

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



Sunday, 21 March 2021

HELPING PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME TO GET WORK READY

Minister for Employment Jaala Pulford has congratulated the first participants of Impact21's job-training program at a Federation Square graduation ceremony on World Down Syndrome Day.

The Andrews Labor Government is investing \$1.27 million in Impact21's Intellectual Disability Employment Program after a successful pilot program. The second intake of 16 participants will shortly begin an inclusive post-secondary school program to gain work readiness skills and meaningful employment.

Shea Macdonough is one of the 12 graduates of the pilot program and a proud advocate for people with a disability. Through the program she has become a vivacious and diligent professional and a valued employee at JB Hi-Fi.

Impact21 is a unique employer-driven program that leads to meaningful and matched employment for Victorian employers and young adults living with Down syndrome.

Co-designed with large-scale employer partners DuluxGroup, PwC, JB Hi-Fi, Sodexo and Deakin University, the program is building work-ready graduates with industry relevant skills, confidence, independence and social connectedness. The program also transitions graduates into customised jobs.

The partnership with Torrens University provides participants with an inclusive learning environment amongst peers for personal and skill development in year one, while the second year provides on-the-job learning and ongoing support and professional development.

Impact21 builds the readiness of employers so they are confident and capable in sustaining a diverse workforce. Employers that sign up to the program, no matter where they are in Victoria, will benefit from tailored Inclusion Training.

The unemployment rate for people living with a disability is about three times higher than the average unemployment rate in Victoria, with entrenched beliefs among some employers limiting work opportunities.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Employment Jaala Pulford

"We're determined to ensure young people living with Down syndrome are supported into meaningful employment."

"We know that Victorians living with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities face extra barriers to gaining employment and that's why we're giving them the extra help that they need to get into good jobs."

Quotes attributable to Inclusion Foundation chief executive Cate Sayers

"We're calling on employers to be part of this successful program that creates real jobs for real people wanting to earn real wages. We'll work with you to make sure that your workplace is ready."

"Our employers value and include our Impact21 graduates as they would any other employee and we want more employers to benefit and include these incredible young people as part of their team."

Quotes attributable to Shea Macdonough

"I really love working at JB HiFi because I have great friends, I'm a member of the team and I do important work."

"I love having independence, getting paid, being a team member and helping customers. I work in the DVD section which is awesome because I have a real passion for movies."

Media contact: Shaun Phillips 0407 553 763 | Shaun.Phillips@minstaff.vic.gov.au