



DISABILITY SECTOR

FUN, NEW ROLES FOR CARERS

Circus schools and Fijian holidays are becoming part of the new disability sector, writes Melanie Burgess

THE growing disability sector and introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is opening up roles in new areas and increased opportunity for career development.

Kelly Jones, general manager for community development at online care services marketplace Better Caring, says people with self-managed NDIS funding are increasingly looking for non-traditional services.

"You wouldn't previously think of enrolling your kid in circus school but circus skills and performance help children with autism with eye contact, speaking and interacting with people," she says.

"We've had one person looking for a swimming buddy for three times a week ... another was looking for someone to teach their child to play online games and use social media safely.

"Under the NDIS's 'capacity building' and 'core supports' a lot of those supports can be purchased."

Work in the disability sector ranges from teaching mixed ability dance classes to providing domestic assistance. Ability Focused director John De Giusti takes families who have children with disabilities on holiday in Fiji.

"They feel like they can't have a holiday because they are a primary carer so I accompany them and they

can enjoy themselves with their partner or by themselves and know that I am looking after their child," he says.

"The beach we usually stay at is a

protected beach so we do snorkelling and fishing tours. We do art classes and visit special schools in Fiji. It's good for parents to see their kid's interaction with the Fijian kids as well.

"We do some basket weaving classes and do a lot of walking and play some games. Parents want their kids to be active and fit."

The disability sector not only offers fulfilling and varied work but also career progression. Endeavour Foundation's Tanya McCulkin started out as a support worker in 1997.

She moved through management roles to become head of service development and design, responsible for co-designing disability services to meet specific needs.

"I've had a lifetime of opportunities here and have met the most amazing people (including) some truly inspirational people with a disability who have taught me not to take anything for granted and to live in the moment," she says.

"My new role feels like the natural convergence of everything I've done to date.

"It's exciting, it's what this new era under the NDIS is all about and, most of all, I trust it will enable us to

partner with people to achieve the real possibilities in their own lives."

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HELPING HAND: John De Giusti with client Alex Dayeh. Picture: CARLY EARL