Travellers Voice

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Come with us on the journey

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Travellers Aid

CEO Welcome

I am proud to say that here at Travellers Aid we are bouncing back with renewed passion for the support we provide our service users.

It is great to see this passion being recognised through the announcement of Travellers Aid as a finalist in the 2022 Melbourne Awards - one of the City of Melbourne's highest accolades celebrating those making extraordinary contributions to our community. We have also been selected as a finalist in the 2022 VTIC Victorian Tourism Awards which celebrate excellence, innovation and resilience.

I am pleased to inform you of an exciting new Community Partnership Program with NHP Electrical Engineering Products. This Partnership aims to increase access and inclusion for all through building our capacity to provide support at events. Further details can be found on page 7.

I am also delighted to see Travellers Aid progress further into regional Victoria as, from early 2023, we will have a new service hub at Ballarat Station. You can read about that further in this newsletter.

International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) celebrates the achievements and contributions that people with disability have made to our community. It is an opportunity to explore ways we can remove accessibility barriers to create a more inclusive world for everybody. If you would like to get involved in this special day on 3 December, or learn more about IDPWD, please visit **www.idpwd.com.au**

In this final edition of the Travellers Voice for 2022, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you - our supporters and friends - for your commitment through regular and generous donations that have assisted us to "bounce back" after two hard pandemic lockdown years. We truly appreciate this kind support.

I would like to finish by wishing you and your loved ones a very happy festive season and I hope to see you at one of our Travellers Aid service hubs soon.

Elias Lebbos | Chief Executive Officer

Our Community – The voice of a service user

Janelle's story

Scleroderma. Some people may know it as "just a skin disease". But for those living everyday with the condition, which causes hardening of the skin and failure of internal organs, it is so much more.

Janelle has been one of our service users for four years, and has scleroderma. Her condition means she has a busy calendar including appointments with specialists, running support groups for others living with the disease, and has required multiple surgeries. Janelle has type-2 diabetes, interstitial lung disease, heart problems, asthma, joint replacements and takes immunosuppressants as part of her treatment.

"If you look at me you'll think I'm fine," Janelle states. "People don't understand the limitations you have inside your own body, or the challenges you face everyday. I can go from perfect to terrible in an instant."

Due to her condition, which leads to difficulty breathing and walking, Janelle is a regular user of our Buggy Service and is considering the Companion Service for both herself and her 80 year old mother. "Using the Buggy Service builds my confidence and reduces barriers to attending social and sporting events in the city, like the Australian Open, as well as medical appointments."

"I have no energy, and I can't walk from A to B," Janelle admits. "I have difficulty with stairs, and I worry about crowds and people pushing me. I also struggle carrying things. Using the Travellers Aid buggy takes all the pressure off thinking how to get somewhere and worrying about my energy."

Janelle believes Travellers Aid are "here just to support me, and help others who need support. More people need to know about Travellers Aid".

Introducing Ballarat Station as our newest regional hub!

A new Travellers Aid service hub will be open at Ballarat by early 2023 - and we couldn't be prouder of extending our services to another regional location.

In 2020, the Victorian Government delivered $100,000 of improvements to reduce physical barriers to accessibility at Ballarat station. The new Travellers Aid service hub will build on the modifications already completed by adding mobility support for passengers connecting between different modes of transport at the Ballarat V/Line station. Our services will operate weekdays from 7.30am to 3.30pm.

Travellers Aid has a long standing partnership with V/Line, our volunteers assisting passengers with their travel needs at Southern Cross, Flinders Street and Seymour stations. The new Ballarat hub is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure public transport is accessible to everyone throughout their journey.

The addition of Ballarat as a second regional Travellers Aid location will allow accessibility services to be extended further into Western Victoria - and will enable more travellers to have increased confidence when moving around the Ballarat station.

Travellers Aid volunteers will be available to help passengers between platforms, coach/bus bays, the taxi rank as well as car park drop off zones - significantly improving accessibility for V/Line passengers. Volunteers will be able to assist in numerous ways, including:

- providing a friendly companion to assist passengers with vision impairments
- a helpful hand for passengers with luggage
- wheelchair transport for passengers with limited mobility or temporary injuries to move around the station

Volunteers and staff are currently being recruited and trained. Elias Lebbos, CEO of Travellers Aid Australia says “our organisation is excited to be expanding into another regional Victorian centre to support V/Line services. Together we recognise that accessibility must underpin all of our services and, where there are limitations, Travellers Aid is the best solution for the one-to-one support. We are very much looking forward to rolling out our new service hub at Ballarat station”.

Learn more about volunteering with Travellers Aid **here** or email us at **volunteers@travellersaid.org.au**

Events

Access and inclusion – even more services at the Australian Open

Travellers Aid trialled an access and inclusion service for over 14 days at the **2022 Australian Open**. We are delighted to confirm that we will be providing even more access services to tennis patrons during the 2023 event (16-29 January). Travellers Aid will be providing:

- buggy transfers
- wheelchair assistance
- personal guidance
- wheelchairs for hire

Wheelchair hire must be pre-booked **online** or by calling us on **03 9670 2072**.

This three-way relationship between Travellers Aid, Tennis Australia and Yarra Trams is what makes the support service at the Australian Open so successful. We hope to see you there in January 2023!

Travellers Aid can also provide support and other personal care services at Flinders Street Station and Southern Cross Station. To book or for further information **www.travellersaid.org.au**

Try before you ride

In October, Travellers Aid participated in the first Try Before You Ride (TBYR) event since the pandemic began. This event helps people become more familiar with public transport and is run in conjunction with transport providers and the Department of Transport. It helps people feel more confident when using the public transport system, and is a great opportunity to learn about accessibility features and ask questions about the network and vehicles. Attendees learnt that services like those provided by Travellers Aid can make the journey that little bit easier.

“ I learned a lot about accessibility of the various modes of transport and that increased my confidence. ”

Our Community Partnership with NHP

NHP Electrical Engineering Products was established in 1968 with founder Nigel Peck determined to create a 100% Australian-owned company focused on providing the best service and highest level of quality products. From humble beginnings, NHP has expanded to provide electrical engineering excellence to all corners of Australia and New Zealand.

After observing first-hand the impact Travellers Aid services provide people with disability and mobility impairments, the leadership team at NHP Electrical Engineering Products was keen to support our work.

Accessibility, inclusion and the power of choice are things both Travellers Aid and NHP value. This relationship will establish a mutually beneficial Community Partnership that works to increase access and inclusion, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to not only experience their communities but actively participate.

We are truly excited about this Partnership, which will assist us to increase our capacity and flexibility in delivering support at short notice through the procurement of much needed mobility devices and buggies, supplied by NHP.

Elias Lebbos (CEO of Travellers Aid) with Geoff Thorp (Chief Marketing Officer from NHP)

Geoff Thorp (Chief Marketing Officer at NHP) says of the partnership, "By joining forces with Travellers Aid, we can help give people access to choices that will enable them to push boundaries - unlocking opportunities and experiences that might not have seemed possible previously. This is something that's fundamental to core values here at NHP. This Partnership was a natural fit for us."

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