

Employer Incentives

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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 System (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 System (SWS) in DWA's Autumn 08 edition and Workplace Modification Scheme (WMS) in DWA's Winter 08 edition. Copies can be found on www.dwa.org.au. In this edition we will provide more information on The Auslan (Australian Sign Language) for Employment Program.

Auslan for Employment (AFE) program

Australians who are Deaf have a wealth of experience and skills to offer employers and many employers may not be aware of government assistance to help recruit and retain Deaf employees. Previously we outlined the assistance which is available through the Workplace Modifications Scheme, which may provide financial assistance to employers for the purchase of special equipment including alert systems, mobile telephones and TTYs. While technology assists many Deaf people to undertake their work, there will be times when personal communication is important. Engaging a sign language interpreter, or having staff in the organisation who know some sign language can be the key to making that communication more effective and inclusive.

In this article, we outline the assistance which is available to help recruit and support existing employees who use Auslan (Australian sign language) to communicate.

The Australian Government's Auslan for Employment (AFE) program provides financial assistance to employers for:

- Auslan interpreting for job interviews and for other work related activities;
- Deaf awareness training for co-workers of a Deaf employee; and
- Funding for staff members to undertake nationally recognised Auslan studies.

The availability of the financial assistance for Auslan interpreting makes it easier for employers to recruit and employ people who are Deaf, especially during the initial stages of conducting job interviews and settling into new work environments. Access to an Auslan interpreter is also highly valued for training courses, induction programs and selected conferences and team meetings.

Employers, including government employers and self employed people may apply for assistance. Providers of government employment services may also apply for assistance on behalf of registered clients.

Applications are made through www.jobaccess.gov.au and it is a good idea to first contact a JobAccess adviser on 1800 464 800 (including TTY) to discuss your requirements and the application process. The JobAccess advisers can provide you with step by step instructions and some tips to make the process quick and easy.

The Government currently provides up to \$5,000 worth of Auslan interpreting for work related activities for each employee. During recent national consultation meetings for the review of disability employment services, several people advocated for access to more Auslan interpreting which is currently under consideration.



Lara Ubaldi of Kmart Richmond and Store Manager, Shaun Wesley

Kmart offering sustainable employment options

Disability Works Australia (DWA) has proudly assisted many people with disabilities into Kmart department stores throughout Australia and has been doing so since DWA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Coles Group in June 2004.

In June 2007, Kmart Richmond identified the need for a Recovery Assistant and contacted the staff at DWA in our Victorian office. DWA broadcasted the position to the local Disability Employment Networks (DEN's) and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). DWA received the referrals and filtered through the candidates with appropriate skills and experience and pre-screened those suitable applicants.

Those deemed suitable were forwarded onto Kmart Richmond for interviews and assessments. One of the applicants put forward by DWA, Lara Ubaldi, was successful for the position and has since progressed from a casual position of limited hours to a permanent position of 28 hours per week. The team at Kmart sees Lara as a very valuable team member and her reliability has had many benefits for the store.

Prior to this position Lara had work experience in Aged Care and a Certificate 1 in Work Education but was looking for a career change. Lara wanted to pursue a career in the retail environment and the Recovery Assistant position in Kmart was to be Lara's first step into the open labour market.

At the point of the DWA assessment she had clearly visible skills and genuine motivation to work. Through DWA she had an avenue to access a role and be prepared for the application process. This has proven to be evidence of how a person can transition from the education system to employment through the services of DWA.

Kmart supported Lara in her new-found position by initially demonstrating tasks, accompanied with clear verbal instructions. This was required to assist with her learning disability. To begin with, Kmart Richmond set a daily routine for Lara. Her skills have proven to be broader than her original position and she is now working further across the store in more areas and fulfilling more duties.

Kmart has shown an ongoing commitment to employing people with a disability and has successfully done so nationwide. Kmart General Manager – Human Resources, Tony Weston, said Kmart was proud to have a long-standing association with Disability Works Australia.

“We look forward to continuing our association with them into the future. Team members provided by Disability Works Australia are valued members of our diverse workforce.”

Tony Weston

Kmart General Manager – Human Resources

On-the-job support can be beneficial and Lara's Disability Employment Network Agency, Interact Employment Services, ensured Lara sustained her position. Their efforts in providing on-the-job support have been exemplary and met all expectations of Kmart Richmond.

All parties have benefited from Lara's employment; her employment agency has placed a great candidate into work, DWA has fulfilled the employers needs, Kmart Richmond have a dedicated and valued team member, and Lara has a great position in a supportive environment doing what she loves.

Employer Support

With the support from the Commonwealth Government, DWA continues to attract National Companies to join the growing band of employers making a commitment to providing job opportunities to people with disabilities.

Our thanks go to the companies listed below as without them, we would not be able to provide the ongoing stream of vacancies (totalling 8,415 job opportunities as at September 2008) to job seekers with a disability and Disability Employment Network members across Australia.

Special thanks to our Employer Partners throughout 2008

- Adelaide Festival Centre
- Adelaide Mushrooms
- ANZ Bank
- Australia Post
- Australian Fuel Distributors
- BAE System
- Bendigo Bank
- Boorandara Council (Vic)
- Brisbane City Council (Qld)
- Business Enterprise Centre (BEC)
- City of Subiaco
- City West Water Limited
- Coles Group
- Commonwealth Bank
- Compass Group
- Darwin Convention Centre
- Grace Removals Group
- Hilton Hotels
- IKEA
- Inghams
- Jims Group
- Kmart
- Luxottica Group
- National Australia Bank (NAB)
- National Retailers Association (NRA)
- Northern Territory Government
- NRA Skills Service
- Peer Training
- SAH Group
- Salesforce Australia
- Savings & Loans Credit Union
- Select Telesources
- Selectrix
- South Australian State Government
- Target
- Tenix Solutions Pty Ltd
- TNT Transport
- University of Western Australia (UWA)
- Unlimited Group Pty Ltd
- Victorian Electoral Commission
- Victorian State Government
- Westpac
- Woolworths

Looking ahead to 2009, DWA will continue to build on the strong relationships in place with all the companies listed and introduce new companies in the future.

On behalf of all DWA staff, I thank you for your support and assistance throughout the past year.



NSW Operations Manager, Disability Works Australia, Nicole Scully and Human Resources Manager, Hilton Hotel Sydney, Chantal Jackson

Hilton Hotel discovering the value of a diverse workforce

The leading global hospitality giant, Hilton Group is well known for its superior service and luxury accommodation. Hilton Hotel, Sydney, NSW has taken this excellent reputation even further by stepping up and embracing diversity.

In June of this year, Hilton Hotel, Sydney signed an agreement with Disability Works Australia (DWA), implementing a plan to develop their staff base by offering employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

The Hilton Hotel Sydney has 576 guest rooms, 4,000sqm of flexible event floor space, and an array of bars and cafes for wining and dining. Hilton Hotel, Sydney has the potential for incredible job prospects. Being such a large organisation, this is a prime opportunity for job seekers with disabilities to gain employment, with the hotel already employing over 625 staff.

DWA has received job vacancies from Hilton Hotel, Sydney and after broadcasting the positions to local Disability Employment Network (DEN) and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) providers, DWA received many referrals to the positions.

Applicants were pre-screened by DWA staff and suitable candidates were short-listed and referred to Hilton Hotel for interviews. Five applicants were offered employment and commenced work on 1st October 2008.

Successful applicant: Maria

One of the successful applicants, Maria Calica had experience in retail and hotel positions previously and has a Certificate 2 in Retail Operations. With a mild intellectual disability and mental health, Maria had not worked in paid employment since 2005 and was keen to get back into the workforce. No workplace modifications were required due to her disability for her to complete her duties. Maria only requires an understanding and supportive employer and employment agency to complete her job well.

Maria's position in Hilton Hotel Sydney is in the Events Department where she assists with behind the scenes preparation of linen and equipment, such as folding

napkins or polishing glasses and cutlery. With the help of DWA and her employment agency, Break Thru Employment Solutions in Maroubra, Maria has gained steady employment and couldn't be happier, saying,

"The people that I work with are nice and caring and help me with my work. My favourite job is helping set up the tables for big dinners. This is the best job I have had and I would like to work here for a long time."

Maria's employment consultant at Break Thru Employment Services stated that, "Staff and managers at the Hilton have been wonderful in helping Maria integrate into the team. They recognize her abilities and give her tasks she can successfully complete. The managers were very open to Break Thru supporting and training Maria on the job as she became accustomed to the work environment. Maria's confidence and self esteem have increased since she started working here and it has been a great job match for her."

Successful Applicant: Allan

Allan Shipley had been unemployed for 2 years before being offered a Loading Dock Attendant position at Hilton Hotel. With an extensive history in administration, customer service and various other areas, Allan possessed easily transferable skills to apply to his new position. Allan's position in the loading dock is an important job as it is the central hub of the hotel and a very busy area. The deliveries and collections to the hotel are made from the dock. Allan's role ensures that the hotel is receiving correct orders and they are being charged accordingly.

Allan has short stature and requires minimal assistance to fulfill his job duties. All he needs to complete his job is the tools to reach items arranged at heights such as a stool or a step ladder. With the flexible environment in Hilton and the support of his employment consultant at 121 Employment, Seven Hills, Allan is satisfied with his job and is comfortable where he is working.

Allan's case manager said that, "Allan is an enthusiastic young person whose disability did not stop him from fulfilling his dreams of being an equal part of society. He is a good example of marginalised people who can succeed in doing things if given the opportunity to do so. DWA actually gave him such opportunity and we are sure he will be successful in his career."

Chantal Jackson, Human Resources Manager, Hilton Hotel Sydney said, "We are excited and pleased to be working with DWA. The Hilton is always looking for opportunities to assist within the community and provide employment opportunities for people who are willing to provide excellent customer service. Both Maria and Allan have integrated well into their Departments and have quickly become valued Team members. The process was easy and was well supported by both DWA and the respective Case Managers. Within the Hotel, there are many roles that can be tailored to suit disabilities and we have been fortunate to have found 2 team members who take pride in their work and we are proud to support them and we look forward to an ongoing relationship with both them and DWA."

New GTO joins with DWA

On the 2nd September, 2008 in Brisbane, Disability Works Australia (DWA) and a new group training organisation (GTO); NRA SkillService formed an alliance by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

NRA SkillService is a division of the National Retail Association (NRA) who provide professional service advice to companies in the service sector. DWA already has an MOU with NRA and have now added their new company division to their list of dedicated employers. With a wealth of industry knowledge, NRA has a large team of professionals who are available to assist with any queries regarding most aspects of providing quality and lawful services, particularly in the retail sector.

The new GTO aspect of NRA still has all of this industry information under its belt but also provides an involved service by taking the hardship out of recruiting apprentices and trainees for companies.

DWA will assist by pre-screening and assessing all applicants with disabilities who apply for Traineeship positions and advise NRA SkillService of the job match suitability and any supports/modifications which may be required for the applicant to fulfill the job requirements to the fullest.

NRA SkillService has a copious number of positions available through their organisation, specialising in retail, butchery and baking trades. DWA receives referrals from Disability Employment Network (DEN) and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) providers and forwards on appropriate candidates to NRA SkillService to filter through and place into the host companies.

NRA SkillService inducts and trains all new employees for their member companies and is responsible for all administration with the employee, pre and post employment.

"NRA SkillService is such an involved company who endures the brunt of the work in setting up and maintaining the employment of trainees and apprentices. Having DWA by our side to assist is helping NRA SkillService immensely."

Paul Willis

General Manager, Training and Development Solutions,
NRA SkillService



Peter Boulton, National Operations Manager, Disability Works Australia; Daniel McDougall, Queensland Operations Manager, Disability Works Australia; Paul Willis, General Manager, Training and Development Solutions, NRA SkillService; and Angela Paul, Manager, NRA SkillService



First Choice Presenting First Class Opportunities

Disability Works Australia (DWA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Coles Group in June 2004 and has maintained a great working relationship to increase the employment of people with disabilities. DWA has had great success with the Coles Supermarket brand and based on this success, has branched out into the retail liquor group, First Choice Liquor.

First Choice was introduced into the retail liquor sector in 2004. They offer a wide range of products, superior service and recently opened a discount superstore offering competitive prices.

Discussions between DWA's Queensland office and First Choice's Regional Manager, Scott Brydson identified a need for Customer Service assistants to join their team. They were required to assist customers with purchases and help carry their goods to their cars. With customer service and licensing requirements being a vital element of First Choice, DWA set about finding appropriate applicants with the essential skills and training required along with a bubbly personality, who could fit in to the team and environment at First Choice.

With the assistance of Red Cross Employment Service in Bowen Hills, Queensland, DWA successfully placed Debbie Cain into the Customer Service role. Debbie was finding it difficult to gain employment as she has vision impairment. Debbie had been unemployed for more than 12 months. She had completed a Certificate II in Hospitality and was keen to get into an industry where she could further her customer service skills in hospitality and work closely with customers.

Since commencing employment, Debbie has required minimal assistance with her vision impairment and has progressed on to the registers within the first 2 months. Store Manager Carly Baker has found Debbie to be a lively and enthusiastic worker and when asked about Debbie, Carly stated, "Debbie has fitted in really well and has become a valued member of our team".

Debbie's employment consultant from Red Cross Employment Service (a DEN/VRS provider) was pleased for Debbie gaining employment in a happy and supportive environment where she can fulfill her passion of customer service. The position fits her personality well and her employment consultant said that,

"Debbie is a bundle of energy and works really well with people."

DWA is always pleased when a perfect job match has been created where all parties are happy and satisfied. When asked about her newly found employment, Debbie said,

"I love my job, First Choice Liquor are great people to work with."

First Choice has seen the value in recruiting people with disabilities and have since incorporated more people with disabilities into their customer service teams around Australia.



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.



Peter Boulton, National Operations Manager, Disability Works Australia; Tina Zeleznik, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Works Australia; and Douglas Schirripa, Chairman, Adelaide Mushrooms



Sonya Argent of Adelaide Mushrooms

Long term employment for Sonya

For South Australian residents, Adelaide Mushrooms is a household name. Adelaide Mushrooms is the main supplier of mushrooms in South Australia. They now sell their products to markets in Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Originally purchased by the Schirripa family in 1984, Adelaide Mushrooms has a farm in Woodcroft and a new Monarto site which was purchased in 2000. The expansion project at Monarto is still being developed but has a composting shed in operation which supplies compost to the Woodcroft site. Besides these two farms, the trust also owns two sites in Tasmania, one in Spreyton and the other in Huon Valley. They are the predominant suppliers of mushrooms in Tasmania, representing about 95% of the market.

On September 22nd 2008, Disability Works Australia (DWA) and Adelaide Mushrooms signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Adelaide Mushrooms employs approximately 350 staff nationally and the company is constantly expanding providing further opportunities for job seekers with disabilities.

The MOU represents Adelaide Mushrooms commitment and dedication to the community and their support for people with disabilities. Such support and dedication has already been proven in the case of Sonya Argent.

In an interesting case study, DWA's Chief Executive Officer, Tina Zeleznik was employed as an employment consultant with a Disability Employment Network (DEN) about 20 years ago, long before the inception of DWA.

During her time with the DEN, Tina placed Sonya Argent as a Mushroom Harvester with Adelaide Mushrooms. When

attending the MOU signing, Tina recognised an employee working at Adelaide Mushrooms. The employee was Sonya who Tina had placed into work almost 21 years ago.

Sonya has been employed with Adelaide Mushrooms since completing school and has an inspiring passion for her work. She continues to work as a Mushroom Harvester and her job involves harvesting, grading the mushrooms and managing her "growing bed" to optimise produce over a 4 day period.

Sonya is no longer receiving support from a DEN as she is comfortable with her work and well supported by her employer. Adelaide Mushrooms modified the duties for Sonya as she was unable to harvest the higher shelves.

Adelaide Mushrooms are to be applauded for the support they have provided to Sonya over the past 20 years. Although they do not treat Sonya differently to other employees, they are flexible and understand she may require extra time occasionally.

Sonya is a very valued employee who is well-liked and respected by the other employees of Adelaide Mushrooms. The company's chairman, Douglas Schirripa said, "Sonya is a model employee liked by all and her dedication to the company is a credit to her."

"Watching Sonya enjoy her work and surroundings makes it a pleasure to have her with us."

Jeff Kimber

Company Manager, Adelaide Mushrooms (Nominees) Pty Ltd