

We are Vasilka, Michael and Wade Cronin. Wade our son has an intellectual disability and as his family our aspirations for our son have always been to have him lead as rich and fulfilled life as possible with choices afforded his sister and brother. When Wade finished high school he went to work at the local supermarket with initial full time support and then tapered off and as needed for nine years. Wade subsequently had a career change and is now working at the Adelaide Convention Centre. This has been made possible with the support of an Open Employment Service finding and maintaining employment for our son.

Going through an agency has supported Wade to find and maintain employment. The correct employment is vital in maintaining support for our son. Having stability with that support is crucial.

Secondly we are also employers and have employed and taken on an apprentice with the support of Personnel Employment the same agency that supports Wade. The relationship with Personnel Employment has been developed over several years and because of that a rapport and trust has been built up regarding employing someone with a disability.

The importance of a job for Wade and how that has been achieved:

- Having a job puts meaning into his life and how Wade is seen by the rest of the community. He is not another person on a day program. He is a worker, a valued member of society.*
- Currently Wade is working at the Adelaide Convention Centre in the city. This job came about through the partnership developed between Personnel Employment and the Convention Centre. Having knowledge of Wade, the Pre Employment Team linked him into his current job knowing it would be a good job fit.*
- Wade works 5 days per week, 3 hours a day. This suits him as he also catches the Tram to and from work, another big task for him to do. Catching public transport was made possible by the support from Personnel Employment showing him how to access the Tram. Getting to and from work on his own has given Wade a boost to his self esteem and he is proud to have that independence*
- Personnel Employment helped support Wade in his various tasks establishing routines and work practices at the Adelaide Convention Centre alongside his co-workers. Personnel Employment was able to step back from support when natural work relationships and support was developed.*
- It is important that Personnel Employment support remain as a back up as any future job or staff changes can be supported in order to ensure the continued successful employment of Wade*
- Support for people with disabilities is an ongoing and lifelong commitment, not a once off*

As an employer of a person with a disability the support received is paramount to the success of the employment placement as follows:

- the matching of an employer and employee*
- a willingness to work through issues as they arise*
- the right support worker*
- open communication between all relevant parties*
- an employer who is ready to rise to the challenge*

The above points are essential for safe and secure employment and take time, commitment and continuity. We have concerns that this will change for the detriment to the right ongoing support.

We understand the Governments dilemma in wanting agencies to be accountable and so they ought to be with poor performers being removed. Allowance for new agencies is also healthy for competition. We would however, like to share some of our concerns, comments and questions with the proposed changes:

- Is there another way that agencies can be scrutinized and measured that gives an entire picture?*
- Is the current framework for measurement taking all things into account, such as enabling services that are flexible and responsive to the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities to continue?*
- The potential impact of losing continuity and staff*
- Encouragement of innovative and flexible provision to services of people with disabilities*
- the agreement of long-term relationship based nature of Disability Employment Services e.g. Employment Support Services program, and the impact of moving to five year contract periods as recommended in the 2009 Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee report, DEEWR tender process to award employment services contract*

Senators *when making your decisions please make sure high quality services achieving quality employment outcomes for people with a disability are not lost through competitive tendering.*

Senators *make sure the Government finds another way to achieve their goals of allowing new organisations to provide Disability Employment Services and address issues with existing services who are not providing a service that achieves quality employment outcomes for people with a disability.*

Regards

Vasilka, Michael and Wade Cronin