

ERICA BURLEIGH



TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE. PROFILE No 12



Course: **Certificate III in Customer Contact**
GTO: **Work and Training, TAS**
Host Employer: **Aurora Energy**

How long has it been since you left school and made a career choice?

I left school when I was 16 and I'm 23 now. When I finished school I did a beauty therapy course for a year. After that I became sick with Meningococcal Meningitis, so I had to choose a different career path. I couldn't do beauty therapy with my vision impairment so that's when I had to think about what kind of career I actually wanted to go into. I'm really interested in working with people, I deal well with people, talking to people on the phone and in person. So I wanted to do something with people.

With your vision impairment are there limited opportunities for you?

I tried lots of different things. I worked in retail jobs, I tried to do reception work but there's just that many things that you don't realise that you actually need your eyesight for. Mum knew somebody who worked in a call centre who was totally blind. And so I thought, well if he's totally blind and I'm partially blind, then surely I could do something like that.

Have you discovered you have a passion for what you're doing?

I love working with customers and with people. Whether I want to stay talking to people on the phone all the time I don't know, but I love working with people, for people and I'd be interested in motivational speaking and that kind of thing to help people.

With Group Training you're able to move around from employer to employer. Had you moved around before you found this position?

Yes, when I first finished my call centre certificate at TAFE, I first started at the Guide Dogs call centre doing telemarketing and that type of thing, which probably built up my confidence a lot. And then after that I went to a Telstra Call Centre and worked there for two months and then realised that there were too many barriers and I couldn't keep going. Then I got employed by Aurora just temporarily and they've bent over backwards for me and done everything and helped me throughout this traineeship.

How important is working and earning an income and how does that balance with your lifestyle?

I'm building a house at the moment and that was one of my major goals to do. So obviously if I didn't have a job I wouldn't be able to fulfil that goal. And I want to go travelling and that kind of thing, so having a job and a job to me is not all about money. A job to me is basically doing something on a daily basis and living life to the full.

What are some of the major achievements that you've had from your career over the last five years?

I won the Tasta Equity Award, the Tasmanian Group Training Award and a National Group Training Award. I won the encouragement award from my GTO, Work and Training, recently as well.

Are you saving money. Have you got lots of friends. What's happening for you?

Friends treat me like everybody else. So I'm just, yeah I've got a very big social life, I'm absolutely flat out.

There was something that you said earlier about your disability. What did you say?

I said that I don't look at it as a disability, I look at it as a challenge.

That's a great thing to say. OK, excellent, thank you.

Erica is a Tasmanian State Training Awards Equity Award winner and a National Group Training winner. Work and Training and Aurora Energy worked together to provide Erica with the correct software and hardware and selected the appropriate units to allow her to complete her traineeship. Her outstanding work performance has resulted in ongoing employment and her ambition is to become a motivational speaker.



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