

# BACK FROM THE BRINK

Life as vivacious, sports-loving and somewhat mischievous 15-year-old Kerbie Edelsten had known it stopped on 5th April, 1991.



It was lunch time on Friday – a school day. That was when Kerbie made the fateful decision to step into her friend's car.

One kilometre down the road, the driver of six months lost control of his vehicle and hit a tree.

Before the accident Kerbie participated in several sports – she was a swimmer, a rower and she played netball. She dreamt of one day becoming a physical education teacher.

Her family had moved from Melbourne to Hamilton (in the Western District), where she attended the local high school and had a part-time job.

And the best news of the lot ... the day of the accident Kerbie was notified by mail that she had been accepted into the Victorian Schools Netball Team.

Life was sweet.

Kerbie's body took the full impact of the crash. She sustained head injuries, internal bleeding, a broken pelvis, shattered both her legs and lost most of her teeth.

Doctors told her parents that the prognosis was grim and if she did manage to survive it would be in a vegetative state.

Kerbie was in a coma for three months, endured countless operations and endless rehabilitation, but she wasn't about to listen to the medicos.

17 years on and she has defied the odds.

"I had a choice: give up or slowly try to rebuild my life. I chose the latter," Kerbie says.

Today she not only walks and talks, but – with the assistance of DASSI's Attendant Support Workers (ASWs) – she swims 40 laps of a 50 metre pool and then completes a full cardio

and weights session in the gym at the Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre.

Kerbie trains for three hours at a time, four days a week, with her ASWs as her constant companions.

One of them, Yvonne, sums it up best.

"Her energy and willpower are amazing. She simply refuses to give up. I am privileged to view what she achieves every day of her life."

Yvonne not only sees Kerbie to and from her sporting endeavours, but assists her with her shopping and home duties, attends appointments with her and is alongside her when she undertakes recreational pursuits.

The pair has a close and genuine bond.

Once again, Kerbie's life is looking up.