf with more freedom.

His ability to swim together with the buoyancy of his wetsuit allows him to function independently out of his wheelchair. This sense of freedom lifts his spirit.

Paddling on his surfboard and controlling the board while surfing builds strength and stimulates coordination. He realised that if he started to surf together with able-bodied friends, he could take on the challenges of bigger waves and experience greater fulfilment.

He did exactly that. But it takes acute attention, otherwise you crash into one another.

> **Always pay attention. If you don't you miss out on opportunities.**

He then took his thought processes further and realised that if he could surf, so could other persons with disabilities. Dries and Albert gathered a bunch of kids with disabilities, taught them the basics and tossed them in the water. Everyone had a great time, nobody drowned and Extreme Abilities was born.

"Miracles happen every day, but if you don't pay attention you don't notice them and you miss out. By paying attention you notice other people's needs as well as your own ability to help. That's how your light shines," he shared to the standing ovation from the scholars.

His journey after establishing Extreme Abilities hasn't always been calm waters. In 2016, his world was brought to an abrupt halt. Two days before he planned to fly to the World Para Surfing Championships, Dries suffered the first of a series of severe setbacks.

He has a pressure sore that developed from a small scratch which looked harmless on the surface but caused serious damage internally. It put him into septic shock. This nearly cost him his life.

Treatment included a prolonged course of antibiotics. In 2018, he was finally healed only to discover that the medication caused kidney damage. One kidney had to be removed. He spent a total of nine months in hospital.

On discharge, he was so despondent that he pledged a year of silence to sort out his psyche.

The impact of the sea as the cornerstone of his faith eventually restored his zest for life and with the aid of his ever-supportive brother Albert, Extreme Abilities was reborn. By now Covid was a world-wide pandemic, which put a temporary stop to their activities.

Fortunately, post-pandemic Extreme Abilities took off again with a grass-roots plan and a ten-year vision that includes promoting surfing among people of all abilities on the West Coast, with a long-term aim of participation in the Paralympics (due for inclusion in 2032).

The current most valuable sponsors for the organisation includes Reef, which supplies the adapted wetsuits and surf gear, Vudu Surf, which provides the adapted surfboards, and the West Coast Community Trust, which supports local sport clubs on the West Coast.

They are also supported by a number of smaller, but very loyal sponsors. Proficient surfers have generated their own personal sponsors while Extreme Abilities sponsor surfers from poor communities who are unable to afford the equipment.

Dries loves spearheading proficient surfers with disabilities to knock down the egos of able-bodied jocks trying their hand at surfing. He considers it good psychology to get the able-bodied to take up surfing.

> “
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> **On discharge, he was so despondent that he pledged a year of silence to sort out his psyche.**

Extreme Abilities does not operate in isolation. One of their passions is to collaborate with other disability-focussed organisations to create a surf culture that fosters social interaction and personal fulfilment.

To this end, they meet weekly with residents of the Harbour of Wellness, a home for adults with disabilities, and Pilgrims Place Healing Wings, a substance abuse rehab organisation, where they do surf therapy in smaller waves and adaptive surf training.

Dries and brother Albert truly are passionate altruistic entrepreneurs who face up to challenges and setbacks to ride the crests of their waves. They are an inspiration to us all. Watch Dries in action here or view the highlights from the 2025 Adaptive Surf Clinic held at Victoria Bay here. R

George Louw qualified as a medical doctor, but, due to a progressing spastic paralysis, chose a career in health administration. The column is named after Ida Hlongwa, who worked as caregiver for Ari Seirlis for 20 years. Her charm, smile, commitment, quality care and sacrifice set the bar incredibly high for the caregiving fraternity.

Get in touch: yorslo@icloud.com

Tales of growth and grit

Participants of life coaching have shown grit and determination to grow their confidence and achieve their goals

Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of coaching an incredible group of individuals through the Life Coaching for people with disabilities programme – a bold, forward-thinking initiative made possible by QASA. Their support created space for real transformation. And what a journey it's been!

Delivered through The World Within, my coaching platform, the course began as a short-term intervention, but quickly became a powerful shared experience of resilience, growth and self-discovery. Life coaching isn't about fixing the past. It's about unlocking potential in the present.

It's a conversation rooted in respect and possibility, where we explore who you are today and chart a path forward. It's about rediscovering choice, reclaiming voice, and reigniting hope, one step at a time. I want to share a few of the stories from the participants to celebrate their progress and also encourage anyone wondering whether life coaching could make a difference in their own lives.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Let's start with Sophie Moloko Pula, a young woman with drive and determination. Sophie found meaningful employment during the course but continued coaching, which stood her in good stead. In her words: "Life coaching has positively impacted my work. It helped me build commitment and confidence in my daily responsibilities."

"I've become more dedicated and was trusted by my colleagues to lead follow-ups for our Mandela Day celebration. We secured sponsorships and partners for the event through teamwork and communication. Life coaching has changed how I view things, improved my leadership skills and helped me make better decisions."

After coaching, Sophie was asked to deliver a speech in Parliament. She accepted and said: "I would never have been able to deliver a speech in Parliament if it was not for life coaching."

Sophie is also a provincial wheelchair basketball player for Limpopo. The programme helped her believe in her ability at work and on the court. That confidence now shows in everything she does.

FINDING ONESELF AGAIN

Another remarkable story is Busiswa Mbizafa, founder of Artizan Naturals which produces all-natural hand cleaners and moisturisers. When she started the programme, Busiswa struggled with low self-esteem and felt voiceless. That began to change.

“Before life coaching, I didn’t believe in myself; not in my abilities; not in relationships; not in anything. I felt lost and disconnected. My disability made me feel limited by it,” she said. “Through life coaching, I found myself again. I discovered my worth, built confidence, and learned to love myself. I now know that my disability is not who I am, it’s just a part of my story.”

“Today I walk with self-belief, knowing I am capable, worthy, and full of potential,” she added. Busiswa is now re-engaging with an Agri-Biotech Incubation Programme to grow her company.

STEPPING INTO POWER

Maria Xolelwa from the Eastern Cape (EC) plays wheelchair basketball for the EC Angels. When she joined, she was unsure of herself and lacked confidence. Through the coaching journey, Maria stepped into her power. She now trains with focus and purpose, and carries a quiet courage that’s visible in how she moves through the world, on and off the court.

In her words: “I was unsure about myself. I now feel more motivated and have a clear sense of direction. I have developed more positive mindset about the future since completing the life coaching programme.”

SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Zama Nxumalo gained confidence and a new perspective. She shared: “In just three weeks, I’ve experienced a profound shift in my confidence and perspective. As a person with a disability, I’ve often felt like my limitations defined me.”

“However, having a coach who understands the challenges and triumphs of living with a disability has been a game-changer. His empathy, guidance and support has helped me see myself in a new light.”

We also have Joseph Rantho, who runs his own NPO, and Sipho Mashishi, who now volunteers at a special school. Each of them found their own voice and way forward through the programme.

DEDICATION TO THE CHANGE

Some students attended sessions from their cars. Others sat outside in the freezing wind during load shedding. Many had no power in their homes for days. But they showed up. They made a plan. They refused to let anything stop them. And that’s what I want future coaching clients to understand. You don’t have to start strong. You just have to start.

ADVICE TO FUTURE CLIENTS

Bring your real self. Life coaching isn’t about pretending to be okay. It’s about being honest and open even when life is messy. You don’t need perfect conditions or fancy equipment, just a smartphone or laptop and an internet connection.

If you have a dream, even a small one, life coaching can help you nurture it and bring it to life by learning how to set proper goals and a fail-safe way to achieve them.

This course wasn’t just about goals or action plans. It was about heart. It was about community. It was about discovering that your story matters and that your future is still wide open and in your hands. R

Len Davey is a qualified life coach. To book a session, contact him via his website: www.theworldwithin.co.za. A free “goal setting” session is offered without any obligation so that you can experience life coaching first hand.

Get in touch: len@theworldwithin.co.za

Golfers with disabilities tee off

The 2025 South African Golf for the Disabled Open drew golfers with varying disabilities to complete in this inclusive game

The 2025 South African Golf for the Disabled (G4D) Open took place at The Wanderers Golf Club in Johannesburg from October 20 to 22, 2025. There were 44 entrants from around the world with 42 men and two ladies. With a wide range of physical and sensory impairments, the Open uses Gross Stroke play, which is the total number of strokes taken by each individual player over three rounds.

While the main championship uses gross scoring, some G4D events on the tour schedule also featured a separate Net event, where players can compete using their golf handicap to allow for a more inclusive competition across a wider range of abilities.

Winner of the Gross division was Spain's Juan Postigo. The Net division was won by Ian St John from Ireland (the only para golfer in the field) and Roux Steenkamp won the Stableford division. Players earn points across the season-long G4D tour to crown the top player based on an Order of Merit ranking system. I managed to speak to some of the local golfers after their 18 holes on day two and was happy to see that everyone was trying their best – no matter what their score!

For Greg Wynn, this was his first tournament. He was just happy to have completed the two rounds with a total of 126 and 128 on both days. A stroke in 1999 caused his disability. He has gone on to open an organisation called "Open Hands", which raises awareness around people with disabilities.

Dehan Van Der Walt has been playing at ERPM Golf Club for the past two years after losing his arm 10 years ago. One of the two ladies, Yolandi Magatye, who has been an amputee since 2018, hails from George. She works and plays at Fancourt, where they supported and sponsor her golf.

Overall winner Juan Postigo is a wonder to watch as he doesn't play with a prosthesis.

MAIN PHOTO: Ian St John from Ireland uses a motorised vehicle to play golf.

LEFT TOP: Juan Postigo balances on one leg when playing and is a player to watch.

LEFT BOTTOM LEFT: Yolani Magatye hails from George and works at Fancourt.

LEFT BOTTOM RIGHT: Dehan Van Der Walt plays at the ERPM Golf Club.

ABOVE: The Alma School scholars showcased their at the golf development session.

Instead, he balances on one leg! The strength he must have in the remaining leg is phenomenal.

Ian St John from Ireland was a pro golfer before a tumour in his spine caused his paralysis in 2016. After nearly two years of rehabilitation, he was discharged and since then has managed to get back on top with multiple top placements in various tournaments. In 2024, he played for the Ireland European team.

Starting golf at age eight has obviously given him the advantage of the knowledge, but he had to start from scratch as a para-golfer making use of a specialised vehicle for which he had to fundraise to purchase. This vehicle allows him to move around the course independently. Once at his ball, the seat straightens up to allow him to be vertical for his golf shots.

The body movement is completely different as the hips are fixed and do not pivot. Thus, all the action is from the shoulders and upper body. Putting is possible as the weight displacement across the four wheels allows the vehicle to not cause dents onto the greens.

I was privileged to be able to watch a session of development golf at Wanderers when scholars from Alma School in Pretoria came through to showcase their weekly golf development session. This school guides and enables both mobility and cognitive impaired children to live with dignity. They use golf as part of their therapeutic programme and I was amazed at the agility of the children and their dedication to these sessions.

Corinne Human, deputy principal, and the entire team of assistants and therapists are dedicated and caring for their scholars, ensuring that their needs are met in every way. CE Mobility provides most of their motorised chairs with Shonaquip assisting with specialist chairs.

Golf is definitely a sport that gets you outside and in the fresh air, however for those permanently in wheelchairs, the equipment can be costly. With determination and sponsorship anything is possible. R

Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access.

Get in touch: mandy@noveltravel.co.za

Easing lower back pain after an SCI

For wheelchair users, back pain is the second most common complaint and a major factor in reduced wellbeing

Back pain isn't just uncomfortable, it changes your daily life. If you have a spinal cord injury (SCI) and live with lower back pain, you are far from alone. Research shows that one in three wheelchair users with SCI experience it. Those who have high cervical injuries often are the most affected.

Chronic back pain can disrupt sleep, heighten stress and anxiety, and limit participation in community activities. The good news? With the right strategies, it is possible to prevent back pain before it develops or manage existing pain.

CAUSES OF LOWER BACK PAIN

Spending long hours in a wheelchair can take a toll on your posture, often leading to overuse of certain muscles. With 68 percent of individuals with SCI using a wheelchair, this is a common challenge.

ABOVE: (On the left) Good posture with ears, shoulders and hips aligned compared to c-sitting posture (on the right) with head forward, shoulders slumped and lower back rounded.

Traditional 90/90-degree wheelchair setups contribute to poor postural alignment, as many users shift into a "C-sitting" posture to find stability and balance. In this position the lumbar spine (lower back) isn't well supported and is often made worse by weak core muscles due to paralysis.

Over time, reduced trunk stability and balance can contribute to scoliosis, muscle strain and imbalance, which ultimately increasing the risk of lower back pain. It's also important to note that not all pain is muscle-related. Many individuals with SCI experience neuropathic pain (described as burning, shooting or tingling) that requires different pain management strategies.

EASING THE PAIN

Small daily changes can go a long way toward easing discomfort and protecting your back, including:

- **Mobility**: Incorporating daily movement and stretching can go a long way toward preventing and easing lower back pain. Gentle spinal mobility stretches, such as leaning the upper body slowly in all directions, are great additions. Aim for short five-minute sessions to break up long periods of sitting.
- **Strength training**: If you have some core muscle function, strengthening these muscles can improve support for the spine and help maintain better seated posture. Strengthening the back muscles themselves can increase endurance, helping them resist fatigue and delay the onset of pain. If you want additional exercise guidance and ideas, head over to the Enable Centre Youtube page.
- **Pain management**: If pain is already present, use heat to promote blood flow and muscle relaxation. Only use it over areas with normal sensation and only for 15 minutes at a time to prevent burns. Massaging the area can also be effective in reducing stress and pain. Consult a massage therapist, physiotherapist or use a tennis ball at home.
- **Consult a specialist**: Good posture is key to avoiding muscle fatigue and strain. Since non-paralysed muscles often compensate for paralysed ones, poor postural alignment can place excessive stress on these muscles. Excessive stress increases discomfort and the risk of pain. If you experience any discomfort or struggle to maintain proper posture, consider consulting a wheelchair specialist for a seating assessment.

TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Cat-cow stretches are some of the exercises to help with your posture.

MIDDLE LEFT AND RIGHT: Rows and presses done with exercise bands can strengthen essential muscles.

BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT: Lateral Leans help to strengthen your core and back to avoid slouching.

THE BOTTOM LINE

An SCI requires you to stay in tune with your body and adapt to its needs. Managing and preventing lower back pain is no different. It is very achievable with the right support and early action. By building small, consistent habits daily and reaching out for help when needed, you can protect your back and improve your quality of life. Your back deserves that care.

The **Enable Centre** is an outpatient physical and cognitive rehabilitation centre with branches in Cape Town and Durban. It operates as a social enterprise, meaning it provides therapy to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds whilst incorporating innovative technology and evidence-based treatments.

Get in touch: admin@enablecentre.org

Remarkable recovery to a full life

With determination and a wonderful support structure, Emil Engelbrecht was able to live a full life after a spinal cord injury

Sports-mad Emil Engelbrecht was a talented 24-year-old flank playing for Louwville Rugby Club's first team against Vredenburg, before the clubs merged, when his world came crashing down on 20 April 1996.

"I was on my way to a ruck when one of the opposition players hit me from behind and I fell onto my neck," Emil shares. "I knew my neck was broken because I heard it break and my body immediately shut down. The mental part was very tough because I used to do sports seven days a week. I was very active and suddenly, I was paralysed."

"It was tough, accepting that I'm paralysed and what the doctors had told me – that I would never walk again. But then I said to myself, 'God won't put you in this situation for no reason'."

"The important thing for me was to accept my situation and be positive," he continues. A gruelling five months in Conradie Hospital followed, but then came the turning point.

"When I went home, I was still 100 percent a quadriplegic. A friend of mine arranged an appointment for acupuncture, and after the first treatment, I was able to stand up from my wheelchair. That was unbelievable! From that Sunday afternoon, I believed that I would walk again," Emil notes.

"I drank supplements and went for sessions in Cape Town three times a week and to physiotherapy on the other days. The travelling wasn't cheap, but after about two months, I was finished with the acupuncture and physio. I transitioned to working out at the gym every day. It took about a year, but I was able to walk with one crutch," he continues*

A carpenter prior to his injury, Emil forged a new future and joined Transnet in 1998 where he has had a successful career as an operations coordinator. He notes: "I coordinate the process of offloading trains and loading of vessels. I'm currently completing a one-year project management course, which will open more opportunities for me."

Emil has also stayed involved in sport. He served as club captain of Vredenburg Rugby Club for 10 years before joining Vredenburg Saldanha Cricket Club in the same capacity. He is now their vice-chairperson. What's more, he's also part of the Members Council of Cricket Boland NPC.

"The Members Council is entitled to attend, speak, ask questions, and vote at any general meeting of Cricket Boland NPC and must ensure that the Board does not operate outside or beyond their powers," a passionate Emil explains. He's still actively involved behind the scenes at Vredenburg Rugby Club as well.

"I am an honourable member of the club and I'll always be part of them. They know that I will always be available when they need assistance from me," he adds.

When it comes to assistance, Emil says he's blessed with a wonderful support system that played an instrumental role in getting him back on his feet, both physically and mentally, and remains supportive for the now 52-year-old.

"I had a lot of support from my fiancé at that time, now my wife, as well as family and friends. I've had great support from the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund as well," he shares.

Known as Rugby's Caring Hands, the Players' Fund assists 78 recipients who sustained catastrophic head, neck and spinal injuries playing the game they loved.

"From the day of my injury, the Players' Fund has been just a phone call away. Their staff are tops and their support is unbelievable! They are always available to assist," Emil comments.

Completing his life, is his lovely family. He shares: "To be honest, I am better off now than before my injury. My wife and I had a daughter after my injury. She's 21 and she's a third-year student at North-West University studying biogenetics. We also have four grandchildren, who are just a joy and keep us busy."

Recently, he faced some adversity again with another injury. He says: "I fell in the dark one evening and bruised my spinal cord again. As a result, I couldn't walk again and spent six weeks in rehab, but I'm walking with two crutches now, and my goal is to go back to one."

Reflecting on his journey, Emil remarks: "Things happen for a reason, even though we normally don't understand why. God won't put you through something that you can't manage."

"In saying that, it's important to have a support structure, to stay positive, and to set goals for yourself. I have achieved some of my goals, while some are still a work in process, but I am patient," he concludes.

**Consult a doctor or medical practitioner before pursuing any treatment especially if the treatment is unconventional. Every spinal cord injury is unique. Recovery and the appropriate treatments will look different for each person. It is always best to seek out professional opinions.*

Quintin van Jaarsveld writes on behalf of the Players' Fund. If you would like to support the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, visit their website at www.playersfund.org.za and select any number of the giving options available, which include EFT, payfast, Snapscan and Zapper.

Get in touch: contact@playersfund.org.za

Smashing barriers with Adaptive Padel

The fast-growing sport of Padel is now accessible to wheelchair users

Few sports combine fun, fitness and friendship quite like Padel. Now, thanks to adaptive initiatives, people of all abilities can join in on the action. Known as one of the fastest-growing racket sports in the world, Padel is easy to learn, low-impact and highly social.

It's played on a smaller court than tennis, with walls that keep the ball in play for longer rallies, making it both accessible and engaging for newcomers and experienced players alike.

Adaptive Sports Fund recently hosted an Adaptive Padel Day at the welcoming Waterkloof Racquet Club, where wheelchair players, families and friends came together to share in the excitement of this fast-paced game. The event highlighted the physical benefits of Padel, but also the community spirit that makes it so unique.

From a health perspective, Padel is a powerhouse. The sport helps improve cardiovascular fitness, coordination, upper-body strength and reaction speed. For wheelchair users, the game also develops agility, pushing technique and overall endurance, all while delivering plenty of fun.

Because the rallies are longer and less physically punishing than tennis, Padel offers a workout that's intense, yet accessible, which makes it a perfect fit for adaptive play.

Beyond fitness, Padel is about connection. One of the sport's greatest strengths is its inclusivity. It allows wheelchair players to compete alongside able-bodied friends and family in doubles matches.

The laughter, friendly competition and teamwork on the court are as rewarding as the sport itself. For many participants, the

opportunity to share a level playing field with loved ones was the true highlight of the day.

"Padel gives us the chance to play together, not apart," one participant shared. "It's about enjoying the game, encouraging each other and realising that sport is for everyone."

The day was further enriched by the presence of CE Mobility, who hosted a display stand and shared invaluable insights with our members.

Their team educated participants about the importance of proper wheelchair set-up and seating, and how having the right chair can significantly increase independence, comfort and performance both on and off the court.

This educational element added a new dimension to the event, reminding everyone that adaptive sport is as much about knowledge and preparation as it is about participation.

The success of the event was made possible by the ongoing support of our incredible sponsors, Verder, Joey Evans and the STM team, whose contributions ensure that Adaptive Sports Fund can continue creating opportunities for people with disabilities to explore new activities. Their generosity helps us break down barriers and build inclusive spaces where everyone can thrive.

A special thanks also goes to the Waterkloof Racquet Club, who opened their doors and ensured the venue was welcoming and accessible. Their hospitality and enthusiasm created the perfect setting for a day filled with energy, encouragement, and plenty of smashes.

Adaptive Padel is more than just a sport. It's a celebration of inclusion, empowerment and the sheer joy of play. Whether you're serving, smashing or simply laughing with friends on the court, Padel proves that the game is always better when it's played together.

At Adaptive Sports Fund, we believe in turning possibilities into realities. Events like this show that when barriers are removed, the results are powerful: Healthier bodies, stronger communities and memories that last long after the match is over. R

Jeffrey Yates writes for the Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF) is a non-profit company, committed to supporting individuals with disabilities and breaking down barriers and creating a more equitable and just world for all people, regardless of their abilities. and with the following objectives: Supporting, enriching, encouraging, motivating and providing resources that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve their goals for them to live their best lives and creating a more accessible and equitable society for all. **Get in touch: info@adaptivesportsfund.org**

Mustangs a Bloemfontein powerhouse with purpose

In a new series on the clubs competing in the South Africa Wheelchair Rugby League, the Mustang Wheelchair Rugby Club is spotlighted

Based in Bloemfontein, the Mustang Wheelchair Rugby Club is an outfit with an iron spine, a community heart and a habit of making history.

STARTING FROM BORROWED WHEELS

Founded in June 2011, the Mustangs began with grit more than gear. They had no training facility and only limited, borrowed equipment. Yet, they still managed to play two South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SA WCR) league tournaments before the year was out.

Even in that fledgling season, national selectors noticed with a Mustang player making the national training squad. By 2012, their first full competitive year, the team won its first two league games and finished a credible fourth out of eight. The early DNA was obvious: resourcefulness, competitiveness and ambition.

Climbing the ranks and producing Wheelboks Momentum gathered quickly. In 2013, the Mustangs finished runners-up in the SA WCR League. Two of their athletes and a physiotherapist joined the national team, the Wheelboks, for the Asia-Oceania Championships in Pretoria. A steady 2014 saw them hover near the summit before ending the season in third overall. In 2015, they were back up to second with three athletes and a physiotherapist entering the national squad, and two players heading to the BT World Wheelchair Rugby Challenge in London.

Just as significant, 2015 marked the birth of a pioneering grassroots development partnership with Tswellang School, the first programme of its kind in South Africa, which saw 86 physiotherapy students rotated through Mustangs practice sessions, seeding a culture of skilled, multidisciplinary support.

CHAMPIONS MADE UNSTOPPABLE

The breakthrough arrived in 2016 when the Mustangs became league champions and remained unbeaten all year. Awards followed: Radio Rosestad named the Mustangs the Disabled Team of the Year while head coach Peter West earned a Coach of the Year

ABOVE LEFT: The Bloemfontein Mustangs at the start of their journey in 2012.

nomination. The team vowed to defend their crown and did.

Through 2017 and 2018 they extended a remarkable winning run totalling 26 and then 38 consecutive SA WCR National League victories. They collected silverware and spotlights: Free State Sports Awards Team of the Year, Radio Rosestad Team of the Year (multiple times), and representation at national sports awards.

By 2019, the streak had stretched to 56 straight wins. Free State wheelchair rugby, powered largely by Mustang athletes (the only club team in the province), took the National Championships in both 2017 and 2019. It was a dynasty built on talent and on a deep system of coaching stability, community development and relentless standards.

STORYTELLING THAT MOVED A NATION

Success travels. So did the Mustangs story. The documentary Wheeling and Dealing drew over 1,3 million views, while a Beautiful News feature clocked 177 247 views – a testament to how sport can cut across disability narratives to celebrate power, speed, teamwork and joy. These features spotlighted a winning team and reframed what excellence and inclusion look like in South Africa.

DEVELOPMENT WITH PURPOSE

From the outset, the Mustangs tied performance to purpose. Their Tswellang School partnership grew year-on-year, connecting promising athletes to the sport and showing learners a path into high-performance environments.

In 2018, the club launched capABLE, a bottle top and bread tag recycling initiative to fund wheelchairs for people in need. By 2019, the campaign had amassed significant tonnage of recyclables – proof that a club can leverage small, everyday actions into transformative mobility and independence for others.

RESET, REBUILD AND RETURN

Like all sport, wheelchair rugby paused in 2020 under lockdown with restrictions into 2021 limiting training and competition. In 2022, clubs returned under strict protocols but without tournaments. Competitive rugby resumed in 2023 with the Mustangs finishing third overall – a resilient return to podium territory amid a national restart.

EMBRACING TWO FORMATS

In 2024, South Africa introduced Wheelchair Rugby 5s (WR5s) to domestic competition. The Mustangs didn't just adapt, they built. They integrated WR5s into training, developed dedicated 5s athletes and kept the Paralympic (four-on-four) discipline strong. They finished third in both formats. For 2025, they've set bold but grounded targets: Top two in WR5s and top three in the Paralympic discipline. The message is clear: The Mustangs plan to contend for titles across both codes.

ABOVE LEFT: The Mustangs team today.

PEOPLE BEHIND THE PULSE

A club this consistent is never a one-person show. Head coach Mariné McIntyre leads the technical and tactical charge, supported by technical staff Teboho Modise, Kagisho Modise and Deandre Pieterse with team support from Monique Smith. Financial backing from PHG Group underwrites key costs, while the University of the Free State (UFS) sponsors the training venue.

Cycle World assists with wheel repairs, Garden City Commercial Bloemfontein helps with transport and SweatGear kits the team. These alliances matter in wheelchair rugby, where equipment, travel and specialised support elevate both safety and performance.

TRAINING TWICE A WEEK

Twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 18:00 to 20:00, the Mustangs gather at Rag Farm on the UFS main campus. A typical session follows a high-performance arc that includes a warm-up, passing and ball-handling drills, a strategy block, then a game or fitness-focused segment, before a structured warm-down and stretch. It's exactly what you'd expect from a club that's sat at the summit and is climbing back.

SUPPORT FOR THE MUSTANGS

Two needs stand out. First, transport support for development athletes. Getting new players to training and tournaments is the lifeblood of growth. Second, a training venue built to regulation that can also host tournaments to unlock home fixtures and a local fan base.

Financial sponsorships and donations remain essential for equipment, maintenance, travel and operations. The value proposition is tangible: Community uplift, national exposure and alignment with a team that consistently turns resources into results.

THE MUSTANGS MATTER

In a little over a decade, the Mustangs have charted nearly the full arc of sporting possibility from borrowed chairs to unbeaten champions. Their story is a template of how you build a culture, widen a pathway and keep standards high through cycles of triumph and transition. In the seasons to come, expect the Mustangs to be right where they've always aimed to be – at the sharp end of competition while pulling more people into the game.

If you're in or near Bloemfontein and want to play, volunteer or partner, the door is open. Join their training session at Rag Farm (UFS) or reach out via phone 083 443 7903 or e-mail at mustangwcr@gmail.com. They're active on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Follow along for fixtures, community drives and results.

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is the official administrator of the wheelchair rugby in South Africa. The association is involved in all aspects from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league. For more information, please contact admin@sawcr.co.za or visit the official Facebook page at @SAWheelchairRugby.

Get in touch: admin@sawcr.co.za

SOUTH AFRICA WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

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LETS PLAY!!! 👊🇿🇦♿🏐
#wheelchairrugby

Reclaiming personal power through sexual autonomy

Through consent and boundaries, persons with a disability can experience greater sexual autonomy

Sexual autonomy is about having control over your own body, desires and choices in intimate relationships. After a spinal cord injury (SCI), this autonomy can feel compromised, because of physical changes but also because of shifting relationship dynamics, societal misconceptions and even medical interventions that don't always prioritise sexual wellbeing.

Regaining a sense of control over one's sexuality after an SCI is not just about physical function. It's about navigating consent, setting boundaries and reclaiming personal empowerment in a world that often underestimates the sexual agency of people with disabilities.

A crucial aspect of sexual autonomy is consent, which remains just as important post-SCI as it was before.

> **A crucial aspect of sexual autonomy is consent.**

However, the way consent is communicated can sometimes require adjustments, particularly in relationships where a partner has taken on a caregiving role.

When assistance is needed for positioning, dressing, or personal care, it is essential that both partners recognise the difference between functional touch and intimate touch. This distinction can sometimes blur, making it even more critical to have explicit discussions about what is and isn't comfortable.

Consent is not just about saying "yes" or "no" to sex, it's about creating an ongoing dialogue where both partners feel safe to express their needs, desires and limits.

> **Consent is about creating an ongoing dialogue where both partners feel safe.**

Another important element of sexual autonomy is setting boundaries, both within relationships and in interactions with the wider world. People with an SCI often experience a loss of privacy due to reliance on caregivers or medical professionals for daily activities. This can sometimes create a sense of disempowerment.

Being comfortable advocating for personal space, independence and dignity is an important step in reclaiming sexual confidence. In intimate relationships, boundaries can be physical (what types of touch feel good or uncomfortable), emotional (how much vulnerability each partner is ready for) and practical (what assistance is needed for certain activities).

Without clear boundaries, frustration, miscommunication or even resentment can develop, especially if one partner feels that their autonomy is being overshadowed by the logistics of the injury.

Sexual empowerment after SCI also involves challenging societal assumptions about disability and sexuality. Many people, including medical professionals or even close family members, assume that those with SCI are either no longer interested in sex or incapable of having fulfilling sexual relationships. This misconception can be internalised, leading to feelings of worthlessness or self-doubt in sexual contexts.

Overcoming this requires rejecting external narratives and redefining sexuality on your own terms. Seeking out SCI-positive sexual education, support groups, or therapy can be instrumental in reshaping self-perception.

For those who are dating post-injury, autonomy also means choosing how and when to disclose details about sexual function, boundaries and needs.

There is no single "right" way to approach these conversations, but it's essential to prioritise comfort and personal agency. Being upfront about expectations while also maintaining control over the flow of information helps establish a foundation of respect and mutual understanding in new relationships.

Ultimately, sexual autonomy after SCI is about self-ownership; recognising that you are still in control of your body, desires and decisions. It's about advocating for your needs, setting clear boundaries and embracing your right to sexual fulfilment on your own terms.

Whether in a long-term relationship or exploring new connections, the journey to sexual empowerment starts with reclaiming the ability to say, "This is who I am and this is what I want". R

Dr **Danie Breedt** is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of psychology. He divides his time between training, research and clinical practice. Danie works from an integrative interactional approach in psychotherapy, dealing with a wide range of emotional difficulties and sexual rehabilitation for patients with disabilities. He is the co-owner of Charis Psychological Services, a psychology practice that specialises in physical rehabilitation across South Africa.

Get in touch: danie@charispsychology.co.za

Highlight from Accessible Gardening Webinar

On Wednesday, 5 November, we hosted an Accessible Gardening webinar with gardening enthusiast, universal access specialist and columnist, Mandy Latimore. She was joined by Jodi Bieber and Wendy Wright.

Jodi is the founder of The Veg Auntie. The company assists with establishing Urban Edible Gardens. Her husband also assists with building compost bins and raised planters.

Wendy is a qualified horticulturalist with years spend growing plants commercially. She is also the owner of The Garden Gallery Café.

The panellists discussed everything from soil health and pest control to accessibility solutions for wheelchair users in the garden.

Participants learned how planting deterrent plants can help protect against pests, how liquid feed is especially important for potted plants, and that root vegetables are best planted directly into the ground rather than trays.

The full webinar was recorded and uploaded to the Rolling Inspiration Youtube channel, and made available to view.

A big thank you also to Kirchhoffs that donated seeds that were gifted to the participants to get started on their garden. R

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2025 Events Calendar

DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH
3 NOVEMBER TO 3 DECEMBER 2025

The annual Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) event runs from 3 November and ends on International Day for People with Disabilities (3 December 2025).

EXTREME ABILITIES WESKUS OPEN SURFING CONTEST
13 TO 14 DECEMBER 2025

Join Extreme Abilities in Paternoster at Eerste Mosselbank for their open surfing contest welcoming surfers of all ages and styles to show off their skills set. Visit the website for more information.

2026 WINGS FOR LIFE WORLD RUN
10 MAY 2026

Entries for the annual Wings for Life World Run are now open. Visit the official website to sign up. All the proceeds go towards funding research projects dedicated to finding a cure for spinal cord injuries.

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QASA Head Office

QASA HEAD OFFICE

Website: www.qasa.co.za
Telephone: 031 767 0352
E-mail: info@qasa.co.za
Address: 17 Hamilton Crescent,
Gillitts, KwaZulu-Natal, 3610

QASA Regional Office

WESTERN CAPE

Telephone: 021 975 6078
E-mail: info@qawc.org
Address: 5 Newhaven Street,
Durbanville, 7550

GAUTENG SOUTH

Telephone: 011 782 7511
E-mail: quadgs@icon.co.za
Address: NG Church,
Brakenhurst, Alberton, 1147

GAUTENG NORTH

Telephone: 012 320 2572
E-mail: manager@qagn.co.za
Address: 10 Bloem Street, Pretoria
Central, 0002

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OUR VISION: is to encourage people with disabilities to have equal opportunities to participate in sports and physical activity, and where their abilities are celebrated and embraced by all members of the sports community.