

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY — EMPLOYMENT

153. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Disability Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to creating employment opportunities for people with disability in Western Australia. Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is supporting jobs, accessibility and inclusion for people with disability across the state?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I certainly can. I thank the member for that question and for her passion in pursuing inclusivity for her community. In fact, as soon as I became minister, I was receiving representations from the member on many matters affecting her community, so I thank her very much.

Jobs for people with disability are at the forefront of this government's approach to increasing inclusivity, and are a priority for me as the new Minister for Disability Services. One example of our inclusive approach to maximise employment for people with disability is the state's partnership with Valued Lives, a peer-led organisation providing support to people to develop micro-enterprises. Valued Lives started its micro-enterprise hub project in March 2019, providing support to people with disability to pursue their really important goals of social and economic participation through the provision of welcoming spaces across the metropolitan region. Under the project, people with disability can access support to develop and operate small businesses in the community. Funding was then provided by the state government to expand and grow the project to meet high demand, with referrals coming from local coordinators, planners and schools, and requests from young people leaving school and seeking to gain employment through the development of their own micro-enterprise. In September 2020, the Western Australian government allocated \$500 000 to support people with disability to achieve their employment goals through group-based peer support. This includes support to access mainstream employment and develop individual employment enterprises.

This commitment is making a real difference to people on the ground. For example, 18-year-old Ethyn Amat, who lives in the south west, has been able to expand his art business through the program. He creates pieces inspired by an array of different ideas, including his Indigenous heritage. Ethyn is non-verbal and found himself connecting with people through colours. Eventually, after creating a number of very impressive art pieces, a family friend suggested Ethyn sell his artwork, and thus the Ethyn Extra-Ordinary Art online page was born and continues today.

So far, Valued Lives has supported more than 100 people to begin their journey towards sustainable employment. As part of our election commitments, the McGowan government recently announced a further \$500 000 to boost micro-enterprise opportunities for a further hundred people with disability to establish new businesses through start-up grants, mentoring and support. We are proud to partner with community organisations to empower and deliver opportunities for Western Australian people with disability.