



# SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS:

a program of social  
inclusion for young  
people with disability

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

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Sponsored by the Higher Education and Skills Group, Department of Education and Training (Victorian Government)

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# i. Executive Summary

Young people with disability deserve the right to equality in all aspects of life including vocational pathways, employment and future directions. Young people with disability are faced with many challenges and moving into employment and access to vocational pathways is a significant hurdle. There is much evidence that indicates employment opportunities for young people with disability are limited. It is critical to advance the inclusion of these young people so that they can be confident and contributing members of our society.

“The Victorian Government made a commitment in ‘Absolutely Everyone’ to develop an employment strategy for people with disability. This is because, despite the state’s broader economic success, people with disability continue to face barriers and discrimination which leaves them significantly underrepresented in the workforce – and there has been very little change over the past 20 years.” (Giving Victorians with A Disability “Every Opportunity”; Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing)

*“People with a disability represent 20 per cent of Victoria’s population. The employment rate for people with a disability is 53 per cent – that’s compared to 82 per cent for people without a disability”.<sup>1</sup>*

*Every Opportunity* focuses on improving education pathways, employment opportunities and support for business ownership and innovation, giving Victorians with A Disability ‘Every Opportunity’ (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing).

Jan Davis is the Course Coordinator for Certificate 1 in Work Education at

Holmesglen Institute Victoria, Australia. The student cohort consists of 16 - 24-year olds who present with additional learning needs or disability. The primary focus of the course is to support students to pathway into mainstream employment or further study.

Since 2012, the UK government has had policies in place to support the development of skills and qualifications for young people with disability through supported internships. A supported internship is a structured study program based with an employer that is delivered in partnership with a learning institution. The students/interns are given the opportunity to develop the required work-related skills by directly learning in the work place with the desired outcome of transitioning into paid employment at the end of the program. The literature suggests that supported internships have a track record of success in enabling 16-24-year-old young people with learning disabilities gain direct work training within top businesses, hospitals and organisations leading directly to employment.

Supported Internships are the United Kingdom governments’ preferred programme to prepare young people with learning difficulties and disabilities for competitive employment. The key idea is to bring together education, training and work skills in a real-life work environment

Benefits of a supported internship program include:

- » Acquisition of skills, knowledge and qualifications appropriate to the employer’s business, appropriate qualifications to recognize vocational skill and functional skills in maths and English
- » Participate in a variety of internship rotations within an organization
- » Acquire competitive, transferable and marketable job skills
- » Gain increased independence, confidence, self-esteem and new social groups
- » Receive work-based individual instruction, coaching, support and feedback from the tutor, job coach and host business managers and mentors

<sup>1</sup> Giving Victorians with A Disability “Every Opportunity”; Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. Retrieved from <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/giving-victorians-with-a-disability-every-opportunity/>

- » Develop links to Disability Employment Services
- » Access to a new, diverse talent stream with skills that match labour needs

Currently there are no known supported internship programs available within Australia. In 2017 an International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship was undertaken in the UK to explore the possibility of introducing this concept at Holmesglen Institute.

Since the Fellowship study was completed, a strategic partnership has been established with the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne – the largest Children's Hospital in Australia. A supported internship pilot project will commence in 2018. Ten students have been selected to participate in the program all of whom will be placed in a range of settings within the hospital including Human resources, Allied health, CSSD (Central Sterilizing Service Department), RCH Foundation, Medical Records, Food Services, Early Learning Centre, Support Services, Family Services and Volunteers. This report will present the development and implementation process of a supported internship program and report on preliminary outcomes of the evaluation. With the support of the Clinical Chair at Holmesglen Institute research a full evaluation of the program will be completed.

# 1. The Fellowship Program

## The Research Approach

In May 2017, Jan Davis undertook an International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship. The aim of the research was to investigate vocational training opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with a focus on building industry partnerships to foster and grow vocational pathways through enriched and more meaningful work experience opportunities.

The key aim of the Fellowship was to investigate and research Supported Internships with the intention to implement a pilot program at Holmesglen and establish additional programs through other organisations into the future. **Currently there are no known supported internship programs available in Australia.**

The literature suggests that supported internships have a track record of success in enabling 16-24 year-old young people with learning disabilities gain direct work training within top businesses, hospitals and organisations leading directly to employment.

A supported internship is a structured study program that involves a partnership between a business, a training organisation and a supported employment organisation that is based primarily with an employer. A tutor and /or job coach, also supports the interns and voluntary employee mentors. Internships enable young people aged 16-24 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve sustainable, paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work through learning in the workplace. Ideally Internships are a year in length and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to transition into paid employment at the end of

the program.

The internship should contribute to the young person's long-term career goals and fit with their working capabilities. For the employer, the internship must meet a real business need, with the potential of a paid job at the end of the program of study should the intern meet the required standard.

Supported internships reflect the following principles:

- » The majority of the young person's time is spent at the employer's premises;
- » Young people are expected to comply with real job conditions, such as time keeping and dress code;
- » Training in systematic instruction, a method specifically designed to help people with complex learning difficulties learn new tasks, is used where appropriate;
- » Stretching learning goals are set, including in English and maths;
- » Both the young person and the employer have support through a tutor and an expert job coach
- » Support continues post the course of study to assist the transition of young people into paid employment and sustainable careers<sup>2</sup>

I chose to base my research in the United Kingdom, specifically in London because:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/61>

- » The United Kingdom government policy is that young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should be supported to develop the skills and qualifications required to succeed in their career. Supported internships are an evidence based method of creating a positive outcome.
- » Statistics indicate a rise in the employment rate of 16-24 year olds upon completion of supported internships.<sup>3</sup>
- » In the United Kingdom 18% of 16-24 year olds with a disability gain employment through normal channels.
- » 70%-75% of students who participate in a supported internship program are gainfully employed.
- » Supported internships have been running since 2012 with Government support.<sup>4</sup>
- » The relevant curriculum and course structure bare similarities to the Certificate I in Work Education course from the Australian training package. (City and Guilds Employability and Personal Development)
- » People with a disability aged 16 -24 year olds are 10 times more likely to experience discrimination than those aged 65 and over<sup>5</sup>
- » In 2015, the unemployment rate for people with a disability was 10%, higher than that for people without a disability at 5.3%.<sup>6</sup>

**These statistics provided me with the motivation to investigate in detail, how successful employment outcomes and employment retention rates for this cohort can be achieved.**

I work at Holmesglen Institute in the Community and Transitional Education Department within the Faculty of Health, Science, Youth and Community Studies. I am the coordinator of Certificate 1 in Work Education courses that incorporate either a Certificate 1 in Retail Services, Hospitality or Horticulture. Our students are between the ages of 16-21 and have additional learning needs and/ or a disability. Upon completion of the course the priority focus is for students to pathway into mainstream employment and/or further study.

My aim was to investigate vocational training opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities that are underpinned by a focus on building industry partnerships to foster and grow pathways through enriched and more meaningful work experience opportunities.

I am committed to pursuing excellence in program delivery that has strong vocational outcomes for our student cohort and exiting students. Developing and maintaining solid relationships with relevant industry organisations would allow for promotion and support of potential employment as an option early in the student's transition planning.

3 How to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities into work, a short guide for schools, colleges and career advisors. Department of Education. UK

4 <http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-options-and-improving-provision-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-sen/supporting-pages/supported-internships-for-young-people-with-sen>

5 Australian Network on Disability

6 ABS 4430.0-Disability, Aging & Carers, Australia: Summary of findings. 2015 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0>

## 2. The Australian Context

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A 2012 study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that only 47.7% of people with disability were engaged in meaningful, paid employment. The study cited a young person's transition from school to further study or employment as critical to their long-term economic future.<sup>7</sup>

It is therefore essential for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities to engage in education programs that provides them with the relevant vocational skills and prepares them for a meaningful vocational transition. This is even more critical now as recent changes in Government funding in the VET sector have meant that many courses at Certificate II or III level are either no longer offered, or they are only offered as traineeships or apprenticeships. It is vital to establish links with employers and establish working relationships within a diverse and inclusive educational community.

Research shows that moving young people into meaningful jobs that are well matched to their interests and have growth potential, positively impacts on job retention

I currently teach at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE in the Community and Transitional Education (CATE) Department within the Faculty of Health, Science, Youth and Community Studies. The student cohort comes to the CATE department after the completion of year 10, from both mainstream and specialist schools. The department runs three courses over two campuses. Most of the students are between the ages of 16 – 24 and have a learning difficulty or disability, needing support with their learning. A learning difficulty and/or a disability may not be the

only issue for the student as many also have confidence issues, social behaviour issues and a general feeling of 'not fitting in'. All the classes are capped at 10 -12 students. Students complete a Certificate I in Work Education and either a Certificate I in Retail Services, Hospitality or Horticulture.

This is a vocationally focused program providing students with the skills to obtain and maintain employment. The Work Education program includes work preparation activities, which aim to develop both general and specific work competencies, including positive work attitudes. Upon completion of the course the priority focus is for students to pathway into mainstream employment and/or further study. Through the applied learning approach students are equipped with skills and knowledge to pursue their chosen vocational pathway. It is of vital importance to establish relationships with potential employers who will provide and support future employment and training opportunities.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40March+Quarter+2012>  
accessed 14/09/17

## 3. The International Experience

I spent three and half weeks in London where I immersed myself in gaining a deep and meaningful understanding of the implementation and running of the Supported Internship program, specifically the Project Search model.

I visited the West Thames College, Hounslow and met with Julie Bennett, Head of Department, Learning and Inclusion where I was able to get an overview of the successful running of Project Search in partnership with GlaxoSmithKline. This partnership began in 2013. West Thames College also partners with Hounslow Civic Centre. I visited their sites and met with the tutors, job coaches and disability employment representatives. Jon Rees, the manager of Action on Disability provided me with information regarding the various supports provided from a Disability Employment Service in establishing Supported Internship programs. I also had the opportunity to meet the students, visit them in their workplace and interview them to gain their perspective on their internship experience.

### **GlaxoSmithKline Headquarters. Brentford.**

- » A science-led global healthcare company
- » The first multinational company to become involved in Supported Internships (since 2011)
- » 4,500 employees
- » Identified benefits to the company: the visibility of students on the program and their regular interactions with employees has helped create a more inclusive and disability-friendly culture. "The program is now a key part of our inclusion

and diversity strategy in the United Kingdom (UK), both from an internal and external perspective". Business Disability Forum, 2014<sup>8</sup>

- » Key vocational skills and work experience opportunities
  - » Office Administration
  - » Catering Assistant
  - » Grounds Maintenance
  - » Bike Shop
  - » Reception
  - » Hospitality
  - » IT executive Support
  - » Mail Room
  - » Security

### **Hounslow Council. London Borough of Hounslow. Hounslow**

- » Local government
- » A community leader, not simply a provider of services
- » Works in partnership with the local community, voluntary and statutory agencies and the private sector.
- » Key vocational skills and opportunities
  - » Facilities Management
  - » Catering
  - » ICT (working with ICT team, solving PC issues)
  - » Barista

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8 Business Disability Forum, 2014

- » Library
- » Childcare Centre
- » Electoral Services
- » Reception
- » Work Smart (maintaining stationery)

I also visited Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College where I spent time with Sue Jenkins, Head of Inclusive Learning. The insights Sue provided on the SI model and its success were invaluable and I was able to visit several sites that partner with the college. These visits also enabled me to spend time with the interns and shadow them during their job rotation and meet with tutors and job coaches.

#### **Sofitel Terminal 5. Heathrow**

- » A top-quality airport hotel offering a wide range of work experience and training opportunities which cover a variety of internal hotel operations and services.
- » Key vocational skills and work experience opportunities
  - » Room Service Attendant
  - » Restaurant waiting Staff
  - » Store
  - » Meetings and Events Management
  - » Kitchen Porter
  - » Customer Service
  - » Staff Canteen Assistant

#### **L'Oreal UK, Headquarters. London.**

- » Key vocational skills and work experience opportunities

- » Post Room Assistant
- » Office administration
- » Catering Assistant
- » Nursery Assistant
- » Receptionist
- » IT Communications
- » IT Maintenance Assistant
- » Cleaning Operative
- » Academy Assistant

#### **Charing Cross Hospital. Hammersmith**

- » 8,000 employees
- » General teaching hospital
- » Key vocational skills and work experience opportunities
  - » Theatre Health care Assistant
  - » Administration Assistant
  - » Domestic Operatives
  - » Ward Host
  - » Back of House Operative
  - » Porter
  - » Post Room Assistant
  - » Store Person
  - » Lift Control Operator

- » Hospitality
- » Maintenance
- » Medical Records

During my Fellowship research I also met with the following people who offered invaluable information and insight in relation to the Supported Internship model:

- » Jon Rees, Manager, Action on disability
- » Jo Harry, GlaxoSmithKline, Business Liaison
- » Jo Baty, Head of Local Offer & High Needs Provision. Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- » Nicky Bitar, Service Manager, Learning and Development provisions, London Borough of Hounslow

Student stories/case studies:

- » GlaxoSmithKline has an employee base of 4000 people. A 2016/17 intern had a successful placement working in the Meeting Rooms Reception and Front of House Reception at GlaxoSmithKline. While here he learned many skills such as customer service, booking and setting up meeting rooms, sorting stock and dealing with deliveries.
- » At Charing Cross Hospital I spent time with a student who had his three job rotations working as a theatre assistant sterilising surgical equipment. Due to his strong work ethic and attention to detail he has been successful in gaining full time employment at the hospital in this role

### **Observations on the Benefits of the Supported Internship Program**

- » Acquisition of skills, knowledge and qualifications appropriate to the employer's business

- » The opportunity to participate in a variety of internship rotations in a high profile local business
- » Acquire competitive, transferrable and marketable job skills
- » Gain increased independence, confidence, self-esteem and new social groups
- » Receive work-based individual instruction, coaching, support and feedback from the tutor job coach and host business managers and mentors
- » Develop links to appropriate support agencies
- » Access to a new, diverse talent stream with skills that match labour needs
- » Engagement, fulfilment, realistic, personal growth
- » Increased employment prospects
- » Increased knowledge of required employment skills
- » Provision of meaningful vocational pathway opportunities
- » Enhanced confidence and self-esteem of the intern







## 4. Personal and Professional Reflections

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Being a recipient of an ISS Fellowship has provided me with a sense of fulfilment on a professional and personal level. I have a very strong commitment to advocating for young people with additional learning needs and disabilities and will demonstrate this by continuing to seek and source excellent and highly relevant vocational pathway opportunities.

Engagement in research has renewed my energy and enthusiasm for my work and the potential vocational outcomes for the cohort of students I work with. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to carry out this research which has extended my knowledge of the Supported Internship programs internationally. Being immersed in the model overseas provided me with the opportunity to witness the success of the program and its relevance and benefits to our students and I have established networks locally and internationally through which I will continue to extend my knowledge.

The knowledge and expertise gained has given me the confidence to recommend and manage the implementation of a pilot Supported Internship program.

## 5. Fellowship Recommendations and Considerations

The Community and Transitional Education Department have been in discussions with a representative from the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) who has indicated support for the RCH to form a partnership with Holmesglen to establish Australia's first Supported Internship program. The Department has given approval to proceed in 2018.

### The proposed model

- » 10 Certificate I in Work Education students who will be based at the Royal Children's Hospital.
- » The program will run for 34 weeks.
- » The program will be delivered from February to November.
- » Students will be required to go through a detailed interview and selection process. RCH and Holmesglen will participate in the interview process.
- » Holmesglen will develop and deliver a detailed induction process. The first 3 weeks of the program will be based at Holmesglen. Students will be gradually integrated into the RCH environment via the exploration and confirmation of travel arrangements, training, employer expectations and an introduction to the organisation and their job role.

- » Students will be expected to follow the below daily schedule:
  - 9.30am – 10.30am: training room: course delivery
  - 10.45am – 3.00pm: Students working supported by tutor and job coach
  - 3.00pm – 4.00: Training room. Reflection and problem solving
- » Holmesglen will provide a full-time teacher / tutor to deliver the program at RCH.
- » A full-time job coach will support the interns on site at the Royal Children's Hospital – RCH are exploring possibilities to fund this
- » The job coach will work in partnership with a Disability Employment Service to assist students to transition from their internship into meaningful, paid employment.

### Suggested Job Placements

- » Administration
- » Mail room
- » Food Services
- » Support Services
- » Medical records
- » RCH Foundation
- » Allied Health
- » Family Services and Volunteering
- » CSSD, Central Sterilising Supply Department
- » Early Learning Centre

## Resources Required

- » Training room (provided by Royal Children's Hospital).
- » Computer access (11 laptops will be purchased by Holmesglen).
- » Workplace mentors (volunteers from Royal Children's Hospital).

## Benefits to the Student

Research in the UK has indicated that young people with a disability who have completed a supported internship have a significantly greater chance of gaining meaningful employment compared to those who seek employment through the usual channels (70 – 75% compared to 18%). It is anticipated that participants in the program will greatly increase their employability following the internship due to having been engaged in a fully inclusive traineeship that includes nine months of practical work experience. Immersing the trainees in a real workplace for an extended period of time will allow them to develop employability skills in a range of different contexts and will teach them to transfer the skills learnt to different roles within the organisation. They will also develop meaningful relationships with colleagues, which will give them the opportunity to highlight the value that people with disability can contribute to the workplace.

It is well documented that actively participating in the workforce has a direct link to positive mental health. Participating in this program will assist the young people to develop valuable skills and knowledge to increase their chances of maintaining employment throughout their lives, which will have a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing. It is anticipated that being meaningfully employed in the open employment market will decrease their reliance on government services such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health services.

## Benefits to the Royal Children's Hospital

It is anticipated that across the duration of the internship program, RCH will identify the value that people with disability can contribute to the workplace.

Research suggests that people with disability have “higher rates of retention, better attendance and fewer occupational health and safety incidents than those without a disability”.<sup>9</sup> The interns will perform meaningful roles that fulfil a genuine business need within the organisation and make a valuable contribution to its daily operations.

Other benefits to RCH could include:

- » Enhancing the organisations social inclusion policy by adding supported internships to its core business;
- » Increased public perception of RCH's contribution to the community;
- » Increased public perception of RCH's commitment to training young people with disability;
- » Social and emotional benefits to RCH employees and volunteers; and
- » social and emotional benefits to patients and families receiving services provided by the interns.

## Benefits to Holmesglen

The partnership with RCH would be of significant strategic advantage to Holmesglen in establishing greater links with the community. Holmesglen would be the first Vocational Education provider to partner with a major hospital to provide supported internships for vulnerable young people. This partnership will highlight Holmesglen's commitment to providing meaningful employment outcomes for young people who are disadvantaged. It would also demonstrate Holmesglen's commitment to The National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020, which aims to provide ‘increased access to employment opportunities as a key to improve economic security and personal wellbeing for people with disability, their families and carers’. RCH have business connections with Cincinnati Children's Hospital in the USA, where supported internships originated, so they already have

<sup>9</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission – [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au).

some familiarity with the proposed model. Partnering with RCH could potentially increase Holmesglen's profile internationally.

### **The potential benefits to other training providers?**

It is intended that the pilot Supported Internship program initiated by Holmesglen would be viewed with interest by other training providers and support would be provided by Holmesglen to other providers with a desire to introduce a similar program.

## 6. Acknowledgements

- » Lorna Misra: Tutor – GSK, West Thames College, UK
- » Harriett Collett: Job Coach – GSK. Action on Disability, UK
- » Julie Bennet: Head of Department. Inclusive Learning, West Thames College, UK
- » Suzanne Rodrigueus: Tutor – Hounslow Civic Centre, West Thames College, UK
- » Raj Yallamilli: Job Coach – Hounslow Civic Centre, Action on Disability, UK
- » Jon Rees: Manager, Action on Disability, UK
- » Jo Harry: Business Liaison, GSK
- » John Kisby: West Thames College, UK
- » Susan Jenkins: Head of Department. Inclusive Learning. Ealing, Hammersmith & West London's College, UK
- » Human Resources department, Sofitel, Heathrow International Airport, UK
- » Jo Baty: Head of Local offer & High Needs provision, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- » Nicky Bitar: Service Manager – Learning & Development provisions, London Borough of Hounslow
- » Stuart Hunter: Head of Department. Community and Transitional Education, Holmesglen Institute
- » Gabrielle Koutoukidis: Dean, Faculty Health, Science, Youth & Community, Holmesglen Institute.
- » Leone English: Executive Director Education & Applied Research, Holmesglen Institute

- » Debra Kiegelde: Clinical Chair, Health Workforce & Simulation, Holmesglen Institute

I would also like to thank the Fellowship Awarding Body the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute).

### Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute exists to foster an apparitional, skilled and smart Australia by cultivating the mastery and knowledge of talented Australians through international research Fellowships.

The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) is proud of its heritage. The organisation was founded over 25 years ago by Sir James Gobbo AC CVO QC, former Governor of Victoria, to encourage investment in the development of Australia's specialised skills. Its international Fellowship program supports many Australians and international leaders across a broad cross-section of industries to undertake applied research that will benefit economic development through vocational training, industry innovation and advancement. To date, over 350 Australian and international Fellows have undertaken Fellowships facilitated through ISS Institute. The program encourages mutual and shared learning, leadership and communities of practice.

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- » Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions
- » Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses
- » Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums

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## **Fellowship Sponsor - The Higher Education and Skills Group**

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