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Bus Stop Films was the brainchild of Genevieve Clay-Smith, and has been running in Sydney and Wollongong for nearly 10 years, teaching students with intellectual disabilities the art of filmmaking but also builds work-ready skills to help them gain employment in other industries.

[Transcript for 'Budding filmmakers thrive with Bus Stop Films'](#)

“When I looked at our film and television landscape, there was no one on television with a disability and certainly no pathways for people with disabilities to be included,” Genevieve said.

“I started to create opportunities for people with disability on the sets of my films, but I realised there was a big gap, and that gap was really unjust because our film industry should be the most inclusive industry in the world – it’s the industry of story-telling.”

“I decided that I’d like to make filmmaking accessible for people, to teach people with disabilities the same things that I had loved learning about at university.”

Faced with the challenge of ensuring the business’ financial sustainability after being run for years on “volunteer love”, Genevieve decided to register Bus Stop as an NDIS provider last year, which means that NDIS participants can pursue the course as part of their vocation-focused skills development funding.

“We still fundraise for special projects, advocacy events, and student film festival travel but the face-to-face program focused on individual capacity building is now sustainable because of the NDIS, which is fantastic.”

Genevieve said the benefits of the Bus Stop Films program went far beyond learning skills for the film industry, with students gaining work place skills that equip them for employment in many different industries following the course including law, information technology, administration, as well as in the film and television industry.

“We assist our students in developing literacy skills, communication skills, work-ready skills, social skills and living skills. We are serious about helping our students reach their full potential through a subject that everybody loves, and that’s film.”

One of the first program participants in Sydney was 34 year old Gerard O'Dwyer from Guildford who has Down syndrome. Gerard's dream was to become an actor.

Gerard has since worked on short films, feature films, plays, commercials and training videos and won Best Actor at Tropfest - the world's largest short film festival - in 2009 for his role in a short film produced by Bus Stop entitled Be My Brother, which also won Best Film. Gerard is the only actor with a disability to ever have won a Best Actor award. Gerard said Bus Stop Films had changed his life and allowed him to follow his dreams.

"Genevieve has put me in the news and kick started my career. I could not believe it when I won best actor at Tropfest that night. I could never have achieved this without Genevieve."

"With every movie I've made with Bus Stop, I have improved as an actor and learned so much. I know she believes in me and that gives me so much confidence!"

"The NDIS has also supported me in my acting journey - funding the Bus Stop Films course, assisting me to develop my goals, improve my speech and communication, and funding a support worker to help me travel for my acting."

Twenty-three year old Joni Campbell from Meadowbank has also seen numerous benefits from her involvement with the Bus Stop Film program which was funded by the NDIS; scoring an administration job at an international law firm as well as a coveted internship on ABC's Playschool.

"Being involved in Bus Stop Films has made me more confident and made me realise I can do things I didn't think I could. It's taught me that having a disability shouldn't define you or stand in the way of your hopes and dreams."

Joni, who has dreams of becoming a film director, was also able to attend the Toronto International Film Festival earlier this year with Genevieve where she participated in a Q and A session about Bus Stop Films and her life as someone with a disability.

"It was a fantastic week. We did so much and met so many industry professionals, and we even got to go to a pitch for Sesame Street which was amazing!"

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