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## Stroke survivor 'can't wait' for Caroline Bay aquatic centre

For Timaru stroke survivor Chris Miller, the Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre's hot pools cannot come quickly enough.

Once a regular user of Strathallan Lifecare's hydrotherapy pool, the closure of that pool to the public has left Chris – and scores of others – high and dry.

Chris loves the massaging effect of suspending herself in warm water to ease her left-side discomfort after a debilitating stroke at the young age of 34.

Now 45, she has taken up pedal-trike riding to fill a vacuum left by the ending of Strathallan hydrotherapy sessions conducted by retired physiotherapist Gwynneth Jones.

"I'm marking time really," she said this week.

"I just cannot wait for the Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre to be finished. I will be their first customer."

Chris is well qualified to know just how healing and relaxing the centre's new heated programme pool and water massage facilities will be and how eagerly the community is waiting for it.

She is a health professional working in the disabled health care area for Bupa Care Services, one of New Zealand's leading providers of elderly care services. She works in a medic alarms sales support role for elderly and disabled people.

It's a role strengthened by the fact that Chris is also chairperson of the Disabled Persons Assembly and president of the South Canterbury Stroke Club. And to round out what has been a total commitment to the welfare of people who suffer health traumas, she has recently been appointed to the South Canterbury District Health Board's disability advisory committee.

Chris sees the need for the therapeutic benefits of programme pools and hot pools on a daily basis and says the Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre is "the best thing ever".

"I have involved myself with council's community consultation programme as a pool stakeholder on behalf of my organisations.

"I have attended meetings and the more I learn about the new centre, the more excited I become," she said.

"This is going to be just so fantastic for our community, the disabled members of which will truly benefit from pool programmes, the ease of access such as aqua lifts, and the ease of just getting to the centre.

"I hope we can have Gwynneth back to conduct more of her water therapy sessions."

Chris's stroke was a life-changing event. Strength and determination has helped her overcome the effects.

"But you do have to push yourself, though.

"A stroke is something no-one plans on. It creates all sorts of difficulties.

"Although strokes affect different people in different ways, a common denominator is that water therapy is an extremely important part of rehabilitation."

She said it was fantastic that the developed aquatic centre design placed such a large emphasis on programme pool therapy, changing and access facilities and relaxation areas for both the disabled and "indeed the wider more mature community".

She said her own experience with stroke had been rewarding, although at times extremely frustrating coping with the effects.

"Far from being crippling for me, my world has expanded. In some ways stroke has been good for me," she said.

"I was once shy and retiring, but now I've got myself involved in a range of wonderful organisations."

And that was a story she was keen to tell other sufferers.

"Stroke need not be the end of the world. It opens doors.

"With the new aquatic centre our lives will be even more enhanced."

Ends



*Stroke survivor Chris Miller . . . "the Caroline Bay Aquatic Centre is the best thing ever".*