

Real choices! Real jobs!



A Guide to Transitioning from School to Supported Employment

PARENT'S, CARER'S, TEACHER'S AND CAREERS TEACHER'S GUIDE



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Parent's, Carer's, Teacher's and Careers Teacher's Guide.

Funded under the Equity Program by the Victorian Department of Education and Training and developed by Brite.

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Further information and copies of this guide are available from the Brite web site at: www.briteind.com.au.

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What is this guide?

This guide is for parents, guardians and those who have a responsibility or an interest in looking after young people including teachers and careers teachers.

This guide is one of a series of three guides published by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The two other guides in the series are a plain English print version and a plain English audio version for students with a disability.

You can view or download each product in the series from www.briteind.com.au.



Why is this guide important?

As the parent, carer, teacher or a careers teacher of a young person with a disability you have a major influence on that student's life and work choices.

Transitioning and preparing for transition after school is not easy and deciding what to do can be a particularly confusing and difficult period.

For the students it means leaving behind the places, people and routines they know so well and embarking on a totally new experience that is exciting and frightening at the same time.

For parents transition is also a difficult time. You can help make the transition as smooth as possible by finding out all you can about the full range of options available.

This guide has been developed to ensure that you are informed of the supported employment post school options in the Hume region of northern Melbourne.

The guide explains what supported employment is and how supported employment can be accessed. It also describes the benefits of accessing the real choices and real jobs offered by supported employment.



What is supported employment?

Supported employment is an important service funded by the Australian government.

It is aimed at people with disabilities who want to work but choose to do so in a supported employment environment or who, because they have higher support needs, normally find it hard to find and keep a job.

Supported employment is funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and delivered by organisations known Business Services.

Business Services receive funding to provide specialist and individualised support to people with a disability so that they can participate in the Australian workplace.

There are two main pathways to enter supported employment:

- ◆ Referral pathway by Centrelink or Job Capacity Assessor
- ◆ Direct pathway by the applicant by direct contact with the Business Service



Types of work available

Business Services are commercial businesses providing services and products to other commercial businesses.

Business Services offer real choices and real jobs.

The types of work available at a business service depends on the nature of their commercial business.



Examples of employment options include:

- ◆ In a factory environment doing packaging, assembling and processing tasks
- ◆ In a nursery environment propagating and maintaining plants
- ◆ In a gardening environment providing gardening and general maintenance services for commercial and domestic clients
- ◆ In a warehouse environment receiving and despatching goods

Why is having a job important?

People with a disability have the right to participate in the same range of activities as people without a disability.

Having a job is important because:

- ◆ Employment is an activity that our society values. Having a job creates social status
- ◆ Regular paid work is generally what people do when they become an adult
- ◆ Earning a wage increases access to other activities
- ◆ Opportunities for social integration occur in the workplace
- ◆ Feeling productive enhances feelings of self worth
- ◆ Being employed provides opportunities for personal and vocational growth



The benefits of supported employment

Supported employment is an important service for people with a disability who want to work.

It provides:

- ◆ Real choices! Real jobs!
- ◆ Real wages for real work
- ◆ Conditions of employment consistent with open employment
- ◆ Meaningful work that is valued in the community
- ◆ A safe and comfortable working environment
- ◆ A workplace free from harassment and discrimination
- ◆ Ongoing performance feedback and appraisal
- ◆ Security of tenure in line with industry standards
- ◆ Skilled disability support staff
- ◆ Specialist disability support tailored to each individual worker
- ◆ Opportunities for development and career advancement
- ◆ Effective training and support linked to individual employment goals
- ◆ Physical and social integration
- ◆ Input into decision making and choice in the workplace

Challenging common myths

Myth #1 Supported employment and sheltered workshops are the same thing

False!

Employment for people with a disability has come a long way since the old days of “sheltered workshops”.

Sheltered workshops were places where groups of people with a disability were isolated from society and perform low level tasks for a token wage without opportunity for development or advancement.

Supported employment is very different. In supported employment people with a disability have real jobs, do real work and earn a real wage.

Myth#2 Supported employment is not a real job

False!

People employed in supported employment have real jobs and do real work for real customers.

They earn a real wage and are supported to learn new tasks, new skills and participate fully in the workplace.

Myth#3 Supported employment is a form of exploitation

False!

People working in supported employment are employed under an award, an enterprise agreement or an employment contract consistent with the conditions of employment in open employment.

As commercial businesses, all providers of supported employment are subject to all the same workplace legislation and regulations as other commercial businesses.

Clorinda's story



Clorinda's daughter Jessica is in her first year of transition at a special school after attending a mainstream school in her primary years.

Clorinda said she has avoided the post-option issue as being in the "too hard basket" but will be attending her first Parent Information Night soon.

She is very satisfied with the support provided at school and fears for the future when special school will no longer be an option.

Clorinda is worried about many things including her daughter's safety, whether she will have enough stimulation and whether she will have the opportunity to interact socially.

She has very negative views of supported employment based on her limited knowledge of the old sheltered workshops. She has seen some photos of people working and is surprised to learn the photos are of people with a disability working in a Business Service. Her first thought was that it looked like a real job.

Clorinda found out that there are opportunities to do many jobs, ranging in complexity from simple and repetitive to quite sophisticated tasks. She thought that the people in the photos looked busy and confident and that they enjoyed what they were doing.

She admitted that her pre-conceived ideas about supported employment were very negative and she has decided to make further enquiries about this option at the end of the year.

Business Services in the Hume region

Business Services in and around the Hume region include:

Brite Services

Cnr Belfast & Dallas Drive,
Broadmeadows, 3047
Phone 9309 5111

Creative Opportunities

10 Tinning Street
Brunswick, 3056
Phone 9386 7611

Brunswick Industries

3-7 Syme Street
Brunswick, 3056
Phone 9387 1433

Dual Ware Industries

305 Victoria Street
Brunswick, 3056
Phone 9666 4504

Hi-City Industries

98 Oriel Road
Heidelberg West, 3081
Phone 9497 3555

Ability Press

2 Robinson Road
Reservoir, 3073
Phone 9666 4504

VATMI Industries

12 Keon Parade
Keon Park, 3073
Phone 9416 8338

BEA Windows

858 Sydney Road
Brunswick 3056
Phone 9384 0400

Woorinyan Incorporated

7 Aylward Avenue
Thomastown 3074
Phone: 9432 0530

Work Experience

Most Business Services offer short term work experience for individual students or groups of students from schools.

Work experience involves 'on-the-job' experience - a taster of what working involves.

Usually, students come with a teacher or aide from their school to support them.

Work Experience is invaluable when the time comes for students to choose their post school options.

It enables students to gain pre-employment skills and increase their readiness for employment in the future.



Ines' story

Ines' son James will be leaving special school at the end of the year.

Currently, he is completing a work experience stint at a Business Service with support from a teacher from the school.

Ines does not think that her son is ready for employment or TAFE and plans to support him to apply for a Lifestyle Program which may also give him the opportunity to learn some important life and work skills.

Whilst acknowledging that the school has given her tremendous support ("Thank God for the school!"), her greatest concern is what's going to happen next.

Ines is particularly concerned because James has Prader Willi Syndrome which requires specialised support. Ines thinks that the ideal scenario for James would be for him to work part-time and attend a Lifestyle program.

Ines was relieved to find out that a local Business Service had the capacity to provide the extra support required for his disability.

She plans to make an appointment for a site tour to inspect the workplace and confirm the training and support service provided.



Applying for work

This section describes the steps for applying for work in a Business Service.

It is a general guide only and may differ slightly from Business Service to Business Service.

In each step of the application process, the person with a disability is encouraged to access the support of someone such as a parent, carer or advocate if they choose to do so.

Step 1

Contact the Business Service and ask for a copy of their entry procedure, eligibility criteria and any other marketing information they have available.

Each Business Service has their own eligibility criteria that must be met before a person can qualify for a service.

It is important that you contact each Business Service and ask them for a copy of their eligibility criteria. You will then be able to check whether you think the student meets the eligibility criteria or not.

In most cases a person must be assessed by a Job Capacity Assessment Provider to be eligible to apply for work at a Business Service. This is commonly referred to as Centrelink endorsement.

The assessment must indicate:

- ◆ That the person has a disability, illness or injury
- ◆ The level of support a person requires
- ◆ The types of assistance required to help them get a job or to stay in a job

The assessment can be organised through Centrelink or in some cases by the Business Service.

Step 2

Organise a workplace visit. A visit allows you to meet the staff face to face and find out about the workplace and the employment conditions. If you don't already have a copy of the eligibility criteria, make sure you collect one during the workplace visit.

Step 3

Submit an employment application. Each Business Service has their own application form but the information collected is very similar. Business Services need to assess whether an applicant meets their eligibility criteria and whether the Business Service can meet the individual's support needs.

Supported employment is a capped service which means that each Business Service has a maximum number of people with a disability it can support at any one time. If a Business Service has reached full capacity you may be able to add the student's name to a waiting list. Find out about whether the Business Service has capacity and, if they don't, find out about how their waiting list works.

Step 4

Attend a job interview. At the job interview staff from the Business Service will confirm eligibility and ask the applicant about their work goals.

The interview is an ideal time to express any concerns and ask staff about the nature of the service provided.

Step 5

Accept the job offer. If the application is successful the applicant will be given a letter of offer detailing the job and the employment conditions. Contact the Business Service if you have any questions about the letter of offer or are still unsure about the service they provide.

When the applicant signs and returns the letter of offer they are accepting a job with the Business Service.

Starting work

Starting a new job can be very exciting and for many of us it can also be a bit frightening. Like all new employees young people with a disability worry if they will be able to do the job and fit into the workplace.

Business Service staff are very experienced in helping new employees to settle in. In the first few days and weeks, staff conduct an induction and orientation program to suit the needs of each new employee.

During induction and orientation the new employee learns more about the job, the Business Service and the people they work with. This helps them to feel more comfortable and fit in to the new environment in the workplace.

Many Business Services have a probationary period of several months after which the employee is offered a permanent job.

The purpose of the probationary period is to give the employee a chance to make an informed decision about whether they want to stay and to make sure that the Business Service can meet the support needs of the employee.

What can you do to help?

- ◆ Offer to accompany them on their first day at work
- ◆ Help them to plan how to get to work and how to arrive on time
- ◆ Help them to establish a routine such as getting their lunch and clothes ready the night before
- ◆ Find out about the way the Business Service operates and how they will be supported to learn
- ◆ Take the time to ask them about their day and listen to their concerns
- ◆ Encourage them to ask for help at work

Anna's story

Anna's son Daniel is 18 years old.

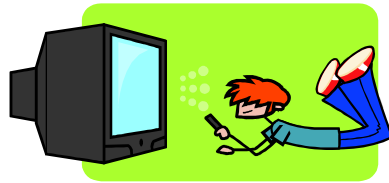
He is currently completing his last year at a special school and has definite preferences regarding what he wants to do.

He is not interested in "crafty or arty things" and wants to be with other people his own age. He's already noticed that some post school options have mainly older participants.

Currently Anna and Daniel are thinking about a placement where he can learn important life and work skills such as a TAFE Work Education course.

Anna's real concern is what happens after this.

Anna has decided to explore the option of supported employment.



Employment conditions

People working in supported employment are employed under an award, an enterprise agreement or an employment contract consistent with the conditions of employment in open employment.

The conditions of employment include pay rate, hours of work, overtime, holidays, sick leave, superannuation and other penalty provisions.

Productivity based wages

Employees are paid a productivity based wage assessed using a wage assessment tool. Different Business Services use different tools but they are all deemed to be fair, objective and equitable.

The wage assessment tool measures how well an employee can do their job, how well they know their job and how quickly they can do a job without making mistakes. The higher the score the higher the wage.

Wage assessments are conducted and reviewed regularly and employees can appeal the wage assessment result if they are not satisfied.



Employment Assistance Plans

Employment Assistance Plans document the employment goals and strategies for achieving each individual employee's goals. They are developed by staff collaboratively with each employee and often an advocate with dates for regular review.

Employees are encouraged to improve their skills and workplace behaviour through workplace training and support. This can include learning a new job or doing a current job better. Learning new skills also improves an employee's chances of getting a promotion and earning more money.

The training and support needs are documented in the Employee Assistance Plan. Staff are responsible for making sure that the plan is followed.

Employment Assistance Plans can include goals and strategies for:

- ◆ On the job training
- ◆ Improving skills in the current job
- ◆ Changing jobs within the Business Service
- ◆ New tasks that an employee may want to do
- ◆ New skills that an employee may want to learn
- ◆ Developing appropriate workplace behaviour
- ◆ Transitioning to open employment

Disability Services Standards

The 12 Disability Services Standards apply to all funded Business Services.

Standard 1: Service Access

Each person with a disability who is seeking a service has access to a service on the basis of relative need and available resources.

Standard 2: Individual Needs

Each person with a disability receives a service that is designed to meet, in the least restrictive way, his or her individual needs and personal goals.

Standard 3: Decision Making and Choice

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in making decisions about the events and activities of his or her daily life in relation to the services he or she receives.

Standard 4: Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality

Each person with a disability's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in all aspects of his or her life is recognised and respected.

Standard 5: Participation and Integration

Each person with a disability is supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community.

Standard 6: Valued Status

Each person with a disability has the opportunity to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable him or her to achieve valued roles in the community.

Standard 7: Complaints and Disputes

Each person with a disability is encouraged to raise and have resolved without fear of retribution, any complaints or disputes he or she may have regarding the service provider or the service.

Standard 8: Service Management

Each service provider adopts quality management systems and practices that optimise outcomes for service recipients.

Standard 9: Employment Conditions

Each person with a disability enjoys working conditions comparable to those of the general workforce.

Standard 10: Service Recipient Training and Support

The employment opportunities of each person with a disability are optimised by effective and relevant training and support.

Standard 11: Staff Recruitment, Employment and Training

Each person employed to deliver services to a person with a disability has relevant skills and competencies.

Standard 12: Protection of Human Rights and Freedom from Abuse

The service provider acts to prevent abuse and neglect and to uphold the legal and human rights of people with a disability.

Key words and acronyms

Agreement	Individual agreements between employers and employees for a particular workplace.
Award	A legally binding document setting out the pay rates and employment conditions.
Award rate	The minimum rate of pay for a job classification under an Award.
Centrelink	A government agency delivering a range of Commonwealth services to the Australian community.
Centrelink Endorsement	Assessment by a Job Capacity Assessment Provider as eligible to apply for work at a Business Service.
Disability Employment Services	Funded agencies which assist people with a disability to gain and retain paid employment in open employment.
Disability Service Standards:	A set of 12 Standards that all Disability Employment Services must comply with. A Business Service has to meet the Standards to be funded.
Disability Support Pension	A payment for people whose physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment prevents them from working, or for people who are permanently blind.
Discrimination	Unfair treatment of a person based on their colour, politics, race, religion, gender or other personal attribute which does not relate to work performance.
Eligibility Criteria	The criteria that you must meet to be able to work in a Business Service
Employee Representative Committee	A group of representative employees in the workplace who take part in making decisions within the workplace and attend regular meetings
Employment Assistance Plans	A documented plan designed to meet an employee's individual needs and employment goals.
Employment conditions	The conditions under which an employee is employed.
FaCSIA	Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs which funds Business Services.

LLENs	Local Learning and Employment Networks are a Victorian Government initiative with the aim of improving education, training and employment outcomes for young people.
On the job training	Training that takes place while the employee is working.
Open Employment	Employment in the open labour market with award-based wages and conditions alongside people without a disability.
Post School Options	What to do after leaving school including employment, further study and lifestyle programs.
Probationary period	A trial period that enables the new employee to decide if they want to stay and the employer to assess whether they have the capacity to meet the employee's support needs.
Productivity Based Wage Assessment	Regular wage assessments that determine how much a person with a disability will be paid. It measures how well an employee knows their job, how well they do their job and how quickly they work without making mistakes.
Productivity based wages	A Pro rata wage calculated through the Productivity Based Wage Assessment.
Resume	Written summary of a person's education and employment history. Sometime called a Curriculum Vitae or CV.
Support staff	Staff with the necessary qualifications and experience who work in a Business Service providing support for people with a disability.
Supported employee	A person with a disability who works in a Business Service. Sometimes also called an employee, a worker, a client or a service recipient.
Supported employment	Employment in funded Business Services where people with a disability earn a productivity based wage and receive specialist disability support.
Training	The development of skills and knowledge to help an employee to do their job.
Transition	Moving from one life phase to another such as from special school to supported employment.
Wages	Payment for services based on an hourly rate.
Work experience	Unpaid participation in a workplace designed to provide an experience of working life.
Workplace behaviour	Appropriate behaviours for the workplace including working safely, starting on time and working well with others.

Further information

Centrelink	13 27 17 www.centrelink.gov.au
Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	1300 653 227 www.facs.gov.au/disability
Disability Symposium 2005. The Way Forward. Australia 2005	www.dsc.wa.gov.au/cproot/1693/3/DisabilitySymposium2005.doc
Disability Online	www.disability.vic.gov.au/
Local Learning and Employment Networks	www.llens.vic.gov.au

