

A model to increase the participation in VET by students with a disability

Kate Barnett

Managing Director, Kate Barnett and Associates, Adelaide

Craig Harrison, Managing Director, Personnel Employment, Adelaide

The Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) is funded by DETYA to promote opportunities for young Australians to acquire workplace knowledge and experience before they leave school. By supporting school-industry programs, the ASTF provides opportunities for senior school students to undertake structured workplace learning (SWL) as part of their formal education. SWL blends students learning with accredited on the job experience and is based on effective partnerships between schools, RTOs, business and the community.

The ASTF has been working for some time with the ANTA Disability Forum to address the under-representation of students with disabilities in the VET system and in VET in School programs. The 'Lighthouse Initiative' was developed as a response to this challenge and has allocated funding over an 18 month period to 3 projects, each exploring ways to increase SWL opportunities for students with a disability, and to develop a range of models which can be incorporated into mainstream SWL programs. The projects are located in the western metropolitan region of Adelaide, Gosford and Launceston.

In particular, the projects will develop models for linking Competitive Employment Placement and Training (CEPT) agencies to schools and RTOs and to business – a strategy which has been significantly unrecognised at a national level. They will also investigate the creation of pathways to VET which provide preparation for work training as part of SWL, which in turn leads to a School based Apprenticeship, at the same time, identifying the specific inputs required to ensure positive outcomes for students with a disability.