

JobQuest

Connecting People and Skills

Penrith Skills for Jobs Ltd

ABN 80 082 730 210



Annual Report 2020-2021

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JobQuest Mission

Through a client focused and community oriented approach,

JobQuest supports our clients to:

- Develop skills in a safe and healthy working environment
- Connect with each other
- Engage with the community
- Build strong networks
- Recognise and realise opportunities
- Develop their sense of belonging



Employee Gender Balance

JobQuest has an excellent gender balance with 100 females and 73 male employees.

Youth Programs are dominated by females and Employment/Property Services are dominated by males. The overall gender balance taking into account all reported positions is -



From: Workplace Gender Equality Agency report for Penrith Skills for Jobs T/A JobQuest

How we achieve our Mission

Employment Services

JobQuest runs property maintenance and cleaning units designed to provide transitional employment opportunities to enable people to gain skills to move on to more permanent work or operate their own small business. These operate in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains out of our Girraween office and in the Hunter out of our Newcastle office.

These services are offered to a range of customers including:

General public – fee for service

NDIS participants

- House cleaning and other household activities
- House and/or yard maintenance
- Skills development

Aged Care clients

- CHSP [Commonwealth Home Support Program] – Western Sydney only
- Home Care Packages
- Department of Veteran’s Affairs clients

Commercial contracts



Y o u t h P r o g r a m s



JobQuest Youth Programs are designed to provide alternative learning models for young people who are not engaged well or coping in mainstream education.

These programs assist young people to overcome some of life's hurdles and get on track to achieving their goals.

Some programs may be targeted to specific cohorts such as refugees or recent migrants and others to young jobseekers or young offenders.

T r a i n i n g

Participation in training is an excellent way for people to engage with others and their community. The development of new skills continues to be the key to finding a job and retaining that job as technological and other changes impact on our working communities.

Our Youth Programs link with our Training arm with a focus on employment skills and literacy and numeracy support for young people. This integration of our training with our other operations provides a more substantial and structured impact on the people who engage with our services.



O t h e r C o m m u n i t y P r o g r a m s



JobQuest provides a two-year, home-based, early learning and parenting program for families with young children.

It aims to provide a structured, education-focused early learning program at home to help prepare children for their participation in school learning.

The program is run in the Newcastle suburb of Windale.

Community Engagement

Community, heritage and connectedness are important to us at JobQuest. We deliver a range of programs to help build more cohesive and inclusive communities.

These programs are often found in areas with significant growth or with emerging or changing communities including new or expanding cultural groups.

Western and South Western Sydney and the Hunter are major areas targeted.

Many of our Youth Programs assist young students identified as being at risk of leaving school, usually due to having displayed anti-social behaviour. We also provide vocational skills programs in schools as an adjunct to academic learning.

Supporting these students to develop strong ties to each other and to the community at large has been one strategy for overcoming many of the obstacles faced by such students. In these programs the participants are encouraged to become involved in community outreach programs.

Some of examples of our community engagement strategies have been - organising a food drive for local homeless people, helping out at a women's crisis refuge, undertaking projects in aged care and child care facilities and undertaking work experience in charity organisations such as Ronald McDonald House and St Vincent de Paul stores.

These opportunities help participants to develop skills and confidence in themselves and create positive relationships with the people around them who come from many walks and stages of life, and often culturally diverse communities, especially in Western Sydney.

We work with migrant, refugee and other newly-arrived people in our regions who are also helped to develop employability skills that suit their new community environment.

Using interactive and fun activities JobQuest staff help participants develop their communication skills and engage in ongoing relationships with peers and others in order to build self-confidence and plan for a positive future.

Our school readiness program in Windale near Newcastle is another excellent example of community engagement as our program staff mentor the parents of young children in their homes, and at the centre, to assist their engagement and support of their child's early education.

Employment programs have always been a strong focus for JobQuest - hence the name. Our current strategy involves providing employment for disadvantaged people or those who have difficulty maintaining employment in our Social Enterprises. The employees can work providing cleaning or grounds maintenance services in our various communities. These services are provided to the aged under CHSP, Home Care Packages and Veterans Home Care and to people living with disability through the NDIS.

This part of our operation provides benefit to the employees and to the customers and clients of our services and is an important pillar of our community engagement strategies.

Our Training Services staff work with a wide range of people to develop skills for work. Our students may be school students, unemployed people wanting to enter the workforce, people undertaking traineeships, or people in the community wanting to undertake any of our various programs to help them prepare for work, learn about technology, increase their skills or just connect with others.

Chairman's Report

As the community opens up after nearly 2 years of fear, restrictions, lockdowns and serious impacts on people's health and livelihoods, we are thankful that we have weathered a storm like no other.

It seems now, that the worst is over, and some normality can be enjoyed as we move into Christmas time and a brighter new year ahead.

While JobQuest continued to operate during the pandemic and some services such as cleaning increased, there were impacts on our workers and those who use our services.

The efforts of our trainers, especially in the school's programs, to continue to deliver on-line where they could, was particularly well done, although numbers being down as not all students could or were willing to participate.

Further infrastructure funding from the NSW Department of Education, has helped us to be more efficient and effective by enabling technology updates at some of our sites. This has enhanced our on-line delivery capacity and our ability to provide professional printed learning materials to students at their homes during lockdown.

JobQuest continues to provide services to our elderly clients in Western Sydney under the Commonwealth Home Support Program and will do this until the current contract expires in June 2023. While some of our clients declined services during the lockdown, the opening up, the warm weather and Christmas approaching, will see a busy time ahead for those providing cleaning, yard and home maintenance and social support for our large number of elderly clients in both Sydney and the Hunter. These services are so important to our elders in assisting them to remain living in their own home as long as is possible and avoid going into residential care.

We continue to work with Plan Managers, NDIS, Aged Care, Rehabilitation, Job Active and Disability Employment Service Providers and many varied community organisations to ensure that people in the community who need our services are aware of and can access the services that we offer. Working in our communities with people and organisations is a strong element of the mission of JobQuest and integral to our success.

Our programs for both young and old continue to focus on digital awareness and skills for work, connectedness, learning and entertainment. As told in one of our stories this year connectedness through the lockdowns has been a major concern for many of our clients.

Another year of operating under difficult circumstances has again shown the resilience, adaptability, and loyalty of our workforce. I continue to be very proud to be the Chair of JobQuest and be associated with such a dedicated group of people across the sections and workforce of the organisation.

Our offices remained devoid of workers for much of the year, but our people adjusted and worked as well as they could from home. And many are now returning and relieved to be back.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to say thank you to every single employee, contractor and volunteer who has contributed to our success this year through your capacity to be flexible, your hard work and your commitment. I am sure our clients, students and customers appreciate the work that you do and the difference you make in their lives.

As usual we can demonstrate our impact on individuals through stories in this report to give insight into our operations and how we meet our mission with our clients, students, and customers. I recommend these stories to you.

In closing, I congratulate every worker, Ka and the senior management team, dealing with another year of adversity where so much was achieved by our outstanding organisation that continues to provide so much benefit to our communities.



Sydney Carr
Chairman of the Board – Penrith Skills for Jobs Inc

Brian's Story

For several years, Brian* has been on the receiving end of some “life changing” assistance around his home thanks to JobQuest.

Traditionally, that help has been in the form of general housekeeping and gardening. But more recently, Brian unexpectedly received support of a different kind – a profound act of kindness by JobQuest that continues to enhance his quality of life.

Brian lives with Multiple Sclerosis, a neurological disease that impacts his mobility. As a result, he is dependent on both his wheelchair and a rollator walking frame for support and stability. Fortunately, though, Brian's health hasn't dampened his enthusiasm to travel and he was excited for a train trip he had planned to regional NSW. But the day before departure, the enormity of single-handedly juggling his belongings while in a wheelchair hit him and Brian began to rethink his getaway.

“I couldn't work out how I was going to take my wheelchair, the walker and my carry bag,” he said. “I need my wheelchair to get around but I also need my walker because if I stay in the wheelchair too long, I get stiff. And I can't be without the walker because I'm not too stable.”

Ready to pull the pin on his trip, Brian shared his concerns with a JobQuest staff member who was visiting his home that day.

“I just said ‘I don't know how I'm going to do it’ and before I knew it, he worked out a way to make it happen.”

With some ingenuity, Brian's rollator was converted into a push trolley. An extendable handle acted as a push bar for Brian to propel the walker forward while seated in his wheelchair, and strapping was used to secure the luggage to the padded seat.

“Within half an hour he came back from Bunnings with some PVC pipe, a couple of elbows and he put it all together. We gave it a test run and it was just fantastic. The next day, off I went on the train,” a delighted Brian said.

“A number of people stopped me to say what a great idea. And it really was. It's basic but geez it's effective. It's amazing that something so simple has made a big difference.

“It has allowed me to be independent. I can go away by myself, and take my wheelchair and my walker and my things and not have to worry.”

Brian affectionately named the contraption the Mark Mobil, in honour of its maker.

“I've been to Coffs Harbour twice since then with it. It has made travelling alone possible. I don't have to bother anyone to come with me to push the walker for me,” he said.

“I made another one myself for my other walker using the same technique and I take that one when I go shopping. It's so manageable.”



* not his real name

Emma's Story

Emma* had been struggling with being engaged at school. Some days it was “too hard” but mostly she felt Year 11 was uninteresting and her classes were boring. She lacked emotional support at home and the challenges she was experiencing with her family exacerbated her disconnection from education. She had reached the point of wanting to drop out.

“I really didn't like it very much,” Emma said of high school. “I wasn't very interested at all.”

In a bid to help her take control of her life, Emma's school referred her to JobQuest to prepare her for the transition from school to employment. And Emma said she was keen to “take the opportunity”.

Although at school she was disengaged and disinterested, Emma approached the program with a real motivation to learn.

“The first thing I learned was how to write an email. That was the best thing,” she said, adding the social skills such as how to dress for the workplace and speak at an interview were also valuable.

Emma also set about identifying a career for herself. She eagerly joined JobQuest on a tour of her local TAFE, excited to learn about the pathway it would offer into the beauty industry. The visit was the inspiration she hoped for.

“I really wanted to do TAFE,” she said. “After I finished the program, I turned 17 which meant I could finally start TAFE.”

“I knew I wanted to do makeup. I have wanted to go into the beauty industry since I was 10 years old. It's something I have been really passionate about. It's my happy place.”

For a girl who speaks despondently of her school experience, Emma becomes cheerful and animated when talks about her future now that she is enrolled in the beauty therapy course. She even plans to extend her studies to gain a diploma.

“It's so different from school,” she explained. “Back when I was at school, I just went with the flow. I didn't care about my grades. It wasn't interesting me.”



“Then at JobQuest, I felt like I was getting somewhere. I enjoyed doing that.”

“Now that I'm in TAFE, I'm passionate and I want to do the work.”

“What's good is that the stuff I learned at JobQuest is helping me in TAFE.”

Emma said she had to distance herself from her family (“I do better when I'm away from them”) so the encouragement she received from JobQuest inspired her to remain on track and focussed.

Describing her growth since leaving school, joining JobQuest and enrolling at TAFE, Emma said: “I'm definitely more confident. I was confident before, but not like this. And I'd say hardworking. Maybe even outgoing.”

* not her real name

Irene's Story

Every week, Irene* will sit comfortably in her chair to read the latest articles from her favourite magazine using her iPhone. She also regularly uses her smartphone to keep abreast of matters related to her local committee and to read meeting agendas and reports.

But now reading has been made all the easier for Irene thanks to JobQuest and a government partnership that has given her and her husband Keith* access to a far more effective piece of technology to stay in communication with the outside world.

Irene and Keith received an iPad and they have discovered its larger screen is more practical than an iPhone. The elderly couple now have greater flexibility when it comes to connecting with family and friends.

“My wife is beyond wanting to use a computer,” said Keith, 82. “She was very much attached to her phone but magazines are hard to read on it. The iPad has been excellent for her.

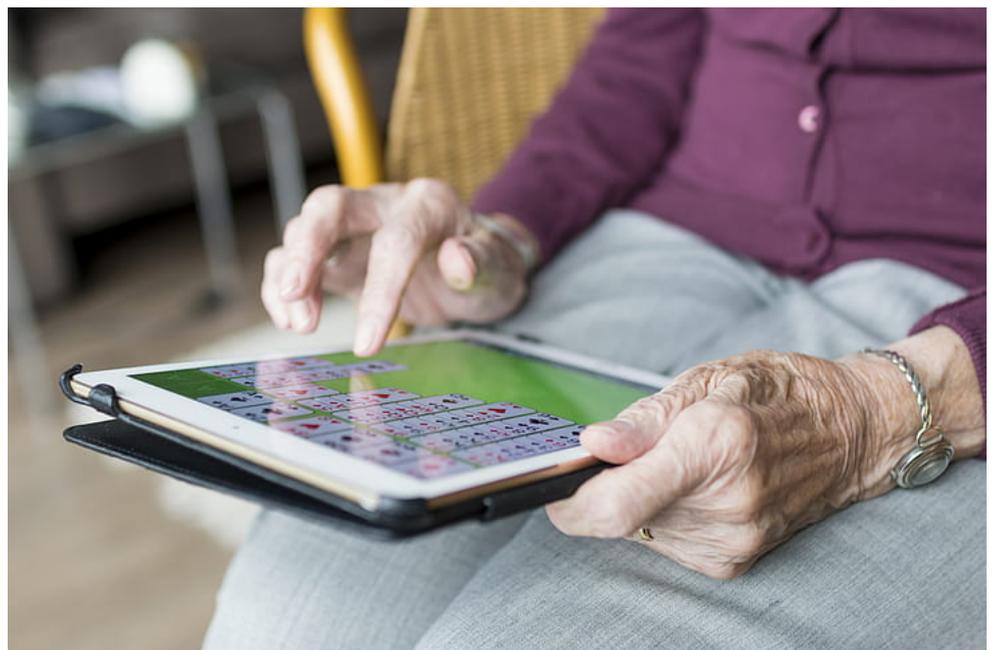
“A phone is wonderful because you have the world in your pocket all the time but this has brought an easier world to our lives.”

Crucially, the iPad has also helped the couple navigate being separated from their loved ones during the current health crisis.

“Communication these days with family is not as easy as it used to be,” Keith said.

The feeling of disconnect has been amplified by social distancing and lockdown restrictions, but the iPad has helped Keith and Irene bridge the pandemic divide. In the last six months since taking ownership of the device, Irene has become proficient in Zoom and regularly uses the platform to video chat with family and friends.

“It is the major communication tool for our wider family,” Keith said. “We have a scattering of family on the west coast, in Brisbane, and Melbourne. The iPad has brought a new communication dimension to our lives.”



** not their real names*

Tony's Story

For the most part of his life, Tony* has hidden his dyslexia. He would find different ways to conceal his reading and writing struggles and would compensate by using his vivaciousness to mask his literacy challenges.

When working as a manager of a ten-pin bowling alley north east of Newcastle, Tony said he would avoid writing emails or completing paperwork by surreptitiously having others do the work for him.

“Dyslexia put me behind the eight ball a little,” said Tony, 63. “But I was spoiled rotten with the best staff and I would just say ‘hey, can you do this for me?’.” The workers were none the wiser, he said.

But when the company closed down, Tony found himself unemployed. He enrolled in a JobQuest program to develop the digital literacy skills he knew he needed if he was to have any chance at re-employment and now Tony is on the path to success.

“What I wanted to do more than anything was learn how to operate a computer,” he said of his early goals. “I couldn’t write emails properly. My emails were all one sentence. There were no full stops and no commas from start to finish.”

Tony was introduced to spelling and grammar apps to aid with his dyslexia. By the end of the program, he was not only able to compose emails complete with punctuated sentences but

he gained other digital skills including graphic design and was able to create online presentations.

“I got so much out of it. In fact, I was upset when it finished,” he said.

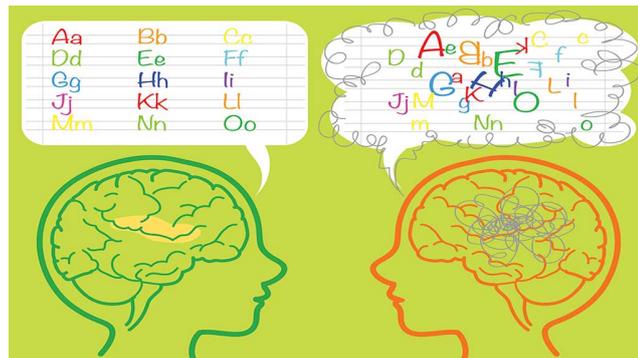
But the evolution of the Tony of old to the digitally capable man he is now wasn’t easy.

“There was a time at the start when I was ready to throw it all in,” he recalled. “I was getting so frustrated with myself. I just wasn’t getting it and I wanted to say ‘I can’t keep up so see you later’.”

But with some encouragement, Tony persisted.

“I told myself I’ll go back tomorrow and I will get it this time, even if I have to stay up all night,” he said.

“And eventually it got easier. I can’t praise the staff enough for their encouragement and patience.”



Tony said a fundraising project was an ideal opportunity to “use all those tools they taught us in class”, including writing emails to seek donations from local businesses for an online raffle. And the experience was “so worthwhile,” he said.

“For a bloke who didn’t know how to even open a computer, I had a go at it and now I just love it,” he said. “I do everything on the computer now.”

* not his real name

Amanda's Story

When Amanda* told her mum she had lost interest in school and wanted to quit her Year 10 studies, understandably her mother was fraught with worry. She was concerned for Amanda's future and anxious about the sort of job – if any - she would be able to obtain with no qualifications.

But Amanda had made up her mind.

“I understand everyone needs some sort of education but sitting in a classroom all day, the environment, the people ... it wasn't for me,” Amanda explained. “I was getting in trouble and I was just wasting my time.”

When a teacher at Amanda's south west Sydney school recommended that she attend a JobQuest program to help her receive the employability skills she needed to find meaningful work, the 16-year-old excitedly embraced the opportunity – and so too did her mum.

“Mum loved the idea but I think it was also because she could see I was so interested and for the first time I was motivated to do something whereas at school I was down all the time,” Amanda said.

“I didn't know what sort of job I wanted to get into. I just knew I didn't want to be at school. But I did like being in a routine and going every week. I think it changed me as a person. I see things differently now. I don't just sit around at home all day. It helped get me motivated and I feel much more independent.”

It wasn't all smooth sailing for Amanda, despite having her mother's support. Her struggles with anxiety cut short her work experience and foiled a potential job opportunity. Fortunately, that didn't spoil her energy to succeed, and Amanda dusted herself off in search of another prospect.

“I don't like change personally but I'm getting better at trying different things,” Amanda said, adding the work experience gave her a taste of ‘the real world’ and taught her she was capable.

“It was a good experience, and I was good at it too. They were really impressed with me which was really good.

“It taught me to see the bigger picture. I think that's how I've changed most through JobQuest, I'm more mature and more aware.

“I got to use all the skills I learned like sending emails, answering calls, talking to people. I really enjoyed it.

“I may not have got a job out of it yet but I got so much more, I think.

And right now, I have a few options for work in business admin that I'm looking at. I feel like I'm setting myself up.”



* not her real name

Annual Compliance Report

JobQuest's operations are carried out within 4 quality frameworks which enable our customers to be assured that our services remain at the highest quality. In order to meet the required standards of operation, continuous improvement is embedded into everything we do. The 4 quality frameworks are:

- ISO 45001:2018 Work Health and Safety Management Systems
- National Standards for Registered Training Organisations
- Aged Care Standards – Home Care
- National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] Practise Standards

WORK HEALTH & SAFETY

In August this year we were successfully audited completed against the “new” standard ISO450001. The result was excellent with only some minor observations recorded.

AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALITY AUTHORITY

The RTO staff have completed some major work in moving learning to on-line formats and moving to fully electronic administration and records systems. Continuous monitoring against the RTO standards assists those involved in training to ensure that each student's journey with JobQuest meets with their satisfaction and results in their desired achievement. New RTO positions now in place will take on specific responsibilities for various training operations.

AGED CARE QUALITY AGENCY

JobQuest has not been subject to an assessment from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission or sometime but we continue to monitor our systems and services against the Aged Care Standards to ensure that our elderly clients receive services of the highest standard.

NDIS PRACTICE STANDARDS

JobQuest successfully completed our surveillance audit against the NDIS Practice Standards and continues to monitor the quality of our services for our NDIS participants. The introduction of a new Emergency and Disaster Management practice standard relevant to JobQuest will require some upgrading of our systems prior to the due date for compliance in January 2022.

Last year we reported on the Continuous Professional Development Program whereby programs that have been previously delivered face to face or through handouts are accessed by workers on-line. Covid and worker shortages has hampered the roll out of these programs, particularly in Western Sydney so badly impacted by the spread of the disease. However there have been many modules completed across all cohorts of workers.

Community Partners

JobQuest would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the support of our partners who assist us every step of our way. For all the in-kind support as well as funding and grants, we would like to thank:

365Care	Kincare	Our Lady of Consolation
Ability Hub	Greek Welfare Centre	Pacific Link Housing
Ability Options	Gotcha 4 Life	Penrith City Council
Australian Chinese Community	Hammondcare	Peppercorn Services Inc (Hawkesbury Leisure & Learning Centre)
ADRA - Cessnock	Hawkesbury City Council	Probus: Rutherford, Metford
Anglicare	Hawkesbury Hospital	Premium Strategies
Anglican Parish of Telarah - Rutherford	Hawksbury Skills Inc	RFBI Masonic Villages - Cessnock and Kurri
Annecto	Housing NSW	Ronald McDonald House - Newcastle, Sydney
APM [Advance Personnel Management] - Penrith, St Marys, Mt Druitt	International Child Care College	Schools Industry Partnership
Baptist Care Services	Joblink Plus - Cessnock and Kurri	Sunnyfield
Break Thru People Solutions	Juvenile Justice NSW	Skilling and Employment – Jordan Springs and Ropes Crossing
Barnardos	Lake Macquarie City Council	Sydwest Multicultural Services
Brotherhood of St Lawrence	Lifeline - Maitland, Raymond Terrace, Hamilton	St Simeon
Care Connect	Live Well at Home	TAFE NSW
Castle Personnel	Living Care, Ashwood Residential Care and Green Hills Residential Care Services	Taronga Zoo
Catholic Education Office	Local Government Training Institute	The Art Gallery of New South Wales
City of Parramatta Council	Mai Wel Maitland and Cessnock	The Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre
Cessnock Leagues Club	Matchworks - Blacktown, Penrith, St Marys, Mt Druitt	The Hills Shire Council
Cessnock Men's Shed	My Home Care	The Mount Druitt Hub, Blacktown City Council
Cwth Attorney General's Department	Milabah - Schools as Community Centre	The Parliament of New South Wales
Commonwealth Department of Defence	Museum of Contemporary Art [MCA]	The Place: Charlestown Community Centre
Cwth Dept of Immigration and Border Protection	Newcastle City Council	Training Services NSW
Cwth Department of Jobs and Small Business	North St Marys Neighbourhood Centre	Uniting
Cwth Department of Social Services	North West Disability Services, The Secret Garden & Nursery	Ventia
Community Migrant Resource Centre	Northcott	Wellman Strata
Corporate Partners	NSW Department of Education	Western Sydney University
Dungog Neighbour Care	NSW Department of Family and Community Services	Western Sydney Zoo
EMPOWERability Inc	NSW Department of Health	Westmead Children's Hospital
Event Cinemas Kotara and Glendale	NSW Department of Primary Industries	WISE Employment
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre	Matchworks - Blacktown, Penrith, St Marys, Mt Druitt	Workskil - Cessnock
Forsythes Training - Newcastle	NSW State Debt Recovery Office	YourTown - Mt Druitt, Blacktown

Special thanks to all our partnering high schools and public schools. Your dedication and resourcefulness are an inspiration both to our participants and our staff, particularly in such as challenging year.

JobQuest also acknowledges the assistance from our peak bodies including Community Colleges Australia, Waste Management Association of Australia, Aged and Community Services Australia, National Disability Service, Social Traders, Hunter Region Apprenticeship and Traineeship Committee, the Western Sydney Community Forum, the Blue Mountains Interagency and many local Chamber of Commerce organisations.

As member, JobQuest continues to find their support invaluable.



CHSP client Mrs Patricia Travis with her beautiful arrangement, on our flower and succulent day at Girraween

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