



Peer & Family Support

Practical help – from lived experience of spinal cord injury

scia.org.au | 1800 819 775

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Spinal Cord Injuries Australia

About Spinal Cord Injuries Australia

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) is a not-for-profit organisation working for people with spinal cord injury (SCI) and other physical disabilities. Our community-based services assist people to overcome barriers, enhance their independence, achieve their goals and live fulfilling personal, social and professional lives. Our members and clients trust us to work collaboratively and deliver our services with integrity, excellence, empathy and sustainability.

Our work has the following focus areas:

- Enhancing people's functionality and health through exercise at NeuroMoves
- Offering a one-stop-shop for information on services, advice and support available
- Sharing the lived experience of having an SCI through peer support
- Influencing social change on a systemic and individual level through advocacy services
- Providing care on a one-off, temporary or emergency basis
- Supporting people back into employment, education or training
- Running an Australian Disability Enterprise that employs people with disability and pays full award wages
- Providing accommodation for people transitioning home from hospital, or who need a break.

Visit www.scia.org.au for further information about our services and support.

About Peer and Family Support

Hearing the news that you have a spinal cord injury is devastating, and the world as you know it changes forever. We know the road back to independence can be challenging, which is why our Peer and Family Support Team, who have been through similar journeys, are there to help you navigate your way forward.

This service provides free non-clinical lived experience to individuals with new and existing spinal cord injuries, as well as their families.



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The team has a range of injury levels, ranging from paraplegia and quadriplegia, to complete and incomplete injuries. They have a wide-range of life experiences post injury, including parenthood, employment, travel, retirement and sport.

More information about our Peer and Family Support can be found on the SCIA website at www.scia.org.au/peer-support

We also have an online Community Forum (www.scia.org.au/forum) especially for people affected by SCI to come together to share knowledge, ask questions and connect in a safe and friendly environment.

How we help

The Peer and Family Support Team works in the Prince of Wales and Royal North Shore Hospital spinal injury units, as well as at Royal Rehab in Ryde, and in Sydney Children's Hospital when required. They support the clinicians in the units by sharing practical application and lived experience.

We offer a number of services to assist you at all stages of your journey so that you can:

- Regain your independence
- Make connections in your community
- Practice skills for everyday living
- Develop the knowledge you need for everyday living
- Feel supported and respected

We know that everyone's post injury experience is different. We assist you with what is important to you.

Product Knowledge

We stay up to date with the latest information on new equipment, assistive technology, products and services that may be useful to you. Whether this is accessing care, modifying your home, or finding out the best transport options in your community. We can link you up with other organisations and share their combined knowledge to support you.



Our Programs

Peer support in the spinal injury units

We meet you in the spinal unit and keep things as flexible as possible because we know that your schedules are often very busy with medical appointments.

1:1 Conversations: Sharing Core Knowledge and Skills

Our team visits you regularly to discuss issues that are important to you. Before you leave the spinal unit we will also advise you about core knowledge for life post injury.

We help you to practically apply the knowledge that enables you to maintain health, independence, relationships and community connections.

Maintaining health keeps you away from hospital and enables you to remain as independent as possible. Talk to us about:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ Bladder | ✓ Skin | ✓ Autonomic Dysreflexia |
| ✓ Bowel | ✓ Wound Care | ✓ Diet and nutrition |
| ✓ Continence management | ✓ Pressure injury management | ✓ Pain management |

Maintaining independence is a lifelong journey. Talk to us about:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| ✓ House modifications | ✓ Community access | ✓ Clothing |
| ✓ Car modifications | ✓ Driving | ✓ Dressing |
| ✓ Independent living | ✓ Assistive technology | ✓ Health and wellbeing |
| ✓ Accommodation | ✓ Entitlements | ✓ Activities of daily living |

Maintaining relationships can be difficult with the added pressure of managing a serious injury. We can talk to you about:

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Sexuality | ✓ Children and parenting | ✓ Maintaining relationships |
| ✓ Fertility methods | | |

Being connected means you can do the things you enjoy. Talk to us about staying connected and building new connections.

- ✓ Sport
- ✓ Recreation
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Hobbies
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Maintaining social connections
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Exercise

Sharpening your skills, as well as helping you develop your knowledge for life post injury, we can also help you to develop your skills. We are available to work with you personally to discuss or demonstrate skills such as:

- ✓ Practical wheelchair skills
- ✓ Transfers
- ✓ Getting out and about
- ✓ Eating out
- ✓ Handling money

Group Knowledge and Skills Sessions

Education Sessions

The Peer and Family Support Team participate in the weekly education sessions organised by the clinical team in the spinal injury units. Participation is compulsory for people in the units and family are welcome to attend. Topics cover key knowledge areas and information about them is available on the ward every week.

We work in partnership with the clinical teams to share lived experience and practical application of knowledge and skills.

- Prince of Wales have education sessions on Thursdays
- Royal Rehab have education sessions on Tuesdays

Recreational Outings

When possible, we join the recreational outings organised by the spinal injury units to help demonstrate the practical application of skills.

Evening Social Confidence Sessions

Going out again for the first time can be overwhelming, but it's an important step when adjusting to life with an injury.



We run regular evening social skills sessions where you can develop the confidence to:

- ✓ Use public facilities
- ✓ Negotiating public spaces
- ✓ Ordering food and drinks
- ✓ Using your hands
- ✓ Handling money

Family Peer Support

Peer Support for Family Members

We encourage and welcome family members and carers to talk to us whilst we are in the units or you can call to make an appointment for a more in depth discussion.

Open Family Forums

Family forums are held at both the Prince of Wales and Royal Rehab spinal injury units. People who are in Royal North Shore are also welcome to attend the sessions at Royal Rehab.

At these Forums you will hear from the perspective of a partner or a parent who has supported someone with an injury, and how they have transitioned from a rehabilitation unit to a home setting.

Sessions are facilitated and participants have the opportunity to ask questions and hear from others who have had similar experiences.

Community Peer Support

Our support and guidance will continue following your discharge, whenever you need it or simply for regular check-ins.

Services we provide:

- A follow-up call to everyone who has received peer support in a spinal injury unit within two weeks of discharge
- Offer regular monthly check-ins
- Assist people at all stages of their journey.
- You can also reach out to us by calling 1800 819 775.



Online Forum

The SCIA online forum is a vibrant online space for people to ask questions, read about new products and services and connect with other people. The Peer and Family Support Team is regularly online, posting new or useful information and they can answer questions too.

Register to participate in the Forum at www.scia.org.au/forum

Group Knowledge and Skills Sessions

Education Sessions

The Peer and Family Support Team holds group education sessions by request at SCIA's Neuromoves exercise centres, covering a range of topics and giving you an opportunity to also socialise with others.

Recreational Outings

SCIA's Peer and Family Support have joined forces with Sargood on Collaroy to host monthly BBQs for people with a spinal cord injury. The BBQ's are free and a great opportunity to meet new people, enjoy the sunshine, relax and share experiences.

SCIA also holds two social activities annually. Visit www.scia.org.au/forum for further information.

Service Standards

Training

Aside from having lived experience, our Peer and Family Support Team members have undertaken training in mental health, first aid, active listening and communication, accidental counselling, assistive technology, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and health and well-being to make sure you are getting the best advice possible. We receive regular training to keep up to date with the latest information. Our team will support you, your family and friends from the very beginning to enable you to regain independence, whatever that may look like.

Our Values

Respect – We know that everyone’s post injury experience is different. We assist you with what is important to you, without judgement.

Honesty – We know through personal experience how challenging adjusting to life with an injury can be. We also know that you need honest, direct and practical information.

Professionalism – Our team has undergone active listening and effective communication training and while our communication is conversational, we always maintain professional standards.

Continuity – We can support you throughout your journey. Talk to us about our ongoing supports.

Culturally responsive, person centred practice – We treat everyone as an individual, recognising that a person is the sum of their life circumstances. We use interpreters when required.

Contact Us

Contacting us is easy. Whether you are a person with an injury who is looking for assistance, a family member in need of support or a clinician who would like to make a referral, just call our Customer Connect team on 1800 819 775. The team will direct you to the most appropriate person to assist you.



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