

ADDE

Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment



NEWSLETTER

“Shaping the Future Together”

FEBRUARY 2006

Hi, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new editor for Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment (ADDE) newsletter. My name is Anthony Bartl and this is my first edition as editor. For those who are interested, in 1986 at age 6 as I was walking home from school I was struck by a car. This left me with C1 quadriplegia, which is the highest spinal break a person can have. As a result I don't have any of the normal bodily functions below the break in my neck including movement, touch and breathing unassisted.

As you can see we have jazzed up this edition and all future editions of the ADDE newsletter by including a masthead and letterhead. On behalf of ADDE I would like to thank WISE Employment head office in North Melbourne for their support in designing the new newsletter mast head and letter head for us. Our newsletter looks so much better from the first edition several months ago.

In this newsletter you will see that we have been very busy at ADDE. You can read all about it in the following pages.

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Robert F Kennedy Quote

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice,

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Our Vision/Mission is to increase employment opportunities in

s/he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resist.

About ADDE

Our mission is to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds in Australia. For those of you who are not aware we were officially formed on September 7, 2005 at Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS). ADDE promotes pro-active employment policies and practices for disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities, mature age workers, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as indigenous people. People who fall into more than one of these categories are recognised as being even more disadvantaged. Therefore, we see a greater need for a change of attitude and awareness.

Work in progress

- Research into disability employment in the disability agency sector in Victoria.
- Our submission for funding has been further developed with Equity Research Centre. This will strengthen the research methodology and provide greater credibility to the project.
- Development of media training resources. We are hoping to access some funding to develop a resource package which can sell the message that it makes good business and community sense to employ people with disabilities and from other disadvantaged groups. The message would be told by those organizations which can proudly tell what it has done for them. Also highlighting what to do and where to go to make it happen. If anyone has some good ideas or would like to support this concept please contact us.

Disability Self Help Grants

- We have been successful in receiving a small grant from Department of Human Services (DHS) to assist us with newsletter production, on developmental work on our website, on developing disability friendly print formats and obtaining interpreters for hearing impaired.

Having tried to get help from outside organizations without any funds we have fallen back on our own resources. The expertise of our new committee members we hope will have us online soon.

Positions Vacant

Secretary

We are still looking for a secretary. Recently Daniel's MS deteriorated and he had to resign. There is still a vacant role for someone willing to lend a hand.

Publicity Officer

We are looking for someone who has experience and/or understanding in developing rapport and contacts with journalists in the media.

Business Mentor

We are seeking someone on a voluntary basis to mentor us in developing a business plan to help us become more strategically focused.

For enquiries about any of the above positions see contact details at end of newsletter.

Feature Article

Equal opportunity or Diversity Employment. Which is better?

There is a big difference between non-discrimination (equal opportunity), a minimalist approach and having a pro-active approach to a diverse work force. In order for someone with a disability or for someone from another disadvantaged group to prove discrimination there has to be blatant and obvious reasons for discrimination. This needs to be clearly the reason for a person not to get the job. This is usually very hard to prove because organisations and individuals site other reasons for the person not being successful. Additionally, most organisations destroy the source data as soon as someone is appointed. The inequity in employment can be shown by the much higher statistics for unemployment amongst disadvantaged groups. For people with a disability this can be as high as 70 to 80 per cent. Figures quoted by the Federal Government are 8.6% unemployment for people with disabilities. This however does not measure anyone on a DSP (Disability Support Pension) and who are not counted as unemployed.

In Melbourne, at the Civic Participation Forum on 29 October 2004 Rhonda Galbally (CEO of Our Community in Victoria and Chair of Disability Advisory Council of Victoria DACV) stated that "The number one issue for people with disabilities is employment". She asked "What is the representation of people with disabilities in government? All levels of government including local government have a responsibility to measure whether their work force is open and accessible to people with disabilities in employment".

There is research that shows having a diverse work force provides greater efficiency and a better bottom line. Garry Becker won the Nobel prize for economics in 1992 for showing this as part of his research into using Human Capital. An article entitled "How you can do better on Diversity" published in Fortune Magazine in May 2004 had the following quote:

"Moreover the Urban League Study shows that at the eight companies where diversity is a fact of life, productivity growth in the past four years exceeded that of the economy as a whole by 18%. Getting serious about work place diversity is not just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do."

Philip Garside (Melbourne Australia) who is well renowned for his books on interviewing says:

"it is human nature to want to appoint people like ourselves to our work place. If you look at your friends they tend to look and think like you, and often have the same values. Therefore unless an organisation has diversity and work place policies in place it is very difficult to get a more diverse work place by hoping this will happen naturally".

Telstra, IBM and other organisations who employ many people from disadvantaged groups (including people with a disability) have measurement tools in place to show that these people have lower staff turn over, take less sick days and value their jobs more. Telstra employs more than 600 people with a disability. Other organisations which are leaders in Diversity Employment in Australia such as The Queensland Department of Education (employ 9% of their work force with disabilities) and Brisbane City Council (Employ 11.2% of their work force with disabilities). These companies take the corporate view that a better service is provided to customers if their work force reflects the demographics of those they serve. If their staff understand the needs and issues faced by the "customer" then it makes sense those customers will get a better service.

To achieve success in Diversity Employment there are several key elements which consistently seem to be in place by organisations which are achieving "best practice".

- A top down commitment to achieving a diverse work force (from the Board and senior management)
- Getting base line data on where the organisation is starting from

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- The setting of targets which can be achieved in planned stages
- Line management to be accountable for achieving targets
- A high level of staff training and awareness as well as having conflict management strategies in place
- Establishment of an Equity and Diversity unit in the HR Department to drive and champion the process through the organisation

In order to know whether the policies and strategies adopted by an organisation are successful, it is essential to measure them both before and after the adoption of the change management strategies. There seems to be an unwillingness to do this by some people in the area of diversity and disability employment. However, this is not the case in other areas of an organisation where achieving change is continually made.

Some people in senior positions use the word “quoter” rather than “target” to give a negative implication about their organisation having any real commitment to the process of adopting change. They use the word “quoter” to imply that people will be put in jobs just to fill the quoter rather than because they can do the job. Other people argue that this will destroy the principle of appointing people on “merit”. What they need to recognise is that those who are disadvantaged by disability, age, race, or culture are not usually competing for jobs on an equal basis to everyone else. Therefore, unless the organisation employing them takes a pro-active approach to address their disadvantage they will continue to be disadvantaged. This will be reinforced from constant negative experience and knock backs. Over time these people may give up trying to find work all together.

Peter Rickards
(Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment)

About Anthony Bartl – Editor of newsletter

Anthony Bartl, newest member to ADDE reflects on his 19 years living with C1 quadriplegia and what he has done during this time... ADDE welcomes him on board

As I look back over my life as a person with a disability it has had its challenges, but on the whole it has mainly been very positive. Since being hit by a car in 1986 at age six (and then spending two years at the Royal Children’s Hospital) I have completed Primary School, Secondary School and most recently have completed two courses at university. Currently, I am undertaking a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies at La Trobe University in Bundoora.

I have a strong interest in social justice for people with disabilities and have been active in trying to stem the flow of injustices placed upon them. At age 16 I began to receive a Disability Support Pension and started to go out. However, in the first few years of receiving the pension, I noticed that in order to go to the movies, concerts, the footy or anywhere where I had to pay entry for myself, my carer was asked to pay too. This charge mostly fell on me and I frequently had to purchase two tickets instead of one. As able-bodied people only have to pay for themselves and I was only on a pension and couldn’t afford to pay double I thought it was only fair to the disabled community to do something about. And so, after years of meetings and lobbying the Companion Card was introduced.

I also sit on a Disability Advisory Committee at the City of Melbourne to try and improve the plight of disabled people.

For a career, I hope to be a journalist working in the media. As part of my desire to be a journalist, I voluntarily edit the Youth Page of a newspaper called the Flemington/Kensington News and next month, will be working with the media at the 2006 Commonwealth Games writing press releases and articles. One of my aims in becoming a journalist is to bring to the forefront the plight and/or needs of people with disabilities.

I have also been part of the first Leadershipplus program completed in 2005.

I look forward to working with ADDE in the future and providing you with a professional looking newsletter!
About Peter Rickards - Founding President of ADDE

Peter was born in New Zealand and also lived in South Africa for five years before his family came to Melbourne in 1970.

Over the years Peter has become a passionate advocate for improving employment opportunities for people from disadvantaged communities. "I decided to form ADDE because I found so many barriers to getting back into the workforce" Peter said. Many organisations such as local, state and federal government as well as disability agencies, which you would expect would be leading from the front in employment of people with disabilities are not doing so. I became tired of trying to change these injustices by myself with no obvious result. After nearly two years of frustration I realised that organisations and government only take you seriously if you speak from an organisation which has credibility and numbers. There are so many people like me I have come across having the same problems. They have just given up trying to find work because it is too difficult when employers are not taking a pro-active approach. The next step has been to get together to try and get change happening and create our own employment opportunities" Peter Rickards said.

He is leading this establishment of a national advocacy and self-empowerment organisation "Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment", which was formed on 7 September 2005.

In 1977, after completing a post graduate qualification in Recreation and Leisure Peter has played a leading role in developing Recreation and Leisure services for people with vision loss. He did this for 26 years at Vision Australia before being made redundant in 2003.

While at Vision Australia his achievements have included the production of videos, a program series broadcast on national radio for the print handicapped as well as the publishing and writing of three books which have sold world wide. He has also established many blind and disability sporting and recreation associations which have stretched state wide and nation wide.

Despite losing his vision at a young age while living in Africa Peter has participated in many sporting and recreational activities. His highlights have been to represent Australia internationally in three different sports.

In 1980 Peter competed in the second winter Paralympics in Norway in the 10 and 20 Kilometre cross country skiing, eventually finishing an amazing top 10 in the world. Then in 1982 his stellar sporting career continued with him winning a gold medal in the 5 kilometre walk in Hong Kong at the Asian Disability Games. Finally, in 1990 his sailing team won an incredible bronze medal at the first world blind sailing championships in Auckland, New Zealand.

Other highlights have included entering teams in three five day 400km canoe Murray Marathons as well as an annual international Dragon boat festival. This led to a trip of vision impaired people who paddled the circumference of Port Philip Bay over eight days in sea kayaks.

In addition to being father to three almost grown up children, Peter still finds time to play golf, go bush walking, cross country skiing, ball room dancing, canoeing, organise fund raising events for charity and play chess. For nine years he was also a leader of a Cub Scout pack. In the last few years Peter has become President of Rostrum Public Speaking Club and in August 2005 represented his club at the Victorian public speaking finals. He also was part of the first Leadershipplus program completed in 2005.

...If you would like to be on our e-mailing list contact or email Peter from the contacts below...

Committee

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