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Café Next Door, a thriving café in Kings Meadows south of Launceston, is not like any other coffee shop, there's something a little more unique about this one.

Vanessa Mitchell and husband Brett opened the café after their 28-year-old son Brad – who has cerebral palsy and a learning difficulty – was consistently turned down for jobs despite being equipped with the necessary skills to enter the workforce.

“Nobody would give him a go because he didn't have experience. There were ‘no's’ around every corner he turned,” Vanessa said.

“It was a very frustrating situation as a parent where you have a child that you had instilled a work ethic into, but nobody would give him a chance.

“Brad's struggles were always something that stuck in our minds and we thought that, one day, we'd like to be able to help find inclusion and provide opportunities to people living with disabilities.”

With intentions to open their own café, a friend suggested expanding it to provide training for people with a disability and opportunities for full time employment.

Eighteen months on, the Mitchell's café is set up in a purpose-built space which houses the café.

Café Next Door is now a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider, providing formal hospitality training to people with a disability on occupational health and safety, hygiene, cash handling, customer service and food preparation.

“It was a lightbulb moment. We designed our café structurally around our people with additional needs.

“Our café is totally open so our staff are seen. They're seen to make coffee, make food, washing up. Whatever the task may be, they're not hidden away.”

It's for that reason the Mitchell's have seen such strong support from their community which allows them to continue to train their staff.

A recent success story was Chloe, a former staff member who found permanent employment at a nearby café after completing her training at Café Next Door.

They are currently working with eight staff members who are training and working towards their Certificate I in Hospitality, with the hope they will all be able to move into mainstream employment, just like Chloe.

“We are working very closely with an employment agency in the area to support our participants getting national accreditation, so they are on the same playing field as any able other person to find a job.

“Whether it’s one hour or 10 hours per week, we want them to get whatever job might suit their capabilities. That is our overall aim.”

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