

## A win, win, win service

When we started Disability Works Australia, the Board wanted to make a real difference for people with disabilities and their families, for employers and for our community.

We realised how fortunate we are to have work in our day jobs that we find rewarding. We also thought that our businesses and employers were blessed with our presence, regardless of any imperfections we might have! But how easy could it have been for each of us and our employers to have missed out on those opportunities?

One way that we have been able to make a substantial difference for each of these three groups is that we have been able to assist more than 2100 people with disabilities into real jobs. Their employers have found employees with the talents that they were seeking. Their families, the community and the Federal Government are enjoying their new independence.

However, our greatest success is yet to come. Our work is having a snowball effect and we can hear a very large snowball rumbling faster and faster towards us.

Without doubt, success feeds success and we have a growing pool of experience, contacts and reputation. Doors open more quickly to us as we can point to the success and benefits that others in their own situation have achieved.

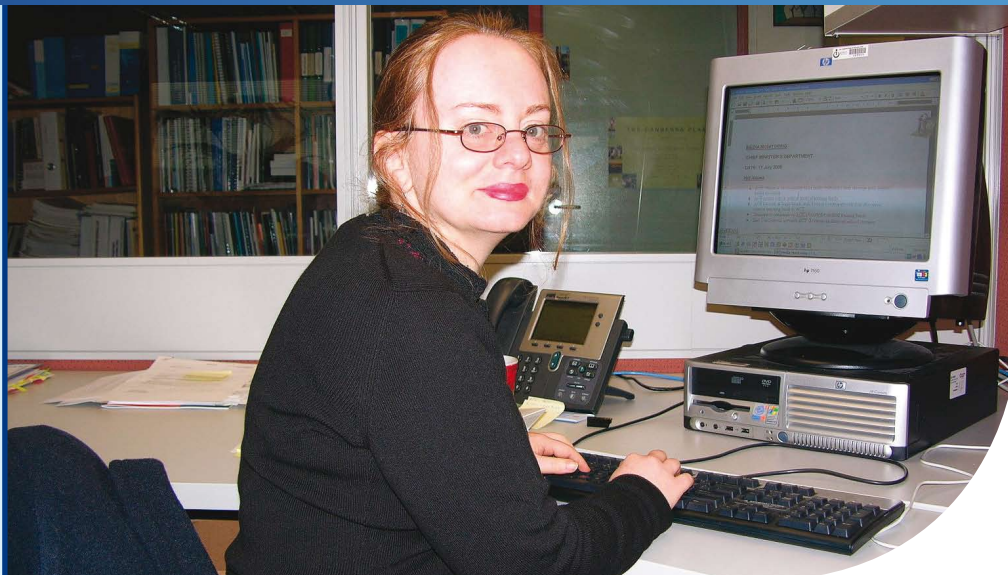
However, more significant is what is in the pipeline. Our last estimate was that when everything planned comes to maturity it will equate to 5000 positions each year – restricted only by the resources available to service the employers. That is a significant win, win, win indeed and will require continued expansion of DWA and its national network.

None of this involves charity (or additional cost) for the employers. It is a matter of good business and getting the right talent. There are valid economic arguments for this. But I believe that an intangible element behind our success is the large number of people who share our ideals and who are prepared to give others a fair go.

The other significant events on our immediate horizon are the Federal Government's review of the role of the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator and the Prime Minister's Employer Awards. Last year I counted six mentions of employers that DWA has worked with, and this year I am hoping for another gold medal performance.

My thanks to our inspirational chief executive Tina Zeleznik and the hardworking DWA staff, fellow Board members, all those who work with and support us, and the Federal Government through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Without you, this success would not have been possible.

**Andrew Rogers**  
Chairperson  
Disability Works Australia



*Penny Thomas's ambition to find a role in media and communications is now on track after winning a place in the ACT Government's graduate recruitment program.*

## ACT aims high with graduate program

The ACT Government has come close to meeting an ambitious recruitment target for graduates with a disability in the first year of a new program.

The recruitment net was cast wide as Disability Works Australia tried to ensure people with a disability filled half the available graduate positions on offer by the government.

A creditable 41 per cent was eventually achieved with seven out of 17 graduate recruits hired as a result of DWA's support. They came from South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria as well as the ACT.

Tracey Crump, senior HR project officer in the Chief Minister's department, said the government had set its target high and was pleased with the outcome.

"DWA was particularly helpful throughout the recruitment process, first in finding the right people and then in making sure the assessment of the candidates was fair," Ms Crump said.

"Not only did they provide us with support, but they also assisted the recruits with their applications and made sure they had an equal opportunity to compete when applying for the positions."

The recruits had a range of disabilities, several of them visual, and came from different educational backgrounds, including law, commerce, environmental sciences and communication.

Positions were awarded in various ACT Government departments including health, treasury and land development.

Ms Crump said it was the first time the government had been involved in such a program and was looking forward to working with DWA again.

DWA chief executive Tina Zeleznik said the ACT Government program was helping to break down the stereotype about people with a disability.

"Best of all, the ACT Government now has a diverse and motivated graduate pool."

### **Penny finds a level playing field**

*Penny Thomas has experienced first hand the barriers that can be faced when being assessed during a recruitment program.*

*Born with a hearing impairment, Ms Thomas, 35, applied for a traineeship after leaving school and patiently waited for the examination to start. No-one bothered to inform her the signal had already been given and, as a result, she failed to finish on time.*

*Ms Thomas says it's just one example of the extra challenges that people with a disability have to overcome. "Far too often the difficulties faced by people with a disability are overlooked or not taken into consideration, which means they are not judged fairly on their ability to do the work," she said.*

*"Fortunately this is changing and it's also becoming more socially acceptable to have a disability – in the past I haven't always told people.*

*"Most organisations now try to minimise barriers for hearing impaired people, such as smaller examination rooms and face-to-face instructions."*

*Ms Thomas' ambition to find a role in media and communications is now on track after winning a place in the ACT Government's graduate recruitment program.*

*Disability Works Australia worked with Ms Thomas and the ACT Government during the assessment process to ensure she was given an equal opportunity along with the other applicants.*



Madonna Noble is one of 38 people with disabilities that DWA has helped place in work with Brisbane City Council, 29 of them into traineeship positions.

## Wheelchair no barrier to a determined Madonna

When a rare degenerative disease forced Madonna Noble into a wheelchair two years ago she realised she was facing a life-changing decision.

The 39-year-old former nurse could either succumb to her disability or take control of her life.

"I considered my options and realised I was ready to make a new start – I wanted to get back into the workforce," Ms Noble said.

She enrolled at TAFE for a course in business administration and before long joined a 12-month trainee program at Brisbane City Council. The council has a policy of offering positions to people with disabilities and a well-developed training program.

As a result of a memorandum of agreement signed between Disability Works Australia and the council in 2004, Ms Noble is one of 38 people with disabilities that DWA has helped place in work, 29 of them into traineeship positions.

"I found it relatively easy, but then I was really motivated and put everything into it," she said. "I couldn't be a nurse anymore and this was something I really wanted to do."

Ms Noble makes it sound like her transition back into the workforce was straightforward, but then she's been a battler for many years.

She was born with ehlers-danlos syndrome, a condition that involves faulty collagen which causes fragile skin and unstable joints. In Ms Noble's case, this has led to frequent joint dislocations, problems with the major organs and her eyes, and 12 years ago she suffered a stroke.

During her 39 years she has also had to undergo about 30 operations to help fix her broken body.

When not at work Ms Noble is a devoted mother of a 14-year-old son who suffers from autism. "I've always loved working with children, especially helping those with a disability," she said.

DWA worked closely with Ms Noble to ensure she had the best chance of success when applying for a position at Brisbane City Council.

And she has quickly made her mark. Ms Noble was a standout trainee – coming runner-up in the council's trainee of the year award.

Since completing her traineeship in May in corporate services, Ms Noble has been given a permanent role in the rates section of customer community services.

## Reaching out to regional Australia

*Disability Works Australia has the support of major national employers and access to quality vacancies. Many of these employers, together with DWA, have developed processes to provide access to vacancies for people with disabilities living in rural and remote areas.*

*Disability Employment Network staff in rural areas work closely with DWA to ensure at least 20 per cent of placements are achieved outside metropolitan areas. Coles Myer has been a strong supporter of DWA's regional strategy, providing employment opportunities all over Australia, including Tamworth in New South Wales, Port Augusta in South Australia, Katherine in the Northern Territory and Broome in Western Australia.*

## Recruitment drive goes long distance

Distance is no barrier for Disability Works Australia in its partnership with Coles Myer Ltd to help people with disabilities find work.

Coles is hiring people with disabilities in all corners of Australia and Maree Jones, DWA's manager in Western Australia, recently travelled from Perth to the state's far north west to assess candidates for Coles' Broome store.

With the onset of the busy tourism season in July and August, the store's manager Peter McGill was keen to hire four people with disabilities to tidy shelves.

Two have already been found and, as DWA News went to print, another two were close to being employed.

"Unlike metropolitan areas where it's never too difficult to find people with disabilities looking for jobs, in regional towns it can be a different story," Ms Jones said.

"Even though we've found it quite hard to fill these vacancies, Peter totally supports this program and has worked very closely with us to identify the right people and to organise a work schedule that suits them. It's been a real team effort."

Ms Jones is also appreciative of local Broome recruitment agency Kimberley Personnel, which went out of its way at short notice to identify candidates for the positions and provided excellent on-the-job support.

Two young men are now employed part-time at the store after a month's work experience – Matthew Pola, 22, who has a significant visual impairment, and Jay Kennedy, 27, who has an intellectual disability.

Coles formed an alliance with DWA in July 2004 to implement an industry best practice model for recruiting people with disabilities. This has led to more than 400 people being hired in a range of positions across Australia.

Mr McGill said everyone ended up being a winner. "We're taking on people that might otherwise struggle to find a job, but it's certainly not just one way because they are all very keen. It's a very successful program."



From left, Lorel Woodhouse of Kimberley Personnel, and Jay Kennedy and Matthew Pola of Coles.



# New government service offers workplace solutions

JobAccess was officially launched in Melbourne on August 11 by the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Minister for Workforce Participation, and speakers from the National Australia Bank.

JobAccess is a free national disability employment information and advice service funded by the Australian Government.

"It is a one-stop shop for information about employment of people with a disability and includes a telephone service and a comprehensive, user-friendly website," Minister Stone said.

"The service provides employers, job seekers with a disability, co-workers and employment services with confidential, expert advice on issues facing people with a disability in the workforce."

The website supporting the service has information about incentive schemes as well as other government services

including assistance available to meet costs associated with adjusting a workplace. Disability Works Australia contributed a number of success stories and testimonials from employers and they can be seen on the website [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)

The Minister congratulated the National Australia Bank on its Disability Employment program with DWA and encouraged other employers and people with a disability to visit the JobAccess website or free call the service on 1800 464 800.



Dr Sharman Stone, Minister for Workforce Participation, centre, with the National Australia Bank's Anne Ward, general counsel Australia, and Ilona Charles, general manager workplace relations and diversity.

# Diversity key to NAB employment

For the past three years, Disability Works Australia has worked closely with the National Australia Bank to recruit – and retain in employment – people with a disability.

It's part of a national agreement between DWA and NAB, which has a commitment to recruitment processes that attract and retain diverse talent.

"The process starts by DWA liaising with the bank's hiring managers or preferred recruitment agency to identify appropriate vacancies and distributing those vacancies to disability employment networks in each State," said Tina Zeleznik, DWA chief executive officer.

"We then source and screen applicants, and liaise with NAB about any adjustments and supports that need to be made for the applicant to take part in the recruitment process or to perform the requirements of the role.

"Then, if the applicant is successful, we work with the employer to enable the smooth transition to work for both the applicant and the work team."

One such recent placement at NAB was Chris Baillie, a graduate who has taken a role as a programmer. Mr Baillie, who is blind, applied independently for the role, but was supported by DWA and Vision Australia Employment Services in workplace transition.

NAB's Chris Hartman, formerly head of the graduate program for NAB's Technology Business Unit, said Mr Baillie applied through normal processes

and was a very strong contender among a large pool of candidates. "He's a very talented individual who uses his own initiative and is willing to take on challenges," Mr Hartman said.

Mr Hartman said that other than JAWS assistive technology, which reads back what is on the monitor, no additional accommodation requirements were needed.

DWA ran a presentation for NAB managers about employing and working with people who are vision-impaired. Vision Australia assisted with the application process and assessed Mr Baillie's workplace to identify any adaptive technology or training required.

"We also ran co-worker education sessions, which gave both Mr Baillie and his colleagues the chance to ask questions of each other," said Robyn McKenzie, manager, Employment Services Vision Australia.

Mr Baillie said the education was very useful. "Everyone gave good feedback and I believe it made my colleagues more comfortable about asking questions," he said.

Mr Baillie has quickly settled into the role. "I am really enjoying work, and have been given the opportunity to prove I can succeed in the role," he said. "I've been allocated projects that are quite challenging at times and have been trusted to complete them.

"NAB has a very open mind to employing people with a disability, which is vitally important."

*Vision Australia is the largest provider of services to people who are blind or vision impaired in Australia, assisting more than 38,000 children and adults.*

*As part of its work, Vision Australia is funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations as an employment provider, offering a wide range of services to help people who are blind or vision impaired gain and maintain employment across Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT.*

*Disability Works Australia has a close relationship with Vision Australia to place people in work for the long term.*

*"DWA's agreements with major employers mean they are aware when job vacancies arise that could suit people who are blind or vision impaired," said Robyn McKenzie, manager of Employment Services Vision Australia. "DWA is receptive and helpful, and very diligent in finding out about our clients and their skills."*



## Services for employers

### What does DWA do?

DWA provides employers and Disability Employment Network (DEN) 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](http://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 DEN, 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](http://www.dwa.org.au)

### What support services does DWA provide?

DWA and DEN 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.dwa.org.au)

### Does DWA provide employers with support after placement?

Yes, both DWA and DEN provide ongoing support to ensure a successful employer/employee relationship. See also [www.dwa.org.au](http://www.dwa.org.au)

## DWA employees solve skills shortages at Jim's

The national agreement forged between Jim's Group and Disability Works Australia has resulted in about 40 people with a disability being placed in full-time work in little more than a year.

"It's a fantastic win-win situation for everyone involved," said Jim's Group chief executive officer Gregory Puzzolo.

Like some other industries around Australia, the major home service franchise is facing skills shortages.

"Every 12 months we turn away over 30,000 jobs around Australia because our franchisees simply don't have the staff to service them," Mr Puzzolo said.

"When we were first approached by DWA to consider taking on some people with a disability, we only thought it may help us through our seasonal busy periods.

"However it has worked out so well that the franchisees have created full-time jobs."

Until now, all the jobs have been in the lawn-mowing division, however Mr Puzzolo said he was now planning to promote the scheme in Jim's

fencing, tree and building maintenance, book-keeping and computing divisions.

"The physical work we do is hard and very intense, which is why Jim's franchisees sometimes find it hard to attract employees. However the employees from DWA all have a fantastic attitude and they're willing to work hard."

Mr Puzzolo said Jim's Group has an excellent relationship with DWA. "I see a long-term synergy between us. Our franchisees are satisfied and the clients are happy so there are benefits all round.

"Franchisees with DWA employees are now spreading the word of the benefits at their local franchisee meetings throughout the country. We aim to become the largest franchisee company in Australia using DWA employees."

Mr Puzzolo said DWA makes the whole process very easy by screening applicants for suitability first and offering strong support in the workplace.

"Our franchisees – and there are 2500 around Australia – have embraced the idea of employing people with a disability," he said.

## Nominations open for Prime Minister's awards

Disability Works Australia is a proud supporter of the Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Awards, which recognise excellence in the employment of people with a disability.

Nominations are now open for the awards, which acknowledge the contribution made by small, medium and large employers in providing employment opportunities for people with a disability. They also recognise the efforts of the

Australian Government funded employment services in helping people with a disability gain employment in the open labour market.

If you are, or know of, an employer or service provider that offers job opportunities to a person with a disability, show your support and submit a nomination. Nominations close on September 18, 2006. For more information, visit [www.workplace.gov.au/eya](http://www.workplace.gov.au/eya) or call 131715.