

## City of Bunbury's Ben Green gets the job done

**Through the Lighthouse Project initiative, local government authorities are being supported and encouraged to increase employment of people with disability. Ben Green's story highlights the importance of disability awareness in the workplace.**

When he was 19, Ben Green's life took an unexpected turn.

While working as a loader driver in a limestone production business, he was involved in an accident that resulted in the loss of one leg and limited flexibility in the other.

The WorkCover WA return to work program for workers was critical in helping Ben transition into a new type of work.

As part of the insurance claim process, he was required to prove that he was actively looking for a job and had initially done some work experience at other places but these roles did not fit with his skills and interests.



He then applied for a finance administration role at the City of Bunbury's South West Sports Centre. After a two-week trial at the sports centre, Ben was appointed to the role in a full-time position.

Seven years on from being appointed at the City, Ben, 29, has gained a reputation as a dependable and hardworking employee at the City. He enjoys his job and being part of a team where most people have been working together for over five years.

The City of Bunbury made one significant modification to cater for Ben's access needs – an automatic door was installed in the office part of the centre.

A lift breakdown posed a challenge more recently but repairs to the ageing lift have now resolved the problem for Ben and the sports centre's patrons.



Now that the City's South West Sports Centre has an employee with disability, it is more proactive in implementing accessibility and inclusive initiatives at the sports centre.

Two of the changes being implemented are an increase in the number of ACROD parking bays and the addition of a drive-through option for buses carrying wheelchairs.

Ben's presence has increased the awareness of the kinds of parking issues a person with disability might face, such as the lack of undercover parking, for protection during inclement weather.

The sports centre's Facility Team Leader Samantha Harnett, who is Ben's supervisor said: "For all of us, revolting weather can be an issue but for Ben it can be a bit more intensive. He can't hold a brolly and then there are issues with water on the wheels," she said.

"I have become a bit of an advocate for understanding the issues around parking needs."

Samantha said organisations employing people with disability needed to increase awareness of disability-related issues among its staff.

"Awareness training would be good. Also, what are the regulations, what do we need to do? Such as needing two per cent of the parking places to be ACROD spots – so I have physically gone out and counted (the existing bays)," Samantha said.

Ben's advice to job-seekers with disability was to make the effort to try various roles to find the right fit and speak to prospective employers.

"You don't have to stay there forever if you don't like it," Ben said.

He also has advice to prospective local government employers.

"Don't just think that because someone is in a wheelchair that they can't do the job," he said. "I think I do a lot better job in a wheelchair than a lot of other people."

Samantha agreed: "I believe him to be one of our most valuable employees.

"His attitude is just brilliant. He gets on with the job, and if there is any issue, he will flag it."

Ben is happy to take on additional responsibilities and is also a good mentor to trainees who occasionally work at the sports centre.



She encouraged people with disability to continue to apply for jobs with local government authorities.

“Tell us what you can bring to the position and we will evaluate everyone on merit, and how we can make it work at the workplace,” she said.

Samantha said Ben advocated strongly for the rights and welfare of people with disability. He also regularly raised awareness of disability-related issues with organisations who employed people with disability.

Samantha encouraged other local government authorities to increase disability awareness among staff. This would ensure that local government authorities could employ high achievers such as Ben while improving access and inclusion for the broader community.