

Equal Employment Opportunities In Public Sector

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Public Sector HR Practitioners Forum
Western Australia
26th September 2006

Background

South Metropolitan Personnel Inc (**SMP**) is a Disability Employment Network (**DEN**) provider funded by the **D**ePARTMENT of **E**mPloyment and **W**orkplace **R**elations to assist people with varying abilities find and maintain award based employment.

Many of the job seekers registered with SMP demonstrate requiring high levels of support and training on the job. This means looking outside the square - **creating job descriptions** - **“Designer jobs”** that match the ability and interests of the individual. We’ll often place 2 or 3 job seekers on the same site and with full support and training on the job, each task is completed to meet the employer’s exacting standards.

The benefit to the employer of matching ability and interests, is that it usually results in loyalty and longevity.

This model, which creates **sustainable employment outcomes**, is a proven best practice, **efficient** and **cost effective** ... a “Win - Win” situation for the Job Seeker, the Employer and SMP.

However

Gaining an employment opportunity for one job seeker with a disability can sometimes prove difficult.

Gaining an employment opportunity for three people with significant disabilities, on the same site at the same time for the same hours, as with many new initiatives, is often seen as a big ask and frustratingly can often take months to implement.

But it’s

Leadership and Partnership that’s the winning combination, the relationship that we at SMP share with our very loyal and supportive employer network. For it takes an employer with leadership skills, whose vision and beliefs reflect our own, who will by demonstration ... champion integration ... champion diversity, turn common sense into common practice and reflect within their work environment, the broader community.

And today

I’d like to showcase one such leader, a major partner employing job seekers that demonstrate varying abilities ... **The City of Cockburn**.

The City of Cockburn currently employs **19** individuals who report having a disability, **10** of whom were recruited from SMP. On the 9th of next month, the City of Cockburn will employ **3** new job seekers from SMP. The City **also employs SMP's contracting arm, our car valet team ... 3 young** people with significant disabilities who maintain the City's accessible busses in a clean and tidy condition for the community centre. This brings to a total **25** employees who report having a disability, **16** recruited from our service.

One employee at the city who reports having a disability has been employed since 1972.
The levels range from 1-9

The Partnership

Since 1998 the City of Cockburn and South Metropolitan Personnel have together forged through like mindedness, a strong and valued but relaxed partnership which commenced with a library/clerical traineeship, followed by a second traineeship in Horticulture and then a third Traineeship in office/clerical.

But it was in 2003, that we seriously floated the idea of placing a team of three job seekers with significant disability into the Parks Department and it was in **June 2004**, with everything in place, set up and fail proof the **first three employees** known as **crew 1** joined the Park's roster. The new employees were and still do receive full on the job support and training.

Success breeds success and in **August** of the **same year**, **crew 2** commenced ... employed in a mixture of parks and administration department duties. As the weeks passed, positive feedback streamed into Council by way of Phone, E-mail, department managers, co-workers, local residents and community newspapers.

Our clients who require support to not only find a job, but to maintain it, were firmly entrenched, accepted and integrated into their working environment and the City of Cockburn was clearly, demonstrating an inclusive open door policy, a commitment to employ people with a disability.

It was with this acceptance that in **August 2005**, a third crew commenced. It did take a little juggling to get the sites and hours suitable for everyone, but in true partnership, the coordinators from Cockburn and SMP worked together, to create a "**do-able**" roster. Next month Crew 4 commences in a mix of Parks and Admin/hospitality assistant duties.

The **City of Cockburn** demonstrates a positive leadership. This leadership commences at the top, with the Mayor and City Councilors, strongly assisted by a very proactive and determined Disability Access Committee, and filters through-out gaining great momentum as it does. Once the our first 3 employees commenced, supported on the job, the **Wombat Theory took over** - "**Word Of Mouth Best Advertising Technique**" News spread with an electronic Magnetism and many department managers contacted HR, the Community Services Manager and SMP requesting that the new employees come and work in their section.

AND WHEN HR BUDGETS ARE SET AND IT SEEMS LIKE THERE IS NO WAY IN, OR IT SEEMS IT IS IN THE TOO HARD BASKET THE DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES DO HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN! AND THIS IS THE WAY WE WENT, WHICH JILL WILL ALLABORATE ON.

The written feedback received from the residents of the City of Cockburn and other employees at all levels, is evidence that not only does the city have the policies which promote access and inclusion, but clearly demonstrates a community that values and experiences the values of equity and diversity within it's workforce.

From the employees recruited from SMP, they all report enjoying the satisfaction that comes with getting up every day and going to work like their family and friends ... They all receive Award based wages and are employed under the same conditions as their co-workers at the City. This includes social activities also.

Looking Ahead

The City, in tune with community needs have given our agency a house – leased at a peppercorn rent. This house set in the grounds of Manning Park is for training in basic pre-employment skills like development of a good work ethic, team work, basic computer skills and importantly for those individuals not able to access employment, a skills for living program.

Our relationship has been further strengthened as the city continues their commitment to assist people with a disability. It is anticipated that in partnership we will relocate our offices to the City's new Youth Precinct which is to be established in Success, on the new Perth to Mandurah rail line.

Strong Leaders

This is the forward thinking leadership that we need ... this is the role modeling that creates employment for other people with a disability... And you all are leaders! ... You all have the ability to make a difference! Policies are great on paper; and many of you are currently developing your strategies, but what will increase employment numbers for people with a disability are leaders who demonstrate the courage of their commitments. Leaders who will give firm directives relating to employment for those people who may perform their duties a little differently or at a slower rate. Leaders who will advocate for their own Social Justice Policy. Leaders who are not afraid to make decisions then step confidently, outside the square.

Again this year SMP have nominated the City of Cockburn for the prestigious Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award. I am sure you will agree that, with the past history and the continued commitment the City of Cockburn deserve this accolade.

Jill and I will be happy to meet with you at the end of this presentation to answer any questions you have relating to “**the how to**” and “**what if's**” of our employment strategy, including work trials, the SWS and wage subsidy. I have also printed some hand outs for you.

But now I would like to **introduce** you to **Jill Zumach**, Social Services Team Leader at the City of Cockburn, who will talk to you about the “Cockburn experience”.

Thank you.

The City's longest employee commenced in 1972

The levels range from level 4 (6)

3 (2)

The remainder are level 1

16 M

3 F

New team is 2 M & 1 F

The contracted team consists of 3 M

Barriers, Misconceptions and myths

A lack of “Courageous Leaders” ... the person who is able to say the YES word!

Passing the responsibility – passing it - passing it – and passing it!!

A lack of education in “Disability Awareness”

I can't afford to have people take time off

I am not sure if our staff has the necessary training

We've never done this before – Tooooooo hard!

I haven't the time – I haven't the room

It's a bit risky- What if they don't work out

What about unfair dismissal?

I don't have time to train and supervise people

Insurance – costs

Sick days - Illness vs. Disability

Workplace accidents