



promoting *independence*
after spinal cord injury



11 November 2008

CEOs 'WHEELED' FOR CHARITY

CEOs from some of Australia's top funds managers took time out from the financial crisis to get a taste of life in a wheelchair on Monday. They were participating in an event organised by **ParaQuad NSW**, called '**Wheels for a Day**'. The event raised awareness of the everyday challenges faced by people who use wheelchairs, with a particular emphasis on workplace access.

Wheels for a Day was ParaQuad's feature event for 'Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week', which runs until 16 November.

Participants started off with some wheelchair training from ParaQuad Ambassadors, before heading off to work in their wheelchairs. The CEOs were divided into two tag teams and were required to spend an hour in the 'chair' at work before getting their wheelchair to the next person in their team, by any means possible, eg. Wheeling or catching an accessible taxi – Alliance Bernstein CEO, Michael Bargholz, did just that, booking his wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) last Friday, just to be sure!

"It was a tough experience" said CEO of Colonial First State, Brian Bissaker, who struggled to get through doorways and discovered the perils of uneven footpaths when he was nearly tipped out of his wheelchair on the way to Perpetual's CEO, David Deverall.

St George Wealth Management CEO, Geoff Lloyd and IFSA CEO, Richard Gilbert, used their time in the chair to test the accessibility of their workplaces and visit staff. Narrow doorways, difficult to open doors and inaccessible kitchen facilities were some of the challenges faced, as was the problem of what to do with your drink when you need to get back to your office – you need two hands to push a wheelchair!

CEO of BT Financial Group, Rob Coombe, was on a mission to wheel across the city from Martin Place to Westpac Place (on Kent Street). Arriving shaken but undeterred, Coombe later 'tagged' with team-mate, Justin Wood from Barclays Global, who had also managed the arduous uphill climb from George Street.

The workforce participation rate of people with a disability is reported to be 30% lower than the general population. This is simply unacceptable and is a statistic that ParaQuad NSW would certainly like to see lowered.

ParaQuad NSW (the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of NSW) provides services for people with a spinal cord injury which help them participate in their communities and lead active and independent lives. Spinal cord injury is sudden and unexpected and it can happen to anyone. Around 10,000 people today are living in Australia with a spinal cord injury, with 300-400 new injuries reported each year – that's about one a day!

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