

DWA celebrates a second term

Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia

Disability Works Australia (DWA) has again won the contract to deliver the National Disability Recruitment Co-ordinator (NDRC) Program, which complements the Commonwealth Government's Employer Demand and Workplace Flexibility Strategy.

Under the new contract, DWA will continue to provide employers and Disability Employment Network (DEN) and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) providers with a single, free and effective point of contact for recruiting and the provision of information on disability employment issues.

Being awarded the contract to provide NDRC services for a second term, until 30 June 2009, means DWA will continue to build on the solid relationships it has already developed with a range of stakeholders, including employers, DEN/VRS providers and the wider community.

This solid foundation will see more people with disabilities join the open employment market over the next two years.

DWA's first three-year term from 2004-2006 saw the national team achieve many goals including attracting more than 5500 job opportunities from employers and placing 2662 people with disabilities into employment.

These results have been achieved alongside the establishment of national infrastructure, which includes branches in most capital cities, and policies and procedures to ensure the provision of uniform services Australia-wide.

The first quarter of 2007 has seen DWA continue to achieve targets with several new agreements aimed at increasing the employment of people with disabilities signed between DWA and large companies. Earlier this year 18 large private sector employers agreed to remain on board by re-signing a Memorandum of Understanding with DWA.

Large private sector employers have continued to show further commitment to the employment of people with a disability by providing DWA with more than 300 job opportunities since January this year.

DWA has also been restructuring and expanding the organisation and has welcomed a number of new staff in various locations across Australia in the first quarter of this year.

These staff will help increase the awareness of DWA through training and promotion and facilitate an increase in the number of people with a disability employed nationally.

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BAE Systems configuration controllers John Hosking and Alex Azevedo at the BAE Systems Australian head office in Adelaide.

High tech roles at BAE Systems

BAE Systems Australia has employed two people with disabilities at its facility in Edinburgh Park, Adelaide, following a Memorandum of Understanding signed with Disability Works Australia (DWA) late last year.

DWA and Vocational Rehabilitation Service provider CRS Australia have supported John Hosking and Alex Azevedo in the transition into their new highly skilled roles as configuration controllers.

Their appointment dispels some of the myths surrounding the capabilities of people with disabilities and demonstrates that with the right qualifications, those with disabilities can do anything.

BAE Systems Australia designs, integrates and maintains military systems for the Australian Defence Force. It employs more than 2700 people in 50 locations around the country, working on projects such as military air support, electronic warfare and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

BAE Systems marketing and communications manager Jim Parkes praised the DWA process of linking employers with appropriately qualified people with a disability.

"As an employer we welcome the opportunity to employ qualified and valued members of the community," Jim said.

Alex and John, who have now been with BAE Systems for more than six months, process, map and control the building of complex defence projects.

John has diabetes and sleep apnea and, prior to winning the job, the former police officer and naval aircraft technician was full-time unemployed for 12 years.

"BAE Systems' safety and first aid representatives approached me when I first started work to find out what support would be required for me to perform my duties in light of my diabetes and sleep apnea," John said.

John, who has a diploma in IT systems analysis and design, said BAE Systems was a very supportive employer.

Alex, who has a diploma in IT network engineering, has used a wheelchair for 20 years. He said that prior to his appointment, the DWA team worked with the BAE Systems human resources department and assisted them with the interview process.

The BAE Systems building where he works already had wheelchair access and the workspace was adjustable, so no modifications were required to accommodate his needs.



Store manager Jason Hall with Campbelltown North West Personnel manager Peter Decimitrov and Woolworths employee Kelly-Ann Jankovskis at the Narellan store.

Mental health awareness help available

Employers and co-workers trying to develop a greater understanding of mental illness and how to support those with mental illness in the workplace and wider community can now access a free e-learning course on CD-Rom to help them.

About one in five Australian adults will experience some form of common mental health problem in any one year. It is therefore likely that an employer will employ someone with a mental health problem reasonably frequently.

The Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace e-learning course has been developed by the Australian Government to assist employers and co-workers in understanding those with mental illness.

To obtain a free copy of the Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace CD-Rom contact the JobAccess advisers on 1800 464 800 or through an online enquiry form at www.jobaccess.gov.au

Kelly-Ann proves keen as mustard

The successful partnership between Disability Works Australia (DWA) and Woolworths continues to highlight the benefits of hiring people with a disability.

Glowing reports have been received about new recruit Kelly-Ann Jankovskis, who has won a part-time position as a shop assistant in the busy Woolworths store at Narellan in New South Wales.

A DWA project officer and a case manager with Disability Employment Network provider North West Personnel attended much of the two-day induction process to support the enthusiastic new recruit, who has Down syndrome.

A North West Personnel case manager also drops in on Woolworths Narellan store manager Jason Hall at least once a week to check on Kelly-Ann's progress.

Jason praised the support offered by both DWA and North West Personnel, describing it as "outstanding but not overpowering".

He said 28-year-old Kelly-Ann had made a valuable contribution to the store by being great with customers, which was his number one priority.

The 12-hour-a-week position involves returning stock to the shelves, filling shelves with stock, 'facing up' and helping customers.

Jason described Kelly-Ann as "keen as mustard", always on time and always smiling.

"It's a pleasure to have her here; she maintains outstanding customer interaction and picks up the morale of the whole team," he said.

"She will hunt down a product and take a customer all the way to it. If she doesn't know where it is she will annoy every other staff member until she tracks it down."

Campbelltown North West Personnel manager Peter Decimitrov said Kelly-Ann had been a client of his firm for the past four years. "We have placed her in a role at a takeaway food outlet in the past and she moved house so DWA found the job here closer to her new home," Peter said.

Kelly-Ann also undertakes work experience one-day-a-week in the North West Personnel office, where she completes general administration duties such as filing and answering the telephone during busy times.

Peter said "the DWA team was always very helpful when liaising with employers to recruit people with a disability".

Woolworths didn't need to make any adjustments to the store to accommodate Kelly-Ann, but she is not permitted to climb ladders. The 120-strong team at the store has overcome Kelly-Ann's limitation by bringing stock down from high places to enable her to fill the shelves.

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Over the next six months DWA will continue to increase the number of people with a disability gaining employment in the open market, with the goal of having two new agreements signed by employers and a minimum target of 500 placements by the end of June 2007. DWA also plans to revamp its marketing kit and website in the first half of 2007, and improve its close links with DEN and VRS providers.

Plans are also in place to increase the number of agreements signed by large employers. Several Memorandums of Understanding are scheduled for signing in coming weeks, including agreements with Bendigo Bank and Savings & Loans Credit Union.

The new contract with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has resulted in some major changes to the way business is conducted at DWA.

DWA is pursuing three key outcomes under the new arrangements:

- Increased awareness by industry and large Australian private sector employers of the benefits of employing people with a disability.
- Higher proportions of people with a disability in the workforces of participating employers.
- Participating employers implementing and independently managing strategies, policies and processes for recruiting and maintaining the employment of people with a disability.

The DWA team is looking forward to embracing the changes, enjoying a productive year and continuing to increase the number of people with a disability in the Australian workforce.

Bank streamlines internal recruitment process

National Australia Bank (NAB) has strengthened its long-standing agreement with Disability Works Australia (DWA) by streamlining the process for people with a disability to access vacancies.

In addition to renewing its agreement with DWA, the bank has altered internal processes, which should increase job opportunities for those with disabilities.

Danielle Mercier is the latest person to benefit from the partnership by winning a position among a small team of seven at NAB's Lane Cove branch in New South Wales.

A DWA project officer identified Danielle, who has rheumatoid arthritis, as being suitable for a role as a customer service officer after discovering she had plenty of cash handling and customer service experience, and had worked in a bank in the past.

Danielle was put forward for the role by CRS Australia before being interviewed and pre-screened by DWA.

She then passed NAB's internal recruitment process and started work in February at Lane Cove where she has become a familiar face to regular customers at the branch.

The only modification to the workspace that was necessary to accommodate Danielle's disability has been the provision of a chair to relieve pain in her feet and ankles.

NAB Lane Cove customer service manager Jaycee Stark said Danielle could ask for help if she needed to. "She has been doing a great job and getting along with everyone in the branch really well," Jaycee said.

Danielle works four days a week, with a break mid-week to rest and spend time with her children. She said after six weeks on the job she was still learning the ropes.

"I think it's great that NAB is giving people with disabilities a go – customers are from all walks of life so staff should be as well," Danielle said.



National Australia Bank Lane Cove branch customer service manager Jaycee Stark (standing) with Danielle Mercier.

Australia Post lifts disability employment target



Australia Post videocoders Ryan McDonald and Jayne Armstrong hard at work at the Australia Post Blacktown Videocoding Centre.

Australia Post has taken another step towards increasing its number of employees with a disability in an agreement with Disability Works Australia (DWA).

The national mail carrier currently employs almost 35,000 people and more than 3000 have a disability.

Under the agreement, Australia Post will work with DWA on increasing this number and improve the employment prospects of people with a disability.

The assistance provided by DWA has been highlighted by the recent recruitment of two new staff at the company's Blacktown, NSW, Videocoding Centre.

Disability Employment Network provider Job Match referred Ryan McDonald and Jayne Armstrong to DWA for the roles as videocoders.

DWA provided information and support and acted as a single, effective contact point for recruiting and the provision of information on disability employment issues.

The Blacktown Australia Post Videocoding Centre was wheelchair accessible and already fitted with adjustable desks, which were altered to suit Ryan's wheelchair and Jayne's height. A small footrest was also installed under Jayne's desk to accommodate her short stature.

Ryan and Jayne have been working as videocoders at the centre, interpreting post codes that can't be read by the mail sorting machines. Their role is important in ensuring that the five billion mail articles handled by Australia Post each year reach their destinations.

New recruits at Australia Post are normally given about three months to achieve a goal of 1900 post codes per hour and qualify as videocoders. Jayne currently achieves about 1300 post codes per hour and Ryan achieves about 1150.

Centre supervisor Lorna Tilde-Reyes said the new workers passed the initial training stage and were working hard to improve their coding skills.

"They have both achieved an accuracy rate of more than 98 per cent and are progressing well," Lorna said.

Jayne is well qualified for the role, having completed several computer training courses after finishing Year 12 and working in reception and as a freelance website administrator in the past.

Ryan, who lives close to the videocoding centre, has been enjoying the hours at Australia Post as they allow him time to continue with his passion of film writing. The 26-year-old has a Masters in Communication from the University of Western Sydney and writes film reviews for several websites while working 20 hours a week for Australia Post. "It is my first job ever so I think my mother is looking forward to me being able to pay my way," Ryan said.

Services for employers

What does DWA do?

DWA facilitates the provision of employment for people with a disability by providing employers with access to a single, free effective contact point for recruiting people with disabilities.

How does DWA assist employers?

DWA provides dedicated, flexible and responsive education, awareness and recruitment services to employers with the goal of assisting them in the employment of people with a disability.

What support services does DWA offer to employers?

- Reviewing existing employment process.
- Suggesting system, policy and process changes to remove potential barriers to the employment of people with a disability.
- Training and professional development on disability awareness for staff.
- Information about available employer incentives and work subsidies.
- Circulating vacancies to Disability Employment Network providers.
- Pre-screening and assessing employment candidates with disabilities and providing profiles of suitable duties, supports and workplace modifications.
- Assisting large employers to raise their corporate image nationally and at a local level through promotion.

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 online application processes can be prohibitive. See www.dwa.org.au for more information.

Can DWA work with employers' recruitment agencies?

Yes, several large 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.

Does DWA provide employers with support after placement?

Yes, DWA provides ongoing support including co-ordination services to ensure a successful employer/employee relationship.

These services include:

- Work experience or work training.
- Wage subsidies.
- Workplace modification.
- On-the-job support.
- Supported wage system.
- Traineeships.
- Disabled New Apprentice Wage Subsidy Scheme (DNAWS)

Please see www.dwa.org.au for more information.

Getting results

Disability Works Australia (DWA) has easily exceeded its target for placements of people with a disability thanks to strong support from employers, including numerous major companies, and all levels of government in the past three years.

From January 2004 to December 2006, a total of 2662 people with a disability were placed into work.

Among the highlights of the past three years:

DWA received 11,194 referrals of job seekers with disabilities, of which 7465 were pre-screened by DWA, which equated to a large pool of possible employees for employers.

People with a disability were placed in varying industries with retail (43 per cent) and State Government (20 per cent) offering the most opportunities.

Of all the placements, 42 per cent were for more than 30 hours a week, 19 per cent for 20-29 hours, 19 per cent for 15-19 hours, and 20 per cent for 8-14 hours.

Of job seekers placed in jobs, 21 per cent had an intellectual disability, 25 per cent a physical disability and 19 per cent had a psychiatric disability.

Disability awareness training was delivered to 2036 participants including co-workers nominated by employers.

Job placements by industry

(January 2004 to December 2006)

INDUSTRY	VACANCIES FILLED	% OF TOTAL
Agriculture Forest and Fishing	30	1.88
Clothing / Textiles / Footwear	9	0.34
Commonwealth Government	48	1.80
Communication Services	25	0.94
Construction	20	0.75
Cultural and Recreational Services	15	0.56
Education	57	2.14
Fast Food	20	0.75
Finance and Insurance	140	5.26
Health and Community Services	65	2.44
Hospitality	49	1.84
Local Council	75	2.82
Manufacturing	72	2.70
Mining	1	0.04
Personal and Other Services	109	4.09
Property and Business Services	146	5.48
Retail	1141	42.86
State Government	531	19.95
Transport and Storage	57	2.14
Utilities	4	0.15
Wholesale Trade	28	1.05
Total vacancies notified	2662	100

“The key element of the DWA service is the process of pre-screening and personally meeting all people with disabilities and services referred for a job. DWA will continue to acknowledge that it cannot do it alone. The combination of motivated job seekers with a disability and a committed employer base is the DWA recipe for success.”

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