

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.

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



Wesley Employment Services



Epic Assist



MS Australia



SensWide Employment



Wise Employment



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

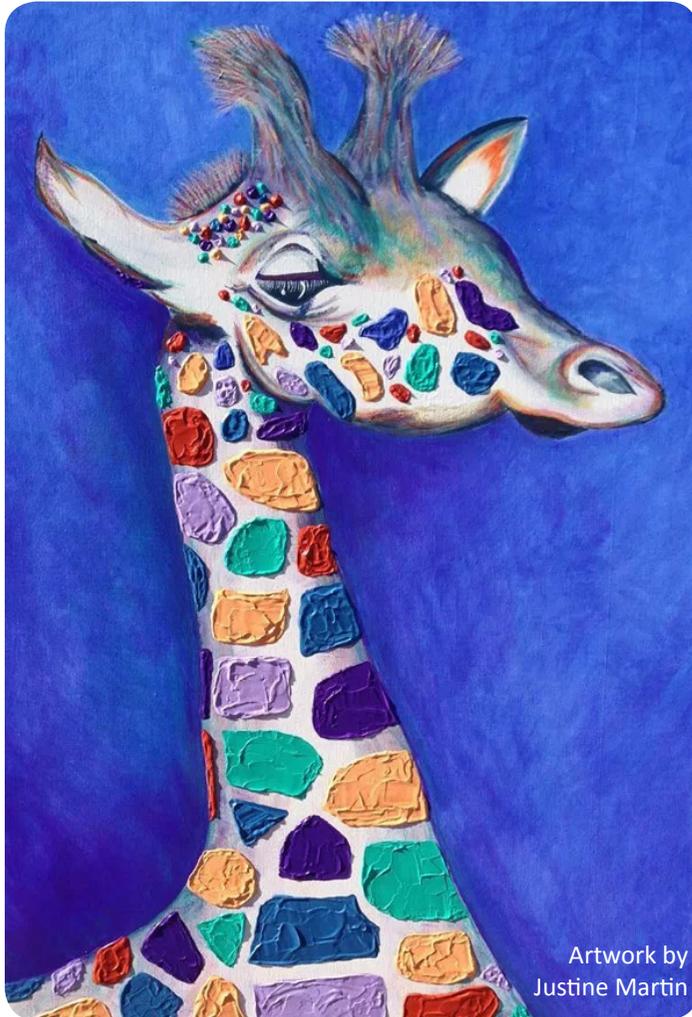


Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2-3
How to use this book.....	5
Trish’s Story.....	6
Trish’s Model of Essential Conditions.....	7
Malcolm’s Story.....	8
Carol’s Story.....	9
Tim’s Story.....	10
Martin’s Story.....	11
Gerard’s Story.....	12
Julie’s Story.....	13
Andrea’s Story.....	14
Mark’s Story.....	15
Donna’s Story.....	16
Irene’s Story.....	17
Justine’s Story.....	18
Justine’s Artwork.....	19
Resource Index.....	20-30

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](#)

[MS Employment Service](#)

[Job in Jeopardy Program](#)

Note: MS Employment is a Disability Employment Service

Further Information

[Employment Services and 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:

1. 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.

2. Treatment and therapy

Eg: 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 everyday. 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](#)

[Disability Employment Services](#)

Note: SensWide is a Disability Employment Service

Further Information

[Employment Services and 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](#)

Further Information

[Assistive Technology](#)

[Health Management](#)

[Knowing Your Rights and 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 and 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](#)

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 with 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 and 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 \(CBS\)](#)

[Disability Employment Services](#)

[Volunteer Programs](#)

[Assistive Technology](#)

Note: Community Bridging Services is a Disability Employment Service

Further Information

[Employment Services and Government Assistance](#)

[Further Study and 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 and 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, dancer 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 Ambassador Program](#)

[Volunteering 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 and 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](#)

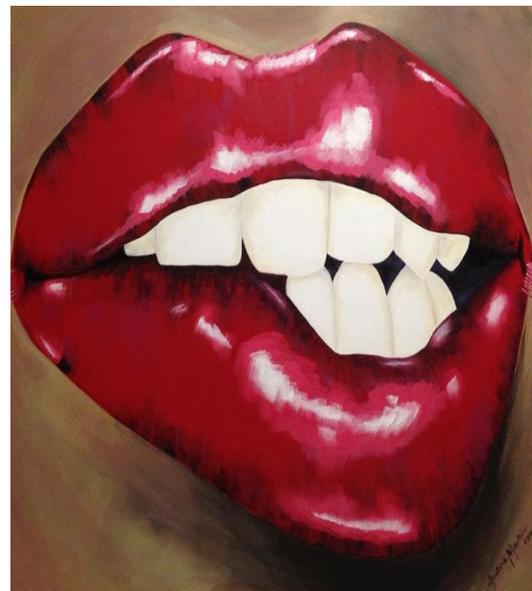
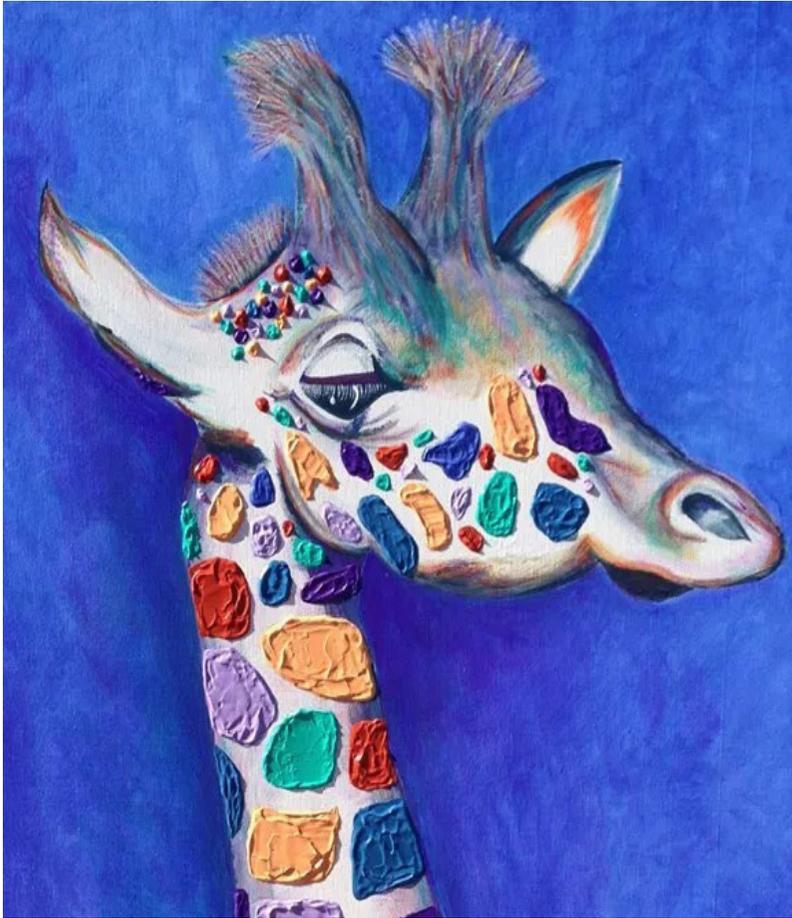
[Justine's Art Page on Facebook](#)

[MS Australia](#)

[NDIS](#)

Further Information

[Self Employment](#)



Original works by Justine Martin - visit Justine's page on [Facebook](#) for further details.

Resource Index

Click on the resource to be taken to the relevant page

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES & GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Disability Employment Services

Employment Assistance

- Community Bridging Services
- 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

Restart Wage Subsidy

Mobility Allowance

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Corporate Champion Providers

Jobs in Jeopardy

MS Ambassadors Program

Melbourne Career Expo

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Disability Parking Permits

SELF EMPLOYMENT

NEIS – The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

Small Business

Online Business

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

MENTORING

Mentoring Resource Hub

Business Networking International (BNI)

ESSENTIAL WORKING CONDITIONS

Assistance from Peak Bodies

Resource Index

Click on the resource to be taken to the relevant page

HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employee Assistance Program

MS Connect

'The Cycle of Life' by Carol Cooke

FURTHER STUDY & EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

Education Support Services

Disability Standards for Education 2005

Reasonable Adjustments

Modes of Study

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Red Cross

Wesley Do Care

Probono Australia - Volunteer Match

MS Australia Volunteer Program

Go Volunteer Australia

Conservation Volunteers

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS & DISCLOSURE

Fair Work Ombudsman

Australian Human Rights Commission

Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

NWRN - National Welfare Rights Network

Employment and MS

Disclosure

Resource Index

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES & GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Disability Employment Services

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

www.communitybridgingservices.org.au

EPIC Assist

www.epicassist.org

MS Australia

www.ms.org.au

MS Employment Service

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

www.senswide.com.au

Wesley Employment Services

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

www.wiseemployment.com.au

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
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
www.jobaccess.gov.au

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
www.jobaccess.gov.au/government-services/employment-assistance-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: www.jobaccess.gov.au/about-us

Resource Index

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES & GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

National Disability Recruitment Coordinator

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

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

www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance

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)

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

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

www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/job-in-jeopardy

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

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
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

www.employment.gov.au/self-employment-new-enterprise-incentive-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

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

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: www.adcet.edu.au/resource/8211/assistive-technology-in-the-workplace/

MENTORING

Mentoring Resource Hub

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)

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:

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: www.msaustralia.org.au

HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employee Assistance Program 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

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 mindset.

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: www.carolcooke.com.au

Resource Index

FURTHER STUDY & EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

Education Support Services

www.adcet.edu.au

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

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

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

www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability/planning-for-post-secondary-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

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

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

<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

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

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

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

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

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
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
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
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
www.ms.org.au/attachments/documents/publications/employment-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
www.jobaccess.gov.au/employers/frequently-asked-questions/disclosure-disability-and-privacy

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