Posted on:
20 November 2020

An innovative disability-focused manufacturer based in Melbourne has defied the crushing impact of the city-wide lockdown to keep its plant operating, staff employed and its thousands of customers with disabilities supplied with essential equipment.

Push Mobility CEO and entrepreneur Shane Hryhorec, himself a wheelchair user and NDIS participant, says the business he founded in 2013 is continuing to operate as normal, providing products and services for people with disabilities to keep them mobile and independent.

The company manufactures its own wheelchairs, wheelchair accessories and other items as well as adapting third-party products to the specific needs of its customers.

Right now the company is fully focused on protecting the health of Australia's 200,000 wheelchair users following new research published by the CSIRO which found the COVID-19 virus can be detected on steel surfaces for up to 30 days.

"Wheelchair users are some of the most vulnerable people to infection as they touch their rims more than a thousand times a day," Shane says. "In response we decided to come up with a range of water-based hand and wheel rim sanitisers, which don't crack the skin like the usual alcohol-based products and thus allow infections to get through.

"For wheelchair users, keeping our hands clean is a lifelong challenge and in the current pandemic the challenge is critical."

Shane, 34, has lived with tetraplegia since breaking his neck in a swimming accident in 2007. He founded Push Mobility based on his own experience getting his first wheelchair, where the only choice and control available was choosing the colour.

"It was an awful experience and it got me thinking, we need cooler products to make people feel less bad about having a disability rather than the sterile off-the-shelf experience I had," he says. "You only have to scroll through our website to find products that are fun and bright and cool.

"Where we can't source or manufacture a product ourselves, we find companies around Australia and around the world who can, and collaborate with them. So a customer will come in and want a wheelchair and then we'll work with 10 different companies to create the best solution specifically for that individual."

Push Mobility sells from its factory and warehouse in Abbotsford, Melbourne, from a showroom in Queensland and via its online store, as well as through dealer networks. Most of his staff either have disabilities themselves or family members with disabilities, a key asset when

working with clients.

The company was one of the very first assistive technology companies in Australia to sign up as a registered NDIS service provider at the dawn of the Scheme in 2013.

Shane says his own experience of the NDIS has been “fantastic, beyond phenomenal”. He uses his plan to fund a range of AT and other personal supports, including occupational therapy provided by Solve Disability Solutions.

“To witness the evolution of the Scheme and the way it’s improved over time has been amazing,” he says. “For companies like ours, the amount of funding available for participants to spend in the marketplace allows us to invest in R&D in a way we never could have before.”

Related Stories and videos

Being non-verbal is no obstacle to effective communication

Shirley keeps the subtitles rolling

5 October 2020
Double shots all round for Esperance entrepreneur

Devin’s coffee delivery business booms

20 December 2020
Online activities are the new normal for Stefan

Stefan’s new normal beats the lockdown blues

22 May 2020
More stories and videos