



Narelle with patient Carolyn

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Narelle Walsh

FULFILLMENT IN HELPING OTHERS

During the course Narelle had to contend with higher than expected course standards, a move from an on-campus to correspondence course model and some of her classmates dropping out of the course.

In over 10 years working in horticulture, administration, public relations and hospitality Narelle Walsh knew something was missing; the feeling that her work was not making a difference to the things that she values most.

Then in late 2006, Narelle, through a friend of a friend, came to understand life for a person with a disability. This not only developed her empathy but pointed her towards a career as an Attendant Support Worker. Helping others achieve a better quality of life, interacting with different people and participating in community activities were all the things that Narelle had been craving for.

In February 2007 Narelle commenced with DASSI as an Attendant Support Worker and was enrolled in the Certificate IV in Disability Work.

However with a decrease in salary, the rising cost of petrol and interest rate increases Narelle initially found working with DASSI difficult. The sense of purpose and meaning that attracted Narelle to the role had been eroded by the financial pressures that everyday Australian families face.

Fortunately DASSI was able to offer Narelle, along with all other Attendant Support Workers, work in her local community of Bacchus Marsh, flexibility in hours to enable her to work for the Department of Human Services at the same time, a pay increase on completion of her Certificate IV and a further pay increase when the new Collective Agreement is implemented in 2008.

"I had finally found something that I absolutely loved to do but my financial situation was causing a great deal of stress," Narelle recalls. "Luckily, I was given a light at the end of the tunnel and I haven't looked back since."

Narelle has since completed her Certificate IV and has gained a significant amount of insight and skills into her role and the system of attendant care. "I learnt about all the policies, procedures, documentation and administrative aspects of the role as well as practical skills on medication, manual handling and behavioral management," Narelle says. "I am clearer on the role, its expectations and boundaries and feel empowered to take a leadership role on things that I was a little hesitant to do in the past. Incident reporting is a perfect example of something that I was bit frightened of but not any more. For this reason it is a must do for all Attendant Support Workers."

"I regard the difficulties as a positive in that the value of completing the course is now greater than I originally thought," Narelle says. "I am motivated to do more study and I am confident in my ability to complete that study."

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