



“Shaping the Future Together”

www.adde.org.au

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QUOTE OF THE SEASON:

“...with one in three staff a consumer of mental health services of some form or another, the distinction between the service users and the service providers in PRA is irretrievably blurred – there is no “Us and Them”, we all share the same journey...”, excerpt from talk by Phil Nadin, CEO, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia, at ADDE Best of the Best Disability Employment forum, 2011.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR:

Far be it for me to say how wonderful the ADDE Best of the Best Disability Employment forum in October was. Have a look at the **Forum Feedback** article to find out what attendees said. This newsletter covers the highlights of the forum – Peter Rickards (**ADDE President Report**) summarises the intent of the forum. Read the **Forum Speakers Presentations**, which summarise the informative and engaging talks by the 5 guest speakers – Graeme Innes (Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission), Jane Morgan (Executive, Equity and Diversity, Brisbane City Council), Justin Le Couteur (Senior Policy Officer, Chief Minister and Cabinet, ACT government), Phil Nadin (CEO, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia) and Andrew Wiltshire, (Manager, Employment Service, Deaf Society NSW).

ADDE will be running another forum on disability employment issues next year. If you would like to be kept informed of our activities, become a member (if you aren't already). Log onto our website for membership application:

www.adde.org.au

Signing off for now.....*Kathy Leitch*, Editor

ADDE PRESIDENT REPORT:

So, what is the real unemployment situation?

- For some types of disability including vision impaired and mental illness the unemployment rate is more than 60%
- ABS data shows there are approximately 1.1 million persons with a disability of working age not in the workforce
- Employment rates of people with a disability in Australia are amongst the worst in the OECD (13th out of 19 OECD countries)
- ADDE 'Leading from the Front' research on disability employment in the Victorian not for profit sector showed that Government not leading. Employment of people with a disability in the public service has dropped 50% over the last 11 years.

The key findings of the research:

- Poor data collection
- Lack of sector wide strategy
- Low level of work readiness
- Lack of policy or strategy
- Lack of funding
- Lack of high level representation
- Lack of proactive marketing and recruitment practices
- Poor understanding of "value"

Where to from here?

- Setting employment targets
- Measurement – you can't manage what you don't measure
- Social procurement
- Disability training - delivered by people with disability
- Politicians should lead from the front by employing people with disability in their electorate offices

What can ADDE do for your organization?

- Attitude change workshops
- Baseline data measurement tool
- Guest speaker service
- Help us continue our advocacy with tax deductible donations
- www.adde.org.au

NEWS:

Diversity@ Work Employment and Inclusion Awards, 2011

The ANZ bank was selected as the Organisational Diversity Laureate for its commitment towards developing and delivering a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy across disability, indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse Australians and gender diversity.

ANZ also won the award for *Employment and Inclusion of Gender Diversity*.

The individual laureate award went to Walter Wagner, the Executive General of Food and Beverage at Crown Casino, for assisting indigenous employment.

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Therèse Rein, founder of international employment services company Ingeus and recipient of the 2010 Human Rights Medal gave a keynote speech about her father who became a paraplegic in his early 20s and his battle to return to the workforce.

Other award winners were:

- CostaExchange, Award for Employment and Inclusion of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Australians.
- Deaf Society of NSW, Award for Employment and Inclusion of People with disability. (Last year's winner, accepted by Andrew Wiltshire, also guest speaker at ADDE Best of the Best Forum held during the day)
- Accenture, Award for Employment and Inclusion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.
- National Australia Bank, Award for Employment and Inclusion of Mature Age.
- ABC, Award for Employment and Inclusion of Indigenous Australians.
- SP AusNet, Award for Today's Youth – the Future of Tomorrow.

ADDE Best of the Best Disability Employment Forum Feedback:

What better way to find out how well received the Best of the Best Forum was than to read some of the Feedback from attendees. We were very pleased by the numbers attending (90) and by the influential positions held by many. We all acknowledge the need to get action on disability employment and what better way than to encourage champions from the top. Amongst the attendees were parliamentarians, executive officers, human resources managers, metro access officers, recruitment managers, small business owners and local council executives. Follows some of the unsolicited responses:

"...this was a terrific forum. Much appreciated."

"Thank you so much for such a fantastic event. I found it worthwhile and met some very interesting and informative people. I have already made some connections regarding linking our roles and look forward to working more in this area in the very near future."

"...I got a lot out of the forum and this is the beginning of a project that I will be working on..."

"Thank you for a very useful and inspiring forum last week. I feel that there is a lot our organisation can learn from the examples that others have set and I look forward to the day when we will reach our target employment of people with disability."

"Thanks for organizing...the forum was inspiring..."

"I found the forum really valuable and informative"

As a result of the forum ADDE was invited to speak at Radio station 3RRR on disability issues. Check out our website to hear the transcript.

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Another worthwhile outcome from the forum was a speech made to the Victorian Parliament by Johan Scheffer, MP, member for Eastern Victoria, which follows:

MEMBERS STATEMENT – Tuesday 25 October 2011

Disability Services support program

Mr Scheffer Eastern Victoria- I congratulate Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment group on the excellent forum it conducted last week to raise awareness of the obstacles standing in the way of people with disabilities obtaining sustainable employment. The forum heard from the disability discrimination commissioner Graeme Innes who spoke about the participation rates of people with disabilities in the workforce generally and the profession in particular, sharing with us his own difficulty in getting a job in law after his graduation.

Justin Le Couteur discussed the progress the Australian Capital Territory government is making through its disability employment strategy, which is increasing the number of people with disabilities employed in the public service and he also discussed the support necessary to assist employees. Phil Nadin who is the CEO of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia gave a terrific presentation on how his organisation is modelling good practice by employing people with mental illness. Around 25% of PRA's staff have a mental illness and those workers are doing a great job.

Andrew Wiltshire the manager of the Deaf Society NSW employment service stepped the forum through issues his organisation manages and that have resulted in people with disabilities making up 50% of the society's staff. It is good for this Parliament's Family and Community Development Committee is conducting an inquiry into the workforce participation by people with mental illness, submissions for which will close on 11 November. This is an important reference and I am sure that individuals and organisations that attended the Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment group forum will share their knowledge with the committee and press their case.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT: THE ISSUES

Forum Speakers Presentations - Summarised:

Graeme Innes AM, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission

It's true of most things in life - clothes, relationships, jobs... one size does not fit all. To make sure that every member of our community has the chance to get a job, we need to accept that "one size does not fit all" in the way people find jobs. How can we redress the huge imbalance of people with disability who are unemployed? Today I want to talk about two issues:

1. Whether you can positively discriminate; and
2. How you might do it.

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Firstly, can you - as an employer - discriminate in favour of people with disability? The answer is a resounding "yes".

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone, or to treat someone less favourably, on the ground of their disability. It contains no equivalent provision barring discrimination against a person on the ground that they do not have a disability. Its purpose is to advance the opportunity of people with disability in our society.

So, if an employer decides to set aside 20 % of its graduate recruitment programme for people with disability it's not against the law.

If an employer decides to create particular positions in their workplace for people with disability it's not against the law.

And if an employer decides to set a target or quota for the number of people with disability it will employ over a certain period of time it's not against the law.

Ideally, there should be no need for positive discrimination measures if people with disability were getting a fair go in the first place, but they are not getting jobs, and discrimination is continuing, despite:

- people with disability wanting to work (many are highly qualified);
- employers professing a willingness to employ people with disability;
- processes supposedly in place to achieve this aim.

The latest media release from the Australian Bureau of Statistics "*Disability Australia 2009*", released 2 May 2011, states the following:

While there have been significant improvements to support those with a disability in many parts of their lives, little improvement has been made in key areas of everyday life over the last six years: labour force participation remained low at around 54 %, compared to almost 90 % for people without disabilities; and Year 12 attainment was around 25 % for people with disabilities, compared to just over 50 % for people without disabilities.

So what is happening?

The low employment rate is not necessarily related to educational achievement and not related to ability. Instead, it is related to employer attitudes, lack of understanding, and the system we use.

- I think we need to unpack "merit selection"
- We need to ensure selection criteria only contain the inherent requirements of the job and do not prescribe how a job must be done.
- We need to examine necessity for tests and testing conditions.
- We need to look out for other barriers such as inaccessible buildings, lack of Auslan Interpreters at interviews and hearing loops for hearing impaired
- We need to look at what factors are preventing career progression.

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While we are doing this, we need to change the situation now, and we can do this by implementing positive discrimination measures as allowed by the DDA.

Let's take recruitment: Make a commitment to give every applicant with a disability an interview, a real opportunity to demonstrate or discuss capacity to perform the inherent requirements of the job during the interview process, that if an applicant with a disability comes equal first or close to being first, the applicant with disability is offered the position, ensure a proportion of graduate recruitment places are reserved for graduates with disability, set recruitment targets for employees with disability, ensure apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience are created or a proportion of these positions are reserved for people with disability

Let's look at career progression during employment: Training, travel and mentoring opportunities for employees with disability. Ensure a comprehensive support and capacity building programme is developed for employees with disability and their managers.

Finally let's look at some other things that we can do: Ensure recruitment agencies contracted by your organisations, as a requirement of their contract, must identify applicants with disability. Work with government to ensure that any employees with disability, and their employers, can have guaranteed access to support on an as-needed basis, and lobby for the expansion of the right to request flexible working arrangements to include employees with disability. Once we shift the paradigm of the merit principle, and accept that it is ok to discriminate positively in favour of people with disability.

Jane Morgan, Executive responsible for Equity and Diversity in the Brisbane City Council (BCC).

BCC has been attracting, recruiting and retaining People with Disabilities (and the other equity groups) since 1995 with our first Equal Employment Opportunity Strategy.

Today, with approx. 5000 staff we have 6.5% employees with disability. This is made up of tradespersons, bus operators, executives and those in higher band roles from Band 5-8 and bands 2-4 salaried roles and some blue-collar jobs. One of our challenges is to encourage staff in BCC to formally identify via our confidential Equity and Diversity Survey.

Our new Workforce Equity and Diversity Framework 2011-15, in addition to aiming for our employment target of 10.7%, set ourselves the goal of becoming a Disability Confident employer.

Recruitment initiatives include:

- We allow access to compete for internal vacancies for low banded roles to People with Disabilities who are not already employed in Council (as we do for indigenous people)

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- Established partnerships with external agencies who specialise in employment of people with disabilities
- Champion for disability employment in the Recruitment Centre
- If people with disability are short listed, we ensure that at least one goes to the next phase. Our research shows this has lifted the success ratio to equal ratio for all candidates.
- Disability Advisory Group (volunteers) operating since 1994. Provides advice to Council on recruitment and retention of People with Disabilities. Won a Lord Mayor Award in 2009. Advocate for redressing accessibility issues, ensuring policies and practices create a level playing field (eg. improvements to occupancy training and evacuation procedures). Web Accessibility sub-group chaired by the CIO. Negotiated Council's commitment to funding sign interpreters for deaf residents.
- We have a strong, integrated employment program that links support and opportunities from case worker activities for severely disadvantaged people through social inclusion work placement initiatives to trainee, apprentice and graduate employment programs. We actively look for suitable people with disabilities in all our employment program recruitment drives. Last year we completed a Work Placement Program for People with Disabilities that resulted in 4 of the 6 participants securing employment. Our Participate in Prosperity Case Worker assists 30 people with disabilities a year overcome significant blockages to being work ready. Our Working On Program for recovering addicts and our Homeless Employment Program inevitably include people with a range of disabilities, including mental illness. The capability and sensitivity of the direct supervisor is the crucial and they need ready access and support from an expert.
- Reasonable Adjustment policy has been in place and implemented since 2003 and was recently updated to reflect new legislation.

Where we want to be?

Essentially, we want to be a Disability Confident employer and recognised as such by the Disability community. We also want to achieve our target for the representation of People with Disabilities in our workforce. We have set ourselves to achieve these within the life of our current Equity & Diversity Framework...up to 2015.

What are we doing to achieve this?

Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017. You can see this on line at <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community-support/community-plans-projects/brisbane-access-and-inclusion-plan/index.htm>.

1. BCC has allocated specific funds to progress our employment commitments. We are focussing on "Building Career Foundations for People with Disability in Brisbane City Council". This money is made

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available through the fines imposed on people who park in Disability Restricted parking spaces. 2 staff will deliver an integrated workforce intervention that:

- Creates the pre-conditions (such as a competitive Talent Pool, areas open to offering opportunities, divisional plans, extending partnerships with external agencies)
- Builds capability (will involve new work experience opportunities for people with disabilities with CRS, career coaching and capability development for team leaders)
- Steps up to increase our number of people with a disability (will involve increasing partnerships with recruitment agencies and greater use of our social inclusion feeder programs, increased focus on young people with a disability such as school based employment programs, extend our Prosperity Network to assist placement in private companies).
- Implement two initiatives to improve the experience of staff who have Mental Health issues.

Andrew Wiltshire, Manager of Employment Services – Deaf Society NSW.

50% of the Society's staff are deaf or have a hearing loss. How did they achieve this? Following consultation with the broader community in 2010, they created a new vision: **"equity for deaf people"**. Their mission statement is: **"We work in partnership with the Deaf Community to enhance the quality of life of deaf people, strengthen the community and advocate for changes that will ensure fundamental rights and freedoms."** The word "Partnership" is the key to what they do. One of their key result areas is: **Leadership by example**

As a community based organisation they are seen to have empathy with people in the deaf community, understand the barriers faced in the mainstream community and to provide employment opportunities for them.

English for the deaf community is often a second language whereas for most of the community it is the primary language and, while seen to be in the disability sector in terms of Government perceptions and funding, it is really a language minority.

The society needs to be seen to be a provider of employment. Many deaf people are inspired by the fact that 50% of staff are deaf or hard of hearing and wonder why other organisations cannot do the same. Strategies used to achieve and maintain this include:

- Bi-lingual policies and procedures in the workplace
- Information in English and Auslan
- In-house English for deaf staff
- Providing Auslan training for hearing staff
- Advertising for positions

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Fluency in Australian Sign Language (Auslan) and knowledge and/or experience in the Deaf Community sector will be viewed as an attractive advantage for any candidate.

When advertising for positions it is important to note that they are merits based so look at the skill sets of potential employees. If a deaf person has the capability and English is their second language the organisation does not see that as a barrier and have strategically made that decision to assist that person. If a person of hearing has the skills but does not have AUSLAN skills they do not treat that as a barrier either and have set up some tools in the workplace to assist them carry out the job.

Regarding employment policies, they have two for everything; one policy for the Human Resources Department and one for Operations. This provides a variety of assistance for people who are deaf or have hearing in the workplace. All the information is in English and is also in Auslan and management reports are circulated in English and Auslan.

The workstations for deaf staff are in pods which are set up so that staff can see who is approaching them from behind by means of mirrors. Half of the managers are deaf so, if their office door is shut and they are in a meeting and something urgent comes up, the staff member outside the door presses a button to set off a visual alert rather than knock.

Justin Le Couteur, Senior Policy Officer, ACT Government

Follows an overview of the ACTPS Respect, Equity and Diversity (RED) Framework and Employment Strategy for People with Disability, implementation of which is Justin's responsibility. For detail www.pwdact.org.au

The government's vision is to be a **'disability confident service, in which people with disability are able to access secure and sustainable employment and are respected for their skills and capabilities'**

1.6 % or 327 self-identified as employees with disability. Since April 2011 they have increased the number of employees with disability by a further 50. The target is to double it to 3% by 2015. The main change implemented is that directorates must report annually to the ACT government on new initiatives they have put in place to increase the number of people with disabilities.

Employment Strategy for People with Disability

- Central coordination/information role, promoting the benefits
- Training initiatives
- Accessibility initiatives: Policy, information and research
- Annual stakeholder progress meetings, including workforce data analysis

To retain employees with disability:

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- Professional development and network for employees with disability
- Build disability confidence across the ACTPS
- International Day of People with Disability
- Promote flexible working conditions
- Raise awareness of obligations

Some of the higher level key performance indicators are:-

1. Report annually to the Chief Minister on progress
2. Remuneration difference is measured
3. Separation numbers are reduced
4. Learning and Development and Career Plans inc. future leaders programs
5. Increase percentage share of ACTPS comprised of people with disability
6. Increase new recruits

The legislation recently changed so that managers can advertise a position and positively discriminate to specifically fill it with a person with disability.

Work experience and school based apprenticeships are encouraged so that students can get a feel as to what it is like to work for the public service.

All services provided by the ACT Government are now under the one umbrella opening up a wide range of jobs such as diesel mechanics, bus service, hospital and kitchen staff and also public service administration roles. Positions such as these will be filled via an Australian Apprenticeship scheme.

They promote their reasonable adjustment program amongst supervisors and are encouraging job applicants to request this at interview. They are planning disability awareness training in both induction and selection panel level so that the recruitment process is barrier-free as well as within supervisor ranks to encourage lateral, positive thinking and to inform them about the funding available for workplace adjustments.

The traineeship for people with intellectual disabilities started in 2010 and all students graduated in August 2011 with Certificate II in business administration. Some continued on to Certificate III. Managers and supervisors highlighted the drive shown by trainees along with their bubbly personalities. They hope to continue the program, broadening the criteria to include all disabilities.

Phil Nadin, CEO, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia.

PRA now has just on 30% of its staff who disclose a lived experience of mental illness. Some of those staff are employed in peer worker roles, but the majority occupy any of the organisation's approximately 225 staff positions at all levels, the most senior of whom is a Divisional Manager.

WHY did PRA decide to adopt this approach?

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1. this has a positive and beneficial impact on the organisation's culture:
 - focussed on the person as a whole
 - involving the person and respecting them for their individual qualities, hopes and strengths
 - helping to demystify the path to recovery through their example and practical support.
2. Inclusive employment practices demonstrate commitment to social inclusion, and social inclusion is our ultimate objective:
 - we can enable people's connection to community through our own actions
 - we can show by our example what other organisations can achieve
 - we can increase the opportunities for the consumers voice to be heard in planning, evaluation and management of our services.

HOW is PRA increasing the number of its staff with a lived experience of mental illness?

We regularly decide to apply affirmative action principles to filling a vacancy. We are also prepared to reconfigure existing team roles to create a position so that a peer worker can be employed alongside other qualified support workers. We don't have a target for the number of appointments we are seeking, as we believe we still have a long way to go.

It is essential that the position to which the consumer is being appointed is seen by themselves and others as a valued role. So the role needs to:

- be clearly defined as to its structure and responsibility
- give opportunity and support for ongoing learning and skills
- reasonable accommodations such as job sharing and flexibility
- have good management, skilled supervision and peer support.

These provisions should not be beyond competent organisations. Mancuso (1990) observed: "... many of the environmental modifications needed to make the workplace more hospitable to employees with psychiatric disabilities, upon reflection, are simply good management practices".

Are we happy with our experience to date?

Absolutely:

- we have seen the range of activities blossom, as peer workers identified and addressed the needs of people at a personal level, organising training and development activities, better directed support services and an increased connection to other services
- staff report a stronger identification with the consumers, and higher than industry benchmark levels of engagement and satisfaction with management practices such as recruitment and selection, focus on achieving positive outcomes, role clarity, workplace diversity, teamwork and organisation direction
- with one in three staff a consumer of mental health services, the distinction between the service users and the service providers in PRA is irretrievably blurred – there is no "Us and Them"

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