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With Oliver Hunter

IA FEATURE
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Meet Mich Schepers

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Welcome

Summer has a way of reinvigorating our sense of possibility. Longer days, more time outdoors and reminders to care for ourselves in the everyday moments. That's the spirit behind our final edition of Inform for 2025, where wellbeing takes centre stage.

Prepare to laugh and reflect with comedian and cover feature Oliver Hunter as he shares how comedy became a path to wellbeing, authenticity and advocacy. Finding his rhythm in the beautiful chaos of family life and championing inclusion, Oliver's comedy is bolder, more grounded and unapologetically real. He's done the work, found his voice and put wellbeing at the centre of his journey on and off stage.

From surf coast adventures to disco nights, Good Times That Do Good shares how one lifestyle and recreational program in Victoria is creating spaces for autistic individuals to thrive through adventure and fun.

We are also honoured to share a heartfelt story of resilience and optimism in the face of managing a rare skin condition for a mother and son in Darwin, alongside 'Voice Your Stories', where Support Worker, Mich Schepers, reminds us that purpose and passion are cornerstones of wellbeing.

Clinical Nurse Consultant Tracey Aldis shares a practical step-by-step guide to creating a wound care kit for home and travel - a small investment that can make a big difference. We also uncover the health benefits of the "sunshine vitamin" for mood, bones and overall energy and how vitamin D is your secret summer superpower.

This edition reminds us that wellbeing isn't a destination, it's a collection of moments, habits and connections.

We hope this summer brings you all three, plus plenty of new memories along the way!

Share your story

If you would like to share your story or experience with us, please reach out to our team at communications@iagroup.org.au.

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CENTRE STAGE *with* OLIVER HUNTER

Living, laughing and rolling with it



Written by Victoria Damos

Seasoned comedian, passionate disability advocate and proud dad to son Ziggy, Oliver Hunter isn't just here for the laughs. He's harnessing them with a deeper purpose, direction and responsibility.

Finding his rhythm in the beautiful chaos of family life, comedic expression and championing inclusion, Oliver's comedy is bold and unapologetically real.

He's done the work, found his voice and has put wellbeing at the centre of his journey on and off the stage.

Comedy became more than just an escape for Oliver. It gave him a greater purpose. With a microphone in hand, a spotlight on his terms and reclaiming the laughs for himself to dish out gave him a sense of rawness and authenticity to be himself.

"I've always been drawn to making people laugh," Oliver shares, reflecting on his teenage years.

"It started as a coping mechanism, a way to deal with the medical trauma that living with a disability can present. Growing up as the only kid with a disability in school, I didn't have any friends with disabilities. I felt pigeonholed," he shares.

As time went on, Oliver started connecting with others living with similar disabilities and discovered a love for making people laugh. Comedy became a way of expressing himself. "I could tell stories about my life and my disability in a way that's informative, inclusive, and, yeah, funny." Oliver said.

"Living with a disability is hard and that often gets overlooked. We see the glamorous side, the Paralympians, the big wins; but we don't talk enough about the day-to-day, about the struggle and it's okay to acknowledge that."

On stage, he's not just seen - he's heard. He captivates audiences with his unique blend of comedy, authenticity and personality as well as his passion for advocacy and inclusion.

Sharing his honest experiences living with a disability, Oliver is connecting with others like him and supporting them to prioritise their own sense of wellbeing and optimism.

He's launched solo shows, performed at comedy festivals and built a loyal fanbase of people with disabilities who finally feel seen. "I'm not a Paralympian, and that's okay," he says. "I'm just like you I get it," shares Oliver.

Nowadays, Oliver is also an Inclusion Coach encouraging participation of individuals with disabilities in local and community sport and empowering sporting clubs and schools to confidently navigate genuine disability inclusion.



Oliver has become more self-aware of what it means to live well and prioritise his wellbeing after he faced the many barriers and challenges living with a disability presented.

“In the beginning, I wasn’t conscious of my wellbeing at all. Now, I’m a husband and a Dad, I have to be the best version of myself, not just for me - but for them too,” shares Oliver.



He regularly sees a psychologist, swims, goes to the gym and consciously makes time for the things he enjoys. “It’s important to be okay doing stuff on your own,” he says. “Keep checking in with yourself. Do what you can do and within your capacity and JUST DO IT!”

“I want to be another person that just does it, so others like me, can see they can do it too,” Oliver said.

His recent performance at Independence Australia’s ‘Mic’d & Mighty’ comedy series, along with his work as a local sports inclusion coach and disability inclusion consultant with Sport4All and GSA reflects a deeper mission of helping young people with disabilities face life’s challenges, embrace who they are and prioritise their wellbeing.

“When you are young, even with a disability, you are free to go to uni, go out and party with your mates, learn and grow, date, live independently and find what it is that truly makes you happy” he says.

“Playing sport for fun, seeing a movie, joining in, wellbeing is about having the choice to live life your way.”

No longer content with ‘folding into the background’, Oliver has taken centre stage, professionally and personally, to show that disability isn’t a limitation and wellbeing isn’t about perfection - it’s about putting yourself first, finding something you love and just rolling with it.

When asked what advice he would give to others navigating the challenges of living with a disability whilst prioritising their personal wellbeing, Oliver shares, “Find an ally, a friend, a family member or even just start with yourself. Know what you want, adapt if you need to, and be kind. Life is hard, that’s okay. Just don’t be afraid to live it on your own terms.”

Oliver is proof that wellbeing isn’t about eliminating the day-to-day realities of living with a disability, it’s about embracing the full spectrum of who you are and turning that into something powerful that could change a life.

You never know whose life you may touch, even with a great big laugh.

@OliverHunter_95 oliver-hunter.com

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Voice YOUR STORIES

Meet Mich Schepers

Between volunteering in her local community, bird watching and helping young autistic adults find their confidence and independence, Mich Schepers shares how a career in the classroom flourished into one of the best rewarding journeys she could have ever hoped for.

Voice Your Stories shines a spotlight on the incredible individuals working tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of people living with disability.

What led you to a career as a Support Worker?

Mich: "I was a school teacher for many years, and during Covid I had the opportunity to teach life skills, resilience and self-esteem to teens who were either displaced, disadvantaged, disabled or needed extra support. It was a hard time for these young people during an already difficult time for our world, and I saw the difference someone believing in them made. So, I applied for a job at SASI and it has been the highlight of my career!"

Being able to support, empower and believe in someone living with disability of any kind is rewarding, but to work with young Autistic adults is remarkable."

Can you share a moment where you felt especially proud of the support you provided?

Mich: "At last year's SASI Art Show, one of our customers stood up on stage to share a few words. We had practiced, backed out, volunteered again and practiced again before those few minutes were able to happen. To see them overcome their fears and get up in front of people was HUGE!"

What inspires you to keep giving your best each day?

Mich: "The smiles on others' faces, the joy in my heart and the satisfaction of knowing I am contributing to a beautiful world."



What is your favourite quote to live by?

Mich: "Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think - A.A Milne"

What do you enjoy getting up to outside of being a support worker?

Mich: "Nature is my happy place, and I actively seek it out each day. Whether a stroll along our local creek, in the bush or on the beach (plus I love bird watching!) I also volunteer for an organisation in my local area that provides free plant-based food to the community. And, of course, spending time with my wonderful family to keep me whole and grounded."

Mich is one of the many support workers at Independence Australia Group providing people living with a disability or other personal need choices, confidence and independence to reach for the stars and achieve their goals.

Stay tuned for more Voice Your Stories as we continue to shine the spotlight on the incredible support workers making a difference, every day.

SASI is part of Independence Australia Group. Learn more about SASI's autistic specialist supports at sasi.org.au

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MY SON Olly

Written by Victoria Damos



When Mereana’s son Olly was diagnosed with epidermolysis bullosa (EB) whilst also undergoing treatment in Perth for a hole in his heart, nothing could have prepared her for the big life change and challenges ahead.

“Olly hasn’t had the easiest start to life,” Mereana reflects, “but he’s the happiest bloke.”

When Mereana first noticed small blisters forming on Olly’s toes, she knew something wasn’t right. “It took a month before a diagnosis was made,” she recalls.

That diagnosis was epidermolysis bullosa (EB) – a rare genetic skin condition affecting an estimated 1,000 Australians. For families like Mereana’s living in rural and remote areas, access to specialised care and accurate information on EB can be challenging.

“There is generally a lack of knowledge around EB with it being quite rare. It can be challenging,” shares Mereana.

After relocating back to Darwin to be closer to family and return to work, Mereana faced the dual task of managing Olly’s EB and maintaining her own wellbeing as a full-time working mother.

Despite this, Mereana has built an informed and supportive environment around Olly, choosing to lead with optimism, rather than fear. She quickly tackled Olly’s diagnosis head-on, leaning into the unknown and building a new life around Olly’s needs.



Her days revolve around careful planning and a consistent care routine that ensures Olly is comfortable and supported. “A lot of planning goes into our days now — it’s part of our routine,” shares Mereana.

Mornings begin early, long before daycare drop-off. Mereana prepares dressings, bathes Olly, and checks his skin to ensure he’s ready for the day ahead. With Olly sometimes in pain and discomfort, Mereana closely supports Olly’s physical and emotional

wellbeing so he can participate in daily life and be like any other child. For Mereana, protecting Olly’s emotional wellbeing is just as important as the daily dressings routine.

“Olly goes to daycare, and I do as much as I can in the morning so that he can enjoy his day without discomfort or disruption,” Mereana said.

In the early days, unfamiliarity with EB meant daycare staff were hesitant and apprehensive, so Mereana took it upon herself to build relationships with Olly’s daycare teachers and provide insight and information into his personal care.

“I keep in regular touch with daycare. I encourage them to take him outside, get him around other children. Don’t leave him by himself. He can do anything like everyone else.” shares Mereana.

With patience and education, she helped create an environment where Olly could thrive, socially and emotionally. Her unwavering belief in his right to a full childhood has reshaped the way others understand and care for him. Olly now plays outside with the other children and is highly active.

Living in Darwin brings its own challenges. From harsh heat and weather conditions that affect Olly’s sensitive skin, to the challenges of access to specialised care in remote areas. However, Mereana focuses on the support systems she does have including her family, her workplace and a growing network of healthcare professionals who, like her, are learning along the way.

“Ultimately, it’s just a day-to-day thing. I learn as I go. The doctors and nurses we deal with are learning about EB too — they’ve been very refreshing and helpful” Mereana said.

Mereana’s perspective on maintaining her and Olly’s wellbeing is refreshingly holistic. It’s not about perfection, but about presence, showing up each day with intention, and continuing to educate herself on EB and how she can provide the best support to Olly.

Despite EB being a rare skin condition, Mereana doesn’t see EB as a limitation for Olly. She wants him to grow into a confident, independent person who embraces life with the same joy, resilience and strength he shows today.



“Olly’s care is important, and more awareness is needed. But the way I see it, everyone’s got something. I don’t want to bubble-wrap him. We just deal with it, like any other day.” Mereana said.

Alongside a supportive network of nurses, healthcare professionals and other EB families, Mereana also benefits from access to the National Epidermolysis Bullosa Dressing Scheme (NEBDS).

This government-funded program, administered by Independence Australia, ensures that approved dressings and practical support are delivered monthly to those living with EB—offering both financial relief and peace of mind.

Being able to focus on what truly matters—Olly’s health, happiness and independence—Mereana is creating a life of opportunity, safety and wellbeing for Olly, so he can lead a fulfilling childhood and prepare him for an even greater future.

Mereana is optimistic about Olly’s future, reflecting, “I want to make sure Olly leads a normal life — go places, meet his milestones, and grow into an adult that is confident and carefree.”

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HOW TO CREATE a HOME WOUND KIT

By Tracey Aldis



Your step-by-step guide

Most minor injuries happen at home — so being ready can make all the difference.

A well-prepared wound care kit helps you treat scrapes, cuts and scratches quickly, reducing the risk of infection and promoting healing. Here's how to create a wound care kit for your home.

The right tools for the job

Only use your wound care tools for wound care so they are not lost, dirty or blunt when you need them. Essential items should include:

- **Blunt-tip scissors** for trimming dressings
- **Tweezers/forceps** for removing debris
- **Disposable gloves** (single-use only)
- **Sterile dressing packs**
- **Alcohol wipes** (to clean tools before and after use)

Choose the Right Dressings

Keep a mix of dressing types:

- **Hydrocolloids:** best for minor, low-exudate wounds
- **Island dressings:** simple, stick-on with padded centre
- **Foam dressings:** absorbent, gentle on sensitive skin
- **Gelling fibres:** great for infected/high-exudate wounds
- **Absorbent pads:** for managing exudate
- **Contact layers:** reduce sticking, add medication or moisture

Secure Dressings Safely

Avoid pressure or creases that could damage the skin by including a mix of:

- **Medical tape** (paper or fabric is gentler)
- **Crepe bandages:** soft and stretchy
- **Cohesive bandages:** self-adhesive
- **Tubular bandages:** simple slip-on option

Pack & Store Your Kit

- Use a waterproof bag or container
- Store in a cool, dry, accessible place (away from kids!)
- Return leftover dressings to original packs in zip-lock bags
- Regularly check expiry dates and restock as needed

Creating a wound care kit for home can be simple and easy — start small, stay clean, and restock regularly. It's a small step that supports greater independence and peace of mind.

Shop our extensive range of wound products at store.independenceaustralia.com

Tracey is a Clinical Nurse Consultant with over 30 years of experience. She has completed a Bachelor of Nursing (RN) and holds advanced qualifications in palliative care, chronic disease management, stomal therapy, continence, and wound management. Tracey is passionate about empowering individuals on their health journeys through holistic support and education and is also certified as a trainer and assessor.

GOODTIMES THAT DO *good*

Where the fun begins and wellbeing flows

It was the perfect Saturday for a weekend getaway on Victoria's picturesque surf coast for a group of eager young adventure seekers and their support workers.

The sun was shining, the waves were crashing, and Jack was already halfway up the steps to the tallest waterslide at Geelong's Adventure Park with his support worker, Andrew, laughing nervously a few steps behind.

For Jack, a weekend escape to the surf coast was an opportunity to be his true self: adventurous, daring, and free.

From day trips to bowling alleys and art galleries, to weekend camps filled with beach walks, BBQs, and disco nights, SASI is reimagining what it means to support autistic individuals through their community access and lifestyle programs.

The approach is simple, but powerful—to create opportunities that are fun, inclusive, and centered around personal choice.

While they may look like just a good time from the outside, the benefits run far deeper.

Regular participation in meaningful activities has been shown to improve mental health, reduce isolation, and build confidence — all key ingredients to psychosocial wellbeing.

“Participation in community activities builds confidence, social skills, and emotional resilience,” says Michelle James (Lifestyle Choices Operations Manager, SASI).

“And that contributes directly to overall wellbeing.”

Participants are invited to shape their own schedule — choosing between beach days, adventure parks, movie nights, or just some quiet time. This encourages autistic individuals to express themselves, try new things, and simply be themselves, surrounded by a team that values their strengths.

The experiences are woven into a larger purpose to nurture the wellbeing of autistic individuals by fostering inclusion, self-expression, and connection through community participation.

“Wellbeing isn't one-size-fits-all,” explains Michelle. “For some, it's finding the courage to try something new. For others, it's sharing a laugh over a campfire or connecting over a shared interest.”

Designed with every individual's needs and NDIS plan in mind, the weekend getaways blend fun with structured support. From rock climbing to campfire stories, every activity helps foster a sense of autonomy and connection for autistic individuals.

Participants return home with stories of new friendships, newfound confidence, and moments of pride - like Jack's thrill-seeking dash up the waterslide.

The impact of these programs demonstrates that joy and belonging are not extras in life - they are essentials.

Find out more about the range of specialist autistic supports offered at SASI by visiting sasi.org.au



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Say hello to vitamin D — your secret superpower for better health and wellbeing this summer.

Why does vitamin D matter?

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble nutrient that helps your body absorb calcium, supports strong bones, keeps your immune system humming, and even helps regulate mood. It's a bit like the ultimate multi-tasker, quietly working behind the scenes to keep your body balanced and your mind in check.

For people with disability or limited mobility, it's especially important to stay on top of vitamin D levels, as time outdoors or physical activity might be less accessible.

How do we get it?

The best source? Good old-fashioned sunshine. When ultraviolet B (UVB) rays hit your skin, your body produce and stores vitamin D. But here's the tricky part: sunscreen (which we definitely need), darker skin tones, older age, and even staying indoors more often can reduce how much vitamin D your body makes. And because we're all trying to be sun-safe — rightly so — getting the balance right can be a challenge.

How much do we need?

The National Health and Medical Research Council provides recommended 'healthy' amounts of vitamin D dependant on your age, increasing incrementally as your get older. Depending on your individual situation, you may need more or less — so it's always best to check with your GP.

Signs you might be running low

Vitamin D deficiency can sneak up on you. Physical signs may include aches, fatigue, or weakened bones. Mentally, it may show up as low mood, anxiety, or brain fog. If you're feeling off and can't quite put your finger on why, a simple blood test could provide answers.

How to top up safely

A few minutes of sun on your arms or legs (early morning or late afternoon is best) can go a long way, especially when balanced with sun safety. If you can't (safely) soak up enough rays, specific food and supplements can also boost your vitamin D.

Look for:

- Fatty fish like tuna, salmon or sardines
- Fortified foods like cereal and orange juice
- Vitamin D supplements (check with your GP first)

Whether you roll, stroll or stretch your way through summer, don't forget to let a little sunshine in. Independence Australia provides an extensive range of supplements and sun-smart products to purchase online.

Choose Independence Australia for your supplements and sun-smart products at store.independenceaustralia.com

TENA PROTECTS PROGRAM



THE DIGNITY OF DRY STARTS WITH A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP



TENA PROSKIN NIGHT PANTS



Designed specifically for night-time use, with more absorbency where it's needed most and faster absorption. Keeping the skin drier for longer.

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As a social enterprise, the income we make is invested back into the vital services we provide to support people with disabilities. Your purchases support us to enhance people's lives.

Travel SMART, STAY CONFIDENT

Beating the Summer Holiday

Incontinence Jitters



Holidays are meant for new experiences and new memories. If you experience bladder control challenges, travelling can feel daunting. With a little planning (and some clever tricks), you can say goodbye to the nerves and a confident hello to your next holiday.

Plan Ahead, Stress Less

Before you set off, map out your trip in stages. If you're flying, book seats near the toilets (aisle seats can be your best friend) and arrive to board early, giving you time to get comfortable and organised.

If you're hitting the road, the 'National Public Toilet Map' is a great tool for pre-planning breaks. For buses or trains, a quick bathroom visit and product change before boarding can make the ride much smoother.

Pack Like a Pro

Think of your bag as your confidence kit. Pack more continence products than you think you'll need. Always carry enough in your hand luggage to cover the trip, plus any unexpected detours. Higher-capacity continence products are great for long journeys.

Keep a couple of spares in a smaller handbag or backpack for quick access, while the bulk can stay tucked away in your luggage. Disposal bags, a change of clothes and a compact wash kit are must-haves.

Pro tip: Save luggage space by arranging products to be delivered straight to your accommodation!

Order products online, delivered direct to your door (or holiday destination) at store.independenceaustralia.com.au.

Dress & Eat for Comfort

Choose dark, comfy clothes that are easy to change in and out of. On the food front, think "light and kind" to avoid bladder irritants like fizzy drinks, caffeine, and alcohol, which can be extra troublesome while travelling. Water is your best friend, especially on long flights where air-conditioning can be dehydrating. Don't skimp on fluids — dehydration may actually make bladder issues worse.

Move, Stretch & Breathe

Sitting for long periods can be tough on your body. Try seated stretches on the plane, stroll during roadtrip pit stops, and sneak in some trusty kegel exercises when you can (they really do help!)

You've Got This!

Travelling with incontinence doesn't have to be an obstacle. With a little foresight, pre-planning and a well-packed bag, you'll be free to focus on the best bits of your trip - the sights, the sunshine and making last memories.



Gentle Adhesion, Reliable Protection

Choose silicone to support healing for fragile skin with confidence.

Designed with delicate skin in mind, the KIS Silicone Tape and KIS Silicone Contact Layer offer soft, secure adhesion without the trauma. Ideal for sensitive or fragile skin, both products provide gentle, effective wound care - minimising pain during dressing changes while protecting healing tissue. Easy to apply, reposition, and remove, they're the perfect pairing for comfort, confidence, and clinical performance.

Silicone dressings offer a gentle solution.

- Soft silicone adhesive
- Conformable layer
- Reduced risk of MARS1
- Silicone tape used for prevention & retention



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