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MEDIA RELEASE

Local Resident Prompts City of Nedlands to Make Access Safer and Easier

Local resident Leanne Fairley worked together with staff from The Centre for Cerebral Palsy to write a letter to The City of Nedlands requesting that they review and improve the accessibility of its local infrastructure, in order to create a more user friendly environment for people with disabilities. In response, The City of Nedlands has promptly repaired and modified several potentially hazardous paths and roadways in the local area, making travel safer for the entire community.

Leanne has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair for mobility and a LightWriter communication device to communicate. A client of The Centre for Cerebral Palsy, Leanne resides in her own home in Mount Claremont and leads a somewhat independent life working Monday to Friday at Westcare in Nedlands.

Leanne regularly accessed her local shops and travelled home from work five days per week in her power wheelchair despite the uneven footpaths and kerbs that posed potential dangers on a daily basis. During her daily journey home from work Leanne was often required to veer onto busy roads as overgrown bushes and sand made footpaths unusable. Steep kerbs on street corners resulted in Leanne having to enter roads on an angle, balancing her wheelchair precariously on the edge of the kerb prior to crossing, and bus stops surrounded by grass made manoeuvring her power wheelchair very problematic when attempting to get on and off the bus safely.

Catching a taxi to work every morning was Leanne's only option to avoid the dangers of commuting through Mount Claremont in a wheelchair, however she was still required to travel the journey from work to home every afternoon, as a return taxi journey five days per week became too expensive.

Leanne's anxieties increased when 54 year old Sandra Gath, a client of The Centre, was tragically struck and killed by a train after her motorised wheelchair became stuck while crossing the tracks at a pedestrian crossing near Carlisle station last April. After this, Leanne became apprehensive of her own journey around her local suburb. Consequently, The Centre for Cerebral Palsy's Therapy Assistant Rachel van Houwelingen began accompanying Leanne home from work in an effort to improve her confidence. During these one on one support sessions Leanne regained her confidence, however numerous hazards were identified by Rachel on the council's roads and paths that could be dangerous to not only people with disabilities, but also to the elderly, mothers with prams and school children on bikes.

After visiting the area several times, photographing the hazards and producing an observation plan, Rachel and Leanne worked with Speech Pathologist Lisa McAllister and Occupational Therapist Lesley Silberstein to draft a letter to The City of Nedlands outlining the issues and requesting urgent action be taken to modify these areas. Shortly after sending the letter The

Centre's Therapists heard back from the council and within a month, several new pram ramps were constructed, parking restriction signs were erected and path modifications were made to nearby bus stops at appropriate locations throughout Mount Claremont to ensure that a continuously safe travel path is available for the entire community.

"My concern was for Leanne's safety and I was overwhelmed with the immediate response," Rachel Van Houwelingen said.

Leanne is "very happy" with the accessibility improvements made by the council.

People with disabilities frequently experience difficulties being independently mobile within their community, with numerous accessibility barriers limiting their participation in every day activities such as visiting the local shopping centre or catching public transport.

Graham Foster, CEO of The City of Nedlands states that "The City of Nedlands is committed to removing these barriers, and has developed the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2007-2012 with the aim of ensuring that all facilities provided by the council are accessible by all people, including those with a disability."

The Centre for Cerebral Palsy and Leanne wish to thank the City of Nedlands for their prompt response in rectifying the issues and hope the changes instigated make access easier and safer for other local people with disabilities, the elderly and young families.

-ENDS-

Photo Opportunity: Leanne in her motorised wheelchair at one of the locations that The City of Nedlands has modified for disability access.

For further information please contact:

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FACTS ABOUT CEREBRAL PALSY

- *CP is a permanent physical condition that affects movement.*
- *In Australia a child is born with CP every 18 hours.*
- *Australians under 18 are three times more likely to be diagnosed with cerebral palsy than cancer.*
- *There is no pre-birth test, no known cure and severity is on the increase.*
- *For most the cause of CP is unknown.*
- *CP is not a disease, it is not contagious.*
- *CP can be as mild as just a weakness in one hand ranging to almost complete lack of movement.*
- *Since 1951 The Cerebral Palsy Association has forged an enviable reputation as one of the leading disability service providers in WA. In line with the outstanding work we do in the area of CP management and support to those with disability, on 13 March 2007 we adopted a new name The Centre for Cerebral Palsy and colourful new logo.*