

ABC RADIO TRANSCRIPT of Tony Delroy's Nightlife Show 28 July 2010 with Tony Abrahams

Tony Delroy:

About eighteen minutes until the latest ABC news and with me in the studio tonight; Ross Lewis, from 'Break Thru People Solutions', and also Keith Mahar, Peer Support Worker for the Woden Community Service.

We are talking about people with a disability getting a breakthrough and a job.

Tony, you actually have specific information here, you actually work for a company that delivers word-accurate captions for deaf kids in schools, and the like.

Tony Abrahams:

Yeah, that's right, Tony.

Tony Delroy:

This is a new innovation?

Tony Abrahams:

Yeah, it is called Ai-Live™. We were on 'The New Inventors' about a month ago. It is a service that we are trying to roll out across Australia, to give deaf kids the same opportunity to access information in mainstream classes as other kids have. It is also a service that would allow deaf people access to the workplace as well, providing them real-time access to meetings. It is a service that is powered by somebody who listens to the content, what is happening, and respeaks into trained speech recognition software. We're looking for people who we can train to be respeakers and they can do this from home. We are looking at this as a whole-of-life solution. Firstly, to deliver access to education and employment for deaf people, but also to allow people who may have physical impairments or mobility issues to actually work from home and earn a decent living, if they have the aptitude to do what we require.

Ross Lewis:

Ross, here. That certainly sounds very interesting and self-employment is one thing we encourage. I have an interesting little story: we had a welder who was deaf and came to see us and had been unemployed for a little while and was finding it hard to work. We sat down with him and said "What abilities do you have?" He explained the welding, and we said "What personal qualifications or what personal qualities?" He said... and he was writing this down, he said "Because I am deaf, I am not easily distracted. Therefore, I will work hard all day." We put that in his resume, we sent it out, within a week he had a job and is still there 10 years later.

Tony Delroy:

Yep, interesting story. It is often, Tony, I guess just the opportunity for people to get access, communication is vital in the 21st Century.

Tony Abrahams:

Yeah, absolutely. And look, it is very similar to what Ross and Keith have been saying, it is about overcoming isolation. Deafness tends to be a disability that is more invisible than others. You see somebody - you don't recognise they have a hearing impairment. Very few people are aware of the fact that there are 160,000 Australians currently out of work and on disability support just because they can't hear.

Tony Delroy:

Yes. And yet our former Prime Minister, John Howard, had hearing aids in both ears. So, you know, it can be done. Tony, thank you very much for highlighting that.