



29

PRIME MINISTER

HONOURS FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

A Victorian timber company and a western Sydney health service today shared the honours a national presentation for businesses which employ people with disabilities.

At a prestigious ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra, the Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard, announced the two national business winners of the *1997 Prime Minister's Employer of The Year Awards*.

Dormit Pty Ltd, which processes timber into components for pallet construction and employs 37 people -- including 10 with disabilities -- is the national small business winner.

The national winner of the large business section -- the Wentworth Area Health Service -- employs 127 people with a disability in its diverse organisation which is accountable for seven hospitals, 10 community health centres and a Health Promotion Centre.

In addition, two Western Australian organisations, Curtin University and Australia Post's WA division took out the national awards for a Higher Education Institution and a Commonwealth Agency employer.

The Awards were presented by Mr Howard and the Federal Minister for Family Services, the Hon. Judi Moylan MP.

The national winners of the small and large business categories were chosen from the group of winners announced over the past two weeks in each State and Territory.

The Awards are made annually to employers who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to employing people with a disability.

"I am pleased to see that since the Awards began eight years ago, more and more Australian businesses are recognising the valuable contribution which people with disabilities can bring to the workplace, not only in productivity, but in loyalty and enthusiasm," Mr Howard said.

"The Awards are judged on a range of important criteria, including initiatives implemented by employers to help staff with disabilities in the workplace, their level of integration into the business, their length of employment, the nature of the work given to them, and the payment of award wages.

“The two national winners in the small and large business categories have both demonstrated an outstanding commitment to employing people with disabilities, and it is very gratifying to see our Commonwealth agencies and higher education institutions also realising the benefits of giving people with disabilities a fair go,” the Prime Minister said.

The Minister for Family Services, Mrs Judi Moylan, said many companies were realising that people with disabilities brought valuable skills and ability to the job. “This year, there were more than 300 nominations for the Awards, proving that employers value enthusiastic workers who are dedicated and can contribute much to productivity,” she said. “This shows up in low levels of absenteeism and staff turnover and the enormous benefits which result from giving people a chance.

“The Awards are an important element of the Government's commitment, aiming to ensure that people with disabilities in our community have the same rights, choices and opportunities taken for granted by other Australians.

“Employers are realising and appreciating the fact that we have a pool of untapped talent in people who just happen to have a disability, and who are willing and able to work within a wide cross section of the workforce,” Mrs Moylan added.

4 September 1997