



MEDIA RELEASE

Powered Mobility Device Community Forum

Wednesday 24 August 2016

Older Australians are striving to maintain independent and connected lifestyles through the use of powered mobility devices such as scooters and electric wheelchairs. In 2012 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission reported that there were as many as 231,000 Australian people using powered mobility devices.

Candice Shore, occupational therapist at SCHS identifies that powered mobility devices enable people to be active in the community once they are not able to walk long distances or hold a drivers licence. Ms Shore has assessed many clients who were wanting to be able to travel to the supermarket on a daily basis and pick up milk and bread including Mr Stewart Thornton.

Mr Thornton says, "The beauty of my mobility scooter is it has given me more independence. I would recommend the training I got from Candice at SCHS, as it has helped me to be more secure when operating my scooter and negotiating around people and obstacles".

Currently in Australia there is no formal licensing for people operating a powered mobility device. Anyone can self purchase and operate a powered mobility device on a road, footpath, shopping centre or home. While there is great benefit for individuals having access to a powered mobility device, there are also risks associated with the operation of such a device if the skills, knowledge and capacity of the operator are not sufficiently matched to the operation of a powered mobility devices.

This risk is not only to the operator of the powered mobility devices but also to the general public using roads and footpaths. Mr Colin Dyke from Roadsafes Mildura reports that in a two year period between 2006 to 2008, there were 442 powered mobility scooter fall injuries that resulted in hospitalisations, most of which occurred in the community on the roads and streets.

Over the last 5 years there has been increased research into the assessment and training requirements for individuals who are wanting to own and operate a powered mobility device, this work has been lead by Kathryn Townsend, Occupational Therapist from Austin Health. Kathryn has developed a complete package of assessment and training for powered mobility devices which includes the Scooter Use Assessment for Adults and the Scooter Use Training Tool.

SCHS occupational therapists regularly assess clients for their suitability and safety in use of a scooter. They are looking forward to the expanded provision of a regular Scooter Forum along with implementing a similar approach to Kathryn Townsend's assessment and training clinic.

SCHS see the Community Scooter Forum as a great first step for those who are considering the use or purchase of a scooter or powered mobility device. Ms Shore, SCHS Occupational Therapist,



believes that the regular Community Scooter Forum is only possible due to the willingness of many other local community services including: VicPolice, Roadsafes, RACV, Country Care and Mobility and Aidacare, who have all agreed to present at the Community Scooter Forum. The first forum will be held at 2pm Tuesday 13 September 2016, at SCHS, 137 Thirteenth Street.

If you would like to attend the first Community Scooter Forum please contact Candice Shore at SCHS on 50225444. More information about the Community Scooter Forum will be available at the SCHS Open Day on Friday 26 August at 137 Thirteenth Street, where you can also find out about all of SCHS services, go on a tour of the new facility and enjoy a healthy BBQ lunch.

END

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