



Esperance Breakfast Event

Cr Malcolm Heasman, Esperance Shire President welcomed 70 business people, employers and service providers to a breakfast event which took place on the morning of November 18, 2011 at the Esperance Yacht Club. Dr Graham Jacobs, local MLA, also attended to offer support to the breakfast's important theme; promoting the employability of job seekers with disability or barriers.

The guest speaker, Kathleen Masters, Hr Co-ordinator at IKEA, convincingly presented the case for open employment for job seekers with disability, provided that the job was well matched and appropriate to each individual's unique skills, interests and capabilities.

Kathleen also demonstrated, through many non-fiction scenarios from IKEA, how employing people facing various barriers is both achievable and rewarding for employers and employees alike. Those with barriers were presented as being more reliable and able to offer longer term placements in employment than their non-disabled counterparts.



A second presenter, Donna Hutcheson of Forrest Personnel, represented the Disability Employment Service sector, offering information on the support available to both prospective employers and employees.

The breakfast aimed to create a more informed understanding of this viable (and often overlooked) workforce for industry attendees, and to promote open employment as a realistic and attainable career pathway for individuals with barriers in the Esperance region.

The breakfast was co-hosted by the Esperance Transition Pathways Group and the Interagency Breakfast Group. Funding was facilitated by Dale Arthur through the NDCO (National Disability Co-ordination Officer) program. The success of the event can be attributed to the assistance and support of Centrelink manager Corrin Chard, the local area supervisor from Smyl, Patricia Thomson, local area coordinator from Disability Services Commission, Betty Shirras, and interagency coordinator Kylie Ryan.



Apprentices and Trainees with Disability

The NDCO program in Western Australia has been auspiced by EDGE Employment Solutions since 2003. During that time the NDCOs have worked closely with EDGE's research and development team to explore transition pathways for school leavers and young people with disability. In recent years this has also involved collaboration with Curtin University researchers.

During 2011 the EDGE/Curtin University research partnership published two articles in the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, generally regarded as the pre-eminent international journal on employment for people with disability. Both articles were authored by Associate Professor Greg Lewis, from EDGE, and Professor Errol Cocks and Dr Stian Thoresen, both from Curtin University.

The two articles focussed on traineeships and apprenticeships as a potential career pathway for people with disability. The first article (Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2011, vol. 34, pp 1-9) was an amalgamation of three sequential research projects conducted by EDGE Employment Solutions over the previous decade. The first project, which commenced in 1999, was a local initiative to increase the number of apprentices and trainees with disability being supported by EDGE. The completion rate for the 33 participants in this project was equivalent to that of people without disability undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia. The second research project, undertaken in 2002, surveyed 23 of 180 Group Training Organisations (who place apprentices and trainees with and without disability) around Australia to discern key success factors in placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disability. The third research project, which built on the findings of the previous two projects, was initiated in 2003 and enlisted 20 Group Training Organisations and 20 Disability Employment Services from around Australia to form partnerships to capitalise on their complementary expertise and resources. Apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates for 216 participants in the third project surpassed those for people without disability in Australia. This paper presents and discusses the successful strategies researched and developed through these three projects.

The second article (Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2011, vol. 35, pp 107-116) 253 apprentices and trainees with disability who were placed and supported by EDGE Employment Solutions (EDGE) between 2000 and 2010 were followed up. Information was collected on income, hours worked, and job durability. This was then compared to matched pairs of current EDGE registrants with similar socio-demographic characteristics who had not commenced an apprenticeship or traineeship. The analysis found substantially better post-training outcomes for participants in the "completed" apprenticeship group than those achieved by the comparison group. Improved outcomes were evident in higher hourly wages, more hours worked per week, higher weekly wages, and greater job durability. Better outcomes were also achieved by participants in the "completed" traineeship cohort and "did not complete" apprenticeship cohort. The outcomes for participants in the "did not complete" traineeship cohort did not differ significantly from the comparison group on most outcome measures.

Earlier this year EDGE and Curtin University teamed up with Group Training Australia and National Disability Services to win a major research contract from the National Council on Vocational Education Research to track several hundred apprentices and trainees with disability around Australia for three years following the completion of their courses.

Meet the Kimberley's newest Website designer; Jesse Derne

Earlier this year Kimberley Personnel commenced Launch, a supported work experience program which offers a stepping-stone for young adults with disability, to kick-start their careers in various Broome based industries.

Twenty Two year old Jesse Derne was one of the first to sign up to Launch, seeking a career in Information Technology. Jesse was born with cerebral palsy, a disability that may create barriers Jesse's mates do not face, however certainly nothing that can't be overcome when you have determination, ambition and drive like Jesse's. Jesse completed a school based apprenticeship with Goolarri Media during his time at Broome Senior High, in which he demonstrated a real flare for website design and broadcasting. Jesse graduated year 13 in 2008, and after a period of unsuccessful job-hunting, he sought out Kimberley Personnel's support to pursue his passion for IT in a mainstream and paid environment.

Launch's program coordinator, Karla Mackenzie, was impressed with Jesse's experiences from school and the TAFE qualifications he had taken part in. "Jesse is well spoken, friendly and has a great personality" Karla states of Jesse's employable nature. "Given the length of time Jesse had been out of employment I thought we may have to get creative".

Karla called upon a local contact, John Collins, who has experience in IT lecturing. John was quick to offer his support, providing mentoring and activities to enhance and refresh Jesse's work readiness, while working collaboratively with Kimberley Personnel to create employment for Jesse.

John, a board member of the Broome Community Resource Centre (CRC), combined his IT know how with his CRC affiliation and came up with the idea of a Community Geographical Domain Name Role at the Community Resource Centre. This role involves creating and maintaining a website for the community of Broome, which will serve as a single gateway to local information about the community, weather, businesses, clubs etc. The website is the easiest way for any community to be located on the web, with Broome's geographical domain name being accessible to all at www.broome.wa.au/

John and Karla worked in partnership to apply for shire funding through the Shire's community sponsorship program, and following the application's success coupled with local fundraising and additional sponsorship from the Community Resource Centre, Jesse commenced work at the CRC's geographical domain name website coordinator on Nov 30th.

Jesse is excited "to work in a fun, inclusive and social environment, with air-con in summer". He works 2 days per week, receiving ongoing support from Kimberley Personnel as required, and in-house mentoring from CRC colleagues. Karla acknowledges that "the Broome CRC have been unbelievable accommodating & CRC's support is so fantastic Jesse is able to head off to work relatively independently with support from his parents for transport", which leads to Jesse's next goal; to obtain his license.

While the current contract is limited by funds to a 6 month period this is an excellent launching pad for Jesse, who recognises "for me this is a great opportunity to prove myself and gain independence."

This project could not have gone ahead without John Collins and the CRC's efforts, the Broome Shire's community sponsorship program, the whole team at Kimberley Personnel who gave up two consecutive Sunday evenings to raise funds at the Crab Races, and of course Jesse who's motivation and passion drove all stakeholders to get this position off the ground.



Management and staff of the NDCO team would like to wish everyone a safe and happy festive season.

Visit our website

Visit our new NDCO website at www.ndcowa.net.au