



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR
PRIVATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE CREATIVITY OF SUCCESS:



DISABILITY IN THE CLASSROOM AND THE WORKPLACE

A GUIDE FOR PRIVATE
TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

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**THE CREATIVITY OF SUCCESS:
DISABILITY IN THE CLASSROOM
AND THE WORKPLACE**

FOREWORD

HOW DO YOU RESPOND WHEN A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY WANTS TO ENROL IN ONE OF YOUR COURSES?

-
- A** Organise a meeting with an enrolment staff member who is trained in inclusive practices to help work through the student's career choices and identify any support needs;

 - B** Get in touch with your local National Disability Coordination Officer to arrange a coordinated solution for the student, drawing on a range of locally available resources;

 - C** Send them off to a public institution?
-

If you answered 'C', you are missing out on a valuable client segment. Providing training solutions to students with a disability is not hard. It's certainly no harder than customising solutions for business clients, but many private training organisations lack confidence in this area.

'Expect the unexpected' is a useful guiding theme for private training providers. People who have a disability live with the consequences of their disability every day. Their disability is not a source of surprise to them. However, they routinely encounter the surprise, shock, agitation and anxiety of other people in response to their disability. This mismatch of daily realities is a source of frustration for people with a disability on the one hand, and for educators and employers on the other.

But what does successful training look like? Certainly, getting a job is important because:

- We all value our financial independence. We all want to be useful. We all want to enjoy a sense of belonging – as part of a community, an organisation, a group of common interests.
- Access to work in return for fair pay is not only a basic human right, but it also makes us feel like valued participants in our society.

At the same time, defining and achieving success is a very personal task. For some people with a disability, success might be the achievement of a Certificate 2 in their chosen area of interest even if they never get a job as a result. Nevertheless, we still have a responsibility to help, guide and facilitate the pathways to achieving the learning, training and vocational goals of people with a disability from all walks of life across all fields of enterprise.

This booklet will help private training organisations overcome their uncertainties and discover that while having the right resources at the right time can be instrumental to the student's success, providing training for people with a disability is mostly common sense. Read this booklet, then get out there and talk with your colleagues within and outside the VET sector about what you've learnt. Find out the resources and support that already exist in your area and share the knowledge. Before long, you will enjoy the benefits that arise from making the best decisions for both your business and for people with a disability.

INTRODUCTION



This booklet aims to help private training organisations in recruiting, training, assessing and transitioning people with a disability into employment. Ultimately, we hope to encourage RTOs to feel confident about providing inclusive services and to share and consult more with each other on disability issues.

This publication is part of a broader disability project being run by ACPET to promote the vocational training needs and employment skills of people who have a disability – sensory, physical, intellectual, or mental wellbeing – by applying the following principles:

- **INNOVATION** in professional development, to expand the disability knowledge base of RTOs;
- **COLLABORATION** to support the responsibility and initiative of students with a disability;
- **LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY** through improved information, support and brokerage.

Given that 18% of Australians have a disability, it is fair to assume that a significant proportion of current and potential VET students have a disability. Many of these people already attend private training organisations and no doubt many more want to. But for some of these people, their disability affects their ability to access services and information and participate in learning, often causing unnecessary frustration and isolation.

Private training organisations do not want unhappy customers, and so most will want their services to be inclusive. Besides, all training providers are obliged by legislation to make their services accessible – the *Disability Standards for Education* and the *AQTF Standards* both oblige VET services to provide people with a disability the same respect, rights and access as other people in the community.

Armed with the right information, you can avoid much anxiety and time and effort in trying to find out how to do the right thing and the best thing for your business as well as for your students and prospective students.

The point to keep in mind is that providing training services to people with a disability is not necessarily a specialised field of enterprise and nor is it something that only TAFE is equipped to do. In fact, it usually just requires a willingness to talk openly with students and staff and knowing where to go if and when help is required. It's mostly common sense. Private training organisations are highly adept at tailoring training solutions for business clients. Designing solutions for students and clients with a disability is comparable in cost and ease. It's all part of providing a quality service.

This booklet will help you respond to your customers. Because everyone is different and every training provider is different, there is no one way to make services inclusive – it's all about the interaction between the individual and the private training organisations. But we can give you a starting point. In the following pages, you will find some common dilemmas and solutions, some useful online resources and some case studies to give you further ideas on how to keep your customers happy. Ultimately we hope to generate discussion and collaboration amongst ACPET members so that in the future any tricky issues can be nutted out with support from informal networks of interested people in your local area.

SECTION

MARKETING TO PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY



MARKETING TO PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

AN UNTAPPED MARKET

As nearly one in five Australians has a disability, smart organisations are looking for ways to improve their confidence and capability in providing services to this untapped market.

In recruiting new students, training organisations need to consider this market and design their marketing strategies so that their message reaches this audience.

After all, it would be a shame to miss out on helping to educate the next Thomas Edison (learning disability), Buzz Aldren (depression), Isaac Newton (epilepsy) or Frida Kahlo (physical disabilities).

In 2003, Microtel Inns & Suites, a budget line of motels, decided to start marketing to travellers with disabilities.

Their plan immediately paid off.

IN ONE YEAR, THEY REPORTED:

275% increase in accessible room night bookings;

260% increase in revenue from accessible room bookings;

400% increase in internet bookings.

MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

The Disability Discrimination Act says that education and training providers need to treat prospective students with a disability on the same basis as prospective students without a disability.

This means training providers need to have information available in a variety of formats, for example print, online, audio. This ensures information is accessible to everybody and potential students can make informed choices.

Your website is a particularly important way for many people with a disability to find out about your offerings. But if documents are published only in PDF format, for example, some people will not be able to read what you have to say. Publish the same content in HTML, Microsoft Word or RTF on your websites so that people with a vision impairment can translate information using their assistive software. For other ideas on making your website accessible see the Web Accessibility Initiative.

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

It is well worth reviewing all your marketing resources for any unintentional barriers. Provide alternative options such as audio and use plain English, short sentences, clear headings, no jargon, and pictures or diagrams where appropriate. This will project your marketing messages to a much wider range of people.

NEARLY ONE IN FIVE
Australians has a disability

GET CREATIVE ABOUT MARKETING

Letting people know that you have taken action to improve their access is a crucial part of your marketing strategy. By publicising that your organisation supports accessibility to all people, potential students with a disability will perceive that they are welcome to participate in your programs. Promote the support services or adaptations you have (or you can access) and any other features that make your facilities receptive to people with a disability.

Your ‘front of house’ personnel are critical in creating a welcoming first impression to potential students. The booklet, *Welcoming Customers with a Disability*, is a valuable resource for all people who deal with customers whether face-to-face, by phone or electronically. It contains communication and etiquette essentials, as well as tips on how to provide outstanding customer service to customers with any type of disability. You can download this booklet from the Australian Employers Network on Disability at:

<http://www.employersnetworkondisability.com.au>

Think about new places to advertise your programs to reach this new audience. Consider advertising through disability publications such as Link Magazine, or at disability conferences such as the biennial Pathways Conference which focuses on the participation of students with a disability in post compulsory education and training.

Make connections with disability organisations which can promote your services for you and help with any support needs. A good start would be to get in touch with local Disability Employment Services providers – organisations that provide support for people while they are training and looking for a job.

See <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES>

Finally, make sure that your marketing and communication people are on board. This article might start them thinking in new and creative ways – *What Marketers Should Know about People with Disabilities*.

<http://disability-marketing.com/newsroom/diversityInc.php4>

WALK THE TALK

This advice has focused mainly on just one of the six Ps of marketing – promotion. Obviously, the other 5 Ps – people, product, place, price, processes – need to back up your communication strategy. In the following pages you will find some specific ways you can make your services accessible during enrolment; training and assessment; and transition to employment.

When embarking on this new marketing direction, remember that like any other market segment it will take time for word to get around and for people to try a new service. It is important to persist and also to recognise that changes made to attract people with a disability inconvenience no-one and benefit many more than just the target group.

PROMOTION
PEOPLE
PRODUCT
PLACE
PRICE
PROCESSES

CASE STUDY



The following is a fictitious case study based on a compilation of similar real-world incidents as reported by agencies such as the Endeavour Foundation and private training providers.

SARAH'S CHOICE – HOW A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE MARKETING STRATEGY CAN BE AN ADVANTAGE

Sarah James is an 18-year-old woman who has always wanted to work in a hair and beauty salon. Sarah also has a mild intellectual disability. And while her family was keen to foster her ambition, her mother was hesitant about approaching a local RTO. Would they welcome Sarah? Would they be able to manage her learning needs?

An information brochure provided by the RTO did indeed sound promising – the RTO clearly stated its commitment to principles of access and equity, and openly welcomed applications from students with disabilities. However knowing that *talking the talk* is only part of what is needed to make the placement of a student with a disability successful, Sarah's mother decided to make contact.

The woman who answered the phone didn't miss a beat when Sarah's mother mentioned her daughter's disability. "We've had three students with intellectual disabilities complete the course and all are working in local salons," she told her, "washing hair, sweeping the floor and making cups of tea." Encouraged, Sarah's mother suggested Sarah make an appointment.

Sarah came home and told her mother the woman who'd interviewed her had been very welcoming, and had told her the trainers would have access to modified resources to help her learn the language and communication skills she would need to work in a salon. Similarly, the woman had been impressed by Sarah – with her determination and her preparedness, noting she had brought documents relating to her prior learning experiences.

Sarah successfully completed the course and is now working three days a week in a salon where she is a valued employee. The salon makes a point of telling the RTO that...

“ Sarah benefits them in so many ways – with many customers returning to have their hair done and say hello! **”**

SECTION

2

ENROLLING PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY IN TRAINING PROGRAMS



ENROLLING PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY IN TRAINING PROGRAMS

ENROLMENT: DECISION TIME FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

When a person with a disability decides they want to enrol in one of your courses, they are faced with the question of whether to tell you about their disability or not. Some people will because they know they need to seek information and support. But many others are fearful about disclosing their disability, believing they may be discriminated against, denied a place in the course, or attract curiosity. Because there is still a perceived stigma, especially with ‘hidden disabilities’ like mental illness, a high proportion of students do not disclose their disability.

It is helpful for you as a training provider to find out about a student’s disability and any particular requirements at the time of enrolment so that you can plan for any adjustments that might be needed.

All enrolment forms should include a question relating to disability. Students should be invited, but not required to disclose any disabilities they may have. You may wish to ask students at this point to indicate on the form if they expect to need any adjustments. They will need to have information about the academic and practical requirements of each course so they can consider their needs in relation to their disability and their chosen course. It is also important to clearly state that all personal information is handled in a confidential manner.

For further information, see this website which discusses the rights and responsibilities of educators in relation to enrolment and disclosure of disability.

http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/intro_teach.htm

WHAT STUDENTS MIGHT WANT TO KNOW AT ENROLMENT TIME

Students will have different requirements, depending on their disability, what support systems they already have in place and what course they are enrolling in. Some of the questions they may want to discuss at enrolment are outlined below.

ALL STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

To which staff members should I introduce myself?

What evidence do you require of my disability?

What help can I get with exams and assessments?

Are there any scholarships available for students with a disability?

STUDENTS WITH A MOBILITY IMPAIRMENT

Who do I see to get a disability parking permit?

Are there wheelchair accessible toilets?

What is the access to buildings like?

STUDENTS WHO HAVE A VISION IMPAIRMENT

How will I arrange to have course notes provided to me in a format that suits my needs?

Are campus maps available in Braille, large print or online?

STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HAVE A HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- Are Auslan interpreters available?
- How do I make arrangements for note-takers in my class?

STUDENTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

- What learning support is available?
- What alternative assessment formats may be available?
- Are note-takers provided if I need one?

STUDENTS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

- What do I do when I need a break?
- Are there rooms available for some privacy?

STUDENTS WITH A CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITION

- What exam arrangements can be made if I am unable to sit for an exam?
- How do I make arrangements for assignments if I am unable to complete them on time?

Adapted from Considering Tertiary Education, Mature Study Program, University of South Australia.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE THE PROCESS RUN SMOOTHLY

There are things your organisation can do to make the enrolment process fairer and beneficial for both the organisation and the student.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Take care in designing and wording forms to ensure they are easy to understand and fill out, are available in alternative formats, including the option to enrol via your website; and offer help in filling out forms;
- Keep records of the types of enquires received from students with a disability to help prepare responses for enrolling students;
- Encourage staff to nominate for a position of Disability Liaison Officer. Provide appropriate training and ensure this person is on-hand to help enrolling students identify their support needs and to coordinate relevant support;
- Train administrative staff in understanding and implementing non-discriminatory practices.

Have a look at what other training providers have done to make their enrolment processes more inclusive. The Australian Human Rights Commission publishes Disability Discrimination Act Action plans from hundreds of education and training providers.

See http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/action_plans/Register/register.html

THINK ABOUT
what you and your organisation can do to improve your enrolment processes

CASE STUDY



The following is a fictitious case study based on a compilation of similar real-world incidents as reported by information services such as the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) and private training providers.

DISCLOSING A DISABILITY – HOW A RECEPTIVE ENROLMENT PROCESS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Caleb Boerma is a 17-year old trainee who is planning to enroll in an information technology course. Currently, Caleb's main interest is networking and secure data transfer, while in his spare time he enjoys computer gaming. Caleb also has cerebral palsy and is hesitant about disclosing his disability to the RTO.

According to Caleb, people often assume that his diagnosis of cerebral palsy automatically means he is also less intellectually able and less capable than other young men his own age. While his cerebral palsy only affects his mobility, he is concerned that disclosing his condition on an enrolment form could mean he won't be accepted by the RTO into the information technology training course.

Caleb's reluctance to disclose also stems from his upbringing, his parents refusing to allow him to use his cerebral palsy as an excuse for not doing something. And over the years he has learnt to manage his disability by *forgetting* his CP label and focusing on what he can do rather than what he *can't* do.

To Caleb's relief, the enrolment form doesn't insist he disclose any disability, but rather invites him to be open about any adjustments or assistance he might need. However, despite the informality and the reassurance all information will be treated in confidence Caleb elects not to tick the box.

Fortunately, at his interview the RTO staff member knows to tread respectfully. It is only after making sure Caleb and his parents understand he has been accepted into the course that he asks whether Caleb would be willing to reconsider. "By disclosing your disability," he tells Caleb, "you will have support behind you, a team on your side."

Initially Caleb and his parents are distressed, but once they realise it is only a *means to an end*, and that it will make it more manageable for Caleb and his RTO, for example allowing the RTO to access equipment and resources to create a disability-friendly workspace that Caleb and his parents feel comfortable and willing to formally disclose his disability.

“ To Caleb's relief, the enrolment form doesn't insist he disclose any disability, but rather invites him to be open about any adjustments...

”

SECTION 3

TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY



TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Banking high-flyer, Bill Moss, says supporting people with a disability is just good business...

“ If you can’t deal with it in the workforce, then you won’t be able to deal with it in your client base.

Private training organisations that can deal with the diversity of their students will be able to maximise their client base.

Contemporary VET pedagogy recognises the need for different teaching and learning approaches, for different contexts and different learners. But this is no easy task in spite of the heightened awareness about it. One of the most hazardous traps is when people assume that ‘groupings’, such as ‘people with a disability have uniform characteristics’. Successful teaching and training approaches begin with the assumption that each student is unique and teaching strategies should be modified to match their individual needs.

Like teaching, assessments can also be modified to suit the particular requirements of students. Alternative assessment strategies are not designed to give a student with a disability a greater advantage or affect the integrity of the course, but rather to minimise the impact of the disability on the student’s assessment performance.

THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RTOS

Under the Disability Discrimination Act, education and training providers are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that students with a disability can participate in learning experiences, including assessment and certification, on the same basis as a student without a disability.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- **CONSULT** with a student to determine if any reasonable adjustments are required;
- **DETERMINE** whether any changes are needed during a course;
- **ASSESS** whether a particular adjustment is reasonable;
- **MAKE ADJUSTMENTS** in a timely manner; and
- **IMPLEMENT** strategies and programs to prevent harassment or victimisation.

Private training organisations must maintain the integrity of the qualification and students with a disability must still meet all inherent requirements of a qualification in order to receive an accredited award. Adjustments must only be made to how information is delivered or how a student undertakes their study.

SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

and training approaches begin with the assumption that each student is unique

USE THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE

You do not need to find your way alone. There is a range of help available for RTOs to make training and assessment practices inclusive of all students.

NATIONAL DISABILITY COORDINATION OFFICERS (NDCOS)

There are 31 NDCOs across Australia. NDCOs assist education providers within their region to provide better services for people with a disability. They also provide information to individuals with a disability, link individuals and organisations to local support services and raise awareness amongst education providers and the general public of the issues facing people with a disability.

See <http://www.deewr.gov.au/ndco> to find your local NDCO

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/sa>
may have resources to support your training organisation to provide an appropriate service to students with a disability

DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

Some students will be registered with a service provider that specialises in providing support and assistance for their particular disability. Service providers offer a range of services for their members including career counselling, advice, the provision of adaptive and other technologies, advocacy and industrial services. Ask your students if they are registered with such a provider, and if not explore with them the option of joining up.

GOOD PRACTICE BENEFITS EVERYONE

Teachers and trainers often find that when they use teaching and assessment methods to benefit a student with a disability, all students benefit. Facing the class when speaking, presenting information in a variety of ways, making course material available ahead of class and asking students if assistance is required are all examples of good practice that benefit students with and without disabilities.

Read the case study on the following pages and think about what improvements you can make to your teaching and assessment practices to make them more inclusive.

More information and advice can be sourced from:
http://www.adcet.edu.au/CATS_for_University.chpx
or www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/sa/view.aspx?id=6907

i Bowman, K. (2004) Equity in Vocational Education and Training, National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

CASE STUDY



The following is a fictitious case study based on a compilation of similar real-world incidents as reported by information services such as the Brain Injury Association Of Queensland Inc and private training organisations.

TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT – HOW A FLEXIBLE PROCESS CAN ASSIST BOTH YOU AND YOUR STUDENT

Training and assessing a student with a disability can require a private training organisation to think creatively and while many are keen to give it a go, some may also feel unsure of how to get it right. Yet as we see in the case of Kianna Rodriguez – a young 18-year-old woman who has an acquired brain injury – the search for solutions can lead to new and innovative ways of delivering all training packages.

Kianna fell ill with meningitis in her last year of school. As a consequence of the severity of the infection she has memory problems and finds it difficult to enunciate words clearly. She also tires easily and struggles with problem solving. Her condition may improve, but as yet no one can predict by how much.

When she met her trainer John, Kianna had what many called *unrealistic career* expectations. She still wanted to go to university. After all she reasoned, “she’d always been at the top of her class.” Her parents wanted her to consider an alternative career path, but Kianna was adamant – she wanted a high-flying career – and any discussion would end in tears, leaving her parents at a loss as to what do. How could they help their daughter when her injury meant she wasn’t fully aware of the changes to her abilities? How would her employer manage? How would her co-workers react?

To her parents’ surprise John supported Kianna’s ambition – “Yes, she could go to university,” he said, “he was willing to help her.”

It was then Kianna who surprised everyone by suggesting she *start small* and perhaps undertake a course in basic office skills. John agreed. He also voiced the advice of disability advocate Bill Moss, “If you can’t deal with it in the workforce, then you won’t be able to deal with it in your client base. Kianna’s employer will have customers like Kianna,” he reassured her parents, “It’s in their best interests to manage.”

John made sure the course was paced for Kianna – using visual cues and modified course materials (compiled with the support of the local brain injury support organisation). He also created a series of podcasts that Kianna could refer to anytime to refresh her memory.

Thanks to John’s lead, Kianna’s parents realised that if they agreed with Kianna, if they said “Yes, she could do whatever she wanted,” she was more likely to feel a sense of control and make suitable decisions. As it turned out Kianna recovered better than anyone had expected and over time no longer needed any extra assistance. So much so she is now considering training as a para-legal.

For the training organisation involved, the journey with Kianna not only boosted their confidence when it came to enrolling students with learning difficulties, but also enabled them to realise the value of incorporating visual cues and podcasts into many of their training packages.

SECTION 4

PARTNERING: FROM CLASSROOM TO WORKPLACE



PARTNERING: FROM CLASSROOM TO WORKPLACE

IT'S WHAT WE'RE ALL HERE FOR

Why do people with a disability enrol in vocational education and training? To get a job. People with a disability want to get a job from their training – just as we all do.

“ No-one wants to be moved through a succession of training courses with no paid work in sight. ”

While some private training organisations may not see the transition to work as part of their core business, high performing providers know that sincere and strenuous efforts to achieving employment for their students gives them a key competitive edge. It is the prize every student expects.

Government sees private training organisations as crucial partners in the goal of increasing the employment prospects of people with a disability. The *National Disability and Mental Health Employment Strategy* highlights the key role of VET in getting people jobs; and thousands of fully funded training places have been allocated for jobseekers, including people with a disability, under the new Productivity Places Program.

HOW CAN RTOS HELP PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY GET JOBS?

CAREER PLANNING

Students have to make the right choices about their education and training so that they can get the job they want. The way they make their decisions is influenced by many people, including parents, friends and teachers. The private training organisation is also important in guiding students' career choices.

When interviewing potential students or providing career planning advice, it is important to let go of any preconceived ideas about the choices available for people with a disability. At the same time, private training providers must provide clear information about the career pathways and workplace requirements that allow people with a disability to match their training program to suitable job opportunities.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

People with a disability are more likely to get a job when their training involves practical experience in the workplace¹. As such, students enrolled in apprenticeships or traineeships get better employment outcomes. Unfortunately, people with a disability still have much lower participation in apprenticeship and traineeship programs than other students.

To improve employment results, private training organisations could think about how they can help students participate in apprenticeships and traineeships. This might be through career guidance, providing relevant bridging courses, as well as creating strong partnerships with group training organisations (GTOs).

GTOs are a good choice for many people with a disability because of the extra support they provide throughout the training contract and, as employers, they are eligible for wage support when they employ an apprentice or trainee with a disability.

Private training organisations can also access funding of up to \$5,500 a year for tutorial, interpreter and mentor services for apprentices or trainees who require additional assistance with their off-the-job training because of their disability. For more information see:

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/employer/incentives.asp>

PARTNERING WITH EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Partnerships between private training organisations and employment agencies can help develop career pathways for people with a disability which are targeted to employment opportunitiesⁱⁱ. The employment agencies which provide specialist assistance to jobseekers with a disability are called Disability Employment Services (DES).

Each year, DES Providers help more than 50,000 people with moderate to severe disabilities find and keep work. DES Providers are being encouraged to increase their focus on skills development, training and education. As a result, private training organisations may well benefit from a burgeoning client base being referred through Disability Employment Services. DES Providers are also an important contact for private training organisations in helping navigate the array of services provided by the disability sector. To find the DES Providers in your local area see:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES> or contact your local NDCO

Not all students with a disability will want to use a DEN. Some people may not want to disclose their disability to an employer and may prefer to use a Job Services Australia Provider for employment support. Job Services Australia Providers are working with people with a disability more and more, and will also be looking for private training organisation partners to train their clients with a disability.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Think about how private training organisations and employers can work together to help people with a disability achieve employment outcomes.

- What are the perceptions of your staff, including career advisors, about what people with various disabilities are capable of?
- What more can private training organisations do to support people with a disability to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships?
- What organisations could your RTO foster partnerships with to improve employment outcomes for people with a disability?

i T. Griffin & L. Nechvoglod, Vocational education and training and people with a disability: A review of the research, NCVER 2008.

ii ibid.

IT IS IMPORTANT

to let go of any preconceived ideas about the choices available for people with a disability

CASE STUDY



The following is a fictitious case study based on a compilation of similar real-world incidents as reported by GTOs such as Disability WORKS Australia and private training organisations.

SECURING EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

The core business of a private training organisation is training people. Looked at from this perspective it is not surprising then that some private training organisations view the transition to open employment as *outside* of their area of expertise and not part of their business. However, given that securing a job is what most students want, including those students who have a disability, it makes good business sense for private training organisations to strengthen their capacity in this sphere. In the case of Michael Velosky we see how one private training organisation went about this – encouraging Michael to plan ahead so it would be more likely he would find sustainable long-term employment.

Michael is a 23-year-old man who works in the aviation industry as an aircraft maintenance engineer. He uses a wheelchair – the result of a serious car accident he had when in Year 12 at school.

Michael's journey began five years ago when he first approached his private training organisation. At the time the staff were very impressed by his determination, but did not feel comfortable about taking him on. Would he, they wondered, be able to perform critical components of his job such as checking aircraft wheels for cracks? Michael, they reasoned, would need a significant amount of practical assistance in order to do his job. And while they did not see the problems as insurmountable, they wanted him to have support in these areas before he began training.

"We are willing to accept you as a student," Michael remembers the private training organisation saying, "but we strongly encourage you to approach our Group Training Organisation (GTO)."

Initially Michael was reluctant, he had not enjoyed his time in rehab and was wary of seeking any further assistance. "Are you saying I can't do the job?" he asked. "No," they reassured him, "Not at all, what we want is for you to have job when you finish training. Having a disability is hard enough, what we want to do is make sure your training doesn't go to waste, that we iron out any problems as we go."

With some persuading Michael finally agreed to make an appointment and the rest is history. The staff at the GTO not only found him an apprenticeship, but also supported him every step of the way. For example, they organised a stand up wheel chair so he could access workbenches and made sure any other necessary adjustments were made so that he could do all aspects of the job.

Now working full-time, Michael contributes much of his success to the wise advice given to him by his private training organisation. "I could've just done the training," he says...

“ But without the staff at the GTO assisting both my employer and my RTO I doubt I would've been work ready, let alone working at the job of my dreams. **”**

SECTION 5

WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS



WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

**WENGER, McDERMOTT & SNYDER
2002**



TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

As educators, you are no doubt familiar with the concept of a community of practice – the process of learning that occurs and shared practices that emerge when people who have common goals interact as they strive towards those goals.

This is a useful way to approach improving services for people with a disability. There is no generic solution for people with a disability – everyone's situation is different. And sometimes the best solution isn't immediately obvious. It might take a bit of lateral thinking, some brainstorming or just a better understanding of where the various resources are located and how to get hold of them.

Communities of practice, or localised informal information networks, provide the means to work through these issues. They also provide a way of forming new and enduring relationships with stakeholders within and outside the VET sector.

THERE IS NO GENERIC SOLUTION FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY...

Everyone's situation is different. And sometimes the best solution isn't immediately obvious.

NETWORKING IN SA

THE DISABILITY OFFICERS NETWORK

National Disability Coordination Officers (NDCOs) help coordinate services and make linkages between service providers for people with disabilities who attend or plan to attend university or vocational education and training.

One of the critical ways that the NDCO for Adelaide, plus eastern, western and southern suburbs makes those linkages is through the Disability Officers Network.

Most of the large education and training providers such as the public universities and TAFE SA have dedicated disability staff. These officers support students with disabilities and also provide advice to teaching and academic staff on how to best meet the needs of their students with disabilities and meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

But it can be a lonely job if you're the only person in your institution or campus with that responsibility. Also, disability is so unique from person to person that it is not possible for one person to know the solution to every issue.

Informally, many of these officers had been linking and talking to each other for many years, but they have now formed a more formal network that meets once a month over afternoon tea at a café and shares cases and develops priorities for training that they can undertake together. Not everyone attends every month, but they also have an email group list where they can easily email each other any questions and have up to a dozen replies within a short period.

Training with service delivery and supplier agencies have been organised by network members on such topics as working with clients who use Auslan, assistive hearing technology and software for people with vision impairments.

Officers with responsibility for disability in some larger RTOs have recently joined the network and find the opportunity to discuss situations and thrash out problems invaluable. The ultimate winner has been the many students who have been helped – sometimes unknowingly – to participate in the course of their choice.

WHY THIS MODEL WORKS

- It is voluntary and informal – no one feels obliged to turn up to yet another meeting;
- It deals with real cases, so the discussions are focussed and work towards an outcome;
- It is localised and cross-sectoral – open to all people with an interest or contribution to make.

If you would like to be involved in the network in SA, or perhaps discuss how to establish a community of practice among similar providers, contact your regional NDCO.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/sa>

THINK ABOUT

How you could set up such a network in your local area?
 Who could you involve?
 What issues could you address?

CASE STUDY



The following is a fictitious case study based on a compilation of similar real-world incidents as reported by employers such as the Royal Automobile Club of Australia, private training organisations and various disability organisations.

NETWORKING – HOW LOCAL, INFORMAL COMMUNITY NETWORKS CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

Private training organisations are constantly looking into the future to best position themselves to meet the demands of an ever-changing workplace. What with the rapid changes in technology and the expectation a wider range of students with differing capabilities will be enrolled; there is a constant stream of information requiring digestion. And while many private training organisations would agree it'd be useful if they could network and share information with one another, there are only so many hours in a day and more often than not pressing daily concerns. So let's look at Remo Training, a private training provider that offers training courses for business, manufacturing and transport and is using a community of practice model to further enhance its capacity to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Established in 1995 Remo manager Jim Sparkes realised early on that on-going staff professional development would need to be a high priority if it were to thrive and grow. But rather than opt for the traditional half or full-day workshop which takes people away from their workplaces, he chose to hold in-house 'muffin mornings' for both course advisors and trainers.

The first 'guests' to attend these informal gatherings were job placement providers who welcomed the chance to talk about current and future employment trends. Over time however, the 'muffin mornings' expanded to include guests with other areas of expertise.

For example, one guest from a local association assisting the blind was able to bring trainers and course advisors up to speed on the latest in voice-activated technology as well as demonstrate how it could be incorporated into training. This information excited trainers because immediately they could see its potential and how it might benefit a larger pool of students, especially those with cerebral palsy and other movement disorders. They were also interested to hear about employers who were already using the technology – call centre operators, accounting firms and legal practices. And inspired to learn that even without the technology there were people with significant vision impairment who were pursuing careers as diverse as remedial massage therapist, television engineer and chiropractor.

The 'muffin meetings' are now at times bigger than Ben Hur. "Not quite what we had in mind when we started them," says Jim...

“ But as a RTO we have not only increased our capacity to service a wider range students, but the knowledge we have gained has enhanced our ability to solve numerous work place issues – for both abled and disabled students. **”**

QUICK REFERENCE

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

ADCET

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provides information and resources to support the work of disability practitioners in the postsecondary education and training sector.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/>

CREATING ACCESSIBLE TEACHING AND SUPPORT

Guidelines on inclusive teaching practice for specific disabilities including hearing impairment, vision impairment, mental illness, learning disabilities and health conditions.

http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats/Specific_Impairments.chpx

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1992 AND DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION 2005

Legislation providing protection against discrimination based on disability. Includes Disability Standards that set out rights and responsibilities of staff and students at education institutions. Action plans lodged by private training organisations to comply with the Standards are available to download.

http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Humanrightsandanti-discrimination_DisabilityStandardsforEducation

DISABILITY INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CENTRE (DIRC) SA

Information, Library and subscription Current Awareness Service on all aspects of chronic medical conditions and disability.

<http://www.dircsa.org.au>

DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION

<http://www.ddaedustandards.info/>

With downloadable booklet: http://www.ddaedustandards.info/UB_DDA_Booklet_webA4.pdf

MATURE STUDY RESOURCE WEBSITE

Website for mature age people with disabilities considering education at university or RTOs. Includes examples of information students will need when enrolling with a training provider.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/Mature>

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Information about designing learning materials so that more people can use them.

<http://www.training.qld.gov.au/resources/information/doc/universal-design-checklist.doc>

WEB ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVE

Strategies, guidelines, and resources to help make information on the web accessible to people with disabilities.

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

QUICK REFERENCE

STUDY SUPPORT

NATIONAL DISABILITY COORDINATION OFFICERS

NDCOs bring together stakeholders and coordinate support, for people with a disability who are at, or who will soon be attending, university or vocational education and training.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/ndco>

In SA: <http://www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/sa>

DISABLED AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICE ASSISTANCE FOR TUTORIAL, INTERPRETER OR MENTOR SERVICES

Australian government funding payable directly to the Registered Training Organisations for Australian Apprentices with disability who require additional assistance with off-the-job training.

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au>

WILLING AND ABLE MENTORING PROGRAM

WAM matches tertiary students with disability with a mentor in the profession or industry the student is interested in. It aims to enable job readiness and support the career development of students and graduates with disability.

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/content/view/full/318>

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC IMPAIRMENTS

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Provides expertise and advice to key stakeholders in the VET sector on the teaching, learning and accessibility needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

http://www.nmit.vic.edu.au/about/centre_of_excellence/

VISION AUSTRALIA

Provides knowledge, skills and expertise to enrich the participation in life of people who are blind or have low vision and their families. Website includes RTO student handbook and assistive technology guide.

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/>

SANE AUSTRALIA

Website includes fact sheets on all the major mental illnesses.

<http://www.sane.org>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH A PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITY

Resource book to help private training organisations appropriately support people with mental illness.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/StoredFile.aspx?id=1946&fn=Academic-Accom-Resource-book.pdf>

OPEN ALL OPTIONS

Website provides information and resources about learning disabilities (LD) including information on teaching strategies, assistive technology and support strategies.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/Oao/>

SPINAL CORD INJURY AUSTRALIA

Provides free practical, relevant information on all aspects of life for people with mobility impairments including employment and training, equipment, transport and support.

<http://www.scia.org.au>

CHRONIC ILLNESS ALLIANCE

Online resource to inform teachers and communities of the impacts of the illnesses on students' lives and educational performance and to offer strategies to assist them.

<http://www.chronicillness.org.au/invisible/>

AUTISM SA

Online resources and contacts to facilitate the successful inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, including Asperger's Syndrome.

<http://www.autismsa.edu.au>

AUSTRALIAN LEARNING DISABILITY ASSOCIATION

Information and resources about learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/ALDA>

QUICK REFERENCE

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYERS NETWORK ON DISABILITY

Group of employers that work to improve opportunities for people with a disability in all aspects of business. They help business people welcome people with disability as employees, customers and suppliers. They provide training and information on disability awareness, communication and etiquette.

<http://www.aend.org.au>

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Disability Employment Services provide specialist assistance to job seekers with disabilities who require on-going support to find and maintain employment. They can provide job placement and on-the-job support for apprentices and trainees.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES>

GROUP TRAINING AUSTRALIA

Group Training Organisations employ over 40,000 apprentices and trainees throughout Australia. They provide pastoral care to all apprentices and trainees and many have particular expertise in employing and placing people with a disability.

<http://www.grouptraining.com.au>

Best Practice Guide: http://www.gtaltd.com.au/projects/downloads/best_practice_guide.pdf

DISABLED AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICESHIP WAGE SUPPORT

Wage support is available from the Australian Government to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice with disability that needs assistance.

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/documents/publications/2009/03Disability.pdf>

JOB ACCESS

An Australian Government initiative to help find workplace solutions and site modifications for the employment of people with a disability. Phone 1800 464 800 for expert advice or go to the website for practical tips and ideas, or to make an on-line application for a workplace assessment.

<http://www.jobaccess.gov.au>

NEWS

DISABILITY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT NEWS

A regular compilation of the latest news, resources, training opportunities and events. From the Centre for Disability Studies at the University of Sydney. To subscribe, send an email to thart@med.usyd.edu.au with “Subscribe Disability Education and Employment News” in the subject line.

NETWORKING AND TROUBLESHOOTING

NATIONAL DISABILITY COORDINATION OFFICERS

NDCOs bring together stakeholders and coordinate support for people with a disability or are attending or will soon be attending university or VET.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/ndco>

In SA: <http://www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/sa>

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A guide to developing shared learning and practices with people who have common goals.

'Cultivating Communities of Practice' – Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, William Snyder, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2002.

<http://www.cos.ufrj.br/~jano/CSCW2008/Papers/Wenger-2002.pdf>

PATHWAYS CONFERENCE

Conference on Post Secondary Education for People with Disabilities held every two years and convened by the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability.

<http://www.pathways10.org>

AUSTED LISTSERVE

The Austed Listserve aims to facilitate discussion and information sharing amongst disability support personnel and teachers in tertiary education and training. Information about subscribing:

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/view.aspx?id=4365>

POLICY

NATIONAL DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Australian Government Strategy which aims to address the barriers faced by people with disability and/or mental illness that make it harder for them to gain and keep work, including access to training.

<http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Publications/PolicyReviews/EmploymentStrategy/>

END NOTE

ACPET is committed to addressing the issue of disability in vocational education and training and the workplace. We've had a great response and we want the dialogue to continue.

If you have any comments or questions about training and employment for people with a disability, or if you just want to share some experiences or knowledge with other ACPET members, please log on to the disability discussion board on the ACPET website at...

WWW.ACPET.EDU.AU

DON'T
FORGET – YOUR
NDCO WOULD
LOVE TO HEAR
FROM YOU



ACPET

WHAT IS ACPET?

ACPET is the *Australian Council for Private Education and Training* – the national industry association for independent providers of post compulsory education and training for Australian and International students.



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MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM:

WWW.ACPET.EDU.AU

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