



# Spinal Outreach Team Newsletter

Issue 24, January 2021

2020 was a year of challenges as we faced the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought opportunities too, as we worked to make changes to continue to support our clients and staff. 2020 also marked SPOT's 25th anniversary. In this edition of the newsletter, '**Looking back, looking forward**', we share some memories of our service and how it looks today. We also feature one of our clients, Lindsay Nott. Lindsay has been involved with SPOT since our early days and has continued to be involved over the years as needs arise. He reflects on the past 25 years below.

## Lindsay's story



'In the days when I was injured (1993), there was little support. It was a time of tough love and you had to sink or swim. There was no safety net like there is now, with transitional programs and community support. It made you resourceful though. I was almost going to need to live in a nursing home until some care hours became available - three hours a day. I lived at my family home with minimal modifications.

It was great when SPOT started. It gave people with SCI access to specialised health professionals at the time they were needed. We could come in and out of the service when things came up. SPOT has helped me with many things such as splints, posture and seating, equipment and skin care. When I had a pressure injury and spent a long time in bed, SPOT liaised with my care support team and linked me in with other health professionals. Within a few weeks of being able to sit again, I was on my way overseas to Alaska. As well as receiving advice from SPOT, my OT has sometimes asked me about how I do a particular task, so that they can advise someone else. In this way, I help inform not only other people in my situation but also health professionals.

I moved into my own place a few years ago. I work, I volunteer in peer support and I travel. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been a massive game changer. I have always taken whatever opportunities are available but the NDIS has opened up a lot more of them. As well as more care hours for general support, there is also support for things like social participation and exercise. It's an inclusive package.

My peer support role helps me and helps others. I have learned that you can't live life by a textbook. Individual circumstances need to be taken into account. My motto is 'improvise, adapt and overcome'. I have set up a website and Instagram account, and made YouTube videos, sharing stories and videos to demonstrate the way I do things. It is called '[My C5 Life](#)'.

It is good to know that SPOT is there when I need them. I am likely to use their service again in the future. Looking forward, I think it will be good to make more use of communication technology options (such as Facetime). Maybe a Facetime meeting before a home visit could help with planning, to get the most out of the visit.'

*We care about you*



**Queensland  
Government**

## Looking back, looking forward - celebrating 25 years of SPOT

2020 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spinal Outreach Team.

Born from a project beginning in 1995 at the PA Hospital, SPOT continues to build on the service model piloted by the original project team of Ruth Cox, Delena Amsters and Kiley Pershouse.

Some things haven't changed. Two of the original team remain, with Kiley now the manager and Delena the senior research officer.



*Ruth, Delena, Kiley  
1997 and 2020*

'Looking at the two photos on the right, it is hard to believe that 25 years have flown by so fast!

Thinking back on when we started SPOT, one of the things I reflect on, and am proud of, is that we asked people with SCI, their families and the service providers they work with, what service they needed and how they wanted it delivered. And we did this before we even started.

Getting feedback, from people who were potentially going to use the service, told us a lot about how we should design our service, and many of the things we were told are still the case today.

Right from the start we wanted to build a service that really was state wide in its reach.

Our regional visiting program has adapted with demand over the years but our commitment to, and focus on, being there for clients who live outside Brisbane has never waned.

2020, with all its challenges, has focused SPOT on how we might create an even more responsive service for all our clients through the use of communication technology.'

**Kiley Pershouse, SPOT Manager**



As we have since the beginning, SPOT continues to explore and adapt to new technology to be able to provide a service across Queensland. Some things *have* changed. As the pictures show, making a video call in 2020 looks very different from 2002.

SPOT has always connected with people all over Queensland by phone, email and in person, and we were early adopters of videoconferencing. Recent advances, including video connection via our desktop computers and portable handheld devices, have made it easier to connect with our clients at any time.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased SPOT's use of video technology and our numbers of 'video visits'. We are evaluating video visiting from the point of view of clients and staff as we continually look for the best ways to meet the needs of our clients no matter where they are in Queensland. That hasn't changed.





## Congratulations Dr Delena Amsters!

Delena Amsters, senior research officer with the Spinal Outreach Team, was recently awarded her PhD by Griffith University for her research into factors that influence participation in life after spinal cord injury. She talks about her work below.

'I learned so much about what helps people to get back into life after SCI by hearing the stories of four fascinating people – Alastair, Vicki, James and Leanne.

Together we thought about how their stories of success (and sometimes disappointment) could provide lessons to rehabilitation professionals who help those who are newly injured to get back into life.

One of the skills we identified as being vital for rehabilitation professionals, and people with SCI, was responsive communication. This type of communication involves genuine two-way conversations where each party genuinely listens to the other. I hope to start some training in this type of communication, which can be undertaken by rehabilitation professionals but perhaps also by people with SCI.

From my PhD studies, I came to realise the value of having people with SCI more closely involved in planning and creating the services that affect them.

This year we will be trialling a SPOT Service User Panel. For the trial, we will invite people with SCI to join the Panel so that we have members from different parts of Queensland with a range of years of lived experience and differing levels of injury.

We will ask Panel members to give their opinions on such things as educational materials, research projects and service planning. I look forward to telling you about the outcomes of this trial in next year's newsletter.'

### *Our team December 2020*

Standing– Michelle, Kiley (Manager),  
Delena, Sarita, Beth, Carey, Bettina  
Seated– Chris, Julie, Karen, Lucy,  
Julianne  
Absent—Emily, Yvonne



## Have you thought about trying a SPOT video visit?

SPOT can offer video visits, connecting with you by your phone, tablet, laptop or computer, in ways you may already be familiar with. This can be done in your home or another community location and you can choose to invite other service providers to link in too.

### **Why try a video visit?**

- ▶ It can feel more personal than a phone call, especially if you haven't met in person.
- ▶ It might be more convenient for you than a visit, or an easier way to involve several health professionals.
- ▶ It's an opportunity to show your health professional your problem or your home environment.
- ▶ We can gather background information before we visit in person.
- ▶ Problem solving can start sooner, even if we visit in person later.

### **Not feeling confident with technology?**

Don't worry. We'll give you all the information you need to try a video visit. We can do a test call with you before the appointment to make sure everything is working, and you feel comfortable.

Have a look at the [Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service](#) website for information and fact sheets.

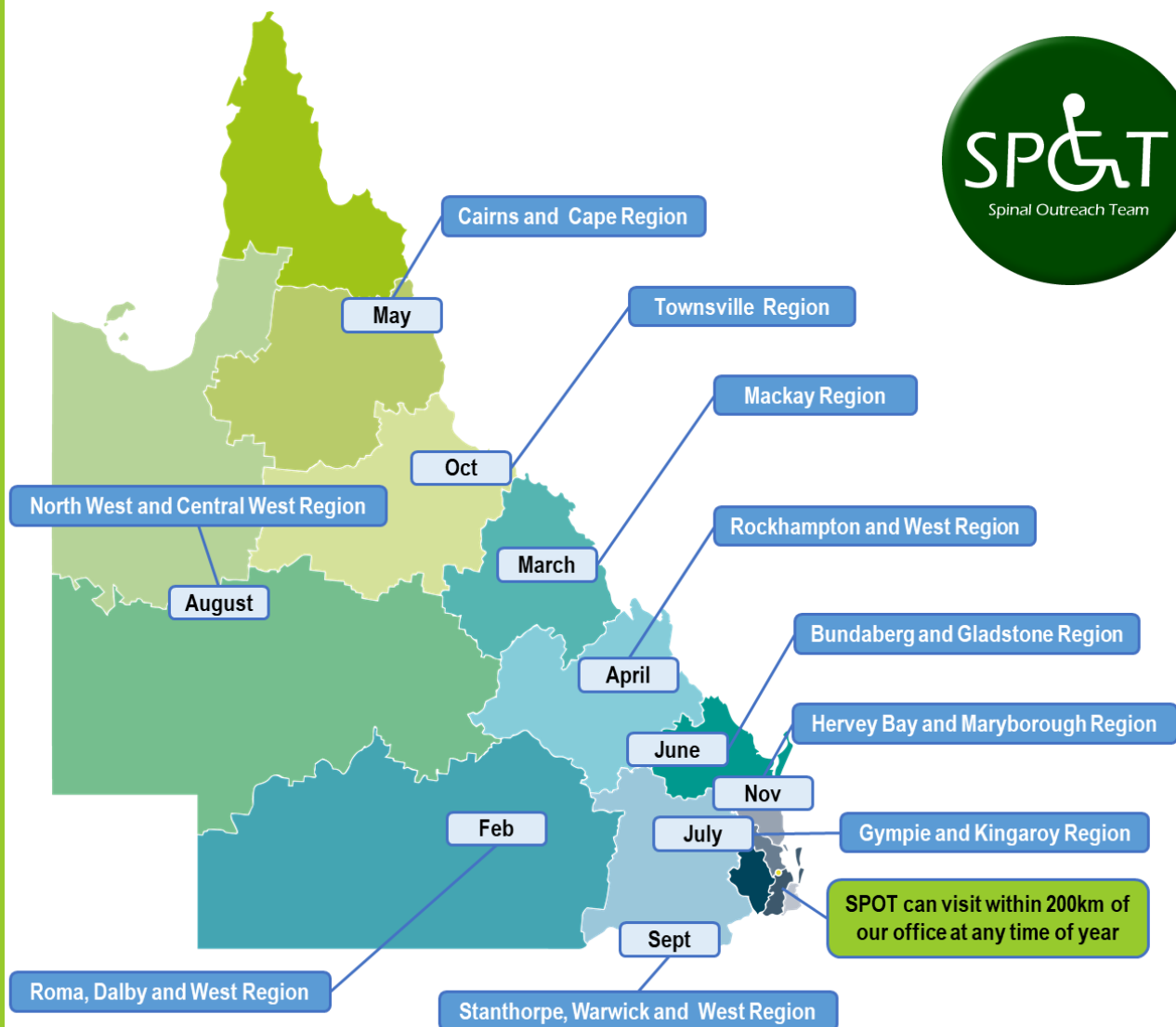
## Regional Focus in 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that the way SPOT has most commonly helped problem solve over the years is by phone and email. And we are now better equipped to offer video visits to enhance our over the phone problem solving.

This was a strength in 2020 and will be just as important in 2021 as we continue to maintain social distances to manage COVID-19.

We will continue to remind our clients and service providers, with a flyer in the mail, when we are planning to focus on your region. Our team includes nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers and a community spinal doctor. Based on the information you tell us, SPOT aims to have the most appropriate team members contact you about options for review and appointments.

**Remember to call us any time of year, wherever you are. We are here to help.**



### Spinal Outreach Team Contact Details

**Phone:** 07 3176 9507 or 1800 624 832 (for regional clients)

**Fax:** 07 3176 9514

**Postal:** PO Box 6053, Buranda Q 4102

**Email:** [spot@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:spot@health.qld.gov.au)

**Web:** [www.health.qld.gov.au/qscis](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/qscis)

**Location:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Buranda Village, Cnr Cornwall St & Ipswich Rd, Buranda Q 4102