

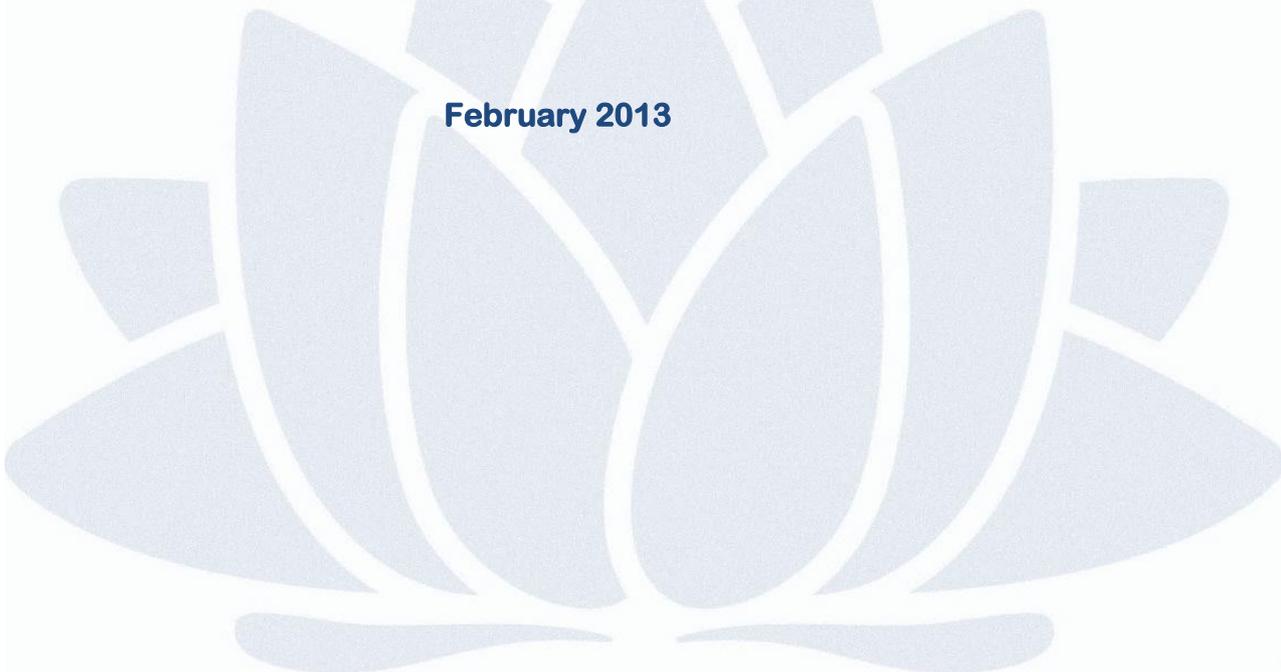


# Snapshots of Success

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**Achievements of Students  
with Disability**

**February 2013**



On 3 December each year Australia celebrates the United Nations International Day of People with Disability and 2012 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event, which recognises and promotes the capabilities and strengths of people with disability.

TAFE NSW is committed to working with people facing disadvantage to develop the critical skills and knowledge needed to best position them to achieve their educational and vocational goals.

In 2011, TAFE NSW enrolled 56,499 students with a disability, an increase of 22% since 2007. Our intent is to support students to best participate in the workforce and it is pleasing to note that 34% of these enrolments were in Certificate III and Diploma courses.

These *Snapshots of Success* are inspirational personal journeys. They recognise how our students have successfully addressed barriers to achieving their goals and participation.

Following are the stories behind the achievements of our students.

My thanks to the students who shared their personal journeys and the TAFE staff who worked closely with them.

Pam Christie

**Managing Director of TAFE NSW**

**Deputy Director-General, TAFE & Community Education**

February 2013

*Note: The wishes of those students who were willing to share their stories, but did not wish to be identified have been respected. An (\*) beside a name denotes that a pseudonym has been used.*

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Jake sustained a spinal injury during the final year of his Certificate III in Carpentry trade course. He has since gone on to complete his apprenticeship and has continued to further training.



In August 2010, the Head Teacher – Building & Construction at Ourimbah together with the Teacher/Consultant – Physical Disabilities at Gosford campus, developed an individual education plan and implemented strategies to assist Jake to complete his **Certificate III in Carpentry**. Adaptive technology requirements and course delivery options were identified.

Negotiations between the Teacher/Consultant, State Training Services and Brookfield Multiplex, Jake's employer resulted in Jake's eligibility for Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS).

This gave Jake an extra six months to complete his apprenticeship and funds for one-on-one learning and mentoring support.

Jake's employer was supportive throughout his rehabilitation and continuation of his TAFE course, which he completed in July 2011. Jake is currently employed full time as a document controller in Pymont.

Jake hopes to progress to management level in the organisation's design area. He is keen to continue to achieve his goals and continue his studies at TAFE using AutoCAD Computer Aided Drafting software. Jake's story 'Plan B' has been published in the Spinal Cord Injuries Australia Spring 2011 edition of *Accord*.

Jessica has excelled and is now a professional photographer, web designer and graphic design artist.



Jess, as she prefers to be called, is a unique young woman with a different perspective on life from most of us. Born with a high level of cerebral palsy and an equally high level of raw talent and self-determination, she continues to pursue her goals through continuing education despite an already demanding professional life.

In 2006, Jess commenced her TAFE journey and completed a **Certificate II in Printing and Graphic Arts (Desktop Publishing)**. She went on to complete the **Certificate III** followed by **Certificate IV in Information Technology (Websites Design)**. Jess is currently undertaking the **Diploma of Information Technology (Website Development)**.

Throughout Jess's TAFE studies she has received support organised by the Disability Teacher/Consultant. This has included note taking and one on one learning support in class. In 2007 Jess met Ken Duncan, a renowned photographic artist, who was impressed with the high standard of her work and commitment to art. Jess was invited to work at his studio 'Created for Life' where she continues to work while also having established her own website business *DARE2BU*.

Jess' website <http://dare2bu.net.au/> outlines her personal story of success.

After a successful TAFE journey, Gino says that his new challenge will be to find an employer who will look beyond his disability to the work he can do



Gino, a pulpit operator at the steelworks for over 25 years, became a quadriplegic as a result of a car accident. As he wasn't able to return to his former work, he contacted the Teacher/Consultant – Physical Disabilities to explore other training and vocational options.

Gino had an interest and skills in technical drawing and he decided to try drafting. He was able to build his confidence and learn skills in using assistive technology including voice activated software and CAD (Computer Aided Drafting) before enrolling in a mainstream CAD course.

After 6 months, Gino had the skills and confidence to enrol in the **Diploma of Architectural Technology**. The Teacher/Consultant was able to

negotiate a modified attendance pattern so that Gino could do the course part-time over a longer period of time. Gino was also able to produce all of the required drawings using CAD. Gino then undertook the **Advanced Diploma in Sustainable Building Design** which he completed in December 2011.

Gino is now completing the **Certificate IV in Training & Assessment** as he is teaching Revit Architectural Design Software to students in the Diploma of Architectural Drafting. History is repeating itself, as Gino is also providing learning support to a young man in his early twenties who had a car accident and wants to train as a draftsman.

You can watch Gino's story on <http://youtube/Ugg-iGoOTto>

Shane is keen to work in the Information Technology industry and is enrolled in the Certificate IV in Information Technology. He was awarded the 2012 Mick Young Scholarship which has enabled him to access the internet at home.

Shane grew up in a small remote town and was born blind. When he started at TAFE the Teacher/Consultant – Vision initially provided Shane with assistance in mobility and orientation of the campus. This enabled Shane to familiarise himself with campus facilities and social activities.

A variety of reasonable adjustments were implemented – notetaker/reader, learning support, as well as equipment and adaptive technology including tactile drawings, audio files, JAWS and Daisy reader software, laptop and Pearl scanner.

Vision Australia and Guide Dogs NSW also provided technical support.

As the course content was online, consultations were held between the

Teacher/Consultant and the teaching section to address delivery issues. The classroom was relocated to a first floor room and JAWS software was updated for compatibility with the Moodle software.

In addition to his technical skills, Shane has broadened his horizons and developed independence and confidence. He manages the set-up of his laptop, completes tasks, asks for assistance and mixes with his peers. Shane now makes his way around the campus mostly unassisted.

The *Mick Young Scholarship Trust*, or MYST, is a national fundraising initiative which gives financially disadvantaged students the chance to further their education at universities, TAFE and colleges across Australia.

David completed the Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) and continued on to the Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). Through David's Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) traineeship, TAFE provided tutoring and mentoring assistance to enable this pathway.



Effective case management and mentoring enabled the support services that David needed, in the workplace, at TAFE and in his personal life, to be coordinated and implemented.

The Disability Teacher/Consultant negotiated reasonable adjustments for David. Learning support was provided in class with team teaching and out of class one on one theory sessions. A reader/writer was used to support David in his exams.

David describes his TAFE experience as very positive. His employer is very satisfied with his work and has encouraged him to continue with his studies.

David's confidence has grown, he is happy at work and has developed a regular friendship group.

Mark completed the Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology (Light Vehicle). He said it was ‘one of the best feelings ever!’



Mark left school after Year 10 and worked at a friend's panel beating business. Mark always preferred ‘hands on’ learning and started an apprenticeship with a large car dealership. He found the self-paced course daunting and was beginning to feel defeated.

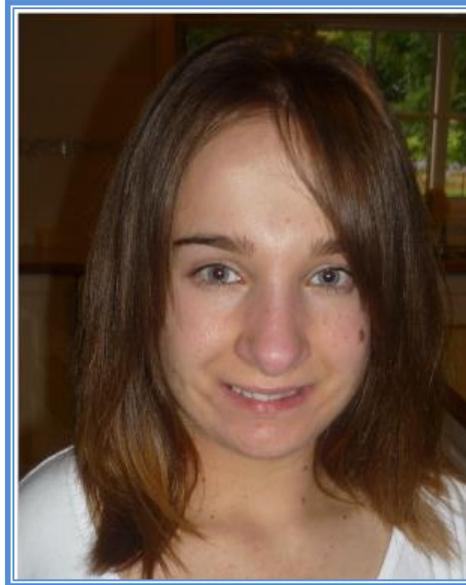
By the time Mark was referred to the Teacher/Consultant – Learning Disabilities ‘nothing was working for him’. The Teacher/Consultant assisted in applying for Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) for Mark. This provided both tutorial and mentoring support.

With this assistance, Mark succeeded in completing 14 units of competency in two months. He was taught strategies for increasing comprehension and expressing information. When his teacher told him that they had just completed the final book, Mark was shocked.

He said ‘having a one on one teacher really works. ‘If I didn't have this I would still be trying to study!’

One year down the track, Mark is doing really well – he is running the mechanical section of a tyre workshop. He speaks proudly of himself and his qualification. “Now I know I am a mechanic!’

Amy completed the Certificate III in Community Services Work at Griffith TAFE in 2011 after previously completing the Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation.



Amy was also nominated and rewarded with the Cheers Financial Award for her achievements. Amy's attitude to all her achievements has been a consistent "I believe I can do anything", no matter the difficulties.

Amy was born with a rare and unique disability called Femoral Hypoplasia – Unusual Facies Syndrome. Amy initially pursued a career in the beauty industry. However, after finding employment difficult to obtain Amy persisted in continuing her education and advancing her skills and knowledge.

In 2012, Amy is furthering her studies at Griffith TAFE by studying the **Certificate IV in Community Services Work** (through correspondence at Narrandera TAFE) and the **Certificate IV in Disability** (through Leeton TAFE) and the **Diploma in Community Services Work** (through Narrandera TAFE).

Her future goal is to get a job in the counselling industry and/or a career that allows her to work with people who have a disability.

Recently, Amy successfully achieved her goal to find a job and now is a Support Worker for Griffith Post School Options.

In 2006, Beth was a qualified pastry chef however could not continue working night shifts with two small children to look after. Beth thought of going to TAFE to study Community Services Work.



Beth was inspired and encouraged by her parents and one lovely friend who explained that there was access for Deaf people at Riverina TAFE. Beth was worried that there would be a lack of interpreters in country areas, compared to Sydney.

Beth started at Riverina TAFE in 2007, doing the **Certificate IV in Community Services Work** and had access to an Auslan interpreter full time. Beth also had access to a notetaker and the Disability Teacher/ Consultant made sure that she had a copy of the notes as it can be hard for a Deaf person to catch up in class when the teacher is talking and writing at the same time

Beth continued to study after completing her **Certificate IV in Community Services Work** and completed the **Diploma of Community Welfare Work** in 2008. Again, Beth had access to an interpreter full time and a copy of the notes from the teacher.

Beth says, “The teachers and students at Riverina TAFE were very understanding, supportive and made sure I was included in group work and discussions. I have recently completed my **Bachelor in Social Science (Social Welfare)** at **Charles Sturt University** and am very grateful for the rewarding experiences at Riverina TAFE that also encouraged me to go to University.”

Julie is a strong, independent woman who happens to have a disability. She was born with Ontogenesis Imperfecta (OI) and was not expected to survive. One hundred fractures and 26 surgeries have not prevented her from having a career in Tourism.



Julie worked in the corporate sector in retail tourism with Qantas and also as a notetaker for students with physical disabilities at Miller TAFE. Realising that teaching was her next goal, Julie completed the **Certificate IV in Training and Assessment** in 2008 and in 2009 undertook the Diploma of Tourism at Bankstown TAFE.

The Disability Teacher/Consultant organised accessible parking on campus for Julie and monitored Julie's progress and learning needs. She was also provided with an adjustable desk and laptop.

Julie now teaches tourism at Illawarra

and South Western Sydney Institutes, working at Wollongong, Dapto and Bankstown Campuses.

Julie's first cohort of students graduated in May 2012. She felt so proud when she was asked to present her students with their certificates and, when one of her students won the award for 'Most Outstanding Student in Tourism & Hospitality' Julie said, 'At that moment it all felt like I'd reached my goal.'

Julie's passion for travel began at age 7 on a family holiday to Fiji. Since then she has made travel the focus of her life both in her work and private life.

Osei completed his apprenticeship in 2011 and was nominated as Apprentice of the Year because he is a great ambassador for his trade. He has aspirations of working in the mining industry in Western Australia.



Close working relationships between the Teacher/ Consultant, the teaching section and the employer enabled the provision of customised support for Osei which was a key factor in Osei's success at TAFE.

Osei arrived in Australia from Ghana in 2006 and was referred to the Teacher/Consultant for Students who are Deaf and Hearing Impaired by his father, a past TAFE student, who knew that support was available for students with disability at TAFE.

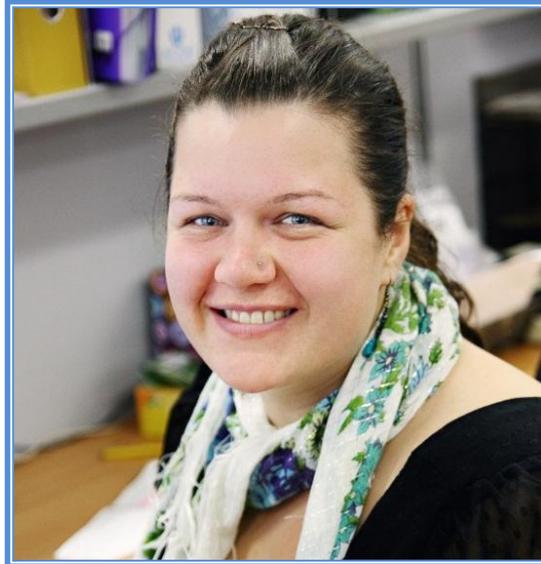
Osei enrolled in a course to learn Auslan and improve his written English skills. This was followed by a taster course in light automotive which included panel beating, spray painting and mechanics units of competency as well as work placement.

The teaching section recommended Osei for an interview with Custom Coaches and he was successful in gaining an apprenticeship. He then enrolled in **Certificate III Engineering Fabrication Trade** and was approved for Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) funding.

The Teacher/Consultant organised learning support for Osei and support from a specialist teacher of the Deaf so that he could continue to improve his English skills. Interpreting was also provided for 'ToolBox' meetings and apprentice review meetings.

TAFE has an ongoing relationship with Custom Coaches which ensured that Osei was well supported and mentored in his workplace. Osei also completed the **Certificate III in Warehousing and Logistics** and has articulated to **Certificate IV**.

Katrina is studying for a Diploma in Events at Granville College and has won many awards which recognise her commitment, achievements and talent.



Katrina was awarded the National Young Disability Challenge Award. These awards ‘celebrate and acknowledge the achievements and contributions that individuals or groups with disability make to our community, and recognise individuals or groups within our community who have contributed to the disability sector’.

This is the first time that a Deaf person has won in any category of The National Disability Awards. ‘As a young Deaf person who uses sign language Katrina has been successful in her own climb through life, and she is a role model for others working towards equity for Deaf people’ said Colin Allen, of the Deaf Society of NSW.

Katrina is a proud Deaf young woman whose first language is AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language). She is undertaking her current course at TAFE via flexible delivery and has been provided with a team of highly qualified and experienced sign language interpreters and a note taker for her classes.

Katrina holds qualifications in Community Welfare, Community Services, Management, Workplace Assessment & Training. She is a Family and Youth Worker and has numerous volunteer commitments.

Giuseppe completed the Certificate III in Off-Site Construction (Shopfitting) and also received an Outstanding Student Award.



When Giuseppe commenced at TAFE, his teacher noticed that he was having difficulties with the course content and referred him to the Disability Teacher Consultant.

After an assessment, Giuseppe was able to access additional funding for tutoring and mentoring support through DAAWS (Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support).

Giuseppe completed the course within the required time frame. During this time the support he received was with maths, drawing skills and breaking down instructions. In addition, the Teacher/Consultant maintained close liaison with the Shopfitting teachers to

ensure his progress and completion of the units of competency.

Giuseppe's hard working nature was recognised in 2011 when he received an Outstanding Achievement award. He is completing the fourth year of his apprenticeship. The class teacher stated that he was pleased he referred Giuseppe to the Teacher/Consultant because he realised that although Giuseppe was highly motivated, he may have disengaged from TAFE had the support not been available. In regard to the learning support provisions, Giuseppe said, "The support was great. I feel like I got help in every way I needed."

Phillipa has achieved her personal goal of working in an office and is now a valued member of the RailCorp team.



Phillipa is an enthusiastic young woman with an intellectual disability who originally wanted to be a childcare worker. However, this proved not to be a suitable match for her skills. With career counselling from the Disability Teacher/Consultant, a more appropriate pathway was identified to better suit her skills and personality.

In 2011, Phillipa transferred to **Certificate I Access to Work & Training (Office Assistant)** course at Petersham TAFE; a customised course for students with an intellectual disability. She found her niche in the course and became an outstanding member of the group. She was selected to do a four week work-placement at RailCorp where she impressed her manager with her office and computing skills.

In 2012, out of hundreds of applicants, Phillipa was one of only five who were offered Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) traineeships with RailCorp. She is currently enrolled in **Certificate III in Business Administration** and attends TAFE one day per week. The course has been customised to meet the learning needs of the students and the specific needs of RailCorp.

Partnerships between the Head Teacher Business & Office Administration, the Teacher/Consultant and RailCorp personnel resulted in Phillipa acquiring the skills, experience and confidence to apply for and gain a DAAWS traineeship with RailCorp. As well as earning a salary, Phillipa really enjoys the social aspect of working.

The motto 'always do your best' sums up Steven's attitude. He has completed three semesters at TAFE and is maturing into a self-assured student and a valuable worker for his employer.

Steven came to TAFE with Gordon from Choice Employment Solutions as a 17 year old Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) apprentice Bookbinder to enrol in the **Certificate III in Print and Graphic Arts (Print Finishing)**.

The Teacher/Consultant – Intellectual provided Steven with one-on-one learning support, especially with maths which was an area that caused Steven great anxiety when he was at school.

TAFE and Choice Employment Solutions have a 'first class and open relationship' and work together to respond quickly to any concerns at TAFE and in the workplace.

Steven says, 'TAFE helps me a lot with understanding the maths.' Steven's employment consultant, Gordon, says that despite having a tough life Steven's confidence has grown in leaps and bounds.

Steven is doing very well at work and his employer speaks highly of him.

When **Dean** first came to TAFE he wasn't confident about travelling independently on public transport. Today, he is a valued employee at DHL and makes time to talk to students about working in warehousing.



Dean left school at the end of year 10 and came to St George College to meet with the Disability Teacher/Consultant to explore vocational educational and training options. He enrolled in **Certificate I Access to Work and Training (Retail Assistant)** in 2010.

Dean acquired skills and knowledge of the Retail Industry as well as gaining employability skills. He also made friends and learned to travel independently. During work placement at Kmart, Dean demonstrated a particular strength in his ability to match words and numbers and in organising stock for product presentation. After identifying these strengths, Dean enrolled in 2011 in a discrete access course focussing on the Logistics industry.

On an industry visit to DHL, Dean was noticed by the manager conducting the tour and was subsequently offered seven days of work experience at their Homebush warehouse. His work experience supervisor at DHL reported that he was, 'willing and hardworking, good at following instructions and dedicated to upholding the workplace standards (safety included).'

Effective liaison between the Teacher/Consultant, Dean's employment agency Nova and DHL resulted in Dean joining the DHL team at Matraville.

Dean is an inspiration to the students he shares his experiences with. The staff in the Disability Unit and the Logistics section of St George College are proud to call him one of their graduates.

Jamie is completing a Traineeship in Certificate IV Business Administration and working at the Australian Human Rights Commission.



Jamie who has Spina Bifida is in a wheelchair. He also has a developmental delay which means it takes longer for him to learn new tasks.

He started at TAFE as a TVET student in Business Studies at Ultimo College. After high school, Jamie returned to Ultimo College to complete **Certificate II in Business**.

The Disabilities Unit at Ultimo College provided this training in a small discreet class which incorporated practical skills training and experience in the Virtual Enterprise Simulated Office.

The following year Jamie enrolled in **Certificate III in Business**, again in a discrete class with a reduced program and learning support from the Disabilities Unit.

Jamie currently attends Petersham college where he is undertaking **Certificate IV in Business Administration**.

Ultimo College counselling and Careers Connect assisted Jamie to apply for a traineeship with the Australian Human Rights Commission which he was successful in obtaining.

**William, a rugby loving country boy, moved 60kms from home to take up a Plumbing Apprenticeship at Orange TAFE.**

'I've got a trade and now I can work for myself.'

William has dyslexia and had received learning support throughout school.

The Disability Teacher/Consultant was contacted to ensure that William could continue to receive learning support while at TAFE.

The Teacher/Consultant, together with William's trade teachers and learning support teacher, implemented a learning support plan for William which was monitored, reviewed and adjusted throughout William's course. Strategies included weekly tutorial support, reader/writer for exams and adaptive technology.

The long working hours, block release pattern of study, training and playing rugby, as well as living independently for the first time were all factors which impacted on William's progress.

The Teacher/Consultant negotiated a modified attendance pattern of one day per week for William as block release, which involved 3 days per week every 3 weeks, was too much information, writing and testing in intense short periods of time.

There were challenges for William despite working hard. William hung in, and after six years he gained his Plumbing Certificate.

William works at Terry Board Plumbing in Orange and has proved that, despite being told at one stage by his teachers that it would be too hard for him, he could do it.

Brian put more work into achieving his qualification than anyone I have seen in my career as an Automotive Teacher. He is an example to others that it is never too late to change and succeed'.



After Brian was awarded the TAFE WESTERN's Apprentice of the Year in 2012, his teacher John Ewing, said: After working for eighteen years as a car detailer, Brian took an opportunity to change career and gain a trade, with encouragement from a supportive employer who knew him to be a dedicated hard worker with a passion for motorcycles.

Brian acknowledged that he had barriers to learning and low levels of literacy and numeracy throughout his schooling, but had never received support until he came to TAFE.

Brian lives 200km from the campus, and attended TAFE by block release 3 days per week every 3 weeks.

The Disability Teacher/Consultant implemented a learning support plan for Brian that included weekly tutorials at the local library where Brian lives, and also provision for Brian's trade teacher to give extra support after class or at Brian's workplace.

Brian's learning experience with TAFE and his employer has changed his life. 'I've finally been able to obtain a trade in something I always wanted to do and I have improved my literacy, communication and computer skills. I've been able to do all of that in a happy, motivated environment. I can now be a valuable employee.'

Not in a million years did I ever think I could be a Vet Nurse,' Peta reflected when she completed the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing. She is now one of the senior nurses at work and represented her employer at a recent conference.



Peta describes herself as a single mum of two teenagers who loves hockey, the bush and animals. She had previously worked as a kennel hand in both paid and unpaid positions. However, when she became unemployed she suffered from depression.

Nevertheless, Peta was determined to pursue her dream of being a vet nurse instead of a cleaner.

Her TAFE training pathway began with literacy classes so that she could better meet the challenge of the **Certificate III in Veterinary Nursing**. It was at TAFE that Peta's 'debilitating dyslexia' was diagnosed and she was referred to the Disability Teacher/Consultant for support.

Peta received one-on-one support with study skills, literacy and numeracy support as well as training in using Read and Write Gold, an assistive technology software package.

Peta worked diligently, converting and reading all her notes using MP3 and Read & Write Gold while her children slept. She also learnt to use Dragon Dictate to write assignments and notes and was provided with a laptop. Her disability employment service also organised an electronic Vet Nurse dictionary. Peta gained Distinctions in three units of competency.

The Teacher/Consultant then facilitated a Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) traineeship. This provided support, including modifications at TAFE and at the workplace. This meant regular employment and the opportunity to 'learn on the job'. Peta said 'I knew I wasn't stupid but I felt it.

But once it (her dyslexia) had a name and I got the help I needed, then it was achievable – not easy by any means. 'If you have a passion and work bloody hard, you'll achieve it.'

Daniel became a quadriplegic as a result of an accident while he was bushwalking. Bushwalking, surfing, snowboarding, golf and camping with friends were activities that 27 year old Daniel enjoyed.



The SpinalWorks project enabled Daniel to enrol at TAFE while he was at Royal North Shore Hospital Spinal Unit and later at the Royal Rehabilitation Unit at Ryde.

SpinalWorks is an early intervention approach to vocational education and training after traumatic spinal cord injury. It expanded on earlier TAFE NSW projects which have delivered training and support to people who are in spinal acute and rehabilitation units after spinal cord injury.

As a Land Surveyor, Daniel used AutoCAD (Computer Aided Drafting) a computer software application. After the accident, his goal was to re-learn

how to use the computer so he could resume his career.

Specifically, Daniel needed adaptive technology to access AutoCAD as he now uses a wheelchair. He has good wrist movement but is unable to move his fingers.

Daniel was able to reach 90% of his pre-accident proficiency by using a combination of standard mouse augmented by a trackball.

In October 2011, Daniel commenced a new job as a quantity surveyor with a large and respected building company where he uses AutoCAD and other specialised engineering surveying software.

An initiative between the Radisson Carrara Resort and Kingscliff TAFE provided pathways for students with intellectual disabilities to further training and employment in the Hospitality Industry.



Ten students with intellectual disabilities were motivated to gain employment in the Hospitality Services sector. They enrolled in the **Certificate II Hospitality (Accommodation Services)** and required reasonable adjustments to achieve their training goals. The course was customised in both delivery mode and provision of learning support.

The course was delivered both at TAFE and in the workplace. The practical units of competency were delivered at the Radisson Carrara Resort where the students were supported by the accommodation and ground staff.

The course represents a strategic initiative in developing partnerships with industry so that training and employment outcomes are maximised

On Q Human Resources and Lifestyle Solutions, secondary partners in this project, provided follow up employment placement and support upon course completion.

Achievements:

- ❖ all students completed the Certificate II course
- ❖ 7 students achieved competence in all units
- ❖ 2 students gained employment during the course
- ❖ 3 students articulated to higher level Hospitality training.

Radisson Carrara Resort has continued to be involved in this program.

Port Macquarie TAFE developed a **Transition to Work** training program for students with intellectual disabilities to address the shortage of casual workers in local cafés.



The Disabilities Unit and Commercial Cookery section at Port Macquarie TAFE selected practical units of competency from the Certificate II Hospitality (Coffee Shop Operations) and State Training Services provided the funding to run the course.

Centacare at Port Macquarie referred students from their Transition to Work program, provided support during the program and work placements on course completion.

Learners' needs were met by customising the course with a practical hands-on focus. The Coffee Academy at Port Macquarie TAFE, as well as the commercial kitchens, were the classrooms.

Learning support in class, mentoring and reasonable adjustment with assessments were provided.

Collaborative partnerships between the vocational section, Disability Teacher/Consultant and Centacare have ensured that key issues e.g. customisation of delivery, learning support, Work Health and Safety, student satisfaction and employment and training pathways, were addressed.

One student studying horticulture at TAFE, another is employed in the hospitality industry, and Bennett (pictured) is completing work placement at a local café at Lighthouse Beach.

The accredited course, **Access to Work and Training** (Horticulture and Landscaping) is delivered at Cumberland Hospital. Western Sydney Institute of TAFE Psychiatric Disabilities Service and the NSW Ministry of Health are partners in delivering this program.

The program enables people with a psychiatric disability to develop entry level skills and helps to facilitate an effective and robust recovery. The program links students with local employment and support services and builds social capital and community partnerships.

Individual education and employment plans are developed for each student and a key feature of the program is an early intervention case management approach. This course is team delivered by qualified industry teachers and specialist support teachers.

The gardens and grounds of the hospital have been improved by the planting of vegetables, fruit, herbs, and exotic and native plants.

The program is also focused on the classification and propagation of rare and nearly extinct trees and plants, including a 'one only in Australia' found on the grounds of the hospital. The program is now partly self-funding.

The course now includes some retail units of competency and students are selling some of their produce. Articulation opportunities and participation in other accredited courses at higher levels have been increased.

To date 46 students have completed the course with the majority articulating to higher level TAFE courses.

A three week **Transition to Learning** program delivered in Term 4 for students with Aspergers Syndrome planning to enrol at TAFE the following year.



Many people with Aspergers Syndrome may have co-morbidity such as learning disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), sensory impairments and/or mental health issues. They may experience high levels of anxiety and require high levels of intensive support to provide skills for independence.

Although students with Aspergers Syndrome may excel in the academic arena, they will find expectations in the social and behavioural domains to be quite elusive. Preparing for and managing change is important for all people, but this is particularly so for those with Aspergers Syndrome.

The program provides students with a skills 'toolbox' so that their transition

into the TAFE learning environment is smoother, successful outcomes are enhanced and course completions are increased.

Specifically, students will develop skills to increase independence, learn strategies to improve course completion, build appropriate behaviours, and seek support when required. Fifty students have completed the program over the past 4 years and all (100%) articulated to courses in TAFE or university or employment during the year following their participation in the course.

The Disability Teacher/Consultant is also working with Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development (BREED) Taskforce Inc. to establish a local parent support group.

As well as orientation to TAFE, the program successfully provides a safe environment and the opportunity to meet other like-minded people and develop peer relationships.