Inclusive Work Placement Provider Awards Breakfast
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 Breakfast held at Wodonga TAFE on Tuesday November 30th 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 breakfast is a joint initiative of the National Disability Coordination Officer program, Wodonga TAFE and the North East Local Learning and Employment Network.
“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.”

Fourteen businesses from the Albury, Wodonga and Rutherglen areas were acknowledged with awards for providing outstanding work placement experiences for local students with disabilities.

These businesses included:
- Victory Lutheran College Library
- Super Cheap Auto Albury
- Warehouse Sales Wodonga
- Lecky’s Electrical Wholesale Pty Ltd
- The Grange
- Aidacare Pty Ltd
- Thurgoona Community Centre
- McDonalds Birralee
- Rapunzel’s Hair Studio
- Arnold’s Fruit Market
- Rutherglen Wine Experience & Information Centre
- Riverlea Australia Pty Ltd
- Vision Australia
- UPA Murray River Region- Shalem Hostel

“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, Albury and Wodonga Council, Chambers of Commerce and Business.

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.