

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

PO Box 502  
Epping NSW 1710

305/16-18 Cambridge St  
Epping NSW 2121

Phone: (02) 9869 0866  
Facsimile: (02) 9869 0722

Record

193

File Number

10165

Author: Papps, Judy

Title: Judy Papps, Parent, Supported Employment

Original source: Interaction Volume 4 Number 5

Resource type: Written

Publication Date: 01/01/90

Publisher Info: NCID

### Abstract

Judy Papps, parent of a young man who has a disability, describes from a family perspective her son's positive transition through supported employment options to his current independent worker status. She discusses her initial reaction, her eventual involvement in assisting support her son, and her thoughts on his future options. **Keyword: Employment**

## **Judy Papps Parent Supported Employment**

---

I am going to give a purely family perspective. My son, Stephen, is 22. He is the eldest of my three children. He has not had a very lengthy work history as he only left school a couple of years ago. He finished at Koomarri School and went to a carpentry shop where he was sanding finished pieces of furniture. He enjoyed the travelling and the company of his workmates. Unfortunately, the carpentry workshop was closed for economic reasons. He was transferred to lawn mowing. He was already a good lawn mower at home so that was not a hassle, but he found a full day lawn mowing extremely tiring. The day was long and he ended up having several days sick leave here and there which was not like him at all.

He was advised by a doctor to transfer after suffering severe sunburn and allergic reactions to the grass and pollen. So that job went. Luckily he was able to be transferred within the Koomarri system. He was put on to ironing and sewing which he did not mind but was not too enthusiastic about.

I had been vaguely aware that there was a trend towards getting people out of workshops and into the community but I had not really become concerned with it as an issue. I was not interested at the time. I was not aware that it was all happening until Sue Warth approached me. She came and spoke to the family at home. For the

first time in about twenty years the family was actually asked what they thought would be appropriate for Steve and what they thought about his future employment. It's a long road from 0 to 22 and nobody had actually asked us what we wanted: we were just usually told.

Sue told us about the enclave plan for the Mint and asked if we thought Steve would enjoy the work. She went into the details about transport arrangements, supervision, workmates, and reassured us that if it did not work for Steve, he could go back to his other job at Koomarri. I realise this is not going to be an option in the future. We were just fortunate to have that offer.

The Mint enclave was a huge success for everybody, for the employees, and for the people already working at the mint as well. Steve really enjoyed getting up and going off to work everyday. He loved wearing the special uniform top they all had with the Mint logo on it. He readily made new friends amongst Mint staff, sharing his interest in sport, while reading papers with friends at lunch time. These were friends, not in his enclave, but people who were already employees of the Mint. The almost daily unhappy phone calls ceased. His health improved and he was a very happy and proud young man.

Sue turned up again before Easter with a rapid decision to be made. The decision was whether we would like Stephen to go from the Mint to the asbestos laboratory. She reassured us about the monitoring in the laboratory and we decided it was a safe job. Our real decision was about how we felt about him going out on his own because he

would be the single person there being trained.

We had to consider about how he would feel being away from his workmates at the workshops and enclaves, whether he would have anyone to talk to, and whether he would be lonely. That was our greatest concern, not the asbestos.

We have now found that Steve prefers to be out on his own; to have his independence; to choose his own friends; and to be an individual. He has found nothing but good mates at the lab, enjoys a beer with them on pay day, and he is talking more clearly than ever.

Another spin-off is that he has finally realised the value of an increased pay packet. Although he does not handle cash readily, he insists on paying his own way. He loves to buy his own program at the basketball. He chooses the clothes he wishes to buy, not the most economical. He loves to buy nice birthday cards and gifts for others. He is saving money in his wallet from his allocation for standard weekly expenses. Before, what he was given was what he spent: it had no meaning for him. He is now thrilled to know how much he has saved and he is taking his most recent savings on a day-trip to Sydney to see a basketball game where Canberra play Sydney. He wants to spend it at their promotions shop on a fancy jacket that he admires. They are about \$90.00 and he can buy that now. It was just out of the question before. He can look at others and decide that he wants a Sydney King's jacket, now he can have one.

Michelle calls in at the lab to check that everything is going well. Really, the only time Steve needs

Michelle is not with problems related to the physical job, but for more personal matters that have annoyed him at work. He then insists that Michelle should be right on the spot at that moment to fix it all. So it is not the job, it is more the little things that irritate him.

We do not know what the future holds for Steve. We would like him to continue in Supported Employment as a supervisor has more clout than parents when it comes to rearranging the job or the work environment, and also has the knowledge of what the job entails.

If an offer came of Open Employment we would look very carefully at it. We do like the reassurance of back-up by the supervisor whose sole interest is in the welfare of the employee whom she is supporting. We take just one thing at a time and make the best possible out of it that we can for Steve. There are no on-going job guarantees for Steve, but then my job is not guaranteed either. That is life at the moment.

I feel the transition to supported employment has all been so successful because of the consultation with the family before any moves were made. The skills shown in matching the employee to the appropriate job have also ensured success. We have always been kept informed at every stage and have received great support from Jobmatch. Steve, in such a short time, has become more confident, more articulate, expresses opinions, is learning the buying power of money, has made good friends, and has great pride in his work. We feel that Supported Employment has really worked for Steve.