



Advance  
Personnel

Quality  
Employment  
Support

# Annual Report

10–11

# MISSION STATEMENT

“To offer quality employment services to eligible people, in a non discriminatory manner in respect of age, race, culture, religion or disability”

## Advance Personnel

Advance Personnel has been assisting people to pursue careers, obtain jobs and maintain employment since 1989 and believe that we provide a quality service based on each person's individual employment needs. We are in our 22nd year of providing employment assistance to people with disability and to employers.

### WHERE DO WE OPERATE?

Our office is situated in the Woden Town Centre – we assist people who are living and/or working all over Canberra and Queanbeyan.

### WHAT IS OUR FUNDING STRUCTURE AND CORE ELIGIBILITY?

The Australian Government funds a range of employment and employment related services.

Advance Personnel is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and is a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider.

We currently provide services under the 'Employment Support Service' program which means we assist job seekers with permanent disability who have been assessed as requiring long-term, regular support in the workplace.

#### **Basic eligibility requirements for DES is that a person:**

is able to work at least 8 – 10 hours per week;

is not receiving employment assistance from another Government funded employment agency;

is not currently working more than 8 hours per week and meets the basic disability criteria (as set by Government Guidelines)

How can Job Seekers or Workers access our service?

Regardless of how people access Advance Personnel, our aim is for everyone to be provided with the highest level of quality assistance. This assistance is based on individual needs and is regularly negotiated with each person as requirements change.

There are 4 pathways to registering with Advance Personnel:

#### **Direct Referral**

The majority of people registering with Advance Personnel contact us directly. At this initial contact, a staff member will discuss eligibility and assist the person to make the required connections. Job seekers require a current Job Capacity Assessment; if necessary this can be arranged through Advance Personnel or Centrelink.

#### **Centrelink Referral**

Job seekers may also be referred to Advance Personnel following a Job Capacity Assessment (this is usually organised by Centrelink) where it has been determined that the person has disability and will most likely require on-going support to find and keep a job.

#### **Eligible School Leaver**

School Leavers who meet the eligibility criteria are also able to access employment assistance (often without having to have a Job Capacity Assessment)

#### **Job in Jeopardy**

The final way of accessing Advance Personnel is if a person with disability is already working and they are at risk of losing their job if they don't receive some additional assistance (this can be arranged through either the worker or the employer directly). The person does not need to have a Job Capacity Assessment to be eligible in this situation.

## WHAT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE?

### Job Seekers and Workers

Advance Personnel offers a range of employment assistance options for job seekers and workers: Registration and Referral, Employment Preparation, Job Search and Employment Support.

To assist individuals progress from Intake to Independent Employment there are a variety of activities and services that are offered to people as they move through our programs and these are undertaken as required:

- Developing a resume
- Designing an individual action plan
- Undertaking career counselling
- Identifying realistic job options
- Assistance with Centrelink and accessing other agencies
- Assisting with self-development activities
- Being a part of intensive job searching programs
- Receiving assistance with applications
- Support for job interviews
- Participating in a vocational placement
- Accessing employment assistance
- Access to various Government Schemes (e.g. Supported Wages, Workplace Modifications, Auslan for Employment)
- Confirming job details (job negotiation and wage monitoring)
- Receiving training and support (on-the-job)
- Accessing advice and support (off-the-job)
- Referring to community services for support as required
- Reducing support to assist with independence if appropriate

### Employers

There are a range of services tailored to meet the needs of employers including:

- Advance Personnel individually job searches to match a person with a job. The Job Search team will investigate the business requirements and match a suitable employee to meet the employer's needs. Advance Personnel primarily assists people with disability who are capable of achieving award wage employment with support. Our goal is to assist the employee to become as independent as possible and maintain productive employment
- we provide on-the-job training when the new employee commences work. The length and manner of support is negotiated with the employer and the new employee, and is individualised to suit each person
- we can provide assistance in preparing detailed duty statements
- we can provide advisory support on disability to the employer and the workplace
- when new duties are introduced, re-training and ongoing support is available to the employee
- regular contact is maintained with the supervisor and the employee to discuss work performance and/or productivity, changed duties, workplace change and job transfers.

Advance Personnel is committed to ensuring that each individual with disability has the opportunity to participate fully in our community and is encouraged to realise their full potential.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Graeme Howieson, Chairperson

David Doherty, Treasurer

Janet Rickwood, Secretary  
(resigned 30th June 2011)

## BOARD MEMBERS

Sam Webster

Gillian Marsh

Sue Salthouse

Lara Radik

Peter Hoefler

Lesley Richards

## ADVANCE PERSONNEL STAFF

(as at 30th June 2011)

Kerrie Langford, CEO

Karen Pennell, Operations Manager

Naomi Hales, Office Manager

Erin Kelly, Customer Service/  
Administrative Officer

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Sonia Wickham, Program Manager

Charles Wood, Senior Employment Consultant

Jenny Sturgess, Senior Employment Consultant

Heather Irons

Stephen Baker

Jennifer Anderson

Petra Kallay

Megan Hartney

Lisa Cass

Daniel Keen

Adam Gooley

Emma Bonehill

Vicky Dockery

Deb Hayes

Shobha Varkey

## JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

Leanne Alexander, Program Manager

Alison Barton

Shea Hanson

Nathan Canizares

Nicole O'Hallaran

Linh Tran

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This has been another year of outstanding growth for Advance Personnel in many areas. Our active participant numbers increased by 22% combined with a 36% increase in employment opportunities obtained for people with a disability. Along with this growth we saw a further increase in our annual income.

A number of new positions were developed to assist with this growth, in particular additional Employment Consultants were appointed and our Senior Employment Consultants numbers were increased. In all we have increased staffing levels by over 20%. These increases in staffing levels and activity have predicated the establishment of an HR Management role and further admin resources.

Staff training has been a major focus during the year ensuring that staff perform effectively and they extend their skills in a way that is beneficial to them as well as Advance Personnel. Opportunities provided, both accredited and non accredited, include:

- Marketing
- Certificate IV Employment Services
- Duty of Care
- Occupational Health and Safety
- New 3rd party database
- Mental Health

The Board has been very involved during the year with a number of policy reviews being carried out including Workforce Diversity, Duty of Care as well as Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing. A Working Group reviewed our Risk Management Plan. Several other documents and issues were reviewed and examined during the year. Many thanks to my fellow Board members who all participated in this work.

Advance Personnel has endorsed the need for a National Disability Insurance Scheme and has participated in the campaign in a number of ways including:

- Letters and information to all stakeholders connected to Advance personnel
- Sponsorship
- Attendance at a number of forums with feedback to the Productivity Commission

We have responded to the draft report issued by the Productivity Commission in February.

Our excellent performance in meeting the Disability Services Standards has continued with this years audit resulting in a totally clean bill of health. Congratulations to all our staff who through their combined efforts maintain this excellent performance. I would also like to thank management and staff for applying themselves so diligently to maintaining our high star rating performance as reported by DEEWR.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow board members for their strong support over this year and the many years past. Also a hearty thanks to Kerrie, our CEO, and her senior management team for providing such excellent support for the Board and guidance to Advance Personnel.

**Graeme Howieson**  
Board Chair.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Advance has had a 22% increase in active participants(job seekers) for 2010-11. This increase was a result of changes to Australian Government policy on Disability Employment Services from March 2010. Staff numbers have increased by 20% to deliver services to active participants.

New *Jobready* software has been installed to assist staff to meet the Department of Education, Employment and Working Relations program management requirements.

A new information technology provider was appointed.

ACT Portable Long Service Leave legislation came into effect which provides for access to long service leave after five years continuous service. Long service leave provisions have been adjusted to reflect the legislation.

I thank the Chief Executive Officer, Advance Personnel staff and my fellow board members for their assistance in ensuring the treasurer's role was properly discharged in 2010-11.

**David Doherty FCPA**  
Honorary Treasurer

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The programs within Employment Services are designed to best meet individual employment needs.

Two teams sit within Employment Services;

## 1. REGISTRATION AND REFERRAL

## 2. EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

## REGISTRATION AND REFERRAL

*The purpose of the Registration and Referral program is to determine an applicant's eligibility and establish how Advance Personnel can best meet each individual's employment needs; referring to alternative or additional services as required.*

The number of people registering with Advance Personnel continues to grow with 168 people commencing with the service in 2010-2011. This is due to Disability Employment Services (DES) delivering a demand driven program. People are connected with Advance Personnel either as a volunteer (choosing to access the service) or as a job seeker with participation requirements (required to participate as part of their income support payment activity).

Jobseekers are assisted by Advance Personnel's Registration and Referral team to access the most appropriate services. Initial contact and assessment commences prior to registering with the service. This ensures people who would like to work are able to fully participate in an Employment Assistance program that recognises their individual needs and employment aspirations. This support continues after commencement by identifying the person's needs and referring/linking them to both internal and external programs such as training courses, counselling, vocational placements and job searching programs.

### Referral

People access Advance Personnel's services through number of avenues:

- Centrelink Referral, and
- Direct Referral

The direct referral pathway accounts for a large number of people accessing our services. The referral sources are broad and diverse.

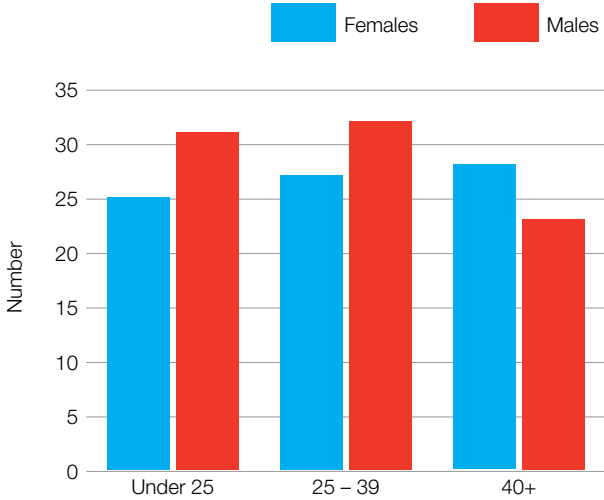
Referral sources 2010-2011:

- Community Organisations
- Schools (Government and Private)
- Expo (Queanbeyan, Youth Week and Post School)
- Self, Family and Friend networks
- Employers
- Pilot traineeships
- Previously registered
- Yellow pages, signage, webpage
- Other DES providers
- Registered Training Organisations

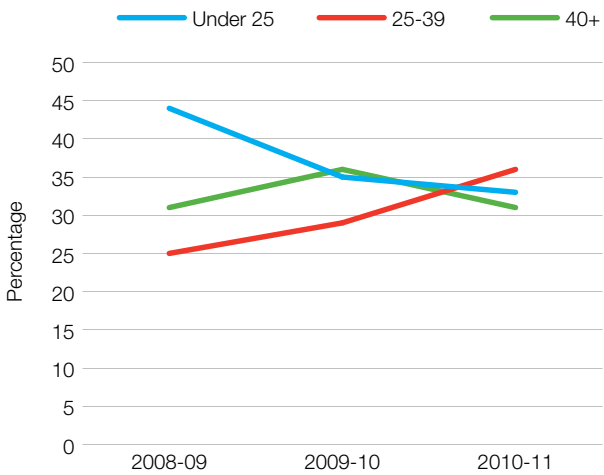
It needs to be noted that people accessing our services through direct referral are more likely to successfully achieve an employment outcome.

## Demographics of New Registrations:

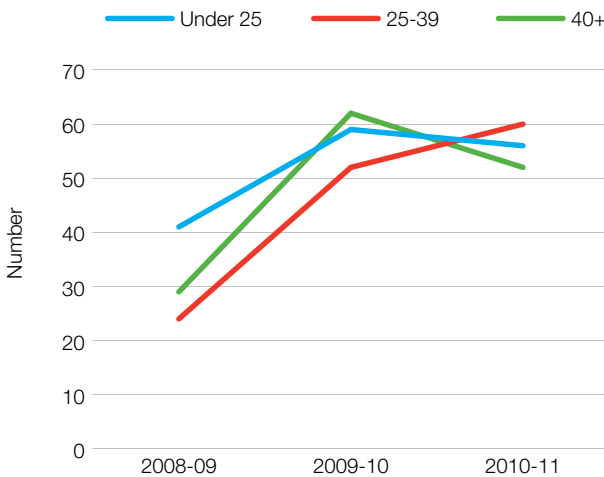
By Gender Graph 1



Percentage by age Graph 2



Number by age Graph 3



There was a noted increase in the number of women accessing our services in the 40+ age bracket (see graph 1). This is due to changes in Government policy with a greater emphasis on encouraging women of school age children to return to work; and the review of the eligibility criteria for the Disability Support Pension

### By age

Prior to the uncapping of the disability employment program, 45% of new registrations were predominately people under the age 25. (see graph2). After the program was uncapped, the number of new registrations increased by 85%. This increase in percentage did not translate directly to the people under 25, in fact only attributed to a 10.5% increase in this age bracket (see graph 3).

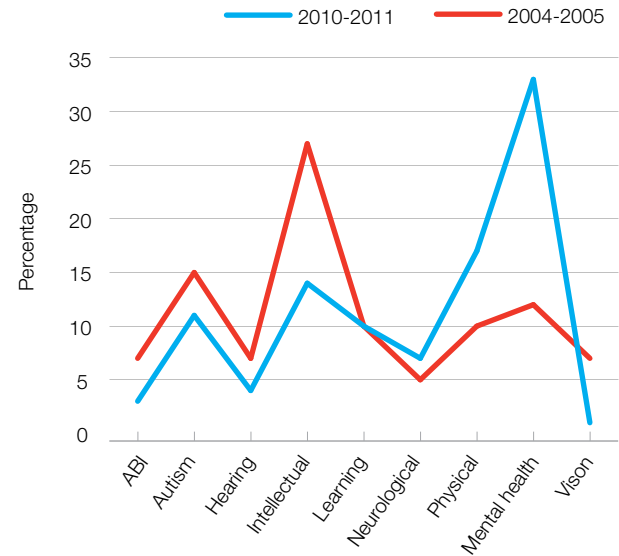
We have concluded that this is due to a number of reasons:

- Most new referrals under 25 are Eligible School Leavers- there has been a negligible increase in the number of school leavers with disability in the ACT
- For a number of years we have maintained close links with the schools and colleges (as have most of the Disability Employment Services), and most people likely to access our services are identified before they leave the education system
- The number of people in the age brackets over 25 years of age, has been identified by Government as priority, and in response to this policy changes have been implemented to encourage greater participation in employment for this cohort of people, hence the increase

### DISABILITY TYPE

Throughout the maturing of Advance Personnel we have expanded our service delivery model to support people with a broader range of disability types, most specifically people living with mental illness. From 2004 the percentage rate of people registering with a primary disability listed as mental illness has increased by 30%. This is reflective of the current acknowledgement by Government and the medical profession that mental illness is the fastest growing disability in Australia.

Disability Type Graph 4



## EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

This year Employment Preparation activities have been provided by both the Employment Services and Job Placement Services teams. The format of employment preparation is determined by the individual needs of the job seeker and is comprised of a mixture of formal and informal activities.

### Internal Group Employment Preparation Sessions

Group Employment Preparation Sessions are held on a regular basis and are delivered by staff in house. The content varies and is structured around the needs of the individuals within the Employment Assistance Phase. This year we delivered the following sessions:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Effective Workplace Communication
- Stress Management
- Health and Wellbeing
- Goal setting
- Money Management

### External Training courses

We have developed a number of close links to Registered Training Organisations who provided Advance Personnel with regular information on accredited courses they are conducting. This year job seekers participated in a number of different courses, including but not limited to:

- CMA – Work Preparation and IT Courses
- Capital Careers – Administration courses
- Royal Life Saving Society – First Aid course
- Canberra Institute of Technology – Beauty Therapy, Administration, Horticulture, Floristry, Disability, English, Childcare, Communication, Media, Lab technician
- White Card accreditation

### Road Ready

Road Ready is a fully supported intensive course aimed at assisting people to develop knowledge of the ACT Road Rules. At the completion of the training, each participant undertakes a knowledge test and if successful can apply to Roads Transport Authority to obtain their Learn to Drive Permit.

Advance Personnel continues to offer access to Road Ready to all job seekers and workers expressing an interest. We currently offer the course in both group and individual settings depending on the needs of the individual.

This year 23 people participated in the Road Ready Course, with 22 successfully passing the knowledge test.

## INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

Advance Personnel continues to provide a number of informal activities based on the requirements of each individual. These include:

- Vocational Placements
- Career Counselling/ New Directions
- Industry Profiling
- Travel Training

These activities are aimed at increasing each individual's confidence and employability skills.

# EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

*The Employment Support Program is designed to assist workers (and the work place) with initial training, employment support (on-going support) and independent/intermittent worker assistance.*

There was an average of 191 workers (up from 148 in the last financial year) assisted per month in the Employment Support program.

Types of assistance provided in the Employment Support program included both on and off the job support. Some of the activities undertaken include:

- task analysis
- moral support
- debriefing
- monitoring appropriate work place behaviour
- understanding workplace requirements
- discussing effective communication in the workplace
- maintaining required standards of productivity
- preparing for assessments (Ongoing Support Assessments 'OSA', Supported wage, appraisals)
- career development opportunities
- investigating training and education options
- assistance with negotiating workplace modifications
- making referrals (counsellors, doctors, external support agencies and community organisations).

The support type and manner it is provided is individualised to meet the needs of the employee, the employer and the workplace.

## ONGOING SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS

Ongoing Support Assessments (OSA) are undertaken on an annual basis 52 weeks after a person has commenced employment, if they require ongoing support.

The assessment is conducted by an external assessor, who will review evidence collated over the previous year and determine the level of ongoing support an individual may require to maintain their employment.

The assessed level of support will result in one of the 4 listed categories:

- High support (average of 12 contacts over 3 months)
- Moderate support (average of 6 contacts over 3 months)
- Flexible support (as required)
- Exit as an independent worker

During the past financial year 136 assessments were conducted. It was noted that the number of people assessed as requiring high ongoing support and moderate support continues to decline (reduced by 10% and 15% respectively) whilst the number of people requiring flexible support has increased by 49%.

## JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

### JOB SEARCH

The Job Search phase is a focused, intensive program, aimed at assisting participants to achieve employment directly reflecting their individual skills, abilities and choice.

This year over 200 job seekers were supported in the Job Search Program. The Job Placement Services team also assisted with career development opportunities for job seekers supported in Employment Services. This assistance varied from writing applications and selection criteria, supporting interviews, negotiating with employers, to renegotiating contractual arrangements.

### STATISTICS

- Jobs negotiated: 134 for 128 job seekers (36% from 2009-10)
- 6 job seekers secured 2 positions
- 828 Telemarketing calls on behalf of job seekers
- 673 applications submitted (40% from 2009-10)
- 177 Interviews attended (8% from 2009-10)
- 102 Selection Criteria completed
- Over 700 hrs cold calling undertaken
- 1191 Resumes submitted

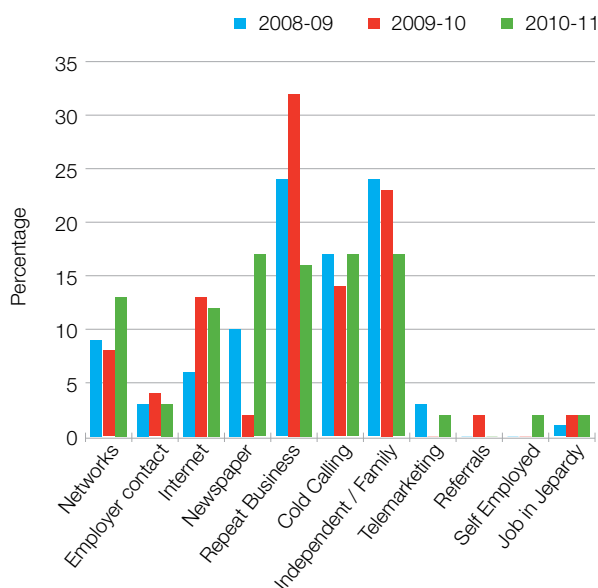
### SOURCING OF JOBS:

Employment consultants employ a number of different methods in assisting job seekers to attain employment. Cold Calling, Repeat Business, Networking and Independent job search continue to be the most successful sources in locating positions (see graph 5 below). It was noted this year that there was a significant increase in the number of positions attained through the newspaper; this can be attributed to seven (7) contract positions advertised in the Canberra Times for the new Centrelink Scanning Centre.

A significant amount of time is spent with job seekers discussing effective and appropriate job searching strategies during the initial phase of the Job Search Program. This support is aimed at assisting job seekers to develop skills to independently job search.

Job seekers who become self employed require assistance in setting up their own business. This assistance varies from attaining Australian Business Numbers (ABN) to negotiating contracts with Franchises.

Sourcing of Jobs Graph 5

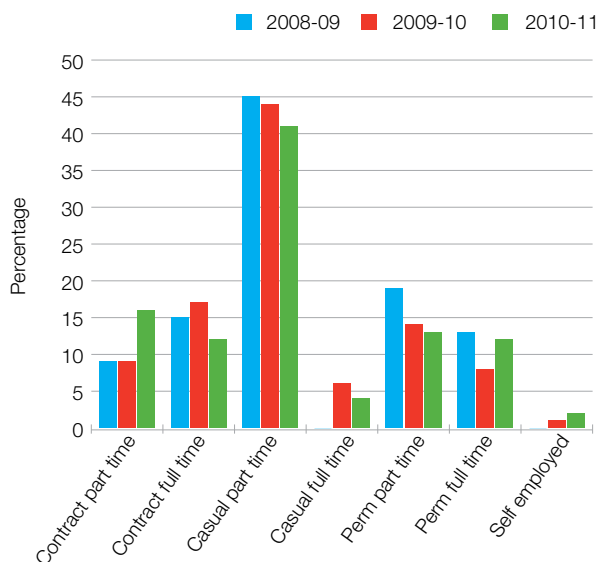


### TERMS OF NEGOTIATION

Casual part time work continues to dominate the basis of employment negotiations; this is in line with the labour market on a national level (see graph 6)

A slight increase in permanent full time jobs was noted.

Terms of negotiation Graph 6



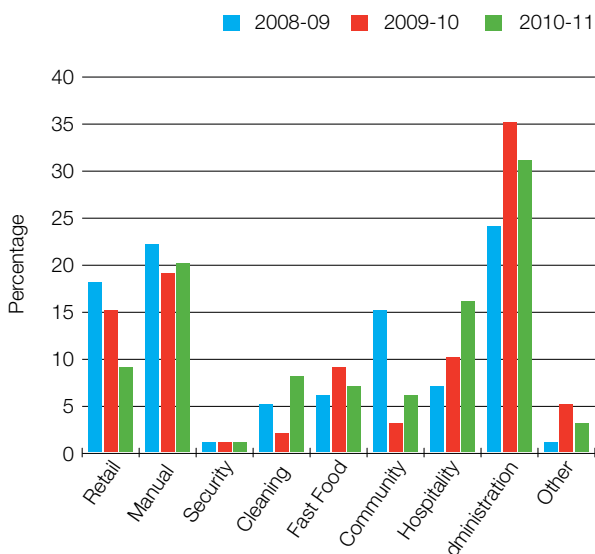
### INDUSTRIES

There has been a notable decline in the number of positions obtained in the retail sector- this has been evident for the last 3 years and is in line with the current labour market in the ACT.

Positions obtained in hospitality increased by 6%. This has been a growing trend over the last few years.

Administration continues to account for the highest number of positions negotiated.

Industries Graph 7



## VOCATIONAL PLACEMENTS (WORK EXPERIENCE AND JOB TRIALS)

Vocational placements are undertaken for a number of reasons:

1. To assist a job seeker to gain work skills (generally 1-3 days)
2. To observe the job seeker in an employment environment to gain an understanding of the individual's skills and abilities whilst developing a knowledge of support requirements; or
3. to ascertain a job seekers suitability to a vacant position.

This year 55 vocational placements were undertaken:

- 49 were conducted to secure employment, with 25 of these placements converting into employment
- 13 placements were paid
- 6 placements were undertaken for skill development
- The average length of time for placements was 8.6 hours, with the minimum 2hrs and the maximum 28 hrs
- Placements were conducted in a range of different industries including; hospitality, laboring, administration, cleaning, childcare and retail.

## EMPLOYMENT INCENTIVE (WAGE SUBSIDY SCHEME)

This year 12 incentives were negotiated with 5 paid out by the end of the financial year; 3 were cancelled due to loss of employment. The remaining 4 will be paid out during the 2011-2012 financial year. The total amount paid out was \$3750.

## EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) is an initiative provided by DEEWR to assist people with disability and their employers with financial assistance to purchase work modifications and work-related services. These include, but are not limited to the cost of modifications that may be needed to a workplace, modification to work vehicles and equipment, Auslan interpreting services and specialised assistance for people with mental health conditions and specific learning disability.

The EAF can be used to assist people with disability who are about to start a job or who are currently working, as well as those who require assistance looking for or preparing for work.

This year Advance Personnel submitted 19 applications with the sum totalling approximately \$64,550.

Of these 19 applications, 7 were specifically for Auslan interpreter assistance.

# MARKETING

## STATISTICS

- Over 120 marketing meetings with new employers
- 65 meetings with current/past employers

A large amount of resources were dedicated to securing face to face meetings with employers this year. Experience has demonstrated that this approach is one of the more successful ways to secure employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It provides the opening to work with potential employers directly- answering questions, identifying potential duties, marketing our services and putting a face to Advance Personnel.

The Job Placement Services Team continues to attend a range of events aimed at building networks. These include Industry Breakfasts, Business after Business (ACT Chamber of Commerce) and Careers Marketing events.

## EMPLOYER RECOGNITION

Advance Personnel recognises the key role employers play in assisting people to participate in employment. We continue to explore a number of different ways to acknowledge this partnership on both an informal and formal basis. As part of the formal recognition process Advance Personnel nominated 3 employers for the Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards.

Nominees were:

- ACT Health Mail Room
- Property Services (Department of Health and Aging)
- Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (FaHSCIA)

We would like to take this opportunity again to congratulate the many other businesses who work with us, for their ongoing commitment to providing employment opportunities for people with disability.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

All Australian Government employment service providers delivering Disability Employment Services are required to be certified as complying with the Disability Services Standards.

The 12 Disability Services Standards set the benchmark of our service delivery

There are five main areas that the Standards fall into:

- Values and principles (having the right approach)
- service outcomes (having the right end result)
- service delivery (having the right organisational processes in place)
- service management
- staff recruitment, employment and training (having the right staff).

Advance Personnel is proud to be accredited at the highest level under the Quality Assurance Scheme. We believe this is an acknowledgement of the quality services we provide to job seekers, workers and employers associated with our organisation.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

With a focus on continuous improvement, Advance Personnel works towards a strategic plan with 3 primary goals:

- To attain sustainable and appropriate employment opportunities for people with disability and employers
- To strengthen and enhance Advance Personnel's business
- Develop knowledge to improve the responsiveness of Advance Personnel

The Staff, Management and Board members of Advance Personnel undertake activities that are directly related to our strategic goals with the aim of continuing to improve the quality and efficiency of our service

## INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Advance Personnel actively participates in driving change within the sector on both a local and national level.

We are members of National Disability Services, and Disability Employment Australia. Through these forums we add commentary, information and data aimed at improving services for people with disability.

We participate within a number of local committees including: Interagency Transition Group, Post School Options, Workforce Working Group, NETA (Network of Employment and Training Agencies) as well as attending a variety of stakeholder meetings across the Territory.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In May 2011 Advance Personnel contracted Cane and Gray Consulting to undertake two projects with the primary aim to lay the ground work for Advance Personnel to consolidate and expand our current suite of services.

The first project was to revisit and formalise current governance arrangements and produce a Board development plan. A Governance Charter was developed with the aim of the document growing with the agency. This Charter is to be adopted at the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

The second project (which is still in progress) is to undertake an environmental scan, analysing the current local environment as well as the broader operating environment. The intention of this project is to identify opportunities for growth for Advance Personnel. This project is due to be completed by the beginning of November 2011 and will lead into a strategic planning day aimed at developing Advance Personnel's next 5 year plan.

## SUMMARY

Advance Personnel continues to mature and expand, but our key objectives remains the same: to ensure each individual has the opportunity to realise their full potential and to provide quality employment services.

Our dedicated team have faced a number of challenges over the past year. Our growth has produced a dynamic environment requiring staff to very quickly upskill, take on different tasks and provide support to increasing caseloads.

As Advance Personnel moves forward into 2012 we are now preparing to consolidate our position within the ACT as a key disability service provider. We are positioning the organisation to compete in the upcoming Disability Employment Services tender, broadening our business base and ensuring the continuity of our services well into the future.

# COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM JOB SEEKERS AND WORKERS 2010-2011

- Our family is extremely grateful for the continued support of Advance Personnel, particularly XX, who has been a tower of strength to (worker) and his parents through a couple of trying incidents in the past 12 months. I feel that without his support it would have become increasingly difficult to sort out issues and keep an 'even' positive approach that is beneficial to the person employed, the employer (workmates) and the family unit. (Mother)
- XX is very helpful and supportive. And without him, I wouldn't have the confidence to succeed
- Excellent and a very friendly support agency and very happy to assist at any time with job support and training and phone calls and emails and parties.
- I'm really happy that Advance Personnel helped me get a full time job in child care. I have had great support during my other jobs. Advance Personnel have also supported me through some personal problems and helped me link up with other support networks.
- Advance Personnel is similar to an 'unrelated' family of mine. Not only do they assist their clients in 'every' stage of getting employment, but they visit me on the job on a regular basis and liaise with bosses if ever the need arises. And the fact that their service/s are free (as well as beneficial) is unbeatable!
- So far Advance Personnel which includes my case manager XX have been very helpful with my employment situation and any help that has been provided to me and my employers. So I am happy with all support right now.
- For me I am happy with the help and understanding and the respect I have within your service. The 12 Disability Services Standards is a full cover to our need so thank you very much wishing you more luck and support in your centre.
- The service has been good and helpful. XX has gone out of her way to help me find a job and build my resume.
- Support that I get from A.P is one that I require and I need a lot.
- I am proud to give nothing but positive feedback about the service and support I have received from Advance Personnel. My case worker XX has helped me with my negotiations in my current employment and I have nothing but positive results from these. If you need any other comments please contact me.
- I have felt that the service of Advance Personnel has been in really great.
- The support that I have had from Advance Personnel has been great from the 1st day that I joined. They have helped me immensely and still provide with support up to today



# Advance Personnel

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