

I am a support teacher with over 22 years' teaching experience in Tasmania and New South Wales with students with a range of disabilities. I am also a member of the Hobart Ticket-to-Work committee which has been expanding the traineeship opportunities for students with disability in the Southern Tasmania region. One of the pieces of advice that the committee received from consultation with local employers was that we needed to ensure that students with disability were familiar with the VET way of learning and assessing in order to be more likely to gain traineeships. It was the result of this advice that I completed my Certificate IV in Training and Assessment last year and have been teaching *Certificate 1 in Access to Vocational Pathways* in 2016 in conjunction with another experienced VET-trained teacher. Every student in the class has a diagnosed disability.

I am extremely passionate about improving the employment and training-related statistics for people with disability and have the responsibility at Claremont College for transitioning Year 12 students with disability to work and the community. The following statistics, presented by the National Disability Co-ordination Officer Program, at a recent Professional Learning session I attended, are dire.

- 20% of Australians of working age have a disability.
- In 2015 only 53.4% of people with disability were participating in the labour force (83.2% for people without a disability)
- Australia is ranked 21/29 amongst OECD countries for labour force participation for people with a disability
- People with disability are the least represented of all equity groups in the Australian VET system
- Only around 2% of apprentices/trainees identify as having a disability.

In order to improve the employment and training outcomes for people with disability it is vital that VET subjects remain in schools for a number of reasons:

1. Employers have asked for more students with disability to be studying VET courses; this is much more likely to happen if students undertake VET courses whilst still at school.
2. From my experience, students receive more educational and social support at school than can be provided through the TAFE system.
3. Students with disability at school have an individualised study program which includes a balanced combination of TASC, VET and work experience. This is not offered to the same degree at TAFE.