

The logo for the South West Disability Network features two overlapping, wavy lines. The top line is blue and the bottom line is green, both with a light grey shadow effect. The lines curve upwards from left to right, creating a sense of movement and connection.

**South West Disability Network**

# Workforce Enhancement Strategy

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BUILDING THE CAPACITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE  
DISABILITY WORKFORCE

# South West Disability Network



# VRRF Project - Opportunities

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- ❖ Attract a more diverse workforce to allow NDIS participants to exercise greater choice and control over the services that they receive
- ❖ Address the workforce recruitment issues experienced by SWDN agencies
- ❖ Attract a new cohort – Year 12 school leavers - into the sector to diversify the workforce
- ❖ Develop clear training pathways to make the disability sector a 'Career of Choice'
- ❖ Collaborate with new and existing industry partners to build workforce capacity
- ❖ Build a skilled disability workforce able to deliver culturally appropriate supports

# What did we do?

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- ❖ The SWDN Workforce Project delivered on three initiatives:
  - ❖ New traineeships in disability support for young school leavers
  - ❖ Disability careers pathways promotion in secondary schools
  - ❖ Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training for frontline workers

# Traineeships in Disability Support

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- ❖ Most SWDN providers did not offer traineeships with only one agency offering a traineeship in administration
- ❖ Traineeships in disability support were trialled with two SWDN providers supported by our new partner Westvic Staffing Solutions, who recruited and mentored each trainee for the duration of their 12 month employment
- ❖ Training (*Certificate III in Individual Support*) was delivered by South West TAFE
- ❖ Very successful initiative with disability providers offering fulltime employment to both trainees and an ongoing commitment by SWDN agencies to offer six traineeships in 2021

# Traineeships in Disability Support

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- ❖ Video – Maggie, Trainee, Southern Stay Disability Services
- ❖ Video – Paul Loughed, Chief Executive Officer, Southern Stay Disability Services









# Careers Pathways Promotion



- ❖ Developed a presentation to deliver to four secondary schools around available careers, training pathways and flexible work opportunities in the disability sector
- ❖ NDIS participants and their representative advocacy network, All Abilities Advocacy, led the discussion around '*What are the qualities and attributes of a Disability Support Worker?*' Disability Support Workers were engaged to discuss their role
- ❖ From the 52 students who self-selected to attend one of the four virtual Disability Careers Workshops, six students have forwarded an Expression of Interest to the SWDN seeking work in the sector
- ❖ Feedback received from School Careers Advisors was really positive - '*Thank you so much for spending time with our classes to present an incredible industry*'; '*the opportunities sounded really exciting*'
- ❖ Participating schools have requested that the SWDN deliver a series of Career Workshops next year

# Cultural Awareness Training



- ❖ 76 staff from SWDN agencies completed Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training facilitated by Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Aboriginal Respected Person Tania Dalton and Aboriginal Advocate Libby Lesock
- ❖ The series of eight half-day workshops were designed specifically to train the disability workforce to deliver culturally appropriate supports to NDIS participants and their families from local Aboriginal communities
- ❖ Survey responses were very positive with the relevance of the training to the disability sector highlighted: *'This workshop has changed my whole view and approach to engaging with Aboriginal communities. I will be seeking to apply this knowledge to the workplace. Invaluable!'*
- ❖ Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training facilitated by Tiiamanno Consultants will be offered to SWDN agency staff as part of their professional development in 2021

# Learnings

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- ❖ COVID-19 led to new models of service delivery, including virtual workshops, which yielded significant cost savings in terms of catering, venue hire, accommodation and staff time and travel
- ❖ Teleconferencing became a viable alternative for communication between stakeholders from rural areas and overcame the impact of distance
- ❖ Being open to change, recognising barriers and opportunities in the new work environment, and collaboration with new and existing partners were important strategies to achieving project outcomes
- ❖ The VRRF project has strengthened the SWDN as it moves into 2021 with new industry partners and new ways of doing business, and a commitment to continue to deliver on all three initiatives beyond the funded project period

# Thank you

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The SWDN would like to thank the VRRF and NDS teams for their guidance and support.

In particular, the member agencies would like to thank Georgia Henderson, NDS Workforce Innovation Connector, who was an invaluable resource to the SWDN Workforce Project.