

# wheelie motivated

Simon Jasprizza CA doesn't let being a paraplegic with a bipolar disorder get him down. Rather he has taken his Chartered Accountancy skills to found Wheelie Motivated Enterprises to help motivate others.

**Story** Leigh Sujanto

**L**ive every day as if it were your last." It's a philosophy that's often cited but rarely followed through... except in the instance of Simon Jasprizza CA, who in November 1997, suffered a tragic injury, which paralysed him from the chest down and confined him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

In July 1997, while working at Deloitte, Jasprizza had what he thought at the time was a mental breakdown and it was during this tumultuous period when he fell through a window and severed his spinal chord.

It wasn't until later that he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a medical condition that affects the brain so that a person experiences extreme moods from very high and over-excited to very low and depressed. Treatment for this condition requires daily medication, possibly for the rest of his life, along with seeing a psychiatrist and psychologist regularly to monitor any progress.

On top of this, the paraplegia also involves a lot of medication, a number of daily routines that take time, regular visits to a spinal doctor and his inability to weight bear means that every day has to be carefully planned to ensure that he is able

to access everything in his wheelchair.

On his recovery, Jasprizza credits the love and support of his family and friends. "My family spent every spare minute supporting me in the acute ward at Royal North Shore Hospital and then when I was being rehabilitated at the Moorong Spinal Unit at Ryde. My work colleagues from Deloitte spent endless hours organising a benefit night to raise money for house modifications, a wheelchair and other equipment that I needed and a bank account was also set up where friends could deposit money to assist in my rehabilitation."

## FINANCIAL ADVICE

In 2001 Jasprizza began working as a peer support officer for a disabled organisation called Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA). He visited clients in hospital, rehabilitation and at their homes to support them in their recovery and advise them on how to live with a spinal cord injury. "Paraplegics and quadriplegics can become easily depressed with their disability, so you need to be on your game to ensure they are enjoying life to the fullest and getting proper medical services where necessary," he explains.

It was while supporting compensable and non-compensable clients for SCIA that he realised that non-compensable clients were having a much harder time financially, living off the Disability Support Pension, (DSP) which is approximately \$280 per week.

"With the compensable clients, I discovered that they were not receiving any financial advice and some clients who had received settlements had spent the lot and were back on the DSP," says Jasprizza. "I saw an opportunity in the market to provide proper financial advice to compensable clients and help invest their money wisely so that they can live comfortably. I also saw an opportunity to motivate these clients to not just sit at home, but to re-enter the workforce, further their education and take up a wheelchair sport."

This led to the creation of Wheelie Motivated Enterprises, which is a team comprising a financial planner, a tax specialist, a solicitor, a strength and conditioning coach, a wheelchair salesman, a project manager for house modifications and a peer support mentor. Everyone in the team is sourced through service providers, with the exception of Jasprizza, who is the case manager and also completes all the accounting work for the various investment vehicles, eg family trusts, companies and SMSF.

Jasprizza also continues to volunteer for SCIA and vows to continue to work with them to ensure all SCI clients are properly cared for, regardless of their net wealth.

He's also recently joined the board of the Josephite Foundation, a non-profit organisation whose major project is a No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) which allows

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low income clients to borrow up to \$1000 interest free for essential items like fridges and other household necessities.

When asked about plans for the future, he says: "For many years now I have wanted to get involved in motivational speaking. I have done a few presentations over the years. I think I have a great story to tell due to my disabilities, both mental and physical. The Institute has teamed up with beyondblue, so maybe that is something I could get involved with in the future."

In his personal life, Jasprizza has also travelled the world playing wheelchair basketball and tennis. It has taken him to places like Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Austria, the United States and Canada. "I played basketball for NSW in Japan and for the Sydney Wheelkings in the National Wheelchair Basketball League (NWBL). In 2006 I had an international tennis ranking of 251 and an Australian ranking of 13. Because of my high level of

disability I found it hard to compete against less disabled athletes, including amputees and walkers, as they could still use their abdominal muscles."


Having since retired from all wheelchair athletics, Jasprizza has had a customised gym built in his back shed and employs the use of a personal trainer four times a week, which helps him to stay fit and maintains his core strength so he can continue to go about his daily routines.

Despite his many obstacles, Jasprizza's outlook remains positive, evidenced by his personal mantra.

### ENJOY YOURSELF

Wearing his Chartered Accountant hat, Jasprizza offers the following advice to readers: "The majority of the Australian workforce works all their lives accumulating superannuation benefits, making sacrifices when it comes to family and loved ones. Then when they retire at 65, assuming

that they can afford to, they find that they don't have the energy to do the things that they have wanted to do all their lives. Their health is not as good as it was when they were 30 and the \$100 that they had in their wallet at 30 can only buy \$10 worth of goods now that they have retired many years later.

"Don't be like the majority of the Australian workforce and wait until it is too late. Get out and enjoy yourself and encourage your friends to as well as we only get one chance at life. Unfortunately the older we get the poorer our health will get so act now." 

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on Wheelie Motivated Enterprises, visit: [wheeliemotivated.com.au](http://wheeliemotivated.com.au)