

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia's National Walk On Program

Social Return on Investment Evaluative Analysis

FULL REPORT

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About Social Ventures Australia

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) works with innovative partners to invest in social change. We help to create better education and employment outcomes for disadvantaged Australians by bringing the best of business to the 'for purpose' sector, and by working with partners to strategically invest capital and expertise. SVA Social Finance introduces new capital and innovative financial models to help solve entrenched problems.

SVA Consulting shares evidence and knowledge to build social sector capacity. We work with non-profits, major funders and governments to strengthen their capacity to access and manage capital, talent and evidence, measure impact, and deploy new approaches to delivering services, to achieve profound social change.

Client confidentiality

Please note that the names of all clients of the program, their families, and SCIA staff have been changed to hide their identities.

Executive Summary

Key Points

- Walk On is an intensive activity-based community rehabilitation program designed to assist a person with a spinal cord injury to improve and maximise their functional ability and lead a more independent life. Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) currently offers the program in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth in formal partnerships with Universities in NSW, Victoria and WA and with the Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association in QLD..
- In early 2013 Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) commissioned SVA Consulting to conduct a Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluative analysis on its Walk On program nationally. This follows previous work by SVA which completed a baseline SROI analysis on the Sydney Walk On program in early 2012.
- This SROI analysis of Walk On nationally is based on the investment and operations of the 12 months ending in April 2013. It concludes that approximately \$5 of social and economic value is created for every \$1 invested in the program. The total present value of benefits is \$7.3million and the present value of the investment is \$1.5m.
- The average participant in Walk On invests \$12,500 in the program (of which \$10,600 is cash), and receives benefits valued at \$88,500
- The majority of value is created for participants, who are also the major investors. As a fee-for-service program, Walk On has already demonstrated that it is valued by its participants, because they are willing to keep paying for it despite its relatively high cost.
- The most valued outcome for participants is their increased independence which provides individuals with increased choice and control over their lives. This is achieved as they increase the strength of working muscles, and also reactivate barely working / non-working muscles. As a result, their mobility increases and they are able to do regular tasks autonomously. 45% of participant value comes through the increased independence experienced, and 31% from the increased hopes for improvements into the future.
- Walk On also generates important benefits for other stakeholders. Families of Walk On participants benefit by having more time to pursue their own interests as the call on their need to care for the person with SCI reduces with increased independence. It also contributes to less strain on family relationships. The Government benefits particularly from the reallocation of resources due to reduced hospital stays despite not currently investing in the program. Universities benefit from clinical placements, which are in high demand and increased research opportunities.

Introduction

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) is a member-based social enterprise that provides support, information and resources for people with a spinal cord injury (SCI) at every stage of their journey. Their focus is to get people 'back on track' following their SCI, finding the solutions to obstacles that may arise and providing information and resources to ensure they remain actively involved in personal, social and vocational activities. It is estimated that there are around 15,000 people living with a SCI in Australia, with between 300 and 400 new cases each year.

Walk On is an individually designed, intensive activity-based rehabilitation program established by SCIA to assist a person with a spinal cord injury to improve and maximise their functional ability, and lead a more independent life.

The program involves intense, dynamic, weight-bearing exercises all performed out of the wheelchair one-on-one with a qualified Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist. SCIA launched Walk On in Brisbane in 2008 in partnership with the Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association of QLD. Based on requests from



people with SCI and their families and friends SCIA then opened centres in Sydney in 2010 (in partnership with The University of Sydney), Perth 2011 (with Edith Cowan University) and Melbourne 2012 (with Victoria University). Over this 5 year period over 250 people with SCI have participated in the program.

Prior to the establishment of SCIA's Walk On, there were no similar community based intensive exercise/rehabilitation programs in Australia specifically tailored to the needs of people with SCI. Exercise programs have been shown to assist in the recovery of independent functional abilities for people with SCI. Exercise programs can also assist a person with an SCI to return to activities of daily living, maintain an adequate level of fitness and reduce the impact of a sedentary lifestyle and secondary effects of the injury upon their quality of life¹.

Today the program supports between 80-90 clients nationally each week. The investment required to run Walk On for one year (April 2012 to April 2013) was \$1.47m, of which the majority (\$1.04m) came from clients, who pay fees to attend the program.

Project approach

In 2013, Social Ventures Australia (SVA) Consulting completed an evaluative Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to evaluate the social and economic benefits created by SCIA's national Walk On program. SROI is an internationally recognised methodology that seeks to understand, measure and evaluate the impact of a project, program, organisation, business or policy. Using financial proxies, it puts a value on the amount of change created and compares it to the costs of creating them

Through the SROI process, SVA Consulting sought to understand, measure and value the changes experienced by stakeholders in the program. The SROI analysis looked at the investment made and the outcomes achieved during the period from April 2012 to April 2013. To do this, it utilised data collected by SCIA, surveys and interviews conducted with stakeholders and secondary research.

Investment

A total of \$1.47m was invested into the National Walk On program, of which \$1.25m was cash investment, and \$211k was in the form of in-kind contributions.

Walk On is a 'fee-for-service' program, and the majority (83%) of the investment comes from participants. Other major investors included SCIA, partners (including universities), funders (philanthropists, corporations and community organisations) and families of participants.

Outcomes

Five stakeholder groups were identified as material for this analysis. For each stakeholder group, their objectives, inputs and outcomes were determined.

In an SROI analysis, the outcomes need to be described, measured and valued. The changes are from each stakeholder group's perspective and must be informed through stakeholder consultation. For this SROI analysis, it was imperative that the perspectives of each of these stakeholder groups were heard and described.

The major stakeholder groups who benefited from the Walk On national program are:

¹ Relevant studies providing evidence for this include:

A.Harness, E.T., Yozbatiran, N. and Cramer, S.C. Effects of intense exercise in chronic spinal cord injury. *Spinal Cord*. 2008. P.1-5.

B.Sardowsky, C.L. and Mc Donald, J.W. Activity-based restorative therapies: Concepts and applications in Spinal Cord Injury-related rehabilitation. *Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*. 2009. 15: p. 112-116.

C.Anneken, V. Hanseen-Doose, A., Hirschfeld,S., Scheuer, T. and Thietj,R. Influence of physical exercise on quality of life in individuals with spinal cord injury. 2010. *Spinal Cord*. 48: p. 393-399.

D.Devillard, X., Rimaud, D., Roche, F. and Calmels, P. Effects of training programs for spinal cord injury.2007. *Annales de Readaptation et Medicine Physique*. 50: p. 490-498.

- *Participants in Walk On*: who experience increased independence, increased self-confidence, increased hopes for future improvement, increased happiness, development of a sense of identity and belonging in a community, and reduced reliance on subsidised wheelchair accessible taxi schemes.
- *Families of Participants*: who experience more time to pursue their own interests, experienced less strain on family relationships and valued a more fulfilling and self-determined life led by their family member with SCI.
- *Partners (including universities)*: who experience more clinical placements for students, and further research into intensive physical rehabilitation programs for patients with SCI
- *Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA)*: which meets the expressed needs of its clients (to participate in a high intensity physical rehabilitation program); experiences an increased level of general funding for SCIA, due to an increased national profile; and experiences increased awareness of SCIA that leads to more people with SCI being introduced to SCIA.
- *Governments*: who experience savings due to improved general health and well-being of Walk On clients, reduced use of medication, reallocation of resources due to reduced hospital stays, and reduced expenditure on taxi subsidies.

Value Creation

Based on the investment and operations of the 12 months ending in April 2013, approximately \$5.00 of social and economic value is created for every \$1 invested. The total present value of benefits is \$7.3million, and the present value of the investment is \$1.5m.

SROI Summary	
Total Present Value of Benefits	\$7.36m*
Total Investment	\$1.47m*
Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio	5.00 : 1

* Value calculated after discount rate of 4.25%

Table A breaks down the value created by outcome, for each stakeholder group. Figure A outlines the Stakeholder Logic that describes how the program impacts participants.

Insights

1. As a fee-for-service program, Walk On has already demonstrated that it is valued by its participants, who are willing to keep paying for it.

There are already a number of services that are available to a person with SCI that they do not have to pay for: including Government Health Services such as the NSW Spinal Outreach Service, or services provided by non-profits like SCIA, such as the peer support and advocacy programs.

Approximately 73% of the investment into Walk On comes from participants (\$1.04m). On average, each of the 83 participants invested \$12,500 each year, of which \$10,600 was cash. This is significant when you consider the comparatively low incomes these participants receive. Their willingness to continue investing is a great indicator of the benefits of the program.

2. Increased independence for participants should be upheld as the primary purpose of the Walk On program.

Through stakeholder engagement it became clear that participants joined Walk On primarily in the hope it would enable them to perform regular tasks more autonomously, leading to increased independence. Our analysis of the one-year investment period demonstrates that 28% of total program value created comes through the increased independence experienced, and that 20% comes through the increased hopes for future improvements. Importantly, the hopes for future improvements are driven by an understanding of the increased independence that has already been achieved by each participant, as well as those around them.

3. Although funded almost entirely by participants and SCIA, Walk On generates significant value for other stakeholders including families of participants, estimated at \$1.16m and the Government, estimated at \$338k for the year up to April 2013.

Families of Walk On participants place substantial value on having more time to pursue their own interests (work, study, leisure etc) and the effects of the program helping with strain on family relationships. Beds are costly in the public health system - the estimated cost is around \$1,100 a night. As a result of the Walk On program, the Government benefits significantly from the reallocation of resources due to reduced hospital stays – a benefit that is valued at \$261k. These hospital stays are reduced because of improved health and general well-being of Walk On participants, and a reported lower rate of incidence of skin-related issues, most likely because of improved skin integrity and blood circulation. Governments also benefit from reduced expenditure on wheelchair accessible taxi schemes (\$70k), because as some participants increase their strength and mobility some can transfer better to be able to be transported as passengers in a family vehicle and others are able to acquire their own driving license and drive themselves.

Summary of value created – Table A

Outcomes	Aggregate value by outcome	Value by stakeholder
1. Participants in Walk On		
1.1 Increased independence	\$2.05m	\$5.04m [69%]
1.2 Increased self-confidence	\$243k	
1.3 Increased hopes for future improvement	\$1.47m	
1.4 Increased happiness	\$619k	
1.5 Develop sense of identity and belonging in a community	\$495k	
1.3 Reduced use of wheelchair accessible taxis	\$163k	
2. Families of Participants		
2.1 More time to pursue own interests	\$1.08m	\$1.16m [16%]
2.2 Less strain on family relationships	\$73k	
2.3 More fulfilling and self-determined life led by family member with SCI	<i>Already valued for Participants</i>	
3. Partners (including universities)		
3.1 More clinical placements for students	\$420k	\$495k [7%]
3.2 Further research into intensive physical rehabilitation programs for patients with SCI	\$75k	
4. SCIA		
4.1 Meet the expressed needs of their clients (to participate in a high intensity physical rehabilitation program)	\$38k	\$325k [4%]
4.2 Increased level of general funding for SCIA, due to increased national profile	\$27k	
4.3 More people with SCI introduced to SCIA	\$260k	
5. Funders		
5.1 See people with Spinal Cord Injuries lead more fulfilling and self-determined lives	<i>Already valued for Participants</i>	-
6. Government		
6.1 Savings due to reduced use of medication	\$7k	\$338k [5%]
6.2 Reallocation of resources due to reduced hospital stays	\$261k	
6.3 Reduced expenditure on taxi subsidies	\$70k	

Table A – Value created for each stakeholder group

Summary of Social Return on Investment	April 2012 – April 2013
Aggregate social return (present value)	\$7.36m
Aggregate investment (present value)	\$1.47m
SROI Ratio	5.00

Table B – Overall aggregate social return, investment and rat

