



The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust  
**Annual Impact Report**  
**2024**

**CATWALK**  
Funding research to cure spinal cord injury



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## CatWalk's Vision

A world free from spinal cord injury paralysis.

## Mission

- CatWalk is dedicated to supporting research to cure spinal cord injury.
- We drive innovation towards reversing spinal cord injury by funding research.
- Over the past two decades we have boosted research capacity by sustained investment in intellectual capital and leadership.
- We are focused on pursuing the most effective route for a cure for spinal cord injury.

## Key Objectives

- Support the scientific opinion that a cure for spinal cord injury can be found.
- Generate and distribute funding for research into a cure for paralysis.
- Identify and enable medical research and development into techniques designed for the regeneration of the effects of spinal cord injuries.
- Monitor the research progress of all researchers funded by the Trust.
- Provide targeted assistance to research organisations working on projects that support the purpose of the Trust.
- Disseminate information about research into spinal cord injury.
- Foster collaboration among all fields engaged in research on the central nervous system, its regeneration, and the alleviation of resulting symptoms.

# Chairman's Report

Firstly, I would like to apologise.

Late last year we were presented with an opportunity so important to our mission that we decided we had no time to waste – we had to act decisively and immediately.

When things are important and urgent, sometimes other things get broken or left aside.

We know we haven't brought all our brilliant supporters along for the ride, so we now want to rectify this.

Welcome to CatWalk's first Annual Impact Report which replaces our twice-yearly magazine (we plan to keep you all much better informed online).

This exciting opportunity is what we're calling our Cure Programme which we believe will produce a major research breakthrough within five years and has drastically reshaped our strategy. We'll unveil the Cure Programme later in this report.

This year has seen the beginning of a transformation of CatWalk to ensure that we have the ability to deliver on the programme and maintain our momentum beyond. We haven't changed our mission or who we are.

**We are still relentlessly driving for a cure for spinal cord injury with the impatience of a champion.**

**We are still seeking out and encouraging the best research.**

**We are still identifying and overcoming barriers that prevent its progress.**

What is different is that we have taken these different strands and woven them into a team with a tangible objective to deliver a result.

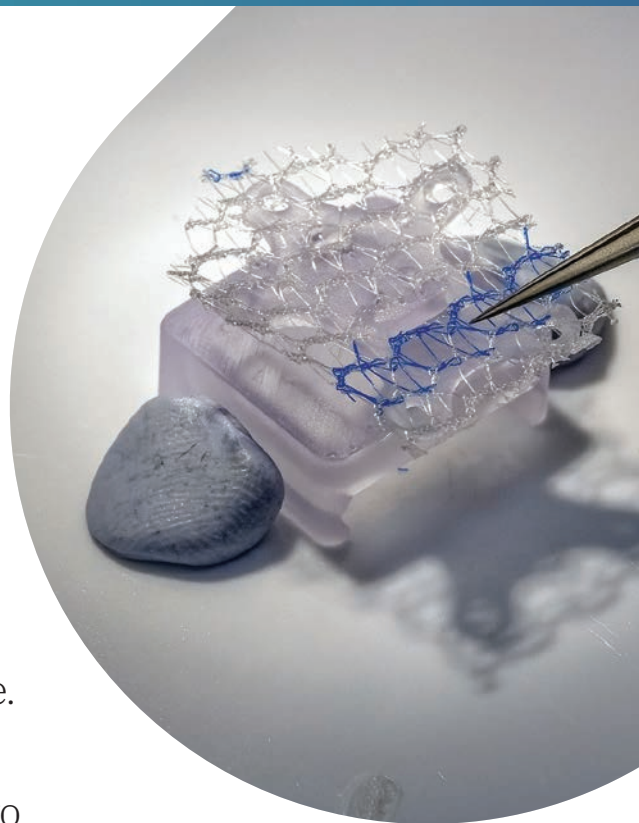
This great leap in our mission is urgent and our language reflects it. We want the world to know that cures are imminent and to be excited that these breakthroughs are being driven by New Zealanders. We need everyone to understand that any treatment that enhances the lives of those living with this awful injury is a breakthrough. And it is vital for our mission that the best and brightest researchers can keep working together focussed on this crucial task.

That is why the theme of our Annual Report is impact: how the work of CatWalk will propel research forward from 2024 onwards. I hope you enjoy engaging in our success and encourage you to spread the word. There is plenty more to do!

This year the Board said farewell to Trustees Paul Wilcox and Fee Webby, both committed supporters who helped set up our new strategy. We thank them for their work and wisdom, and for continuing to be formidable supporters behind the scenes.

We have welcomed Professor Martyn Goulding, Tara Satyanand and Lee Taniwha as new Trustees. Martyn is one of the world's top neuroscientists, Professor and Department Chair at the prestigious Salk Institute in the USA, and recent winner of the international Brain Prize for his pioneering work in spinal cord research. And, he is a Kiwi. We are delighted that he has come on board at such a critical time.

Tara has wide international experience in medical research in the public, private and non-profit





sectors and is an invaluable navigator for us. Lee is a dynamic force in community engagement and inclusivity, and brings us his experience as CEO of a homecare service provider that supports those with complex and long-term care needs.

The Board is also being supported differently. One of our changes was to pressgang long-standing trustee Tom Brady into taking on our challenge full-time. Tom's considerable experience has been fundamental to our strategy since 2018 so we were thrilled he agreed to guide this transformation as Chief Executive. He is working with our amazing staff to upskill and organise CatWalk for the future, while assisting with our major fundraising campaign.

This Board and staff team will continue to take on key experts in 2025 and I am confident that we will be well equipped to play our part in accelerating progress towards a cure for spinal cord injury.

Finally, I would like to give my personal thanks to my fellow Trustees and the other volunteers who help make CatWalk what we are. A big thank you is also due to all of our generous supporters, and for the continued confidence of our founder Catriona, as we pilot her vision into its next phase of success.



David Pretorius  
Chairman, CatWalk Board of Trustees

# Chief Executive's Report

I write this in the afterglow of a sensational Luminary Gala event that many of you will have enjoyed. Although most of the work was done during the year captured by this Annual Impact Report, unfortunately the event itself and its remarkable results were not. However, we hope you enjoy the feature on Luminary, as we would be mad not to celebrate it.



As Dave our Chair has said, this year was transformative for CatWalk. I am humbled to have been asked to help the team rise to the challenge we face with our Cure Programme rollout. The programme will significantly increase our capacity to speed up the search for cures for spinal cord injury.

Our financials show we are still driving considerable research both here and overseas. In the performance report, the 'overspend' of \$662,899 might be misleading. All of the \$730,000 we expended as grants was committed to in previous years from funds already held. It is still an incredible amount to be able to provide and had led to further spinoffs. This year our income was focussed on future years. That has led us to some bold conclusions.

Our Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility (SCIRF) at the University of Auckland has been instrumental in providing a research base and encouraging new researchers. The SCIRF impact report demonstrates exciting progress later in this volume. However, much of our recent post-doctoral research has been conducted in parallel beyond the SCIRF. We found ourselves directing a highly capable group of researchers, all independently making important breakthroughs.

One of our top research stars, Dr Darren Svirskis, was reporting his results when we asked him what was stopping the researchers from working faster. What ensued was a series of discussions where we mapped out a novel solution. CatWalk could provide the 'glue funding' that kept the otherwise-

funded individuals together as a multidisciplinary team focussed on a result. They would have the flexibility to pivot behind promising leads and be guided by a powerful scientific advisory group. We called this team the Spine Squad.

As the reporting year concluded, we were poised to formally sign our commitment to the University of Auckland to make the Spine Squad a reality with a newly promoted Professor Svirskis at the helm. This will be primary focus for the next few years.

This year we also got the news that the Get a Grip study that we are joint funding in Australia has hit a recruitment block. Our team immediately negotiated bringing it to Auckland as a pilot programme so New Zealanders could benefit. We got in touch with Julie Rope from Rope Neuro Rehabilitation who had brand new facilities ideal for the study. Thanks to Julie's help, we have jumped through all the ethics hoops we need to proceed, and we look forward to reporting our progress next year.

It is clear our partnerships are crucial to achieving our goal. As an independent trust we reserve the right to work with only those we believe will help us accelerate our progress. We have been fortunate in getting the support of some incredible world-class organisations and I would particularly like to thank the University of Auckland, the Centre for Brain Research, the Neurological Foundation, SpinalCure Australia, Neuroscience Research Australia and the New Zealand Spinal Trust, without whose collaboration we would be years behind.



We have continued our partnership with Auckland and Otago Universities conducting the NZ Brain Bee Challenge, encouraging promising school students into neuroscience research. And, we held the second of our Spinal Symposiums to gather the spinal cord sector together to present challenges and opportunities. Each one of these has brought people together in new ways and has brought cures closer.

I'd like to again acknowledge the support of our generous donors and supporters at every level. Although CatWalk drives the research, we can do nothing without the support of those who get in behind our mission with the funds necessary. We all need to celebrate your generosity and give a big 'Thank You'.

My final thank you is to the Trustees and staff of CatWalk who are the real drivers of our mission. It's a big part of the culture that everyone more than pulls their weight and strives for excellence. I have rarely worked with a Board that is so committed to leading by example and being active participants in the mission, and that inspires our staff and volunteers to never accept second best.

It takes all these people to make up Team CatWalk. I invite you to read on about the extraordinary impact you have made to make paralysis from spinal cord injury a thing of the past.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Brady'.

Tom Brady  
Chief Executive

# Founder's Footnote

What an evening!

Thank you to you all for your support of another incredible night and CatWalk's biggest fundraiser of dollars yet. What was obvious to me was the number of cogs in the very big wheel of 'Luminary' which made this event stand out.

From the theme 'Luminary' chosen by CatWalk's GM Meg Speirs, through to the extraordinary prizes up for auction, gathered by a small but very effective committee in Anna Hiatt, Sarah Gadd, Kate Lambie, Hamish Ramsden, Chris Lovelady, Meg Speirs and I. Back this up with a guest list which would blow us all away with their bidding, their follow up support and their genuine want to support the goal of getting wheelies functional and independent.

All this matched by key personnel both when speaking on stage and behind the scenes ... everyone worked so hard in the role they played, meaning CatWalk was the definite winner on June 22.

Amongst the prizes were the super styley and accessible Lawn Road Retreat in Hawkes Bay, helicopter adventures down south, golfing and dining with NZ's newest citizen Lady Henrietta Tavistock at Woburn, accessible fishing thanks to Wish-for-Fish, service fees to the hottest thoroughbred sires in NZ and Australia from Rich Hill and Newgate, dining with CatWalk's international Patron Zara Tindall and her husband Mike and so much more.

A prize that struck a particular chord with me was the incredible Village Goldsmith's 'Luminary Necklace,' donated by Ian and Christine Douglas. Ian has been a CatWalk ambassador since inception. His support comes from the experience of having broken his neck but being one of the lucky ones to walk again. Quite simply – Ian and Christine get it. They know how lucky they are and they are also a couple who have worked incredibly hard to be the very best and deliver the very best ... what we love most is their want to break new ground, and set and achieve seemingly

unachievable goals. True CatWalk ambassadors, walking the talk.

Christy, the marketing guru alongside Ian and Christine, had brainstormed the 'Luminary Necklace'. A spinel, one of the world's coolest gemstones, which boasts healing properties (and also sits in the coronation crown) is surrounded by diamonds on a spine of diamonds.

On the night I'll be honest I started to get nervous. We knew we had an audience capable of bidding for such an item but would they love it and the story as much as we did? They hadn't been in the room when Christy pitched it to us. We'd sent out handwritten letters to potential bidders in advance, popped stunning cards about the necklace on every table, our MC Rachel Smalley had worn it to kick the evening off and worked the room to show it off.

When it comes to the auction, I hold my breath but the bidding is fast and furious thanks to Steve Davis auctioneer extraordinaire, I realise Jo and Brendan Lindsay are bidding. Not being able to see where the other bidder is or who was bidding against them (which it emerged was a close friend of my sister!), I was rooting for them. The Lindsays are one of CatWalk's biggest supporters and I had visions of Jo wearing it and thinking of CatWalk each time she wore it. When the hammer was knocked down to them at \$40,000 I went straight over and gave them the biggest hug. I was stoked ... what happened next was unbelievable. They turned around and said: "Catriona we've bought it for you – it belongs with you."

Even writing this gets me emotional yet when it happened there were no tears just complete and





utter disbelief. This stunning necklace was mine to wear, I could not believe it. Those that know me know that tears well up easily but I was in a state of shock, no tears just utter disbelief at Jo and Brendan's generosity. What I did say though was when my time is up and either I pass on or CatWalk has a new front person then 'The Luminary' gets passed on to the most deserving person (female) of CatWalk – just like the Coronation crown. It is spectacular and hasn't been off my neck (except to swim) since the evening.

It's fair to say the evening was a spectacular success and not because I was lucky enough to leave with a \$40,000 piece of jewellery!

There were many high points of the evening and listening to our four wheelies Brad Smeele, Sophia Malthus, Jamie Astwood and Lee Taniwha speak about their stories followed up by CatWalk Vice-Chair Grant Sharman was one of mine.

Another was being able to share with guests the progress I'd made with my body since stepping away from the CatWalk board to push on as hard as possible physically and mentally. Showing I could walk with a pacer using my brain was six years of hard graft thanks to many many hours with physios, PT's, carers, time in the pool, pushing and standing. There are many more hours of training to go to get this body functional but to achieve this 22 years post injury shows just what the brain and body are capable of ... imagine if we mix it with some world class research. Now that's spine tingling!

Pre evening and post we received incredibly generous donations towards the CatWalk Cure programme. You can view these in the financials

but a special THANK YOU to all for backing CatWalk ... you are making a BIG difference and we really really appreciate it.

This Founders Footnote I am writing from a very hot Paris during the Olympics. So hot I've sent my travelling buddies off for the day so I can give this body a rest ... it didn't travel well, has not coped with the heat and has been fighting low blood pressure along with a chest/head/flu situation since a swim in Nice ... is it Covid? I don't want to know but what I can say is coping with these temperatures on legs is a bit easier than trapped in this tetra body and my non-wheelie buddies are also struggling!

I don't write this as 'poor me,' I know I'm bloody lucky to be here and we will be making the most of every single opportunity but it reminds me of CatWalk's WHY ... life in a chair is really tough, even the fun stuff is tough!

We're here to get legs moving, bladder and bowels working, and together we are getting there one step at a time.



Thank you as always,  
Catriona



# International Patron

Kia ora CatWalk friends, as always, I'm absolutely in awe of the energy and enthusiasm your team brings to each of its endeavours.

It's been fantastic to hear that the Luminary gala dinner in Auckland raised more than \$570,000 for Spinal Cord Research, and getting people back on their feet. That's just incredible, and makes me so proud to be a part of the CatWalk movement.

It was genuinely so much fun for Mike and I to put our thinking caps on and offer up a pub lunch for the auction. While we couldn't be there on the night, I can assure you we're looking forward to hosting the generous bidders down at our local, just as soon as we get the dates sorted!

CatWalk truly is phenomenal. From your founder Catriona, to the thousands of volunteers, Board members, funders and supporters who back your events each year - thank you for your commitment to making a difference.

I send my very best wishes to you, wherever you are in the CatWalk family.

Zara Tindall, MBE



# Bring you The Poronui Passage in support of CatWalk

An extraordinary adventure through the wilds of Poronui. **Saturday 30th November 2024**

Nestled in the secluded Taharua Valley in New Zealand's North Island – just a 40 minute drive from Taupō – Poronui is an authentic back-country station set in the foothills of the beautiful Kaimanawa Mountain Ranges.

A “luxury” trail event, Poronui Passage is the best way to treat trail lovers to the best in life; a challenging and insanely scenic MTB, run or walk wrapped up in all the luxury treatment you could wish for.

A variety of distances are available for either trail walking, running, mountain bike or e-bike:

- 42.2km Marathon trail run \*\*
- 21km Half Marathon trail run or walk \*\*
- NEW \* 12km run or walk\*\*
- 50km Mountain Bike or eBike \*\*
- 30km Mountain Bike or eBike

Think hot showers, free massage, gourmet post-event fare, craft beers and wine at the finish line, all the barista coffee you can drink, cosy blankets and fires, beautiful high-quality event apparel, epic medals, a stunning and inaccessible location, and heaps more.

Every entry supports CatWalk, but hurry as there are only 400 places available.



For more information and to enter [poronui passage.co.nz](https://poronui passage.co.nz)

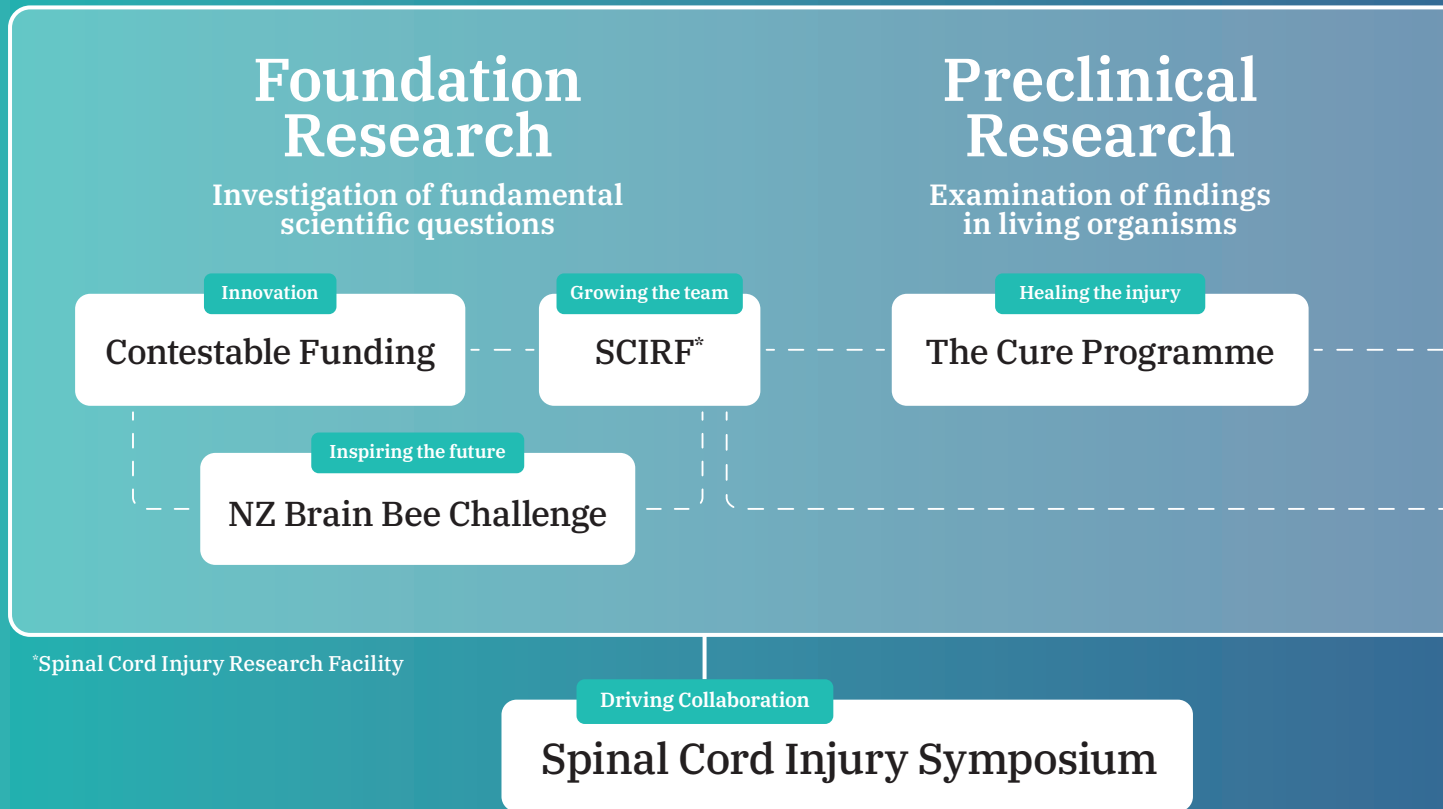


\*\* Children aged 14 and under are not able to participate in these events without prior approval. Please contact [renee@totalsport.co.nz](mailto:renee@totalsport.co.nz)

# Research Strategy

CatWalk is dedicated to advancing the understanding and treatment of spinal cord injuries. Our initiatives encompass a wide range of scientific and medical explorations. Each plays a crucial role in the mission to cure spinal cord injury.

## Curing Spinal Cord Injury



\*Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility

CatWalk funds comprehensive research to address the complex challenges of spinal cord injury.

We support a wide variety of initiatives. From education to research and therapeutic development to patient care. CatWalk is paving the way to more effective treatment and, ultimately, a cure. Each of CatWalk's initiatives plays a vital role in achieving this goal.

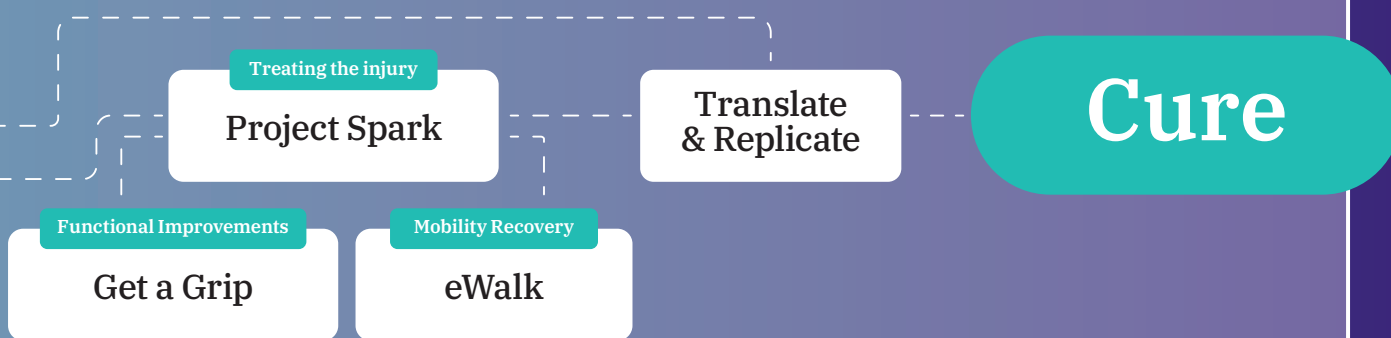
The following is our research strategy.

Each strand/initiative is crucial to curing spinal cord injury paralysis.



## Clinical Research

Testing of therapies & medications in humans



# Healing the Injury

## The CatWalk Cure Programme



The Cure Programme focuses on healing damaged spinal cord tissue and regenerating nerves.

This programme supports a dedicated, multi-disciplinary team of researchers, dubbed 'The Spine Squad'. Weaving together research from across disciplines, the Spine Squad are unique. Their research on cellular regeneration; neuroprotection; and novel therapeutic strategies is world leading.

The Cure Programme is a deliberate step away from traditional funding models.

Supporting a dedicated team drives research at pace, fosters collaboration and sparks innovation.

Funding this programme is essential to advance a cure. Specifically, the Cure Programme aims to:

- Drive the development of novel treatments to restore function and improve quality of life.
- Support the progression of therapies through human trials, accelerating access to new treatments.

# Treating the Injury

## Project Spark - Sparking a revolution in spinal cord injury treatment



CatWalk, in collaboration with SpinalCure, has supported Project Spark since 2020.

Project Spark is a comprehensive research programme to advance rehabilitation and recovery. CatWalk supports both the eWALK trial and the Get a Grip study. These aim to advance rehabilitation techniques to improve mobility and aid sensory recovery.

This partnership underscores the transformative potential of collaboration.

CatWalk's support of Project Spark relies on several key values:

1. Innovative Approach: Both the eWALK trial and Get a Grip study employ cutting-edge technologies and methodologies that promise significant breakthroughs.
2. Potential Impact: The outcomes will lead to major improvements in mobility and dexterity for individuals with a spinal cord injury. This addresses some of the most challenging aspects of daily life post-injury.
3. Alignment with Our Mission: Project Spark aligns with CatWalk's mission to enhance the lives of individuals with SCI. These studies will contribute to tangible advancements in SCI care and rehabilitation.
4. Collaborative Synergy: This partnership with SpinalCure enhances the scope and reach of Project Spark. This helps to drive forward impactful research that might otherwise be limited by funding constraints.

The eWALK trial and Get a Grip Study are two pivotal components of Project Spark. Each plays a crucial role in the larger research landscape. Each focus on different aspects of the injury. Understanding these.

### Mobility Recovery - The eWALK Clinical Trial:



The importance of eWALK lies in its potential to restore mobility. This trial is developing and refining electronic walking aids and neuromodulation technologies. These innovations will restore mobility by enhancing and/or bypassing damaged neural pathways.

eWALK is an electronic rehabilitation platform leveraging technology to assist patients in their recovery. It emphasises:

- **Accessibility:** providing remote access to rehabilitation resources, so that patients to continue therapy at home.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** utilising data analytics to monitor progress and optimise rehabilitation strategies.
- **Technological Integration:** integrating technology (including virtual reality and wearable devices) to enhance engagement and accelerate outcomes.

### Functional Improvements - Get a Grip:



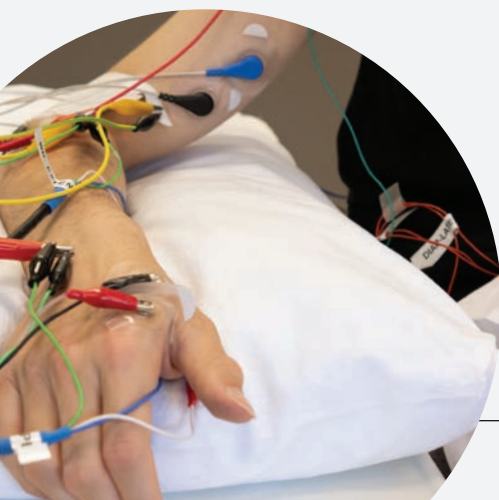
The aim of the Get a Grip study is to explore if transcutaneous spinal cord neuro-stimulation (TSS), combined with exercise training, can improve hand and arm, and respiratory function for people with chronic tetraplegia.

This research targets the restoration of fine motor skills, Get a Grip will revolutionise the rehabilitation and recovery of individuals with spinal cord injury. Therapies that restore crucial functions, will significantly enhance patients' ability to perform everyday tasks essential for daily activity and autonomy.

The primary objectives of the Get a Grip study include:

- Understanding the underlying mechanisms that contribute to hand and upper limb recovery, and respiratory function.
- Assess upper-limb dexterity, function and strength and respiratory muscle strength before and after - TSS and the exercise intervention.
- Development of standardised protocols for hand-function rehabilitation in SCI patients.

Using robotics, virtual reality, and electrical stimulation, Get a Grip is tailored to the participant. Addressing individuals needs ensures a personalised and effective rehabilitation plan.



The personalised approach of Project Spark addresses the diverse needs of different patients. It provides a comprehensive range of rehabilitation options. Project Spark aims to bridge the gap between research and practical, clinical application. Its data provides evidence to support approval for mainstream use.

Project Spark aligns with CatWalk's desire to improve quality of life and increase independence.

## Growing the Team

### Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility (SCIRF)



SCIRF is a centre dedicated to spinal cord injury research. It supports everything from basic science to clinical trials.

This facility looks for innovative research projects that have the potential to revolutionise treatment. Through this investment, CatWalk supports pioneering research that might otherwise have remained unfunded.

#### SCIRF provides:

- State-of-the-art infrastructure: advanced tools and technologies essential for cutting-edge SCI research.
- Integrated Research: facilitating the translation of laboratory findings into clinical applications. To bridge the gap between research and care.
- Collaborative environment: creating a hub for scientists and clinicians to work together. SCIRF nurtures collaboration, enhancing the quality and impact of research.

## Encouraging Innovation

### Contestable funding



CatWalk's Contestable grants provide essential funding for groundbreaking research in SCI knowledge and treatment. These grants are critical for:

**Innovation:** They support high-risk, high-reward projects that might not receive traditional funding, enabling innovative approaches to SCI research.

**Collaboration:** The grants encourage collaboration among scientists, clinicians, and institutions, fostering a multidisciplinary approach to tackle SCI challenges.

**Flexibility:** They allow for rapid responses to emerging scientific opportunities and challenges in the field of SCI.

#### Funding Details:

- Two funding rounds per year for biomedical or clinical research projects.
- Scholarships and Fellowships: One round per year for Postgraduate scholarships and Postdoctoral fellowships.
- Grants can be used in New Zealand or at an overseas centre of excellence.

## Inspiring the Future

### The NZ Brain Bee Challenge



The NZ Brain Bee Challenge is an international neuroscience competition for high school students. This challenge encourages young minds to explore the complexities of the brain and nervous system.

#### Importance:

- Educational engagement: to inspire the next generation of neuroscientists by fostering an early interest in brain and nervous system research.
- Awareness and outreach: raises awareness about neurological disorders. Highlights the significance of neuroscience in understanding these conditions.
- Talent pipeline: cultivates a pool of motivated young individuals to pursue careers in research. Ensuring a continuous influx of new ideas and perspectives.

## Driving Collaboration

### Spinal Cord Injury Symposium



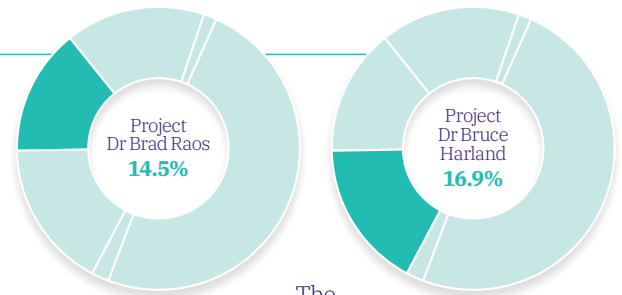
The SCI Symposium is an annual event to bring together wheelchair users, researchers, clinicians, and other stakeholders. Presentations and discussions explore the latest advancements and challenges in SCI research.

#### We drive:

- Knowledge exchange: facilitating the sharing of cutting-edge research findings and innovative ideas.
- Consumer defined needs: insights from those who matter most.
- Networking: provide a platform for networking and collaboration among SCI professionals and organisations.
- Strategic planning: to align research efforts and set strategic priorities for the SCI research community.

Together, these research initiatives cover the spectrum of spinal cord injury research. CatWalk initiatives cover immediate functional improvements to long-term cures. CatWalk aims to drive comprehensive progress and cure spinal cord injury.





The impact of your support  
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The CatWalk

# Cure Programme

Our mission has been to find a cure for paralysis from spinal cord injury since 2005. Over 20 years, CatWalk has taken local research from it’s infancy to develop a credible group of world-class scientists.

Recently, the research we have funded has been showing results, in part because our researchers have been collaborating. Professor Darren Svirkis’ work on sustained electrical fields has been driven hand-in-hand with Dr Bruce Harland’s research on new biomedical implants, which has also enabled Dr Brad Raos to examine the development of electrical biomarkers following spinal cord injury. Dr Amy McCaughey-Chapman groundbreaking progress in cell regeneration has just reached the point that it can be enhanced by Darren’s research.

Each have shown results and we want them to continue. Aligned with other cherry-picked post-doctorate researchers, PhD experts and promising post-graduates at the University of Auckland, we are now empowering them to work as a team in a new way.

## The Spine Squad

The Spine Squad is based in the Centre for Brain Research at the University of Auckland, headed up by Professor Darren Svirkis.

They’re a multi-disciplinary team built around the most promising of the researchers whose work we have funded over the last few years. We’ve pulled them together and are maintaining their momentum by taking four proven streams of research and integrating them in ways not done anywhere else.

Together, the Spine Squad researchers are stimulating injured tissue to replace cells that have been lost or damaged to improve motor and sensory function. “This regenerative focus is different and complementary to other approaches around the world” explains Darren. “Rather than bypassing the injury, the Spine Squad is looking to heal it, and plot the pathway to human clinical trials.” The key to healing is that all functions of the spinal cord are being examined for repair, with walking being symbolic of the end goal.



## What is different?

“The classic research funding model works but does not provide continuity, nor cross-discipline integrity”, says Darren. By leveraging existing grants, the Cure Programme will provide the Spine Squad with five years of sustained funding to keep them laser-focused on groundbreaking results.

We are also providing a top-flight international scientific advisory group to guide the research and ensure that it gets access to the latest international breakthroughs. In a novel approach, the team will be empowered to pivot their efforts based on their discoveries.

Through this process we'll also grow the research capability and expand our spinal cord injury workforce to continue the drive for a cure.

Darren has provided us a very clear goal. “By the end of the five years, the Spine Squad aims to achieve a major milestone – getting an injured rat walking, demonstrating successful preclinical models ready to translate to clinical trials.”

## Meet Darren

Professor Darren Svirskis is a problem solver. “I grew up on a farm,” he says, “and I loved it. I loved it because I spent all my time figuring out how to fix problems. How could I get this piece of equipment to that part of the farm, in time for a particular thing to happen, when the original parts weren't designed to go together? There was always a solution, but the answers didn't always come from the places you expected them to.”

Darren leads the Spine Squad and has been instrumental of creating the team ethos.

“My approach is to look across disciplines and bring together the different tools, techniques, knowledge, and skills to work in unison and heal the spinal cord.”

Darren believes that the quickest way to a cure is a straight line. The boundaries between disciplines don't matter. “Thanks to CatWalk, the Spine Squad is able to look right across the research spectrum.

We'll be able to hunt out different combinations and possible solutions focussing on the one objective – curing spinal cord injury.”



## Vision for the future

At the conclusion of the programme, CatWalk will have created a successful, translatable animal model, which will open the door for Government and international funding.

We will also have built and retained a Centre of Excellence, with the best New Zealand minds connected through strong international partnerships. In this way, the programme will accelerate the international pursuit for a cure for spinal cord injury paralysis.

**It's no longer a matter of if, but when.  
Join us in making it happen quicker, led  
by New Zealand.**



## Our International Scientific Advisor

Renowned neuroscientist Professor Martyn Goulding, Ph.D, joined the CatWalk board in April 2024. He is the Professor and Departmental Chair of the Molecular Neurobiology Laboratory and the Frederick W. and Joanna J. Mitchell Endowed Chair at The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in the USA.

With a distinguished career unravelling the complexities of neural circuits in the spinal cord, Professor Goulding brings unparalleled expertise to this crucial intersection of science and advocacy.

His groundbreaking work, marked by a keen understanding of the intricacies of the nervous system, has earned him international acclaim, including the prestigious Brain Prize in 2022 for his pioneering work.

Martyn has agreed to convene our Scientific Advisory Board using his considerable pull to attract the leaders in the world of spinal cord injury research. His strategic vision and scientific acumen will be invaluable to ensuring the Cure Programme's transformative potential.



# LUMINARY / 2024

CatWalk supporters came from far and wide to attend LUMINARY // 2024 - a night of glamour and generosity, dedicated to advancing research and treatment for spinal cord injuries.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon rubbed shoulders with long-term supporters, Richie and Gemma McCaw, and Henrietta Duchess of Bedford. There were simply too many distinguished guests to name.

Our thanks go to auctioneer-extraordinaire, Steve Davis and MC Rachel Smalley. Special thanks must also go to the Rich Hill and Newgate Studs. Their donation of nominations of PROISIR and CAPITALIST respectively, were a highlight.



These extraordinary donations helped drive the fundraising total to an outstanding \$570,000.



BRAD SMEELE

JAMIE ASTWOOD

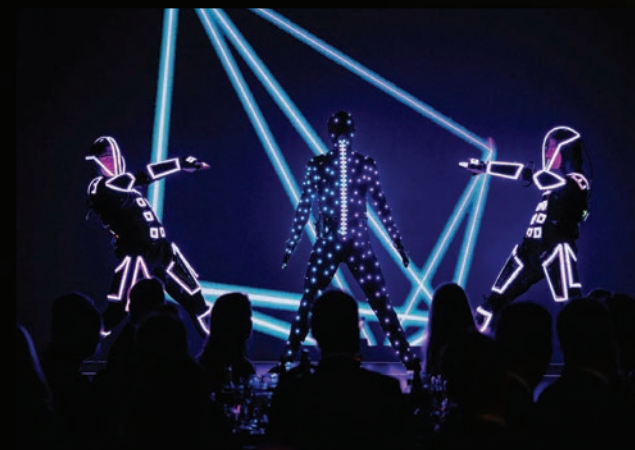


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# MAJOR SPONSORS

LUMINARY // 2024 was made possible through the exceptional contributions of its major sponsors: Jarden Wealth, Hugo Charitable Trust, and Auckland Thoroughbred Racing.



Jarden Wealth



Auckland Racing Club



Hugo Charitable Trust

# LIVE AUCTION SUPPORTERS



Over The Top Helicopters



Entain



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Rich Hill Stud & the Proisir Syndicate



Henrietta, Duchess of Bedford



Zara & Mike Tindall



The Potting Shed Pub



Richie McCaw



Helibike NZ



StaySouth



AJ Hackett



iFLY Queenstown



Relax It's Done



Skyline



TSS Earnslaw



Everything NZ



The Ballard Family



The Village Goldsmith



Whitestone Cheese



Wish4Fish



The BNZ Breakers



The Grille



Sarah Gadd

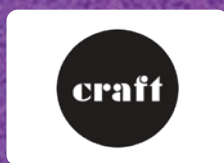
# VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

- Sarah Gadd
- Anna Hiatt
- Kate Lambie
- Catriona Williams
- Hamish Ramsden

## EVENT SUPPORTERS



Frankie and Flora



Craft Design



Sugar Design Studio



NZ Bloom



The Cartery



Premium Liquor Co



Edwards Sound &amp; Vision



Mirage



## SILENT AUCTION SUPPORTERS

- Adie & Justin Long
- Al Brown
- Amisfield
- Amy Hoedemakers
- Anderson, Hilson & Raymond Families
- Angus Watson
- Auckland Recreational Flying Club
- Batched
- Bayswater European
- Bostock Wines
- Bridget Foley Design
- Burn Cottage
- Christchurch Paragliding
- Craig Oldfield, Lachie & Bindy McLeod, Poppy & Shayne Hammond
- Designer Clothing Gallery
- Dick Frizzell
- Dilmah Tea
- Donna Hoyle Design
- Equilibrium
- Exquisite Wool
- Fantail & Turtle Gastro Pub
- GOMedia
- Grant Sharman
- HitAir vest
- Honest Wolf
- HOOGA
- Hugo Charitable Trust
- Janet Molineaux
- Karahui
- Kate Senior
- Kirsty Roby and Nikki Perry
- Lawn Road Retreat
- Made4Baby
- Making Faces
- Manuka Doctor
- Mt Rosa Wines
- Nick & Nicky White
- On The Point - Lake Rotorua
- Paneton French Bakery
- Paul Lamb
- Penny Barnett
- Quartz Reef
- Shopology
- Sophie Hunter Aesthetics
- Suite Gallery
- Suzanne & David Hansen
- The Chiefs
- The Potting Shed
- The Wool Pot
- Total Sport
- Valli
- Waiheke Whisky
- Wilson and Dorset
- Yvonne Bennetti

## SUPPORTING PUBLICATIONS

- Racing Post ANZ Bloodstock
- The Thoroughbred Report
- NZ Thoroughbred Breeders
- NZ Thoroughbred Marketing
- NZ Thoroughbred Racehorse Owners Bulletin

The Great  
**NZ Tee-Off was a  
great success!**

A donation of \$25,254 was received from the Great New Zealand Tee-Off held on November 24th 2023 throughout New Zealand.

A vision by CatWalk Ambassador Ollie Bradshaw and a dedicated group of friends who enlisted golf courses from Northland to Southland, seeking donations of tee times for a synchronized play at 1pm on November 24th.

The response was remarkable, with over 300 tee times secured from 150 clubs. These valuable slots were then auctioned on the Galabid platform in September, resulting in an impressive fundraising total of over \$60,000. The proceeds were generously donated to three charities – CatWalk, Hope Without Fear, and Movember.

Heartfelt appreciation goes out to Ollie, the tireless volunteers who devoted countless hours to bring TGNZTO to fruition, the supportive clubs and sponsors, and to all the players who participated.



## Taupō Marathon

# Vicki Didsbury running for a cure

August 3rd saw runners and walkers line up for the annual Taupō Marathon hosted by Total Sport. One of these was Vicki Didsbury who, along with her husband Bruce and son Jackson, have been long time supporters of CatWalk.



"We have special family friends who have been directly impacted by spinal cord injuries and their strength of character has inspired me to do something to support CatWalk to try to help everyone who has been impacted by SCI. These friends are at the forefront of my mind on every training run and in this way they will be helping me to the finish line in Taupō!"

It was back in March that Vicki made the decision to aim for her very first marathon and took to training.

I have had fantastic advice and guidance from a very special friend of mine - Sarah Biss, who is a running coach at Speedplay Coaching. She has helped the process to be fun for me, which has made all of the training much easier for me and more injury free than it might have been if I hadn't of had her professional input.

I have been very lucky to have had some training runs in different regions of New Zealand and it has enabled me to enjoy some of the amazing

walkways and cycle ways that New Zealand has to offer. My recent early morning run at Lake Tekapo was a real highlight. Cold but spectacular!

I am very excited for the actual run at Lake Taupō. It will be a little different to my normal hilly farm runs but I will look forward to running a track that I have never run along before and competing in my very first marathon.

Vicki also created a fundraising page on the Raisley website and initially set a target of \$1000. This was quickly surpassed thanks to a flurry of generous supporters we are thrilled to report Vicki raised over \$7000 for CatWalk!

**"I support CatWalk because of the amazing research work that this organisation does to try to help those who are affected by spinal cord injury".**

Thank you, Vicki, for choosing to support CatWalk and spinal cord injury research.

If you are competing in an event and would like to use it as an opportunity to support CatWalk, please reach out to [chris@catwalk.org.nz](mailto:chris@catwalk.org.nz) who is happy to assist in setting up a fundraising page.





## Charly the accessible campervan travels NZ

Since its launch in January, Charly has travelled to many parts of New Zealand. In late February and early March, Charly was showcased at Motorhome shows in Hamilton and Palmerston North.

These events allowed many people to explore Charly's accessible features.

CatWalk Founder, Catriona Williams, and her husband Sam tested Charly at the Horse of the Year in March. Their feedback was invaluable for the design team, ensuring Charly is user-friendly and easy to operate.

"We were so excited to trial Charly and were not disappointed. The design by ACM Motorhomes is 6 star. It's really swish and there are no apologies for this... this is a holiday, something you work hard and save for, and Charly means we can be part of our friends and their camper team.

The main thing to remember is you are camping, so being thrifty with everything from water, to power, to using the loo is the key to happy campers. We loved it so much we've booked Charly again for 2025, this time to the South Island"

Following this, CatWalk Ambassador Sophia Malthus spent a promotional day getting acquainted with Charly.



Scan the QR Code to watch the video

The team at Milner Mobility are delighted with the interest in booking Charly. The simple online booking portal has seen clients from both New Zealand and overseas reserving Charly for the months leading up to Christmas and into 2025.

**For more information and to make a booking, please visit [www.milnermobility.co.nz](http://www.milnermobility.co.nz)**



Charly proudly supported by

greenstonepartners

SITIPEK

Hugo CHARITABLE TRUST

FCM MOTORHOMES

Milner Mobility

HT Systems Live your best life

SUGAR design studio

FeatherLite by Sure Grip

JEAN + ROB JOHNSTONE

JONATHAN MUNZ

Supporting

**CATWALK**  
Funding research to cure spinal cord injury

**New Zealand Spinal Trust**  
Te Tarahiti Manaaki Tuanui

Supporting Positive Futures

Profile:

# Moe Harmon

## From record-breaking athlete to resilient survivor: Moe Harmon's journey

Moe Harmon was breaking records as a teenager. Growing up in a football-mad family as one of five siblings, Moe became the youngest player to represent the Cook Islands in the female national team. She was just 14.

Her parents and brother still live in the Cook Islands, while two sisters are in New Zealand and a younger brother is in Sydney. Moe's family has always been close-knit and supportive, they've played a crucial role in her journey.

2019 was a transformative year for Moe with a move away from family to study at Auckland University. This also coincided with a busy time preparing for the 2019 South Pacific Games and the Oceania Football Under 19s Championships.

Moe's life was falling into place until an unexpected turn of events during a visit home in 2020 changed everything. While visiting her family during a university break, Moe was involved in a single-vehicle accident late one night. Despite the clear weather, her car rolled over. Moe escaped without a single scratch on her body. However, she sustained a severe spinal cord injury (SCI) at T4 level.

With only one flight per week from Rarotonga to New Zealand, Moe had to wait until the following Friday to leave for NZ. There are no CT scan facilities on the island and the extent of the damage was not able to be confirmed. Moe spent the first week following the accident immobile in the small hospital. Despite the rudimentary facilities, the staff were all very caring.

Moe was accompanied by her parents on the flight to NZ and underwent surgery the following Monday at Middlemore Hospital. Once discharged, she spent two months at the Otara Spinal Unit, which proved to be a challenging experience. Although she wasn't fully ready, Moe left early, eager to return home to Rarotonga.

In early December, Moe flew back to her family home, which had been modified to accommodate

her needs, including the installation of a hospital bed. She stayed with her family until February 2021 before returning to New Zealand.

Now, Moe lives with her sisters, who assist with transport and care. She has continued her studies at Auckland University, and commends them for the accessibility and support around campus.

During her initial rehabilitation, Moe worked tirelessly to learn new skills and adapt to her new reality. She continued her rehab upon returning to New Zealand, attending sessions with Rope Neura and Healthvision physios. Moe even had the opportunity to try an exo-skeleton, which she found fun and motivating.

Despite her injury, Moe remains passionate about sports, particularly those played with feet. She continues her avid support of her footballing family. With the recent formation of the Cook Islands Paralympics Committee, Moe is eager to become more engaged. She'd like to discover a sport she can enjoy and actively participate in, potentially aiming for the upcoming South Pacific Games in 2027.

Moe is now in her final year of study and completed her latest round of exams on the day she volunteered at the Luminary. She'll soon be heading back to Rarotonga to fulfil the scholarship criteria that requires two years of service upon graduation. She has many options for her future career and is still deciding which area to focus on.

**Her journey from a record-breaking athlete to a resilient survivor is a testament to her strength, determination, and the unwavering support of her family.**





## What would you like to be able to do most?

I would cherish the ability to play soccer again. Yet, beyond the capacity to walk or physically move, what matters most to me is the ability to physically feel things, even if it means I'll be in a wheelchair forever. This function feels more crucial to me than any other. It would allow me to sense when I need to empty my bladder, when my stomach is upset, or when I've accidentally injured my toes or twisted my ankle. I yearn for that sensation. It would eliminate the uncertainty of whether my spasms indicate a problem I can't feel or if my headache is just a typical migraine or a symptom of AD (Autonomic dysreflexia).

**“It would be liberating not to have to second-guess my health.”**

If I had to choose between regaining the ability to walk or the ability to feel again, I would choose the latter, although, of course, having both would be wonderful.

## What would make the biggest difference to your everyday life right now and what is one of the challenges you face?

Before my injury, whenever I thought or heard about paraplegia, I simply equated it with the inability to walk, and even then, I thought, “That’s tough!” However, I’ve come to realize that’s not even the worst part.

Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects is the additional effort required to maintain my health now. I must constantly monitor everything I do – what I eat and how much I drink. Regular pressure relief is essential. Is my skin showing signs of a potential pressure sore? Are my feet swollen? Have I accidentally injured myself without realizing it? Did I use my standing frame today? Have I

completed my daily stretches? It’s these little details that accumulate and make living with a spinal cord injury a little more demanding.

Over time, these tasks have become part of my daily routine, but there are still days when I think, “I wish I didn’t have to do all of this.” Without this added workload, life with a spinal cord injury would undoubtedly be much easier.

## What does an SCI mean to you?

I’ve always been one to challenge myself, and my spinal cord injury has been my greatest challenge yet.

**“This injury has been both the most traumatic and profoundly transformative experience of my life. It’s a paradox of feeling both independent and helpless simultaneously. It’s mourning the ‘old me’ while celebrating the ‘me now.’”**

It’s experiencing the thrill of accomplishment only to be set back by something minor. It’s almost like finishing a race only to find out you’ve got one more lap. The only option is to keep moving forward.



To read more about Moe, visit our website

Profile:

# Timothy Young

We first met Timothy Young in 2016. Tim sustained his spinal cord injury in February 2009 while snowboarding at Whistler Canada.

An accident while performing a trick saw Tim land on his neck rather than his feet resulting in a break of his C5/C6 vertebrae.

After qualifying with a Master of Science and PostGrad Cert. in Educational Psychology, Tim focused on children's education. He established Education These Days to promote technology that assists children's learning.



As we fast forward to 2024, Tim is now happily married to Erika and father to 3.5 year old Jasper. His days are full, being the Founder and CEO of Smart Access Limited and the Chief Executive of My Life My Voice. Tim was also instrumental in the Magical Bridge Trust which created an accessible and inclusive playground now operational in Claudelands Hamilton.

Tim and Erika recently attended Luminary – a rare childless night out for them both!

“Even just small improvements in movement can have a huge impact on independence and lifestyle.”



To read more about Tim and the extraordinary work he is undertaking visit our website.



New Zealand Spinal Cord Injury Registry

# NZSCIR Statistics

## Level of traumatic spinal cord injury New Zealand 2022

**31%**

### Paraplegia

Paralysis of the torso muscles and the lower limbs.

**67%**

### Tetraplegia

Paralysis of the torso muscles, the lower limbs and arm muscles.

**The higher the injury the more bodily functions are affected**

## Traumatic spinal cord injury causes



**42%**  
**Falls**



**27%**  
**Transport**



**19%**  
**Sports**



**12%**  
**Other**

The CatWalk

# Financial Reports

AuditPLUS<sup>+</sup>

## Summary Financial Statements

2024 - \$      2023 - \$

### Summary statement of financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2024

#### Revenue

Donations, fundraising and other similar revenue	301,352	1,026,305
Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	220,695	8,510
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>522,047</b>	<b>1,034,815</b>

#### Expenses

Expenses related to public fundraising	27,842	54,058
Volunteer and employee related costs	341,510	238,615
Costs related to providing services	77,223	85,793
Grants and donations made	738,371	768,765
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,184,946</b>	<b>1,147,231</b>
<b>Suplus/ (Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(662,899)</b>	<b>(112,416)</b>

### Summary statement of changes in net asset/equity as at 31 March 2024

Opening equity balance	<b>3,102,053</b>	<b>3,214,469</b>
Deficit for the year	(662,899)	(112,416)
Closing equity balance	<b>2,439,154</b>	<b>3,102,053</b>
Comprising:		
Accumulated surpluses	2,439,154	3,102,053
	<b>2,439,154</b>	<b>3,102,053</b>

### Summary statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024

Equity	2,439,154	3,102,053
Represented by:		
Current assets	520,137	379,767
Non-current assets	2,021,074	2,759,021
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>2,541,211</b>	<b>3,138,788</b>
Current Liabilities	102,056	36,736
Total Liabilities	102,056	36,736
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>2,439,155</b>	<b>3,102,052</b>

### Summary cash flow statement for the year ended 31 March 2024

Net cash flow from operating activities	(816,346)	(111,664)
Net cash flows from investing & financing activities	871,021	98,384

These Summary Financial Statements should be read in conjunction with the notes to the Summary Financial Statements and the report of the independent auditor on the Summary Financial Statements.

### Notes to summary financial statements

1. These Summary Financial Statements have been extracted from the full Performance Report which was authorised for issue by the Board on 4 July 2024.
2. The specific disclosures included in these Summary Financial Statements have been extracted from the full Performance Report for each relevant period.
3. The full Performance Report for each relevant period has been audited and the audit report has been issued for the year ended 31 March 2024.
4. The Performance Report of the Trust has been prepared in accordance with Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting - Accrual (Not-For-Profit).
5. The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust is incorporated as a Charitable Trust.
6. The presentation currency is New Zealand dollars rounded to the nearest dollar.
7. The Summary Financial Statements cannot be expected to provide as complete an understanding as provided by the full Performance Report.
8. The Summary Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with PBE FRS 43 Summary Financial Statements as appropriate for a Public Benefit Entity.
9. The full Performance Report is available on the Charities Services website.

# Report of the independent auditor on the summary financial statements



To the Trustees of The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust

## **Opinion**

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024, summary statement of financial performance and summary statement of changes in equity for the year then ended, and related notes, are derived from the audited performance report of CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust for the year ended 31 March 2024.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited performance report, in accordance with FRS-43: Summary Financial Statements issued by the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board.

## **Summary Financial Statements**

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not for Profit). Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited performance report and the auditor's report thereon. The summary financial statements and the audited performance report do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited performance report.

## **The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon**

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited performance report in our report dated 4 July 2024.

## **Trustees' Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements**

Trustees are responsible on behalf of the entity for the preparation of the summary financial statements in accordance with FRS-43: Summary Financial Statements.

[Continue over the page](#)

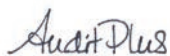
**Auditor's Responsibility**

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited performance report based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with International Standard on Auditing (New Zealand) (ISA (NZ)) 810 (Revised), Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

Other than in our capacity as auditor we have no relationship with, or interests in, The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust.

**Restriction on Responsibility**

This report is made solely to the Trustees, as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



**Audit Plus Accounting Services Limited | Qualified Auditor | Eketāhuna - Wairarapa**

1 August 2024

## Notes to Financial Accounts

These accounts are an accurate representation of summary financial results in this report year. The Trustees wish to highlight that CatWalk does not plan its years in isolation.

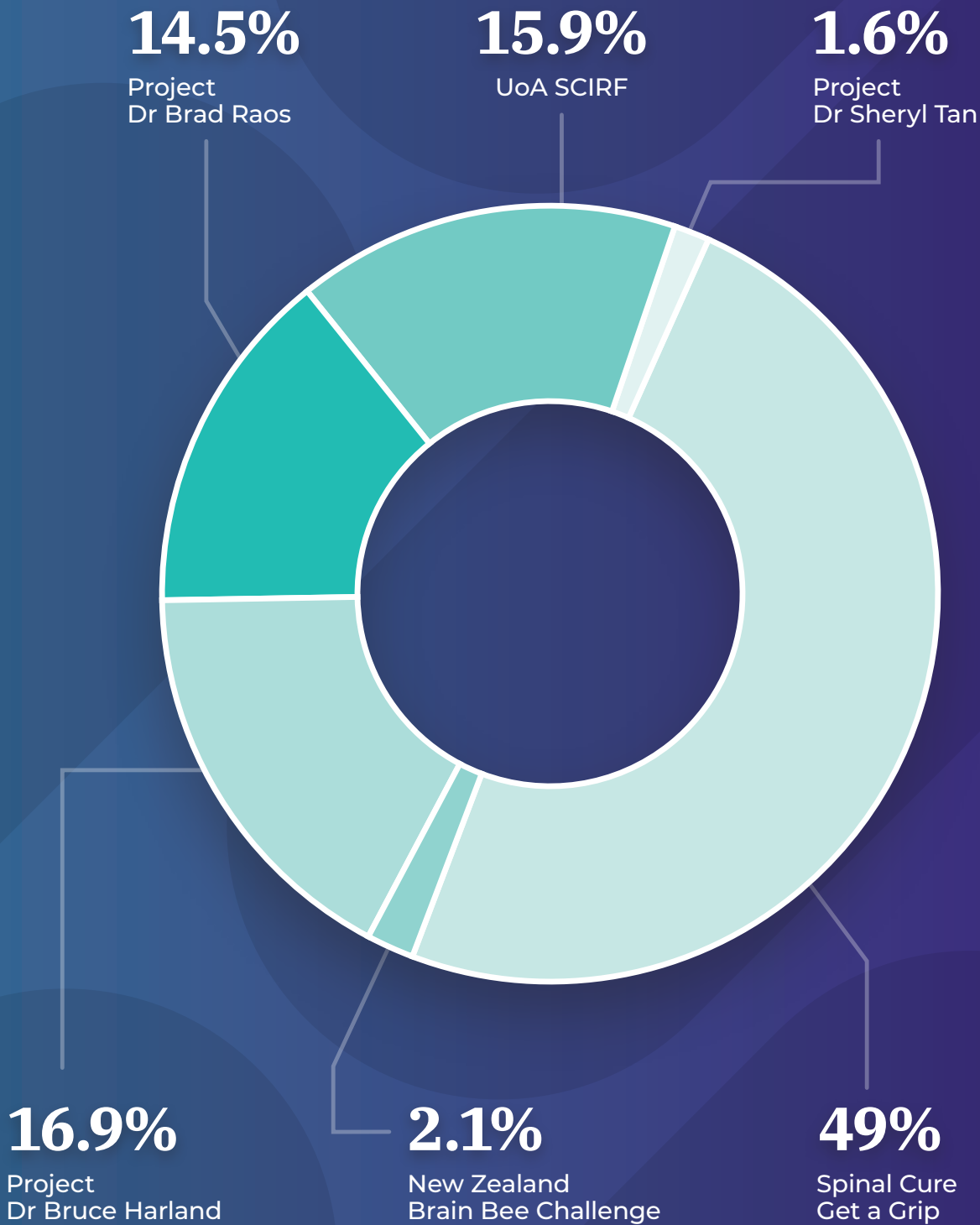
CatWalk primarily seeks to increase the rate and effectiveness of research into cures for spinal cord injury. Therefore, our grant commitments are made strategically, often multi-year grants based on cash holdings already acquired. Meanwhile, the Trust's income has tended to fluctuate between years depending on the timing of fundraising events or securing partnership grants.

This year we were pleased to continue funding a high level of research while we focussed on increasing capacity, developing the Cure Programme and planning the Luminary event. These accounts show a spend-down to preserve impact funding while we prepared to increase income in the next year.

# The impact of your support

Description & quantification of the entity's outputs

University of Auckland School of Medicine Foundation – SCIRF Grant	\$116,176
University of Auckland – Project Grant – Dr Sheryl Tan	\$11,768
SpinalCure Australia – Get a Grip (AUD)	\$357,666
University of Auckland – Sponsorship of NZ Brain Bee Challenge	\$15,000
University of Auckland – Project Grant – Bruce Harland	\$123,181
University of Auckland – Project Grant – Brad Raos	\$106,884



# Our Founder

MNZM **Catriona Williams**

## Our Board Of Trustees



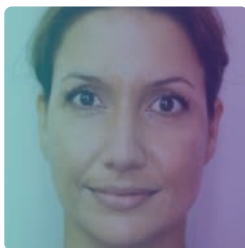
Chair  
**David Pretorius**



MNZM  
Deputy Chair  
**Grant Sharman**



Prof. Martyn Goulding



Tara Satyanand



Kirsty Rueppell



Dr Simon Manners



Lee Taniwha

# Making a difference together

## Major Donors & Foundations

- Scarlet Trust
- Dorothy Cutts
- The Thompson Family Foundation
- Lindsay Foundation
- Hugo Charitable Trust

## Corporate Champions

- Sims Metal
- Barenbrug
- Farm Source
- EquiBrands Benchmark Feeds
- Bell Gully
- Findex

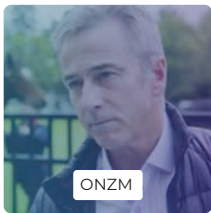
## Research & Sector Partners

- Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA)
- Spinal Cure
- Rope Neuro Rehabilitation
- The Centre for Brain Research
- University of Auckland
- New Zealand Spinal Trust

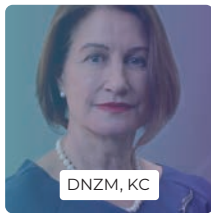
## Our Patrons



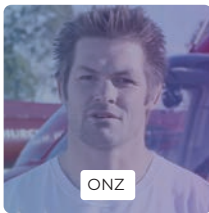
Zara Tindall



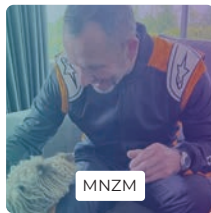
Lance O'Sullivan



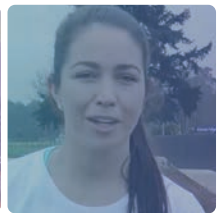
Dame Lowell Goddard



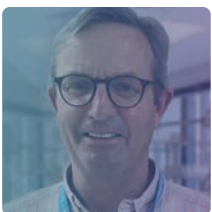
Richie McCaw



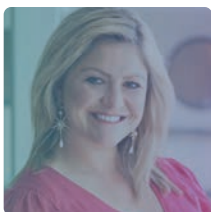
Aaron Slight



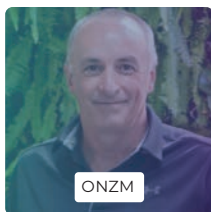
Sarah Walker



Dr Rick Acland



Toni Street



Duane Kale



Dion Nash



Sir Mark Todd

# Make a difference, today.

---

Spinal cord injury does not  
have to be a life sentence.  
A cure is within reach.

Your support helps to bring  
that cure closer.

Thank you.



Please  
donate now



The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust

# Entity Information

## Nature of Business

Registered Charity

## Charity Registration Number

CC27170

## Date of Registration

30/06/2008

## Auditors

Audit Plus Accounting Services Limited

## Solicitors

Bell Gully

## Registered Office

C/- Findex  
Level 17, 88 Shortland Street  
Auckland 1010

## Postal Address

PO Box 555, Masterton 5840

## Telephone

06 377 5430

## Email

[info@catwalk.org.nz](mailto:info@catwalk.org.nz)

## Website

[www.catwalk.org.nz](http://www.catwalk.org.nz)

