

From PTSD, anxiety, and depression, to saving lives as a paramedic

Issue 85 | May 2019



Bec sought help to manage her mental health conditions before scoring her dream job

We recently heard from Bec, who sought help to manage her mental health conditions, before scoring her dream job with NSW Ambulance.

Here is Bec's story:

"When I came to EPIC I was lost. I was struggling with severe PTSD, anxiety, depression, and very low self-worth. I didn't know where I wanted to be or how to get there, but I knew that this wasn't it and I couldn't give up.

I worked with EPIC's Lismore team over many years. They were so welcoming that I found I enjoyed going to my appointments.

Over time I became more involved in volunteer organisations State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, and Lifeline. The skills I was learning - not just doing the job but also talking to people and making friends - meant I was becoming more confident.

Over time, the guys at EPIC began to say that I was a different person. I thought, 'You're kidding, right? I'm a ball of nerves!' I hadn't even realised how far I'd come. By this stage I was close to finishing my degree, I'd done a diploma at TAFE, and I had a job. But I still I had to keep moving. So I did.

Then out of the blue I received a phone call from NSW Ambulance asking if I'd like to continue my application to become a paramedic. This began a wild ride for the next 12 months of trying to jump every hurdle placed in front of me. But I pushed on and finally I received a call saying, 'Congratulations, you start in Sydney in two weeks, then you'll be off to Broken Hill for 12 months.'

So here I am starting this new journey to become a paramedic. Don't get me wrong, I still struggle with my anxiety and depression, but I've learnt ways to face it and I now have many friends I can turn to for support. Now I look at every obstacle that's ahead as a way to build my strength and resilience."

We love seeing what our job seekers can achieve with the right support crew by their side.

In this edition, we're showcasing stories that our job seekers have shared, in their own words. We hope these stories inspire you to take action and tackle your own goals.

The EPIC Enquirer is distributed to connect and inspire more than 3,500 job seekers across Australia who are being supported by EPIC on their employment journey. If you would like to receive The EPIC Enquirer in your letterbox you can subscribe at bit.ly/EPICenquirer.

You can also connect with us through Facebook for more job seeker success stories.

To connect with your local EPIC Service Centre call 13 EPIC (13 3742) or email us on hello@epicassist.org
epicassist.org

 EPICAssistAU

 EPIC_AU_

 EPIC Assist

 EPIC Assist

CEO update by Bill Gamack

Welcome to the May edition of the Enquirer- it's hard to believe we're almost halfway through 2019 already!

This month, we're encouraging our job seekers to invite a friend into EPIC, to say G'day in May. We love helping people find work they enjoy and are proud of, and we want to change the lives of even more job seekers. If you have a friend with disability who needs a hand finding work, introduce them to EPIC today.

We understand that everyone is at a different stage on their journey to employment. That's why we take the time to get to know each individual, and understand what you need to succeed. There is no 'one size fits all' approach with us- we always treat you as the individual you are.

In this edition of the Enquirer we share personal accounts of people that we've helped, who are all at various stages of their employment journey. I hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as we enjoyed helping create them!



Steph faces her future with confidence

"Being on the autism spectrum has affected my whole life in a variety of ways. During adulthood, it has had a significant impact on my ability to find long-term employment that fits my strengths and qualifications.

I obtained a Bachelor in Creative Writing and an Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design on the Sunshine Coast, but job openings were scarce and successful applicants were expected to have prior experience. After unsuccessfully applying for jobs for several months I was an anxious and depressed mess. I felt that I had been overlooked by the employers, that my work wasn't as good as my peers, and that there didn't seem to be a place for me in the workforce.

A few months later, I was referred to an excellent psychologist who helped me deal with this negative thinking. My psychologist recommended that I work with EPIC in Windsor, and in the 11 months I have been with EPIC, I feel much more prepared and confident about re-entering the workforce.

While at an appointment at EPIC I heard about meetup.com, and through it I was able to find a couple of groups which meet weekly. Just going to that first session allowed me to break through the block that had kept me frozen for the last year. I now go to those groups every week.

I still have negative thoughts about my lack of work, but I have made a lot of progress, and no longer feel that life is getting



away from me. I think that I continue to grow as a person every year, and as time goes by, I will surely be in an even better position than I am now."

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for Steph, but she's feeling optimistic about her future

Tom's journey from polio to finding his passion

"My name is Tom and I was born on Thursday Island in 1958. When I was very young, a great sickness swept through the whole of the Torres Strait Islands. That sickness was polio, and I became ill. I was not able to walk and had to crawl on my bottom everywhere I went. My parents had to do everything for me.

I got my first job at the Thursday Island General Hospital at the age of 18. I worked as a Cleaner and Orderly, and remained there for over 10 years.

When I was due to take my long service leave, I decided to go back to Cairns, as I had family there and Cairns had better employment prospects. This became the place I set up for the rest of my life, making a home where I could raise my family.

I got in touch with EPIC initially to help me look for casual employment. As well as that, EPIC has given me the opportunity to finish my studies in Community Services, which I am very happy about, as I would very much like to work with troubled youths who are at risk with drugs and the police."



Tom's come a long way, and we couldn't be happier to have played a role in his success.

How Peter's noise-cancelling headphones have transformed his life

"My desk was moved temporarily to a busy corridor, closer to two large conference rooms and a lunch room. The large quantity of noisy foot traffic was greatly distracting, and I was seeing my productivity decrease.

Since receiving the noise-cancelling headphones, my world has been turned upside down. When I wear them, I am in my own little 'bubble' and I am able to focus on my tasks without interruption.

I have put signs on my desk that say I may not hear people if they attempt to speak with me. These signs have also had an added bonus of greatly improving my general wellbeing as I'm also asking people to attract my attention from the front (and not by touching!). I quickly noticed that the focus on my work would last hours, rather than seconds or minutes, which has led me to set an alarm on my smartwatch to remind that it's time to go home! Otherwise I fear I wouldn't notice that I've worked beyond a regular day.

My headphones have also made life at home easier as it is taking me a shorter period of time to 'hide away' and regain the ability to hold a conversation with my wife and interact with my dog. Would I recommend these to others? Absolutely!"



Peter is on the autism spectrum, and his new noise-cancelling headphones are helping him focus at work.

Bubbly Bree spreads joy around Caloundra



Bree has been putting smiles on faces at EPIC's Caloundra Service Centre since she connected with us in 2016.

"My name is Bree and I've been going to EPIC since 2016. First EPIC helped me find a job collecting trolleys, which I absolutely loved. I like working outside and being active, so it suited me well.

Now I am delivering pamphlets for 8 hours a week. I also love this job, because I can get my steps up while also getting paid. I walk up to 9km in a 4-hour shift, and often send my steps to my Employment Consultant so she can see how well I'm doing.

Outside of work, I am interested in many different activities, including ten-pin bowling, swimming and table tennis.

One of my greatest athletic achievements has been competing in last year's Special Olympics Australia National Games, in Adelaide. I received gold in 100m freestyle, gold in 50m backstroke, silver in 50m freestyle and fourth place in 50m freestyle relay.

I'm very proud of what I have achieved so far in life, and am looking forward to many more adventures in the future."

Are you ready to share your story?

We're always thrilled to receive updates about how our job seekers are progressing, in work and life. Sharing your story can encourage other job seekers to connect with EPIC, and find the support they need to reach their employment goals.

Contact us today to tell your story. Visit epicassist.org/contact-us/



EPIC Events

THRIVING NOW'S NEURODIVERSITY AND EMPLOYMENT SYMPOSIUM

This event is an opportunity for EPIC job seekers who are on the autism spectrum, or with ADHD or Dyslexia, to attend and learn about services that are available and also opportunities that are on the horizon.

EPIC is proud to be sponsoring this event.

Friday 31 May
9am - 4pm

Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron
578 Royal Esplanade, Manly QLD

TICKETS: thrivingnow.net



GLOBAL DATES

20-26 May

National Volunteers Week

29 May

Wear White at Work

30 May

World MS Day

June

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

10-16 June

Men's Health Week

27 June

PTSD Awareness Day

7-14 July

NAIDOC Week

24 July

Stress Down Day

Feedback from participants

“

My caseworker understands my physical and mental health conditions, and doesn't try to force me into jobs where I would fail-unlike other job providers.

Mark

”

“

EPIC have very caring, supportive staff that have gone above and beyond my expectations to help me gain work. They give excellent advice and guidance, and always stay in touch to see how I am going.

Monica

”

“

EPIC consultants provide job search support that is respectfully tailored to my abilities.

Maree

”

DID YOU KNOW...



We can support your training

If you're looking to kick-start a career in business or retail, you can do it with us! EPIC Education Assist (RTO ID 41218) is our registered training organisation, offering the following courses:

- BSB20115 Certificate II in Business
- BSB30415 Certificate III in Business Administration
- SIR20216 Certificate II in Retail Services
- SIR30216 Certificate III in Retail

If you live in Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast or the Gold Coast, you may also be interested in CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support - Disability Specialisation, which will prepare you for roles in the disability support sector.

For more information, visit epicassist.org/training, call (07) 3857 5085 or email training@epicassist.org