



Media Release

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International Day of People with Disability 2007

Did you know that 1 in 5 people in Australia have a disability? They are our family, friends, workmates and people we meet every day.

International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) is an official day declared by the United Nations to celebrate the achievements of people with a disability. It is celebrated annually on 3 December.

This year's theme, determined by the United Nations, is "Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities."

Horizon Foundation won an Australia Day Award at the start of 2007. The organisation is a Redlands-based success story where 33 people with disabilities are employed in two business services: Marketforce Mailing and Finishing Service, and Wire and Wood Products.

President, Albert Benfer, says that Horizon strongly believes in the importance of work for people with disabilities, and is considered a 'best practice' leader in this area.

"It's one of the core principles we were founded on, 25 years ago," he said.

"The United Nation's theme for IDPwD 2007 is about the right to 'decent work'. We advocate that work for people with disabilities should be fulfilling, rewarding, meaningful and paid fairly."

"Sadly, there are many countries where people with disabilities suffer terrible employment discrimination and a lack of opportunities. In Australia, organisations like Horizon have made much progress in recent years towards the creation of jobs for people with disabilities, and better community awareness that people with disabilities make great employees," Mr Benfer said.

Manager of Horizon Business Services, Nathan Grima, says that the organisation strives to give employees a fair wage for a fair day's work.

"We use the Supported Wage System, which is amongst the highest of the payment systems within the disability field. It is totally productivity-based and it results in higher wages for our employees," he explained.

"We also place a high importance on regular team activities. We have a very active employee social club. Employees also get rewarded based on highly profitable months - examples in the past have been going out to lunch, and spending a day at Movieworld," he said.

Nathan says that Horizon has some of the hardest-working staff he's ever worked with.

"Many employees have made huge achievements. One that stands out is Darren Simpkin, who works

at Wire and Wood Products. When he started he'd never held a hammer. Now Darren can make every timber product that we manufacture. He uses complex machinery like a docking saw, and he even personalises jigs to make it easier for other employees to use."

"Darren's on-the-job skills and his own confidence has improved out of sight since working here," Nathan said.

17,500 Australians currently work in supported business services.

For information about Horizon Foundation call 3245 4266, horizon@horizoninc.org

International Day of People with Disabilities website is www.idpwd.com.au

People with Disabilities: Facts and Figures

'Disability', as it relates to 20% of Australia's population (ABS), is defined as a limitation, restriction or impairment which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities. It encompasses mental health, sensory, physical and intellectual disabilities.

The United Nations states that "in most countries up to 80% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed."

In Australia, labour force participation rates are estimated as:

- 81.4% for people without any form of disability
- 65% for people with disability excluding those with profound or severe core limitation
- 32.7% for people with a profound or severe core activity limitation

(Labour force figures sourced from Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2007, Report on Government Services 2007, Productivity Commission)

IDPwD Events in the Redlands

Horizon Foundation received a Redlands Shire Council Community Development Grant to coordinate 2007 IDPWD activities in Redlands district. Call 3245 4266 for more details, and please show your support in making these two events a success:

1. Saturday 1 December - Horizon Foundation Glamour Ball, Celebrating International Day of People with Disability. Venue is Thornlands State School Hall. Tickets cost \$25 and include dinner. RSVPs are essential.
2. Monday 3 December – "Redlands Disability Mini Expo" at Capalaba Central Shopping Centre. 9.30am to 3pm. Come in for information on disability services, a photo display, and showbag giveaways.

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