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Local businesses discover value in hiring staff with disability

"You have to look past the disability and see the capability" said Katoomba Mitre-10 trade manager, Tom Davis, supervisor to two staff with disability, hired through NOVA Employment.

"Our workers are keen and are grateful for the opportunity," said Mr Davis.



From left, NOVA Employment CEO Martin Wren, Tahlia Murray and Tom Davis of Mitre-10, and NOVA Katoomba manager, Lyn White.

Katoomba's Mitre 10, Leura Garage restaurant, Carrington Hotel and Cleanaway, were among 35 businesses who attended NOVA Employment's sixth annual 100 jobs in 100 days campaign launch, which showcased the abilities of workers with disability, in an effort to bring awareness to this often untapped pool of jobseekers.

A mix of large and small business owners and company managers, gathered at Springwood Sports Club on Wednesday, September 18 to focus on building a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

"We couldn't be happier with the workers we've hired," said Mr Davis, referring to a timber yard hand and delivery driver.

"From NOVA Employment you get hard-workers who are eager and willing to learn," he said.

Mitre-10 assistant, Tahlia Murray, who also spoke at the event, said "you may need to alter your training processes slightly but in the end, you won't be disappointed".

Leura Garage restaurant kitchen manager, Debra Shipley, said "we've been hiring staff through NOVA for several years now and it's worked out really well for us".

"NOVA gives us the support we need, when we need it. And it makes you feel great to see a change in their confidence level as they settle in and get used to the work."

Ms Shipley has trained five restaurant staff with a disability since the award-winning restaurant was taken over by James Howarth in 2011.

Co-owner and general manager of the Carrington Hotel, Mark Jarvis, who has also hired workers through NOVA Employment, said "it's the fear of the unknown" that often deters employers.

Mr Jarvis said "before we hired staff through NOVA, I had concerns about whether people with disability could do the job and, how a disability might contribute to productiveness but, after hiring I discovered those fears were unfounded".

"There's no real difference. In fact, the disabilities of the staff we've hired isn't even noticed anymore. What we see, is hard workers who are happy to be there and want to contribute."

NOVA Employment is located in Katoomba and Springwood. Employers looking for staff can contact their local NOVA manager on 1300 ABILITY (1300 224 5489).