

I have lost everything

Shelley Hadfield

AN amputee has won an out-of-court settlement from a support service for injuries caused by climbing up and down stairs every day at work.

Doctors have told Luke Austin, 55, he will never work again, and he has to take large amounts of pain killers every day.

The Tullamarine man worked at Crisis Support Services in Footscray.

His desk was on the first floor of the building while the entrance, toilets and kitchen were on the ground floor, 26 steps below.

Mr Austin, whose leg was amputated below the knee,

Stairs too much for amputee worker

said he had several falls on the stairs and his stump was damaged as it rubbed on his prosthesis as he climbed the stairs many times a day.

He said the injuries led to complex regional pain syndrome. As a result, he could not stand any pressure on his stump and can no longer wear his prosthesis.

"I have lost everything. I have lost my career. I'm in a wheelchair for the rest of my life," Mr Austin said.

In court documents filed in the Supreme Court, Mr Austin said the service failed to provide a safe place

of work, failed to heed complaints and failed to obtain a building with a lift.

The principal of Arnold Thomas and Becker, Lee Flanagan, said it was incomprehensible the organisation had ignored Mr Austin's complaints.

"This organisation is supposed to assist people, but they failed to assist a very good employee and caused him a severe injury," he said.

Crisis Support Services spokeswoman Cara Spencer said the organisation wanted to achieve the best possible outcome for Mr Austin.

"We obviously wish Mr Austin the very, very best," Ms Spencer said.

The board and management had changed since Mr Austin worked there.

The service provides several helplines, including SuicideLine, previously the Victorian Suicide Help Line.

Mr Austin said the problems began when Crisis Support Services, then Caring, moved from West Melbourne to Footscray. "When I started to go up and down the stairs I realised there was a problem," he said.

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Injured: Luke Austin has won an out-of-court settlement.

Girl, 17, allowed sex swap

Marianne Betts

A GIRL of 17 has been given approval to begin treatment for a sex change, adding to the growing number of cases of this kind.

Family Court judge Justice Linda Dessau granted "Rosie" permission to begin hormone treatment, but no orders were made for surgery.

Rosie, who has been diagnosed with gender identity disorder, had identified as a male for as long as she could remember.

At two, while being bathed by her father, she asked him if she could go to the hospital to have an operation to give her a penis.

By three she insisted she was a boy and would wear only boys' clothes, and even had a boy's name for herself.

At eight she picked the name she wished to use once she began her sex change.

When puberty hit, Rosie became increasingly distressed and defiant, and wore clothes to flatten her breasts, the court heard.

In favour of the decision were Rosie's "unwavering views" and the support of her parents, Justice Dessau said.



God bless you, ma'am: A man kisses the hand of Kate Middleton yesterday during her first official appearance with Prince William (inset) since their engagement. Pictures: AP

A taste of things to come

KATE Middleton got a taste of life as a working royal when she and Prince William dedicated a lifeboat in their first official appearance since their engagement.

Hundreds of people cheered as the smiling 29-year-old princess-to-be poured champagne over the vessel in a dedication service yesterday at the lifeboat station at Trearddur Bay, Wales.

She did not smash the bottle because the lifeboat was inflatable.

The couple's appearance whipped up excitement ahead of their wedding on April 29.

- AFP





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