

# **DISABILITY, ENTERPRISE EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE WORLD OF WORK**

I have been requested to speak about the future world of work and implications for graduates with disabilities. This necessitates a discussion on the nature of, and pathways to, future employment. In my opinion, this also requires a discussion on enterprise skills and establishing community partnerships to enable jobseekers with disabilities to participate in employment in a complex and changing work place. Coupled with this, employment services which have traditionally assisted jobseekers with disabilities are having to operate in an environment of reduced funding and open competition due to government policy.

## **What does this mean?**

Enterprising means more than just enterprise and represents the mind set and skills required by jobseekers to be successful in the work force of the new millennium.

Enterprise traditionally refers to the skills, attributes and knowledge needed to build a business. We need to go beyond this and look at the skills required to be “enterprising” to successfully manage employment that is consisting more and more of casual, part time or contract work. To me, being enterprising involves the above skills but also the following:

- Organisational skills and knowledge.
- Communication skills and knowledge.
- Personal attributes and knowledge.
- To be able to take risks
  - make decisions
  - be resilient
  - be creative and flexible
  - resourceful
  - identify opportunities

Jobseekers are going to have to know how to self manage their employment that will probably consist of several part time and casual positions.

I will return to this point later.

By community partnerships I mean – schools, small and large businesses, governments, employment services, vocational training organisations and the general community working more closely in a range of projects and/or educational programs to establish greater links and to create new pathways to employment for job seekers.

## **What is the new and changing work place?**

In the past decades we have witnessed extraordinary developments in Australian and global economies. There has been a move to an information and technological society.

These changes have been brought about by accelerating scientific and technological developments governing the knowledge and skills required by workers which exceeds that of previous generations of workers. Thus the nature of work has changed and is continuing to change rapidly in a way that is radically different to when I started working. Employment is being redefined away from full time work, job security (a job for life), to short term employment contracts based on knowledge and skills and/or the need to manage several contracts to make up the equivalent of a full time job. This is being influenced by world economics, accelerating communication and information technology and networking of production across regions and cities to form global cities.

Businesses are mechanising their processes to minimise costs with a reduction in many entry level positions and routine jobs. Another aspect of this trend is global networking of production allowing smaller businesses to be a part of collaborative ventures with bigger companies.

Smaller businesses are establishing strategic alliances and there is more outsourcing of functions which has the potential to create opportunities for enterprising youth.

There is considerable evidence that the world of full time traditional work is receding and being replaced by either continuous changing roles in one area of work or changing of areas in which to work.

This has resulted in an increased polarisation or dual labour markets within regions based on low skills or high skills and the development of global cities with potential marginalisation of whole regions.

Using Sydney as an example, we find a concentration of employment in high value finance, business and technical services in the centre of the city and dispersal of knowledge and service based employment in metropolitan hubs, such as North Ryde, Chatswood, St Leonards, Burwood and South Sydney. Communities disconnected from the knowledge economy will become marginalised with men who have lost routine jobs and with women who cannot speak English finding it doubly difficult to find a job.

The characteristics of marginalised communities are:

- Declining real incomes;
- Skill profiles do not match demand;

- High proportion of unqualified residents;
- High unemployment;
- Enterprises catering largely to local markets;
- Declining land values relative to other areas;
- High dependency on social welfare;
- Traditional skilled males – non-English speaking females.

### **Implication For Youth and People with Disabilities**

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum report “Australia’s Youth Reality and Risk” provides valuable evidence of the impact of the cataclysmic change on youth.

The report highlighted the following:

- The 1990s have seen a long term trend of high youth unemployment and a marked effect on the number of teenagers gaining full time employment.
- Growth in the number of non students and school leavers finding themselves in insecure part time work not linked to training and/or education.
- Fall in school retention rates at a time when there is a continued reduction in full time employment opportunities.
- A trend for young people to find work that requires “fewer skills” and pays less.
- A significant drop in the earnings of young people.

It would be safe to argue that such changes in employment have had, or have the potential to have, a greater impact on jobseekers with disabilities.

On top of this we have the current federal government’s policy of open competitive tendering for labour market programs which has resulted in the closure of many community based providers and the loss of valuable local infrastructure. It is also feasible to argue that specialist disability services will head in a similar direction with significant implications for jobseekers with disabilities. The experiences of the successful community based job network providers provide useful lessons as we are forced to achieve community aspirations through ethical commercial principles.

### **New Pathways To World Of Work**

As a result of this changing nature of work we need to identify new and different pathways to the world of work.

There are decreasing opportunities to work with large private and public organisations while there are increasing opportunities to be engaged with outsourcing of that work to small business. Evidence shows that small business is a growth sector in the economy as many more tasks are being outsourced by

large corporations and public sector agencies. There are also examples of people in full time traditional employment 'wanting' personal and household services plus new markets/opportunities being created in technology, tourism, and recreation.

With this decrease in traditional employment opportunities jobseekers need assistance to develop an understanding of, and interest in, alternative income generating options so they can take advantage of new opportunities and become involved in non-traditional forms of employment.

This requires a shift from 'working for someone' to working at doing something. This shift requires a cultural change to achieve new and different ways of thinking about the future world of work and development of skills, attributes, and knowledge.

Future world of work may include;

**1 PAYE Income**

- ◆ full time.
- ◆ part time or casual.
- ◆ Seasonal.

**2 Contract or subcontract**

- ◆ task or project orientated.

**3 Product and/or service delivery (micro or small business)**

- ◆ meeting customer needs for reward.
- ◆ providing help in the local community that does not necessary attract financial reward.

It may also include having several part time, casual, or contracts, or a combinations of these, at the same time.

**Skills For The Future World Of Work Or To Be 'Enterprising'**

As mentioned in the introduction, jobseekers of the future are going to require a different mind set, skills, knowledge and support to be successful in the work force of the new millennium.

This different mind set, skills, knowledge and support involves:

- Organisational skills and knowledge.
- Communication skills and knowledge.
- Personal attributes and knowledge.
- To be able to take calculated risks
  - make decisions
  - be resilient
  - be creative and flexible
  - be resourceful and use initiative

identify opportunities and turn them into reality  
understand the meaning of work  
be able to plan  
persevere and persist  
be organised  
have a positive attitude and confidence  
present appropriately  
goal set  
be relevant  
have manners and respect for others  
have practical experience  
learn from failures  
find encouragement during setbacks

Irrespective of whether a person is employed as a PAYE employee, contractor, or involved in production or service delivery through a micro or small business they are going to need to be able to self manage and believe in their own ability.

Even for PAYE employees there are growing expectations that workers have the ability to work effectively in teams, with less dependence on direct supervision. There is also the expectation of active participation in the workplace, improved communication skills, decision making ability, and self reliance.

In particular to succeed in the future world of work people will need to know how to ;

- ◆ manage time and money
- ◆ build and maintain relationships
- ◆ keep track of things
- ◆ have a system
- ◆ have telephone and letter writing skills
- ◆ optimise interpersonal skills
- ◆ market self
- ◆ display job interview skills
- ◆ write applications or proposals

Additional to these skills, there are another set of skills required to establish and maintain a successful micro or small business.

### **What Then Needs to be Done?**

I believe we have to develop partnerships with schools, industry, governments, employment services, disability services and other stakeholders. Collectively we need to explore self funding enterprises to maintain adequate support structures. Universities need to also consider their role in preparing graduates for future employment. Recent experience indicates that graduates are often viewed as lacking practical employable and/or vocational skills by employers. A number of

employers also view “trainees” who receive nationally recognised training on and off the job while attracting a payment preferable to university graduates.

I would also suggest there is a need for strategic alliances to collectively tender to establish programs and/or pathways to maximise opportunities and resources for jobseekers. This would also enable better coverage of services to jobseekers, sharing ideas and best practice through collaborative ventures.

I am aware of one disability employment service which is negotiating a business arrangement with a licensed club to provide a pathway to employment for their clients and financial stability.

I believe we need to introduce enterprise education while at school and possibly university, or at least opportunities to access such training in conjunction with studies. Such programs could include establishing opportunity banks to assist jobseekers to obtain contracts and receive appropriate personal and industrial support while learning new skills. One secondary college to establish an opportunity bank is Hawker College in the ACT . There is no reason why students with disabilities could not be part of such programs.

There is also scope for organisations to tender in partnerships with schools for programs.

The other aspects are how we prepare young people to be enterprising in the new work force. Goddard and Ferguson (1998) in their report into self managed employment and enterprise initiatives researched businesses, schools and youth to ascertain the skills and competencies required to be enterprising:

- Understanding the meaning of work.
- Perseverance and persistence.
- Being creative and flexible.
- Being able to plan.
- Managing time and money.
- Knowing how to build and maintain relationships.
- Knowing what is a business.
- Keeping track of things.
- Wanting to have a go and taking a risk.
- Being organised.
- Having a system.
- Records, book-keeping, invoicing and all that sort of thing.
- Communication skills.

These results, not only illustrate the required skills and competencies needed to obtain work, but also how to be successful once in a job. The work place of the future will require more self reliance and initiative as well as less dependency on being told what to do by a boss.

People will have to work more in teams and enter into life long learning to constantly upgrade their skills.

From this it is clear that job seekers with disabilities will require support from agencies more than ever to fully participate in the workforce of tomorrow.

### **Conclusion**

It is evident that we need to shift priorities to a focus on vocational preparation to meet the changing demands of the work place.

It also indicates the need to move beyond our traditional approaches. Although this may initially be threatening, we cannot afford to be territorial.

From my experience many young people still believe that they will be provided with a job which reflects a dependency on the system. This can result in a cycle of dependency and projection on others when things do not work out as expected as well as reliance on social welfare.

As a society we cannot afford such a situation. Our economic and social future depends on ensuring a successful transition from school to work or study. It is also critical for the individual's own economic security and well being.

### REFERENCES

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