



Supporting People With Disability

MEDIA RELEASE

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Canberra business creates life changing opportunities for school leavers with intellectual disability.

As thousands of teenagers from Canberra region schools graduate for 2016, many are hitting the job market or higher education. But what happens to those with intellectual disability?

Koomarri, Canberra's leading service provider for people with disabilities in Canberra and the surrounding regions, has joined forces with a group of Canberra businesses to support these local school leavers in a very simple way. Through *Work Skills for Life* training courses and work experience placements, these people can gain skills for work and obtain fulfilling employment.

"With the school year ending, now is the time for parents or guardians of school-leavers and anyone with an intellectual disability, to start thinking seriously about what they're going to do and how they can move into the workforce smoothly and lead the most independent life that they can," said Nadine Stephen, Koomarri's CEO.

"Our approach is to support people with disability to be active in their local community, be employed and living where they want to live with the people important to them," continued Nadine.

Koomarri offers two nationally recognised qualifications and work experience – *Cert I in Work Skills for Life*, which covers topics including working independently, protective behaviours, money management, and dress and hygiene. And the *Cert II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways* which covers topics including using digital technology, reading and responding to routine workplace information, and writing and numeracy for the workplace. They also offer an Information Technology course.

"Our courses provide students the opportunity to complete a recognised qualification in preparation for work and further studies," Nadine said.

One local man who has completed courses with Koomarri and gained employment is Mitch, a 25-year-old resident from Tuggeranong. Having been supported by Koomarri for several years, Mitch undertook the *Work Skills for Life* course in 2015, and then the Information Technology class this year. He is currently works at the Department of Human Services and says he enjoyed learning about getting ready for work in the morning, learning to catch a bus, doing mail outs and helping with printing.

"I liked the sound of the Koomarri course as it taught Mitch many different skills relevant for the workplace. The course directly built on his abilities and knowledge," said Mitch's mum, Donna.

“I would recommend this to other parents and guardians of people with disability, as it gave Mitch extra knowledge and skills which boosted his chances of getting a job. The part time nature also meant that he could combine work and other interests with his studies,” Donna continued.

Koomarri’s Cert I and Cert II course duration is six hours over two days a week for 40 weeks in line with ACT school terms. Courses are held in both Woden and Belconnen, subject to interest, and work experience placements are found in local businesses for up to 15 hours over five days. This helps individuals find a job that best matches their skills in real workplaces. And there are very real benefits for employers too.

Harvey Norman Fyshwick has taken on several graduates from Koomarri’s courses, and Bedding Department 2IC Shane Simons says Harvey Norman as a group likes to be involved in community organisations as much as possible.

“We saw this as an opportunity to support young people wishing to enter or experience the workforce,” Shane said.

“The majority of students were keen, eager and open to suggestions with some showing a natural flair for merchandising and others were eager to please,” Shane continued.

Anyone with an intellectual disability from the Canberra region can enrol now. Places are filling fast and there are only a limited number of vacancies left for courses commencing January 2017. The closure date for enrolment for Koomarri’s IT course is Friday 13 January 2017. Closure date for Cert 1 and Cert II is Friday 27 January 2017.

These courses can be accessed by ACT and NSW resident with NDIS funding, people without NDIS funding can access the courses on a fee for service arrangement.

For more information on Koomarri and to register your interest for their Work Skills for Life courses, visit www.koomarri.asn.au, email reception@koomarri.asn.au or phone (02) 6280 6143.

For more information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact Nadine Stephen, Koomarri’s CEO, on 0404 633 449 or nstephen@koomarri.asn.au