



## BRIEFING PAPER

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Going to your local gym:  
Some ideas for people living with disability



A JFA Publication

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## **BRIEFING PAPER**

# **GOING TO YOUR LOCAL GYM:**

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**SOME IDEAS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY**

# INTRODUCTION

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The Julia Farr Association wrote this paper in response to issues raised by people living with disability about the challenges accessing their local gym or health club. This paper explores the benefits of going to a gym and provides ideas on how to make it easier for a person living with disability to access a gym or health club in their local community.

## THE BENEFITS

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There are many reasons why going to a local gym can benefit a person, including;

### **1. Improved Health Benefits**

Evidence from a study undertaken by the University of Queensland on Health Benefits of Exercise for Persons with Disabilities suggests that people living with disability who are physically active will spend less time in hospital or be unwell, compared to a person living with disability who does not exercise<sup>1</sup>. The Physical Therapy Information on Healthline highlights how regular exercise can decrease the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease and cancer. A person living with disability who exercises regularly may benefit from increased movement, improved tone and muscle, flexibility, strength, endurance, balance, co-ordination, range of motion, relaxation, weight loss, decreased pain and decreased stress and anxiety<sup>2</sup>.

### **2. Being Part of Community Life**

It is important for every person to feel that they are a part of their community. Going to the gym is just one example of where a person has the opportunity to participate in a common community venue alongside other citizens with similar interests. This sets the scene for the development of new acquaintances and networks based on a sense of common ground.

### **3. Self Esteem**

Regular exercise can assist with positive feelings about oneself. When a person exercises their body produces chemicals called endorphins. Endorphins are known to improve a person's mood, including reducing the perceived level of pain a person is experiencing. When this occurs a person is likely to feel more positive<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association, 'Health Benefits of Exercise for Persons with Disabilities', Information provided by Sean Tweedy, CONRAD Research Fellow, School of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland <<http://www.sportingwheelies.org.au/doc.php?ID=245>>

<sup>2</sup> Physical Therapy Information on Healthline <<http://www.healthline.com/galecontent/physical-therapy>>

<sup>3</sup> Mental Health Matters, 'Exercise & Esteem' <[http://www.mental-health-matters.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=513:exercise-a-esteem&catid=178:self-esteem&Itemid=1912](http://www.mental-health-matters.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=513:exercise-a-esteem&catid=178:self-esteem&Itemid=1912)>

# THE CHALLENGES

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The Julia Farr Association recognises that there may be some challenges when a person living with disability seeks to access a gym. Some of these challenges may include:

## **1. Accessibility**

A gym may not always be physically accessible to a person living with disability, especially if the person uses a wheelchair or other mobility aids. Through the course of writing this briefing paper, we visited a number of gyms to look at accessibility. We also ran a short email / postal survey. From these visits and survey responses we identified a number of access issues, including:

- No accessible car parking;
- No ramp or appropriate access to the gym for a person who uses a wheelchair or other mobility aids;
- Gym located upstairs;
- Gym equipment located very close together with no room to access or manoeuvre a wheelchair;
- The setting of weights and the use of some gym equipment may require the assistance of another person (noting that this also presents an opportunity given that gym users do sometimes pair up to use weights);
- No accessible toilet or changing area;
- No public transport nearby.

## **2. Cost**

The cost of taking up a gym or a health club membership can be quite expensive, especially if a person has a lower income.

## **3. Attitude**

This could be the perceived or actual attitude of other gym members towards a person living with disability **or** it could be the attitude of a person living with disability about going to the gym.

Possible reasons why people may have a negative attitude towards a person living with disability include:

- The non-disabled gym member may not know anyone with a disability and may therefore be unsure as to how to 'act' towards the person;
- The non-disabled gym member may have formed the view that people living with disability are not involved in the community and are catered for somewhere else.

Possible reasons why a person living with a disability may have a negative attitude towards attending a gym include:

- The person may feel they do not have the confidence to attend a gym, because they don't 'fit in';
- The person may have previously had a bad experience with people's attitudes in other situations;

- The person may feel that other people are watching and judging them;
- The person may feel that there will not be enough individual attention from trainers and that those trainers do not know enough about disability.

Some of these concerns may be real and some may be perceived.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

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### **Access**

The Julia Farr Association has visited a number of gyms to look at access. Gyms which have accessible features have been included in our Access Directory: <http://www.juliafarr.org.au/accessdir/disclaimer.asp>.

These details will be updated periodically. If you visit a gym which is not on our list let us know what you found and we will happily take a look.

An 'Access Alert Postcard' is also available through the Julia Farr Association. A person can send an 'Access Alert Postcard' to a gym if a person finds that a gym is not accessible. To view this postcard please see *Appendix 1* or contact The Julia Farr Association for supplies of the postcard (there is a small charge). Our details are at the front and back of this publication. When you make contact with a venue about access let us know and we can follow up. It is through this and other ways that using your 'voice' can help change to happen.

### **Cost**

Gym membership can be expensive, especially if a person's main income is the Disability Support Pension. To assist with overcoming this we approached a number of gyms to discuss discounts. For the gyms that can offer a discount, please see *Appendix 2*. For ongoing updates to this list please refer to our website.

Some gyms offer a program termed 'Exercise Therapy' which is subsidised by a \$46.50 Medicare rebate for the first five sessions if a person has an Enhanced Primary Care Plan (EPCP – see below). In most cases this will mean that the first five sessions will be free. However, it is important to confirm this with the person providing the exercise service.

An EPCP is a program which was introduced to assist with the coordination of care for people living with disability, older Australians and people living with complex care needs. The program provides a framework for a multidisciplinary approach to health<sup>4</sup>. A person with an EPCP may be eligible to participate in Exercise Therapy. Exercise Therapy looks at providing a person with a range of exercise interventions with the assistance of a personal trainer. For more information on 'Exercise Therapy' refer to *Appendix 3*.

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Health and Ageing, 'Enhanced Primary Care Program (EPC)' <<http://www.health.gov.au/epc>>

## ***Attitude (Yours/Others)***

The following are tips for thinking about your attitude, and other people's attitude:

To you, the person living with a disability:

- A person who sees herself/himself as positive and able to contribute, is more likely to be seen by others as a person who is positive and able to contribute<sup>5</sup>;
- It is easy to feel discouraged by previous negative experiences, but you are still the main agent of change in your life so keep a focus on the possibilities;
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) is legislation designed to protect people living with disability from negative attitudes resulting in discrimination. If you think you have been discriminated against there are actions you have take - contact your local advocacy agency for advice. If you don't know which agency that is, contact us and we will try and find one for you;
- The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Australia in July 2008 means that there is a national commitment that "ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities"<sup>6</sup>

To you, the non-disabled person:

- It is important to remember that a person living with disability is a citizen first and foremost. The person's disability is only one aspect of who they are;
- Regard the person as you would regard any other person using the gym or health club. If you think the person might need assistance, then ask the person (rather than assume anything). Through common sense, and the natural fellowship that comes when people share common interests, we can all play our part to maintain a rich and diverse community.

## **CONCLUSION**

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People living with disability have the right to access the same opportunities as other citizens but often this is frustrated because of access issues or attitude issues.

This information paper shows that there are opportunities out there. Testing can improve these opportunities and people living with disability can take a leadership role in growing community awareness of access.

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<sup>5</sup> Enabling Education Network, 'Hand-out 5A – Attitudes and Disability'  
<http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/handout5a.php>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations n.d., *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and optional protocol*, p.4  
<<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>.



# Access Alert!



## Access Alert!

I recently visited your venue and noticed that it was not accessible to people living with disability. This is the problem:

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If your venue was accessible it would attract more visitors (and not just visitors living with disability). That way it is better for everyone. Also, all organisations have a responsibility, under the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992, to provide equitable access to goods and services and premises used by the public. Premises are broadly defined and would include all areas included within a building and surrounds.

If you would like further assistance with this, please visit [www.juliafarr.org.au](http://www.juliafarr.org.au) or contact the Julia Farr Association, a not-for-profit agency, on (08) 8373 8333. They'll be glad to help!

From: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affix stamp here

To:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of venue)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address of venue)

**Access  
Alert!**

An initiative of Julia Farr Association



## APPENDIX 2

A range of gyms have let us know that they are able to offer a discount. Julia Farr Association visited these gyms to look at their accessibility and have provided the below key to assist people.



Accessible Car park



Accessible entrance





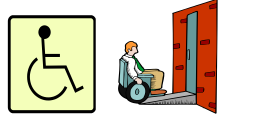


Accessible toilet



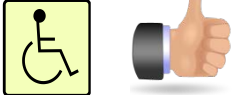
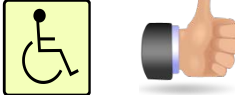
Some accessible equipment (this includes reasonable space between some equipment and alternative access to some equipment where there are stairs).

Gym Details	Discount Details	Accessibility
<p><u>CASA Leisure</u></p> <p>Marion Leisure and Fitness Centre Cnr Oaklands Road and Rosedale Avenue Morphettville SA 5043</p> <p>Tel: 08 8294 6488 Fax: 08 8376 1951 Email: <a href="mailto:mlfc@casaleisure.com.au">mlfc@casaleisure.com.au</a></p>	<p>Marion Leisure and Fitness Centre can offer a discount to potential gym members living with disability reducing fees to \$14.20 a week.</p>	
<p><u>CASA Leisure</u></p> <p>Seaford Recreation Centre Grand Boulevard SEAFORD SA 5169</p> <p>Tel: 08 8327 1555 Fax: 08 8327 1566 Email: <a href="mailto:seaford@casaleisure.com.au">seaford@casaleisure.com.au</a></p>	<p>Seaford Recreation Centre can offer a discount to potential gym members living with disability reducing fees to 14.20 a week.</p>	

<p><u>CASA Leisure</u></p> <p>St. Clair Recreation Centre 109 Woodville Road Woodville SA 5011</p> <p>Tel: 08 8445 8344 Fax: 08 8244 4546 Email: <a href="mailto:stclair@casaleisure.com.au">stclair@casaleisure.com.au</a></p>	<p>St. Clair Recreation Centre can offer a discount to potential gym members living with disability reducing fees to \$14.20 a week.</p>	
<p><u>CASA Leisure</u></p> <p>The Hub and The Hill Recreation Centre 100 Taylors Road Aberfoyle Park SA 5159</p> <p>Tel: 08 8270 3900 Fax: 08 8270 6516 Email: <a href="mailto:hubandhill@casaleisure.com.au">hubandhill@casaleisure.com.au</a></p>	<p>The Hub and Hill Recreation Centre can offer a discount to potential gym members living with disability reducing fees to \$14.20 a week.</p>	
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u></p> <p>539 Greenhill Rd, Hazelwood Park, 5066 Phone: (08) 8364 2933 Fax: (08) 8364 3265 Email: <a href="mailto:cqmburnside@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cqmburnside@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u></p> <p>520 Anzac Highway, Glenelg East, 5045 Phone: (08) 8295 8488 Fax:(08) 8295 8496 Email: <a href="mailto:cqmglenelg@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cqmglenelg@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u></p> <p>11 Princes Road, Kingswood, 5062 Phone: (08) 8272 2266 Fax: (08) 8271 6977 Email: <a href="mailto:cqmmitcham@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cqmmitcham@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	 <p>(downstairs only)</p>
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u></p> <p>97 Smart Road, Modbury, 5092 Phone: (08) 8396 7333</p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant</p>	

<p>Fax: (08) 8396 7577  Email:  <a href="mailto:cgmmodbury@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cgmmodbury@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>(the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u>  Level 1, North Adelaide Village Shopping Centre, Corner of O'Connell and Archer Streets, 5006  Phone:(08) 8230 0555  Fax: (08) 8230 0599  Email:  <a href="mailto:cgmnorthadelaide@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cgmnorthadelaide@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	
<p><u>Goodlife Health Club</u>  1201 Old Port Road, Royal Park, 5014  Phone: (08) 8241 0444  Fax: (08) 8240 1655  Email:  <a href="mailto:cgmroyalpark@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au">cgmroyalpark@goodlifehealthclubs.com.au</a></p>	<p>Goodlife Health Club will offer a no joining fee which is a saving of \$149. A personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) can sign in as a guest (no fee) when assisting a person living with disability.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u>  1 Kookaburra Lane  LITTLE HAMPTON SA 5250  Phone: 08 8398 4883  Email: <a href="mailto:mtbarker@contours.net.au">mtbarker@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u>  3/4 Main North Road  Blakeview, SA 5114  Phone: (08) 8254 3200  Email: <a href="mailto:blakeview@contours.net.au">blakeview@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u>  15A, The Promenade  Mawson Lakes, SA 5095  Phone: (08) 8359 1655  Email: <a href="mailto:mawsonlakes@contours.net.au">mawsonlakes@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	

<p><u>Contours</u> 3/74 Prospect Road Prospect, SA 5082 Phone: (08) 8125 8700 Email: <a href="mailto:prospect@contours.net.au">prospect@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> Lvl 1, 443 Magill Rd St Morris, SA 5068 Phone: (08) 8364 3264 Email: <a href="mailto:stmorris@contours.net.au">stmorris@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> Shop 1, 693 Port Rd Woodville, SA 5011 Phone: (08) 8347 3868 Email: <a href="mailto:woodville@contours.net.au">woodville@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> Corner Golden &amp; Grove Way Golden Grove, SA 5125 Phone: (08) 8289 1330 Email: <a href="mailto:goldengrove@contours.net.au">goldengrove@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> Shop 5, 400 Montague Rd Para Vista, SA 5093 Phone: (08) 8263 3222 Email: <a href="mailto:modbury@contours.net.au">modbury@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> 37-39 Commercial Rd Port Adelaide, SA 5015 Phone: (08) 8240 5222 Email: <a href="mailto:portadelaide@contours.net.au">portadelaide@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	

<p><u>Contours</u> 28 Commercial Rd Salisbury, SA 5108 Phone: (08) 8258 5001 Email: <a href="mailto:salisbury@contours.net.au">salisbury@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	
<p><u>Contours</u> 20 Heysen Drive Trott Park, SA, 5158 Phone: (08) 8387 5553 Email: <a href="mailto:trottpark@contours.net.au">trottpark@contours.net.au</a></p>	<p>Contours will offer three free trial sessions to a person living with disability. A discounted rate for a personal assistant (the person supporting you to attend the gym) will be offered.</p>	

## APPENDIX 3

# Exercise Therapy Information Sheet

### About our information sheets

We hope this information is useful to you, and let us know of any changes/additions that can help future editions. Also let us know if there are other topics you'd like covered. Because some information may change or be incomplete, please read the disclaimer on page 12.

## Disability and Exercise

For all of us, exercise is a good idea, and can play a key role in the maintenance of good health. The therapeutic benefits of exercise have also been explored in relation to people living with disability. One such approach is termed *Exercise Therapy*.

*Exercise Therapy* is an active approach towards rehabilitation and is aimed at restoring function, improving mobility, relieving pain and preventing or limiting physical disabilities through the use of cardiovascular machines, strengthening equipment, and hydrotherapy and flexibility exercises. The term 'exercise therapy' is a little unfortunate as it makes something sound more complicated and special than it actually is. The essence of the approach is a regular visit to the gym with a personal trainer who is able to assist with an individual program.

*Exercise Therapy* programs aim to provide a range of exercise interventions to enable a person with an injury or disability to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and aim to prevent or manage a person's situation through exercise. *Exercise Therapy* programs are generally designed

on a one-to-one basis for people who undertake exercise specifically for injury rehabilitation or health management.

A practitioner of this approach can improve the health of many people including people living with diabetes, obesity, heart disease, arthritis and high blood pressure and can assist people with dementia, osteoporosis, depression, stroke, cerebral palsy and brain injury. The approach looks at improving a person's flexibility, strength, endurance, balance, coordination and range of motion. The goal is to improve the person's capacity within their work and home environment.

If a person is interested in participating in *Exercise Therapy* then they may wish to visit their GP for a referral. A person who has an Enhanced Primary Care Plan (EPCP) may be eligible to access *Exercise Therapy* services with Medicare Rebates if the provider is accredited with the Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science (AAESS). Eligible people with an EPCP are entitled to a total of five allied health visits a year, with each visit attracting a Medicare rebate of \$46.50. In most cases this will mean that the first five sessions will be free, however, it is important to confirm this with the person providing the exercise service.

An *Exercise Therapy* practitioner will measure a person's strength, muscle performance, posture, coordination and motor function, and then will develop a plan with the person. This will take into account recommendations from the person's GP, what the person would like to achieve, the person's medical history and the person's overall health and fitness. The plan can then be run at the gym or at home.

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## REFERENCES

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Adelaide Exercise Physiology <[www.aep.net.au](http://www.aep.net.au)>

Advances in Psychiatric Treatment, Exercise Therapy and Mental Health in Clinical Populations <<http://apt.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/full/8/4/262>>

Department of Health and Ageing, 'Enhanced Primary Care Program (EPC)' <<http://www.health.gov.au/epc>>

Enabling Education Network, Hand-out 5A – Attitudes and Disability <<http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/handout5a.php>>

Mental Health Matters, 'Exercise & Esteem' <[http://www.mental-health-matters.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=513:exercise-a-esteem&catid=178:self-esteem&Itemid=1912](http://www.mental-health-matters.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=513:exercise-a-esteem&catid=178:self-esteem&Itemid=1912)>

Merendi, Medicare Enhanced Primary Health Care Plan Scheme  
<http://www.merendi.com.au>

Physical Therapy Information on Healthline  
<<http://www.healthline.com/galecontent/physical-therapy>>

Rehab Management, Enhanced Primary Care Plan  
<<http://www.rehabmanagement.com.au>>

Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association 'Health Benefits of Exercise for Persons with Disabilities', Information provided by Sean Tweedy, CONRAD Research Fellow, School of Human Movement Studies, <<http://www.sportingwheelies.org.au/doc.php?ID=245>>

United Nations, Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and optional protocol  
<<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>