

Media Release

28 November 2023

Growing critical job opportunities – Int. Day of People with Disability

Australia is in the grip of a massive workforce shortage, with a third of businesses struggling to find suitable staff (ABS, 2022).

Despite this, figures show just 54% of people with disability are in the labour force, compared to 84% without disability.

These statistics are a major driver for non-profit organisation VMCH – which has spent the last year growing its unique employment pathways program, supporting people with a disability to learn job-ready skills in hospitality, horticulture and retail.

Sunday December 3 is [International Day of People with Disability](#), aimed to promote community awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability.

VMCH has set itself a target to support 100 people to find and sustain meaningful open employment by 2025. Since February this year, 19 have found work, six of whom with VMCH.

Ararat resident Tyson Ballinger, aged 28, is one such employee. He works with VMCH's Green Team, which sees three gardening crews across Melbourne and regional Victoria deliver commercial gardening and maintenance services to VMCH home care clients.

"I have found it to be really good and enjoyable, and love all aspects so far, especially mowing and whipper snipping," Tyson says.

"We are always working on new tasks. I do feel more confident in myself since starting."

Green Team Coordinator Josh Dorn says Tyson's enthusiasm for his job is growing, and he's about to increase his working hours.

The Green Team's Ararat crew is new, part of VMCH's plan to reach more people with disability seeking work in regional areas.

"It's great to see it evolve and I am excited by the prospect of it growing into a positive part of Ararat's community," Josh says. "I enjoy working with clients like Tyson and helping them gain skills and confidence in themselves."

VMCH General Manager Disability Services Daniel Carter says having the skills and confidence to work in a job that brings meaning and pays a fair wage is a life-changing opportunity.

"For many of our clients, these are opportunities that simply have not previously existed. And for some who have been able to find a job, the complexity of staying in the job has been overwhelming."

Over the next year, VMCH hopes to raise its training hours by 20% across its social enterprise cafes, op shops and horticulture programs to help double the number of people transitioning from training to employment.

"Of course, not everyone wants to be a barista, maintenance officer or retail worker," Daniel says. "So, to help people explore jobs in other industries we partner with businesses such as the YMCA, Veolia, Ventia and

governments who are both committed to the benefits of a diverse workforce, and in need of staff to fill critical skills gaps.

“By normalising the employment of people with disability in a range of roles and industries we reduce the anxiety of businesses to embrace the opportunity for the more than 1.1 million Australians with a disability to find a meaningful job.”

For more information on VMCH’s Employment Pathways program, visit vmch.com.au/disability/for-adults/job-skills/ or call 1300 698 624.

Media enquiries

Cassie Zlonzak

Communications Manager

M: 0402 422 852

E: cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au

About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren’t just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we’ve been around for over a century, we’re always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

