

SEED FUNDING FOR 'LIMBS 4 LIFE'

This year, *Limbs 4 Life* received a seeding grant from ANZ Trustees. The \$86,000 will provide *Limbs 4 Life* with the financial resources to commence research, employ staff and implement projects to support amputees in Victoria.

In 2003, 37 year-old Melissa Noonan had a terrible train accident and among the many consequences of the accident, Melissa's right leg had to be amputated above the knee.

To most people this would be a crushing blow. To Melissa, the experience highlighted a need that would ultimately drive her to establish Limbs 4 Life.

"The medical people are wonderful, and so are the rehab people," said Melissa. "But there was no information about what was going to happen and I had no idea what life without my leg was going to be like."

After 10 months in acute and critical care, Melissa started rehabilitation at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. It was here that she met Jacinta Dyson.

"When I asked Jacinta (a muscular-skeletal assistant for the amputee department) what info I could get [on amputation], she said *Look Mel, I have tried to research it for other people, and there is nothing out there. If you want to find stuff, you are going to have to do it yourself, but I'll support you.*"

Melissa and Jacinta began working together and – after a lot of research and preparation – they conceptualised Limbs 4 Life to provide support for amputees.

Melissa approached ANZ Trustees for seed funding for the start-up phase of Limbs 4 Life. Her application was successful and funding was provided by the Support Fund for Adults with Physical Disabilities.

"It's a big project, and I was absolutely speechless when Teresa [from ANZ Trustees] called me. We had put a lot of effort into it, and it was the best reward we could have got."

The \$86,000 in funding has already gone some way towards helping Melissa to achieve her goal of providing a one-stop-



Melissa Noonan (centre) with members of the peer support volunteer team.

shop for advice and support for amputees. The Limbs 4 Life website (www.limbs4life.com) now houses information resources, and allows the group to reach and assist people in remote locations.

Limbs 4 Life is also training peer support volunteers (amputees themselves) to visit hospital wards and help alleviate the distress felt by people who have recently lost a limb. This part of the program is based on an experience Melissa had while she herself was in rehabilitation.

"I was really lucky," said Melissa.

"I got a visit in hospital from a [disabled] friend of a friend. And the day he walked through the door on two legs ... it changed my whole world around. This guy was back at work, riding a push-bike, and I was like Oh my god! I can do stuff."

With the grant from the ANZ Trustees, Jacinta can now work permanently with Limbs 4 Life in an official capacity, which Melissa admits is wonderful for the organisation. Melissa is hoping Jacinta will be able to put her "Movement for

Disability" studies into practice, providing Limbs 4 Life clients with different remedial options, outside of physiotherapy.

Melissa is keen to develop the relationship with ANZ Trustees into a true partnership. "From what I have read, ANZ Trustees also offers mentoring... While I am dealing with people all the time, and that is second nature to me, there are a lot of other areas relating to the business side of the organisation I would like to develop to benefit the organisation."

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