



DETERMINATION PAYS OFF FOR LARISSA

WORDS BY DEBBIE FILES

MOTEL ENTRANCE



As we approach adulthood, people often ask us what we want to do with our lives.

For most of us, work is the clear-cut answer. We have ideas and choices to make and it's a bit scary. But as we get into the rhythm of employment, we come to take on many roles as we go through our working life.

Being employed, being part of a functional environment, and working in a team, is for some a far off dream that may never be a reality, because we seem to live in a world of great expectations. Nova Employment challenges these expectations and recognises valued status by giving our clients the chance to develop skills for employment, and to participate in the activities that are valued in our community. But without a community that is focused on our youth, and in particular the youth with disabilities, this outcome would not be achieved.

Larissa came to Nova's Transition to Work program after completing her Year 12 HSC at Broken Hill High School. Transition to Work is a 2-year program that results in a Certificate 1 in Work Education. The program delivers diverse and highly experiential work abilities to school leavers who have an intellectual disability, enabling them to gain the employable skills that are needed to

find and maintain work. This is achieved through the support of quality work experience, which is sourced from the Transition Job Coach and offered by the businesses of Broken Hill. To get a clear understanding of what they want to do, the Transition to Work trainee needs a diverse program of work experience in many different industries, so at the end of the program they know what they like, and where their skills and strengths lay.

Larissa discovered that she enjoyed manual work and was very good at it. Larissa was offered work experience at The Life Line shop, IGA Fresh, PCYC, Playtime preschool, and the Broken Hill airport kiosk. Larissa gained valuable skills in the working world, and these businesses are to be congratulated for the quality of work experience they offered.

Larissa hit another milestone on her path toward gaining employment in September 2010, when she became the first Transition to Work trainee in Broken Hill to obtain her Certificate 1 in Work Experience Hours. Larissa's favourite topic was work place rights and responsibilities, and she has good knowledge of what is expected of her at work.

As a Transition to Work trainee, Larissa had priority access to Nova employment

as a job seeker. Nova employment offers a free service to people with a disability, which helps them to gain and maintain meaningful employment of their choice. Larissa was assigned to an employment consultant who worked closely with her to find a job that matched what she was looking for.

In April, Larissa's employment consultant had an employer appointment at the Silver Spade Motel, with owner/operators, Ruth and Wayne Stubbings. After hearing what Larissa was looking for, and learning that post-placement support is given in the workplace, they were asked to meet with Larissa. After an interview, Larissa was offered a position as an assistant in short-stay accommodation at the Silver Spade. Larissa was so excited that she went back to the Nova offices and announced with great pride that she had got a real job. Larissa has proven that she is a reliable team player. She absolutely loves going to work, and the Silver Spade staff have been amazing at passing their knowledge of the industry on to Larissa.

This is a story of group effort and community spirit. It shows that with encouragement and determination we can all achieve in life. As Larissa often says: "Don't let fear stop you."