



## KIMBERLEY DISABILITY FORUM The First of Many . . .

Local agencies across Northern WA have partnered together to improve services for people with disability.

For the first time in Broome the Disability Services Commission, Life Without Barriers, Kimberley Individual & Family Support Association and the National Disability Coordination Officer Program coordinated a two-day free training forum for all those involved in the lives of people with disability.

This unique opportunity was provided to people from the Kimberley and the Pilbara who have an interest, personal or professional, in supporting people with disability and their families to live a good life.

The Forum commenced on September 5th with a Sundowner overlooking Roebuck Bay, followed by two days of workshops which focused on areas of direct care, education and employment within the disability sphere. Notre Dame University hosted more than 100 stakeholders to engage, network and participate in this quality training event. Guest presenters included John Armstrong, Phil Flint, Chris Yates and Li Lian Kim.



New information – sinking in!

Participants included representatives from the Government and non-Government sectors, the Department of Education, Disability Employment Services, industry representatives, carers, family members and people with disability.

DEEWR's National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program sponsored the event by providing financial support and assistance to participants travelling from regional and remote Northern WA. This funding supported a wide range of stakeholders to attend the Broome based forum, ranging from teachers and education assistants from Kununurra District High School, to individuals with disability and family members from Pandanus Park and Looma remote communities, to employment agencies and Partnership Brokers from Karratha.

DEEWR's National Disability Coordination Officer for Northern WA, Nicole Cox, said after the event, "It is exciting to combine much needed professional development with such wonderful networking opportunities for stakeholders from various backgrounds and regions, each with a strong interest in improving the lives of people with disability in Northern WA."

The forum was an overwhelming success, drawing comments such as "It inspired me to think on how to continue to develop", "outstanding and uplifting", "inspiring" and "we need more of this". Surveys indicate the networking opportunities, knowledge content and chance to reflect on values and quality of service provision to be forum highlights.



Some of those attending the Forum.

Question and answer sessions allowed for groups and individuals to identify barriers to education, employment and direct care for people with disability. These gaps in services were highlighted and prioritised, and the information will be fed back to appropriate departments and stakeholders over the coming months, including the Department of Education, DEEWR's Disability Employment Service Program, the Disability Services Commission and local shires and communities.

The Kimberley Disability Forum committee has already met to begin planning the 2012 forum, which will be tailored to the interests and needs of stakeholders, based on the feedback, ideas and contributions of all interested in achieving a good life for people with disability in Northern WA.



John Armstrong addresses the forum.

## 'I.T. TECHEADZ'

'IT TechHeadz' is a joint venture between Kalgoorlie DSC Staff, Career Contact and the National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO). Participating schools include the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School and John Paul College. Others include those from the general community who are in the process of transition.

This program was set up as a forum for students with Autism spectrum disabilities who are in transition from school to work or further training. The purposes of the program include the facilitation of increased social interaction, the opportunity to share IT skills, and general preparation for the workplace.

Each week the forum is part open time, with access to computers, and part learning, through material presented by visiting speakers. The speakers not only offer increased IT knowledge, but also share their personal experiences of setting up a business in the IT area.

Participants seem to be gaining much from the dynamic that has developed within the group and from the opportunity for information sharing.

## 2011 Ability Career's Expo – New Venue!

With a welcomed change in location to the Astral Room at the Burswood, this year's Abilities Career Expo was well received by students, parents and teachers. This was confirmed by the exhibitor's survey with 89% rating the venue as very good to excellent.

Exhibitors reported an increase in parent participation. They also commented on improved engagement from teachers in gathering information to feedback to parents who were unable to attend. 74% of the exhibitors stated that the Expo met their primary objective which was general awareness, with a further 33% rating networking as their most important objective. However, only 41% considered the attendees were the appropriate decision makers for their product of service.



Transperth – a very popular stand.

Transperth being a first time exhibitor at this year's Expo was a very popular stall. Students and parents alike availed themselves of the latest information to better navigate the transport system in preparation for improved transport independence on leaving school.

## VET Student Mentoring Program Under Development

The NDCO is currently working with two Government Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and a Disability Employment Services provider to establish a Student Mentoring program for VET students with disability to improve their employment outcomes upon finishing their studies.

As a strategy to address low performance and completion rates for VET students with disability, mentoring programs are well known for their effectiveness. However, despite considerable interest in mentoring programs for youth there still remains only a few disability specific mentoring programs throughout Australia.

This project is modeled upon a previous mentoring project involving two TAFE colleges (Swan and CY O'Connor) and a DES provider (EDGE Employment Solutions) which was conducted in 2004-2005. That project delivered significant outcomes for the TAFE graduates with disability. Unfortunately, like many pilot projects, the lack of ongoing funding prevented its continuation.

This current proposal is to employ a Mentoring Coordinator (MC), with funding provided by EDGE Employment Solutions, to work on-campus with the Disability Service Officers to identify students with disability requiring additional support to successfully transition from their TAFE courses to employment in their chosen field of study.

Expected program outcomes will include:

- Identifying students with disability at participating campuses who require additional assistance in transitioning to employment and making them aware of the services that can be provided through the Mentoring Coordinator
- Arranging mentoring between industry-matched mentors and students with disability
- Assisting impending graduates to secure subsequent employment in their chosen field of study

Progress to date has included identifying the demand for the program, benchmarking with the assistance of the Youth Mentoring Network. Potential participating stakeholders have been identified and project and project benchmarks are now under development. The plan is for the Mentoring Program to be promoted towards the end of this semester in preparation for a full roll-out the new academic year.

## Bunbury Future Possibilities Conference 2011



Entry to the venue at Sanctuary Golf Resort, Bunbury with Donna Wroth of South West VETlink greeting participants.

Following on from last year's conference – this year was bigger and better! Some 70 participants registered for the 2011 event, which was significantly up from the previous year. Together with support staff, exhibitors and staff committee this made for a muster of almost 150 attendees.

The conference ran from 10 am to 2.00 pm so the students, for the most part, could engage in the conference program as if it were a regular day at school. Students travelled from as far away as Manjimup and Collie high schools in order to

participate in the conference: the eighth year it has been held in conjunction with the NDCO program.

Along with the breakout sessions the day included time to visit service providers' exhibitor stalls, a great competition/game on OH&S issues, and a participation draw for the 'world's most coveted iPod!' Arguably the most valuable part to the day was the success stories from past and present students telling of their subsequent achievements in the workplace.

The keynote speaker at the conference was Telisha Beauglehole, who is undertaking an apprenticeship with Karamphiles Builders in Manjimup. Telisha not only gave a great presentation, but also shared an inspiring video that showed her actively involved in her apprenticeship.

The program was modified a little from last year to facilitate a more relaxed event. This year there were only six break-out sessions instead of eight. Each session was designed to be interactive and engaging for the students.

Principal of the Geographe Education Support Centre, Ron Ng, gave a fantastic presentation on how not to behave during a job interview. Dressed as a Viking with helmet and horns, he left an impression so that no one will forget his session and its message.



Ron Ng leaves an unforgettable impression!

The National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) for Southern WA, Dale Arthur, said after the event, "Apart from the value of the information sharing and social interaction, a real strength of the event was that it was largely run on the day 'by the students for the students'."

The Bunbury Future Possibilities Conference was organised by a committee of local service providers chaired by the NDCO, Dale Arthur. Special mention needs to be made of the extra effort and contribution made by Donna Wroth of South West VETlink.

Other contributors included: Department for Communities, South West Institute of Technology, Activ Foundation, Geographe Education Support Centre, Morrisey Homestead and Newton Moore Community Work Centres. Funding for the conference came from the NDCO program, South West Development Commission, South West VETlink and Forrest Personnel.



Australind Junior Jazz High School Band provided enjoyable entertainment during the sumptuous lunch.

Thought is now going into how the parents and primary carers and potential employees can be more directly linked to the program. An increase in participation of some more of the decision makers is believed to be of importance toward increasing the effectiveness of the event. This is in response to the survey results received on the feedback forms returned by participants and exhibitors.

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