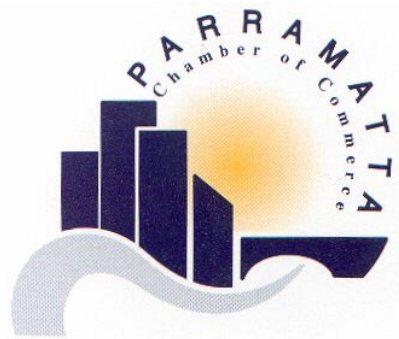


Do Yourself a Favour - Employ Someone with a Disability!

A Guide for Employers in Parramatta



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Message from the President, Chamber of Commerce

Parramatta is growing fast and becoming the preferred location for business leaders. As a member of the NSW Chamber of Commerce, Parramatta City Chamber of Commerce & Industry aims to create a strong, stable environment where local businesses prosper and receive the vital assistance needed to serve all members of their local community.

Today's business world presents a constant challenge to stay competitive and grow a healthy and diversified customer base as well as attract and keep great staff.

'Do Yourself a Favour - Employ Someone with a Disability!' addresses these very issues. This e-booklet was initiated by the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW, based in Harris Park. They have a great understanding of local conditions and they also understand the challenges faced by local residents with a disability who come from very diverse cultural backgrounds and want to work locally.

This e-booklet is designed to give you, as a local employer in the Parramatta area, information and ideas about the benefits available to you by diversifying your employee and customer base.

It gives me great pleasure to launch Do Yourself a Favour – Employ Someone with a Disability!



Stephanie Dale
President
Parramatta City Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc



Foreword

Do yourself a favour – employ someone with a disability!

It's true: you will be doing yourself a favour. I employ people with disabilities and they are just like any other employees: some are very committed, some are more focused on the pay packet, some are relaxed, some are a bit anxious, some are easy to work with, others are more complex.

It's also true that when you employ someone with a disability you tend to get a person who is very practical and keen to get started on the tasks you ask them to do. In general, people with a disability want to prove they can do the job and are highly motivated to get on with it and stick with it.

Because our society often ignores their needs, people with a disability have to learn to be resourceful, patient and assertive if they want to get work or socialise. These are great qualities we rely on at Qualitec to get the job done. Our employees adapt well to the work environment, have devised more efficient ways of working and are great at telling us when something is not right or when they need more information to do the job.

Working with people with disability can also be a lot of fun - what you see is usually what you get! If someone is not up to the job you'll be the first to know. And you'll be the first to be complimented if you do something your employees appreciate. Your sense of humour and your communication skills will increase and your understanding of the world will deepen.

I recommend that every local employer do themselves a favour: it certainly works for me.

David Caton

David Caton
General Manager, Qualitec Ltd
Board Member
Parramatta City Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc

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A new Way to do Business

This booklet is about the bottom line benefits of employing people with disability and explains how employers in the Parramatta area can get help to recruit, train and support some of the best employees they'll ever have. It provides links to the free support services available to employees with disability and employers and to other useful sites. It aims to dispel the many misconceptions about employing someone with disability.

Many employers are not aware that:

- productivity rates, attendance records, job retention rates and safety records are as good or better for people with disability compared with other workers;
- most people with disability do not require special work arrangements or workplace modifications;
- federal government financial incentives to employers, free training and ongoing support services to both the employer and person with disability make hiring people with disability a sound business proposition;
- the high rate of unemployment of people with disability results from stereotypes - people with disability are not given a chance to show what they can do;
- people with disability have a wide range of skills and qualifications and work successfully in a wide range of industries and professions at all levels.

Benefits for your Business

With more and more businesses employing people with disability, evidence is growing about the benefits, financial and non-financial, of diversifying your workforce in this way.

Approximately one in five people in the community have a disability. This means that over 131,000 people with disability living in the Cumberland/Prospect area, including almost 27,000 in the Parramatta area, and their families are potentially your customers or clients. By diversifying your workforce to reflect the diversity in your community, you can improve your access to this significant segment of the market as well as improving your public image and links with the community.

Given the opportunity, people with disability can dispel the myths and negative stereotypes commonly held by society and show their positive contribution to the workplace. Information collected in workplaces employing people with disability shows that¹:

- 90% rated average or better than their colleagues without disability on job performance;
- 98% rated average or better in work safety;
- 72% higher annual retention rate (resulting in savings on recruitment and training); lower absenteeism; and
- no increase in compensation costs.

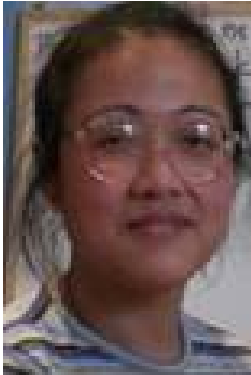
A 1991 Victorian report indicates that only 4% of employees with disability claimed for accidents during that year compared with 14.7% of employees without disabilityⁱⁱ.

For more facts and statistics that dispel the myths and stereotypes about employees with a disability see www.JobAble.gov.au/fact_sheets.



Support from employer's network

The Australian Employers' Network on Disability, *Employers Making a Difference (EMAD)*, is a not for profit organisation supported and led by employers who believe in the benefits of employing people with disability. They promote and support businesses which encourage people with disability as employees, customers or clients. Check their website for more information: www.emad.asn.au



Examples:

Companies in Australia such as Telstra, Franklins and McDonalds have discovered that their workforce functions far more effectively when it includes people with disability.

Dr Ann Diamond, Employment General Manager, Telstra says:

"We recruit our staff from the best available pools of candidates, including people with a disability. Employing people with a disability has enabled us to gain insight into the diverse telecommunications needs of our customers."



And from Franklins:

"People with disabilities have a great deal of value to add to our business, not only through the tangible benefits but also through achieving workplace diversity. Our goal is to gain and retain committed people and demonstrate a corporate commitment to the communities we serve."

Mr Tat Cork, Regional Director of McDonald's:

"People with a disability have brought to McDonald's a vast range of life and work skills, as well as being very productive and reliable."

(from www.becsa.com.au)

Employers in the Parramatta area are also enthusiastic:

Matt Gould, Manager, The Reject Shop, North Ryde, says:

"High staff turnover has always been a problem for us. But the employees Active Employment [a disability employment service] has supplied turn over less frequently. They seem to have the ability to do the job much better and they last much longer." (Active Employment brochure)

Fadil Pedic, The Research Forum, Parramatta:

"Active Employment found us a staff member who is focused, motivated, values the job and has access to the level of support needed to do the job. All of this takes pressure off me."

(Active Employment brochure)

Financial Incentives for your Business

The federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations provides financial support through the Wage Subsidy Scheme and the Workplace Modifications Scheme to employers who employ a person or take on a trainee or apprentice with disability.

Information about this assistance is available at the federal government's JobAble website at www.JobAble.gov.au/employer.asp.

Information about the many training programs offered by the federal government, including [New Apprenticeships](#), can be also found at the [Department of Education, Science and Training](#) website.

Recruitment: Specialist Employment Services

If you are considering offering employment opportunities to people with disability, contact:

Disability WORKS Australia Ltd (DWA) on Ph 9282 6914 or visit their website: www.dwa.org.au

DWA is a federal government funded "one stop shop" for recruiting people, including trainees and apprentices, with disability. Employers can advise DWA of vacancies and DWA broadcasts them to all specialist disability employment services in the area as well as to the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. (Employers can also approach individual disability employment services direct).

DWA screens candidates put forward by the employment services and refers suitable people to the employer for final selection. If you wish to employ one of the candidates, the disability employment service can provide support and assistance, for example:

- pre-employment work trials;
- free employment training until the employee has attained the agreed productivity and quality of work;
- on site training for employers and co-workers;
- job support if required;
- information on incentives, subsidies and supported wages;
- identification of any work place modifications which may be required.



Specialist disability employment services covering Parramatta include:

Active Employment (works with people with all kinds of disabilities congenital and acquired, including intellectual, physical, neurological, sensory, learning, attention deficit disorders and psychiatric): Ph 9635 6300; Suite 5, Level 5, 169 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

Jobmatch (varied disability groups): Ph 9890 0970; Level 2, 1 Fennell St, North Parramatta

Deaf Society of NSW Employment Service: Ph 9891 4820; Suite 401, Level 4, 169 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

SEDS – Metro West (Sydney Employment Development Service) works with people with physical disability, multiple disability and acquired brain injury: Ph 9635 7600; Suite 1, Level 1, Lachlan Towers, 17-21 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

Break Thru Employment Solutions Ltd (varied disability groups): Ph 9893 9988; Suite 5, Level 1, 20-22 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

Department of Education and Training New Apprentices Centre (NAC) Parramatta (trainee/apprenticeship centre – provides services for students with disabilities): Ph 9204 7400; Station House, 16-18 Wentworth Street, Parramatta

Disability and Anti- Discrimination Law

People with disability have the same rights to employment opportunities as people without disability. Both the NSW *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* and the federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* prohibit employers from discriminating against an employee or potential employee on the basis of their disability. If a person with a disability applies for a job with your company or business and can perform the essential requirements of the job, that person should have just as much chance as anyone else. The best person should get the job, whether they have a disability or not.

In some cases you may need to make adjustments to the workplace or work practices to enable the employee to perform most effectively, for example, enlarging a computer screen or modifying a work-station or lighting. However, you do not have to make any changes which would cause you unjustifiable hardship, such as incurring unreasonable costs.

If you want further information about employers and anti-discrimination law, you can contact:

- Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, Employers/ Service Providers Advisory Service
Phone 9268 5544; www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb
- Human Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Phone 9284 9600; www.humanrights.gov.au

Frequently Asked Questions

What types of jobs are/ aren't suitable for people with disability?	People with disability work successfully in a wide range of jobs, industries and professions. Just like people without disability, it depends on the skills, training and qualifications of each individual.
Will it cost more for insurance and compensation to employ someone with disability?	No. Because the person's disability is recognised when they start work with you, it should have no effect on insurance costs. As for compensation costs, studies have shown that people with disability are much less likely to be involved in accidents and make claims than workers without disability.
If special equipment or modifications and adjustments are needed in the workplace, who will pay for them?	Most people with disability do not need expensive equipment or modifications. If they do, Government subsidies are available.
Will people with disability take more sick days because of their disability?	There is no evidence to support this. If anything, people with disability have been shown to have higher attendance records.
What about safety?	Workcover and specialist training agencies can assist to ensure that the work environment is safe for everyone, including any employees with disability.
Will I have to spend more time training and supervising a person with disability? Will someone always have to help them?	Not if the person with disability has the appropriate skills for the job. If they do need extra training or support, it can be provided free of charge by an approved Disability Employment Service. Government subsidies may also be available.
What if a person is less productive due to their disability?	Most employees with disability work just as productively as their co-workers and receive a full salary or award wage. However, if they can't, the Supported Wage System can help. It enables the employer to pay a wage geared to the worker's independently assessed productivity.
What questions can/ can't I ask about a person's disability?	The specialist employment agency should be able to answer your questions before you interview their client. You can ask questions relating to the applicant's disability only to identify whether you will need to make any adjustments so they can do the job. For some great tips about interviewing job applicants with disability see www.work.asn.au
How can I be sure that a person with disability will 'fit in'? How will co-workers respond?	The specialist employment agency will look over the work site and liaise closely with management and co-workers to ensure any concerns are met before the person starts work. If necessary, they can provide training in disability awareness to co-workers.
How should a person with disability be treated at work?	With respect and dignity – just like any other employee.
What happens if it doesn't work out?	The odds are high that it will work out – research shows that people with disability perform well and have a high retention rate. However, if things don't work out, your normal procedure for dealing with performance problems applies.

adapted from www.work.asn.au

For More Information

For information, tips and strategies about working with an employee with a specific disability, see www.JobAble.gov.au, a federal government website focusing on employment and work related issues.

JobAble aims to be a relevant, useful, and informative guide for Job Network case managers, disability employment services, job seekers with a disability and for employers or potential employers. It contains fact sheets, information about specific disabilities, tips and links to other related sites for employers.

ⁱ Quoted by Disability Recruitment Co-ordinator for Western Australia: <http://employability.ecu.edu.au>

ⁱⁱ The Occupational Health and Safety Report on People with Disabilities (DEAC, Vic 1991) Source: Department of Employment, Education and Training *The Disability Reform Package: Employer Information* Australian Government Publishing Service 1992.