

Thursday, 12 February 2009

DISABILITY SKILLS INITIATIVE EXTENDED TO COMMUNITY

A highly successful program providing accredited workplace training for hundreds of South Australians with disabilities, will now be extended to include community centres.

Employment, Training and Further Education Minister, Paul Caica, will make the announcement this morning at **Bedford's Panorama site**, where 108 participants will graduate from the innovative training program.

They form part of 154 people graduating across the State this year, including graduation ceremonies held at Port Pirie, Mount Gambier and the Eyre Peninsula.

Today's graduation ceremony will be held between 10.30am and 12 Noon.

"This will bring to a total over 750 South Australians with disabilities who have now graduated from *Abilities for All*, since I launched it in 2006 as a joint initiative between government and the disability sector, undertaken by Bedford and TAFE SA," Minister Caica said.

"They've graduated in areas ranging from Engineering, Furnishing and Business to Horticulture, Viticulture and Hospitality. And they've received qualifications in Certificates I to III or Statements of Attainment."

"I'm delighted to announce today the SA Government and Bedford will now join forces with the Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (CANH).

"This new partnership and the program that's been developed for this year will ensure training reaches local community centres and those in our community that are not involved in learning and employment.

"Our aim is to now include people with disabilities who face multiple barriers to achieving their potential or are not well connected with their community."

Minister Caica said the State Government would again contribute \$500,000 in annual funding to train 160 participants this year, and provide up to \$176,000 in 'User Choice' training subsidies for those participants entering contracts of training.

Minister for Disability, Jennifer Rankine says Bedford has built a proud history since 1945 and the State Government was thrilled to be delivering this service.

“*Abilities for All* identifies the strengths and barriers that each participant encounters before assessing their literacy and numeracy needs – designing the programs around individuals,” she said.

“We know that quality education allows participants to feel self-empowered through the ability to undertake duties independently, and this growth in confidence in the workplace has a flow-on effect to other aspects of their life.”

Bedford’s Chief Executive Max Dyason says, “We are thrilled to be working alongside the State Government on the next vocational education initiative to progress the employment opportunities of people with a disability or disadvantage.”

“It is vital that people with a disability have access to the support and preparation needed before embarking on employment. The latest extension of the *Abilities for All* program will ensure that participants have the best possible start before moving into the workforce.

“Participants will be assigned with both a facilitator and an employment consultant to ensure each person’s needs are met and will incorporate one-on-one mentoring, counselling and ongoing long-term personal support.

“We are delighted to be leading such a vital programme which provides an important link between education and employment,” Mr Dyason said.

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