

## Joel's Journey – July 11, 2016



Loss is a hard thing to deal with, human instinct demands that we automatically replace, or attempt to replace, that which we have lost.

As soon as I woke in that hospital bed nearly 2 years ago and was able to comprehend what had happened, the first thing I wanted to do was regain the use of my legs. I was hell bent on walking again, I was willing to do anything to get back the life that I was living. I remember in the documentary my friend Fraser Green made about my story, my main goal and my attitude was directed at walking again. Slowly but surely I heard more and more stories of people like me with the same attitude towards their recovery, but was next to heartbroken and quite depressed for some time when being told that they and I would NEVER walk again (I would like to thank those people who told me this, because you have given me the best motivation to prove you wrong). This effected my personal life and mental state for quite some time, I lost hope and had almost all but given up. I was shattered. I will now admit on a public forum for the first time, although those close to me were aware of this. I had openly basically giving up.

Everyday I contemplated how I could end my life, and It wasn't until a few regular visits from people I consider mentors and extremely great friends that I realised walking again wasn't the be all and end all. Loving life and enjoying my days with my family and friends was just as important as walking. I was

given a job through my mate and now boss Glen Ferrarotto at "Ironsides Recruitment", started working 2 days a week, started to believe I could still contribute to society. Also, during this time I also became close friends with people at the Greensborough RSL. They have given me the opportunity to get over here along with other Sub Branches and Anzac House and I have absolutely surpassed my expectations of what I could achieve in only 6 weeks (5 so far) and have re aligned my goals and expectations with that day I first woke up in the hospital.

A week of new beginnings, If every journey begins with one small step then I have already made that small step. As mentioned previously my spasms have gotten stronger and more frequent as my therapy continues, this week for the first time since my injury I was able to voluntarily move one of my legs by triggering and utilising a spasm. To those viewing at home or around the world it may not be viewed as a useful movement but it is a stepping stone towards controlled movements in my legs. I legitimately feel that with enough time over here, persistence, sacrifice and dedication I am well on my way to proving those people who doubted me wrong. The trainers have also attributed this progress to the fact I have quite large glute and quad muscles, my big arse that all my friends taunted me about for so long has come in handy after all. This being the end of week 5, my upper body strength and stability has improved so much so that whilst using the standing frame I only require one trainer as opposed to 2 or 3 in the. My abs are well and truly firing and my balance has yet again improved. I can now incorporate upper body exercises while in the standing frame thanks to this newly gained strength.

It's a shame that next week is my final week because all of the trainers are starting to see improvement and getting excited at the progress I have made. This has instilled my drive for an episode 2 of project walk in 2017, for who knows what could have been if I don't return to Project Walk.

Joel