

Spinal Outreach Team Newsletter

Issue 23, January 2020

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to 2020. At SPOT we are getting used to a big change. For nearly 20 years we have had the same telephone number, but at the end of last year our phone system was upgraded and we had to get new SPOT phone and fax numbers. Telephones are a crucial part of the way SPOT works as most of the problem solving we assist with is done over the phone!



In this year's newsletter, we highlight some of the ways you can work with SPOT no matter where you live in Queensland using phone, email and videoconferencing, often now referred to as **telehealth**. And speaking of work, we also look at the topic of employment.

Work is something we do with the goal of being productive. This means different things for different people. It could be the tasks of getting through a day, home duties for ourselves and others, or voluntary work. For some people, work is paid employment. For those who are thinking about starting or returning to work, Tania Goossen from Spinal Life Australia (SLA) has provided some tips that you may find helpful, plus Scott shares his experience of employment after his spinal cord injury.

Scott's story

Scott has worked with the Queensland Museum since 1984. Returning to work following his incomplete paraplegia involved a change in his role to accommodate his disability and additional equipment such as a height adjustable desk.

Scott enjoys his work as the Image Resource Officer with Queensland Museum. He says that being at work is good for keeping his brain active and using his problem-solving abilities, and he enjoys the social contact. His trip to and from work on the train has been made easier recently with the addition of an NDIS funded power assist device for his manual wheelchair.



© Queensland Museum, Peter Waddington

New telephone number for SPOT

Our phone system has been upgraded. This means that we have new telephone and fax numbers. The new numbers are in use now but for a short time, if you call on our old number, your call will be diverted to us.



Please make a note of our new phone number or save it in your phone.

New phone number: 07 3176 9507

New FAX number: 07 3176 9514

Have you heard about the changes to the NDIS?

The NDIS now funds a range of disability-related health supports, for example, continence supports, respiratory supports, and wound and pressure care supports.

Look at the NDIS website www.ndis.gov.au or contact SPOT for more information.



[National Disability Insurance Scheme](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

We care about you



**Queensland
Government**

Tips for returning to work after a spinal cord injury

by Tania Goossen, Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor, [Spinal Life Australia](#)



Returning to work, studying, or contemplating a new job after a spinal cord injury can be daunting but it can have positive effects on physical and mental health, as well as financial benefits. There are many pathways to employment. Here are some tips to get you started.

Photo of Tania Goossen courtesy of Spinal Life Australia

Thinking about work?

Voluntary work offers many opportunities.

- Try out job ideas.
- See if employment could fit into your life.
- Pinpoint how many hours you can work while balancing home duties or managing fatigue.
- Improve confidence and work tolerance.
- Get contacts that might lead to paid work or potential referees.
- Develop and practise skills.
- Help your local community.

Approach places you'd like to volunteer directly, or look at volunteer vacancies at www.volunteeringqld.org.au.

A **Disability Employment Service (DES)** could provide you with extra support to look for a job.

- They often have contacts with local employers, can explain supports available to potential employers such as workplace modifications, and may be able to offer a wage subsidy (financial incentive) to an employer who can offer you paid work. Find out more at <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/people-with-disability/available-support/1631>
- Get a referral to a DES provider through your local Centrelink office or approach providers directly.
- Note you cannot use DES and NDIS funded supports at the same time.

Study is a way to update your skills, gain a qualification or move into a new industry.

- This could be a one-day refresher, TAFE course or a degree at University.
- Find information about financial support for study at: <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/training/subsidies> and the twice-yearly \$5000 TAFE Queensland scholarships at: <https://scholarships.tafeqld.edu.au/>
- Disability Employment Services can sometimes help with the cost of courses too.

NDIS

- If work is a goal in your NDIS plan, you may be able to use specific funding to get advice and build your capacity. Talk to your NDIS planner or supports coordinator.
- If you haven't included work as a goal in your current NDIS plan, make sure it's on the list for your next plan review meeting.

Do you need a career change or want to try something different?

- Think about what you enjoy. Is it helping people, being creative, problem solving, working with your hands...?
- List your skills and knowledge.
- Research jobs that match your lists.
- Try a free online career quiz like www.myfuture.edu.au for job ideas.
- Get professional career advice from a Rehabilitation Counsellor (<https://www.asorc.org.au/memberdirectory>), consider using your NDIS funding, or discuss this with your Disability Employment Service provider if you have one.

Whatever your work journey looks like, it will help to keep yourself as healthy and fit as possible, do things that make you feel good about yourself, and surround yourself with positive people who support you in your work goals.

Self employment can be a great option.

- It may provide flexibility to manage things like fluctuating pain or energy levels.
- If you were self employed before your injury, consider if it is feasible to continue this with only minor changes. If there are bigger challenges, is there a way to change the focus of the business, or your role in it to make it more manageable?
- If you're thinking about starting a new business, you may be eligible for assistance with training, mentoring and income support through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS): <https://www.employment.gov.au/self-employment-new-business-assistance-neis>

Ready to look for work?

Talk to employers

- Personal contacts are the most successful job search strategy.
- Be confident about your skills and abilities.
- You will need to be realistic about any limitations due to your spinal cord injury, but employers really appreciate suggestions about supports and equipment available, and ways of overcoming barriers you might experience.

- Update your resume, contact referees, research employers and start asking around.
- Consider a well worded post on LinkedIn or social media.
- Check websites like SEEK and CareerOne regularly.
- In applications, be sure to address what the employer is asking for.

Previous employers can be a great source of new opportunities.

- Let them know you're looking for work again.
- You may be able to return to the same job with modifications or equipment.
- They may offer you a different role, using your experience in another way.
- Consider part time work to manage fatigue or attend appointments.

For information, funding and advice on **specialised or adaptive work equipment**, changes to your work area, and financial support for you and your employer visit www.jobaccess.gov.au or phone the JobAccess Advisors on 1800 464 800.

Problem solving every day for people with SCI all over Queensland

The Spinal Outreach Team provides services for people with a spinal cord injury all over Queensland. Did you know that most of the problem solving SPOT does is by telehealth? As a small team, this is the way we have found we can have the biggest reach.

With telehealth, we have many options. We can help by phone, email, FaceTime, Skype, or videoconference at a hospital or community centre. Giving SPOT a quick call when you first notice a problem can help get information or advice earlier, rather than later. We can also provide information and advice to your service providers.

Sometimes we can visit with you and your local service providers. We are able to make an appointment to see people who live within 200km of Brisbane at any time of year. Appointments for regional visits to other parts of Queensland occur throughout the year and are listed on the back page of this newsletter.

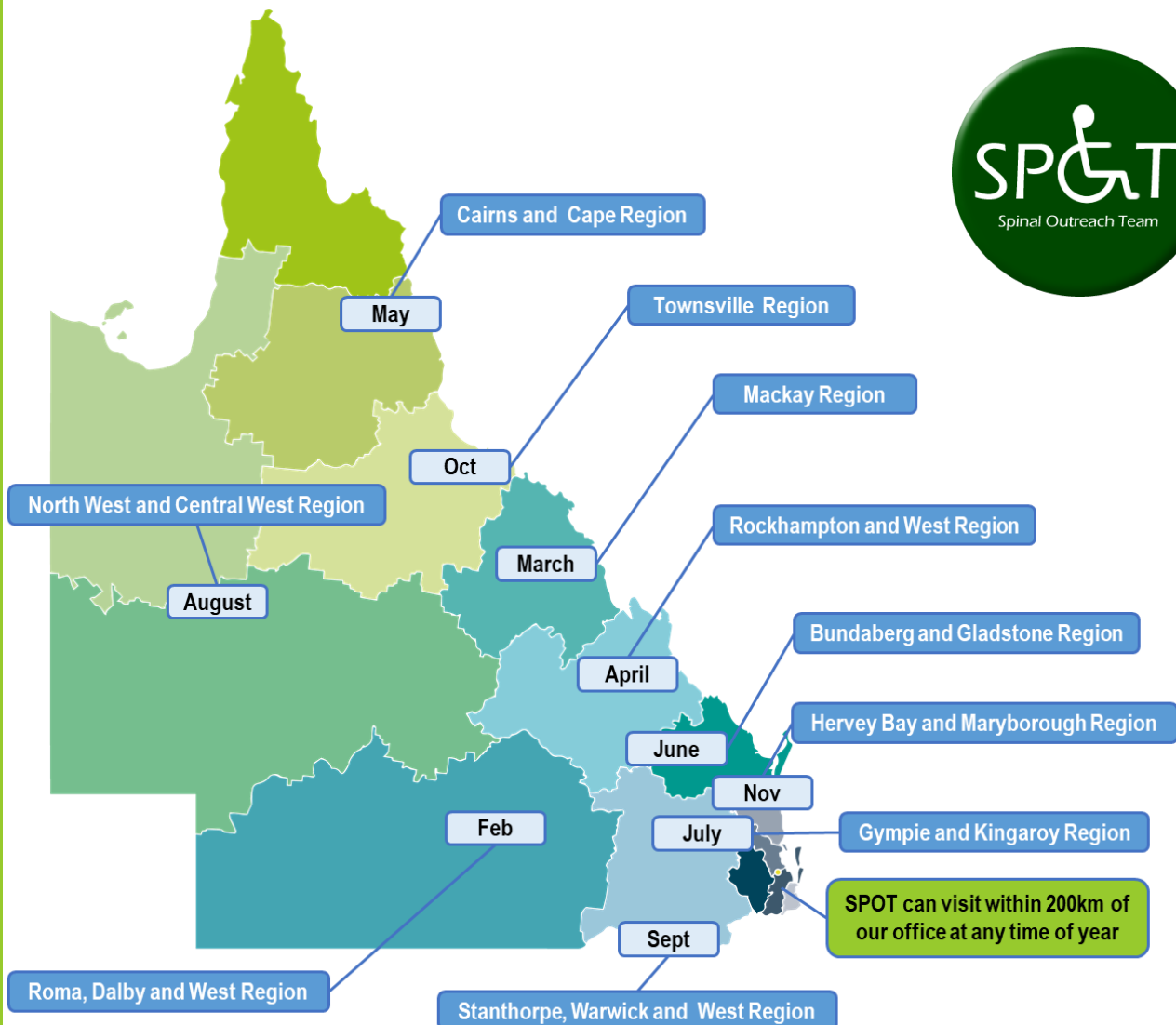
For SPOT clients who live in regional areas, if you have a problem or need information, **don't wait** for a regional visit. Contact SPOT straight away. We might not be in your neighbourhood for a while, but there are many other ways that we can connect with you to start problem solving.

Tom is one of our clients who takes the opportunity to phone SPOT if he has a question. He also uses his local neighbourhood centre to send through emails and pictures like the one we have used in the newsletter. Tom used to live in Brisbane, so even though he now lives in regional Queensland, he still takes the opportunity to call SPOT if he has a question and needs information or advice.



Regional visits in 2020

Check out when we will be in your area.
Remember to call us any time of year. There's no need to wait for the regional visit.



You will get a flyer in the mail to let you know when we are planning a visit to your region.

SPOT most commonly helps problem solve by phone and email. We can also see you by appointment, either face to face, or by videoconference in your home or other community location. 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. If a team member, for example the doctor, is not available in person or additional needs are identified, we can still arrange follow up by phone or videoconference.

Note our new number

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

Web: www.health.qld.gov.au/qscis

Location: 3rd Floor, Buranda Village, Cnr Cornwall St & Ipswich Rd, Buranda Q 4102