



VIVID

From Work Experience To Micro Business - a ground breaking supported employment journey

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When Vivid client Talisha began work experience at Journey Early Learning Centre two years ago, she could never have imagined it would lead to her very own micro business.

As an Echuca Special School graduate, Talisha's placement at Journey was part of Vivid's *School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) Program*. However, to progress into open employment in childcare, Talisha was required to obtain her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education, which was unfortunately not a pathway available to her.

In response, Journey developed an individualised employment pathway for Talisha to ensure she could continue offering activities to the centre's children as a sub contractor.

What began as work experience, has grown to scheduled activities at Journey and the establishment of a micro business, which Talisha is currently deciding on a name for.

Talisha's passion for working with children grew from her work experience at Journey, as well as a volunteering stint, and it's evident she loves the work.

"I love doing activities with the kids... they love building blocks," Talisha said.

"They also love dancing and singing and I like to get the kids up and moving."

When asked about the prospect of starting her micro business and any challenges it might present, Talisha confessed she was prepared and ready to go.

"I am an entertainer... and I'm not too nervous as I've done it all before," she said.

Vivid Employment Pathway Coordinator Mark Stocken said Talisha would receive an abundance of support in this exciting employment opportunity, which had broken new ground in the SLES program.

"This has not been done before at Vivid," Mark said. "There have been clients who have moved into jobs, but this is the first time this subcontractor scenario has been created, and it's a great example to others about what's possible in terms of different modes of employment."

"This will be a really good benchmark for people to work towards, and to see what Talisha has done and what they could potentially do."

Support for Talisha extends to the intricacies of establishing a micro business, including planning and invoicing, as well as access to an in-house business coach sourced for the first time at Vivid.

Mark said this model of work creates a scenario where varying pathways to employment are created for clients and the positive outcomes become more visible for local businesses.

“This could be whatever Talisha wants it to be and it’s important we start small and keep building,” Mark said.

“We need to help set Talisha up for success in what is essentially a micro business... which is really cool and a first for Vivid.”

Journey has been integral in creating this opportunity for Talisha, reaching out to Vivid following the success of her work experience in creating fun activities for the children.

Centre Manager Leanne Mathers said they were proud to have created this partnership with Talisha and her family.

“Since we welcomed Talisha into Journey Early Learning Echuca two years ago, she has brought such bright and enthusiastic energy into our learning environments. She has an infectious personality and we all look forward to her visiting each week,” Leanne said.

“We are so pleased to create an opportunity to bring her passion to life and watch her learn alongside the children in our service.”

With the support of Vivid and the open-arms approach from Journey, Talisha will put together a 12-week activities program, an employment model which Mark believes has the potential to be replicated in other child care centres.

“Talisha’s journey has created an environment where new possibilities have emerged for employment outcomes, building on employability skills and sharing the message that a job doesn’t necessarily have to look like full time employment,” Mark said.

“It’s a very holistic approach... and shows that employment can look different for everyone.”

Vivid was recently successful in a Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF) grant which aims to create employment pathways for people with intellectual disabilities and has allowed the organisation to structure and deliver more purposeful employment pathways for clients such as Talisha.

This grant has helped secure Mark’s services, as well as the employment coach, and supports an expansion of Vivid’s Work Crew into different options for employment.

Vivid’s Shannon Walker said up until now it has been a purely fixed model of supported employment, but is shifting to creating new pathways into more open and mainstream employment for clients, which is exciting for everyone involved.

“The grant has helped Vivid develop a structure that can include many and varied pathways as well as individual employment plans like Talisha’s,” Shannon said.

“It is exciting for us as it individualises and changes the way our employment pathway business model operates.”

Talisha’s story with Journey is an example of Vivid’s mission to achieve outcome-based open or supported employment for clients and help them achieve varying employment-related goals while establishing important relationships and partnerships within the community.

These partnerships would not be made possible without the support of the Vivid employment team, and Talisha wanted to thank Mark, Wendy, Bec and Sue for helping her build on the relationships that have fostered her micro business. All Talisha needs now is a business name!