

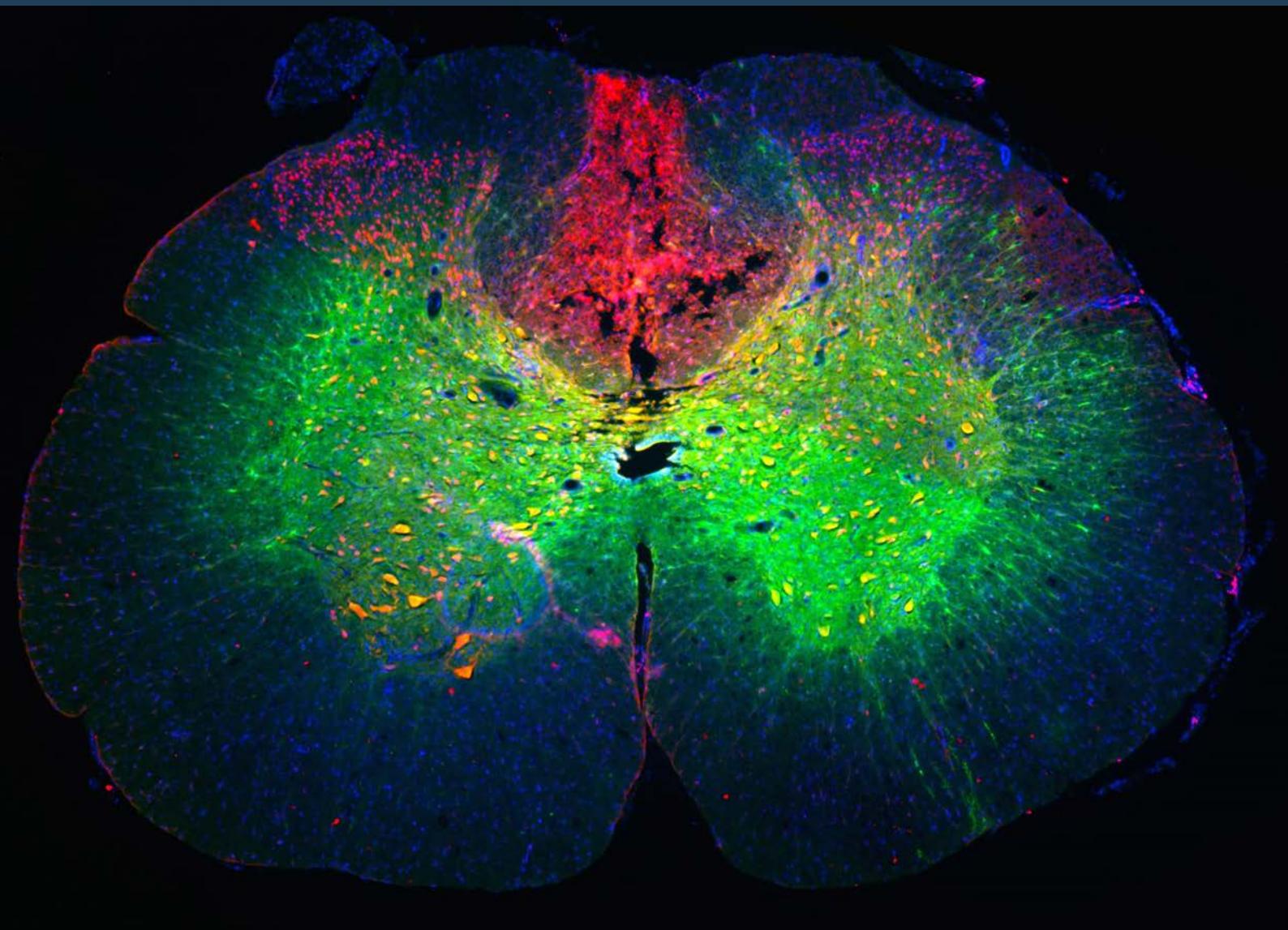
# CATWALK

NEVER SAY NEVER

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SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH TRUST

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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF  
**The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Research Trust**



Swimming with whale sharks – [livingaloo.com.au](http://livingaloo.com.au)

# THIS ISSUE

June 2017

Founder’s Footnote .....	3
A Message from our International Patron .....	4
Pip McCarroll .....	4
Epic Journey .....	5
New Patron Announced .....	5
Research Update .....	6
Nicholson Donation .....	8
New Partnership .....	8
Remarkable: Intro .....	9
Remarkable: Pot of Gold Raffle .....	9
Remarkable: Major Sponsors .....	10
Remarkable: Photos .....	12
Remarkable: Dave Vass & Tony Dee .....	14
Life’s a Beach .....	15
Team CatWalk.....	16
Equitana New Zealand.....	18
World Class Pairing .....	19
Fundraisers .....	19

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who help us produce this magazine*

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# Founder's FOOTNOTE

Dear CatWalkers, I wish to open this message by acknowledging two hugely significant events in CatWalk's history.

Firstly, our heartfelt thanks and support for Professor Louise and Jon Nicholson who have recently made a \$1 million dollar donation to SCI research at the Auckland University Brain Research Centre. We are incredibly proud, Louise, of all you have achieved through your inspiring career – and of course specifically for SCI. The Brain Bee Challenge which encourages NZ's brightest young minds to work in the neurological area of research, assisting in the setting up of a specific SCI research area at Auckland University's Centre for Brain Research, supporting those keen on the SCI area to focus on it, encouraging CatWalk to back these initiatives, and then your words "We're doing this because we want to see this cure in my lifetime and I believe it's possible." This speaks volumes.

I've been lucky enough to have some pretty amazing experiences over the last few months and when I reflect back it is all due to the kindness of friends who quite simply do not see the chair. Of course our ultimate want is to make the chair redundant but in the meantime this is a special thank you to all of you for not giving the chair centre stage but allowing it to merely be the tool to enjoy all that is possible.

Fun is always a challenge when your mobility is limited and you're heavily reliant on friends but when it comes to a CatWalk event, it's critical to its success. As CatWalk Chair Scott Malcolm mentioned recently, unless it ticks that 'fun' box we do not continue.

So secondly and building on that theme, CatWalk's Remarkable Black Tie dinner was just that, Remarkable. Our major supporters Godolphin and AJ Hackett ensured we had the right ingredients to mould another special evening. Both Godolphin and AJ Hackett threw themselves behind the preparations, the detail and the marketing to demonstrate they were backing the evening 100% of the way. The donations of product and prizes for experiences were exceptional

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"Fun is always a challenge when your mobility is limited and you're heavily reliant on friends but when it comes to a CatWalk event, it's critical to its success..."

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and our guests came wanting to show their appreciation of support. Many of our donors joined us for the evening and have touched base since to say we want to support again – thank-you, ironically we're not great at asking but when someone kindly offers we LOVE making the most of an opportunity.

Behind every CatWalk event there are a small team of volunteers who give it that special touch of magic, this event was no different. Anna Hiatt, my funniest friend, helped woo the CatWalk board on date and location. Pip McCarroll ensured we had the best venue possible. Caroline Abbiss, an old school friend, threw her mind body and soul, friends, family, children into ensuring every detail was attended to – both the fun detail and the mundane bits! Our added bonus with the AJ Hackett sponsorship was Henry Van Asch's PA Helen Forsyth who showed us every step of the way why she has this job. Behind the mayhem the team at the office Meg, Chris and Donna did a sterling job dotting the i's and crossing the t's. Thank-you girls for giving so much of your time (not hours but weeks) to ensure that not only did every guest have the best night ever but that CatWalk benefited so enormously.

After this event Sam and I were lucky to have a few days cycling in Wanaka to celebrate a special friends '50th. We went

places on my handcycle (that is designed for the road with road tyres) that were definitely designed for mountain bikes. Hair pin turns, narrow paths with falls that dropped straight into the lake and steep inclines that needed more than my power assist to climb. Thanks to lots of willing and able friends we cycled some sensational routes, rarely touching the tarseal and truly had an adventure of a lifetime.

But wait there's more: we've just been diving with the whale sharks near Exmouth in Western Australia [www.livingaloo.com.au](http://www.livingaloo.com.au). If it's on your bucket list or even if it's not – quite simply 'do it'! It was sensational. Yes we had to be lifted a lot, yes we had to talk the crew through being careful with my backside, yes we had to monitor my temperature as sometimes I was too hot, other times I was too cold but swimming along beside the biggest fish in the ocean was a treat we'll never forget.

For all of the above it is the people you share these adventures with that make it special. Thank-you all for making this wheelly feel ablebodied, for giving her the opportunity to do what some see as impossible and for just being you. Your fun with the planning, your adventurous nature and your humour along the way has made this a magical 6 months.

Andrew Nicholson, Mark Todd, Tim Price, every time you step up to the winners podium we all puff our chests with pride more than you will ever know. To achieve your lifelong dream Andrew after sustaining such a serious SCI is Superman stuff. You all instil in us every day that what appears impossible is anything but. Dream it, Believe it, Do it.





*Toby Sutherland and John Taylor*

# Epic Journey

Toby Sutherland and John Taylor took on this epic journey and generously raised funds for CatWalk and Life Flight Trust.

The very long ride was completed when we arrived at the Bluff on 18th March, 27 days after we started at Cape Reinga. The journey for us was truly a once in a lifetime experience, cycling through this wonderful country of ours and meeting such fabulous iconic New Zealanders. The Tour Aotearoa course (designed by Jonathan Kennett) had us cycle minimally on main highways, but mostly on secondary roads and cycle ways such as the Hauraki Cycleway, Waikato River Trail, Timber trail, Wanganui Mountains to Sea Trail, Manawatu Cycleway, Rimutaka Cycleway, Nelson Great Taste Trail, West Coast Wilderness Trail, Lake Hawea/Wanaka Trail, Arrowtown/Queenstown Trail and Around the Mountains Southland Trail.

The first 3 days were the hardest as our bodies got use to riding 100 + kms per day on a mountain bike carrying about 10 kgs of gear. The trip was one big highlight with perhaps: – riding the 90 Mile, Beach, riding through the Kauri forests, crossing the Kaipara harbour, jet boating down the Wanganui River and taking the Earnslaw over to Walter Peak were just some stand outs.

We are so grateful to be able to have had this opportunity of a lifetime and to have been able to fundraise for the two chosen charities. We are truly humbled by the donations received that go towards Life Flight and Catwalk Trusts, whom we were riding for.

We wish to say a huge thank you to all those that donated, believing in the two charities and in us. THANK YOU so very very much!

Thanks to John, Toby and those who supported them CatWalk received a donation of \$11,067!!



*Dame Lowell Goddard with granddaughter Georgia.*

## New CatWalk Patron Announced

Hon Dame Lowell Goddard served as a Judge of the High Court of New Zealand from 1995 – 2015.

She was appointed Queen’s Counsel in 1988. In her early years Dame Lowell practised at the Independent Bar in Auckland before joining the Crown Law Office in Wellington as Crown Counsel and subsequently as Deputy Solicitor-General.

During 2007 and 2012 she chaired the Independent Police Conduct Authority and from 2010 to 2016 was a member of the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT). In that capacity, Dame Lowell took part in field inspections of conditions of detention in countries such as Cambodia and the Ukraine. She also acted as the SPT’s focal point in the Asia Pacific Region.

Dame Lowell has been involved in a number of public inquiries in New Zealand and in February 2015 was appointed by the British Government to Chair the UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), a role she undertook until August 2016.

She is a Distinguished Alumnus of Auckland University and recipient of the 1990 Commemoration Medal and the NZ Suffrage medal. In 2014 she was made a DNZM for services to the law.

Dame Lowell is honoured to be a Patron of the CatWalk Trust, and was formerly a member of the Grants Committee of that Trust.

She is also a Vice Patron of the Mistletoe Trust, which provides educational programs for children and is Chair of the Mistletoe Charitable Foundation.



*Professor Louise Nicholson*

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### Connexin/Peptide project

We have shown that peptide5 is effective for delivery via the blood stream as a treatment early after SCI, we now wish to test the efficacy of an existing drug (Tonabersat), that we have identified as a channel blocker.

Tonabersat drug has the real advantage in that it has already been used in several phase two clinical trials, and is therefore highly likely that we shall be able to move this drug to clinical trials much more quickly.

We now have evidence that connexin channels are involved in ongoing (chronic) inflammation after injury. This chronic inflammation leads to neuropathic pain and sustains an environment in the cord that does not promote nerve cell regrowth and reconnection.

We now plan to test Tonabersat as a treatment for chronic SCI. Reducing this inflammation will create an environment that decreases or prevents neuropathic pain and will increase the likely success of interventions such as our gene therapy approach. It will also allow for spontaneous regeneration of nerve cells leading to functional improvement.

### Gene therapy

Evaluating the use of gene therapy to deliver a protein that breaks down scar tissue after injury and allows for regrowth and reconnection of nerve cells has seen the completion of the first set of experiments testing delivery of the scar busting protein.

Analysis of the data from the first study is almost complete and appears to show that we are able to break down the scar, allow nerve cells to regrow, reduce the size of the injury and improve hind limb function following injury. The fact that our treatment reduces injury size is very exciting as it shows that we are able to protect the tissue after injury and encourage nerve cell regrowth, allowing for the reconnection of nerve cells.

From mid 2017 we will repeat these experiments using our gene therapy approach alongside intensive exercise training to facilitate the reconnection of nerve cells in the correct way and thus improve the functional outcomes we have already seen with gene therapy alone.

### Antioxidants

Our previous studies have demonstrated that measuring the level of antioxidants in the cord after injury allows us to determine the extent of damage to the spinal cord. This is a very significant finding as it will be extremely useful in developing treatments and advancing clinical trials for SCI. It will allow identification of precisely which patients are likely to respond to treatment and which treatment is likely to be best for each individual patient. We aim to test our peptide and other drug treatments so we can correlate the improvement seen following peptide/drug treatment with antioxidant levels.

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“This is a very significant finding as it will be extremely useful in developing treatments.....”

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# Research UPDATE

The Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility continues to make significant progress in a number of research areas with the goal of developing cures for spinal cord injury (“SCI”).

“The fact that our treatment reduces injury size is very exciting...”

## NEW PROJECTS

### Protecting blood vessels

Following a SCI blood vessels in the cord are damaged and become leaky. This allows blood to get into the cord and this makes the size of the injury larger.

Developing ways to protect the blood vessels and stop the leakiness are potential targets that will reduce the size of the injury. Three Honours student projects are currently underway in the lab to 1) understand specific changes that occur to blood vessels after injury that can be targeted with drugs; 2) test drugs that will potentially strengthen the blood vessels themselves and 3) test drugs that will help repair the damaged vessels and prevent the leakiness.

These projects will be completed by the end of 2017 and the results will give us a much better understanding of how blood vessels are affected after injury and provide valuable information about a number of potential new drug treatments for SCI.

### Use of multielectrode arrays for guidance of nerve cells

A collaboration has been established with Dr Darren Svirakis (School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland) and Dr Maria Asplund (Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany) to test the use of multielectrode arrays to guide the growth of nerve cells across an injured cord.

The arrays have been designed with channels that allow nerve cells to grow across them and connect to other nerve cells. This technology has real potential as nerve cells can be guided to reconnect across the damaged cord, reforming connections and allowing for functional recovery.

This is a new and exciting area of research and the addition of this capability to the SCIRF will provide novel pathways towards developing a cure for SCI.

### Liposomes for drug delivery

A collaboration has been formed with Dr Zimei Wu (School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland) and Dr Justin Dean (Department of Physiology, University of Auckland) to test ways of packaging drugs for delivery directly to the site of a SCI.

These packages (called liposomes) can be targeted directly to specific cells at the injury site, including both nerve cells and scar cells. This approach has an advantage over injecting drugs directly into the blood stream as it ensures that the drug will not be broken down in the blood stream and that the optimum dose can be delivered directly to the site of injury.

This approach enhances the possibility of drug treatments being successful. A PhD student working on this project is currently generating the liposomes. Once these have been produced we will test them in our spinal cord model to determine if we can target specific cell types and over what time frame we can effectively treat the spinal cord after injury.



Dr Simon O'Carroll  
*on behalf of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility team*

# Nicholson DONATION

The stunning news broke on a Saturday morning in May and left even CatWalk's most ardent supporters gasping with disbelief, joy and an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

Whether we picked up the New Zealand Herald, clicked onto their website or logged into facebook, there was a genuine sense of emotion at the announcement of a meticulously planned decision by Louise and Jon Nicholson.

The headline: Louise and Jon would be donating \$1million dollars to the University of Auckland, tagged to the search for a cure for Spinal Cord Injury.

It reduced many to tears, and was a shock in all the best ways – yet the Nicholsons' motivation is not a surprise at all.

Like our founder Catriona, Professor Louise Nicholson has been, and remains, unshakeable in the belief that not only will a cure be found – but that it will be in her lifetime.

As those of you who've been following our research updates will know, Louise helped establish the University's Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility back in 2011, and with ongoing funding from CatWalk, she's always been determined to see it succeed.

"I would like to see it grow in terms of capacity. I would like there to be more hands at the bench, more people working towards finding a cure for spinal cord injury," says Louise when discussing the decision.

"I like doing things for other people like my students and the people I have had the privilege to mentor. I look at some of these young people now, particularly women, and think, boy that's my legacy. It's just wonderful to see."

That's why she and Jon have decided

that the money will be used to support University of Auckland PhD students working on SCI.

"I would like to be around when we find a cure.

"Spinal cord injury is devastating and very far reaching for the individual and family but in terms of numbers of people it doesn't touch the population such as cancer would, so it's not a research area that has wide knowledge within the community.

"There is huge potential to actually make a difference and find a cure."

As the Herald reported, this represents the single largest donation ever made by a university staff member, and is a sum described as unprecedented by a grateful Vice-Chancellor Professor Stuart McCutcheon. He says the Nicholsons' financial support underlines the university's value "to change lives for the better."

At CatWalk, we could not agree more.

Louise and Jon, you have supported us in very many ways, large and small, over many years. We know you have appreciated the donations from so many Kiwis over the past decade and that you stand beside everyone who has ever given a dollar to our cause and to the research facility. Now, we all wish you the very best in what is sure to be a busy retirement.

You will be with us, and with the University team, every step of the way.

Tena korua. Tena korua. Tena korua.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.  
– Charlotte Gendall.

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Specialist products

Buy our **Agriseeds Specialist Horse Pasture Mix**  
\$200 per 25kg bag + freight

All proceeds go to **CATWALK**  
NEVER SAY NEVER  
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## NEW PARTNERSHIP

CatWalk are thrilled to announce a partnership with New Zealand Agriseeds and present for sale a Specialist Horse Pasture Mix – made by Agriseeds exclusively for sale by CatWalk with ALL proceeds being donated towards research into spinal cord injury.

Agriseeds Marketing Director, Michael Hales, approached us with the offer of supplying 200 bags of the seed mix to CatWalk which equates to a \$40,000 donation.

For CatWalk, partnering with Agriseeds was a natural fit, says founder Catriona Williams. Our charity has strong ties with the equestrian industry, so when Agriseeds presented the idea of a horse specific seed mix, we snapped up the opportunity

The seed was launched in February with promotion at the Dressage NZ Championships, Horse of the Year Show and Festival of Future Dressage Stars. To date 140 bags of seed have been sold with purchasers from the far north through to Canterbury taking up the opportunity to refresh their paddocks and support CatWalk

Available in 25kg bags which is recommended to cover 1 hectare, the mix includes cocksfoot and brome species with a small amount of clover and horse friendly rye grass seed. Price per bag is \$200 plus freight which represents excellent value for money.

Laura Akers, agronomist for Agriseeds explains the seed selection for the horse pasture mix.

"We designed the mix to directly reflect horse's specific dietary needs. It's high in fibre, low in sugars and has a low endophyte component, making it the perfect mix for grazing horses"

Seed is available for spring sowing and is located in Hamilton and Christchurch distribution centres.

For further information and orders, please contact [info@catwalk.org.nz](mailto:info@catwalk.org.nz), [www.agriseeds.co.nz](http://www.agriseeds.co.nz)



The first ever Queenstown based CatWalk event held on 29th April 2017 at the AJ Hackett Bungy Centre, Kawarau Gorge was a resounding success!

Founder Catriona Williams had always wanted to introduce CatWalk to Queenstown and the opportunity became a reality thanks in no small part to the amazing band of volunteers who lived in the area. Caroline Abbiss, Anna Hiatt and Helen Forsyth set to work quite some months ago and the Queenstown community got right in behind them by supporting CatWalk through sponsorship and expertise.

The date was set and the venue secured – thanks to Henry van Asch and AJ Hackett Bungy.

The area is Remarkable and that was the theme for this event – the setting,

entertainment, food and refreshments and truly Remarkable guests who bid with great gusto on the range of desirable and exclusive auction items.

The scene was set for the night when the audience were captivated by Dave Vass telling his story on the big screen about how his life changed when an accident while climbing in 2015 left him with a SCI. Unbeknown to the audience, Dave was preparing to bungee jump at the end of the video and the gasp from the audience when they realised was very emotive. With Tony Dee singing “Yes I Can” the crowd cheered Dave on as he was supported by the expert AJ Hackett Bungy team and down he went!

The event was co-hosted by CatWalk Patron and media personality Toni Street and Queenstown real estate guru Brendan Quill, with veteran stock-auctioneer Jono Robertson supplying his skills on the hammer come auction time.

“To have raised \$350,000 is an amazing result. We are truly humbled by the generosity of everyone involved, to the night’s sponsors Godolphin and AJ Hackett, and all our generous prize donors” said Catriona. “Our sincere thanks go out to all 200 attendees for their wonderful contribution. We simply couldn’t have achieved such a superlative result without their enthusiasm and support.”

## Pot of GOLD RAFFLE

Three amazing prizes and only 200 tickets in the draw – the Pot of Gold Raffle was a huge success for CatWalk!

Courtesy of Godolphin and Emirates, prize one on offer was a trip for 2 to the 2018 Dubai World Cup. Business class flights and full royal treatment at the world’s richest day in racing, this was truly an experience of a lifetime.

Nestled in the secluded Taharua Valley, 40 minutes from Taupo, Poronui Lodge boasts some of the world’s best wilderness experiences, breath-taking scenery and genuine warm hospitality. Prize two included 2 nights’ accommodation, all meals and a day of guided activities.

Covering 40 kilometres through Great Otway and Port Campbell, the 12 Apostles Lodge Walk is a multi-day passage from Castle Cove to the Twelve Apostles. Included in Prize three was a 3 night luxury stay, all meals and refreshments and helicopter transfers.

Geoff and Matt from Moving Media – [www.movingmedia.co.nz](http://www.movingmedia.co.nz) – created an incredible promotional video for Pot of Gold. With over 13 years in business and with a recent investment in the latest HD Drone and broadcast production equipment, Moving Media give clients the very best in creative techniques and quality, and it certainly came through in the Pot of Gold video which was shared far and wide through social media channels.

We were also incredibly fortunate to have the support of the team at Trackside who gave this video and audio extensive coverage on

their channels and radio programmes. Trackside brings you two channels packed full of racing action and commentary. Located on SKY channels 62 and 63, and available to watch online via TAB’s Watch & Bet service, both TAB Trackside 1 and TAB Trackside 2 offer you a huge variety of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing. Many tickets were sold purely from seeing and hearing about Pot of Gold on these channels!

The 200 tickets at \$250 each sold to buyers from New Zealand and overseas and we say congratulations to the three winners:

- Andrew Crombie – Wellington
- Luke Wilkinson – Australia
- Jason Fleming – Hawkes Bay

Look out for the next CatWalk Pot of Gold Raffle in 2018! Sincere thanks to the sponsors of the Pot of Gold Raffle:

- Godolphin
- Emirates
- Poronui Lodge
- Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk
- Trackside
- Moving Media Hamilton





# MAJORsponsors

## GODOLPHIN

**G**odolphin have been supporting CatWalk since 2012 through generous donations of service fees and exceptional experiences.

In an astonishingly generous offer, Sheik Mohammed's Godolphin Australia gifted a Brazen Beau service, valued at a massive \$AUD44,000, which was auctioned at our Remarkable event.

Godolphin's Managing Director Henry Plumptre says the opportunity to contribute to the drive for a breakthrough was a perfect fit for Brazen Beau.

"Godolphin exists through Sheikh Mohammed's passion for horses and competition. His leadership in many aspects of the equine industry gives us the relevance that we enjoy today," says Henry.

"In supporting CatWalk, Godolphin is actively assisting research into spinal cord injury where the benefits will directly flow to injured riders in all aspects of equine competition.

To CatWalk founder Catriona Williams Godolphin's donation is incredibly special.

"This is an amazingly generous gift and it demonstrates the very best cooperation. New Zealanders, Australians, and the international team behind Godolphin are all standing together as we drive the quest forward.

"This is one race we can't afford to lose, and we can't thank Sheikh Mohammed and Godolphin enough."

Godolphin also gave the incredible 2018 Dubai World Cup package for the Pot of Gold Raffle. This prize sees the winner and friend flown business class by Emirates to Dubai to attend the 2018 Dubai World Cup as guests of Godolphin.

### Brazen Beau

By I Am Invincible from the Snaadee mare Sansadee, Brazen Beau was a standout racehorse of his generation, scoring an outstanding win in the G1 Newmarket as a three year old. He emulated the likes of Exceed and Excel, and downed the world's highest rated older sprinters, including the champions Chautauqua and Lankan Rupee.

Having covered over 260 mares in his first two seasons at stud, Brazen Beau's book already reads like a "who's who," with three-time Melbourne Cup heroine Makybe Diva as well as G1 winners Regal Cheer, Rinky Dink, Midnight Oil and Maybe Discreet among his matings. The dams of G1 winners Astern, Earthquake, Mongolian Khan, Peggy Jean, Hucklebuck, Bon Aurum and Griante have also been matched with this outstanding individual.

Blessed with outstanding conformation as well as talent, Brazen Beau represents both outstanding quality and value, being the leading first-season sire at the broodmare sales last year with in foal mares selling for up to \$AUD570,000

## AJ HACKETT BUNGY

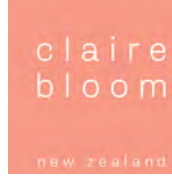
**T**he name that is synonymous with pushing the boundaries – AJ Hackett and Henry van Asch showed Remarkable support to CatWalk. The venue – the AJ Hackett Kawarau Bridge Bungy Centre – was the perfect setting for our 200 guests. The AJ Hackett team made sure every detail was attended to, turning the fully functioning bungy tourist centre into a glamorous evening venue in 2 hours!

Starting the evening with a bungy jump from Dave Vass who suffered a SCI in 2015 kicked off the night in remarkable fashion. The pro bungy jumpers entertained guests who enjoyed champagne and canapes on the viewing deck.

Not only supplying the venue AJ Hackett/Henry van Asch also generously donated wine, champagne, buses and manpower for our guests, even bungy jumps for prizes. We even had Richie McCaw complete his first bungy jump on Sunday morning in tandem with Gemma!



*Dave Vass being prepared for his jump by the AJ Hackett Bungy Team*





Photos courtesy of Michael Thomas Photography



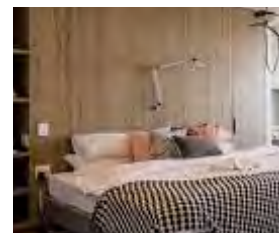
“To have raised \$350,000 is an amazing result. We are truly humbled by the generosity of everyone involved, to the night’s sponsors Godolphin and AJ Hackett, and all our generous prize donors”

– Catriona Williams



The GoLightlies were a bit! Check them out at [www.golightlies.com](http://www.golightlies.com), [www.facebook.com/thegolightlies](https://www.facebook.com/thegolightlies) or phone: 0274690985.

# Life's a BEACH



CatWalk special correspondent Charlotte Gendall learns more about a unique Australian SCI innovation, where instead of Hospital, they're talking Hospitality.

**T**hey're living the dream at Sargood on Collaroy, and the reviews are top class.

"World first resort and health spa ... revolutionary ... personalised ... groundbreaking ..."

When the world's first hotel dedicated to those with SCI opened at Collaroy (NSW) earlier this year, it made international headlines. Wheelies, their families and their friends finally have a place where SCI standards are the norm. Where they dictate the terms. Where all the 17 purpose-built and self-contained apartments are both practical and also aesthetically pleasing.

James Dakin is the resort manager and says the staff are genuinely thrilled at the early feedback.

"It's a totally fresh idea, there's nowhere else in the world like it."

Founded on land designated 100 years ago for a hospital, the driver is now what "guests" want to do, rather than what's best for "patients."

Built on land in north east Sydney originally donated by Frederick George Sargood in 1918, the resort's built on a site with a history of care and healing, previously home to an extension of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children used for nursing children with polio and tuberculosis back to health. The need for this facility eventually ceased and the site was declared surplus.

The concept of a luxury accessible accommodation facility was then developed with the aim of promoting social integration, activity and support for people with spinal cord injury. With support from government agency iCare, the Sargood Foundation acquired the site for what's become Sargood on Collaroy. It has now partnered with Royal Rehab, a leading spinal cord injury rehabilitation service in NSW, to operate the centre.

The end result: Sargood on Collaroy now provides people with spinal injuries and their families a unique experience and the opportunity to develop vocational skills, health, well being, education – or simply enjoy a gorgeous place to stay on a beautiful sweep of golden Aussie beach.

James Dakin says they've been welcoming wheelie guests with earlier horror stories of paying hundreds of dollars a night for accommodation that's totally inappropriate for wheelchairs. At

Sargood, it's all fit for purpose and the word is spreading.

Bookings are strong from right across Australia, and further afield. Sargood will make the allure of Sydney a more manageable reality for tourists.

"Just today we had a very strong inquiry from a gentleman in Chicago, and he's very determined to come."

There's broad scope here for either a rehabilitative holiday which might feature physio, treatment, adaptive surfing, or golf. Or just a pure holiday.

"There's broad scope here for either a rehabilitative holiday which might feature physio, treatment, adaptive surfing, or golf. Or just a pure holiday."

"It's all about choice," says James.

Local residents have been extremely supportive of the project, with strong financial input to make it possible. They recognised the original intention of the benefactor, and the idea that the site could be lost to development was anathema.

James was initially headhunted 15 months ago and has been onsite since September. Although there's strong clinical input with qualified physios and medical staff, his background in hospitality reflects the overall ethos.

"It was time to change," he says. "We had to get away from the idea of a matron at the desk of a nursing home." Now guests are greeted at check in by a receptionist.

And all ages and stages are welcomed. It's family friendly – kids with SCI and their

families, or mums or dads with SCI and their kids.

"Just the other day we had a 60 year old who's been living with his injury for 40 years. He lives by a beach down south but this was the first time he'd been confident enough to get out there amongst it all. The golf, the tennis – the team even got him on the beach and in the water for the first time in four decades.

That visit was a real highlight for James but every guest is welcomed and supported.

"It's an easy place to stay, and also an easy place to meet other guests."

CatWalk founder Catriona Williams has toured the facility and says she'll definitely be back.

"It's absolutely fantastic. So beautiful and seamless. It would be a pleasure to check in!" <http://sargoodoncollaroy.com/>



# Team CATWALK

For the third year in a row, the CatWalk Trust deputy chairman, Dave Pretorius, has taken it upon himself to cajole every friend, friend of friends, and business associate he's encountered to join him in running the epic TCS New York City Marathon. As a result of his enormous passion and energy, Team CatWalk 2017 has grown to a crowd of 28 athletes and 8 supporters.

The Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at Auckland University generously hosted an information evening for the team to kick off our 2017 fundraising campaign. Dr Simon O'Carroll, Director of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility, updated us on the progress being made towards finding the cure for spinal cord injury.

We sat enthralled as he explained the multi-faceted approach being undertaken at the CBR. He told us the cure for spinal cord injury is not just going to be about administering the peptide they're developing to reduce the inflammation at the injury site; it's not just going to be about removing scar tissue so that healthy cells can re-grow; its not just going to be about injecting stem cells, or adding a growth factor, or targeting electrical stimulation into the injury site, it's going to be a mixture of all those things. And they are getting to the point in their understanding of spinal cord injury that means things should move forward a lot more quickly.

The evening continued with a touching and powerful presentation by Dan Buckingham who has lived for 18 years with a spinal cord injury he sustained while playing rugby at university. He has shared his story on his fundraising page. <https://catwalk2017newyorkmarathon.gofundraise.co.nz/page/DanBuckingham>

Dave Pretorius then followed with his recollections of his own daughter's accident and restated his personal mission to keep on running until a cure is found and his Holly can walk again. He rallied the team to enjoy this journey and to get fundraising so the CatWalk Trust can support even more research at the CBR, and he can finally hang up his track shoes

because Holly, and others like her, will be running their own marathons. Dave's story is available on his fundraising page at <https://catwalk2017newyorkmarathon.gofundraise.co.nz/page/DavidPretorius0>

At the back of the room listening to Dan and Dave sat two young Honours students who are currently progressing their own research programs in spinal cord injury research at the

CBR. When Dave mentioned there were still a couple of entries available for further participants to join the team, expanding on his belief that more makes for merrier, and adds to the ultimate success of the campaign, Laverne Robilliard and Connor Clemett looked at each other and said, "We can do this. We should do this."

Laverne says she felt so moved hearing about what everyone at the CatWalk Trust was doing for them. "The amount of work they put into what we do and the lengths people go to really resonated with me. I came away feeling a fire within me and it reiterated that what we are doing here is tangible."

She says of the marathon, "The reward of getting through something that seems so huge to me, and the fact that it is also putting something back into the work I'm really passionate about, is incredible to me. And meeting the people who are directly impacted by my work excites me."

Connor says he felt so inspired by Dave. "I didn't attend the evening with the idea of running the marathon, but the event added a layer of excitement and meaning to what I'm doing in the lab. I thought the infectious

enthusiasm and camaraderie Dave brought to the whole thing was awesome, and I thought then if there was ever anything I could contribute that would add to what I do, this is surely it. We came away buzzing, and luckily Louise Nicholson and Sir Richard were there, saw our excitement and offered to support us as representatives of the CBR."

Distinguished Professor, Sir Richard Faull, had watched the students approach Dave after the formalities concluded. He and

"I don't consider this a handout – the students have to fund the other half of the fare themselves – but it is my hope that this experience will transform their lives."



*Some of the CatWalk NYM Team of 2017*



*Connor Clemett and Laverne Robilliard*

Professor Louise Nicholson heard them asking the big question; what would it cost to take part? For a student, it's a large number.

Sir Richard, knowing what a tough financial challenge it would be for them, stepped forward and offered to help by funding half their costs. He says he saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate the CBR's commitment to the Catwalk Trust.

"For two of our students to have the opportunity, and to want to go to the New York marathon, is marvellous because it engages them in a practical way in contributing to the ongoing lives and possibility of a cure to those with spinal cord injury.

"I've been helped by people in all sorts of ways in my career, and the best way to give thanks for that is for me to help others. I believe it is a responsibility everyone should have, and so when these two young students expressed their interest, I committed to personally contributing to make this dream come true.

"I don't consider this a handout – the students have to fund the other half of the fare themselves – but it is my hope that this experience will transform their lives."

For Connor and Laverne this undertaking will be no mean feat. Their Honours theses are due for submission the day after Team CatWalk departs for New York so their academic commitments need to be adjusted to accommodate an accelerated conclusion. Since both students intend applying for Doctoral positions in the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility, they need to achieve the highest distinction in their Honours thesis in order to be accepted and gain funding for their PhD research. So, to add training for a marathon to the mix, and fundraising for CatWalk, they face a very challenging few months ahead.

Connor says, "It is going to be difficult with our other commitments, but I believe it is possible, and it doesn't compare to those having to live with spinal cord injury."

**Please support Connor and Laverne by visiting their fundraising pages.**

<https://catwalk2017newyorkmarathon.gofundraise.co.nz/page/ConnorClemett0>

<https://catwalk2017newyorkmarathon.gofundraise.co.nz/page/LaverneRobilliard>

# World Class PAIRING

CatWalk Trust has been announced as the exclusive official charity partner for EQUITANA Auckland, partnering a world-class event with an innovative and ground-breaking charity

Trust general manager Meg Speirs says they are both “delighted and honoured” to be involved.

“CatWalk has a long-standing relationship with the Hansen family, who have supported the trust for a number of years,” says Speirs. “We know how big EQUITANA is in

Australia and it is really exciting for the industry to have it coming to Auckland.”

EQUITANA Auckland promised to take entertainment to a whole new level in New Zealand.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for CatWalk to be partnered with an industry that has already supported us so much in the past and we hope will continue to support us in the future.”

World-class equestrians Sir Mark Todd MBE and Zara Phillips MBE are both international patrons for CatWalk.

Speirs says there are huge advances being made in spinal cord injury research but likens it to a giant jigsaw puzzle.

“There are lots and lots of different pieces that will pull together to make the complete picture,” she said. “We are working at getting the right pieces in the right place at the moment. We are also collaborating internationally. It is crucial that what is being done here is in synch with what is being done in Australia, North America, the United Kingdom and Europe.”

Spinal injury was hugely complex with every one different to the next.

“While we may find advances in one area, we need to figure out how that can be applied to a slightly different injury.”

Now was a hugely exciting time in research.

“Science and technology is happening faster than we can fund it. We are in an age where technology is progressing so quickly and at such a high level, and because of that technology, it is not a matter of when, rather of how fast we can make it happen. It all comes down to funding.”

People will have the opportunity to donate to CatWalk Trust at the time of ticket purchase and there will be other initiatives throughout EQUITANA Auckland in support spinal cord injury research.

Event director Andrew Hansen says he too is

very pleased EQUITANA Auckland is partnering with CatWalk.

“They have an amazing history with equestrian and a real passion and reputation within the industry,” said Hansen, “especially with Catriona (Williams) at the helm.”

Williams was a former top eventer and showjumper, competing at the likes of the Badminton Horse trials, European Championships and was tilting for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games when she had a catastrophic fall that has left her in a wheelchair.

Since then though, Williams has completed the New York City Marathon and climbed to Everest Base Camp on a hand cycle, she was a finalist in the 2014 KiwiBank New Zealander of the Year Awards, recognised in the 2014 Queen’s Birthday Honours list as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, and was the community and not-for-profit sector winner at the New Zealand Women of Influence Awards.

Hansen felt it fitting for a world-class event like EQUITANA Auckland to be partnered with CatWalk.

“I hope we can help raise the profile and awareness of this fantastic organisation with money raised going towards ongoing spinal cord injury research.”

For more information, head to [www.equitanaakl.co.nz](http://www.equitanaakl.co.nz)

“CatWalk has a long-standing relationship with the Hansen family, who have supported the trust for a number of years”



Alex Anderson and volunteers at the Stride out for CatWalk showjumping day.

## FUNDRAISERS

- The Year 7&8 students at Marina View School held a mufti day in December and kindly donated the proceeds of \$843.70 to CatWalk!
- \$1500 was donated from Kings College following their annual Runathon in April. Board member Vikki Maclean was on hand to run a few laps of the field and present the CatWalk prizes to the male and female student who raised the most in sponsorship.
- \$2224.00 was raised through an initiative by Alex Anderson who organised a Show Jumping day at the National Equestrian Centre, Taupo in February.

What a fantastic weekend at the CatWalk Trust show jumping fundraiser, Stride Out for CatWalk 2017. Unfortunately this summer weather was playing havoc and after loads of deliberation, we decided to postpone the event by one day to try avoid the thunder storms and torrential rain!

I want to thank all those that supported this change making it an almost seamless process, and especially those that even though they couldn’t attend, still kindly decided to donate their entry fees to this great cause! We had a fantastic turn out on Sunday and everyone who attended seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves!

When I first started planning for this event I had no idea what to expect as a potential outcome, but after expenses we raised a solid \$2,224.00 for the CatWalk Trust.

This would not have been possible if it hadn’t been for the amazing sponsorship we received from Hansen, The Cambridge Collection, Woolshed Taupo, Dunstan, Taupo Saddlery, Kiwi Span Taupo, Farmland Taupo, Geoff Taylor Goldsmith, Trev Terry Marine, Manuka Vets, McKenzie & Co, Caci Clinic Taupo & New Plymouth, Saddlery Warehouse, AHD Bedding, RD1 Taupo, BeeKind, M21 Taupo, Zanadu Equestrian and Electrical Control & Design Limited (sorry if I forgot any!!)

A special thanks to Kathryn, John, Kerri, Alexa, Tristan, Ceci, Courtney, Todd, Mark, Geordie, Jo, Abby, Amanda, Donna, Jocelyn, Jackie, Kate and Scotty (BBQ builder) for all your fantastic support and for those that just offer to lend a hand!!

Alex Anderson



# CATWALK

NEVER SAY NEVER

SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH TRUST



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Please use the following name(s) in all acknowledgements .....

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