

Michael Costello

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Submission to "Willing To Work"

To whom it may concern,

Re: Disability Discrimination in Employment

I am a Disability Pensioner due to having Asperger Syndrome. My childhood dream job was to work as a Tram Driver in Melbourne. I was employed as a Tram Conductor on a short-term contract in 1993, but my time on the job was only to last 19 months, due to problems dealing with some less than desirable members of the public. After losing this job, I was soon after admitted to Mental Hospital, where I was finally diagnosed. I then did a training course that was aimed at training people as Bus Drivers. I did well at the course, except in the driving area, where I failed to obtain a Bus Licence. But as a result of the course, I was able to obtain a job as a School Bus Supervisor (Second Person on a Disabled Kids School Bus).. This job however did not last, as I had difficulty coping with certain aspects of this job.

After leaving this job, I applied for the Disability Support Pension, and have been in receipt of this payment since early 1996. Since then, I have done a lot of volunteer work, mainly in the Community Television and Audio/Visual Production areas. While there is potential for me to do paid work in this industry, the jobs are usually "reserved" for so-called "normal" people that are well educated..

I am also an early school leaver, having only stayed at School to year 9, again due to problems caused by my then undiagnosed Aspergers. I am also overweight. I do not tend to do to well in formal education settings, tending to prefer working things out for myself, so I have few, if any, "pieces of paper" to impress employers with. At least for the last ten or so years, I have been open about my Aspergers, and included the entry "Disabilities: Asperger Syndrome" on the last line of my resume. This is because I would rather be open about the condition at the outset, and if an employer chooses not to hire me as a result, then most likely it is a place I would not be comfortable in working at anyway.

I have tried to use the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service to assist in my case, but the first thing they did when I walked though the door was tell me that because I was overweight, I would be unlikely to get a job and that I would have to lose weight, etc before they would look at finding work for me. I then walked out on my appointment, never to return. Prior to that, around the time I went on the Disability Pension, I used a specialist Autism Spectrum employment service. I stuck with it for a number of months, but I got sick of the regular meetings with other sufferers of the same condition as myself. I was also sick of them trying to push me into areas of employment I would not have been able to enjoy doing.

So now I manage my own case in relation to employment matters and I am not registered with any Job Agency, as I do not have any faith in any of these services. I also do not desire to be "forced" into a job that I do not consider myself to be suitable for. I am afraid that in my case, I need to be very picky about jobs, because my traits make it very hard for me to cope with jobs in which I have no real genuine interest.

I have applied for various jobs since this time, with little success. At one stage, I was called in for an interview for a job related to the Video Production industry, but I felt afterwards that they only called me in to have a laugh at my expense. I have applied for around 10 or so jobs over the years since 1996 in various industries, but I do not actively look for work or apply for jobs as I find the whole process depressing and soul destroying, as the vast majority of my job applications result in never hearing back from the employer.

As things stand, at the present time, I have almost given up all hope of ever finding suitable paid employment, and I dread the prospect that I will be on the Pension until I move onto the Age Pension. However, when I come across a possible position, I give serious consideration to applying. Usually, however, it will be ruled out by, e.g., "High stress position" or "Well developed interpersonal skills essential" Even when I feel able to apply, it is soul destroying when there is not even an acknowledgment. Not even a crumb of comfort which might – just might – keep a glimmer of hope alive.....

Yours Sincerely,

Michael Costello