

Job@quest

Connecting People and Skills

Penrith Skills for Jobs Ltd

ABN 80 082 730 210



Annual Report 2021-2022

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JobQuest Mission

Through a client focused and community-oriented approach,

JobQuest supports our clients to:

- Develop skills in a safe and healthy working environment
- Connect with each other
- Engage with the community
- Build strong networks
- Recognise and realise opportunities
- Develop their sense of belonging

Employee Gender Balance

JobQuest has an excellent gender balance.

Youth Programs are dominated by females and Employment/Property Services are dominated by males. The overall gender balance taking into account all reported positions is -

52% female

48% male



From: Workplace Gender Equality Agency report for Penrith Skills for Jobs T/A JobQuest

JobQuest runs property maintenance and cleaning units designed to provide transitional employment opportunities to enable people to gain skills to move on to more permanent work or operate their own small business. These operate in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains out of our Girraween office and in the Hunter out of our Newcastle office.

These services are offered to a range of customers including:

General public – fee for service

NDIS participants

- House cleaning and other household activities
- House and/or yard maintenance
- Skills development

Aged Care clients

- CHSP [Commonwealth Home Support Program] – Nepean/Hawkesbury and Blue Mountaing
- Home Care Packages
- Department of Veteran's Affairs clients

Commercial contracts



Youth Programs & Training

JobQuest Youth Programs are designed to provide alternative learning models for young people who are not engaged well or coping in mainstream education.

These programs assist young people to overcome some of life's hurdles and get on track to achieving their goals.

Some programs may be targeted to specific cohorts such as refugees or recent migrants and others to young jobseekers or young offenders.



Participation in training is an excellent way for people to engage with others and their community. The development of new skills continues to be the key to finding a job and retaining that job as technological and other changes impact on our working communities.



Our Youth Programs link with our Training arm with a focus on employment skills and literacy and numeracy support for young people. This integration of our training with our other operations provides a more substantial and structured impact on the people who engage with our services.

Other Community Programs

JobQuest provides a two-year, home-based, early learning and parenting program for families with young children.

It aims to provide a structured, education-focused early learning program at home to help prepare children for their participation in school learning.

The program is run in the Newcastle suburb of Windale.



Community, heritage and connectedness are important to us at JobQuest. We deliver a range of programs to help build more cohesive and inclusive communities.

These programs are often found in areas with significant growth or with emerging or changing communities including new or expanding cultural groups. Western and South Western Sydney and the Hunter are major areas targeted.

Many of our Youth Programs assist young students identified as being at risk of leaving school or not functioning well in the usual school environment. Such as vocational skills programs in schools as an adjunct to academic learning and supporting students at risk to successfully transition from school into employment or other further education and training, via our "bridging" programs, such as Workforce Readiness and Transition Success. These aim to develop student's knowledge and capacity in being ready for life beyond school.

Some of examples of our community engagement strategies with students include organising various appeals for products to help homeless people, such as toiletries, socks and awareness campaigns, drives to support local animal shelters with towels, blankets and toys for the animals, creating care packages for children in hospitals, fundraising for various charity organisations, undertaking work experience in charity organisations, such as The Salvation Army and Hawkesbury's Helping Hands. These opportunities help participants to develop skills and confidence in themselves and create positive relationships with the people around them.

We work with migrant, refugee and other newly-arrived people in our regions who are also helped to develop employability skills that suit their new community environment.

Our school readiness program in East Lake Macquarie near Newcastle is another excellent example of community engagement that supports the development, community connection and confidence of parents and carers to support their child's early education. Here, staff provide mentoring and peer support to families with children aged 3 and 4 years in their homes, and at the centre, through play-based learning activities and regular group gatherings. We assist children to become curious learners and to achieve important developmental milestones to support a successful transition to school.

Employment programs have always been a strong focus for JobQuest - hence the name. Our current strategy involves providing employment for disadvantaged people or those who have difficulty maintaining employment in our Social Enterprises. The employees can work providing cleaning or grounds maintenance services in our various communities. These services are provided to the aged under CHSP, Home Care Packages and Veterans Home Care and to people living with disability through the NDIS.

This part of our operation provides benefit to the employees and to the customers and clients of our services and is an important pillar of our community engagement strategies.

Our Training Services staff work with a wide range of people to develop skills for work. Our students may be school students, unemployed people wanting to enter the workforce, people undertaking traineeships, or people in the community wanting to undertake any of our various programs to help them prepare for work, learn about technology, increase their skills or just connect with others.

Chairman's Report

At the end of last year, we were looking at a much more "back to normal" scenario with great anticipation and while this did occur to some degree, the pandemic had other ideas and considerable numbers of people, including many of our workers, continued to contract Covid 19. Now things look more positive but we remain cautious.

Our efforts to recruit for much of the year were met with little response which has been the same situation for many businesses in our communities. This has stretched our workforce and we are most grateful to those who have put in extra hours to cover for others.

I am informed however that over the past few months we have managed to recruit new workers in both our Social Enterprises and in Training/Youth Programs. So, to those of you who are new to JobQuest over the past year I say welcome and I join with the Board and the Senior Management team in wishing you a happy and prosperous engagement with us.

The Board has also been informed that effort and resources are being put into technology to assist in effectively keeping and using the information needed to run our programs. While it was daunting for staff when our UK based scheduling platform could no longer provide its services to us, it was also pleasing that the staff put in a great effort to find, assess and then implement a replacement. This is an Australian based platform with more functionality and hopefully when fully implemented will be a great help for both the Social Enterprise and for our HR Team.

Our RTO and Youth Programs continue their success with students and are to be congratulated for becoming a NSW High Performing RTO in late 2021 which guarantees some funding assistance for our students for 3 years. The introduction of a new assessment platform for the RTO continued the investment in technology and I believe this has been a great success in improving both the productivity and accuracy of our RTO record keeping.

Social Enterprise services also continue to services to the elderly in Western Sydney, Nepean/Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains under the Commonwealth Home Support Program and also via Aged Care Providers assisting their clients with their Home Care Plans. The services we provide are so important to our elders in assisting them to remain living in their own home as long as is possible and avoid going into residential care.

We also continue to provide services to over 300 NDIS participants in Sydney and the Hunter and it was very pleasing to hear that we successfully undertook our re-registration as a NDIS Provider this year. Our household tasks services continue to provide an important adjunct to support the goals and aspirations of our participants living with a disability.

Working in our communities with people and organisations remains a very strong element of the mission of JobQuest and integral to our success. Our mission remains to build strong communities through the work that we do with individuals and we appreciate the support and collaboration from the many organisations and individuals who are part of our large community network.

The other big happening in 2021/22 was the storm damage and then fire at our office in Penrith and the subsequent hunt for new premises and setting up again for the Penrith team. Then the Maryville lease became unviable to continue and two new sites were set up in Newcastle – Mayfield and Cardiff. The Board is most appreciative of those staff impacted by and involved in these moves and we hope that you have now all settled well into your new "homes".

JobQuest is an organisation with a very dedicated group of people working across the sections doing great work in our communities, and I continue to be very proud and pleased to chair the Board.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to say thank you to every single employee, contractor and volunteer who has contributed to our success this year. I am sure that everyone who accesses our services also appreciates the work that you do and the difference you make in their lives as told in the stories in the report.

Enjoy the festive season and the chance to relax over the holiday break.



Sydney Carr

Chairman of the Board – Penrith Skills for Jobs Inc

Jackson's Story

When Jackson* was first introduced to a JobQuest job readiness program, he said he "didn't have a clue what it would be about or what we would be doing."

The only reason he showed even the slightest interest was because it offered an opportunity to "get out of the classroom." By his own admission, Jackson felt lost at school.

"I'm not the sort of person to sit down and do work," he said.



What he did like was being outdoors and constructing things with his hands. So, the program – aimed at building capacity and resilience – was the perfect fit for the almost 15-year-old who was unmotivated and disengaged at school.

Jackson soon discovered he would be involved in building a chicken coop for the local Salvation Army Community Gardens. The designing, planning and co-ordinating tasks would encourage Jackson to work autonomously, test his maturity, build his communication skills and challenge him to work as part of a team. The latter initially made him nervous, he said.

"I prefer to work by myself but then I learnt that I can work well as a team too," he said. "I learnt lots of things actually. Like how to use new tools, how to do measurements and co-ordination.

"And I learnt that hard work is good work." It's a mantra that Jackson would use to inspire his peers throughout the program.

"That's what I would say to the other kids to encourage them," he said. In fact, Jackson would share many a motivational speech - a sign of how much his confidence grew throughout the program.

"I think I had self-confidence before but I definitely felt more comfortable and encouraged as time went on," he said.

Jackson said he used his newly acquired skills to gain work experience doing something he loves – working on boats at the local marina. But he was most pleased that the program helped him cope with family challenges.

"Being at home isn't that great," he said. "My sisters have left, there's no internet... I really just wanted to get a job, and find some type of work, whether I got paid or not. I love working on the boats coz I love being on the water.

One day I want to travel the world."

*not his real name

Colleen* looks forward to two events occurring every week: dinner at her son's house and her weekly visits to the local club for a game of bingo.

The latter is an opportunity for the 75-year-old widow to build social connections after a challenging 12 months. But she said she couldn't do it without the support of JobQuest.

Colleen was first introduced to JobQuest when she was recovering from lymphoma. She was wheelchair bound and living in a care facility but the home support she received meant she could return to her home.

"I couldn't do any cleaning. I could just about walk," she recalled.

"They would come and help me with the housework and lawns. It made it so much easier. If it weren't for their help, I wouldn't have been able to come home," she said.

With her health now on the up, Colleen was keen to get out and about more, but again needed assistance to be able to leave the home.

JobQuest staff accompany Colleen to her weekly game of bingo which she credits for improving her social wellness.

"Every Friday, someone picks me up and we go to bingo. They stay with me," she said. "I like being out with the old people. We have a good time together.

"But I'm not comfortable being on my own just yet. I wouldn't be able to enjoy going if wasn't for JobQuest.

"Unless I go to my son's house, it's my only outing. I look forward to it every week."



*not her real name

At the start of the new school term earlier this year, mum of two Meredith* found herself in despair. Her 15-year-old daughter Kylie* had been suspended twice the previous year and the prospect of expulsion felt real.

Kylie had been on the receiving end of taunts by bullies since the start of high school but more recently she had started to retaliate. And the counterattacks had become physical.

"Kylie loved school up until she reached high school. That's when the bullying started and, with social media involved, it became intense," Meredith explained.

"She wasn't motivated, she was extremely disengaged, and she was being annoying to the teachers and back chatting. She felt unsupported by them. But when she started becoming withdrawn from the family, that's when I really worried.

"I honestly didn't know how we were going to go on with school. She felt like she had no direction and the dread we faced at the start of the year was ... I just didn't know what we were going to do."

That's when the school's careers advisor recommended JobQuest and Meredith said that was the start of Kylie's transformation.

"Her approach was a complete turnaround," she said. "Kylie was up and ready early and, for the first time in a really long time, she wanted to go to school. Her maturity just changed.

"The positive reinforcement she was getting through the program really suited her and she loved the flexibility of the delivery too. The combination of course-work and work experience worked so well for her."

So well in fact that Kylie was offered paid employment at the warehouse she was attending for work experience. But it wasn't all smooth-sailing. Kylie said she felt overwhelmed when the program first started.

"But then I thought I'm not going anywhere at school so I have to do this for myself," Kylie said.

"They gave me confidence to go to workplaces and talk to bosses and ask questions, how to be formal in a work environment and write emails – real life skills that I needed.

"The person I was before was lazy. I didn't care about anything and I wasn't trying to achieve any goals. "But now I have a plan for myself and I push myself to go further."

With her sights set on a career in carpentry, Kylie is enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship course that will start in the new year.

"She has a plan and she has some direction now," Meredith said. "I don't know what we would have done without JobQuest."

*not their real names



Liam's Story

When Liam* was first introduced to a jobs-focussed training course through JobQuest, he was reserved and detached.

His approach to the program – which aimed to equip students with the skills that would make the transition from school to employment successful – was much like his attitude to school: he was disconnected.

"I would describe myself as an ok student," Liam said. "I'm reliable and always at school. But I dislike the structure of school." Then something shifted in Liam as the course progressed. He eagerly participated in group activities, immersed himself in the tasks and even started to give serious thought to his future.

"It changed the way I got involved with activities in a more positive way," he said.

"It helped me to develop skills and get back on track. It was a fun and social time as well," he said of the "ice-breaker games" which he said helped him become more social. More than social, Liam also became a leader. He was soon allocating tasks to his peers, showing initiative and confidence.

But it wasn't all smooth sailing for Liam. His use of profanities marred the gains he was making. So, an incentive activity was devised to encourage students to improve their behaviours, including Liam's language.

Using a pay slip system, students had money deducted from their 'weekly wage' if they were late, used their phones, swore or used any disrespectful language.

Competitive by nature, and keen to earn the most money, Liam learnt to control his impulses. He made a conscious effort to think first before speaking. The task also helped the students with their numeracy skills.

Liam credits the program for shaping his behaviour and motivating him to take advantage of new opportunities and experiences like his part-time job and work experience in landscaping.

*not his real name



Irene's Story

Irene* cringes when she recalls the state of her home two years ago.

"It was an absolute bombshell," she utters quietly. "I just couldn't get on top of it. I had a bad knee and other health problems and to be honest, I'm not a good cleaner. Then the grandchildren would come round and the place would get messy.

"It got to the point I was copping criticism about my house not being clean. It was putting people off."



Irene said she felt she was caught in an endless cycle: the messiness would impact her mental health, and her worsening mental health would stymie any desire to clean. Her anxiety soared.

"I felt stuck and I didn't know how to get out," she said.

Irene knew she needed help if she was going to "get on top of it".

And that help came in the form of JobQuest which not only provided assistance with house cleaning but supported Irene to establish some daily living skills that would help her maintain order.

"They would come once a week to help me clean but they also helped me with little tips to get me in a good place," she said.

Two years later, Irene's reliance on JobQuest for support around the home has dropped off. And she's proud of that.

"They used to come every fortnight but now they only come once every three months," she said. "I'm never as fast or efficient as them but I definitely feel like it's come together.

"They taught me to wash as I go and I don't let it get out of control like before."

But there was one piece of advice that resonated most with Irene. "That it's ok to do (housework) when I feel like it, no matter what time of day it is. That's good because there are some days, I'm awake at the crack of dawn and I'm in the mood to clean so I do it then. I'm pleased that it's working so well."

*not her real name

Teagan's Story

In the face of hard times, single mum Teagan* would look for silver linings.

No matter what hardship or challenging situation she was facing, she would rise above and create positivity. "Everyone experiences difficulties but sometimes it helps to put yourself in other peoples' shoes and recognise you're not alone," she said. "There is always someone else doing it tougher than you."

But even for normally upbeat Teagan, her reserves of resilience flagged last year under the weight of the Covid-19 pandemic. "That was a real challenge," Teagan said of 2021, the year she quit her job as a nurse to care full-time for her five-year-old son James*.

"I definitely felt isolated and lonely," she said of the lockdown period.

"It was hard not being able to socialise with people and I couldn't see my family. I could talk to people on the phone and we Face Timed but it's not the same. "And when they eased restrictions and then reimposed them it felt like one minute you have everything and the next second it's taken away. "Covid was a real struggle for us."

Then support arrived in the form of a 'resilience and well-being toolkit' that was delivered to Teagan and other families like hers to bolster their resilience in the face of adversity. Organised by JobQuest, the resource pack contained a resilience and gratitude journal and a set of emotional playing cards to help children (and parents) understand, express and communicate their emotions. Also included was a soft plush toy, storybook and a glitter jar activity.

"I was very emotional when we received our pack and James was very excited by it," Teagan said. "It fitted really well with me and James. "He loved the book. When you read positive messages like that, it changes your mindset and you start to think positively too."

Teagan said she recognised that every family experienced the pandemic differently "and it helped me to know we weren't alone. It was such a beautiful gift that touched my heart." Teagan used the emotion cards to play snap with James. It helped her gauge how lockdown was impacting his well-being.

"Most days he expressed feeling happy but some days he would pick out the cranky card. That helped me better understand how he was coping," she said.

Other families said the resources arrived when they needed them most as their children were feeling disengaged with home learning. They said the activities provided a social connection in the absence of playgroups or extra-curricular activities.



*not their real names

David's Story

Although David* was driven and determined to find a job, he says he lacked the skills to be able to make it happen.

Then he enrolled in a JobQuest program to enhance his literacy skills, develop his ability to work with others and help carve a pathway to a new career. That's when his fortunes changed.

"I had been looking for a job for a while and then the program happened. I didn't think it was going to help and I thought I wouldn't be interested in it but I was," David said.

"I was actually really surprised I got a lot out of it and how willing they were to help me get a job."

David said he suffers anxiety and his mental health "was pretty bad at times". But rather than give up, he requested some time off to speak to his mental health team and get back on track.

"I was so happy the trainer understood. They were fantastic," he said.

Following a successful trial working in property maintenance, David gained employment with Housing NSW which he credits for giving him the lawn mowing experience he needed to progress further.

He is now employed with JobQuest, striking a strong rapport with NDIS clients and his colleagues.

"I really enjoy being able to go out in the world and feel good that I'm working and earning my own money," David said.

David has since obtained his driver's licence and moved into a share home with a friend and his family – two goals he set himself but worried early on that he wouldn't be able to accomplish.

"The course really boosted my confidence and made me realise I could achieve these things," he said. "I didn't think those things were going to happen for me but now it's all falling into place. I'm lucky too that I have a really good family behind me.

"If it wasn't for the course, I think I'd still be out looking for a job."



*not his real name

JobQuest's operations are carried out within 4 quality frameworks which enable our customers to be assured that our services remain at the highest quality. In order to meet the required standards of operation, continuous improvement is embedded into everything we do. The 4 quality frameworks are:

- ISO 45001:2018 Work Health and Safety Management Systems
- National Standards for Registered Training Organisations
- Aged Care Standards – Home Care
- National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] Practise Standards

WORK HEALTH & SAFETY

In August this year JobQuest completed the re-certification audit for ISO45001:2018 WHS Management Systems. There were only some minor observations recorded and the audit went smoothly as usual.

AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALITY AUTHORITY

The RTO staff have completed some major work in moving assessments to an on-line system after previously doing the same for learning, administration and records systems. It is expected that the new assessment system will further enhance excellence in and productivity of, our training services. Continuous monitoring against the RTO standards continues to assist those involved in training to ensure that each student's journey with JobQuest meets with their satisfaction and results in their desired achievement.

AGED CARE QUALITY AGENCY

JobQuest has not been subject to an assessment from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission but we continue to monitor our systems and services against the Aged Care Standards to ensure that our elderly clients receive services of the highest standard.

NDIS PRACTICE STANDARDS

JobQuest successfully undertook a re-registration audit against the NDIS Practice Standards this year with no non-conformance recorded.

Community Partners

JobQuest would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the support of our partners who assist us every step of our way. For all the in-kind support as well as funding and grants, we would like to thank:

365Care	Forsythes Training - Newcastle	NSW Fire and Rescue
Ability Hub	Gotcha 4 Life	NSW Police Force
Ability Options	Greek Welfare Centre	NSW State Debt Recovery Office
ADRA - Cessnock	Hammondcare	Our Lady of Consolation
Afford	Hawkesbury City Council	Pacific Link Housing
AI Group	Hawkesbury Hospital	Penrith City Council
Anglican Parish of Telarah	Hawksbury Skills Inc	Peppercorn Services Inc (Hawkesbury Leisure & Learning)
Anglicare	HBA	Premium Strategies
Animal Welfare League of NSW	Housing NSW	Probus: Rutherford, Metford
Annecto	Hunny Pots Early Learning Centre	Productivity Bootcamp - Penrith
Apprenticeship Careers Australia	Hunter Botanical Gardens	Ronald McDonald House
Apprenticeships R Us	Hunter Multi Cultural Centre	Salvation Army
Australian Catholic University	IGA -	Schools Industry Partnership
Australian Chinese Community	International Child Care College	SES Western Sydney
Australian Defence Force	Joblink Plus - Cessnock and Kurri	Skilling and Employment Squad
Baptist Care Services	Juvenile Justice NSW	St Simeon
Baptist Care- Hope Street	Kincare	Sunnyfield
Barnardos	Kingston Building	Survivors R Us
Barr Group	Lake Macquarie City Council	Sydney Multicultural Services
Blacktown City Council	Lendlease	Tillies Childcare
Break Thru People Solutions	Lifeline - Maitland, Hamilton, Raymond Terrace	TAFE NSW
Brotherhood of St Lawrence	Live Well at Home	Taronga Zoo
Bunnings	Living Care, Ashwood & Green Hills	The Art Gallery of New South Wales
Care Connect	Local Government Training Institute	The Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre
Castle Personnel	Matchworks - Blacktown, Penrith, St Marys, Mt Drutt	The Hills Shire Council
Catholic Education Office	Mai Wel Maitland and Cessnock	The Mount Drutt Hub, Blacktown City Council
Cessnock Leagues Club	Medowie Hardware	The Parliament of New South Wales
Cessnock Mens Shed	Medowie MX	The Place: Charlestown Community Centre
City of Parramatta Council	MEGT Newcastle	Training Services NSW, NSW Department of Industry
Coles Supermarkets	Milabah - Schools as Community Centre	Uniting
Attorney General's Department	Museum of Contemporary Art	Ventia
Dept of Defence	My Gateway	Verto
Immigration & Border Protection	My Home Care	Wahroonga Corporation
Dept of Jobs & Small Business	NECA Training and Apprenticeships	Wellman Strata
Department of Social Services	Newcastle City Council	Wesley Mission
Corporate Partners	North Penrith Neighbourhood Centre	Western Sydney University
Community Migrant Resource Centre	North St Marys Neighbourhood Centre	Western Sydney Zoo
Creative Childcare	North West Disability Services, The Secret Garden & Nursery	Westmead Childrens Hospital
Dungog Neighbour Care	Northcott	WISE Employment
Eastway Carpentry	Notre Dame University	Woolworths Supermarkets
Ella Bache - Sydney	NSW Department of Education	Workskil - Cessnock
EMPOWERability Inc	NSW Department of Family and Community Services	
Endota	NSW Department of Health	
Event Cinemas Kotara and Glendale	NSW Department of Primary Industries	
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre		

Special thanks to all our partnering high schools and public schools. Your dedication and resourcefulness are an inspiration both to our participants and our staff, particularly in such as challenging year.

JobQuest also acknowledges the assistance from our peak bodies including Community Colleges Australia, Waste Management Association of Australia, Aged and Community Services Australia, National Disability Service, Social Traders, Hunter Region Apprenticeship and Traineeship Committee, the Western Sydney Community Forum, the Blue Mountains Interagency and many local Chamber of Commerce organisations. As member, JobQuest continues to find their support invaluable.

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