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Disability workforce boosted by innovative new partnership

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PEOPLE with disability in South West Sydney now have access to an innovative path towards securing sustainable employment.

Social enterprise Jigsaw has announced it has partnered with leading western Sydney provider Macarthur Disability Services (MDS), to bring Jigsaw's unique prepare for work, through work model to the region.

MDS is set to open its "Livelihood, empowered by Jigsaw" hub in South West Sydney, incorporating Jigsaw's three stage 'pathway to employment' model of training and work experience, award wage employment in a social business, followed by transition to open employment.

Jigsaw CEO Paul Brown said: "Working-age Australians with disability have a lower rate of employment (48%) than those without disability (80%)]. This is simply not good enough.

"Our vision is an Australia in which people with disability are fully included in the workforce, which is why we've developed an alternative model to employment that is highly effective in linking the right person with disability to the right job and improving long-term employment outcomes.

"We created Jigsaw to drive systemic change in the sector. Our model has been designed to be scalable and replicated by other employment services, to create even greater impact.

"That's why we're excited to be taking the next step in our growth with the formation of this partnership with MDS, a well-respected provider who is keen to bring the benefits of the Jigsaw model to their community."

Since 2014, Jigsaw has supported more than 1000 people with disabilities on their pathway to mainstream employment at award wage.

Of those employed or transitioned into employment by Jigsaw, 91 per cent retain their position to this day.

Jigsaw's model is outperforming existing disability employment models, namely the Government's Disability Employment Services system which sees 70% of people with disability unemployed again after just three months in a job. 2

MDS CEO Jeff Scobie said: "Working with our community, we identified a need for more innovative approaches to employment. Having watched people with disability successfully use the Jigsaw model to achieve their employment goals, and witnessing Jigsaw's social enterprise in Frenchs Forest in action, we are really pleased to enter this partnership and open Livelihood."

"It is encouraging to already have so much interest in Livelihood from the community, businesses and government.

"There is a feeling of great enthusiasm to be opening and offering real award wage-based jobs for people with disability in South Western Sydney.

"We look forward to opening initially in our Head Office in Campbelltown."

The Jigsaw model sees candidates through a comprehensive workplace-based training program focused on soft, transferable skills to get them work-ready.

Candidates receive paid professional experience and are then supported to find long-term mainstream employment with a disability-confident employer in a role that matches their skills and interests.

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