

Employer incentives

Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia

Financial assistance is available for the employment of people with disability

People with disability bring a wide range of skills, abilities and qualifications to the workplace. With current labour shortages, it is now more important than ever for employers to look beyond traditional sources of recruitment.

There are a range of Commonwealth Government services available to assist all employers to employ people with disability. Below is a snapshot of some of the assistance.

Work Experience or Work Training

This allows employees to work in a position for a period of time to learn the job at no cost to the employer.

For more information visit:

<http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/WorkExperiencePlacementprogramme.htm>

Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)

The Wage Subsidy Scheme offers financial assistance to employers, to encourage the employment of people with disability in open employment conditions. It is available to people with disability who are being assisted by Disability Employment Network members or Vocational Rehabilitation Services to secure work.

Workplace Modifications Scheme (WMS)

The Workplace Modifications Scheme aims to make accommodating employees with disability in the workplace easier. The scheme provides a free workplace assessment and reimbursement for the cost of workplace modifications and equipment to help workers with disability obtain or retain employment. It may also reimburse the costs of training in the use of the new equipment, if required.

Modifications previously purchased through the Workplace Modifications Scheme include:

- disability specialist IT equipment;
- adaptive workplace tools, automatic doors, ramps, and
- vehicle related modifications.

Employer feedback confirms that the new streamlined application and reimbursement process through www.jobaccess.gov.au is fast and efficient.

Supported Wage System (SWS)

The Supported Wage System (SWS) is available to people who are unable to work at full wage rates due to the effect of disability on their workplace productivity. It enables people with disability to access a reliable process of productivity-based wage assessments to determine fair pay for fair work. Eligible employees undergo an independent productivity assessment to measure their productivity in comparison to other workers undertaking a similar job and then they may be paid a pro-rata amount of the applicable award.

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Wayne Noakes, TNT National Recruitment and HR Communications Manager with Nigel Smart, Business Development, DWA.

TNT Signs Alliance with Disability Works Australia

Disability Works Australia (DWA) and TNT Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Sydney recently aimed at improving the employment prospects of people with a disability.

TNT offers a comprehensive range of business to business express delivery services Australia-wide and in over 200 countries around the globe. The Australian operation comprises approximately 4,800 employees across all divisions and a fleet of around 2,400 vehicles. TNT's head office is located in Mascot Sydney, and comprises some 400 administration staff along with 56 depots across Australia.

DWA is funded by the Australian Government to provide a single point of contact for large private sector employers seeking information and advice about employing people with a disability.

DWA chief executive officer Tina Zeleznik said the signing of the agreement would continue to assist more people with a disability to enter the workforce and TNT offered a variety of roles from call centre to dockhands.

"More and more large employers like TNT are seeing that it makes good business sense to have a workforce that reflects the diversity in our society and their customer base."

"We are thrilled when employers maintain a commitment to working towards increasing the number of employees in their workforce with a disability."

"DWA can support the employer to ensure their recruitment processes are accessible for people with a disability, provide disability awareness training, coordinate

"More and more large employers like TNT are seeing that it makes good business sense to have a workforce that reflects the diversity in our society and their customer base." Tina Zeleznik, DWA, CEO

workplace modifications, provide a pre-screening service and support by providing a single point of contact for recruiting people with a disability," Ms Zeleznik said.

TNT National Recruitment Manager Wayne Noakes said "We at TNT are delighted to be working with DWA, as it enables us to adopt a national approach to recruiting people with a disability into the TNT organisation."

"TNT aspires to be a leader in social accountability within the transportation industry by promoting a positive culture with respect to human rights and the continuous improvement of working conditions."

"We seek to attract, develop, reward and retain outstanding individuals who appreciate the value of acting as a team. Our partnership with DWA will ensure our recruitment processes are accessible and attractive to people with a disability."

DWA and TNT will jointly work together to roll out the recruitment of people with disabilities within each state across Australia.

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National Disability Recruitment Coordinator

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator works with employers and Disability Employment Network members and Vocational Rehabilitation Services to help facilitate the recruitment of people with disability. This program is managed by DWA.

JobAccess

JobAccess is a comprehensive, easy to use website and a free professional telephone information and advice service where you can access confidential, expert advice. The JobAccess advisory team includes a fully qualified psychologist and occupational therapists who are experienced on all disability employment matters, including the range of Australian Government services and incentives available for employers who may wish to employ people with disability. **You can access the service on 1800 464 800 or visit the website www.jobaccess.gov.au**

Traineeships for People with Disability

Employers hiring a trainee/apprentice may be eligible for a range of Government incentives and personal assistance ranging from \$1250 – \$1500. Additional incentives of up to \$2500 may also be available for employers of apprentices or trainees who complete their training.

An employer of a disadvantaged worker (aged 45 years or older) may attract a special \$750 Mature Aged Worker Commencement Incentive and a \$750 Mature Aged Worker Completion Incentive.

Employers of apprentices or trainees aged 30 years or more may also be eligible for additional financial support of up to \$150 per week. Eligible apprentices may also receive up to \$800 to purchase trade tools.

Additional support may also be available for those in declared drought or rural and regional areas.

Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support

A wage support payment at the rate of \$104.30 a week or pro-rata for part-time apprenticeships is available to an employer who currently employs an Australian Apprentice with disability who has been assessed as a person requiring assistance. Tutorial and workplace modification assistance are also available.

The Auslan (Australian Sign Language) For Employment programme

The Auslan for Employment program provides financial assistance to employers of Deaf workers. This assistance helps with the costs of providing Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreting for job interviews and work related activities, Deaf Awareness training and nationally recognised Auslan studies for co-workers.

Incentives will vary according to the individual circumstances of the job and the employee chosen. More than one of the above incentives may be available for each employee with disability, depending on individual circumstances. Additional State Government incentives may be available depending on the location of the employer.

In the next three editions of DWA newsletter, we will provide more information on the incentives above: how to apply, what they can be used for and some of DWA examples in coordinating the incentives for the employer.

Information current at time of printing or subject to change.



Since May 2007, Inghams have forwarded DWA 24 job opportunities to advertise within Western Australia.

*Que Vuong – Boning Superintendent
Megan O'Mara – HR & Recruitment Officer
George Punevski – client
Peter Meredith – Employment Consultant, Deafinite*

INGHAMS: “Doing the right things and doing things right”

Inghams is a multifaceted company that is today a large and significant contributor to the food industry, in particular the poultry industry. In fact, Inghams has become the largest producer of meat chickens and turkeys in Australia, employing over 8,000 staff nationally.

Inghams philosophy of “*Doing the right things and doing things right*” is evident in the commitment they have to their employees.

In May 2007, Disability WORKS Australia (DWA) Western Australian staff approached Inghams about improving the recruitment of people with a disability into Inghams operations. It was refreshing to hear that Inghams WA operations were already working collaboratively with a handful of Disability Employment Networks on placing people with a disability. Inghams were more than happy to develop an ongoing relationship with DWA and to review their existing recruitment process to open up the opportunity to increase the number of people with a disability in their workforce.

Since May 2007, Inghams have forwarded DWA 24 job opportunities to advertise within Western Australia. These have included factory work, egg collectors and farm hands, feedmill operators, truck drivers and administrative positions.

Inghams have employed seven people through DWA, six of whom are still successfully employed. Megan O'Mara, Recruitment Officer and Megan Brennan, Occupational Health & Safety Officer for Inghams, work hard to place people in positions that best suit their disability. Two outstanding examples of their commitment to people with a disability can be illustrated through George and Nik's stories.

George Punevski was employed in August 2007. George is profoundly deaf and has tunnel vision. The first position he was placed in required a level of co-ordination that proved to be too difficult for

George and despite George's best efforts he was unable to achieve in this position. George was then placed in another section cutting chicken into strips for Kentucky Fried Chicken. Deafinite Employment Services provided excellent job support but George was still struggling to meet the requirements for this job. Warren, the plant manager at Inghams, was very impressed with George's excellent attitude to his job. He was a reliable worker who gave 100% and was well liked by all the staff.

Rather than let George go, Inghams continued to source a position that suited his skills and abilities. George was transferred to the boning line and given the job of hanging the chickens. This position suited George as it required a slower and steadier pace and George is now firmly established in the position and requires little support. In fact, George has now become a permanent full time worker at Inghams.

Nik began work as a Hatchery Assistant at the Wanneroo Farm in September 2007.

Nik was anxious about returning to the workplace as he had been a victim of bullying at his last workplace which resulted in hospitalisation for severe depression. He disclosed this at his initial interview at Inghams and was reassured that Inghams have a no tolerance approach to workplace bullying and was given a brochure outlining where to seek assistance if bullying occurred in the future.

Nik has become a valued team member at the Farm. He is very reliable and just gets on with the job. The support and empathy that his employer has given him has resulted in Nik's confidence and self esteem greatly improving.

Inghams and DWA continue to actively develop the recruitment process with Inghams reaping the rewards.

Group Training Organisations and PWD

Group Training Organisations (GTO) provide an important part in the employment and training of Australia's developing workforce. Group Training is an employment and training arrangement whereby an organisation employs apprentices and trainees under an Apprenticeship/Traineeship Training Contract and places them with host employers.

In short a group training organisation is very much like a labour hire company but for the fact that they are dealing with apprenticeships and trainees. Each period the GTO will send the organisation who has taken on an apprentice or a trainee an invoice for payment.

Group Training Organisations can play a critical role in the development and training of people with a disability so they can tap into apprenticeships and traineeships. In formulating strategies around this concept two papers were produced by the Group Training Association on the issue of employing apprentices or trainees with a disability.

The two published reports from the GTA were the;

1. **Key Success Factors in Placing and Supporting New Apprentices with Disabilities through Group Training: Findings of a National Study.**
2. **Key Success Factors in Placing and Supporting New Apprentices with Disabilities through Group Training: A Best Practice Guide.**

The study isolated one major telling feature that can make a significant contribution to increasing Australian apprenticeship opportunities for people with a disability. This feature is the establishment of collaborative partnerships between Group Training Organisations (GTO) and the Disability Employment Network (DEN) who support people with disabilities.

Source: http://www.gtald.com.au/projects/people_disabilities.html

With around one hundred and fifty GTO's and several hundred DEN organisations across Australia, this collaboration can be impaired by the complexity and inter-relationships of GTO's and DEN's in each state/territory, thus potentially limiting the numbers of apprentices employed that have a disability.

Disability Works Australia offers a viable and credible opportunity for GTO's to remove this complexity and offers an efficient link between GTO's and DEN organisations across Australia.

Disability Works Australia has started to collaboratively work with GTO's in each state to connect them with DEN organisations, creating new networks and links to a large candidate pool of labour.

GTO's are encouraged to contact their state based DWA office and discuss the potential benefits of using DWA to link GTO's to the Disability Employment Network.



James "Jimmy" Pluckrose working at Willson Wool Store.

GTO and DWA Success in Action: Willson Wool

Customers at Willson Wool in the South Australian regional town of Clare are now so accustomed to James 'Jimmy' Pluckrose scooting around the shed in his electric wheelchair; they ask after him if he is not there. The 21-year-old lives on the family farm nearby and is working towards completing his rural traineeship, concentrating on the wool industry, so he can help with wool classing on the farm.

Jimmy said his wheelchair could get him into all sorts of places including cattle yards, sheep yards and shearing sheds.

"Me and Dad were drafting rams out of a mob of sheep and one of the dogs got into the yard when it wasn't supposed to and of course the ram went mad and charged the chair and I got tipped over."

"Dad said all he could see was my foot plate sticking up and he lifted the chair up for me but it was my fault because I should have been watching where the ram was going."

Jimmy said he hoped to be able to 'class' wool on his family farm and help his father as much as he could. Jimmy's duties at Willson Wool include examining the characteristics of the wool in its raw state by analysing the breed of sheep, wool crimp, strength and colour.

Owner and manager of Willson Wool, Dave Willson, said Jimmy had made it clear when he first started that he wanted to be treated like everyone else.

"He is known far and wide, people come in and ask after him if they don't see him."

"Jimmy always wants to be doing something and he's determined and persistent – if there is a tool right in the middle of the ute that we need he will go off to get it even though we tell him he won't reach it. He just says 'you just watch me', off he goes and sure enough he comes back with it," Dave said.

He said Jimmy was into his third year of working at the shed three days a week.

"He is great with the customers and he gets a fair bit of speed up in that chair of his, when we are busy he answers the phone and also helps support customers when they come in," Dave said.

"I may take a bit longer than the others but I do get the job done," Jimmy said.

Jimmy's position is subsidised by Commonwealth Government funding through Statewide Group Training.

Statewide Group Training is an independent, community based not for profit organization and is one of the largest employers of apprentices and trainees within South Australia.

Statewide Group Training entered into a partnership arrangement with Disability Works Australia (DWA), to combine strategic capabilities to place and support apprentices and trainees with a disability. Working with DWA has increased recruit efficiencies as Statewide can actively recruit apprentices using DWA as a conduit to the DEN organizations within the state.

Willson Wool has received additional funds under the workplace modifications scheme to modify a toilet and purchase a wool sorting table to accommodate Jimmy's cerebral palsy.

Transport SA have also helped make the shed more accessible for Jimmy by laying bitumen at the entrance to the building after his wheelchair got stuck on the kerb one day.

Jimmy was assisted into the position more than two years ago thanks to the co-operation between Disability Works Australia, Statewide Group Training and Disability Employment Network provider, Interwork.

Recruitment Made Easy

Employer or preferred supplier notifies DWA of forthcoming job opportunities.

DWA broadcasts vacancies to attract applicants with disabilities.

DWA receives applications and pre-screens applicants.

DWA provides the employer or preferred supplier with details of suitable applicants and advises about any potential supports or modifications required.

Employer or preferred supplier keeps DWA informed of changes or delays in the recruitment process.

Employer or preferred supplier decides which applicants to interview.

DWA contacts and arranges interviews with suitable applicants.

DWA notifies any applicants the employer has decided not to interview.

DWA contacts the employer or preferred supplier to discuss interview results and gain feedback to provide to the applicant.

DWA provides the employer with continued support for employees with a disability.



Tim O'Donnell, Project Officer DWA and Jason Whitehall, Bendigo Bank Contact Centre Manager.

DWA Awarded Victorian Government Funding for 2008

In 2002, the Victorian State disability plan was released and outlined a vision whereby people with a disability will have the same rights and responsibilities as all citizens of Victoria. The plan had three independent goals, one of which included the Victorian Government leading by example and increasing employment opportunities within the Victorian Public Service.

Victorian State Government Departments have been required to develop strategies to increase employment of people with a disability as one part of six outcomes within their disability action plan.

This process has led to an announcement on the International Day of People with a Disability, 3rd December 2007, that Disability Works Australia has won funding from the Victorian Government to support Victorian Government Departments in the recruiting of people with a disability.

The Minister for Community Services, Lisa Neville, announced the funding allocation and stated,

"The funding will be used by Disability Works to pre-screen and match applicants with a disability to vacant positions, support applicants with a disability during selection process, and if required, coordinate workplace modifications and provide support to successful applicants when they start their new job."

"It's fantastic that the theme of this years International Day of People with a Disability puts the spotlight on 'decent work for people with a disability', which is a priority." Ms Neville said.

"Dismantling barriers for Victorians with a disability to gain decent work will take time and requires a comprehensive approach."

"Disability WORKS Australia is pleased to be managing the Disability Employment Register for the Victorian Public Service to provide specialised assistance to improve the recruitment and retention of employees with a disability in the Victorian Public Service."

Funding for this service is jointly shared by the Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development and Workforce Participation Branch, Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development."

Tina Zeleznik

Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia