

Cleaning job is driving force for Ryan Kitching

Through the Lighthouse Project initiative, local government authorities are being supported and encouraged to increase employment of people with disability. Ryan Kitching's story highlights the benefits of hiring a qualified person with disability.

For Ryan Kitching, an outdoor cleaner at the Shire of Gnowangerup, a driver's licence would make a perfect job even more perfect.

"I like working at the Shire. There is nothing I dislike. I get on with the job, and my supervisor is wonderful. He is very clear about what he wants me to do," Ryan said.

Getting out of the house and out and about in the community is really important for Ryan and, in his opinion, for all other people with disability.

"I love my job at the Shire. I was a gardener for six months at a school, and then I got the job as a gardener at the Shire. But when one of the Shire cleaners left, I took the opportunity to become a cleaner. I prepare the bins for pickup, I clean the barbecues at the park, I clean the toilets. I wish I could work more hours," he said.



Ryan, 35, lives in his own unit in the community. He has a learning difficulty, but requires no assistance to go about daily living or working.

"I am renting my own unit and I am very independent. For now, I have to walk everywhere, but once I get my driver's licence I can be much more out and about," he said.

"I have no trouble supervising Ryan," his immediate supervisor, John Skinner, said.

"I just make sure I allow enough time for him to complete the task, as he may need a bit more time to think about the requirement and understand it. But once I explain it and make sure he has understood what I need, I usually only need to tell him once and he gets the job done."

In John's opinion, Ryan is an ideal employee – he just goes about his job, which is outdoors and mostly on his own, and there are no complaints.



“He has been in the job for one year and knows his job very well. He sometimes comes with ideas about things he would like to do and we discuss them together and see how they can be implemented. I am hoping he will get his driver’s licence soon. This will enable him to do a lot more work,” John said.

According to John, opportunities for people with disability to work in local government are significantly enhanced when there is a program providing financial support to get their foot in the door. Once the person with disability is in the role, it becomes so much easier for everyone, he said.

This was the case for Ryan. Working with Disability Employment Service (DES) provider Great Southern Personnel was the key to finding both his jobs, at the school, and then at the Shire of Gnowangerup. Ryan’s initial employment was funded as part of a State Government-funded scheme to help employ people with disability, but now he is directly employed by the Shire.

“Get yourself an employment consultant (a DES provider). They can help you find a job,” Ryan advises people with disability seeking to enter the workforce.

John encouraged people with disability to keep trying, and not get discouraged, either while trying to find employment or when they were actually in the role. He suggested employers consider what a role required and then decide if the person’s disability affected their ability to do the job and, if there was a work around, then to certainly give them a fair go.