# Making Experience Count

A resource for mature age job seekers with disability

## Acknowledgements

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this country and pay respect to Aboriginal Sites, Culture and to past, present and future Elders.

### About this Book

The Making Experience Count eBook was developed by Tania Perez from the Inner Mel­bourne VET Cluster (IMVC) National Disability Coordination Officer Programme.

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The Australian government funds the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Programme, which supports the transition of people with disability into further education and employment pathways. The IMVC delivers the NDCO Programme within the Northern and Eastern Metropolitan Regions of Melbourne.

The IMVC is committed to the social inclusion of all, and is passionate about providing opportunities for the wider community to enhance capabilities in applied learning and vocational education and training.

Please contact the IMVC for feedback or ideas about this resource.

### Artwork

Justine Martin has kindly provided her personal story and images of her artwork for this book. Justine paints and draws a range of subjects. Giraffe symbolism depicted in Justine’s featured artworks has been included as it encourages us all to reach as far as we can in our endeavours.



[National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program Website](https://www.education.gov.au/national-disability-coordination-officer-programme)

### Thank You

This book could not exist without the willingness of the inspiring individuals who have shared their personal stories with us to assist mature age job seekers to be resourceful and resilient in finding employment.

Thank you to the following services who provided invaluable assistance in sourcing stories for this publication:

[Community Bridging Services Website](http://www.communitybridgingservices.org.au/)

[Wesley Employment Services Website](https://wesley.org.au/employment/)

[Epic Assist Website](http://epicassist.org/au/)

[MS Australia Website](http://www.ms.org.au/)

[SensWide Employment Website](http://www.senswide.com.au/)

[Wise Employment Website](http://www.wiseemployment.com.au/en/home)



  

Special thanks to ALL who shared their inspiring personal stories for this publication









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## How to use this book

**Making Experience Count is a collection of 12 personal stories and resources aimed at sharing helpful strategies and information for mature age job seekers.**



The stories contained provide rich personal experiences and highlight resources and services that may be helpful to people with disability.

We hope this book provides insight for people with disability who are looking to return to work, study or up-skill.

We thank all participants for their honesty and openness in sharing their stories with us.

### Interactive Table of Contents

In the Table of Contents - click on each story to be taken to the relevant page.

### Helpful Links

With each story, there are helpful links in blue which will take you to websites and links in the Resource Index for further information on organisations and support options.

### Resource Index

At the back of the book the Resource Index outlines and provides more information about these links, and also lists further support services.

## Trish’s Story

**Trish is the founder and Coordinator of the MS Ambassadors Program and shares her proactive strategies in sustaining employment.**

**Trish started working at the age of sixteen in a major hos­pital in Finance and Administration. At the age of nineteen she experienced her first symptoms of multiple sclerosis and diagnosed years later.**

At this time, Trish planned to get as much experience, as quickly as pos­sible, to build her resume and experience in a range of work areas.

“I felt I had to adjust and be prepared.”

Trish managed to gain experience within every department in the hospi­tal to put her in good stead to find future employment in her local area.

Later in consideration of managing her multiple sclerosis and having a family, this plan assisted her in getting work in a new work area at a local Aged Care service. Trish identified Aged Care as a booming area and became secretary to a Geriatric Aged Care Assessment team. “The plan was to get a job close to home to make life and multiple sclerosis worka­ble.”

In 1995/6 Trish became unwell and required new medication that was not free listed. Although it was a challenging time, she formed a com­mitted lobby group, and successfully lobbied the Federal Government to allow access to this treatment for people diagnosed with multiple sclero­sis in Australia. It also gained the attention of MS Australia.

Trish was approached by MS to work in their Marketing department as a casual public speaker to create awareness about multiple sclerosis. The role expanded and Trish became the founder and the Coordinator of the **MS Ambassador Program** in Victoria whose aims and objectives of the

program is to Educate- Motivate and Advocate. This program is being used as a benchmark for other states in Australia and Auckland, New Zealand. In sustaining employment, Trish works to a **Model of Essen­tial Conditions** for an individual with multiple sclerosis to survive in the workplace with a chronic illness (see over page). “Living successfully with MS is multi-dimensional in every way”.

She is also a client of the **MS Employment Service** that offers a range of services including the **Job in Jeopardy Program**.

The **MS Employment Service** provides Trish with funding for house cleaning, seated heating products to assist with pain management, a light weight travel case to transport work and a laptop for fatigue man­agement.

They are currently looking into funding for a portable mini data projec­tor to also manage fatigue, which can be used to train new ambassadors and provide community presentations, without the burden of transport­ing a laptop.

### Helpful Links

MS Ambassadors Program Service

Jobs in Jeopardy Program

Note: MS Employment is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

## Trish’s Model of Essential Conditions

**“Multiple sclerosis is a condition that requires flexible work conditions to suit the conditions of the condition.”**

Multiple sclerosis is complex and requires a multi-management approach to suit the individual - who generally has multiple symptoms which are un­predictable and invisible. Trish believes that the significant contributor to remaining in the workforce is having flexible work conditions. She educates employers about this model. Trish utilises it to sustain her employment as the Coordinator of the **MS Ambassadors Program**.

The premise of this model is to help employers understand the medical condition/s or disability, how it impacts the person and to consider how the employer can help. This model is universally helpful to a range of employees who have varying medical conditions and disabilities. There are essential conditions for an individual with multiple sclerosis to succeed in the workplace including:

### Having a flexible and supportive family

E.g.: If you work from home the family need to understand your work responsibilities and respect the work space.

### Treatment and therapy

E.g.: Ensure that the medical services you are receiving are up-to-date and have the best treatment available. Multiple Sclerosis im­pacts emotionally and socially, and the emo­tional management is as important as the physical management of the condition.

### Government support

i.e. Financial assistance such as **mobility al­lowance,** or access to entitlements such as a **disability parking permits** and the free listing of treatments.

### Support from relevant peak agencies

**MS Australia** provides information and sup­port. Knowledge is power and allows you to make informed choices. Community education is vital to support community understanding.

### Workplace providing flexible conditions

Consider how can you make the job work for you? It may include working from home, if pos­sible. The **MS Employment Service** has a dual role to assist the individual to remain in

employment, and to speak to the employer and provide assistance to the Employer to keep the person employed.

### The individual needs to be self-motivated

### Helpful Links

Mobility Allowance

Disability Parking Permits

MS Australia

Disability Employment Services

Knowing Your Rights & Disclosure

Note: MS Employment is a Disability Employment Service

## Malcolm’s Story

**Malcolm had been out of work for almost four years and with help he now has a great job that challenges him.**

**“Before I found SensWide I had submitted 30 job applica­tions and hadn’t yet progressed to the interview stage. I had been out of work for nearly four years due to illness and at sixty-two years of age was finding it extremely difficult to get a job.”**

“I met Alex (an Employment Consultant) at a community centre and was provided details of their program WorkingOUT which outlined how they could help me get a job.”

“After going through the registration process to commence WorkingOUT, I had my first meeting with Alex and his boss Tristan on the 18th of Au­gust.

They explained how they would assist me - but I still had to do a lot of work myself. They helped me re-write my resume and cover letter - which was far better than anything I could have written.”

“Every two weeks I would go back to meet with Alex who helped me apply for jobs. I also used the Seek job search and applied for any jobs that interested me.”

“I received many knock-backs but Alex was there to support me through the process.”

“I was invited by prospective employers for some interviews and while I felt the interviews went well, I didn’t get selected. In total I applied for over 60 jobs. With my new resume and cover letter I was getting to first base, but no further.”

“Alex then turned his attention on coaching me on interview techniques and responses - giving me ideas and positive ways of answering ques­tions.”

“He also coached me in online aptitude tests, typing speed and non-ver­bal reasoning.”

“In late September I got an interview for an IT Support Consultant. I used all the techniques that I had been shown over the previous few months and got the job!”

“It is a great job and challenges me every day. I am still very much in the training stage, but feel in time I will be able to perform the tasks re­quired.”

“It is such a relief to have full time work again. I feel I have a sense of purpose back. I cannot thank **SensWide** enough for the support they gave me.”

### Helpful Links

Disability Employment Australia

JobAccess

Restart Wage Subsidy

Senswide Employment

Disability Employment Services

Note: SensWide is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

## Carol’s Story

**Carol is a Gold Medallist and Paralympian. She believes it is important to have big dreams and set small steps to reach your goals.**

**“Tell people you trust about your dream. Once you tell someone, it becomes reality and you get challenged by oth­ers and do it!”**

When Carol does public speaking gigs she takes a pull up banner that says “DREAM BIG”. In Carol’s life, she has overcome challenges with de­termination and spirit and continues to achieve and succeed.

Carol previously served as a member of the Toronto Police Force

in Canada for fourteen years where she worked in the undercover drug squad for four years. While growing up, she was a national level swim­mer and still has a passion for sport.

After she moved to Australia, at the age of thirty-seven, Carol was di­agnosed with MS and left full time employment. In December of 2006 she took up rowing and made the Australian Rowing Team in 2008 and 2009, where she competed at the World Rowing Championships, com­ing away with sixth place.

Later, Carol made an unexpected change to cycling in which she had no previous experience. She was soon named on the Australian Para-

Cycling Team and competed at the 2012 London Paralympics - earning a Gold Medal. “Dare to face your fears and believe in yourself and you can accomplish anything.”

In 2014, Carol was recognised in the Australia Day Honours List - being named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Carol believes it is important to have a team around you no matter what you are doing. As a Paralympian on the Australian Para-cycling team, she has put the team she needs together - including her cycling coach, sports scientists, a massage therapist and a swim and gym coach. Carol also sees her husband as part of her team and has personal strategies to ensure she manages her condition and succeeds.

“You need a team in life as well. It is important to back yourself up with a team and services that can assist, as well as family and friends”

Carol is also an **MS Ambassador** and started the MS 24-hour Mega Swim in 2001 and continues to be a volunteer consultant for the Mega Swim events.

Carol has published a book **‘The Cycle of Life’** written from real life experiences. It is helpful for anyone going through change, to overcome adversities and to find your hidden courage.

### Helpful Links

MS Ambassadors Program

The ’Cycle of Life’ by Carol Cooke

### Further Information

Assistive Technology

Health Management

Knowing Your Rights & Disclosure

## Tim’s Story

**Tim persisted in overcoming life challenges and with assistance successfully gained employment in his desired field.**

“**While I would get to the interview stage, a lot of employers thought I wasn’t capable of doing the job due to my disabili­ty.”**

Tim suffered a stroke resulting in paralysis on the right side of his body. At forty-six years old, Tim faced many challenges in daily life and secur­ing employment.

“I had been looking for a job for about eleven months. I’d applied for around six hundred jobs, but none of my applications were successful.”

Tim registered with **WISE Employment** in Richmond, and was paired with Employment Consultant, Sarina. WISE was able to offer ongoing job search support to Tim including updating his resume and offering target­ed pre-employment training.

“When I met my WISE consultants, they always greeted me with a heart­felt “hello”. They were on the lookout for jobs that suited my disability and skill set and it was great to have their support.”

Promoting Tim as a candidate to several employers was also a way WISE Employment was able to help with job searching. Tim also was able to attend a Job Fair at WISE Employment.

“Tim has a great attitude. He continued to apply for jobs despite many setbacks.”

“He didn’t give up and was very persistent – we knew he would succeed, it was just a matter of when,” Sarina from WISE explains.

Several months of hard work eventually paid off, resulting in Tim being offered a role in his desired field.

Tim now works as a Customer Service Officer at a national call centre, and has received very positive feedback from his employer.

He is thankful for the support WISE was able to provide him:

“Being back in the workforce gives me so much satisfaction.”

“After the help from WISE, I’m a very happy person. They were profes­sional, understanding, supportive and never gave up!”

### Helpful Links

Disability Employment Australia

JobAccess

Restart Wage Subsidy

WISE Employment

Disability Employment Services

Note: WISE Employment is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

## Martin’s Story

**Martin believes that your attitude determines your altitude and is currently self-employed as the Director of an online management system.**

**“Ultimately everyone is self-employed, they have a choice where they want to go, and are responsible for their own future.”**

Previously a ‘Bobby’ (Police Officer) in Yorkshire for 17 years, when

Martin arrived in Australia he firstly worked as a Bylaws Officer, sold life insurance and then became a workplace trainer and has extensive expe­rience as a trainer, manager and consultant.

He also completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, a Diploma of Training and Assessment Systems and an Advanced Diploma of Man­agement.

Twelve years ago, Martin became the partner of a company focussing on online training - **The Course Bank**, an online learning information

management system.

Now the sole owner and Director of the Course Bank, he spends more time designing and creating online training modules. He has also made The Course Bank available to **MS Australia** in Victoria, NSW and the ACT.

Active in his community Martin is a member and past President of his local Rotary Club, and was also a Harmony Day Ambassador for his local region. He is also an MS Ambassador after being diagnosed with multi­ple sclerosis four years ago.

Martin believes if you want to be **self-employed** you need a realistic idea, determination, and understand that there is a lot of thinking and planning that goes into business - a lot of work behind the scenes.

Martin suggests finding a business **mentor** - someone successful in an area that you want to go into. A mentor could be from the

**Business Network International (BNI)** - the world’s largest business networking and referral organisation.

“Being self-employed means you are still accountable and answerable to yourself and not to others, and you are independent. There is a sense of personal satisfaction and enjoyment and you can take a day off when you want to.”

“Many people create their own limits. Step outside of yourself and try new pathways to go beyond what you think you can achieve.”

### Helpful Links

Self-Employment

MS Australia

Mentoring

Online Business

Business Network International (BNI)

[The Course Bank](http://www.thecoursebank.com.au/)

## Gerard’s Story

Gerard returned to work and went from Employee to Franchisee, gaining assistance to find his dream job.

**“At the end of the day it comes down to how much hard work you put in. If you believe in yourself and that you can do the job, you can achieve anything. I’m an example of that.”**

Gerard was determined to find work despite having his sleep apnoea and was especially interested in working for a Mitre 10 store.

An **EPIC Employment** Consultant heard Mitre 10 had a Sales Assistant position vacant and went to chat with the local store owner, Shelley.

EPIC provided Shelley will a copy of Gerard’s resume and facilitated the follow-up needed for Gerard to become an employee, and the rest, as they say, was history!

Over time Gerard became a reliable trusted employee to the business owners, Shelley and Dave.

They were impressed with how Gerard showed initiative and his great customer service.

Gerard recently got in touch with EPIC to discuss employing some par­ticipants at Mitre 10, also mentioning that after 35 years of running the business, Shelley and Dave were retiring and going overseas.

Due to Gerard’s hard work, reliability and great attitude, and with no other family to pass the business onto, Shelley and Dave felt Gerard was the right person for the job – and Gerard now owns the business!

Gerard actively employs participants with disabilities, and his message to employers is not to judge:

“Don’t judge and don’t treat them any different to anybody else.

I can do the job just as well as anyone else, if not better. That’s the Aus­sie way, give everyone a go.”

Gerard’s message to participants is equally poignant: “At the end of the day, it comes down to how much hard work you put in. If you believe in yourself - that you can do the job - you can achieve anything. I am an example of that.”

### Helpful Links

Restart Wage Subsidy

EPIC Assist

Self-Employment

Disability Employment Services

Note: EPIC Employment Service is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

Self-Employment

## Julie’s Story

**Julie is a determined woman whose current goal is to work in the Arts Industry. She recently completed a Masters of Arts and Cultural Management to progress her career path.**

**“I want to work in the Arts industry to improve access and inclusion of Arts for both artists and audience members for people with a disability.”**

In 2014 Julie commenced with **Community Bridging Services (CBS)** Jobnet Employment Program to gain assistance to find work in the Arts industry.

Julie is blind and has some paralysis, and with assistance from CBS is cur­rently developing her work skills to find a job that is a good match for her current interests.

Julie has an employment background in Tourism and Events Management and is currently developing networks in the Arts and Cultural industry. Julie gained **voluntary work** at the Red Cross where she works in the Mates Program in Telechat, and at the Blind Welfare Association.

“Telechat is a program that matches people over 65 years of age or with mental health conditions. I call or visit them on a regular basis, they are often isolated and it is good to have a chat.”

It was recognised that **assistive technology** was needed for Julie to gain further paid employment. Julie is currently up-skilling her technology skills by learning JAWS, a screen reading tool for both PC and a MAC com­puters.

“I have also started using a touch screen which I never thought I would

do. With my iPhone I have access to the internet and to maps with voice over that tell me exactly where I am located.”

“I feel more in control of where I am going.”

Julie also enjoys a theatre software application that provides audio description of theatre productions. Assistive Technology has enhanced Julie’s quality of life in terms of employability and socially.

CBS has helped Julie access the **Employment Assistance Fund**, helping Julie to purchase software applications.

Julie has found CBS to be a positive employment service that “treats her as a whole person and just like everyone else.”

In terms of building career options, Julie believes: “You need to know what you want and what your goals are, and stay connected with com­munity. Create your own opportunities and be prepared to advocate for yourself.”

### Helpful Links

Restart Wage Subsidy

Employment Assistance Fund

Community Bridging Services

Disability Employment Services

Volunteer Programs

Assistive Technology

Note: Community Bridging Services is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

Further Study & Education Assistance

## Andrea’s Story

Andrea manages a busy life, which includes family, further study, and working as a Unit Manager at an Aged Care facility.

**“It is important to have health professionals that listen and are empathic.”**

In 1995 as a registered nurse, Andrea went on a working holiday to Eng­land to be a live-in nurse to a lady who was severely affected by multiple sclerosis. Later in 2005, Andrea was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis herself.

Andrea believes if you have multiple sclerosis or other conditions, it is important to be an active participant in your own **health care manage­ment** and to be well informed: “It’s good to know what you need to be informed of, and to have a basic understanding of your condition and the treatment.”

Good health management includes having medical practitioners that are professional and up-to-date with current information, who acknowledge the impact of your condition on your life, and understand what is impor­tant to you.

In terms of balancing her work and home life Andrea currently works four days a week, and has learnt to ask for help when she needs it. She has also found that it is helpful to prioritise what is important: “As an adult is it hard asking for help - but it is important to ensure that you can be the most effective that you can be.”

Andrea has disclosed to her employer she has MS, and has been honest about what she can do in the workplace, by emphasising her strengths and abilities.

Andrea found that there is less stigma associated with disclosing in a workplace - as it is not uncommon for others to have illnesses or other conditions. Andrea also believes that it is helpful to **know your rights**, as it can be hard to navigate what you may need in the workplace.

There are also services that can help including the **Employee Assistance Program.**

“Before you get your diagnosis you may have career ideas, and getting a diagnosis does not change the end result. It may just take you a bit longer to get there, and you may need extra help.”

In 2011 Andrea completed a Masters in Aged Care. With family and work, Andrea opted for online study and paced herself - completing her Masters by studying part time over five years.

Andrea did not disclose to her University that she has MS. The lecturers were willing to help and she felt comfortable communicating with them via email and telephone.

Andrea enjoys being a student and would like to do some future study when she feels the time is right. Andrea believes: “you need to find a balance that works for you.”

### Helpful Links

Health Management

Knowing Your Rights & Disclosure

Employee Assistance Program

Further Study & Education Assistance

## Mark’s Story

**Mark’s determined attitude has seen him achieve great things as a swimming teacher and competitive sportsman.**

**“If anyone told me I couldn’t do something - I would just give it a go. I did a half marathon twice, climbed two active vol­canoes, and I have lost count of how many triathlons I have done. Next up - my first half-ironman!”**

Mark has a diverse working history including working on the Clydesdale horse carts, kitchen-hand, dance and theatre work.

Mark has kept a positive attitude to trying new things and now has a 10-year ongoing career as a qualified Swimming Instructor, Dive Coach and Life Guard. He completed AustSwim, Life Guard and First Aide Certifi­cates. At the time he received some financial assistance from Centrelink to pay for two of his courses to assist him in returning to work.

Mark’s Swimming Coach is a **mentor** for Mark and encourages him to move forward and mentored Mark to become a Swimming Teacher.

Mark says: “You have to have people who will back you up and help.”

In 1993, Mark was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) and his condition is progressive and ongoing, he has periods where he loses his mobility and needs to use a wheelchair.

When Mark considered becoming a swimming teacher as a career he considered adjustments.

“I looked at how I could adapt the job to suit the wheelchair. I can still teach and coach and use the wheelchair.”

He also has positive Managers who understand his condition and assist in monitoring his work and health, and accommodate his medical ap­pointments and time off if needed.

“My boss wants to ensure that I stay healthy - and wants to keep me in my job.”

Mark’s combination for success has included his positive attitude, finding a job that works for him, having an accommodating workplace and finding a mentor.

As well as Mark’s paid employment - he also has two **voluntary** positions

as an MS Ambassador and organiser for MS 24 Hour Mega Swim and organised the first rural Mega Swim event.

### Helpful Links

Mentoring

Volunteer Programs

MS Ambassadors Program

### Further Information

Essential Working Conditions

Health Management

## Donna’s Story

**Donna is a dynamic person who is always working towards her next life project and is currently organising her first major fundraiser.**

**“I really enjoyed re-skilling - it keeps the brain active.”**

In 1990 Donna followed her childhood dream and joined the Victoria Police. In 1994 Donna was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Upon her diagnosis, she educated herself about her condition, adopted a positive attitude and continued to focus on her career.

Donna fulfilled a number of roles with the Victoria Police and after her diagnosis they included: Peer Support Officer to over 170 staff, and Intel­ligence Officer - a role that required attention to detail to analyse and re­port on statistical data such as state crime figures. Donna also did public speaking within the Victoria Police about managing chronic illness.

“In the position of Peer Support Officer, I used the condition of multiple sclerosis to draw on and shared my experiences, and assisted staff with health and relationship issues.”

After a twenty-year career with the Police, Donna was proactive about her health and decided to reduce her workload. She started a new chap­ter in her life by **volunteering** in an administration role and to also assist people who were also living with multiple sclerosis. Donna also volun­teers as an **MS Ambassador**.

Donna was nervous when she started doing volunteer work at MS Aus­tralia, however she adapted to a new work environment and soon built new abilities and confidence in a different role.

This opportunity expanded her existing skill set and provided her with a reference in a new work area. Donna’s administration skills were noticed and after six months of volunteering she was successful in attaining the role of Bequest Officer with MS - a role she performed for over three years. “I also felt confident that my volunteer experience could have lead onto a similar job with other organisations.”

Donna has recently resigned from her role as Bequest Officer as she is currently focussing on getting her health on track and reducing her stress levels: “I believe it is important to find the right job and life /work balance.”

Donna has taken on another volunteer role in the area of event plan­ning, and is organising a new major fundraising event with **MS Australia**. This is another new work area for Donna - who is now gaining valuable experience in the area of event planning and is building further on her work experience.

She is not sure where it is leading her - however, as always, she has a positive outlook: “I am finding this project’s a pleasant challenge and the event should attract over 300 people.”

### Helpful Links

MS Australia

MS Ambassadors Program

Volunteer Programs

## Irene’s Story

**After retiring Irene felt that she still had something to offer the workforce and her community.**

**She wanted to be part of her community, despite having multiple sclerosis and chronic back pain.**

Irene joined **Wesley Employment Services** which she became aware of through their outreach promotion at a local Shopping Centre. She felt she had something to offer the workforce on a part-time basis.

Irene’s Employment Consultant supported her through the application process for a position at Woolworths, and she was successful in obtain­ing employment. Irene started working in customer service at the self-check-out stations.

Irene is now working ten hours a week over several shifts, which means she can manage her health conditions.

Wesley Employment Services’ Post Placement Support Team have assist­ed Irene to manage her medical conditions in the workplace, meeting with her regularly before her work shifts.

Irene really enjoys her job, particularly helping customers at the check-out, and learning new things.

Wesley Employment Services says that “Irene feels liked at work and a real part of the team. She gets on well with all the staff, customers and management.”

When Irene expressed an interest in volunteering, Wesley Employment Services introduced Irene to **Wesley’s Do Care program**.

Irene now works as a **volunteer** and regularly visits a socially isolated

elderly lady who lives in her area, providing companionship and social support.

Irene will continue to contribute to her community with the on-going support of Wesley Employment Services to help her maintain her job at Woolworths and her on-going volunteer work.

### Helpful Links

Restart Wage Subsidy

Disability Employment Australia

JobAccess

Wesley Employment Services

Disability Employment Services

Volunteer Programs

Wesley's Do Care Program

Note: Wesley Employment Services is a Disability Employment Service

### Further Information

Employment Services & Government Assistance

## Justine’s Story

**After a long and successful career in retail, sales and managing teams, Justine has had to change her idea of what employment meant to her.**

**“I had always wanted to learn to paint, so I took up a brush and started. I have since found I love to paint with acrylics, draw with graphite, use inks and now - I dabble with water colours.”**

In 2011, Justine was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and had to give up full time employment. At this time, it was suggested to Justine that she find a hobby - so she started attending art lessons at a local art studio to help manage her condition.

Justine discovered that she had a natural talent for art and later com­pleted a Certificate in Creative Industries. She is now a well-recognised artist who enters exhibitions and has won multiple awards.

Justine has ongoing orders for her artworks both locally and overseas, and the sales help supplement her income.

Now that Justine has rebuilt her confidence, she is collaborating with a friend to run a joint stall at markets so they can assist each other.

Justine has drawn on her rich experience in sales and her ability to be resourceful, which has assisted her with her current **self-employment**. Justine is also a client of National Disability Insurance Agency and uses the **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** to engage services to remain self-employed in other areas such as cleaning services.

Justine uses online resources and communities to manage her life and assist others.

As Justine is not always able to attend a course physically she taps into online learning tools including YouTube classes. Justine does most of her shopping online and has items such as art supplies delivered:

“The internet is my connection to the outside world if I am unable to leave the house. It is a way of not feeling alone as this can be a battle; it is scary and daunting to be alone.

A valuable contributor to her local community, Justine undertakes

volunteer work including Secretary and Media Officer for her local Weightlifting Club, is an MS Ambassador and also coordinates an online support group for people with multiple sclerosis.

With over 550 members, Justine’s MS support group provides an opportunity for members to share and discuss their experience.

### Helpful Links

Online Business

[Justine’s Art Page on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/JUZT-art-Justine-Martin-Artist-295281423856712/)

MS Australia

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

### Further Information

Self-Employment



Original works by Justine Martin - visit Justine’s page on [Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/JUZT-art-Justine-Martin-Artist-295281423856712/) for further details.

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Employment Assistance

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* Epic Assist
* MS Australia
* MS Employment Services
* Sensewide Employment
* Wesley Employment Services
* WISE Employment
* Disability Employment Australia
* JobAccess

Employment Assistance Fund

National Disability Recruitment Coordinator

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### Employment Services & Government Assistance

#### Disability Employment Services

[View Disability Employment Services Website](http://www.employment.gov.au/disability-employment-services)

Disability Employment Service (DES) providers promote and assist the employment of people with disability by:

* Assisting people with disability to find work in open employment situations
* Assisting employers to employ people with disability
* Supporting the ongoing employment of people with disability

There are 224 providers of the Disability Employment Services program operating across almost 2000 sites in Australia.

### Employment Assistance

#### Community Bridging Services

[View Community Bridging Services Website](http://www.communitybridgingservices.org.au/)

#### EPIC Assist

[View EPIC Assist Website](http://www.epicassist.org/)

#### MS Australia

[View MS Australia Website](http://www.ms.org.au/support-services/ms-employment-support.aspx)

#### MS Employment Service

[View MS Employment Service Website](http://www.ms.org.au/support-services/ms-employment-support.aspx)

This service supports people living with multiple sclerosis to maintain employment or find a suitable job. This service is currently only availa­ble in some areas of Victoria and New South Wales.

#### Senswide Employment

[View Senswide Employment Website](http://www.senswide.com.au/)

#### Wesley Employment Services

[View Wesley Employment Services Website](http://www.wesleyemployment.com.au/)

Wesley Employment Services is one of Wesley Mission Victoria’s servic­es. They place and support job seekers to find and stay in jobs, working with employers to match the right person to the job. Wesley Employ­ment Services is a DES provider and works with a diverse range of job seekers up to 65 years of age who have a permanent medical or mental health condition, learning difficulties, injury or disability.

#### WISE Employment

[View WISE Employment Website](http://www.wiseemployment.com.au/en/home)

WISE Employment helps employers to find the right staff and job seek­ers to find meaningful work via Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia employment programs.

## Resource Index

### Employment Services & Government Assistance

#### Featured DES Providers

##### Disability Employment Australia

[View Disability Employment Australia Website](http://www.disabilityemployment.org.au/)

Disability Employment Australia is the peak body representing the Dis­ability Employment Services sector. Their members are located across the country and specialise in finding people with disability employment.

This organisation brings together employers and employees and main­tain a long-term relationship with both to help meet any challenges that might arise down the track.

##### JobAccess

[View JobAccess Website](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/about-us)

JobAccess is an information and advice service funded by the Australian Government to support the employment of people with disability. It offers help and workplace solutions for people with disability and their employers.

Advice can include how to access a Disability Employment Service, workplace modifications and adjustments and Auslan interpreting. You can contact a JobAccess Adviser by calling 1800 464 800 or by visiting their website.

##### Employment Assistance Fund

[View Employment Assistance Fund Website](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/government-services/employment-assis¬tance-fund)

The Employment Assistance Fund helps people with disability and mental health conditions by providing financial assistance to purchase a range of work related modifications and services.

Assistance is available for people who are about to start a job or who are currently working, as well as those who require assistance to find and prepare for work.

The Fund may reimburse the cost of work related modifications and services can include but is not limited to the following:

* modifications to the physical work environment
* modifications to work vehicles
* adaptive equipment for the workplace
* information and communication devices
* Auslan interpreting
* specialist services for employees with specific learning disorders and mental health conditions
* disability awareness training
* Deafness awareness training, and
* mental health awareness training

The JobAccess Advisers can provide advice on workplace modifications and can be contacted on 1800 464 800 or by using the Online Enquiry Form: [View Job Access – About Us Website Page](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/about-us).

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### Employment Services & Government Assistance

#### National Disability Recruitment Coordinator

[View National Disability Recruitment Coordinator Website](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employers/ndrc)

If you are a large employer of more than 100 employees, help is avail­able to make it easier for you to recruit people with disability and to access support services including specialist recruitment advice, job support and employer incentives at no cost to your organisation.

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator also offers a point of contact for all employers looking for advice on the recruitment of peo­ple with disability. The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator is able to link you with Disability Employment Services providers and help you establish a working relationship with them.

#### Restart Wage Subsidy

[View Restart Wage Subsidy Website](http://www.experiencepays.gov.au)

Australian businesses that provide jobs to people 50 years of age or older, can seek financial assistance from the Australian Government.

The Restart Wage Subsidy provides a $10,000 (GST inclusive) incentive to employers to hire and retain mature age job seekers 50 years of age or older who have been unemployed and in receipt of income support (including the age pension) for six months or more.

#### Mobility Allowance

[View Mobility Allowance Website](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/mobility-al¬lowance)

A payment for people with disability, illness or injury who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance and who participate in approved activities including travel to and from home for paid work, voluntary work, study or training, or to look for work.

#### The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

[View The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Website](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of pro­viding community linking and individualised support for people with permanent and significant disability.

The NDIS will deliver a life-long approach to support people with disa­bility through individualised planning processes to identify the reasona­ble and necessary supports participants need to enable them to achieve their goals.

The NDIS is being rolled out in stages because it’s a big change to the current system.

To participate, you need to meet both the age and residence require­ments. You also need to meet the disability or early intervention re­quirements.

#### Corporate Champion Providers

[View Corporate Champion Providers Website](http://www.employment.gov.au/meet-our-corporate-champion-providers)

Corporate Champion providers work closely with employers to provide an assessment of their organisation’s workplace and to develop a plan to improve their practices in employing mature-age people.

One-on-one advice and support is provided to achieve the goals of the plan, such as updating recruitment processes, rolling out new flexible working arrangements or introducing retention and mentoring pro­grammes.

Providers can assist employers in accessing financial assistance includ­ing Restart. Some Corporate Champion providers also hold information seminars. These seminars are free for employers to attend and provide an opportunity to network and learn more about the programme.

## Resource Index

### Employment Services & Government Assistance

#### Jobs in Jeopardy

[View Jobs in Jeopardy Website](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/job-in-jeop¬ardy)

Job in Jeopardy assists people at risk of losing their job because of illness, injury or disability by seeing what can be done to keep you with your current employer. It does not help you find a new job. This service is free and available through registration with a Disability Employment Provider.

You do not need to be receiving a payment from the Department of Health and Human Services or have an Employment Services Assess­ment to access Job in Jeopardy assistance.

Assistance may include:

* advice about redesigning your job so you can keep working
* having your workplace assessed to see how it can be changed to make it easier for you to work
* having your workplace changed so you can continue to work
* specialised equipment to help you do your job

#### MS Ambassadors Program

[View MS Ambassadors Program Website](http://www.ms.org.au/get-involved/ms-ambassadors.aspx)

MS Ambassadors help educate the community, including employers about multiple sclerosis, dispelling myths and misconceptions, and mo­tivating audiences with their personal courage and determination.

MS Ambassadors are inspirational people living with multiple sclerosis or caring for a person with the disease.

These amazing volunteers have a unique experience of living with mul­tiple sclerosis that they are willing share with others.

#### Melbourne Career Expo

[View Melbourne Career Expo Website](http://www.careerexpo.com.au)

The Melbourne Career Expo is the largest and most comprehensive careers event in Australia.

### Local Government

#### Disability Parking Permits

A state-wide Disability Parking Scheme currently operates in Victoria, which is administered by local councils on behalf of VicRoads. Permits issued under this scheme are recognised in other states.

Residents can apply to their own local council for a Parking Permit. The application process includes providing supporting documentation.

#### MetroAccess

The aim of MetroAccess is to build the capacity of local communities across metropolitan Victoria to become more welcoming and inclusive of people with disability. MetroAccess is a partnership initiative be­tween the Victorian Department of Human Services and Local Govern­ment. Contact your local Council office to find out about MetroAccess in your area.

### Self-Employment

[View NEIS – The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme Website](http://www.employment.gov.au/self-employment-new-enterprise-incen¬tive-scheme-neis)

#### NEIS – The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

This scheme is for job seekers who are interested in starting and run­ning a small business. It provides job seekers with accredited small busi­ness training, business mentoring, and income support to help them turn a business idea into a viable business and help them to become a self-employed business owner. The scheme is delivered by a national network of NEIS providers under JobActive, in locations around Australia.

## Resource Index

### Self-Employment

#### Small Business

[View Small Business Website](http://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/business-and-industry/abn-acn-business-management/small-business)

This Australian Government website provides a range of links which have been provided by the Australian Government to assist with start­ing and managing a small business.

#### Online Business

[View Online Business Website](http://www.business.gov.au/business-topics/business-structures-and-types/online-business/Pages/default.aspx)

This Australian Government website provides information about start­ing and managing online business, also referred to as e-business, which is any kind of business activity that happens online (over the internet).

### Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) is one of the mechanisms you can use to accommodate the needs of employees with disability so that they can realise their full potential.

AT enables a person with disability to perform an activity or improve their job performance and is used for a whole range of tasks. It may include a customized workstation, specialised software, or another type of technology.

For further information, refer to Assistive Technology in the Workplace for People with Disability booklet: [View Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training (ADCET) Website](http://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/8211/assistive-technology-in-the-workplace/)

### Mentoring

#### Mentoring Resource Hub

[View Mentoring Resource Hub Website](http://www.mentoringresourceshub.com.au)

Provides practical and accessible mentoring resources, tools and edu­cation for mentees, mentors, partnerships and mentoring programs. There is a cost associated with these resources:

#### Business Network International (BNI)

[View Business Network International (BNI) Website](http://www.bni.com.au/en_au/index)

The World’s Largest Business Networking and Referral Organisation

### Essential Working Conditions

#### Assistance from Peak Bodies

The following links provide information about the national disability peak bodies who provide assistance to people with disability:

The Department of Social Services provides a listing of National Disa­bility Peak bodies that provide assistance to people with disability and carers: [View Australian Government – Disability and Carers Website/Page.](https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/consultation-and-advocacy/national-disability-peak-bodies)

## Resource Index

### Essential Working Conditions

#### Assistance from Peak Bodies

MS Australia works in advocacy and communications and collaborative­ly with stakeholders to benefit thousands of people affected by multi­ple sclerosis across the country. They provide a range of services and support to the MS community: [View MS Australia Website](http://www.msaustralia.org.au)

### Health Management

#### Employee Assistance Program

[View Employee Assistance Program Website](http://www.eapaa.org.au)

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free and confidential coun­selling service offered many employers to their employees to support their well-being in the workplace and in their personal lives. Depending on the employer’s arrangement, EAP may also extend to immediate family members.

This program offers initial support and assistance to individuals and groups of employees who have personal and/or work related issues that may impact on their well-being, work performance, safety, individ­ual and workplace morale and psychological health.

You can contact your Human Resources consultant or other appropri­ate professionals in your organisation if you don’t know who your EAP provider is.

#### MS Connect

[View MS Connect Website](http://www.ms.org.au/support-services/ms-connect.aspx)

MS Connect provides a range of information, assistance and referral to services and support for people affected by multiple sclerosis.

This includes providing up-to-date information about multiple sclero­sis, expert advice on managing symptoms and minimising the impact of multiple sclerosis, information on treatment options, and referral to education and employment programs, and support services.

#### The ’Cycle of Life’ by Carol Cooke

Publication by Carol Cooke, in which she shares her secrets to over­coming adversity, accepting change, finding your hidden courage, and creating a winning mind set.

Carol was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, but has gone on to em­brace the changes in her life and take on new challenges that people half her age wouldn’t even want to try. She’s gone on to win Paralympic gold and become a world champion.

Carol’s book can be purchased via her website: [View Carol Cooke Website](http://www.carolcooke.com.au).

## Resource Index

### Further Study & Education Assistance

#### Education Support Services

[View Education Support Services Website](http://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/8211/assistive-technology-in-the-workplace/)

ADCET is the Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training and provides information, advice and resources to Disability Practitioners, Teachers and Students on inclusive practices within the post-secondary education sector.

#### Disability Standards for Education 2005

[View Disability Standards for Education 2005 Website](http://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education)

The Standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and partic­ipate in education on the same basis as other students. The Standards were formulated under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and came into effect in August 2005.

#### Reasonable Adjustments

[View Reasonable Adjustments Website](http://www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/reasonable-adjustments)

Reasonable adjustments refer to the assistance provided by tertiary institutions for students with disability or health conditions to ensure equal access to teaching and learning. It is recommended that students who require adjustments discuss their circumstances with a Disability Practitioner at their tertiary institution.

The adjustments will be recommended in line with legislative guidelines and are directly related to up-to-date documentation.

#### Modes of Study

[View Modes of Study Website](http://www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability/planning-for-post-second¬ary-education/modes-of-study/)

Post-secondary education providers have become more flexible in meeting the changing demands of a diverse potential student popula­tion. ADCET provide information on the modes of study available.

### Volunteer Programs

#### Volunteering Australia

[View Volunteering Australia Website](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

The national peak body for volunteering and work to advance volun­teering in the community. They also provide resources and information for becoming a volunteer or organisations who may wish to start volunteer programs.

#### Volunteering Red Cross

[View Volunteering Red Cross Website](http://www.redcross.org.au/volunteering.aspx)

Red Cross has a volunteer program which aims to expand your skills and experience and increases your employability. It is also an opportunity to gain job experience in your chosen career and if you are considering further education.

## Resource Index

### Volunteer Programs

#### Wesley Do Care

[View Wesley Do Care Website](https://wesley.org.au/?s=do+care)

Wesley Do Care is a support service for socially isolated older people and adults with a disability who live independently within the com­munity. Volunteers provide social support to enable people to remain engaged with or reconnect with their personal interests within their community.

#### Probono Australia - Volunteer Match

[View Probono Australia - Volunteer Match Website](http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer)

VolunteerMatch helps people across Australia match their skills from industries such as IT, hospitality, design, accounting, law and sales, to a relevant and rewarding volunteer role. Provides free advice, informa­tion and opportunities for getting the most out of volunteer work.

#### MS Australia Volunteer Program

[View MS Australia Volunteer Program Website](http://www.msaustralia.org.au/get-involved/volunteer)

MS Australia’s state societies rely on volunteers to help in many facets of their work. Volunteers assist with everything from community-based visiting programs to fundraising. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer, contact your state MS Society to find out what volunteer positions are currently open.

#### Go Volunteer Australia

[View Go Volunteer Australia Website](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)

Provides information about volunteering and how to find opportunities and organisations for volunteering, and as an organisation how you can find volunteers.

#### Conservation Volunteers

[View Conservation Volunteers Website](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)

Conservation Volunteers welcomes people with a love of the outdoors and interest in the environment to get involved. You don’t need any prior skills or experience, just a reasonable level of health and fitness. There are a range of volunteer options:

### Knowing Your Rights & Disclosure

#### Fair Work Ombudsman

[View Fair Work Ombudsman Website](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Help you understand your rights and responsibilities at work. You can get information on employee entitlements, pay, leave, awards and agreements.

## Resource Index

### Knowing Your Rights & Disclosure

#### Australian Human Rights Commission

[View Australian Human Rights Commission Website](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Provides resources and outlines assistance to help prevent discrimi­nation, respect human rights and promote diversity in the workplace and handle complaints of harassment and discrimination. This website also has good practice and good business fact sheets, and tool kits, guidelines and other resources to support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

#### Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

[View Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Website](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

Employers have a legal responsibility to make sure that everyone who works for them is treated fairly and with respect. As an employee, you are protected from discrimination in the workplace by Victorian and Federal laws.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission works with both employers and employees to help them prevent discrimi­nation from occurring, resolve complaints and take practical steps to create fair and productive workplaces.

#### NWRN - National Welfare Rights Network

[View NWRN - National Welfare Rights Network Website](http://www.welfarerights.org.au)

NWRN is the peak community organisation in the area of social security law, policy and administration. It aims to reduce poverty, hardship and inequality in Australia by advocating for a social security system which is fair, adequate and well administered.

Their members are community legal centres and organisations whose role is to provide disadvantaged people with free information, advice, education and representation in the areas of social security and family assistance.

Their members operate in all states and territories of Australia. Their services are free and independent.

#### Employment and MS

[View Employment and MS Website](http://www.ms.org.au/attachments/documents/publications/employ¬ment-and-ms.aspx)

A Fact Sheet that includes a range of information such as disclosure in the workplace, reasonable adjustments, financial and legal matters and helpful services.

#### Disclosure

[View Job Access – Disclosure Website/Page](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employers/frequently-asked-questions/disclo¬sure-disability-and-privacy)

JobAccess provide information to employers and employees on the Dis­closure of Disability and Privacy for Employees and Employers.