

Employer incentives

Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia

In DWA's summer 07/08 edition I promised for the next three editions to provide you with more detailed information on Employer incentives provided by the Australian Government. How to apply, what the program can be used for and DWA examples in coordinating the incentives for the employer. To remind our readers the incentives outlined are:

- Work experience or Work Training
- Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)
- Workplace Modification Scheme (WMS)
- Supported Wage Scheme (SWS)
- National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (yes that's us DWA)
- Job Access
- Traineeship for people with disabilities
- Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support
- The Auslan (Australian Sign Language) for Employment Program.

We have previously provided detailed information on the Supported Wage Scheme (SWS) in DWA's Autumn 08 edition and this edition we will provide further information on the Workplace Modification Scheme (WMS).

More about the Workplace Modifications Scheme

The skills shortage provides Australian employers new opportunities to expand and enhance their workforce. People with disability are a great employment resource, as they are eager to work and offer many benefits to their employers. The Australian Government has a range of free initiatives designed to help employers recruit and retain people with disability. The Workplace Modification Scheme (WMS) is one of these initiatives that help people with disability find meaningful and ongoing employment.

People with disability are an asset to any workplace. Like all employees, people with disability bring a range of varied skills and attributes. In addition, research has shown that people with disability have a lower rate of absenteeism, have fewer accidents at work and the costs of hiring people with disability can be significantly lower than hiring other employees. Employing people with disability can also strengthen your business through building staff morale and generating community support.

While there are some job seekers and employees with disability that require assistance, the majority of people with disability do not require any workplace modifications.

What is the Workplace Modifications Scheme

WMS was created in 1998 to help employers recruit and retain staff who have a disability. Under the Scheme, employers can be reimbursed for costs incurred for adjustments made to the workplace which helps a person with disability perform work responsibilities. The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), provides funding for a range of workplace modifications such as physical workplace adjustments to buildings and work equipment and vehicles. It also reimburses the costs of purchasing special or adaptive equipment including specialist software and computers. Recent examples of modifications/equipment include work related hearing aids and hearing loops for meeting rooms, Zoom Text software, custom made keyguards and the installation of automated doors. The Scheme may also provide for some training in the use of the modification or equipment. The Scheme

Continued page 2



Group General Manager Human Resources, Luxottica, Rhonda Brighton; Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care and Member for Bennelong, Maxine McKew MP; Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia, Tina Zeleznik; Minister for Employment Participation, Hon Brendan O'Connor MP; and Chief Executive Officer, Luxottica, Chris Beer.

Luxottica leads the way in human resources initiatives

A special event for the signing of the MOU

was attended by the Minister for Employment Participation, Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care and Member for Bennelong, Maxine McKew MP.

In Sydney, 21 August 2008 – Australia's largest eye care group, Luxottica, has moved to bolster its commitment to build a diverse workplace by being the first company in the optometry sector to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Disability Works Australia.

The Australian Government funds Disability Works Australia to deliver the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator Service (NDRS) to work with large employers, assisting them to recruit people with disabilities. As part of the MOU, Luxottica, where appropriate, will fill both temporary and permanent positions nationally in the organisation with people with disabilities recommended by DWA.

Luxottica is part of the Milan-based Luxottica Group, the world's largest eyewear company. In addition to owning 5800 optical and sunglass retail stores in North America, Asia-Pacific, Australasia, China and Europe, Luxottica Group has an unrivalled portfolio of house and licensed brands.

With over 900 stores across the OPSM, Laubman & Pank, Budget Eyewear, Bright Eyes Sunglasses and Sunglass Hut brands, Luxottica is the leading optical retailer in Australia, in addition to having a strong wholesale division to the business.

Chris Beer, Chief Executive Officer of Luxottica Australasia, SE China & South Africa said: "Luxottica is committed to enhancing its positive work environment by attracting employees from a diverse range of backgrounds and minority groups. Together, we

recognise and appreciate that each individual has unique abilities which add strength to the business. Signing the MOU is a logical, yet integral part of further improving the workplace environment at Luxottica."

Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer of DWA, said: "DWA has already filled temporary positions at Luxottica's head office in Sydney and there are further plans to expand to other sites, including: the EyeBiz lens laboratory; the Luxottica distribution centre; and retail stores. We look forward to an ongoing relationship with Luxottica where the organisation and its potential staff are sure to benefit."

This MOU is the latest sign of growing momentum in the Luxottica human resources area and supports the group's commitment to maintaining and escalating its position as an employer of choice.

Minister O'Connor outlined Australian Governments planned improvements to make employment services more accessible to employers and more responsive to job seekers.

"This agreement between Luxottica and DWA is an excellent example of how employers can take proactive steps to give people with disabilities a fair go in the labour market."

Minister O'Connor encouraged other employers who have not considered people with disabilities as potential employees to do so now.

Ms McKew welcomed the agreement and said "This MOU will provide significant opportunities for people in Bennelong and means more opportunities for people with disability in society and to reach their full potential. Showcasing employers like Luxottica, who are leading the way in providing flexible and adaptable work opportunities, will help to overcome prejudices and stereotypes often held by employers."

Employer incentives

continued from page 1

is flexible and is designed to consider each individual person's workplace requirements. WMS assistance is available for both new and existing employees.

Eligibility

To be eligible for WMS, the employee must:

1. be employed for at least 8 hours a week and be employed in a position expected to last 13 weeks or more (or have a job offer)
2. have an ongoing disability that has lasted, or is likely to last, for two years or more
3. have a disability that results in a limitation, restriction or impairment affecting their everyday activities that requires a work-related adjustment
4. be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
5. be employed under a legal industrial arrangement that complies with the minimum standards established by federal, state or territory law.

For more information about eligibility see the Workplace Modifications Scheme Guidelines available from www.jobaccess.gov.au.

To access the Workplace Modifications Scheme

To find out more about WMS or to lodge an application all you have to do is visit jobaccess.gov.au. JobAccess is a United Nations award winning Australian Government initiative, facilitating practical workplace solutions for people with disability and their employers through an information rich website and a free information and advice service.

Before you begin the application, you will need to know what modifications and / or equipment are required for your employee. The Workplace Adjustment Tool, available on the JobAccess website, is a searchable database of products where you can search for ideas and solutions based on either, the type of job being undertaken, a particular disability, a type of product or a particular supplier. When you find a product or solution that interests you, the tool will link you to suppliers or services in your state or territory where you can obtain a quote.

After you have found a workplace solution, complete the Workplace Modifications Scheme application form. If the employee is registered with a Disability Employment Network or Vocational Rehabilitation Service provider, they may submit the application, instead. The application process is easy and the Workplace Modifications Scheme Guidelines are available to help you. However, if you have any questions JobAccess advisers are available to assist you.

After completing the application form, a free workplace assessment may be organised to confirm the relevance of the request and the WMS assessor can offer expert advice on workplace adjustment, equipment and modifications. Applications can be approved very quickly after receiving the Workplace Assessment report and then you are able to purchase equipment and seek reimbursement.

All applications are subject to criteria outlined in the Workplace Modifications Scheme Guidelines.

For more information on WMS, or on any matter relating to the employment of people with disability, visit the website www.jobaccess.gov.au or phone a friendly JobAccess adviser on freecall 1800 464 800.

DWA can also be contacted for assistance. The following two case studies are two examples of employers that have worked with DWA to ensure workplace modifications and supports are in place. This ensures that people with a disability can win a position on merit and be able to perform the duties required to sustain the employment.



Majella Knobel

Westpac Bank and DWA leading the way in recruiting graduates with disabilities

Case study 1.

In 2007 Westpac Bank one of Australia's leading financial institutions approached DWA to review its graduate recruitment processes in relation to its impact on graduates with a disability.

Offering approximately 180 graduate positions as part of its annual recruitment intake, Westpac bank is one of the largest recruiters of tertiary graduates in the banking sector and one of Australia's 'Big Four' banks.

According to Sarah Armstrong, Westpac's Graduate Recruitment Manager, "In order to maximise the potential of Australia's talent pool Westpac identified the need to remove any barriers to its current recruitment methods that may prevent it from attracting and securing graduates with disabilities".

In consultation with DWA, Westpac implemented a graduate recruitment model that provided reasonable adjustments, supports or modifications as part of its recruitment and interview process for applicants with disabilities.

Current recruitment processes are generally electronically based via a web site and in many instances, this method is not suitable for candidates with vision impairment, learning disability, dyslexia and some medical conditions. Westpac wanted DWA to provide a service model that involved providing direct access to a person who understood the needs of various students with disabilities and was familiar with modifications and reasonable adjustments that could be made to online and group assessment/ recruitment processes.

Westpac also appreciated the extensive resources and knowledge of DWA to access:

- Disability services staff at universities;
- Other degree providing institutions across Australia; and
- in organisations and areas who are associated students with disabilities.

DWA are pleased to be working with a large national employer who was keen to employ a diverse range of staff and considered any accommodations as a normal part of a recruitment process. This enabled DWA to provide a secure and supportive environment for applicants with a disability knowing that the employer was interested in securing the best talent available and understood this meant accommodating a diverse workforce.

DWA staff played a vital role in supporting and encouraging applicants by providing an easily accessible and confidential support service for applicants. This service assisted applicants to identify any impact their disability may have on their ability to participate equitably in the recruitment process and enabled DWA to liaise on their behalf with Westpac to organise any individual modifications or supports.

Westpac run a robust recruitment programme with fierce competition across the country for positions. The modifications, support and reasonable adjustment provided by Westpac to their recruitment service did not reduce the rigour and standards of the recruitment process undertaken by Westpac, these included:

- Desk top scanners, large font paper work, altered contrast on screen and hard copies of on line testing for people with visual impairment.
- Hands free units and note takers for people with physical disabilities.
- Auslan Interpreters and face to face interviews were conducted instead of phone interviews for people with hearing impairment.
- Extra time was provided for people with a disability depending on their needs.
- Assessment centre tests were provided in alternative formats.
- Assisted with transport to assessment centre.

As a result of this partnership, DWA pre-screened many candidates with 65 applications from across Australia being forwarded to Westpac. DWA applicants were successfully able to demonstrate their academic and personal skills through a range of alternate mechanisms that required minimal modifications to the existing Westpac recruitment structure. Over half of these applicants progressed to the final stages of the recruitment process.

DWA is pleased to advise that Westpac is currently negotiating contracts of employment with a number of DWA candidates who have a range of disabilities and looks forward to continuing the partnership in the future.

Majella Knobel has accepted a graduate position with Westpac in Sydney, to commence in February 2009. Majella is a recent Honours graduate of the University of Melbourne. Majella has only been without sight for the past 11 years and during that time has adapted to using a range of assistive technology to facilitate her study and work.

Australia Post, Delivering Opportunities

Case study 2.

Caroline Browne had been unemployed for seven months prior to pursuing a career with Australia Post. Not long after, she found herself riding one of the iconic Australia Post motorcycles.

Caroline lost her hearing at the age of three after a bout of Meningitis, however her positive attitude and determination would not let deafness affect her employment opportunities. So when the factory closed where Caroline had been employed for many years, she aligned herself with Nova Employment, a Disability Employment Network (DEN) provider offering a specialty service to help the Deaf and people with a hearing impairment into work.

With the support of case worker Cassandra Olsen from Nova Employment, Caroline identified a job opportunity within Australia Post which appealed to her, "a postal delivery motorcycle officer". Having grown up with motorcycles on the Cook Islands, Caroline decided it would be fantastic to have a job where she could enjoy the outdoors – and fulfil her passion of riding!

Caroline applied online through Australia Post's website. Having declared her disability on the application form, support was offered at the outset to Caroline from four main areas: her (DEN) agency, Nova Employment; Disability Works Australia (DWA); and Australia Post's NSW/ACT Diversity and Centralised Recruitment Units.

Overseeing the recruitment of people with a disability for Australia Post NSW/ACT is Vanessa Cotton of their Diversity Unit. This Unit works in consultation with the job applicant, DWA, the DEN provider, and with the Recruitment Units to match people to vacant positions within the business.

Passionate about her involvement, Vanessa comments,

"We are all individuals, with our own skill sets. When a person declares they have a disability, we take into consideration their personal situation with the aim to ensure they are not disadvantaged in any way throughout the application process, and once employed."



Caroline Browne

Australia Post engages the services of DWA, primarily to provide an objective, independent assessment of an applicant's disability. Their report indicates whether the individual can fulfill the inherent requirements of the job, in addition to recommending appropriate adjustments and modifications to further accommodate the recruitment and job placement processes.

Cassandra from Nova accompanied Caroline to her meeting with DWA, interpreting throughout using Australian sign language (Auslan). As a consequence of receiving the report from DWA, Australia Post was well informed on Caroline's abilities and requirements from the outset.

Danica Vucic from the Australia Post Recruitment Unit explains,

"Each person with a disability is very unique and we try to make adjustments where necessary to our assessment procedures to gauge a candidate's ability to perform the inherent requirements of the job."

Caroline was then ready to continue through the 'standard' recruitment process. This included a pre-placement medical assessment, a federal character clearance, reference checks, in addition to an assessment facilitated by Chandler McLeod. This assessment for delivery officer applicants focuses on numeracy, literacy, comprehension and behaviors.

Caroline was interviewed by Lakemba Delivery Centre Manager Adrian Jones, with Cassandra from Nova again signing Auslan for the meeting. Adrian remarked, "Interviewing Caroline was no hassle. She met all the selection criteria in her answers – and communication using an interpreter went without a hitch."

With pre employment checks completed, Australia Post offered Caroline a fulltime postal delivery officer role at the Lakemba Delivery Centre. Vanessa advised her colleagues in the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Department, who then conducted an OHS review to determine if there were any additional safety requirements the Lakemba Centre needed to consider. Adjustments – including extra warning lights, and a mobile phone kept in the office dedicated to communicate via SMS with deaf posties on their round – were already in place as the Delivery Centre had been modified previously for another hearing impaired employee.

Before starting on the job, Caroline attended the three-day Australia Post Induction, run as a centralised course at their Leightonfield Facility. A component of the Induction involved practical training on how Caroline would sort her mail each morning on a sorting frame. Following on from the Induction Course, Caroline attended a two-day motorcycle training course. Cassandra signed for Caroline throughout the Induction and Motorcycle Courses.

Three weeks after applying online, Caroline started her first day at the Lakemba Delivery Centre. It was a big day for Caroline but the support did not stop here. Brad, a Postal Delivery Team Leader, was assigned as a mentor to Caroline. After a couple of days of providing on-the-job support, Cassandra felt comfortable that Caroline was ready for her first unaccompanied shift. Having developed a good rapport with the management at Lakemba, Cassandra ensured she maintained ongoing contact with Caroline, Brad and Adrian. Through the mentorship, Caroline and Brad have developed a great friendship. In fact, Adrian and Brad's fantastic encouragement meant it was not long before Caroline really felt a part of the Australia Post team.

For Caroline, working for Australia Post is like a dream come true. **As Caroline states,**

"Riding the bike makes me feel free, I love the job, the team at Australia Post, and the good friendships I have made."



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.



Senior Project Officer (State Government), Disability Works Australia, Tim O'Donnell; Policy Officer, Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development, Michael Uniacke; Acting Manager, Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development, Peta McCammon.

Statutory Bodies Step Up in Victoria

Over the winter period, a series of workshops have been undertaken focusing on the Disability Action Plans (DAP) of thirty eight Victorian Statutory bodies.

The thirty eight statutory bodies represent some of the largest organisations in Victoria including Office of Public Prosecutions, Melbourne Water and Vic Roads to name a few.

This gathering reinforces the commitment of the Victorian Government and directly relates to the recent announcement late last year that Disability Works Australia (DWA) had won funding from the Victorian Government to support Victorian Government department's recruitment of people with a disability into the Victorian Public Sector.

DWA has negotiated the signing of individual agreements with each Department and this has now lead to ongoing discussion with a number of Victorian statutory bodies with regards to their own Disability Action Plans.

Momentum has been building with the key area of recruitment of people with a disability being highlighted as one of the four outcome areas to be reviewed, assessed and improved.

During the June 2008 workshop, Disability Works Australia was invited, to help facilitate discussion within the groups of statutory bodies to:

- Gain an understanding of the four outcome areas of DAPs.
- Learn about key strategies to include in their DAPs.
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability, presented by – Milly Parker, Victorian

Disability Advisory Council.

- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities.
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability, Presentation – Michael Walker, and Michael Uniacke Office for Disability.
- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment.

This session had a strong focus on employment and changing attitudes which discriminate against people with Disability.

Tina Zeleznik, CEO of Disability Works Australia addressed the group on "reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment." Ms Zeleznik spoke of DWA and how the organisation can support and help the statutory bodies with the recruitment of people with a disability into their organisations.

Various group discussions occurred to talk openly about the recruitment of people with a disability. The discussion focused on what organisations currently provided people with disabilities during the recruitment process and what could be modified so that the recruitment process was more equitable.

Overall, the workshop was a success and several statutory bodies have now started a conversation with DWA to help with the recruitment of people with a disability into their organisations.