

Joel's Journey – 2 May, 2017

TRUTH & SURPRISES

276,000 in total, or 12,600 people per year suffer with spinal cord injury in the United States. Juxtaposed with Australia's 12,000 in total, perhaps this gives reason as to why I'm not blatantly stared at by grown adults or treated like a child and reminded more than I should be, of my disability, when I venture out into the public arena. Here, I feel am able to do ANYTHING (within the confines of the law) or go ANYWHERE and feel comfortable. In accordance with Californian law, "Businesses are required to maintain a path of travel to Wheelchair accessible spaces that are a minimum of 30 x 48 inches and clear of the walkway, whether at tables or in some other type of seating arrangement". Also "The design standards require that a minimum of 5% all of all fixed features— Including counters, bars tables and seating— meet needs to be accessible" You see, unfortunately back home it is not law or implied but is merely and pathetically a 'privilege' to be able to leave the house, attend an establishment and it have a ramp to get in, not stairs, accessible toilets, disabled car parks, dining areas suitable for wheelchairs. If these things don't exist, the answer? "Too bad, deal with it". Meanwhile my day/night, experience is tainted, and most of the time, others who are with me are affected also, having to carry me upstairs, leave to find a bathroom, or just leave the venue completely. This plays heavily upon my confidence, something that in the past would define me and set me apart from my peers. This is an insight into the backwards "Stone Age" like mindset of the somewhat narcissistic deluded prioritisation of the Australian public, where are we are more worried about changing icons on the traffic lights so it is more "Gender friendly".

This is somewhat out-of-the-box although relative to an issue that these days I am very passionate about. That issue being our societies current state of judgment and lack of morality. The reference is from a member within an industry that not only promotes, but easily forgives and forgets certain individuals indiscretions due to their past or future sporting ability, potential, capital they possess or ability to generate revenue. People that otherwise represent a minute percentage within our community and are placed upon an unjustified pedestal. This stems from a brilliant article written by Dane Swan that really hit the nail on the head. He is currently in America enjoying the

fruits of a successful and colourfully well documented career, both on and off the field. No stranger to the spotlight but clearly not a fan of it, he sheds light on his taste of the American culture, where last week he attended a large and well-known music festival; 'Coachella'. Among many other excellent truths, he wrote "I love Australia, but here's where we need to lift. Everywhere you look at these US parties, everyone — celebrity or not — is comfortable doing their own thing. Unfortunately, it's a far cry from the Australian culture". He then goes on to speak about how one player was photographed whilst on leave having a cigarette, by a member of the public, and that photo was then forwarded onto the media. Here lies the perfect example of the mindset that needs a dramatic revamping. I feel, and this is merely my opinion, that whenever we leave the house entering the public domain we are judged, segregated and pushed into groups that society says we belong, and consequently act as such. Something, in my four weeks whilst over here I have not witnessed or experienced and it seems as if a vague memory or dream. I have not yet been reminded of my wheelchair or been made to feel uncomfortable because of it.

I mentioned in my last blog that progress cannot be witnessed in the short-term, I lied. In one week I have noticed improvements in my table mobility (Rolling around and lifting onto my elbows on the tables), core strength, posture, flexibility and ability to elevate my chest off the table and hold good posture. All this in turn allows me to sit better in my wheelchair. In five days this progress was witnessed by not only myself, but the trainers as well. I credit this sign of progress to my commitment in the gym, pre and post workout prep and extremely clean diet. Lets not forget about the other sacrifice of not enjoying an alcoholic beverage on the weekend or whenever the opportunity presents itself. A massive thank you to Elisa for giving me the greatest opportunity at achieving success in the gym by way of massage after a big day, preparing nutritional meals, and allowing me to only focus on getting the most out of my workouts. My diet in Australia was somewhat questionable, resulting in delayed and drawn out morning routines, dehydration and starving my body of the required nutrients whilst drowning it in unnecessary carbs fats and sugars. I blame nobody but myself for this. Now, four weeks in on the strictest diet I have ever put myself through, I am starting to see the benefits every day now and continue to see new ones. A morning routine that would otherwise have taken two hours (bowel, bladder, shower dressing), is halved, signs of weight loss incrementally growing. My goal for the year remains, to stand, for those of you that witness our live broadcasts of my workouts, you would have seen a

trainer slapping my legs and bending and manoeuvring my torso in order to create spasm then basically lift me and stand with me. The results so far have been encouraging, we have established that I have an excellent spasm in my quadriceps, and turning that spasm on is relatively easy, once at a better standard, this spasm will allow me to lock out my legs. Although this will help, we have not yet been able to activate spasm in my glutes, which in doing so Will Bring me from sticking my bum out to straightening my body. This is where relativity comes into play, for all of this to happen, I must be lighter, for my body is too heavy on my already weakened legs to be able to hold myself up. Since my change of diet, my body's ability or inability to regulate its temperature has been exaggerated. I have constantly been cold, wearing extra clothes and sending Elisa crazy constantly asking for the windows and doors to be closed. But there is a plus! With my exercise and diet I have dropped nearly 2 kg in four weeks.

This week I had another 'down' day. I experienced my first Anzac Day away from my Country and service mates. A day that would otherwise have been spent at dawn service, paying my respects to the fallen, a 'gunfire brekky' with rum in my coffee, catching up with Army mates I have not seen or do not see often enough, reminiscing on the good and bad times/experiences whilst in. There is something about hearing the ode, the last post and old diggers stories in the wee hours of the morning and throughout the day that nothing on this planet can replicate or come close to. I, like every man and woman who has ever served have an allegiance and emotional tie to this day. A tie like no other. I found it especially hard to be away from the ceremony's, the parades and my mates on this day. Such an emotional day for so many, for many reasons, for me, my favourite day of the year. Elisa and I found an international super-market, went and purchased some ANZAC cookies and brought them in to Project Walk for the trainers to taste. The 24 cookies were devoured in 30 minutes. Fair to say they were a hit.

Next week I look forward to picking up my brother and mum from the airport and showing them the California lifestyle and the facilities at Project walk. Elisa and I are currently working on an innovative and VERY insightful project that will give you a whole new perspective on a day in the life of..... Stay tuned and follow Joel's Journey for more information!

LBJ ON THE WAY TO GOAT

Joel

