

Removing the barriers

Welcome to the first issue of DWA News. Each quarter, we will talk about the role Disability Works Australia plays as the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator and bring you the heartening stories of the employers, employees and Disability Open Employment Services with whom we work.

DWA's core role is to provide employers with a single point of contact that will provide all the assistance they need to employ someone with a disability. This assistance is free of charge.

Over the years we have found that sometimes employers perceive the barriers to taking on someone with a disability as too hard to overcome. That is where DWA steps in - to identify any real or perceived barriers and to work with the employers to change or modify processes and remove the obstacles.

DWA has employment contracts in place with an ever increasing number of employers, including some of Australia's best known, such as Coles Myer, National Australia Bank and the Jim's Group. We also work with State Governments and organisations such as the National Retail Association.

We are also working on pilot projects in different States with other major employers including Woolworths, Australia Post, Brumby's, ANZ Bank and the Federal Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, which is our primary funding body.

In December, DWA prepared a report, *Practical Solutions to Increase Employer Demand for Workers with a Disability*, which is based on our experience and feedback from key employers and employer groups.

The key recommendation in the report is that the role of the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator should be re-affirmed by the Federal Government and additional resources be made available to underpin any new agreements negotiated with national employers.

The report makes a further 12 recommendations, which we believe will complement and support implementation of the Government's Welfare to Work and Employer Demand and Workplace Flexibility strategies.

DWA will continue to build on its close relationships with the Commonwealth Government and other partners to continue increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities across Australia.

By Tina Zeleznik
Chief Executive Officer
Disability Works Australia



Coles Noarlunga Manager Greg Arnold, far right, with employees Julie Woolfe, left, Jodie-Lee Butterfield, Jonathon Lee Pilypas, Robert Turner and Douglas Dougall. All were supported into employment by Bedford Workplace Services, apart from Jonathon, who was supported by CBS.

Coles Myer receives top award for disability employment

Disability Works Australia client Coles Myer Ltd has been nationally recognised for its commitment to employing people with a disability.

In December, Coles Myer won the National Corporation category of the 2005 Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Awards, which recognise excellence in the employment of people with disabilities.

Another DWA client, the City of Boroondara in Victoria, won the Local Government category.

Coles Myer formed an alliance with DWA in July 2004 to develop and implement an industry-best practice model for recruiting people with disabilities. In just over two years, the company had already employed 378 people in a range of positions across Australia.

Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer of DWA, said Coles Myer's results were outstanding. "I have never experienced such commitment, support and enthusiasm as shown by the company's management and staff," Ms Zeleznik said.

"Coles and DWA have created on-line information packs to assist the Disability Open Employment Services (DOES) through the recruitment process. The high quality of support provided by DOES once the person has been placed is a critical element of the success of the agreement."

Ms Zeleznik said that as Australia's largest retailer – and largest private sector employer – Coles Myer's

promotion of the employment of people with disabilities is an inspiration to all employers.

Reagan Garner, Coles Myer's Recruitment Manager, said the company was committed to better reflect the diversity of its customers and the community in its employee base.

"Our agreement with DWA establishes a framework for us to develop and implement long-term systemic and cultural change to maximise the employment prospects of people with a disability," Mr Garner said.

Coles Myer provides ongoing training and development opportunities to ensure that employee performance and job satisfaction are maximised for people with disabilities.

"We also undertake workplace modifications, including the redesign of duties, as a matter of course," Mr Reagan said. "Training is also provided to management and staff to increase awareness of the issues facing people with disabilities and the benefits they bring to the workplace."

The Boroondara Council has worked closely with DWA to employ a number of people with disabilities, all of whom have mainstream positions. The Council has special software for sight impaired workers, and undertakes comprehensive ergonomic and worksite inspections to ensure modifications are made where required.



Ocean Advertiser's owner Jim Montgomery, left, with Rory Eade.

Rory's talents bring papers to life

Graphic designer Rory Eade is helping to bring Ocean Advertiser's publications to life in Perth, thanks to Disability Works Australia.

Mr Eade is responsible for working with clients to design their advertisements and business stationery.

He joined the company in January 2005, at the same time as its first edition, and has been an important part of the growth of Ocean Advertiser.

The privately owned publisher initially launched its *Wanneroo Coastal* publication, which was followed by *Joondalup Central* in August. The company also designs and prints a wide range of business stationery. Other publications include a quarterly business-to-business supplement and the *Short Stories Australia* book.

DWA's role included advertising the position for Ocean Advertiser, pre-screening applicants and organising three months' work experience for Mr Eade, which was supported by his disability agency, CRS Australia.

Maree Jones, DWA State Manager in WA, said Ocean Advertiser was then happy to employ Mr Eade in a part-time position, which has now become full-time.

"Rory settled into the position immediately and has been a perfect fit," Ms Jones said. "His attention to detail, creativity and commitment to his craft has enabled Ocean Advertiser to rapidly expand in its first year."

Mr Eade is also an accomplished artist and is planning to write a children's book.

“Disability Works Australia is a valued strategic partner in assisting in the delivery of the National Australia Bank's Diversity Strategy. DWA is uniquely positioned to provide ongoing collaboration to help us attract, select and retain employees with a disability. In 2005, a total of 66 people were employed under our disability employment program and successfully placed in a range of roles across the organisation.”

Mark Leopold

Group Adviser
Group Corporate Social Responsibility
National Australia Bank

Business Enterprise Centres promote disability employment

Disability Works Australia has established a positive working relationship and strong credibility with industry through its partnership with Business Enterprise Centres Australia.

Offering access to its network of 130 offices and about 200,000 member businesses, the BEC network has the ideal organisational infrastructure to incorporate DWA services nationally.

In Victoria, co-locating with the Brunswick Business Incubator (BEC) has resulted in a highly successful partnership for DWA.

In the past 12 months, businesses associated with the BBI have employed 12 people with a disability in a variety of roles and industries.

Funded by the Federal Government and the Moreland City Council, the incubator is closely involved with about 60 emerging local businesses and has strong employer networks, which also benefit DWA.

Garry Benson, DWA State Manager for Victoria, said that as the businesses grow and move out of the centre, they take their employees with them and are then replaced by new start-ups.

"Because the incubator deals with a wide range of businesses, new employees with a disability are moving into varying and non-traditional sectors," Mr Benson said.

Graeme Walker, General Manager of the Brunswick Business Incubator, said having DWA on site gave new businesses an understanding of the importance of creating diversity in the workplace.

"Businesses that have taken on an employee with a disability have been very pleased with the results and the support that DWA provides," he said. When BBI itself recently had a vacancy for a Cleaning and Maintenance Manager, Mr Walker went straight to DWA.

Mr Benson said DWA and BBI also work closely together to identify sectors in which people with a disability are not well represented.

"Last year it became apparent that there were few people with a disability working in the local construction and building industry," he said. "We worked with Melbourne Safety Skyways in particular, which now employs six people in a range of roles, from administration to steel fabrication."



BBI Cleaning and Maintenance Manager Barry Weer, who was supported by the Northern Region Employment Support Services.

Training meets needs of retail sector

A Queensland pilot project between the National Retail Association and Disability Works Australia to deliver retail training to people with a disability has been hailed a success, and has achieved significant employment outcomes.

The pilot project, which was launched by Prime Minister John Howard last year, involved recruiting and training candidates who had the potential to flourish in the retail sector.

Paul Willis, the National Retail Association's General Manager of Training and Development, said the initiative was welcome because there are extensive skills shortages throughout Australia across the retail sector. NRA has a strong national membership of large, medium and small retailers, including franchisors and franchisees.

"By tapping into new labour markets, such as people with disabilities, it opens up an exciting pool of talent for employers," Mr Willis said.

Called Ready and Able, the project involved 45 jobseekers, who undertook six weeks job readiness and retail training and two weeks of work experience with a retailer. The pilot was funded by the Australian Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Disability Works Australia supported the pilot project by providing recruitment and selection processes and daily classroom support as part of the formal training component delivered by the National Retail Association. DWA also is assisting in "marketing" the candidates to retail employers and supporting employers in overcoming any barriers.

The nationally recognised training addressed skills and knowledge that employers are seeking, such as point-of-sale handling techniques, selling and product knowledge skills, communication and customer service skills, and visual merchandising techniques.

The success of the pilot has resulted in a further project in Brisbane, with options for Ready and Able projects in other States. Disability Works Australia and NRA are also working together on projects in South Australia, supported by the SA Government.

"The great success of the pilot project was the increased self awareness and self esteem that the participants gained, enabling them to overcome barriers restricting them from joining the job market," Mr Willis said.

"Ready and Able is the best program for anyone who wants to get into retail. I got sick and tired of knockbacks every time I went for an interview to do with retail. So I joined the program. Without it, I wouldn't be where I am today. I started with Action as a shop assistant in the produce department ... now after six weeks I am second-in-charge of the department."

Noel Wells, August 2005

NT Government runs pilot recruitment program

Compulsory interviews if applicants meet essential job criteria is one aspect of a unique pilot program being run by Disability Works Australia for the Northern Territory Public Service.

The program, which has been developed by DWA since July last year, offers the NT Public Sector a special recruitment service for the employment of people with disabilities. Eight people have been employed since July, with more in the coming apprenticeship intake.

Ms Christine Short, Principal Adviser, Equity and Diversity, Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment in the NT, said the program is a key part of the NT Government's Willing and Able Strategy, which aims to provide a working environment where people with disabilities are recruited and retained on the basis of their abilities, and where barriers to workplace participation are removed.

"In the NT, almost 13 per cent of the working age population has a disability and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is double that for people without a disability," Ms Short said. "There is also a high rate of disability in the indigenous population."

The DWA program has involved establishing a register of people with a disability who are seeking employment, and providing training to enable them to become job ready. DWA also provides public service managers and interview panels with disability awareness training, and realistic guides to ensure the applicant's disability is irrelevant in the interview.

"DWA's approach of assisting government employers to understand how to employ people with a disability and to break down the barriers is effective," Ms Short said. "It is amazing how much ignorance exists among employers and how much focus they can put on peripheral issues that would not impact on the core skills needed to do a job."

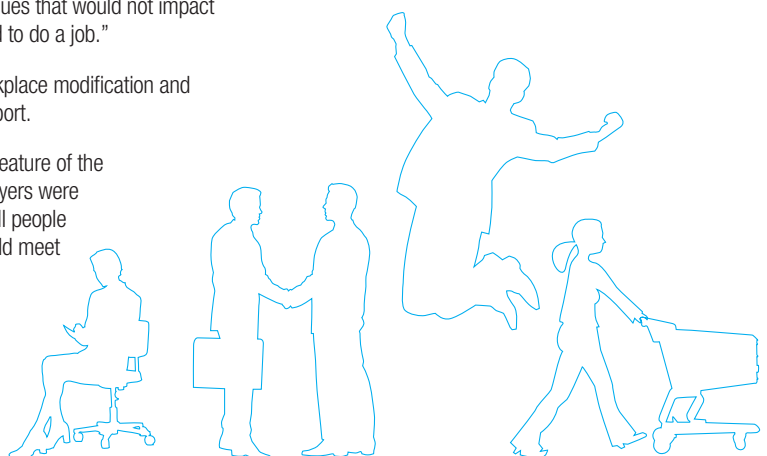
DWA also assists in workplace modification and provides on-the-job support.

Ms Short said a unique feature of the program was that employers were compelled to interview all people with a disability who could meet essential job criteria.

"This overcomes a huge initial barrier and, with the interview panel trained in disability awareness, the interview can proceed on a more level playing field."

DWA has similar agreements in place with the South Australian, ACT and Victorian Public Service and some Commonwealth Government Departments.

For further information, contact Peter Boulton, DWA Manager SA/NT, tel: (08) 8186 9900.



Services for employers

What does DWA do?

DWA provides employers and Disability Open Employment Services (DOES) with a single, free contact point for assistance in recruiting people with a disability. We also provide general information on disability employment issues. See also www.dwa.org.au

How does DWA assist employers?

As a "one-stop shop", DWA assists employers to recruit people with disabilities by:

- Providing access to a large number of disability agencies;
- Promoting understanding of the role of DOES, which improves the quality and tenure of placements;
- Job matching and screening potential employees; and
- Providing recruitment information.

DWA also provides national and/or multi-site employers with an efficient method of recruiting large numbers of people with disabilities. See also www.dwa.org.au

What support services does DWA provide?

DWA and DOES staff are available to test employers' eligibility for incentives such as:

- Work experience or work training;
- Wage subsidies;
- Workplace modification;
- On-the-job support;
- Supported wage system;
- Traineeships; and the
- Disabled New Apprentice Wage Subsidy Scheme (DNAWS). See also www.dwa.org.au

Is your application form appropriate?

DWA staff can work with employers to ensure their job application forms do not discriminate against people with disabilities, for example, some on-line application processes can be prohibitive. See also www.dwa.org.au

Can DWA work with employers' recruitment agencies?

Yes, several national employers that use DWA also engage recruitment agencies as the initial contact point. DWA has worked with agencies to develop best-practice models based on the needs of the employer and the resources available. See also www.dwa.org.au

Does DWA provide employers with support after placement?

Yes, both DWA and DOES provide ongoing support to ensure a successful employer/employee relationship. See also www.dwa.org.au

Getting results

DWA's core target of 700 placements a year has been met easily, thanks to strong support from many major companies, all tiers of government, large and small employers, and Disability Open Employment Services.

From January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2005:

2437 (32 per cent of total) referrals have been made by CRS Australia and 5323 (68 per cent of total) by DOES and "no service";

Referrals from DOES and other agencies resulted in placements for 1312 people with disabilities (74 per cent of total) while CRS Australia achieved 450, or 26 per cent of the total placements;

51 per cent of placements were for more than 30 hours a week; 22 per cent for 20-29 hours; 16 per cent, 15-19 hours; and 11 per cent, 8-14 hours;

State Governments have provided most of the vacancies (39.57 per cent) along with retail (14 per cent) and finance and insurance (7.25 per cent);

People with a disability were placed in varying occupations with clerical (33 per cent), sales (27 per cent) and labourer (27 per cent) offering most outcomes; and

28 per cent of clients were coded with a physical disability, 19 per cent with psychiatric disabilities; and 18 per cent with intellectual disabilities.

Job placements by industry and occupation

(January 2004 to December 2005)

INDUSTRY	VACANCIES FILLED	% OF TOTAL
Agriculture Forest And Fishing	30	1.70%
Clothing / Textiles / Footwear	9	0.51%
Commonwealth Government	46	2.61%
Communication Services	21	1.19%
Construction	22	1.25%
Cultural And Recreational Services	12	0.68%
Education	53	3.01%
Fast Food	13	0.74%
Finance And Insurance	115	6.53%
Health And Community Services	59	3.35%
Hospitality	52	2.95%
Local Council	59	3.35%
Manufacturing	66	3.75%
Mining	1	0.06%
Personal And Other Services	75	4.26%
Property And Business Services	154	8.74%
Retail	524	29.74%
State Government	381	21.62%
Transport And Storage	44	2.50%
Utilities	4	0.23%
Wholesale Trade	22	1.25%
Total Vacancies Notified	1762	100.00%

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Clerk	581	32.97%
Labourer / Worker	472	26.79%
Manager	12	0.68%
Other	42	2.38%
Para-professional	52	2.95%
Plant And Machine Operator / Driver	21	1.19%
Professional	67	3.80%
Sales / Personal Service Staff	475	26.96%
Trade	40	2.27%
Total	1762	100.00%

“ DWA alone cannot fulfil employers' expectations - the support we receive from the Disability Open Employment Services and CRS Australia is crucial to the success of all plans developed with employers. ”

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