

Successful job seeking strategies for people with injury and illness or disability

Deakin University established the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) to meet the requirements of students with disability, and as a resource to the rest of the University.

- The DRC is staffed by experienced professional workers with knowledge and expertise in access and equity issues. They work closely with academic skills advisers, counsellors, career advisors and health and well being staff.
- If a physical, sensory or learning disability, or medical or mental health condition, interferes with your ability to achieve your academic goals then the staff at the DRC may be able to help you.

If you need further information you may need to speak with and/or be registered with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC). Please go to www.deakin.edu.au/disability or make an appointment at Student Life reception.

Useful Resources

Willing and Able Mentoring (WAM)

The WAM program matches job seekers or tertiary students who have a disability with mentors in leading organizations in the job seekers/students' field of interest for a series of approximately eight one to two-hour discussion meetings during semester two of the given year. During these meetings strategies focused on are:

- Gathering information about the career environment they are heading towards
- Refining interview skills
- Experiencing the workplace culture (eg. staff meetings)
- Developing better skills in presenting a professional profile
- Disclosure and demystifying disability and related workplace issues (eg. Workplace modifications)

For further information and application forms for WAM, go to www.graduatecareers.com.au "How to find a job" and "Getting started".

WISE Employment

WISE Employment is a not-for-profit organization with a professional, integrated approach to finding the right job for jobseekers and the right staff for employers.

www.wiseemployment.com.au

The Job Access website

This resource is an initiative of the Australian federal government. It was designed to help out not only Job Network staff, but also employers of job-seekers with a disability, to negotiate the unique circumstances surrounding their job-seeking activities.

www.jobaccess.gov.au/joac

Choosing Your Path – Disclosure: It's a personal decision

This is a free online resource which has been developed for students and employees with disabilities and also for employers, educators and support services.

<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/rdlo/disclosure/>

Graduate Careers Australia

This has all university careers service contacts, job-seeking and employer information for students.

www.graduatecareers.com.au

Disability Employment Action Centre (DEAC)

A Melbourne-based, not-for-profit organisation founded to represent people with a disability. Part of DEAC's work is to represent graduates with a disability who are looking for work.

www.deac.org.au

Australian Workplace

Australian Workplace provides job seekers, employees and employers with information about finding a job, starting work and workplace issues. In particular follow the "For individuals" menu to 'Disadvantaged job seekers'.

www.workplace.gov.au

Job seeking strategies

The following section is from www.workplace.gov.au written by Jill Farnbach, Rehabilitation Consultant, Belconnen Regional Unit, ACT- CRS Australia -Member AACC

Job seeking for people with an injury, illness or health condition can be a daunting task. However, with a clear understanding of your strengths and limitations, and a sound job seeking plan, you can significantly increase your chances of obtaining and keeping suitable work.

Choosing the right job

Prepare carefully before commencing job seeking by following these steps.

- Know your restrictions and their daily impact on you.
- Be clear on any special requirements that an employer will need to know about.
- Ensure that you can communicate these clearly to an employer.
- Gain a full understanding of your skills, interests and abilities. The [MyFuture](http://www.myfuture.edu.au) website is a valuable tool. www.myfuture.edu.au
- Make a list of potential jobs, using such resources as the [Job Guide](http://jobguide.dest.gov.au) <http://jobguide.dest.gov.au>
- Ensure that you can safely perform all or most of the tasks involved in any possible job. You can do this by talking to people in the industry to get an idea of what is actually required on the job, both mentally and physically.
- When you have decided on a suitable job or goal, ensure that you have a current resume which clearly identifies your skills.
- Brush up on your interview skills.

Talking to employers

It is a challenge to talk to employers positively about your disability or condition. However some prior planning and discussion will go a long way. Talk with your treating practitioner and/or employment counsellor first and decide how best to present your situation.

Employers and employees have a Duty of Care. This means that you need to be able to perform the duties without jeopardising the safety of yourself or other workers. You need to meet the standards of proficiency that could reasonably be expected from people performing that job.

Here are some general hints on talking with a potential employer about your condition or disability:

- Face to face discussion gives a better opportunity to explain your skills and circumstances.
- Keep it brief.
- State clearly what your restrictions are.
- State clearly what special considerations you may need.
- Remember to highlight your skills and abilities.
- Remember never lie, don't dwell on your disability or injury and think positively.

Here are some additional ideas on how to discuss your situation in different circumstances:

1. On a job application form: If asked the question - Do you have any health problems?

Possible responses (on the application form)

- Not that will affect my ability to do the job
- I will discuss this at an interview
- Not applicable (to this job)
- Leave it blank and explain verbally at the interview
- Do not say "no" if the answer is "yes".

2. At an interview

Possible responses

- I have had a medical condition in the past, but I have now recovered from this and will still be able to do the job required.
- I have /have had a health condition in the past. Explain what this means/ has meant for you in practical terms (eg concentration, social skills, medication). However, I am keen to return to the workforce and am confident that I can perform this job safely and well.

3. After the job is offered/accepted

Possible Strategy

Choose an appropriate time to talk privately with the employer. If you have been in the position for a short time ask for feedback on your performance. At this time it might be appropriate to add: "I'd like to inform you that I have a condition called----- and while this doesn't affect my work, it does mean (I need to take medication/I need to take regular breaks/ If you see these behaviours I would like you to do this-----.)"