Inclusive Work Placement Provider Awards Luncheon
International Day of People with Disability 2010

Dr Kevin Murfitt, a lecturer focused on workplace diversity and the coordinator of the
Willing and Able Mentoring program [a national career matching program for tertiary
students and job seekers with a disability] spoke about the importance of work
experience placement opportunities in shaping the employment futures of students with
disabilities at an Inclusive Work Placement Provider Awards Luncheon held at GOTAFE
on Monday November 29th to celebrate the International Day of People with Disability on
Friday December 3rd 2010.

"International Day of People with Disability is a really important day – it’s a day to raise
awareness of disability, and to acknowledge that people with disability play a vital part
in the community and in the workforce,” said Dr Murfitt.

Dr Murfitt’s main area of research is concerned with understanding and identifying
solutions to the barriers faced by people who have a disability in gaining employment,
specifically attitude change and the impact of mentoring and work experience in
fostering better inclusion of people who have a disability in the workforce.

Dr Murfitt lost his sight in his mid 20’s after a penetrating eye injury, so he has a
personal and professional perspective on the impact of blindness, and the challenges
and solutions to accommodating impairment and achieving success.

Despite equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, technological advances,
and a growing awareness of rights to full social inclusion for people who have a
disability, in the 15 or so years since the enactment of the Disability Discrimination
Act (1992), employment of people who have a disability in Australia has declined,
while for other Australians employment levels have increased.

“With one in five Australians experiencing some degree of disability, it is vital that the
barriers to employment be reduced and providing work experience and mentoring
opportunities like the one’s recognised in this awards ceremony can have a real
impact on this,” said Dr Murfitt.
The awards luncheon is a joint initiative of the National Disability Coordination Officer program, GOTAFE and the NETRACKS LLEN.

“The aim of the awards breakfast is to recognise the contribution of local employers to social inclusion for people with a disability through providing work experience opportunities that assist people with a disability to learn work-related skills and to demonstrate their abilities in a real work situation,” said Vicky Drage, National Disability Coordination Officer, “The opportunities these businesses have provided is invaluable.”

Twelve businesses from the Wangaratta and Alpine shires will be acknowledged with awards for providing outstanding work placement experiences for local students with disabilities.

These businesses included:
- Gloria Jeans- Wangaratta
- Wangaratta Childcare Centre
- West Trend Hair Dressing- Wangaratta
- Benalla Library
- Park Lane Nursery- Wangaratta
- Landmark Real Estate- Wangaratta
- Down Under Kiwi Fruit- Whorouly
- Central Access- Kilara Campus
- Warby Street Veterinary Hospital- Wangaratta
- Myalla Kitchens and Cabinets- Wangaratta
- Alpine Health- Mt Beauty
- Mt Beauty Visitor Information Centre

“Work experience really paves the road to employment for many students so I hope these businesses will spread the word about how easy and rewarding it is to have students with disabilities be work placement students,” said Ms. Drage.

The event was attended by over 40 representatives from schools, Disability Employment Services and Businesses. Many of the students involved in the nominations were in attendance to assist in thanking the organisations who had provided them with work placement opportunities.

International Day of People with Disability was established in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly to promote awareness of the contributions and experiences of people with disability. It is celebrated worldwide on 3 December each year.