

**Quote of the month:**

"All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." Edmund Burke (1729 - 1797 - English parliamentarian)

It seems that this quote from the 18th century has relevance today. In this month's newsletter we have a very interesting array of articles written by people who are trying to do something to overcome the "forces of evil" from the world around us.

Great news from ADDE President, Peter Rickards can be read in his report regarding the organisations growing strength through receiving funding from various sources.

The article (JOBSEEKER VS. JOBNETWORK) by an ex employee of a DEN (Disability Employment Network) expresses her views on the tug of war that exists between those who are trying to better the lot of jobseekers and the agency management who only see "a jobseeker as a dollar sign".

In the article by David Sullivan, (RETAINING YOUR JOB WITH A DISABILITY), we see the 'forces of evil' again being exposed; in this case the 'Welfare to Work' 'Reforms' which the federal government have brought in which seem to be ignoring the plight of disabled jobseekers by making the rules harsher and less supportive.

'WELFARE TO WORK CASE STUDIES' shows an opportunity to do something positive. Perhaps your story might help to highlight the real life experience of those of us confronting this new government package of 'reforms'. Read about how you can be involved.

All is not lost as can be seen by the articles about Brisbane City Council's diversity and disabled employment policies, and Darebin City Council's innovative employment program for the Darebin Community Festival, which show that not all 'good men are doing nothing'.

Anthony Bartl has given us a good outline of a useful website for disabled jobseekers and Debra Pinkerton has informed us of the push by VECCI to encourage people with disabilities and other 'Key Priority Groups' to take up apprenticeships.

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

I have enjoyed putting this newsletter together this month and look forward to receiving your story for future newsletter's. **Kathy Leitch....**

CONTENTS

PAGE	ARTICLE
2	UPDATE ON ADDE BY PETER RICKARDS
2	JOBSEEKER VS. JOBNETWORK
5	RETAINING YOUR JOB WITH A DISABILITY
6	WELFARE TO WORK CASE STUDY
7	BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL DEFINITELY LEADING FROM THE FRONT
8	DAREBIN COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – A GREAT INNOVATION
9	“JOBACCESS” WEBSITE REVIEW
10	APPRENTICESHIPS – DO PWD THINK THEY ARE FOR THEM?

UPDATE ON ADDE BY PETER RICKARDS

After much hard work and set backs with funding submissions, the ADDE snowball is really starting to role. With sponsorship we received from “Australian Ethical Investment Ltd”(head office in Canberra), our project to develop ADDE into a national network representing disadvantaged job seekers more widely across Australia has commenced. The 18th of July this year will be a significant day where ADDE will be hosting a national workshop on employment and disability. We aim to conduct a post conference day following the national disability advocacy conference 15 to 17 July at which all states and territories will be present. Further details in next issue.

The second piece of great news is that ADDE has been notified that we have been successful in receiving a grant from DVC (Department of Victorian Communities) to develop a business plan. Our aim is to undertake this project in an innovative way, which will develop skills and lead to greater employment opportunities for those who participate.

Good news also in receiving a disability Self Help grant again this year from DHS (Department of Human Services) to enable us to develop our website and other administrative functions.

JOBSEEKER VS. JOBNETWORK

(The author wished to remain anonymous)

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

Having been working within the (un)employment industry for more than 15 years with the majority of those years working within Job Network, I can honestly say, in my opinion, most Job Network members including Disability Employment Network Agencies see it as a cash cow. Jobseekers complain about how Centrelink only sees them as numbers – well, Employment Service providers only see a Jobseeker as a dollar sign.

Their brief from DEWR is to get as many jobseekers off welfare benefits as possible – no matter what it takes. Individual circumstances are not taken into account *unless* having previously been divulged to Centrelink and the Centrelink Officer has seen fit to put it onto the jobseekers electronic file for viewing by the Job Network Member. Heaven forbid if your circumstances change along the way.

DEWR provides copious amounts of money to Job Network members as payment for getting jobseekers off welfare benefits, starting with a payment for a jobseeker to just walk through the door of the Job Network member for their 'initial' interview, a payment for signing them up into a program somewhere along the 'jobseeker continuum', to a payment for getting them into work for 3 or 6 months including other payments. I'm not talking small change – I'm talking thousands of dollars per jobseeker for the steps along the way.

Disability Employment Network Agencies are the same. Payment is provided to the Disability Employment Agency for a 'commencement', for each month they are assisting a jobseeker to find work and if they get a job, for 'milestones' within their employment period.

Some JNM and DEN providers give kickbacks to their staff in the name of bonuses for the number of jobseekers who stay in their jobs for 3 or 6 months. As far as I am concerned, this is not about assisting jobseekers but about making money. No wonder most Job Network members can afford to expand after only a short time – their coffers are full after forcing jobseekers into work. The Disability Employment Network Agency I worked for was no different – I care about my clients, I care about their individual circumstances and I care about what sort of work *they* want to do. Tough! said the Manager. You have KPI's to meet as does the Agency. No amount of me explaining that if you

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

take into consideration what the jobseeker is looking for will it assist you to assist them. I stuck to my guns – I did it my way and still exceeded my KPI's – it matters that it matters to the employment consultant.

Some of the staff within the Disability Employment Agency, and within Job Network members, have absolutely no respect for their clients – it's just their caseload they have to work with to get them into work. I have heard clients being called disgusting names, told their disability is not as bad as it was being portrayed, clients threatened if they did not accept a job, etc.

How is any of that going to assist a jobseeker? Within the Job Network, if a jobseeker is offered a job that the Job Network Member thinks they can do, the jobseeker must accept it or a recommendation for a 'breach' may be listed with Centrelink. Within a capped Disability Employment agency, the client's disability should be taken into account and their desires for the type of job they are looking for (within reason), adhered to.

Forget it. If you are registered with any part of the Job Network, they are there to get you into work and for you to keep that job. Your wishes be blown! As far as I can see, the equation goes a little like:

jobseeker + desires in work vs. Job Network + money = Job Network wins.

If you are a jobseeker with a disability, even if you have no Centrelink obligation because you receive no payments, and have registered with a capped Disability Employment Network, bear in mind that whatever agency you are registered with, they are meant to be there to help you.

Ask for a tour of the premises – does it offer inclusive technology within the jobsearch room, ie., narrator or large fonts on the computers, do the jobseekers seem happy to be there? If not, why not? Ask questions. Ask to speak to one or two for their views on the agency. Ask to speak with an employment consultant – will they take into account your interests in what employment or training program you want to do? Will they assist to pay for the training program you want to do? Remember, there is a lot of money in those bank accounts and a proportion is meant to assist jobseekers with vocational training, purchase of uniforms, work tools etc.

If you register with an agency and you find their practices are not for you, ask to transfer to another within your area. You are entitled to get the best service

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

possible. Each Disability Employment Agency must adhere to the Disability Service Standards (there are 12) and must adhere to DEWR's Code of Conduct.

Don't be bullied into doing something you don't want to do, don't be spoken to as though you don't matter, don't accept less than what you are entitled to. If need be, take an advocate along with you for every appointment, every interview, every meeting with your Disability Employment Agency. Make notes, make complaints if necessary and speak with the agencies Manager. You are entitled to a service and if you are not getting that service, make sure they know it.

RETAINING YOUR JOB WITH A DISABILITY

David Sullivan (ADDE committee member)

We know that Governments will assist if we become sick or 'disabled', and will offer help to support us with payments and other services to help us keep our balance. But recently any feeling of 'comfort' about the support the Government automatically offered, was seriously changed, some would say almost removed – for anyone Disabled these days.

You will notice that the focus has very much moved towards the financial adjustment at the expense of the other. All the evidence shows that by far the best recovery can be made if someone goes on working. But this, of course, is often much more difficult to arrange. Different countries treat the subject very differently.

We are now becoming familiar with what our Federal Government seems to be attempting in its 'Welfare to Work' policy. It appears that their thinking is that Disabled people – except the 720.000 already receiving Disability Pensions – should be required to search for, and perform, suitable work, or the Government will move to reduce, or remove, the payments. It is instructive that a claim of Unfair Dismissal is still such cases may be few and far between. available (if the employer is not small) if the reason for dismissal is the Disability – although

Leaving aside the obvious question of what sort of duties can be found for someone who cannot reliably perform employment for certain regular days each week, there is another important option. What if we adapted jobs better to encourage people to remain in them. Or even adapted jobs specially to anticipate the needs of a Disabled Candidate?

Although I cannot attempt a global survey, it is instructive to see what has happened in two economies with which we are familiar - UK and USA. England has taken the line of encouragement of the Disabled by focussing on the 'Suitable Adjustments' necessary to let (or encourage) the person go on doing the job. Obviously, there has to be medical clearance about the safety

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

factor, but if an employer fails to make the adjustments after conciliation, then it will be treated more or less as an Unfair Dismissal. There is even a book produced to summarise the experience so far, including the various legal precedents, and the Blair Government managed to convince the Employers to publicise the changes to Employers of all kinds. Any cost of the 'suitable adjustments' is met from a public fund – and clearly represents a good investment.

The 'Reasonable adjustments' can be sought even for a candidate who wishes to be considered for the job – although this can obviously become very complex. But the motive is similar – lets try to keep in jobs (or bring into jobs) those people who can do them well.

US experience in recent years has some similarities, in that the 'Americans with Disabilities Act' provides that employers must make 'reasonable accommodations' whenever this will permit the employee to perform the 'Primary Function' of the job. If there should be a dispute over this, not soluble through discussion, then the employee can bring a case against the employer – although the intention is clear. Any cost of adjustment will be shared (State and employer).

In the case of both countries, the priority is clearly different from that in Australia. The aim is encouraging someone to stay in their job if possible: with suitable adjustments if needed. As someone might have said, 'If it isn't mostly broken, then maybe you don't need to mostly fix it'.

We think you will want to combine to let the Governments know how you feel about these changes. Your only personal channel is to inform your elected and potentially elected Representatives (State and Federal) about your opinion. We shall certainly be putting the case, but your local effort is vital. This is especially true if you are now being (or are likely to be) personally affected by the Government changes.

WELFARE TO WORK CASE STUDY

In July 2006 the Federal Government introduced new rules for people receiving Centrelink payments. The changes are called "Welfare to Work". Welfare & community organisations want to know how the new rules are affecting people. Over the next one or two years organisations across Australia will be collecting stories from people who have been affected by "Welfare to Work". These stories will be used to help the Government & the media understand the impact this legislation has had. AFDO (Australian Federation of Disability Organisations) is conducting interviews of people who have/are being affected by "Welfare to Work". If the person agrees, their story will be kept in an electronic data base which will be able to be accessed by other community groups (this is a secure site). No one will know the name or there will be no information on the data base that could identify the person whose story is on the data base. The interviews can be conducted via the internet, telephone or in person and nothing will be put onto the data base without the persons right being fully explained, the person will stay anonymous and will also get to see their story before it is put onto the data

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

base. By sharing their stories people will be helping to argue for changes that will make Australia fairer for all. If you would like to do the survey and find out more details please contact Robert Pask at AFDO on (03) 9662 3324 or by email robert.pask@afdo.org.au

BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL DEFINITELY LEADING FROM THE FRONT

- ❖ Brisbane City Council values diversity because of the broader range of knowledge and skills a diverse workforce brings to our organisation. Diversity makes Brisbane City Council a more innovative and creative organisation. We also believe in reflecting the diversity of our community in our workforce.

Council welcomes employees of different ages, genders, skills, abilities, life experiences and cultures and is committed to maintaining workplaces that are diverse, inclusive, fair, safe, and free of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Our goal is to develop and retain a workforce that has the capabilities we need to achieve our 2010 vision of an inclusive, diverse and vibrant city and we value the contributions our employees make to this.

Council has four equity groups (women, PWD (people with disabilities), CALD (Culturally and linguistically Diverse) and indigenous) who support Council in improving working conditions for people from equity groups.

Currently, our equity & diversity targets are:

- ❖ 2.5% of employees - Indigenous
- ❖ 11% of employees - people with a disability (PWD)
- ❖ 12.5% of employees - people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- ❖ 40.1% of employees - women in Band 5 to SES positions
- ❖ 45% of employees - women in salaried positions
- ❖ 10.3% of employees - women in the wages positions; and
- ❖ Every Division and Business Unit is required to develop a Local Equity and Diversity Plan that aims to deliver on Council's equity & diversity objectives.

Council's Equity and Diversity initiatives directed at employees with a disability include:

- ❖ "Changing Minds" project, which provides training for managers to recruit & retain employees with a disability and has commenced early this year
- ❖ Access to Bands 2-4 vacancies for people with a disability who are external to Council

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

- ❖ Five PWD Council employees participating in career development as part of the Hot-Careers project
- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Disability Works Australia aimed at recruiting and retaining more people with a disability in our workforce
- ❖ Reasonable adjustment aimed at accommodating the needs of employees with a disability
- ❖ A comprehensive disability information kit for managers to improve their knowledge about the needs of employees with a disability and enhance retention

Notable achievements:

- ❖ 21 November 2006: Council awarded Federal Government Mature Age Employer Champion Award for its commitment to supporting 'wise heads'. The award recognises employers who employ at least 20 per cent of staff aged 45 and over and who implement age-positive practices.
- ❖ 6 December 2006: Council was selected as a finalist for Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award 2006 for its commitment to, and performance in, the employment of people with a disability.

To access Council job advertisements go to www.brisbane.qld.gov.au and click on "Find a job in Council".

DAREBIN COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – A GREAT INNOVATION

Darebin Council sought people with a disability who were interested in working as behind-the-scenes crew at this year's Darebin and Community Kite

Festival on Sunday, 25 March 2007.

These were all paid positions. Training was provided and each person was matched with an experienced mentor.

In addition, people with a disability were asked to help audit the festival for disability access. These were also paid positions.

Darebin Disability Advisory Committee Chair, Cr Chris Kelly, said this was part of Council's efforts to make Darebin events accessible and inclusive of all. "One in six Darebin residents has a disability, making up a large part of our community. It is crucial that people of all abilities get opportunities to be active in community life," Cr Kelly said.

"Ensuring events and community activities are accessible and inclusive is also about considering the needs of older people, people with young children, people who speak languages other than English and people with disabilities amongst others.

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

“This project, supported by VicHealth, provided employment options for people with a disability and highlights Council’s commitment to increasing opportunities for all,” she said.

“JOBACCESS” WEBSITE REVIEW

By Anthony Bartl

www.jobaccess.gov.au “JobAccess” is a self-help website for people specifically with disabilities, but is also helpful for able-bodied job seekers, to increase their chances of finding work. The site is also aimed at people involved in the employment market like employers.

The site provides comprehensive advice on what people should do before going for the job interview as well as what they and people like employers should do after someone gets the job.

Everything, from the basics including web site user friendly tools for easy browsing through to contact details for work modification outlets being listed and a list of what might be the most suitable job for each individual.

The “jobaccess” web site is a federal government initiative to better equip people with disabilities to get a job. At a glance the ‘JobAccess’ web site seems like any old job web site. There are the photos of people in various professions all with the expected glowing smiles and the typical list of job search categories – ‘Job seekers’, ‘Employers’ and ‘Advice’. But, take a closer look at the home page and it will tell you www.jobaccess.gov.au is an Australian Government workplace solutions and employment site specifically for people with disability.

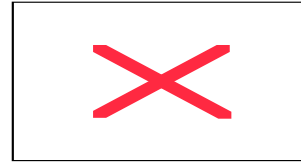
The site is broken up into seven major categories. These are listed at the top of each page. There’s ‘Employers’, ‘Job seekers’, ‘Co-workers’, ‘Service providers’, ‘Advice’ and within this, sub-category tabs titled ‘Workplace Adjustment Tools’ and ‘Contact a Job Access Advisor’, then there’s ‘Services’ and ‘Secure Online Forms’. The home page also lists a phone number to call about two programmes – one is a ‘New Work Experience Placement Programme’ and the other is a ‘New Auslan For Employment Programme’.

While the site is all about employment and workplace solutions, you may be surprised to know that ‘JobAccess’ isn’t a site that lists job vacancies or job opportunities. Instead it provides advice on every stage of the employment process: preparing for work, how to look for jobs and, if you need it, support in the workplace once you’ve found a job.

APPRENTICESHIPS – DO PWD THINK THEY ARE FOR THEM?

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.



Are you considering all your options?

VECCI Apprenticeships Services has been working hard to raise the awareness of how the Australian Apprenticeship Program can assist business and industry in meeting the skills shortages facing many Victorian businesses.

In order to address the skills shortages businesses need to consider all their options. The Australian Government offers financial assistance to employers' wishing to take on an Australian Apprentice or Trainee. Additional financial assistance is available to businesses that support an Australian Apprentice or Trainee from the 'Key Priority Groups' of Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, mature aged workers, secondary school students and those working in skills needs occupations [Skills in demand list](#)

VECCI Apprenticeships Services formed a Key Priority Groups Division to support businesses wishing to recruit, train and retrain employees from these groups.

It is integral to VECCI's success to supporting these Key Priority Groups and to raise the awareness of business to the many suitable candidates who would welcome the chance to gain an Australian Apprenticeship and demonstrate their abilities. The jobseekers found in the Key Priority Groups offer a valuable pool of potential workers that employers should not overlook.

What are Australian Apprenticeships?

Australian Apprenticeships combine paid work with accredited training leading to a nationally recognised qualification. They bring together traditional trade apprenticeships and industry focused traineeships under one service enabling the delivery of industry training to new and existing employees.

More information on Australian Apprenticeships can be found on the Australian Apprenticeships website: www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au.

Why should an employer consider a person with a disability?

When looking at the reasons an employer should consider taking on a person with a disability research shows that these employees on average:

- stay longer in a job than employees without a disability
- rate higher on reliability for attendance and sick leave
- have fewer recorded OHS incidents
- cost less to recruit

It is also a well documented fact that people with a disability bring a variety of skills, talents and abilities to any workplace and research shows that employers who employ a person with a disability would do so again.

So where are the jobseekers?

Are you considering all your options? It is all well and good to tell business that there is this great pool of potential workers but does this great pool of potential workers know that this is an option that they can take?

Australian Apprenticeships exist in more than 500 occupations so chances are that there is an Australian Apprenticeship available that will fit most career paths.

We have found through discussion with employment networks that jobseekers are not always aware of the huge opportunities available to them through Australian Apprenticeship pathways; this applies to all jobseekers in the Key Priority Groups including people with disabilities.

A great story to share

The following story has been provided to VECCI by the Department of Human Services and we are pleased to be able to pass on this great example of successful Australian Apprenticeship placements for an Australian Apprentice with a disability.

*Deanne is undertaking a traineeship in the Freedom of Information Unit and has found the program extremely worthwhile.
'When I got the traineeship, Vision Australia came in and organised a CCTV (closed circuit television) and ZoomText program for me.
'I wanted to work in business administration. I really like the concept of learning while you're working. You're not in a classroom taking down notes – you're learning on the job. It's fantastic – a great system and, at the end of the day, it's been a really nice environment and the people are great!'*

Assistance available to you

As a jobseeker you may be eligible for additional financial support to assist you achieve your career goals or new career direction through an Australian Apprenticeship:

- Living Away From Home Allowance
- Youth Allowance for Apprentices aged 16-24
- Austudy for Apprentices aged 25 and over
- ABSTUDY for Indigenous Australian Apprentices who have reached minimum school leaving age
- Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarships provide two \$500 payments for undertaking a trade Australian Apprenticeship in an area of particular skills need
- Tools For Your Trade Initiative provides a toolkit worth up to \$800 for undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship in an area of particular skills needs

Shaping the future together

Our mission/vision is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

Where needed and approved under the Disabled Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) the Australian Apprentice can also have access to workplace modifications that assist with workplace duties and learning tasks along with additional mentoring and tutorial support.

Some useful links to help you

Australian Apprenticeship Training Information Service: Australian Apprenticeship pathways, careers and qualifications information
www.natinfo.com.au

Australian Jobsearch: Online jobsearch service, includes access to apprenticeship and traineeship vacancies www.jobsearch.gov.au

JET: Online service where jobseekers can access apprenticeship and traineeship vacancies
www.jet.org.au

Job Guide: Online information about careers, education and training
www.jobguide.dest.gov.au

MyFuture: Interactive online career exploration service www.myfuture.edu.au

VECCI Apprenticeships Services, Key Priority Groups Division, Relationship Manager, Debra Pinkerton Email: kpg@vecci.org.au Ph: 03 8662 5389.