



Thinking about that Job

Everyone has a dream job. For some it is to be a chef, for some it might be to be a nurse and for others it might be to be a hairdresser. Some people like putting things together some like writing and some enjoy working with people. People try to choose a job that interests them. People with a disability are no different. The types of jobs that they do are as varied as the people that do them. This is the way it should be. People with a disability should aim for the type of job that interests them the most.

But sometimes the way people with a disability do jobs is different from people who do not have a disability. Sometimes people with a disability need to look at the different skills that are required in the job that interests them. They need to look at the skills that are required in the job and then work out how or if their disability will impact on the job. The impact is not always negative usually there are answers and different ways to do a job.

In fact in Europe there are several restaurants that are run entirely by blind people. But there is a catch. People who attend these restaurants must eat in the dark. The idea is to provide the patrons with an experience of what it is like to be blind. Patrons who attend the restaurant must place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them and are led to their table. They are not allowed to carry matches, lighters or any form of instrument that can provide light. The only place where there is light is in the toilet.

The blind people **have adapted the restaurant to their needs.** Chefs work by memorising the placement of their utensils and the layout of the kitchen, in this way they know where everything is. Waiters wear bells so that they are aware of where each other are and do not run into each other. They also have the room layout mapped out in memory.



Directions and instructions are provided clearly and concisely. Smell, taste and touch are essential senses that are used to the maximum.

It is the patrons of the restaurant that struggle. For them they must eat in the dark and learn how to use their knives and forks without seeing what they are eating. Some of the patrons become so alarmed that they become claustrophobic and must leave the restaurant. The blind employees, who include waiting staff and cooking staff, run the restaurant without a glitch.

The point of this story is to show that **with planning there is no reason why people with a disability cannot do a variety of jobs.** There are always answers and there are always solutions. It is important to explore these solutions while the student with a disability is at school so that they leave school with the answers.

Solutions are varied. Sometimes the solutions involve the use of special technology. Sometimes the solutions involve changing the workplace too, for example providing space to manoeuvre a wheelchair. A business in Warrnambool provided employment in the manufacturing area to two intellectually disabled employees. The employees were required to use a cutting machine. To ensure they were kept safe the business installed a special safety mechanism to the cutting machine. In doing so they made the machine safer for everyone. **Adjustments do not need to be complicated and often they benefit everyone.**

It is not only important to know how one's disability will impact on a job but it is also important to know that **the Government provides support for employers** to make the needed adjustments. This can involve providing support workers, purchasing technology or providing Auslan interpreters.

Unfortunately many students with a disability leave school with little knowledge of the disability specific skills that they need to develop to do a job. Disabled people might need to develop skills to communicate, they may need understanding about designing the workplace to meet their needs or just simply knowing the types of support they can get from the Government – these essential things are rarely part of their transition plans. **BUT THEY SHOULD BE.**

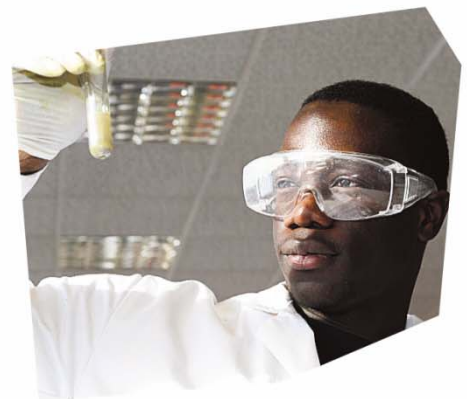
The National Disability Coordination Officer Program is a network of 31 officers throughout Australia. **They can help you to explore options in work, training and study.** Navigating the system and finding the right information can be overwhelming. For information about funding or other disability issues related to study/training or employment contact your NDCO today. Your NDCO is waiting to assist you. **If blind people can run restaurants all over Europe – What is possible for YOU?**

For more information try these websites:

http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/disability_emp_services.htm

<http://jobaccess.gov.au/Home/Home.aspx>

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This eZine was produced by Gary Kerridge, National Disability Coordination Officer; South Western Region, Victoria

Reprint by region 8

National Disability Coordination Officer
Region 8

48 Central Avenue Oak Flats NSW 2529

Phone: 02 4656 7610

Fax: 02 4256 7699

Email: julie.williams@northcott.com.au