Posted on:
29 August 2021

A mild intellectual disability hasn’t stopped Ballarat NDIS participant, Courtney McLelland from finding work.

Now, with the help of APM Employment Services, she’s conducting weekend tours at Ballarat’s Botanical Gardens.

The 20-year-old said she loves her new tour guide role, taking people around one of Australia’s most significant cool climate gardens, as she points out its collection of mature trees and marble statues, set amid a wealth of colourful garden bed displays.

“I just love it. It’s great to be out in nature; it’s nice talking to people, and mum is really proud of me,” she said.

Courtney’s APM Employment Services consultant, Matthew Bunning, said finding employment at the best of times is hard for anyone, let alone people with disability, but he was proud of Courtney for persisting and then securing her current role.

“Courtney is working for Access Guides, and she’s doing really well. It’s been great for her on so many levels, helping her to enhance her life skills and confidence,” he said.

“It’s enabled her to interact with others; she has responsibility, and it’s showing her she really does have the ability to do it.

“It’s also showing her having a job is about more than money. It gives you more control over your life, and it can improve your health and wellbeing.

Matthew said every week he touches base with Courtney to see how she’s going.

“I provide what we call ‘post placement support’ to ensure Courtney is happy, supported and doing well in her workplace, and if there’s anything else she would like to discuss,” he said.

“I really believe this role will open up so many doors for Courtney. It will give her confidence in public relations and in retail – any customer facing role, so going down this path and working as a tour guide has been hugely beneficial for her.”

Matthew said initially Courtney faced the same long wait for any call or email job reply and she received plenty of rejections just like anyone else in this tough pandemic environment.

“It was a bit of a long journey, and Courtney was finding it challenging not knowing where her next opportunity was coming from, but then the tour guide role came up,” he said.

“It gave Courtney the spark she needed. It really showed her there are opportunities out there, and although it took longer than expected due to covid restrictions, it was a great result in the end,” he said.

Courtney added she is so grateful for her NDIS plan and all the supports it’s provided.

“I also have great support from Connect (Courtney’s chosen disability support provider) and I’ve got a great team of workers who help me with my living needs,” she said.

“If I want to do some cooking they help me to follow the recipes, and if I need to go grocery shopping they help me with that too. It’s just so great to have all this support,” she said.

The NDIS provides Australians aged under 65, who have a permanent and significant disability with the supports they need to live more independently and to increase their social and economic participation.

The NDIS provides support to over 116,000 Victorians. Now, nationally, over 466,000 Australians are benefiting from the NDIS, including over 245,000 receiving support for the first time.

Related Stories and videos

NDIS participant, Gerry Groombridge of Kingston, who has a love for retail, has found his niche designing, making, marketing and selling products at Mosaic Support Services social enterprise, Made By Mosaic.

Gerry’s found his niche after learning the retail ropes

13 September 2021
Caleb is on his way to becoming an apprentice chef

Caleb ‘plates up’ career dream with NDIS support

27 August 2021
Her friendly disposition means she’s become popular with all the regulars

Amanda celebrates a year in mainstream employment

10 August 2022
More stories and videos