

ADDE

Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment



NEWSLETTER

“Shaping the Future Together”

Now on the web at www.adde.org.au

OCTOBER 2006

G'day members and welcome to yet another bumper packed edition of the ADDE newsletter. It's our 1st year anniversary – yihah!. I think it says something about people with disabilities and that they have a real determination to bring about change.

This newsletter marks ADDE's first year of operation. We've been working hard on a constitution and as soon as it's ready to go we will officially launch ADDE. We will be sure to let you know the date and venue of the launch occasion.

Despite the significant decline in the percentage of federal public servants with disabilities over the last 10 years, there has been a positive development in the introduction of a scheme next year to cover workers compensation for job trials for disadvantaged and long term job seekers. on page six.

Some exciting developments have taken place recently at ADDE. You might notice a change to our template above where it says “Now on the web at www.adde.org.au”. We understand that it's sometimes easier to read online. As a result you can now read this newsletter as well as keep up to date with what the latest is at ADDE on the net!

Until next time enjoy reading! Anthony Bartl (Newsletter Editor)

CONTENTS

Page 2 & 3 – Profile of Riki – Job hunter

Page 3 & 4 – Feature Article - Many more people with disabilities should be trainers

Page 5 – Profile of David Sullivan – Communications Officer

Page 5 – Thankyou to AEI

Pages 6 – 70,000 job seekers to benefit

Page 6 & 7 – Mature age blues article

Page 7 & 8 – New DISTSS database

Page 8 - Committee contacts



“People think of leaders as men and women devoted to service, and by service they mean that these leaders serve their followers ... The real leader serves truth, not people.”- J.B. Yeats

shaping the future together

Our Vision/Mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds

About Riki – Employment Hunter with a disability

My name is Riki, I'm 28 and live in the northern suburbs. I have moderate vision loss and have slower physical motor coordination due to birth difficulties, causing lack of oxygen to the brain. Although I have suffered vision loss all my life, it wasn't until January 2004 I was classed legally blind. I use an ID cane, particularly in crowds and getting on and off public transport. I have nystagmus (a bad eye wobble or shake,) keratoconus, (cone shaped corneas,) and am short sighted. My perception of distance and depth is severely altered. In effect, my sharpness and clarity is weaker, which I describe as looking through the foggy clouds of heaven all the time. I have magnifier and reader programs on my PC, a hand held magnifier and a monocular to see and read things in the distance like street signs. I can read large print, size 16 and up reasonably comfortably.

When people discuss employment, it means different things to different people. For some, they have success, fortune, and a love of their work. For others, it may be the difference between paying bills and not. Some people have the ability to find jobs that fall in their lap, while others don't seem to get their fair break. It is even much tougher for those of us with disabilities who struggle to compete in the open working market.

In the 10 years since finishing year 12, I have struggled to get paid employment. While peers at school had part time work, I stumbled in and out of several interviews without any success. I have had the assistance of various employment agencies including CRS, Distinctive Options, RVIB and Wise Employment.

As hard as my marketers worked to get me a job, a lot of employers just dismissed me. A lot of employers consider vision impaired people a high risk factor and are unsure of their skills, their abilities as well as what contributions they can make to a job. The hardest part however is educating employers and the public about the positive contribution we can make as staff members.

In order to do this, I've approached organisations for Volunteer work. I am currently volunteering at Yooralla working on a Peer Support Program to help other people with disabilities become more active and self confident in the community. I also visit an elderly Autistic lady in a nursing home once a week where we chat and do activities like look at her drawings and scrapbooks as well as make things.

I have been assisting with "No Limits"; a disability programme on C31 for over 2 years. I help out on shooting days, in the timing of segments, in being a flash tones girl and in greeting guests. I've also assisted with marketing, promotion and sponsorship for the programme. I have even volunteered in an Interchange programme where I assisted on group outings. So, as you can see I keep myself very busy!

Two and a half years ago I had paid work with the RVIB, now Vision Australia in a community jobs programme. It was temporary employment where I assisted vision-impaired people to gain skills for future employment. The programme ran for 15 weeks and was an initiative of the State Government.

I am constantly asking myself as a person with not much work experience "how do I, or anyone for that matter gain employment without experience. Similarly, how do you get experience without employment?" It's a vicious cycle.

Shaping the future together

*Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in
Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds*

A big problem I've had in voluntary employment situations is that the government won't pay for workplace modifications to suit my disability. Without equipment like a CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) it is very hard for me to read hard copies, like print outs, books and other text.

On the other hand if employers were willing to pay me the government would say "no worries, we'll fund your CCTV, and other adaptive technology to help you maximise your productivity in work." I am in the fortunate position working at Yooralla at the moment – an organisation who have been generous enough to buy a CCTV for the office, which I use to great benefit. I don't know how many organisations would be willing to have this kind of equipment come out of their pockets.

A situation occurred earlier this year when after going to Volunteering Victoria to apply for volunteer positions I got sent a list of available roles working in hospitals. I was really excited. I was put on the 'waiting list' of the Children's, Freemasons and Women's hospitals. I had a meeting with the Freemasons coordinator and I then went through all the training. But as she was an office person and not someone who worked on the wards she didn't have confidence in me spending time with patients unsupervised! I was crushed by this lack of confidence. Now she is the coordinator at the Children's so my hopes there are dashed too. Red Cross also expressed interest in me to volunteer in the Education Department of the Children's but I was also considered by them as a major risk factor. They saw my strengths however and assisted me to try and find something else.

Employers quite naturally have to make a 5-minute assessment of you and sometimes it may not be accurate. It is the same with judgements made on resumes.

In the past I have studied at a TAFE post Secondary school and done courses including Community Work, Call Centre/telemarketing and Office Business Administration. Recently, I have had interest in doing a course in Natural Therapies and have studied the "Introduction to Massage" as well as "Bowen Therapy" and "Reiki 1 and 2". I hope to one day do Bowen and Reiki professionally and while running my own business.

It is a shame that with my disability, employers don't realise even if a task does takes longer than someone able-bodied to get finished I would still do as good a job as the ordinary employee.

Despite my setbacks and difficulties I continue to experience I hope one day find an employer that will give me my "fair break" and give me permanent paid work. I have goals I still want to achieve and maybe one day I will meet them. Until then I'll just keep plugging away at what I know how. I haven't been in the easiest situation but I haven't been in the worst either. Despite everything that has happened to me I could honestly say that I have never wanted to be anyone else. I am Riki and ready for work!!

Many more people with disabilities should be trainers!

By Harold Hartfield

It is unfortunate that to date very few qualified people with disabilities are currently working as trainers.

Shaping the future together

*Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in
Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds*

There are a number of significant benefits of employing trainers with a disability. These benefits accrue to the training organisation, the trainer, the community at large as well as the disability community

There can be no substitute for the living and shared experience of a person with a disability training others **about disability**. A trainer with a disability who may utilise personal support at home is in a compelling position to teach aspiring support workers about the topic. Not from the perspective of a textbook, but from practical life experience. The unique experience of living with a disability whilst working and teaching personal support cannot be replicated by those teaching the topic without a disability.

When the training organisation has trainers with a disability within their ranks they demonstrate a culture of acceptance and inclusion of disability to people from the outside world. The very principles studied in Disability Studies are being followed by the agencies themselves. In this way role modelling is provided to the community at large and to the disability community. Trainers with disabilities are able to gain employment and maintain a job **like anyone else**. To date the percentage of people with disabilities actually working is significantly below the Australian average. An obvious opportunity exists here for registered training organisations to provide supported worker training as well as disability agencies to employ suitably qualified workers with a disability.

Going forward a proactive policy should be to encourage training organisations to employ more people with disability. This could happen by trainers being set a certain number of trainer positions that would have to be filled by trainers with a disability. This could be mandated by government policy with funding tied to registered training organisations who adopted such a policy. In the United States 508 of the *US Rehabilitation Act* prescribes that all equipment procured by US Federal Government bodies must be accessible to people with disabilities. In this way issues of access are kept uppermost in the minds of all organisations

The mantra of a number of disability organisations “*Nothing about Us Without Us*” holds true in the field of disability and training. Accredited people with disabilities qualified in Certificate IV TAA (Training and Assessment) can open up employment opportunities for themselves within registered training organisations.

My employment background before my motor accident has been spent as a teacher and more recently since my accident as an advocate. As a secondary trained teacher for over twenty years I found the transition from teaching students in high school to teaching adults working in the disability field both challenging and rewarding. In this situation I can draw on the experience of living with a disability. Teaching support workers the theory of advocacy and the legal and ethical issues that go hand in hand with disability support work reinforces the work that they are doing.

In 2004 I completed Certificate IV TAA. I have worked as a casual trainer with a major Victorian Service Provider training support workers in Certificate 3 and 4 in Disability Studies. The blending of my experience as a person with a physical disability, my advocacy skills and teaching background has stood me in good stead

Shaping the future together

Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds

About David Sullivan – ADDE Communications Officer

David Sullivan, communications officer for ADDE reflects on his life so far and how his MS diagnosis has spurred him on to become a staunch advocate for people with disabilities...

I was born in London in 1950. I went through school with Music Scholarships, although I never planned to be a Pro. While I was studying I met my partner, Jane, in Oxford where we were both graduating. She was studying English and I took Politics Philosophy and Economics (just like two characters by the name of Hawke and Clinton). She went on to work as a Journalist, and I graduated to find myself working for London Transport (including 3 months as a Bus Conductor). My specialty became Industrial Relations. During this time we did quite a bit of travel including a trip one year that took us down under to Melbourne, Australia. We fell in love with the place and came to live here in 1979, *to celebrate the arrival of Mrs Thatcher!*

In 1982, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

For 11 _ years, I continued to work in Human Resources for ICI. There followed a series of part-time attachments, including the Kidney Foundation and The Brotherhood. Then I took up the role of Editor of 'Short Circuit', the PwMS (People with Multiple Sclerosis) Newsletter. After several years as a Committee Member, in 2004 I became the President of PwMS, after my predecessor suffered a heart attack.

My partner still writes for The Age, has had a book published by Penguin, and we have a 13-year-old son, Christy.

For several years, I have been focussed on improving the prospects of newly Diagnosed:PwMS to securing a job. Right now, he is organising a program whereby computers are given to PwMS who already have limited resources. When ADDE first started I was asked to help by looking after Communications. I am still learning.

And still travelling. Next stops are Vienna, Prague and Budapest. Then Cuba.

Call it therapy!

A Big Thank You to Australian Ethical Investments!!

ADDE has received a grant from this organisation to help us to develop a national network to represent individuals and organisations from disability and diversity backgrounds that are disadvantaged in employment. Over the next six months we aim to develop communication with people in all States and Territories who would like to progress objectives to open employment opportunities for people with disabilities and other disadvantages.

The second part of the project is to organise a workshop where representatives can be brought together to develop common purposes and strategies to cause systemic change and establish social enterprise opportunities.

If you have an interest or represent an organisation, which would like to be part of this process, please contact us

Shaping the future together

Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds

70,000 Disadvantaged Job Seekers to Benefit

The Australian Government will commit \$2.7 million to pay the insurance cost of job seekers undertaking work experience, the Minister for Workforce Participation Dr Sharman Stone has announced.

As part of the 2006–07 Budget, 70,000 job seekers will have their accident and personal liability insurance paid for by the Federal Government (over four years). The coverage will be available from 1 January 2007 and conclude 30 June 2010.

"It has been demonstrated that unpaid work experience can often lead to a full or part time job, but an outstanding issue has been the cost of accident and personal liability insurance" Ms Stone said.

"This initiative for short-term insurance cover will help job seekers who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, and some parents on income support through better access to work experience. It will also help employers who are experiencing workforce shortages as a result of the ageing population, have access to a greater pool of potential employees," Dr Stone said.

Findings from local labour market and skills shortages surveys undertaken with employers across Australia have shown that lack of relevant work experience was one of the major barriers for job seekers when applying for jobs.

Anyone wanting further information can contact: Sarah Blakers 02 6277 7630.

ADDE congratulates the Minister on such an initiative. It fully endorses the program and any other program that assists people with disabilities integrate into the work force.

Mature Age Working Blues

By Kathy L

Shock! Horror! I have experienced these emotions frequently in the last month. Here are some examples:

I was filling out a form yesterday and realised I could not place my age in the 41 – 50 box any more. I am now in the 51 – 60 age bracket. 60 seemed like a long way off but now I am bundled together in this group.

I was on a crowded train recently and a young woman got up and offered me her seat. This was very nice of her however I realised the last time I had this happen was about 18 years ago when I was pregnant with my son. Now either the young woman misconstrued my middle aged spread or thought I looked old enough to have to sit down! Either way it certainly was a confidence buster.

The third example (and more serious) happened about 3 weeks ago. I went to work and was confronted with a not so friendly greeting from my boss – a letter of dismissal! My 3 months trial was up and they said they couldn't afford to keep me on any longer. No warning, no discussion, no notice, company car and mobile phone handed in and a fare for taxi home given (how generous of them). Suddenly, at 51 I was on the unemployment scrap heap. I went home pondering my situation – no job, need to pay the rent, buy food, pay bills, buy a car and look for another job. To make things worse I was a sole parent, had 2 dependent teenage children, I was mature age, didn't have much in the bank and had no assets. Oh well, at least there is Centrelink I thought

Shaping the future together

Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds

The next day I went to my local Centrelink for assistance with my plight. What did I expect from Centrelink? HELP. What did I get? NOTHING! It appears they think I am fully capable of sorting out my difficulties. I was glad they had confidence in me but my feelings of panic after this meeting with them certainly were not swayed. According to Centrelink I have enough money in the bank to live on for a few weeks (didn't matter that it was my life savings which I was slowly building up to one day put a deposit towards a house, perhaps by the time I was 60). I live near public transport so I don't need a car (too bad if the jobs I might apply for are not serviced by public transport). Once I had spent **ALL** my money (they predicted I would need financial assistance 13 weeks from this initial meeting with them), the government would give me a miserly \$550 a fortnight. This would have to pay the rent (\$250 week) and all my other expenses. I walked out of Centrelink with feelings of **Shock and Horror!** What about unemployment benefits? What about rent assistance? What about sole parent support? What about help with finding a job?

So here I am writing this article for ADDE in the hope that readers can get an idea of some of the issues ordinary people experience post John Howard's AWA's (Australian Workplace Agreements) and so-called welfare reforms. It appears that there is no safety net. We are so behind the rest of the world (except perhaps the USA). I was reading recently that Denmark has a system that supports unemployed with 80% of their previous jobs's income and includes training. I wish!

What do I do now? Look for work – apply, apply, apply. In 2 weeks have had about 3 knockbacks and currently have 8 job applications out there. The question is, when do I stop applying for jobs which sound interesting and start applying for any old job? Not yet – I haven't spent all my money. What if I don't have a job before the next rent payment is due? Other questions arise – If I had a mortgage or owned a house would the government expect me to sell it before they gave me any help? They expect me to use my life savings (small as they are) before they help me and yet a house represents someone's life savings. I feel like I am being punished for being a sole parent, unemployed and a non homeowner. Seems like I have no choice but to take the first job offered. I mentioned this to the Centrelink officer and all they could say was at least if it doesn't work out and I am back at Centrelink in the next 12 months I won't have such a long waiting period for financial assistance!

I am one of the unemployed who is not part of the statistics as I don't receive anything from the government. How many more like me are out there?

DISTSS - Disability Consultants Network

A recent initiative at Database of Disability Consultants Project Team (DISTSS) has been in building a new on-line database of people with disabilities working as disability consultants, trainers, facilitators, and speakers. This database is called '**Disability Consultants – Nothing About Us Without Us**' and is an information product for organisations, government bodies and corporations to access disability expertise and for them to then share their experience.

After several months planning and discussions held with key players in the sector, as well as our Project Advisory Group we are now able to offer people with disabilities the opportunity to list themselves on this new database.

This information includes general information about the database and criteria for a listing. It also lists detailed information for consultants as well as an application form they can fill out. The resultant database will be available at www.disabilityconsultants.org.au later this year. If you have any queries please contact Catherine at dho71994@bigpond.net.au or Janet at cherub@tadaust.org.au.

Shaping the future together

*Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in
Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds*

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

Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Peter Rickards	President	peter_ri@bigpond.net.au	0407 509117
David Sullivan	Communications Officer	sullivs@iprimus.com.au	0407 812077
Amanda McNeill	Vice President	amanda.mcneill@tpg.com.au	
Juliana Nwobu	Secretary	jnwobu@yahoo.com.au	
Ian Boyd	Treasurer/country rep	ianrboyd@vic.australis.com.au	
Paul Hume		paul.hume@vooralla.com.au	
Alan Bartlett	Issues	ajbartlett@fastmail.com.au	
Barry Stomej	Cultural Diversity	barry@adec.org.au	
Asitha Gurusinghe	Website	asitha1@fastmail.fm	
Alex Rowsell	Coopted/constitution	vulterra@hotmail.com	
Anthony Bartl	Coopted/newsletter	anthonyb@melbpc.org.au	
Deb Humphris	Membership/Coopted	debhumphris@yahoo.com	

Shaping the future together

*Our Vision /Mission is to increase employment opportunities in
Australia for people with disabilities & from diverse backgrounds*