



PERSPECTIVE

How my life has changed in the year since I became an amputee

ABC Lifestyle / By James O'Brien

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Incident description

The Abc.net.au website experienced a data breach. Almost 47 thousand email addresses were exposed, together with credential data. Leaked records include password. The validity of the data exposed couldn't be verified. Yet we're still informing you about a potential data breach – but keep in mind there's a chance of it being a false positive.

Exposed data

Email Password

No. of exposed accounts

46 000

Safety warning: This website has been breached or has been part of a data leak.



On June 30 last year, my life was forever changed.

I'd missed an important work deadline, and my friends and family were concerned about my welfare. When they couldn't reach me, they came to my home. They called police after I didn't respond when they knocked on my door.

With the help of emergency workers, they broke into my apartment and saved my life.

I'd recently arrived home from a trip to Cambodia and Vietnam and I'd been feeling unwell, which I put down to general illness or maybe COVID.

In fact, as a result of a cut foot, an infection was rapidly taking over my body, resulting in [sepsis](#). I was barely conscious when my friends and family found me.

When I was taken to hospital, my lower right leg was amputated below the knee. I also found out I had [undiagnosed diabetes](#).

Now, a year since my amputation, I'm marking my "stumpiversary" (as it's sometimes called in the amputee community) and I'm feeling both optimistic and reflective.

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Simple emails and messages of support required multiple readings before I could even attempt a response.

I also had to put modesty concerns aside as nurses helped me with the most basic of human functions.

The question I kept getting asked by friends and family

"How are you REALLY?" was a frequent early question from concerned family, friends, and medical staff.

At first, their responses to my "I've had a couple of tough days, but mostly I feel pretty good" seemed laced with disbelief.

I noticed there were two main ways in which people responded. First

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It hasn't escaped me that millions around the world have lost limbs without the notch health system.



"I feel lucky to be alive," I told my friends, "like I've been given a second chance."

Living with an amputated leg has brought all sorts of changes.

(Supplied: David Cubbin)

In total, I spent close to four months in hospital. Preparing for discharge was always at the forefront of my mind, including whether I could navigate in and out of the apartment independently.

Would I be able to shower independently? And what modifications, if any, might be necessary for me to continue living on my own? Would I always be in a wheelchair, or would my new prosthetic leg allow me to lead a "normal" life?

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What is sepsis?

- Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the body damages its own tissues and organs in response to an infection.
- Immediate treatment in hospital is vital.
- Sepsis often needs to be treated in the

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I got tired pretty easily. It often felt like I was making twice the effort compared to someone without an amputation.

The dedicated Wednesday off work for medical appointments and rehabilitation activities like swimming and physiotherapy has been a welcome relief. However, fatigue persists, sometimes forcing me to spend most weekends resting in bed.

My workplace has been wonderful, and I'm optimistic about returning to full-time work later this year.

The amputee Facebook group I joined has also been invaluable as a guide. Discussions there shed light on the varied experiences of returning to work.

Some, like a bank employee facing ongoing medical challenges, have struggled for years even with a part-time return. Others, like a remarkable



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One year on, I'm aware of how lucky I have been and the support I've received from

But this experience has also brought a different perspective and new challenges.

Recently, after heavy rain, the lift in my apartment block stopped working, which meant it was harder for me to get in and out of my apartment.



While I'm still mobile, I tire more easily than before. (Supplied: David Cubbin)

It was a reminder that, despite my apparent mobility, I could easily find myself housebound.

In the last year I've achieved a few personal goals, such as taking up some sport and even marching in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

In the next few months, I'm hoping to receive approval from the NDIS for a much lighter prosthetic leg, which will hopefully mean even greater flexibility.

James O'Brien is a planning manager for audio content at the ABC. This article was adapted from a piece originally published on his blog.

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