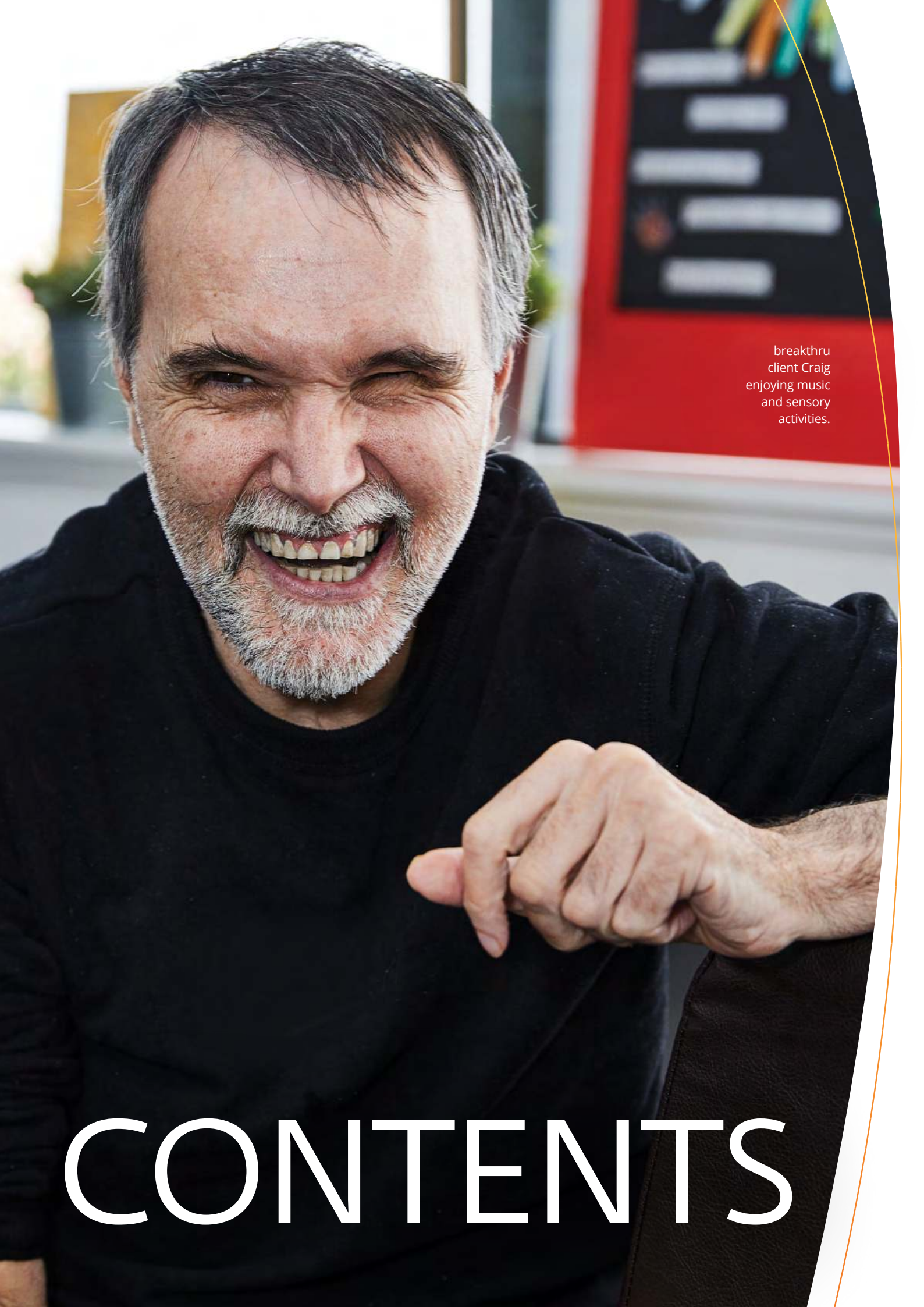




Royal Rehab
Empowering Independence

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



breakthru
client Craig
enjoying music
and sensory
activities.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, and we extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The year at a glance



Advanced our strategy, enhanced our leadership capacity and now span 25 locations across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland



Completed our Advanced Technology Centre housing 25 advanced technology devices including world-leading robotic exoskeletons



Launched our first ever Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan



Successfully merged with for-purpose disability services provider breakthru



Supported the NSW Ministry of Health's COVID-19 pandemic response and kept our clients and staff safe



Our service
locations

A message from the Chairman and the CEO

In what was an extraordinary year of achievement and growth, we advanced our strategic goals and continued our unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality care and service.

A focus on innovation

Being Australia's premier destination for innovative rehabilitation and disability was more than ever in sharp focus in FY22 with the completion of our technology-driven centre of excellence within our Ryde campus.

Construction of the world-class centre forged ahead despite facing lockdowns, restrictions, changing government health mandates and issues with international supply chains and freight. The project and build teams rose to the occasion, finding solutions and working through the numerous logistical challenges and constraints, never compromising on quality.

Housing over 25 devices, the new centre will be a game-changer and serves as a launch pad for further innovation in the rehabilitation and disability space. When it opens in FY23 our clients will have access to some of the most advanced technology including world-leading robotic exoskeletons, with the potential to transform their rehabilitation programs.

Being bold

The 29th of November 2021 saw us reach a key milestone in our growth strategy when disability support provider breakthru Ltd became a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Rehab. At the heart of the merger are two great organisations both aligned, working to improve the lives of Australians living with disabilities, illness, and injury.

breakthru has been providing disability support services for over 25 years, working across 23 locations in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Its broad geographical reach, especially in regional areas, along with its complementary service offering means that in combination, both organisations can now offer more people more choice.

The merger has been a major undertaking and it is exciting to bring together the wealth of experience and expertise of both organisations to break down barriers as we provide more options to the people we serve, empowering them to live as independently as possible.

We want to personally thank all involved for their hard work on this exciting venture – we could not have asked for a smoother transition.

Formalising our reconciliation journey

In June 2022, Royal Rehab launched its inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which will guide our organisation's reconciliation initiatives internally, and in the communities in which we operate.

As we learn more about the work we can do for a better Australia for all, increasing our understanding, building relationships, and increasing the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are important first steps in formalising our organisation's reconciliation journey.

Going above and beyond

Despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the skill, passion and can-do attitude of our people that saw us accomplish so much this year. We advanced our strategy; achieved significant milestones such as the technology centre and the breakthru merger, and continued to play an important role supporting the NSW Ministry of Health's pandemic response. As we faced further lockdowns and restrictions, our people went to extraordinary lengths to ensure we could continue to staff our operations and maintain a continuity of care and service for our clients. It was due to the incredible efforts of our people and leaders: capable, flexible and resilient, that we were able to achieve such outstanding results.

Investing in our leaders

Our leadership capability has never been stronger. We continued to develop and invest in our leaders through our ongoing Leadership Development Program and stepped up the talent at the Board and Executive level with some fantastic new appointments.

While we say farewell to Board Members Anthony Wehby and Pamela Grant, we would like to congratulate Marilyn Speiser on her appointment to the position of Vice-Chair, and welcome new members Alex Gillan, Clara Cutajar, Paul Billingham and Jane Spring, whose expertise and leadership will make a welcome addition to our talented team of Directors. To our outgoing Directors, we thank you for your service and support.



Increasing the number of women in leadership positions has been shown to result in better outcomes, which is why we are so pleased to share that with these new appointments, women now make up 40% of the seats on our Board.

A special thank you

A special thank you must also go to our patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales and Mr Dennis Wilson, and to our partners and donors, without whom so much would not have been possible. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Honourable Brad Hazzard, Minister for Health and Medical Research, for his continued support, and say farewell and thank you to John Alexander OAM, Federal Member for Bennelong for 10 years. We also extend a warm welcome to our new Federal Member for Bennelong Jerome Laxale MP.

Finally, and most importantly, a huge thank you to our clients and staff. To everyone who has come through our doors, thank you for placing your trust in us. And thank you to our staff who make everything possible.

We look forward to seeing what remarkable things we can all achieve together in the coming year.

Tony Staveley AM, Chairman and Matt Mackay, Chief Executive Officer



The Royal Rehab team extends its heart-felt congratulations to Chairman Tony Staveley who was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours and Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.



Chairman Tony Staveley receiving his award from Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales.



OUR STRATEGY



Disability Services client Patrick Du with
Royal Rehab support worker and carer, Kelly.

Empowering people to reach their potential

The Royal Rehab story began 120 years ago, when pioneer and founder Susan Schardt reached out to people with a disability who were otherwise shunned by society. Susan's purpose informed her life's work and laid the foundations for Royal Rehab as it is today.

Driven by a vision to create a world without limits for people with disability, illness, and injury, Royal Rehab's strategic plan serves as a roadmap for achieving its purpose - to empower people to reach their potential - and is anchored by three strategic priorities:



To be the destination for creative thinking in rehabilitation and disability through collaboration and creation of an entrepreneurial culture – underpinned by pioneering rehabilitation and disability research.



To be bold in its ambition to grow by seeking opportunities to acquire and partner with reputable rehabilitation and disability services - whilst ensuring that the right systems and processes are in place to anticipate and welcome growth.



To nurture a culture where its people and customers thrive by creating a sustainable workforce who are focused on working together, with each other and with customers, to create never thought possible care.

Strategic priorities



The destination for creative thinking

- Cutting-edge innovation
- Pioneering research



Bold in our ambition to grow

- Expanded horizons
- Designed for scale



A culture where people thrive

- Better together: make it happen as a team
- Never thought possible care
- Sustainable workforce



breakthru client David enjoying the
sunshine at South Coogee, NSW.

Client Joe Cusmano using the EksoNR exoskeleton with physiotherapists Louise Pearce and Melissa Mussett.



The destination for creative thinking

Nation leading technology centre becomes a reality

There has never been a more exciting time to be working in Australia's rehabilitation and disability space.

Tapping into the rapid development of advanced technologies, Royal Rehab is transforming the way it delivers rehabilitation and disability services through the creation of what it hopes, is the first in a series of leading-edge technology centres.

Matt Mackay, Chief Executive Officer of Royal Rehab, believes technology can play a significant role in unlocking better patient outcomes and that the creation of Royal Rehab's first Advanced Technology Centre will make innovative technology more accessible to Australians.

"We know that the use of technology in combination with traditional therapies has the potential to drive better outcomes for patients. This will revolutionise the rehabilitation and therapy pathway for patients, which in turn can lead to dramatic changes in a person's quality of life."

"Similarly, we want to provide people living with a long-term disability access to these technologies, so they too can benefit from improved strength and fitness, and maintain or even improve their functional independence," says Matt.

Construction of the world-class technology centre forged ahead in FY22, despite the many challenges presented by COVID-19. The project team were required to problem solve on the run and 'think outside the box' – a prime example being the installation of a temporary lift on the outside of the building when COVID-19 restrictions created access issues to the building site.

In tandem with construction, the project team focused on finalising the selection of advanced technology that would be housed within the centre from world-leading robotic exoskeletons and 3D proprioceptive devices to virtual reality software. The clinical team then set about undertaking comprehensive training in how to both use and incorporate each piece of technology into clinical practice.



Client Vu Dang with Senior Physiotherapist and Advanced Technology Clinical Lead Jason Redhead.

The complexity of the advanced technology required highly skilled and specialised training – and this training was unique due to the limited amount of advanced technology available in Australia and the sheer number of devices that were purchased by Royal Rehab. Conducted on-site, the training involved flying in specialist clinical educators from Austria and Singapore. Co-ordination was also challenging due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Jason Redhead, Senior Physiotherapist and Advanced Technology Clinical Lead at Royal Rehab, co-ordinated and participated in the clinician training. Jason is now one of only ten clinicians in the world to achieve level three credentials in the EksoNR advanced robotic exoskeleton.

The training strategy involved implementing a 'train-the-trainer' process, meaning Royal Rehab can continue to upskill its therapists, ensuring a process of continual learning is in place.



CUTTING-EDGE INNOVATION

Since November 2020, 65 therapists have formally participated in Advanced Technology training. These clinicians join a world-leading elite group, capable of safely integrating advanced technology into rehabilitation and therapy pathways.

General Manager of Royal Rehab Hospital Ryde, Selina Rowe is passionate about the future learning and teaching opportunities created by the technology centre, particularly how this fosters a culture of continuous enquiry and improvement. "As an influential and respected learning and teaching organisation, Royal Rehab is a magnet for students. The rest of the world is watching us now," remarks Selina.

As part of this culture of continuous enquiry and collaboration with global partners, in early July 2021 Jason Redhead shared Royal Rehab's learnings and insights on how they had incorporated advanced technology into clinical practice at the Europe and Asia Pacific Ekso Bionics conference.

Plans are underway to officially launch the technology centre and provide more Australians with greater access to this potentially life-changing technology. The vision for what the centre can achieve is best summed up by CEO Matt Mackay when he says, "It is our hope that the centre will empower people with disability and life-changing illnesses or injuries with a newfound sense of independence and freedom."

“ This will revolutionise the rehabilitation and therapy pathway for patients, which in turn can lead to dramatic changes in quality of life.”

Matt Mackay, Chief Executive Officer,
Royal Rehab

Client Alejandra Lopez with
Senior Physiotherapist and
Advanced Technology Clinical
Lead Jason Redhead.





Client Alex Noble using the EksoNR exoskeleton.

Alex's story

When Alex Noble experienced a catastrophic spinal cord injury in a rugby training session, his parents Kylie and Glen feared he might never walk again. But with expert care from Royal Rehab's Senior Physiotherapist Jason Redhead and using EksoNR, the most advanced robotic exoskeleton in the world, he is making incredible milestones.

With its cutting-edge technology, EksoNR is a lightweight, strap-on exoskeleton that provides highly specific real-time feedback, enabling instantaneous control and modification of assistance levels, so the client must use their own weight-bearing ability to rebuild muscle and improve posture, balance and walking pattern.

Approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, EksoNR is suitable for anyone with lower limb weakness wanting to improve how they stand and walk. It can be beneficial for clients with spinal cord or brain injuries, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, or Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Since attending rehabilitation therapy at Royal Rehab using EksoNR, Alex has made tremendous progress, improving his step pattern and his standing endurance, doubling his walking time, and increasing his number of steps.

Alex's mum, Kylie says, "Watching him take those first steps ... it was wonderful and powerful ... and gives the hope that there is always change ... technology and medical advances are amazing."

Commenting on his own progress, Alex says, "EksoNR has so many beneficial factors ... it's good physically and emotionally ... being able to walk and stand up ... getting to feel normal again ... I 100% recommend it."

“Watching him take those first steps was wonderful and powerful and gives the hope that there is always change.”

Kylie Noble

Research projects and highlights

Working with leading research partners, Royal Rehab's research program continues to foster critical thinking - expanding its knowledge and understanding within the areas of rehabilitation and disability, to improve the quality of life for those within the rehabilitation and disability communities.



Journal articles published



Textbook chapters published



New research projects



Julie Pryor, Director of Research.

1. Be Pain Smart Clinic evaluation
In collaboration with the University of Sydney and funded by the Agency for Clinical Innovation and icare NSW
2. Evaluating meal satisfaction in patients within a specialist rehabilitation
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
3. Validity and reliability of self-administered version of walking index for spinal cord injuries II (SA-WISCI II) outcome measure – a PhD student project
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
4. Online communication partner training and social media initiatives for family members, carers, and service providers of people with traumatic brain injury
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
5. Nursing's contribution to patient rehabilitation following spinal cord injury: a systematic review
A Royal Rehab project
6. Impact of robotic exoskeleton/other robotic mobility devices training on energy expenditure and body composition in adults with spinal cord injury: a systematic review
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
7. Examining the effects of probiotics use on gastrointestinal function in adults with Parkinson's disease: a systematic review
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
8. Integrated oral care for spinal cord injury patients: a qualitative study
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
9. An exploration of clinical staff perceptions and experiences of inpatient rehabilitation for adults with severe obesity and a recent spinal cord injury
In collaboration with the University of Sydney and supported with funding from the Sydney Musculoskeletal, Bone and Joint Health Alliance and the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses' Association
10. Interviews to determine the smallest worthwhile treatment effect for motor training on strength for people with spinal cord injury – a PhD student project
In collaboration with the University of Sydney
11. A clinical profile of admission to the newly established Royal Rehab Sexuality Service: a clinical data mining project
In collaboration with the Ingham Institute
12. Evaluation of a Sleep Disordered Breathing Management Model for people with spinal cord injury at Royal Rehab
In collaboration with Austin Health and supported with funding from the Australasian Sleep Association
13. What is the nature and experience of female sexuality following spinal cord injury?
Supported with funding from the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses' Association



Research aims to inform clinical practice and rehabilitation care

Royal Rehab's Dr Priya Iyer, PhD, APD, Professional Leader – Dietetics, is passionate about nutrition and the role that diet can play in improving the cardiometabolic health of adults with spinal cord injury (SCI). Below is a summary of her study and findings, and is a fitting example of how a culture of critical inquiry and continuous improvement has delivered impressive results.

While cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the most common cause of death among Australians, the risk and prevalence of CVD is even greater in people with spinal cord injury (SCI). Through her research Priya set out to identify opportunities to improve the cardiometabolic health of adults in rehabilitation with SCI – and in so doing, to improve the rehabilitation care model for all adults with SCI.

Priya undertook her PhD under the supervision of Prof Karen Walton and Prof Eleanor Beck, from University of Wollongong, who are renowned leaders in the field of nutrition and dietetics.

Priya believed that undertaking research as part of her clinical role would provide a faster, more seamless translation of research evidence into practice in the real-world setting.

Royal Rehab supported Priya to undertake her research within her clinical duties, providing additional study leave and professional development opportunities.

Key champions of her research were Staff Specialist Dr Weber and Royal Rehab Ryde's very own General Manager, Selina Rowe, who saw the long-term benefits of Priya's work – as well as the opportunity it provided to pilot new technologies and innovative approaches.

It was for these reasons that Royal Rehab supported the purchase of two key pieces of cutting-edge technology. One was a bioelectrical impedance spectroscopy (BIS) which measured body composition of the research participants; and the second was an Indirect Calorimeter, which is the gold standard to estimate a person's energy requirements. Only two facilities have access to both these technologies to advance care in spinal rehabilitation nationally – Royal Rehab is one of them! Feasibility studies are on the horizon to enable the use of both devices in routine clinical practice.



Dr Priya Iyer with the Indirect Calorimeter, the gold standard for estimating a person's energy requirements.

Results in action

Priya's findings have already resulted in changes within the SCI unit and there are many more in the making as Priya continues her focus on introducing further clinical and operational improvements and advancing the use of technology – describing the possibilities as 'limitless.' She will also be advocating for holistic rehabilitation care - with pre-emptive CVD surveillance and interventions.

Aiming high

Priya wants to extend her research beyond the confines of the hospital walls and will be consulting with a range of internal and external stakeholders to seek changes to policies and models of care and standards so they can be responsive to real world evidence.

Priya is committed to conducting further research to evaluate outcomes and substantiate evidence.

"Royal Rehab has offered me more reasons to love what I do and to aim higher," says Priya.

"There is such a strong alignment of my goals and vision with those of the organisation. It has a great culture with passionate teams and leaders who share the goals of improved patient care and service excellence.

"More recently, growth in the technology space has inspired me to dream big to help the patients I support to achieve even more. The most important part of my work is the privilege to be part of the rehab journey of each patient I support, and to be able to contribute even in a little way to maximise their rehab potential and improved health outcomes.

"I never cease learning by being part of their rehab journey and am incredibly lucky to be part of Royal Rehab," says Priya.

“ Royal Rehab has offered me more reasons to love what I do and to aim higher. ”

Dr Priya Iyer

Priya's research findings

1

Diet and exercise have the potential to lower CVD risk in individuals with spinal cord injury.

2

Poor CVD screening in spinal rehabilitation despite high prevalence of CVD and associated risk factors.

3

Poor nutrition knowledge among patients translates to suboptimal dietary practices.

4

Improved nutrition literacy and health-promoting diets (e.g. Mediterranean) are required to improve metabolic health.

Conclusions



Pre-emptive screening



Nutrition education



Dietary changes with a health promoting diet



Potential to improve cardiometabolic health



Priya has concluded that a combination of pre-emptive screening, nutritional education, and making dietary changes in line with a health promoting diet, all have the potential to improve cardiometabolic health for those with SCI. These findings provide new insights and a clear direction for the rehabilitation care model to optimise cardiometabolic health.

PhD scholarship begins to take shape

Jane Bradshaw, a physiotherapist in the Be Pain Smart Service at Royal Rehab was the successful recipient of the first PhD Scholarship partly funded by Royal Rehab in collaboration with the University of Notre Dame Australia.

Nurturing research partnerships with universities is a key priority for Royal Rehab as it strives to remain at the forefront of creative thinking.

The tax-free PhD scholarship, valued at \$30,000 per annum for up to three years supports Jane to undertake research under the direction of an expert academic and clinical team from the University of Notre Dame Australia and Royal Rehab.

The research aim is to enhance flourishing in rehabilitation inpatients with spinal cord injury (SCI) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Human flourishing is defined as a 'phenomenon that relates to how a person experiences life, demonstrating resilience, thriving, and post-traumatic growth'. Human flourishing also encompasses positive emotions, such as hope, gratitude, and love. When care includes emotional aspects, it improves health outcomes, wellbeing, and quality of life.

Jane identified that there was not only a research gap regarding human flourishing within the context of inpatient TBI and SCI rehabilitation, but also in the interventions that could be used to enhance patient experience and improve the recovery process.

Jane is passionate about supporting people's journeys and 'meeting them where they are.' She also wants to understand how best to support people to 'bounce back' after trauma.

Co-design

Currently in the literature review phase of her research, later this year Jane will be using experience-based co-design to 'tap into the rich lived experience' of TBI or SCI to design an intervention to enhance human flourishing following TBI or SCI that can be both implemented and evaluated as part to the research.

A special partnership and a supportive culture

Jane has nothing but praise for her supervisors and the support she has received from Royal Rehab. She has described the collaboration between educational institutions such as Notre Dame Australia and Royal Rehab as 'vital', remarking that 'universities bring a depth of experience in the fields of education and research, which is essential to enhancing patient outcomes'. Jane says it is the supportive and positive culture at Royal Rehab that makes research such as hers possible, resulting in 'great outcomes for staff' and being 'brilliant for patients'.



Jane says she hopes her research will result in a greater understanding of the 'ingredients for recovery'. Her goal is to create a program that enables more patients to experience well-being and a better quality of life despite their traumatic injury.

Jane Bradshaw (L) with Julie Pryor, Director of Research (R).



breakthru client Michelle going home
after an engaging day of activities.



Bold in our ambition to grow

breakthru merger

There was cause for celebration when for-purpose disability support provider breakthru Ltd became a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Rehab on 29th November 2021, paving the way for the creation of more opportunities for more Australians to access industry-leading disability and rehabilitation services.

It was 25 years ago that a gentleman by the name of Ross Lewis founded breakthru. Ross saw a vast gap in the employment opportunities presented for people with disability compared to everyone else. This injustice sparked Ross' ambition to change the world. He was determined that people living with disability should experience seamless inclusion within their communities, moving out of sheltered workshops into real working jobs.

A quarter of a century later and spanning 23 locations across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, breakthru provides a range of disability support services. With a specific focus on helping those most in need, they offer specialist programs for people experiencing mental illness, a disability or health issue, long-term unemployment, unmet education goals or homelessness.

In 2021, Royal Rehab and breakthru saw the benefits of a merger – with each being able to offer complementary services. Nowhere else in Australia will clients be able to access the breadth and depth of services made possible by this union. breakthru clients can now access cutting-edge technology and expert clinical services, including neurological, cardiac, and orthopaedic rehabilitation services – as well as supported independent living and specialist disability accommodation. breakthru's geographical footprint and employment and training services mean that Royal Rehab clients can now access bespoke disability support services, mental health supports and employment services across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. As a nationally recognised training provider breakthru will also be able to provide training for Royal Rehab's aspiring disability support workers, allied health assistants and mental health professionals.

With a combined 146 years of experience, specialist skills and expertise in the rehabilitation and disability support sectors, the merger will enable the sharing of training, upskilling, and research opportunities for the combined total of 1,300+ employees across the 25 locations, positively contributing to the health care and community services sectors.

Royal Rehab CEO Matt Mackay says, "By bringing two great organisations together to work as one, our talent pool, geographical reach and client offerings grow, enabling us to continue to deliver on our purpose to enable the people we serve to reach their potential."

The year ahead

Integration plans are already well underway with the shared services functions of both organisations now co-located and working together at Royal Rehab's Milsons Point offices. The transition to common software solutions and processes continues; and key leaders within Royal Rehab are working with breakthru staff and leaders to learn and understand more about breakthru operations and services.

As we move into FY23, systems integration work will continue, including the procurement of new fit-for-purpose software solutions to streamline IT, Finance and HR functions, with work to develop and implement a common CRM also planned. The breadth and depth of expertise across the two organisations opens up a range of exciting possibilities, providing the opportunity to trial new and innovative approaches to rehabilitation and disability service provision. Developing new service offerings particularly in regional areas, will also be a key focus in the coming year.

Perhaps breakthru founder Ross Lewis described the future opportunities best when he said, "I am particularly pleased about the merger with Royal Rehab, an organisation I greatly admire.

"I am both humbled and proud to have been a part of the history of breakthru. Our success is due to the ongoing passion of breakthru's staff and leaders to be social revolutionaries. What is that you may ask?

"The empowerment of people with disability is a societal revolution that is relatively new. Before this revolution, exclusion was the norm. It is turning, due in no small part to the efforts of organisations like breakthru and Royal Rehab over the years. Viva la Revolution!"



breakthru client Vicky enjoying cooking and creative activities with her peers.



DESIGNED FOR SCALE

A continued focus on quality

Good clinical governance is essential to ensure an organisational culture of safety and quality improvement - and for maintaining high quality care and safe environments for clients.

Across Royal Rehab, quality and safety are a priority, along with the maintenance of high standards and a drive for continuous improvement to ensure patients and consumers receive safe, high-quality care that meets their needs. Achieving this involves making sure the right systems and processes are in place and actively engaging with staff, clients, carers and families.

As part of its on-going commitment to delivering clinical excellence, Royal Rehab appointed new Executive Manager Brigid Kerley to oversee the Quality, Safety and Risk functions – and to review and improve its Clinical Governance framework and structure.

With the review complete, several improvements have already been implemented, including the identification and roll-out of additional staff training and support, and the amalgamation of breakthru and Royal Rehab's risk management platforms.

Going into FY23, key areas of focus include streamlining and standardising clinical governance functions across the organisation, strengthening staff engagement, enhancing client feedback, extending governance support, and improving safety and quality.

Consumer advisory groups gain momentum

Collaborating with clients is critical to ensure the delivery of responsive and quality services that meet the needs of those that access them.

Consumer Advisory Groups provide a structured way for this kind of collaboration, creating the perfect opportunity to seek client feedback and advice on services, and act as a valuable sounding board for generating innovative ideas.

Over the course of the year Royal Rehab created and re-invigorated consumer advisory groups at: Sargood on Collaroy, the Public and Private hospitals at Ryde, and at MetroRehab Hospital in Petersham. Membership across the groups reflect the diversity of clients and the diversity of services offered by each service area.

Whilst COVID-19 restrictions limited in-person meetings, collaboration and engagement continued virtually, via email and by telephone across the groups.

Each of the advisory groups look forward to meeting in person over the coming year as they review operational and strategic performance from a consumer perspective, evaluate consumer feedback, and review information that is developed for client dissemination.

Through this special collaboration Royal Rehab will be able to continue providing outstanding care, always with the view to challenge the status quo to deliver 'reimagined care'.

Dawn's story

Dawn had missed out on spinal rehabilitation because her spinal injury was a secondary consequence of her cancer.

It was thanks to a suggestion from her NDIS plan coordinator that Dawn became aware of Sargood on Collaroy in 2021. With the assistance of The Sargood Foundation who funded travel costs, Dawn had her first experience of what spinal injury rehabilitation could mean for her.

According to Jessica Allen, Clinical Operations Manager, the team at Sargood 'opened Dawn's mind to things she wasn't even aware she could do for herself', giving her a better understanding of bladder, bowel, and skin care.

Working with the Sargood team, Dawn learned how she could be more independent in her care and rely less on others for her daily needs. Trialling Activities of Daily Living showed her better ways to manage her life. Dawn was able to raise her expectations and confidence of what she was capable of.

Through Sargood's carers, Dawn was also able to connect with a spinal injury community, work with therapists in the adapted gym, and has since completed the Skills for Independence course that was hosted at Sargood. "It has made a world of difference to me - and to what my future looks like, and what I see as possible for me," says Dawn.

“Seeing the way to navigate the world through the experiences of other wheelchair users has been amazing.”

Dawn Miller-Argue

"I learnt so much about what was possible and the type of questions to ask about my own physiotherapy or occupational therapy sessions. Seeing the way to navigate the world through the experiences of other wheelchair users has been amazing," she adds.

Dawn is also proud to be a member of the Sargood Consumer Advisory Group which meets twice a year and is a valued advocate and sounding board for innovative ideas for the team at Sargood.

"Sargood makes such an extraordinary difference to my life so if there is any way I could give constructive feedback, I am more than happy to do that.

"I was also interested to understand why and how Sargood operates - what its intention is," she says.

Dawn also acknowledges the value of having diverse membership on the advisory group. "All three of us have different points of view, different priorities, and different conditions; and our feedback has been quite different.

"I find that very engaging and I like seeing how other people approach issues. It is one of the great things about the advisory group," she says.

Dawn is looking forward to learning more about Sargood's operations and continuing her work on the advisory group, which she describes as 'quite humbling.'



Sargood on Collaroy client Dawn Miller-Argue with Skills for Independence participants.



breakthru support worker
Marise supporting clients
develop their numeracy and
literacy skills.



DESIGNED FOR SCALE

Building for the future



Customer Service Manager Rachael (L)
with Support Worker Alyssa (R).

A key element of a growth ready organisation is robust and scalable information systems that can expand and adapt to the future needs of the business.

Strong systems, with embedded and automated processes ensure organisations can replicate everyday business processes as new locations or operations are added, while delivering improved services to their customers.

In line with its growth strategy and to achieve higher levels of support and efficiencies, Royal Rehab is making a significant investment in new information systems and associated technologies to support its IT, HR, finance, marketing, and customer service functions.

Following detailed needs analysis, new fit-for-purpose cloud-based systems have been selected. In the coming financial year, these solutions will replace multiple legacy systems and manual processes widely used across the organisation.

Project benefits include, improved efficiencies, collaboration, new best practice processes, and the potential for faster and improved decision making through the availability of enhanced business data and intelligence.

Work is also underway to implement a new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) to capture clear and consistent customer information and provide better customer insights. In addition to the contribution to sales and marketing activities, the CRM will help improve the customer experience from the enquiry to the onboarding stage. In line with its strategy, these system enhancements will position Royal Rehab to reliably welcome growth as it expands its horizons.



A culture where people thrive



Freya the Royal Rehab assistance dog with the team at Royal Rehab Ryde's Brain Injury Unit.



Looking out for customers and for each other

As the nation continued to cope with the on-going effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, so too did Royal Rehab. Health systems and in particular hospitals, were on the front lines since the pandemic's earliest beginnings. Despite numerous lockdowns and uncertainty, staff across the organisation worked tirelessly to deliver a comprehensive response, overcoming significant financial and operational challenges.

Reflecting on the events of FY22, Denise Thomas, Chief Operating Officer at Royal Rehab, says she was humbled by and deeply proud of the immense skill, strength and stamina demonstrated by staff across the organisation. "In COVID we found our group strength and together we delivered some amazing outcomes. We had to learn to lean on each other and show compassion for each other," says Denise.

Ensuring the continuity of services and the safety of customers, clients and staff was a major focus and Royal Rehab's Leadership and Response Teams played a key role in guiding and helping the organisation stay agile and responsive to changing government COVID-19 mandates.

Staff across the organisation shared their resources, strengths and expertise freely - whether it was sourcing PPE or COVID-19 test kits, working together to interpret and implement government mandates, or manage risk in an operational setting, the team worked together, supporting each other both practically and emotionally.

Sharing the load

Once again, the organisation worked in partnership with the NSW Ministry of Health to support the NSW government's pandemic response. To reduce public hospital waiting lists and to free up beds in public hospitals for COVID-19 admissions, the Royal Rehab leadership worked closely with area health networks to take in extra public patients from the Sydney and Northern Sydney Local Health Districts.

As public patients were admitted to Royal Rehab's private and MetroRehab hospitals, highly skilled staff were deployed from other areas across the organisation to help support the increase in admissions. The Spinal Injury Unit staff stepped up to the challenge and undertook mentoring and supervision of private hospital staff to ensure a continuity of care, specifically for patients with complex equipment and care needs. Spinal cord injury physiotherapists and occupational therapists worked across the private hospital providing much needed support.

MetroRehab
Hospital clients
in an PD Warrior
exercise session.



Senior nurses from the Brain Injury Unit supported their Spinal Unit colleagues, whilst several Sargood on Collaroy clinicians and therapists were also utilised in mentoring and supervision capacities.

Commenting on the strength and special nature of the collaboration, Denise Thomas says "Our relationships with the Local Health Districts meant that we were busy, and our hospitals were full because we opened to both public and private patients. We were a trusted provider of excellent care during a time of intense challenge for everyone – and that trust comes from the many years of hard work invested in building such strong partnerships."

Keeping customers safe and connected

Throughout the various lockdowns the priority remained – to keep safe those in Royal Rehab's care. Lockdowns were a particularly challenging time for everyone and staying connected online became a lifeline for clients as well as their families and friends.

With support from the capable IT team led by Darren Hunter, Executive Manager IT, technology solutions were delivered swiftly.

Doctors undertook 'virtual rounds' for patients and MetroRehab Hospital set up FaceTime and Zoom meetings for clients to connect with family and friends. The Spinal Injury and Brain Injury Units instigated a 'virtual visitors program' where staff assisted clients to stay connected using a range of devices including phones, iPads and computers. They also set up a weekly online supermarket order for clients, so they could continue to access those little treats and necessities during lockdowns that would normally be delivered by friends and family.

For those in disability services across Royal Rehab and breakthru, supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of clients was paramount.

In response to a growing demand for mental health support during the pandemic, breakthru developed new programs such as mindfulness, keeping well and art therapy, which were all delivered remotely. Telehealth was used to continue to deliver support services and to maintain a sense of normalcy when disability support workers could not conduct routine in-person visits. To keep spirits up clients in supported accommodation received special hamper and gift card deliveries. Staff also rallied to support their colleagues by organising hamper drops of their own.

Acting breakthru General Manager Peta Maskell praises the efforts of her team at every turn saying, "Our staff at breakthru rose to every challenge we put to them during this intensely difficult period. With every decision we made, we had our customers' best interests at heart."

The collaborative attitude of the team members who were looking out for their clients and for one another highlights the special culture that exists across the organisation. Chief People Officer Phil Dibley remarks, "The way people supported each other to mobilise and respond, talks to the culture of our organisation in such a positive way."

“ We all had to roll up our sleeves, push through and just do it. All our leaders believed passionately in what they were doing and why – their purpose, to keep safe those in their care, to look after each other, and to look after their staff. ”

Denise Thomas, Chief Operating Officer,
Royal Rehab



“The team is keen to support clients the best they can – and that really resonated with me.”

Marcella Gretch, Education and Training Coordinator, Disability Services



BETTER TOGETHER: MAKE IT HAPPEN AS A TEAM

Marcella Gretch, Education and Training Coordinator

A registered nurse for over 30 years, as well as extensive experience working in health education, Marcella oversees mandatory training for the 400+ staff working across Royal Rehab's Disability Services team - making sure that current practices are in line with NDIS standards and are keeping staff and clients safe.

Marcella also runs the onboarding program for new staff, checking that they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Her new role is aimed at improving the practical skills of staff and strengthening and embedding compliance processes and procedures.

To extend the reach of the education and training programs, Marcella delivers both hands on training and train-the-trainer workshops to service managers and team leaders.

She also conducts face-to-face workshops and assesses staff in the field to make sure they feel comfortable and safe in their roles which can often include important tasks such as administering medication.

Marcella says what she finds rewarding is watching that 'light bulb' moment that people experience when they are undergoing their training – and seeing how that translates into better care for clients. In the 12 months since her appointment, Marcella has already seen a significant improvement in practice amongst staff due to the increased focus on training, and she has plans to create even more training opportunities including the expansion of e-learning.

Marcella says that what strikes her most is the culture at Royal Rehab. She says, "It's the people that keep me in my role. The team is keen to support clients the best they can – and that really resonates with me."



Marea Steel, Business Improvement, Infection Control and Education Coordinator

An experienced registered nurse, working in both the public and private sectors, as well as in various quality and education roles for more than 30 years, Marea joined MetroRehab Hospital as a registered nurse in 2018. Not long after however, Marea saw an opportunity to apply her wide range of skills and experience and moved into her current role as Business Improvement, Infection Control and Education Coordinator.

Marea describes her role, as 'ensuring the quality of all patient-centred care and making sure that the education needs of staff are maintained'.

Her role spans business improvement, maintaining patient satisfaction, managing incidents and complaints, and ensuring that MetroRehab Hospital is meeting all its accreditation requirements - both National Standards and NSW Health Accreditation requirements.

Marea also oversees mandatory training and education in-service sessions for staff. She says her role is a supportive one in which she is always happy to 'lend an ear' and work through any issues or concerns that staff may have. "I'm not just nursing focused, I'm organisation focused," she says.

Finding ways to solve problems and improve service delivery are two aspects of the role that attracted Marea, as is the flexibility that her role provides: which includes a four-day working week, and the opportunity to vary those days, depending on her work or home life requirements.

Marea describes the work environment at MetroRehab Hospital as 'very welcoming.' "It's a lovely place to work," she says. "What I like is that there are no divisions within the teams. It's not always about the work; my colleagues also see me as a person with a life and family. It's incredibly supportive."

Marea also sees the benefits of being part of a larger organisation through Royal Rehab. She says it provides her with opportunities to discuss ideas and access support from across the organisation. "It's not a critical environment, it's supportive, and there is the opportunity to gain experience in different areas."

Marea says that customers often remark that the care and expertise they received from MetroRehab Hospital is well beyond what they expected. "The care and the expertise are there, the quality of care we give, our medical expertise, our staff, even the quality of the food - it's all here. It's a great place to work," she says.

David Simpson, Occupational Therapist

David's role as occupational therapist includes meeting one-on-one with guests to provide clinical occupational therapy services, running group sessions and workshops, and developing the services and facilities on offer at Sargood on Collaroy.

Highly experienced, David has worked in spinal injury management for 20 years across different settings including Moorong, Royal North Shore Hospital, and in private practice. He says he feels privileged to work at a place like Sargood on Collaroy which is all about innovation and breaking new ground.

Electronic assistive technology is a key area of interest for David. He is always looking for new ways to expand Sargood's offerings to be more inclusive and accessible, and to make stays that much more enjoyable and relaxing.

Overhauling the home automation system in the guest rooms to make them more accessible, developing a 3D printing course for guests to learn how to use 3D printing to create their own solutions to their functional barriers; developing a customised controller to allow people with high level spinal cord injuries to drive remote control cars with their mouth; introducing new daily living equipment, and providing the latest in adaptive console, PC, and virtual reality video gaming

equipment are just some of the many improvements David has introduced.

"Sargood is already an incredible facility, but there is always room for improvements," David says, showing his passion to find new and better ways to improve accessibility. Some projects David has in the pipeline include introducing a control system to allow hands-free use of the elevators, so guests can move between floors without assistance, and collaborating on the development of an app that allows drone flying with mouth-operated joysticks.

What makes Sargood special is the depth of knowledge across the team, and the supportive environment in which staff are encouraged to brainstorm ideas and bring them to life. David is an integral part of this, bringing his passion for helping those with spinal cord injuries and combining it with his incredible creativity to identify clever solutions to unique problems. Everyone at Sargood is waiting to see what ideas he comes up with next!



Occupational Therapist, David Simpson (centre) with clients Greg Hulton (L) and Nathan Black (R).

Iain Irving, Occupational Therapist

Iain has worked as an occupational therapist at Royal Rehab for the past eighteen years. Over that time Iain has worked in a wide variety of teams including the old Coorabel General Rehab Unit, the Spinal Injury Unit, the Brain Injury Community Rehab Team, the Spinal Outreach Service, the Driving Assessment and Rehab Team, and the Sexuality Service. He has also had the opportunity to act in management roles in the Occupational Therapy Department and the Brain Injury Community Rehab Team.

Speaking about his time at Royal Rehab Iain remarks, "If you had said to me that I would be here for eighteen years when I first started, I would not have believed you!" Having the opportunity to explore a variety of roles has really helped Iain find his passion.

When asked what makes Royal Rehab special, Iain says it is both the services offered to clients, and the culture. He describes Royal Rehab's services as 'first class' – and the culture as one in which 'everyone is trying to get the best results for clients, and staff are looked after'.

Taking time to celebrate both staff and client achievements such as the 'Wall of Fame,' where clients get to share their stories and inspire others, are two areas where Iain says Royal Rehab really excels.



A key motivator for Iain is being able to support clients who have sustained a traumatic injury to achieve the things they want to do. It could be trying something new or resuming an activity in a modified way. For Iain, it's important to know that he has made a difference.

Currently Iain is working in the Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team and the Sexuality Service - a recent initiative aimed at providing sexual health and relationship services for people with injury, illness, or disability. According to Iain, providing people with holistic supports or assisting them with the skills to go on a date or resume a level of intimacy was not commonly addressed in people's rehab journey previously.

Iain looks forward to helping more people achieve their goals over the coming year and to collaborating with his colleagues to develop even better services. He feels that this client centred approach is something that he shares with colleagues right across Royal Rehab."

“At Royal Rehab there really is a client driven focus from the top to the bottom.”

Iain Irving, Occupational Therapist,
Royal Rehab

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2021 saw Royal Rehab join a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government and not-for-profit organisations with the endorsement of its inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

RAPs provide an important framework for organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation.

The recent merger with not-for-profit organisation breakthru created an incredible opportunity to advance reconciliation efforts across a larger number of locations. Spanning 25 sites across three states: from Cairns in the north; to Melbourne in the south; and west of the Great Dividing Range to Dubbo, Coonabarabran, and centres in Regional New South Wales - developing a RAP was never more important.

Built on the concepts of relationships, respect and opportunities, the organisation's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan includes a series of tangible actions, guiding both internal actions as well as how Royal Rehab operates more broadly in the communities that it serves.

The plan includes actions that seek to:



Increase the understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights.



Establish and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.



Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.



Increase the diversity of Royal Rehab's suppliers to support improved economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“These are important first steps in formalising our organisation's reconciliation journey and learning more about the work we can do for a better Australia for all.”

Matt Mackay, Chief Executive Officer,
Royal Rehab

Artist spotlight: indigenous artist Sabrina Spencer

Leading the design aesthetics of Royal Rehab's RAP document is a piece of artwork called Bush Medicine by indigenous artist Sabrina Spencer.

Sabrina paints in a reduced monochromatic palette, predominantly painting two major Dreaming stories, one being the Bush Onion or Bush Medicine.

Through repetition of pattern, Sabrina creates movement and depth, and an overall contemporary aesthetic.

In 2020 Sabrina exhibited at Art Paris and is proving to be a much sought-after artist with a distinctive op-art style.

Sabrina's incredible artworks now hang in pride of place within Royal Rehab, Ryde and MetroRehab hospitals.



Isabelle Durkin, National Training Manager, breakthru College

Isabelle commenced with breakthru in June 2020 and is responsible for growing the organisation's highly regarded RTO portfolio. Prior to joining breakthru, Isabelle had a successful career in commercial marketing roles, later transitioning to the training sector where she led a team of 40 trainers and taught part-time at the University of NSW.

An accredited trainer with over 20 years of experience in both the education and healthcare sectors, Isabelle oversees the training of 600+ students each year, with the view to grow this number in the years to come.

In FY22 she oversaw the completion of online, accredited, and non-accredited training as well as 30 face-to-face classes in the centres of Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Mount Isa, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Sydney, Dubbo, Orange, the Blue Mountains, Taree and Port Macquarie.

Isabelle's leadership, along with the support of her growing team, saw breakthru College receive a 'high performer' rating from the NSW Department of Education - a rating only bestowed on organisations that achieve great educational and employment outcomes.

Currently Isabelle is focused on expanding the qualifications available through breakthru College - particularly in the aged care, disability care and mental health sectors - who are all experiencing industry-wide staff shortages.

Her favourite part of her role is waking up every day and making a meaningful change in her community. "We all help contribute to improving people's lives," she says.

"Seeing disadvantaged students graduate and the improved confidence they now hold, makes every day worth it. And it means that much more when you know they will go on to help others in need with their new qualification.

"I am so blessed to be surrounded by a motivated and dedicated team, who continuously strive to make a difference and are so enjoyable to work with," says Isabelle.

“ Seeing disadvantaged students graduate and the improved confidence they now hold, makes every day worth it. ”

Isabelle Durkin, National Training Manager, breakthru College



Field Officer, Joanne Ohl, from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (L) and Isabelle Durkin, National Training Manager breakthru (R).

Sarah Willoughby, National Clinical Lead - Behaviour Support

Having completed a Bachelor of Behavioural Science in psychology at the Queensland University of Technology and with her Master of Public Health at the University of Queensland underway, Sarah is an experienced practitioner in the field of positive behaviour support.

Sarah delivers supports to children, adolescents and adults with behaviours of concern and levels of intellectual capacity ranging from mild to significant.

Sarah approaches her work at breakthru with passion, empathy and creativity, working to build rapport with clients by treating each situation from a holistic and justice-oriented viewpoint.

Outside of her role, Sarah dabbles in children's entertainment work at birthday parties and for the Starlight Foundation, as well as performing in community-based musical theatre shows.

When she was first offered a role at breakthru in March 2022, due to unexpected personal circumstances, Sarah had to withdraw her application. Months later in June, Sarah was ready to get back into the workforce, making the decision to reach out to breakthru once again, albeit with trepidation about her prospects. To her surprise, the hiring manager, who is also Sarah's current manager Jo, valued her attitude, experience, and expertise, – finding a way to bring Sarah into the team. "I felt so valued as an individual," Sarah says. "To receive such a warm welcome months later really made me value the culture and level of compassion at breakthru so much more."

After starting as a Behaviour Support Practitioner, Sarah's expertise, combined with the passion she showed in her work, saw her recognised as one of breakthru's most outstanding clinicians. As a result, she was promoted to her current role as National Clinical Lead, Behaviour Support.

In addition to her duties assisting clients to manage complex behaviours, Sarah now leads the design, implementation, and improvement of services across the Behaviour Support practice nationally.



This includes areas such as reviewing practices, providing space for shared and informed discussion, professional development, and supervision.

"The opportunities that breakthru has presented throughout my time with them have been incredible," says Sarah. "I feel so supported and encouraged to contribute to our community and the industry in a meaningful way, which is the entire reason I began working in this industry."

Sarah is particularly proud of the community partnerships and collaborations with external agencies she has developed during her time at breakthru.

When asked what she enjoys most about working at breakthru Sarah says, "The culture! Transparency, honesty, integrity, kinship, and support, plus the other values that we hope for within our workplace and careers."

"They are so prominent and evident here at breakthru. There is truly a passion to strive for excellence and to assist customers to achieve their personal goals and improve quality of life."

"I have never worked within a setting that is so congruent with its declared values and aligned with my own."

"I read a quote recently which was akin to 'with the right people around us, we can achieve anything.' This resonated with me not only for my role at breakthru, but for my peers, our customers, and their supports."

"The people around us are truly resources and, if we value each other, as we should, we can make meaningful impact and progress through even the most challenging of obstacles," Sarah says.



OUR SERVICES



Royal Rehab client Feng Zhai with Allied Health Assistant Natalie Pedler during a hydrotherapy session.



breakthru Cairns client Taine achieves his employment goal at Bunnings.



A unique offering

Highly regarded for its expertise in brain and spinal cord injury as well as disability services, including through its merger with disability provider breakthru, no other Australian organisation offers such a comprehensive range of rehabilitation and disability services including:



Multidisciplinary rehabilitation and allied health therapy, including advanced rehabilitation technology.



Disability services support.



Supported accommodation services.



Mental health supports and employment services.



Training services for disability support workers, aged care workers, allied health assistants and mental health professionals.

breakthru

breakthru is a for-purpose organisation founded with the vision of changing lives by empowering people with disability to achieve their goals. A NDIS provider, Disability Employment Services (DES) and Registered Training Organisation (RTO), breakthru sees each person as an individual with unique needs, preferences, and aspirations.

Over the course of 25 years, driven by a commitment to offer choice, inclusion and respect as demonstrated in their approach to individualised services, breakthru has helped thousands of Australians to realise their dreams and unlock their potential.

breakthru's key services include:

Disability Support



Support Coordination – supporting people to get the most out of their NDIS plan and ensuring selected services deliver on their individual needs, expectations and goals.



Improved Daily Living, improved relationships and improved learning which supports clients to live more independently by developing, skills to live, communicate, relate and learn.



School Leaver Employment Support services to help navigate the transition from school to the real world.



Disability Employment Services to help people living with an injury, illness, or disability, find and keep a job.



Improved Living Arrangements offering support and guidance to find appropriate accommodation or to improve current living circumstances.

Mental Health

Working in partnership with clients, carers, families and health professionals to develop and implement tailored recovery plans which may include a variety of behavioural and vocational supports, breakthru offers one-on-one or group counselling sessions to help clients manage stress, anxiety, anger and depression; build capacity for independence; or to assist with the transition into education or a professional environment.

Allied Health

Be it clinical counselling, behavioural supports, occupational therapy or psychology, breakthru offers evidence-based allied health services to meet individual goals and build independence.

Disability Employment Services

Whether it is short or long-term assistance, breakthru helps clients find and keep a job that's right for them.

Support includes:



Providing recruitment advice and job-matching services.



Help designing a job that meets individual goals and capabilities.



On-the-job support to ensure people settle into their new job comfortably.



Training information and awareness activities for both the employee and the employer.

breakthru College

breakthru is a registered Training Organisation providing a range of accredited and short courses that are responsive to industry needs. Training is both personalised and self-paced to ensure that all students obtain the skills they need to succeed.

Family Mental Health

The Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS) aims to improve mental health outcomes for children and young people, and their families.

FMHSS works with families to provide free, flexible support that is suitable for children, young people and families affected by, or at risk of, mental health issues through access to a range of early intervention and education services. Help includes counselling, advocacy, referrals, and personalised family supports.



breakthru College students celebrate at their graduation ceremony in Townsville.



Patrizia (L) and Lucy (R)
cooking up a storm in
the kitchen.

Highlights

Strength in adversity

It was another eventful year for breakthru, with natural disasters such as floods, bush fires and the ongoing pandemic presenting significant challenges for employees and customers alike.

With COVID-19 impacting services across all regions, staff were all too often required to rapidly adapt to changing Public Health Orders, often with very short notice. Through it all, and after another year of constant change, breakthru continued to strengthen its services, maintaining a strong financial position and finalised the highly successful merger with Royal Rehab, thanks to the amazing work of the teams across both organisations.

Transported by bus purchases

Taree, Port Macquarie, Dubbo and Townsville clients were thrilled with the purchase of four brand-new Toyota HiAce vans in FY22. The new vehicles were a welcome addition, helping clients connect with the community, and with each other, after months of COVID lockdowns and isolation.

Kicking goals for disability

Focused on making their club more inclusive, Dubbo's local footy club, the Macquarie Raiders ran a disability tag league for clients of disability organisations in Dubbo. Many of the participants were breakthru clients, so this year breakthru decided to jump on board as a sponsor.



breakthru Dubbo clients playing football.

Clients had the full season experience. They met professional league tag players including star players from the Rabbitohs, they received full training kits, and experienced opportunities to play games in the main stadium. The season was a great success, helping the club to get back on its feet after the impacts of COVID-19, with participants enjoying both the experience and the opportunity.

International Day of People with Disability

International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) continues to be one of the most important events of the year, and in 2021 breakthru celebrated by hosting its annual FOCUS event, an event which began in 2019 as a way of showcasing and celebrating the day.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the event was held virtually in the form of an online art gallery, where people from across Australia could view the work of some of breakthru's talented customers.

In the lead up to the December event, more than 20 customers made submissions to the online art gallery, with many commenting that the new challenge and creative outlet provided a much-needed reprieve from the daily lock-down routine which they had endured for months.

When launched on December 3, interest far exceeded expectations, with the gallery seeing over 500 visitors in the first week alone. While the talent was exceptional, one piece that stood out was from Arnold, a talented artist from St Albans, Victoria.

Arnold's piece (right) uses soft pastels and features a man in a surgical mask. The man's head represents the earth, signifying the impact the pandemic has had on mental health across the world. The man also has wings, which represent hope as we fly forward into the future.

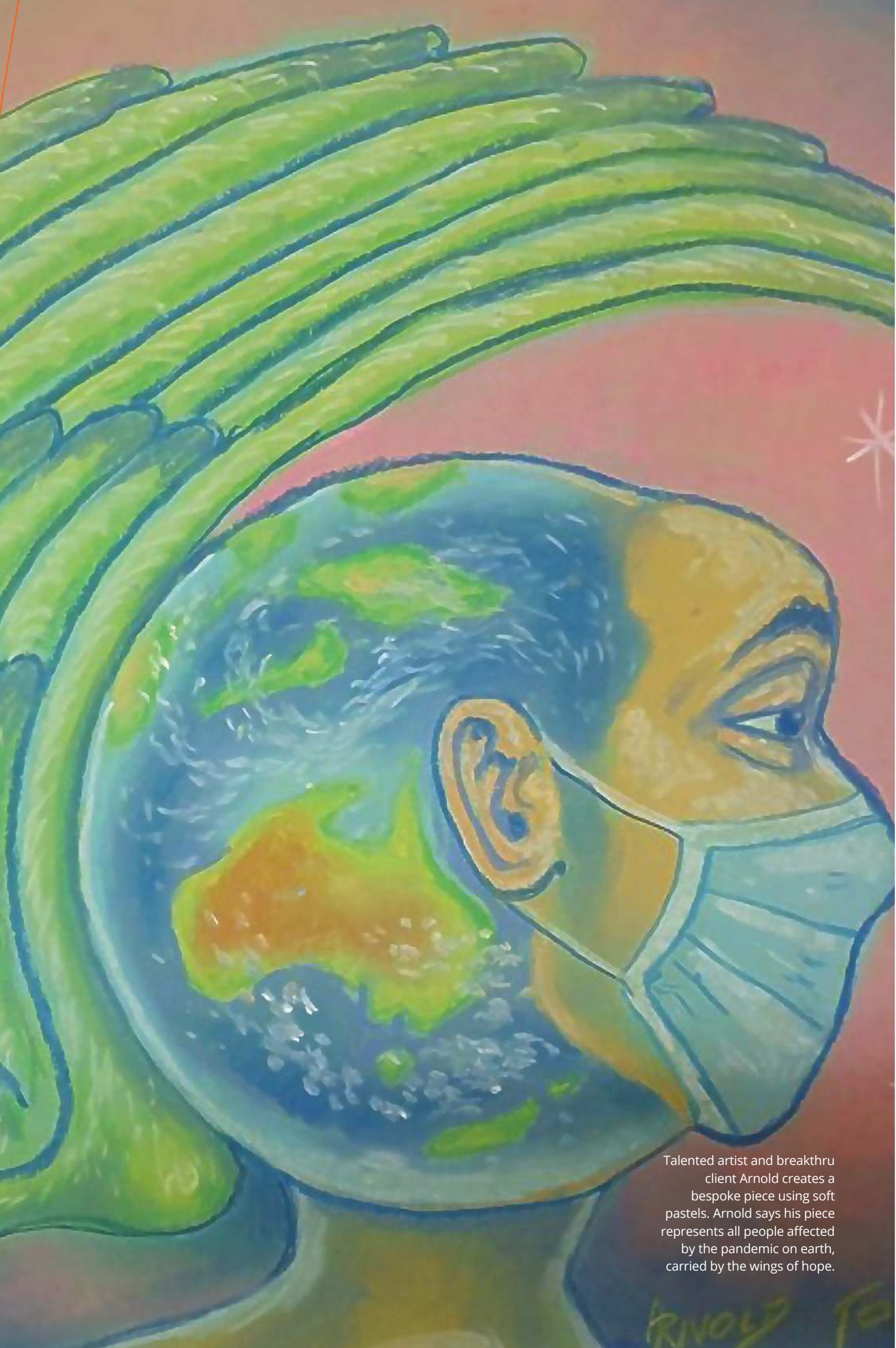
Arnold describes his artwork as a medium through which he manages his mental health and the stresses caused by the pandemic.

breakthru looks forward to more exciting events and celebrations for IDPWD in FY23 and extends a special thanks to customers who gave the time and effort to participate and make the event a success.

The year ahead

Over the coming year breakthru will continue to progress and build on the merger work already underway.

Some of the projects on the horizon include increasing the number of therapy services, opening new accommodation services in Coonabarabran and Atherton in QLD and a fully accessible café in Tuggerah.



Talented artist and breakthrough client Arnold creates a bespoke piece using soft pastels. Arnold says his piece represents all people affected by the pandemic on earth, carried by the wings of hope.

Jack's story

When Jack first came to breakthru almost three years ago, he presented as a shy and reserved young man who lacked confidence and self-belief.

Born with Down Syndrome, Jack had faced many challenges growing up, and despite being an affectionate, caring and thoughtful young man, he often worried about not being able to express himself clearly, especially when communicating with strangers. He also believed that people did not want to talk to him.

As with many young people, as Jack was about to finish school, he began to consider employment but didn't know where to start. So, when he heard about breakthru's School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) program, he immediately reached out.

Once connected into SLES, Jack spent time working on his mindset, speech and communication skills. With this self-development he slowly started to come out of his shell, feeling more comfortable being around people, taking part in conversations, and feeling more confident in expressing his opinions.

With this progress, Jack and his support network moved to the next phase - to gain real-world experience. Jack's Support Worker Quinn knew Jack was now ready to start a new chapter in life and organised a working trial at a local café called Archie & The Bear Café.

Meeting Jack, café owner Chai was impressed, giving him the opportunity to work on a casual basis.

Jack very soon became a key member of the team, his charming personality ensuring his popularity with the customers too.

Jack also became a media star when local media took an interest in his story, featuring him on both WIN News Cairns and 7 News.

Commenting on Jack's progress, breakthru support worker Quinn says, "Jack has gone from being someone who was quite shy and worried about his speech and being understood, to someone that's happy to speak to anyone.

"I think he's finally figured out that we care about what he's going to say. We take the time to listen to him because what he has to say is interesting and important."

Jack is ecstatic at his progress as well and is thrilled to see all of his hard work paying off. "I enjoy making the coffee and the cakes.

"I feel happy. It goes right to my heart. Because all my friends are like a big, big family," he says.



breakthru Cairns client
Jack smiles for the
camera while on the job
at Archie & The Bear cafe.

Charlie's story

Moving from his home in Fiji to Australia in 2019, Charlie had big dreams to study and enter a career in nursing motivated by a passion to help others. However, whilst preparing to apply for a Bachelor of Nursing in late 2019, a change in personal circumstances meant Charlie was unable to pursue his dream career.

Known as a hard worker with a heart of gold, Charlie set his sights on fulfilling his dream of finding a career where he could help people. He began to research his options, however, just as he was ready to commence his studies and enter the workforce, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

As restrictions began to limit movement, Charlie suddenly found himself lacking study options, without a job and with few alternatives. It was a year since his big move to Australia, and Charlie was becoming increasingly anxious. Intent on finding work that would allow him to care for people, during an online search Charlie came across breakthru College. Seeing that many of the qualifications available would lead him to a role in care, Charlie lodged an enquiry to find out more.

Charlie received a call from breakthru's Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) Coordinator Tracy the very next day to discuss his options.

"After explaining my circumstances to Tracy, she suggested that I apply to study a Certificate III in Individual Support," says Charlie.

"Taking her advice on board, I decided to take the plunge and steer away from nursing in favour of community services. That afternoon, I handed in my application and within just a few days I was enrolled to study."

With restrictions still in effect, courses could not commence in-classroom and breakthru College instead transitioned to online learning.

"Despite the lack of face-to-face class time, I found my trainers adapted well and delivered each unit perfectly," says Charlie. "Being support workers themselves, they were all very well prepared and equipped with the knowledge needed to conduct their roles as support workers."

"I was also pleased to discover that in addition to the wonderful trainers, breakthru College could also help me find work placement once I completed the necessary theory in my qualification," he adds.



breakthru College graduate Charlie.

Having witnessed Charlie's exemplary work ethic as a student and knowing his warm and caring personality, Tracy knew just the place for Charlie.

"We've worked with local service provider – Kith and Kin – for a number of years here in Townsville," she says.

"Like many providers, they were looking for compassionate and reliable candidates with a genuine interest in supporting people in need. If anyone meets these criteria, I thought it had to be Charlie. After a brief discussion, we agreed to put his name forward for work placement and the rest is history."

Following a six-week work placement as part of his qualification, Charlie's outstanding work ethic saw Kith and Kin extend a permanent offer of employment which Charlie accepted with great enthusiasm.

With close to 12 months of employment under his belt, Charlie's story doesn't end there. As one of Townsville's exemplary new support workers, Charlie was nominated for Equity VET Student of the Year as part of the Queensland Training Awards.

In a sea of hundreds of applicants, Charlie was named one of three finalists, receiving much deserved recognition for the fantastic work he does every day.

"breakthru College really kick started my career," says Charlie.

"Their help and support have been instrumental to my success, and I look forward supporting those in need through my role at Kith and Kin."

Sargood on Collaroy

Situated on the headland of Sydney's Collaroy Beach, Sargood on Collaroy is a world-class purpose-built resort providing accessible holidays, short-term accommodation, and assistance for people with spinal cord injury (SCI), and their families and carers.

Proudly operated by Royal Rehab, Sargood on Collaroy is a collaboration between the Sargood Foundation, icare and a private benefactor. Recognised as a global leader, the award-winning resort enjoys breathtaking views and is fully accessible. Accommodation, care, and equipment are tailored to meet the individual's needs helping to create an enjoyable and supportive experience for guests every time.

Modern, spacious rooms and suites feature the very latest in assistive technology, advance home automation, adaptive equipment and daily living aids, making it that much easier for those who are transitioning from rehabilitation to home. Guests can also select from a wide range of specifically designed, accessible recreation and leisure activities or take advantage of the state-of-the-art-gym.

Sargood boasts consistently high customer satisfaction ratings with many of its guests returning for repeat stays.

Highlights

The COVID-19 pandemic again required Sargood to take precautionary measures and close its doors from July to December 2021. During this time Sargood's highly trained, specialist staff were redeployed to support critical operations across Royal Rehab – including in the Spinal Injury Unit and Royal Rehab's Private Hospital.

This enabled Royal Rehab to continue to deliver high standards of care for clients, whilst keeping staff and the broader community safe. It was also a fantastic professional development opportunity for staff, fostering cross collaboration and skills exchange across the Royal Rehab teams.

Reimagining the customer experience

Collaborating with customers, carers, and their families to re-imagine service delivery has always been part of Sargood's DNA. This collaborative approach was stepped up a notch with the appointment of the Sargood Consumer Advisory Group. Ranging in gender, age, and level of spinal cord injury, the three-member Board comprising of Lee Ferrier, Dawn Miller-Argue and Alex Richter (all accommodation guests as well as Club Sargood clients), held their first meeting on June 15th. The group provides a valuable sounding board for new ideas and blue-sky thinking, examining all facets of Sargood's operations. They will help to inform decisions around service provision, including suggesting new courses and activities and reviewing guest feedback.

This collaboration between the management team and customers helps to improve every touchpoint in the Sargood guest and client experience.



Skills for Independence

Equipping people with spinal cord injury with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to improve their health, further independence and share life experiences was the primary purpose of a new tailor-made five-day course run by the Australian Quadriplegic Association and hosted at Sargood.

Developed and led by people with lived experience the 'Skills for Independence' course provided the essentials to help progress post rehab, transition back home or adjust to a change in circumstances.

The course received fantastic feedback from those who attended and will now become a regular feature on the Sargood calendar.

New activities and courses

A number of new activities and courses were added to the ever-expanding list of activities on offer at Sargood.



Adaptive mountain biking



In-house intensive exercise



Scuba Diving – for certified divers



Axe throwing



Paint and sip art classes using adaptive brushes



99%

Overall score for efficiency and quality of service.



97%

Guests say their stay at Sargood had a positive impact on their life.



97%

Guests say that Sargood met their expectations.



81%

Guests picked up new and useful tips for their lifestyle.



81%

Guests gained more confidence in skills for recreation and leisure.



The Sargood on Collaroy team.



Sargood on Collaroy Program Coordinator Sebastian van Veenendaal preparing for an adaptive mountain biking course.

Club Sargood client enjoying a gym session.

Club Sargood

At Club Sargood, members and hotel guests can participate in rehabilitative, strength and conditioning, and fitness-based training regimes supported by experienced professionals. The state-of-the-art facility on site at Sargood on Collaroy boasts fully accessible and adaptive gym equipment and amenities, and is open seven days a week for hotel guests and club members.

Staff work alongside club members and hotel guests to develop tailored rehabilitative or exercise programs to meet individual goals and needs. Gym members who are usually locals, benefit from regular assessments to monitor progress, while hotel guests continue to be supported with home exercise programs and telehealth consults once they have returned home.

Club Sargood continued to go from strength to strength in FY22 with member numbers and hours of therapy steadily increasing across the 12 months of operation, so much so that the gym space has been expanded to accommodate the additional volume, much welcomed by club members and hotel guests.

“There is probably not a better gym, with a better ocean view, than we have here at Club Sargood.”

James Dakin, General Manager, Sargood



105

Total clients



58

New clients



5

New clients per month



55%

Growth in one year



Sargood General Manager James Dakin with Guest Attendant Barbara Frerck and Susan Johnston, Sargood Foundation Executive Director.

A job well done

Congratulations to Anthony Robertson and Barbara Frerck, the recipients of the Sargood Foundation's Sheree Hurley Staff Awards, for providing excellence in guest care and teamwork.

The year ahead

Over the coming year Sargood is looking forward to welcoming returning clients, but most importantly, reaching even more people with spinal cord injuries. Sargood will be connecting with more Allied Health professionals and clinician networks across the Eastern Seaboard to drive referrals. Key staff will be travelling interstate to meet with clinicians across key spinal services – showcasing Sargood's equipment and services, and encouraging those with SCI to travel to Sargood for the full experience!

Matt's story

Matt became a quadriplegic six years ago following a car accident. Since Sargood's opening, he has been a frequent guest and participant in the range of adapted recreational activities and courses on offer.

Sargood on Collaroy has created a trusted space for Matt, complementing the care involved in his high-level spinal injury, and providing him with the opportunity to trial and enjoy the wide range of activities and opportunities available. Whether it's remote-control model sail boats and cars, drone flying, pottery or 3D printing, Matt has tried them all at Sargood.

"In the 3D printing course, we were asked to think of something we could make that would improve our lives. It really opened my eyes from a creative and technical perspective to what was possible. Engaging in the activities at Sargood allows me to experience the next level of independence."

Matt says he appreciates how inclusive the activities are for all participants including partners and family. "It's not just about me, it's recreational for everyone that's involved, which I really appreciate."

The relationship between Sargood staff and Matt is a true partnership, where Matt learns from staff and they learn from him. "We encourage feedback from all our guests," says Jessica Allen, Clinical Operations Manager at Sargood. "Matt is excellent at putting forward feedback in a really positive way."

Matt is also open to new staff attending his care sessions to observe and learn. Matt's unique skill for directing his own care and answering staff questions patiently and kindly has shown staff a unique perspective and has created a respectful, two-way learning environment which has resulted in many service improvements at Sargood.

Matt is now back at work and studying part-time, but he is still a regular face, taking advantage of the constantly evolving range of activities and programs on offer.

Matt and his wife Allison attribute Sargood's specialness to many things, but most particularly to the warm, welcoming, and considerate staff. "When we go to Sargood, we don't need to worry about anything. Everything is taken care of, and nothing is ever a hassle" Allison says.

In fact Matt and Allison chose to honeymoon at Sargood, where upon arrival, they were welcomed by the team with champagne, flowers, and chocolates. "It was wonderful being there on the headland. We loved sitting on the balcony watching the waves come in. The staff really went above and beyond looking after us," Matt says.



Sargood on Collaroy
client Matt Allen.

MetroRehab Hospital

MetroRehab Hospital provides specialist neurological rehabilitation, supporting the recovery of patients with conditions such as stroke, acquired brain injuries, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. Also known for cancer, cardiac disease, pain management and reconditioning programs, MetroRehab Hospital takes a patient-centred, multidisciplinary approach. Offering both inpatient and day programs, facilities include a fully equipped gymnasium with the latest in rehabilitation equipment and a heated hydrotherapy pool.

Highlights

FY22 once again saw MetroRehab Hospital supporting Sydney Local Health District's COVID-19 response through the admission and management of 148 public patients over the course of the year. Staff worked tirelessly to achieve strong clinical outcomes: providing high quality care, whilst keeping patients, staff, and the community safe. Patient satisfaction remained exceptional with 99% of patients saying that MetroRehab had met or exceeded their expectations.

 99%

Patients say that their expectations were met or exceeded

 148

Public patients
admitted

 3020

Same-day
private patients

 328

Multi-day
private patients

Client Steve Kourepis
pictured outside
MetroRehab Hospital.

MetroRehab client
Juliet Cranny during a
physiotherapy session.

Juliet's story

When she first arrived at MetroRehab Hospital from Concord Hospital following a stroke, Juliet says she 'couldn't do anything'; the stroke had significantly impacted her left side - her left arm was in a sling, she needed the assistance of two nurses to walk, her voice had lost its strength and when she spoke, her speech was slurred.

Juliet says that she did not know anything about MetroRehab Hospital prior to her admission but recalls that she was advised that it was one of the best places to go for rehab.

Having spent six weeks at MetroRehab Hospital, Juliet now agrees. "I was quite impressed," she says. "The staff, the attitude of everyone, and the nursing care was so attentive. Nothing was ever a trouble to them. It was the same with the clinicians as well."

Juliet's daily schedule involved a combination of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech pathology. Gradually, she was able to do more for herself and after just three weeks she was able to get out of the sling.



Three months later, Juliet can now do so much more with her left hand, the strength in her voice has returned, and her speech has improved dramatically. She is also walking independently, using only a crutch, to get around.

Following discharge, Juliet returns to MetroRehab Hospital twice a week for physiotherapy where she is improving the strength in her arm and leg; her balance and her gait; and her fine motor skills and endurance. "I feel very grateful to everyone at MetroRehab Hospital. They show me such kindness and are always so positive," she says.

Brain Injury Unit

Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit (BIU) is a highly specialised service providing inpatient traumatic brain injury (TBI) specialist rehabilitation. One of only three state-wide services, the unit is dedicated to supporting adults aged 16 to 65 years with the skills, function, and confidence to live life as independently as possible following injury.

Individually tailored programs are delivered through a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals including rehabilitation doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals. On-site resources include a gymnasium, hydrotherapy pool, productive garden, and adaptive exercise equipment. The inpatient service is also complemented by the Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team (BICRT) who provide support, care and advice, once inpatient rehabilitation is complete.

Staff demonstrated incredible resilience during what was another challenging year, as the teams worked collaboratively and seamlessly to provide patients with high quality care and support.

The year ahead

As some activities were paused or postponed due to COVID-19, the BIU is looking forward to re-instigating some of its patient-centred activities including discharge ceremonies. These ceremonies celebrate the remarkable achievements of patients who are ready to be discharged - an important milestone in their rehabilitation journey.

Highlights

As Royal Rehab continued to work with the NSW Ministry of Health to support the COVID-19 response, senior nurses from the BIU were seconded to the Spinal Unit who were in turn, responding to the transfer of spinal unit patients from public hospitals into Royal Rehab's private hospital.

Brain Injury Unit client
Jun Guo with Freya.



Providing much needed 'furapy'

Freya is no ordinary Labrador. She has her own Royal Rehab staff identification card and works regular shifts in Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit and Private Hospital.

Known as a 'furapy' dog, Freya plays a vital role in providing social and emotional support to patients. Just like other members of staff, Freya makes her morning rounds, visiting patients who look forward to giving her a pat or a carrot treat.

Social Worker Lauren Bannerman says that Freya's presence on the ward helps to 'normalise' the unit. "Having Freya on the ward helps make it less clinical - especially for those who have been here a long time," Lauren says. "She also breaks down language barriers, creating meaningful opportunities for interaction."

Freya has her own work calendar and is booked in by therapists to assist with a range of tasks such as road safety or walking activities. She also supports language skills development, with patients learning how to give her instructions. On her scheduled breaks Freya likes to have a lie down and eat her lunch outside. She also likes belly rubs and rolling around in the garden.

Client, Jun Guo

Jun Guo arrived at Royal Rehab from Royal North Shore Hospital following a serious car accident, which resulted in severe brain injury, a broken collar bone, broken leg, and multiple injuries.

Under the care of the Brain Injury Unit, Jun has a full schedule each day, which includes speech therapy, physiotherapy, and speech pathology. Jun's wife and daughter Miranda visit each day to help with his care and provide support.

Jun is a dog lover and misses his toy poodle. So, Freya's visits are an absolute treat. As Jun's primary language is Mandarin, Freya also provides him with an opportunity to connect and communicate without language presenting a barrier. When Jun says 'bench,' Freya lifts her front paws up onto the side of his bed or the arm of his wheelchair while he pats her and feeds her healthy carrot treats. Miranda can see how Freya's presence relaxes her father whose ear-to-ear smile tells her how happy he is to see Freya.

"When Freya visits, Dad becomes visibly relaxed, and I can tell from his big smiles that he is very happy to see her," Miranda says.



Client Neil Pidgon with Freya.

Client, Neil Pidgon

Neil had a serious motorcycle accident in January 2022, resulting in traumatic injuries – a broken neck, broken leg, broken arm, broken ribs, a punctured lung, and severely damaged shoulder.

Neil is a huge fan of Freya, who knows his voice and visits him regularly, sitting in pole position next to his wheelchair for pats, attention, and carrot treats.

Neil says that he enjoys time with Freya, "She seems to know that I am a dog person," he says. "It's heart-warming to have a happy wagging tail visit you - she's always attentive."

Neil has always maintained a positive outlook throughout his recovery and looks forward to being reunited with his own dog Patch when he returns home. He is full of praise for the expert care and support he has received in Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit and is grateful for Freya's regular visits.

“Your whole body lights up when you see her. It's like seeing your best friend again.”

Neil Pidgon, client

Brain Injury Community Rehab Team (BICRT)

Part of the NSW state-wide Brain Injury Program, the Brain Injury Community Rehab Team (BICRT) are specialised clinicians who have extensive experience in adult brain injury. The comprehensive programs adopt a multidisciplinary approach and are customised for each client. Programs are delivered in clients' homes, in the community or at Royal Rehab, and are focused on what each client wants to achieve, and the areas that are important to them in their daily life.

Be Pain Smart Clinic

Clients with chronic pain often feel misunderstood or do not have their pain experience validated. The Be Pain Smart Service is a state-wide icare funded project, hosted by Royal Rehab, and managed by the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI).

In only its second year of operation, this new initiative is designed to address the negative effects of pain through a multidisciplinary assessment and management service for people with spinal cord injury and/or traumatic brain injury across NSW.

The Be Pain Smart Service has been going from strength to strength, running 50 clinics and providing 180 multi-disciplinary appointments over FY22, representing a significant increase on the previous year.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the clinics were run mainly via telehealth, with the remaining appointments being either face-to-face or a hybrid of face-to-face and telehealth as appropriate. The clinic also provides outreach services across NSW, with sessions held at Royal Rehab and five other sites, including virtual clinics at Prince of Wales Hospital (SCI), Liverpool Hospital (TBI), Tamworth (TBI), Port Kembla Hospital (TBI) and Mid-North Coast (TBI) and an on-site clinic visit at Prince of Wales Hospital (SCI).

Senior Clinical Psychologist Regina says, "In the Be Pain Smart Service, the whole team, medical doctors, physiotherapists, and clinical psychologists, listen to the client's whole story because we are not just treating their arm or their leg, but their whole body, person, and life.

"This gives the client the opportunity to understand how their pain impacts not only on their physical capacity and functional activities but also on their mental health, participation in leisure and recreational activities, and social connections.

"The intradisciplinary approach provides hope to the clients and a clear pathway for clinicians. Working closely as a team, and being present while another clinician assesses and educates a client ensures our team has a better understanding of each clinician's role in the intradisciplinary team.

"Collaboration is the best way to help our clients to manage their pain. Seeing the whole team together means the client gets all their questions answered," she says.

“The whole team, medical doctors, physiotherapists, and clinical psychologists listen to the client's whole story because we are not just treating their arm or their leg, but their whole body, person, and life.”

Regina, Senior Clinical Psychologist, Brain Injury Community Rehab Team



Client Naomi Deck.

Naomi's story

Fifteen years ago, Naomi was on her way to work when she was involved in a high speed motor vehicle accident which resulted in a significant traumatic brain injury, a broken back and two broken legs.

Naomi underwent intense rehabilitation for the first few years following the accident where she says that she had to, 'learn how to do everything again,' including how to sit and to swallow.

With time, Naomi was able to self-manage what she describes as her 'uncooperative body,' which includes right sided lower limb spasticity that causes her right foot to drop and curl. Naomi also has quadruple vision, meaning that she sees four of everything all the time.

Two years ago, Naomi started having a series of falls caused by her lower limb spasticity, including a serious fall down a flight of stairs where she sustained a second brain injury. One of the lecturers at the college where Naomi was undertaking her diploma in theology, suggested that she seek assistance from Royal Rehab. Her lecturer was a disability specialist and was familiar with Royal Rehab's services. Following a visit to her GP, Naomi was referred to Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation team.

Whilst Naomi had been receiving weekly physiotherapy for many years, she had not been seeing a physiotherapist that specialised in working with brain injury patients. When she started her physiotherapy with BICRT's specialist clinicians, Naomi immediately noticed a significant difference.

Assessing Naomi, the BICRT also referred her on to receive specialist care including Botox treatment to her right calf and foot which stopped her foot from tightening and turning in when she walked, reducing falls.

The team also recommended Naomi wear a nerve brace (Bioness L300- electrical stimulation device) on her right leg to help with her gait and leg function.

Naomi says the nerve brace was a 'game-changer' and she now walks with a normal gait. In fact, Naomi now walks approximately 12km every day!

The team's occupational therapists helped Naomi to extend the amount of time she could stand and helped her to address her jumbled handwriting; whilst Naomi can spell, she has trouble translating letters into the correct order onto the page.

Naomi's speech pathologist has also helped her with strategies to support her studies; she checks in with Naomi to make sure she is able to follow the work in class; and she organised a 'smart pen' or 'live scribe', that records lectures whilst Naomi is writing - and then sends the recordings to her computer. Significantly, she has also helped Naomi advocate for the opportunity to undertake verbal assessments instead of written assessments. Now able to complete assessment tasks orally, Naomi's grades have improved from a 51% average to a distinction average.

Presently Naomi works with vulnerable groups at her local church where she is Director of Community Care. She says she is incredibly grateful for all the support she has been provided by BICRT and Royal Rehab. "I have achieved all my goals - and they were not little goals," she says.

"Just having clinicians who understand the nuance of brain injury has made such a difference. I feel like Royal Rehab are advocating for me clinically and are referring me on to people who are helpful."

Naomi's advice for those considering contacting BICRT is not to hesitate. She says, "They'll help you to get closer to achieving what you want - my quality of life has improved exponentially, and I feel empowered to keep going."

Spinal Injury Unit

The Royal Rehab Spinal Cord Injury Unit (SIU) is one of only two units in New South Wales dedicated to providing specialist rehabilitation services to people who have sustained a traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI).

This specialist service, for which Royal Rehab is renowned, is delivered through a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals including rehabilitation doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals.

Individually tailored rehabilitation programs are goal directed and customised to enable clients to gain the skills and confidence to live life as independently as possible.

Highlights

In addition to the successful operation of the Spinal Cord Unit, the team provided additional staffing and support to Royal Rehab's Private Hospital. Working in partnership, they successfully managed the arrival of public patients transferred to the private hospital from Sydney and Northern Sydney Area Health services – as part of the NSW Ministry of Health's response to COVID-19.

Despite the many challenges presented by numerous lockdowns, the team also found time to review and improve the quality of information available to prospective patients at the pre-admission phase.



Client Charlotte
Zeederburg.

Easing the transition to rehab

Rehab can be a daunting experience, especially for those who don't know what to expect. The Spinal Injury Unit team wanted to make the transition to rehab easier by providing prospective patients with clear and detailed information about the rehabilitation process and facilities on offer at Royal Rehab.

Working collaboratively with Royal North Shore Hospital, a key referring hospital, the SIU team set about analysing the end-to-end customer experience so they could identify what pre-admission information was critical for new patients.

A comprehensive booklet was developed that included details about the admission process; rehabilitation program options; work, and study program options, and visitor and discharge information.

Patient feedback was sought to ensure the information was clear, relevant and accessible to clients with higher level SCI, with improvements made along the way including the addition of more photos and the development of a digital version. The three-way collaboration has ensured that clients entering Royal Rehab's Spinal Injury Unit now have a greater understanding of how they will be supported on their rehabilitation journey.

A smart idea

The use of 'smart' or assistive technology can greatly improve the independence and quality of life for individuals who have sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI). Voice activated software is just one piece of technology that is providing greater control for people with SCI.

In FY23 the Spinal Unit will be undertaking a scoping project to explore how it could introduce a range of 'smart' features including voice activated lights, blinds, TV, bed operation and a voice activated call bell system. The many benefits include increased client safety, particularly those with limited upper limb function, to be able to reliably use an adapted nurse call system to request assistance and increase client independence.

Providing clients with the opportunity to trial assistive technology can improve their experience throughout their time in hospital, and also allow them to trial this technology in preparation for returning home.

“I want to thank you for your endless kindness, patience, compassion, and determination to help Richard achieve his goals. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. I know Rich will never forget what you have done for and with him, and neither will I.”

Thank you note from Tanya Grassi, a client's mother

“ I feel very grateful to be in this amazing place. The access to the expertise, technology and community, all of that together, it's incredible. ”

Charlotte Zeederburg



Charlotte's story

Charlotte is an adventurous spirit with a passion for all things vintage, such as piloting tiger moth planes and riding her vintage motorcycle.

It was during one of these occasions while participating in a vintage and classic bike rally that Charlotte sustained her significant injuries. A freak accident, where the front wheel of her motorbike lost traction on loose gravel, caused her to become sandwiched between the bike and a wall.

Airlifted to Royal North Shore (RNS) hospital, Charlotte was found to have sustained eight broken vertebrae, seventeen broken ribs, a broken shoulder, wrist and ankle. She spent three and a half months at RNS prior to arriving at Royal Rehab's Spinal Injury Unit.

Of her time at Royal Rehab, Charlotte says she has 'loved every minute' of her rehabilitation journey. "I feel incredibly well looked after," she says, "the team of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses, social workers and psychologists have been amazing."

Charlotte has been particularly impressed with the way the team has collaborated with her to help her achieve her goals. "I told them that I wanted to become as independent as possible and to get my legs strong so I can start driving, and every single one of those goals has been ticked off," she says.

"They hear what I say and act accordingly," she adds.

During rehabilitation Charlotte's days have been both busy and varied, consisting of going to the gym, participating in occupational therapy and physiotherapy sessions, and accessing the hydrotherapy pool.

Sessions with social workers and psychologists have helped her to stay positive and driving lessons to help her get back a level of independence. Charlotte says that she also appreciates the constant encouragement and support she receives from the nursing staff, "the nurses are amazing," she says.

"They are extremely supportive and remind me of what I can now do that I was unable to do before. It is a huge boost when someone reminds you that you've improved a lot."

12 weeks into her rehabilitation, and Charlotte has made fantastic progress, now having movement in both of her legs which are getting stronger by the day.

She has been particularly impressed with the technology available in the gym, especially the EksoNR robotic exoskeleton which helped her take her first steps. "When I think about where I was six months ago, I could barely lift my arm. I've come a long, long way," she says, "It's such an amazing feeling, to stand up on my own and walk again."

Charlotte says she also appreciates the recreational activities on offer including wheelchair tennis and the opportunity to interact with members of the spinal cord community who have provided practical advice and support.

Charlotte is keen to get back in the air flying tiger moth planes as soon as she can – and she is working hard to achieve this goal. "I feel very grateful to be in this amazing place which I feel very few people in the world have access to. The access to the expertise, technology and community, all of that together, it's incredible," she says.

Royal Rehab Private Hospital

Royal Rehab Private Hospital (RRPH) is a specialist rehabilitation facility renowned for its world-class rehabilitation programs and exceptional clinical care.

Supported by a skilled team of professionals and outstanding facilities, RRPH specialises in multidisciplinary neurological rehabilitation for conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and orthopaedic rehabilitation programs. It also provides a range of intensive inpatient and day rehabilitation programs supporting recovery following surgery, trauma, and chronic illness.

Responding to growing demand

In response to increasing demand for rehabilitation services, in FY22 RRPH employed additional staff across the disciplines of physiotherapy, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and exercise physiology. These additional resources will help RRPH to continue to provide high quality rehabilitation services, as well as expand its service offerings - especially in Day Rehabilitation.

Highlights



Continued to play a significant role in assisting the NSW Ministry of Health's response to the challenges of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic admitting 23 public patients.



Admitted complex rehab patients from Graythwaite Rehabilitation Centre, and spinal cord injury patients from Royal North Shore Hospital.



Introduced an enhanced staffing model to accommodate the needs of public patients to ensure the delivery of care to all clients was at its optimum.



With support from Royal Rehab clinicians from Sargood and the Spinal Injury Units, the RRPH team managed the higher clinical care needs of public patients with professionalism and agility.



Royal Rehab client
Anne Robertson.

Day Rehabilitation

In addition to increasing its staffing and program offerings, Royal Rehab Day Rehabilitation also upgraded its gym to include new advanced technology which helps with the engagement and motivation of clients through stimulating games and activities.

The new advanced technology devices include the Tyrostation, the Myro and the Hocomo Andago; the Tyrostation provides options for both upper limb and lower limb rehabilitation using sensors for both measurement of range of motion and force; the Myro is a force plated touch screen which allows for a variety of therapy activities for both upper limb rehabilitation, cognitive rehabilitation, and balance activities; and the Andago is a body weight supported device that allows for clients to practice mobility.

In addition to helping patients to stay focused and motivated, these devices also provide accurate and sensitive ways for clinicians to measure performance and improvement over time.

Feedback from clients who have used these devices has been overwhelmingly positive, with one client remarking, "I was so focused on the activity, I was able to complete so many more repetitions."

In the coming year there will be a focus on expanding and promoting new service offerings in occupational therapy and speech therapy - which has been made possible by the increase in clinicians.

A focus on patient satisfaction

RRPH undertakes a patient and carer survey annually so it can compare results year on year to identify any improvement opportunities. Year on year results have continued to be very strong with patient satisfaction reaching 99%.

RRPH received positive feedback for communication during pre-admission, admission and discharge, care delivery and staff attentiveness, environment, accommodation, cleanliness, and food.

The results are shared with other hospitals who also participate in the annual survey, to discuss ideas and strategies for improvement.

As part of RRPH's focus on best practice and innovation, a research project that assesses and evaluates speech pathology rehabilitation will also commence in FY23. The aim of the project is to assess and improve the measurement and effectiveness of current practices to benefit patient care.





Royal Rehab client Trevor
Hamilton at home.

Trevor's story

73-year-old Trevor Hamilton is often described as a 'community stalwart' of the Blue Mountains where he lives. Highly active within his community, a keen athlete, canyoner and until recently a maths teacher, Trevor has competed in four marathons, 30 triathlons and has run in every City to Surf race since it began – giving him 'legend status.' And that's just a small sample of Trevor's achievements.

Trevor served on the local Springwood Foundation Day Committee for more than a decade and is a life member of the Sydney West School Sports Association and Nepean Triathlon Association. Sharing his passion for the outdoors with students across the Blue Mountains, Trevor set up the Winmalee High School water polo team - with some of those students going on to represent Australia; helped to run the Duke of Edinburgh Award and set up the school's Ski Racing team program – which also produced some national level talent. In 2018, Trevor was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his incredible service to the Blue Mountains community.

Just days before he had his stroke, Trevor had led 20 people on a 20km bush trail run. On the night of 8 December 2021, Trevor had woken up feeling unwell, subsequently collapsing on his bed where his wife called an ambulance suspecting he was having a stroke. Trevor was taken to Nepean Hospital where he experienced two more strokes over the next two days.

Upon discharge from hospital Trevor was transferred to a rehabilitation facility that did not specialise in stroke rehabilitation. Five weeks into his rehabilitation his daughter, a physiotherapist, requested that he be referred to Royal Rehab to continue his rehabilitation. "My daughter did the research and insisted I go there," Trevor says. "She told me it was the best place for someone recovering from stroke – and she wasn't wrong, it was a fantastic place."

Arriving at Royal Rehab in a wheelchair in mid-January 2022, Trevor was unable to walk, had minimal movement in his left hand, no movement in his fingers and could not lift his left arm more than five centimetres. He also had difficulty swallowing and had trouble with his speech.

At Royal Rehab, Trevor's rehab program included a combination of one-on-one sessions and exercise groups that included hydrotherapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy and gait retraining sessions using an Ekso exoskeleton to improve his mobility.

Speaking highly of the support he received during his therapy sessions, Trevor says, "the occupational therapists and physiotherapists were fantastic, they challenged me and just kept me going."

Trevor's wife Helen says that she noticed an improvement almost immediately. "They were marvellous with him. As soon as I got him there, I knew I could relax as he was in such good care."

Trevor also has nothing but praise for the nursing staff who he describes as being incredibly supportive. "The nursing staff really looked after me and took me under their wing. They always had a smile on their faces, and nothing was ever too much trouble."

Fast forward four months to April and Trevor was discharged – able to walk with just the support of a walking stick. He also regained significant movement in his left arm, hand and fingers and is now able to lift his hand up to his shoulder. His swallowing has improved, and his voice is clearer and stronger.

“It was the most amazing place. You'd be mad not to go there. People need to know about Royal Rehab – it is the only one for stroke.”

Trevor Hamilton

Community Rehabilitation Service

The key goal of Royal Rehab's Community Rehabilitation Service (CRS) is to help clients to re-connect with others and participate in community life. Sessions are tailored to support specific client needs and goals and can occur wherever people find it most meaningful - at home, on public transport, in their local gym or even their local shopping centre.

Sexuality services

Established in January 2021 to provide sexual health and relationship support for people with injury, illness and disability, the service has gone from strength to strength. Service highlights include the establishment of a dating after brain injury group aimed at people with lived experience of brain injury looking to improve their relationship and dating skills; the delivery of FIRST BASE - an introductory full day workshop for health professionals to upskill in sexuality and disability - delivered to 30 rehabilitation and disability clinicians (thanks to a Health Education and Training Institute grant), and the development of a series of podcasts, webinars, lectures, conversations and presentations aimed at normalising sex and disability.

In FY22 the sexuality team were invited to share their learnings and present at key conferences including the Rehabilitation Medicine Conference, and "Integrating sexuality into rehabilitation" by Candice Care-Unger and Jacqui White; and "Sexuality and Disability. Establishing a specialised sexuality service for people living with disability and integrating sexual wellbeing into rehabilitation" by Candice-Care-Under, at the Social Work in Disability Conference.

Community therapy

Preparations for the construction and operation of the new advanced technology hub was a key focus over the course of the year. Additional staff were employed across most disciplines, receiving dedicated education and training in how advanced technology could be incorporated into therapy plans. Staff also received training to support clients within the sexuality service.



Following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, the second half of the year saw a resumption of more 'business-as-usual' operations, resulting in a significant increase in service provision across the board.

Group-based programs such as hydrotherapy and the cycling hubs recommenced and expanded, providing a much-needed recreational pursuit for clients.

The use of telehealth has continued beyond lockdown and is now an embedded practice when suitable for clients. In particular, the speech pathologists have embraced telehealth, finding it has enhanced services without the need to wear masks during a therapy session.

The demand for case management and social work services also increased significantly, demonstrating the commitment of the team to support Royal Rehab's most vulnerable clients.

A new model of care

Following the re-evaluation of the community rehabilitation service, Royal Rehab's NDIS and icare allied health therapy service underwent significant change - in FY23 it will form a new entity known as Royal Rehab LifeWorks. Creating two specialised teams, one focused on health fund services, and the other on disability and injury insurance, allows teams to specialise in their areas of expertise and respond to increasing levels of demand. Other key changes include how physiotherapy and occupational therapy services are delivered, shifting towards a hybrid model of therapy.

FY23 will see a further expansion of outpatient services with the opening of the advanced technology centre, and additional staff training. The therapy team will also be exploring new and improved ways to measure both functional outcomes and quality of life measures for clients in both the technology therapy centre and in community settings to demonstrate how therapy is meeting client goals.



Clients participate in an adaptive sports day at Royal Rehab, Ryde.



343

Community Rehabilitation Service clients



1,220

Hours of physiotherapy in person sessions



80,000 km

Driven by Royal Rehab clinicians servicing the Sydney Local Health District

Client Eric Lombardo with horticultural therapist Claire Boyle in Royal Rehab's productive garden.

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION SERVICE

Driving assessment and training service

Run by Driver Trained Occupational Therapists, the Driver Assessment and Training team assesses, advises, and offers support through all the necessary steps toward independent driving for people returning or learning to drive following illness, injury, or disability.

To better support clients, the team also works with vehicle suppliers to advise on vehicle modifications, as they help clients adjust to the modifications and equipment.

A key highlight for FY22 was seeing three clients successfully undertake their disability driving tests after COVID-19 significantly delayed their driver rehabilitation program.

Another highlight for the year was the recruitment of a new Occupational Therapist driver assessor, taking the team of assessors to three. With a new assessor on board the team plans to provide additional driver assessment services in the new financial year.

Providing education to hospital registrars and other allied health services on the Occupational Therapists driving assessment process will also continue in FY23.



Royal Rehab client
Margaret Sutherland
during a driving lesson.

Stepping On

Run in partnership with NSW Health, Stepping On is a community-based falls prevention program for seniors. Designed to build knowledge, strength, and confidence to prevent falls and stay active and independent, the program combines gentle strength and balance exercises with educational sessions.

Participation remained strong in FY22 with over 238 participants taking part over the course of the year. Group formats included Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and virtual formats.



Transitional aged care program

Royal Rehab continued to work in partnership with North Sydney Local Health District in the transitional aged care program for persons aged 65 years and older, to enable their return home from hospital following injury or illness.

480 clients engaged in the multidisciplinary program including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology, social work, and dietetics.

The goal is to support people to continue to live in their own homes and participate in their local communities as independently as possible.

Home-based rehab and public outpatients programs

Administered on behalf of the Northern Sydney Local Health District, Royal Rehab's home-based rehabilitation and public outpatient programs provide multidisciplinary, short-term rehabilitation programs delivered in home or community settings following hospitalisation or changes in function.

Specialist allied health professionals and registered nurses assist clients to regain function in their daily activities to help achieve as much independence as possible.



487

Clients engaged with the service.



10,424

Hours of therapy conducted.



9,754

Therapy sessions provided.



245

Telehealth sessions conducted.

John's story

Fourteen months ago, John experienced a spinal cord injury following surgical complications which essentially left him with paraplegia.

During his time at the spinal unit at Prince of Wales Hospital following his surgery, John was advised that the best place for his rehabilitation was Royal Rehab. According to John, he was advised that, "if you can get transferred to Royal Rehab as an outpatient, you will possibly be in the best place in the world for someone with your type of spinal cord injury."

In February 2022, John met with the Community Rehabilitation Service at Royal Rehab for the first time. During an initial assessment, John and the Royal Rehab team identified some goals that John wanted to achieve. His immediate goal was to be able to use a walker so he could move around independently at home. A longer-term goal was to be able to walk around his local shopping centre on his own.

Working with the multidisciplinary community rehabilitation team, John has been focusing on improving his strength. He works with a physiotherapist and occupational therapist weekly.

He has also been using the new equipment in Royal Rehab's gym which he describes as 'fantastic'. What has especially impressed John is how the new gym equipment also provides therapists with information about a client's individual progress so they can, as John describes it, "assess and adjust your program to take you to the next level."

The team also visited John's local gym to design a program that he can use there. John has been making incredible progress and is now up and walking in a frame and can stand up and stay standing independently. John says that this was inconceivable to him when he left the hospital, "I never imagined I would be able to do what I now can do," he says.

"Now, when I am at the supermarket, I can reach things on the shelves by myself, I no longer have to ask for assistance. I can also use my dryer at home because I can stand up now. I can get in and out of a taxi and use buses and trains with total confidence.

"Worlds have opened up to me that weren't possible before," says John.



Royal Rehab client John Nugent with physiotherapists Stephanie Mock and Jason Redhead.

John has also received home visits from the team who made suggestions about how to make it safer and easier for him to move around his home. In line with the team's holistic approach, John has also been working with one of the team's dietitians to increase his protein intake – to complement his strength program.

John now has a full-time job in procurement which he can perform from his home. He attributes his success in gaining employment in part, to one of the team's social workers. "She helped me see that I still have valuable and pertinent expertise, and that I can still contribute. She helped me imagine a picture of myself in an accurate and helpful way," John says.

With the support of the team John is regaining sensation all of the time; now he can feel the temperature of water and can feel his feet when he steps. Speaking about his experiences with the Community Rehabilitation Service John says, "when I go into the front door of Royal Rehab, I say to myself, 'I feel safe, I feel welcome'. I want to regain all the ability I can, and I count myself as so lucky. My experience at Royal Rehab has been terrific."

“ Worlds have opened up to me that weren't possible before. ”

John Nugent



In-Voc

In-Voc is a specialist vocational rehabilitation service dedicated to supporting people with spinal cord injury to explore work, study and volunteering options by providing assistance with career exploration and planning, skill and knowledge development, returning to work supports, assistive technology and job-seeking skills.



Royal Rehab client
Andrew Regan.

Andrew's story

36-year-old Andrew Regan was playing rugby when a tackling accident left him with significant damage to his spinal cord, resulting in quadriplegia.

As a result of his injury, Andrew spent 100 days at Royal North Shore Hospital (RNS), where at week 10 he started to think about how he could return to work. Andrew says that he felt that the sooner he could get back to work and 'feel like he was contributing to society, the better.'

Prior to his accident, Andrew had been working as an agricultural researcher with the CSIRO. Outside of work he was also undertaking a PhD in agricultural research: exploring ways to increase carbon in the soil to improve productivity for farmers and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Upon hearing Andrew's goal to return to work, RNS staff connected him with Rachel Harper, In-Voc's Senior Vocational Consultant and Occupational Therapist. Visiting Andrew at hospital, Rachel worked with him to understand the tasks he performed in his role at the CSIRO to identify what he could continue doing and the barriers he would need to overcome to get back to work.

Andrew found Rachel's fortnightly visits to RNS extremely beneficial. "Coming across to meet me at RNS at a point in time when I needed help to start thinking about how I might return to work, was very helpful. It helped me start sooner rather than later," he says.

To help Andrew overcome on-the-job-related structural barriers, Rachel and Andrew trialled different assistive technologies, including software that translates spoken words into text, and mouse options including breath activated options.

"Between our first meeting and where I am now, my hand and wrist movement has improved to the point where we are now considering leaving some of those earlier proposed technologies behind," Andrew says.

"It was very encouraging to see that there were good and usable options way back then – and now I am lucky enough to have had more movement return, there are other options that might suit me better. It's great to know that there are so many options out there."

Rachel also worked with Andrew and his employer to apply for a grant to fund the voice assisted software that will enable him to undertake many of his duties when he returns to work. "I am very lucky that my employer wants to support me through my recovery," says Andrew.

"Rachel managed the entire process of liaising with my employer and helping me to fill in and submit the forms. Funding came through within a few days and the entire process of filling in the form, getting it approved and downloading the software onto my computer only took a week in total. It was an amazing achievement."

Rachel is helping Andrew to navigate the new software and the mouse options on offer. His goal is to re-commence his PhD and potentially start working one day a week for the CSIRO later in the year.

Now in rehab, Andrew is strengthening his arm and hand functions as well as improving his overall balance and strength. His medium-term goal is to spend Christmas at home with his wife and 18 month old son Angus - and to start full-time work in the new year.

When asked about his experience with In-Voc, Andrew says, "They are so approachable and happy to help. That mental health component - knowing that there is a future outside of hospital and that it is achievable to work again is so important.

"As soon as you know that there is that light at the end of the tunnel, it's then just a case of working towards that."

“ They are so approachable and happy to help. That mental health component: knowing that there is a future outside of hospital and that it is achievable to work again is so important. ”

Andrew Regan

Spinal Outreach Service

The NSW Spinal Outreach Service (SOS) provides specialist state-wide support for people who have sustained a spinal cord injury, their carers and local clinicians throughout metropolitan Sydney and rural and regional New South Wales.

A new rural model

Following the successful use of telehealth for most clinics during 2020, the Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service (RSCIS) is exploring how virtual care can be incorporated within the service as a safe, effective, accessible option for healthcare delivery across New South Wales.

Accessing specialist spinal services in a timely and efficient manner through virtual care, has the potential to benefit rural clients across the state, and is in line with NSW Health's virtual care strategy.

In FY22, RSCIS received support from the Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF) to review the service to identify opportunities for virtual care. The review is now in its final stages and will result in a series of key recommendations which will inform a new Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service model.

It is hoped that this new model will help patients to receive more appropriate care in a timely fashion and provide benefits for all patients, no matter where they live.



12

Clinics were run incorporating face-to-face and telehealth sessions in a range of locations spanning northern, southern and western NSW.



111

Clients in total attended the 12 clinics.



35%

Clients were new to the service.



Disability Services

Creating safe and supportive places where people with disability can live with dignity has always been a guiding principle for Royal Rehab.

Since inception in 1899, Royal Rehab has been providing specialist accommodation and services for people with disability, with support taking many forms, including providing permanent housing with drop-in or live-in care, as well as expertise and guidance in navigating the NDIS. The goal is always to ensure that those with a disability can live with choice and control.

New community centre takes shape in Rydalmere

Plans to create a comfortable and friendly space where clients can come together to relax, socialise, or undertake courses are on track, with the fit-out of an exciting new space in Rydalmere well underway.

When complete, the new community centre will provide an opportunity for Royal Rehab and breakthru to create complementary programs for their clients for the first time. Day programs will include recreational and educational activities such as life skills workshops including health, cooking, assistive technology, social skills and more.

A dedicated training space will also be a feature of the new centre, which will be used for staff onboarding and professional development.

Disability teams from both Royal Rehab and breakthru will co-locate at the new centre with Royal Rehab staff moving from Ryde and breakthru staff moving from their Parramatta office. The new centre will be a highly collaborative venture, laying the foundations for innovative thinking and new ways of working. The centre is due to open mid to late August 2022.

The year ahead

Opening and welcoming Royal Rehab and breakthru clients to the new community centre at Rydalmere will be a primary focus for the Disability Services team in the coming financial year. The new centre will provide a great opportunity to develop new programs and engage both clients and staff.

The upgrading and refurbishment of current accommodation homes will also continue with more works planned for FY23.



34

Homes across Sydney suburbs.



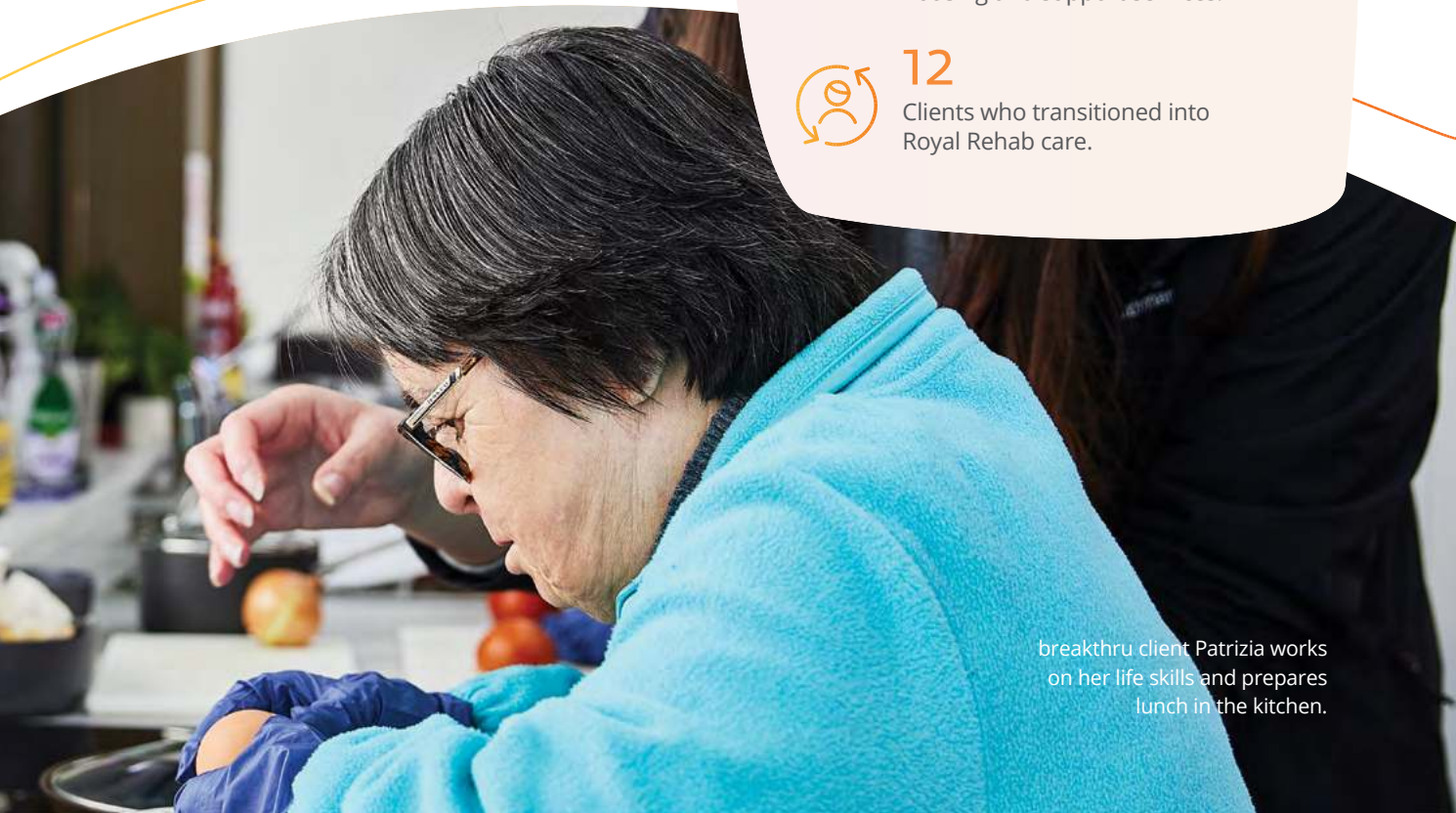
186

Clients provided with specialist housing and support services.



12

Clients who transitioned into Royal Rehab care.



breakthru client Patrizia works on her life skills and prepares lunch in the kitchen.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Patrick's story



39-year-old Patrick had dreams of opening a Chinese takeaway in Walgett in country NSW where he was living and working. Patrick experienced a major set-back however when he was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident in which he sustained a significant traumatic brain injury and multi-trauma injuries including spinal fractures.

Patrick was transferred from Walgett Hospital to Royal North Shore Hospital, and then on to Royal Rehab in December 2021 where he spent four months in Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit slowly regaining his memory as well as his ability to talk and walk.

Originally from China and with no family supports in Australia, Patrick was grateful for all the kindness and support shown to him by Royal Rehab along the way. Patrick says, "they provided me with company and reassurance, they made me feel like I had a family and friends. Most importantly, they always gave me lots of hope."

Less than a year after his accident, with the right support, Patrick has been able to get his life back on track and has moved into Royal Rehab's supported accommodation services to continue his rehabilitation. A community support worker liaises with Patrick's therapy team (which includes an icare coordinator,

a psychologist and social worker) and supports him with a range of day to day living activities – building his capacity and helping him to be as independent as possible.

Since moving out into the community, Patrick has made great progress. He visits the local shops by himself and has been on many outings including to the beach and the Chinese gardens.

He has also been enjoying getting back to cooking and is thrilled that he is able to remember how to cook his favourite Chinese meals.

Patrick is excited and optimistic about the future and is giving himself small goals to achieve each day. The next step is to complete a safe food handling course and to trial some voluntary work. His long-term goals are to find a job, visit his family in China and eventually to live on his own. He says, "Royal Rehab has saved my life and given me a second chance."

Royal Rehab client Patrick (L) outside his home with Support Worker Kelly (R).

Royal Rehab Foundation

The Royal Rehab Foundation, with the support of its generous donors plays a key role, often 'stepping in' with critical funding to support recovery, rehabilitation or daily living, by providing funding for a wide range of programmes, initiatives and services.

Highlights

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact in-person fundraising activities, the Foundation turned to social and digital media to encourage donations and raise awareness of its important work. This new approach to fundraising saw donations increase by 26%, helping the Foundation continue to touch the lives of many with a range of new initiatives.



26%

Increase in donations.



26

Grants awarded.



Royal Rehab Foundation client receiving his gift card.

Christmas cheer goes a long way

Thanks to the Foundation's generous donors, Christmas 2021 was made a little bit more festive for the residents of Royal Rehab's supported homes. All residents received a much-appreciated \$50 gift card to spend on something special. Bringing Christmas cheer into the homes, each home was decorated and gifted a special Christmas hamper for all to share.

Funded entirely by donations, this was a first for the Foundation who hope to continue the tradition. The funds also allowed for the provision of essential hygiene kits and bedsheets for clients most in need.

ROYAL REHAB FOUNDATION

The Ducati Owners Club of NSW sets a record

The Ducati Owners Club of NSW has been a generous, long-time supporter of Royal Rehab and FY22 was no exception. Renowned for their famous raffles and club events, their hard-working committee raised a record amount of \$75,000 for Royal Rehab.

The funds have been instrumental in helping establish Royal Rehab's first virtual reality room, located in the recently completed Advanced Technology Centre. VR software is increasingly being used in pain and mental health management, strength and balance training, and in improving upper limb function and cognition.

Clinicians are already seeing the benefits of using the VR, reporting that clients using the programs are engaged for longer periods. The web-based nature of the software also allows for greater telehealth opportunities into the future, with clients being able to potentially trial the system in their homes for long-term use.



Mike Luker Ducati Owners Club NSW Treasurer (L) with Matt McKay CEO, Royal Rehab (centre) and Ducati Owners Club NSW President Scott Gibson (R).

White Knight grants commence

Following a merger of the White Knight Foundation and the Royal Rehab Foundation in FY21, the White Knight grants program awarded its first grants this year. The fund, named in honour of Liam Knight who himself was the subject of an unprovoked and violent attack, gives a helping hand to those who have been victims of crime.

This year the fund has supported people experiencing domestic violence to restart their lives in new homes and has provided much needed travel and treatment assistance for those in need.



Carlos' story

In 2011 Carlos, his wife and two children arrived in Australia from Brazil to embark upon a new and exciting life. An IT professional, Carlos' skills were in demand both in Australia and overseas.

Carlos frequently travelled to Saudi Arabia for work, spending many months away from his family. During his time there, Carlos decided to get fit and joined a local triathlon club, becoming both a social and racing member.

Whilst training to compete in an Ironman triathlon, Carlos was thrown from his bike onto the road, experiencing severe, life-threatening injuries including a traumatic brain injury, multiple fractures, severe calcification of his hips, decreased eyesight and paralysis of half of his face.

After six weeks in a coma, Carlos spent a further six months in hospital in Saudi Arabia before he was able to return home to Australia in January 2021.

Upon his return, Carlos was admitted to Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit where he set to work on his recovery which included using a hand cycle and doing laps of the grounds around Ryde.

This had a positive impact on both his physical and mental health, providing him with a greater degree of independence.

To support his recovery and to help Carlos achieve his goal of one day returning to road cycling, the Royal Rehab Foundation was able to purchase a stationary bike at a cost of \$4,999 which his family would not otherwise have been able to afford. Upon hearing Carlos' story, 99 Bikes Castle Hill, who supplied the bike, generously provided a discount of \$250.

Carlos continues to make great progress in his recovery and is one step closer to achieving his goal of returning to competitive cycling.



Carlos with his awards.



Royal Rehab Staff Member Martina (L) with Carlos (R) on his cycle



OUR
LEADERSHIP



Sargood on Collaroy Program
Coordinator Sebastian van
Veeneendaal with clients at an
adaptive mountain biking course in
Manly Dam, NSW.

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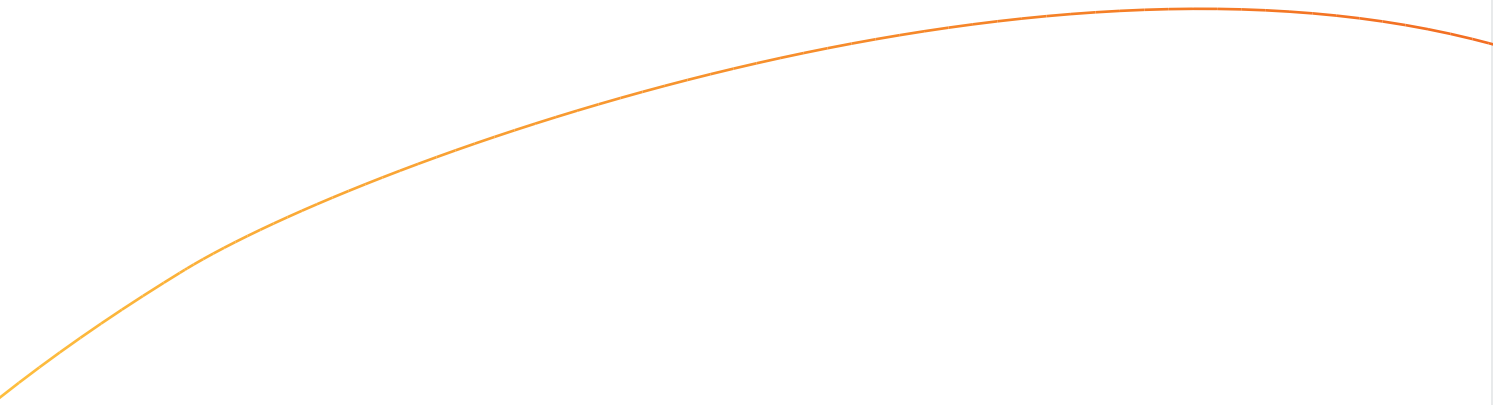
Glen Stoddart
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Help us empower people to reach their potential.

- Donate via the website
- Commit to a regular gift
- Leave a gift in your will
- Support our community fundraising
- Explore a corporate partnership

Royal Rehab is a registered charity and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



For more information please contact us at:
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