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It’s official, Sutton Grange NDIS participant Henry John is right where he wants to be, working for V/Line, Victoria’s largest regional train and bus network.

The 21-year-old, who has autism and who has overcome speech difficulties thanks to NDIS supports, is now working part-time as a station assistant at Bendigo railway station.

Much to the train enthusiasts delight he’s selling tickets, directing and assisting customers on and off trains, making station announcements and doing other general admin duties.

‘I can’t believe I’m finally working for V/Line. It’s a dream come true. It means I’m one step closer to my long-term employment goal to one day become a conductor,’ Henry said.

To get to this point Henry used his NDIS employment supports to engage Scott Mclarty, a career mentor from local disability employment provider Connecting Futures Australia.

It meant Scott could work with Henry to identify his strengths and skills, help build his confidence; connect him with young adults with similar interests to build his friendship groups and provide additional support to help him become independent and job ready.

‘I wouldn’t be where I am today without the NDIS and Scott’s support. Living with autism is challenging. After leaving school I realised I did need a bit more help than others,’ Henry said.

‘I had a really hard time applying for jobs or finding a job to get me to where I am today.

‘My speech was also a huge barrier, so my mum and stepfather helped me to get NDIS funding. It meant I could start looking around for employment support and speech therapy.

‘With employment this is where Scott came in. He worked with me one-on-one weekly. He helped me tweak my resume; showed me how to write a good cover letter and we did mock job interviews. We also worked on some life skills, like budgeting and cooking.’

Henry said Scott also supported him through an employment training program called BOUNCE to determine his level of work-readiness. It helped him to identify some of the barriers preventing him from achieving his employment goals, which he and Scott would work on.

‘BOUNCE helped to build my confidence and it also helped me to set clear goals about what I wanted to achieve,’ Henry said.

‘Scott also suggested I set long and short-term employment goals.

My short-term goal was to find a job to help me build my customer service skills and to earn and save some money.

‘Scott thought at job at a supermarket would be a good start.

He supported me to apply to Woolworths, then he helped me prepare for my interview.

A few days later I received an email to say I got the job. It felt so good. My parents were really proud of me.’

Working for Woolworths casually, Henry never lost sight of his long-term goal to work for V/Line.

While he did have experience as a railway volunteer, he knew he needed to continue to build his customer service skills so he would be well placed to apply for future V/Line roles.

Knowing Henry’s potential and still focused on supporting him work towards his long-term goal, Scott worked hard behind the scenes connecting with V/Line to discuss possible work experience.

After lengthy talks and an extensive assessment process Henry was granted a V/Line internship, working at Bendigo station 2 days a week over 6 weeks.

‘I was so excited. Everyone was so inclusive and supportive. I learnt a lot,’ he said.

Scott said Henry made ‘a lasting impression’ on all the staff he worked with
.
‘At the end of Henry’s internship he was presented with a certificate of achievement. It was such a great moment for him. He’s worked so hard. He really deserved it,’ Scott said.

Not long after Henry’s internship finished Henry said he saw an opening advertised for a local part-time service officer at Bendigo station. Henry applied and the rest is history.

‘I’m working 2 jobs I really enjoy and now I’m truly confident about my future,’ he said.

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