

MEDIA RELEASE

May 2022

Activ leads industry transformation in disability services

WA's leading disability services provider Activ, is charting a new direction by closing the large-scale industrial work sites it has run since the 1950s in favour of more personalised support and training for people with disability.

Announcing the change today, Chief Executive Officer Michael Heath said Activ was taking a leading role in a transformation that was happening in disability services across Australia.

Activ will close large-scale work sites at seven locations across metropolitan and regional WA in stages, commencing in July this year. These sites will be replaced with more community-based work and Academy-style independence programs for people with disability.

"When Activ established our first large-scale work site in the 1950s, it was a ground-breaking innovation, providing new work and social opportunities for people with disabilities who were often locked away in institutions or kept behind closed doors. We're proud to have led that push," Mr Heath said.

"However we recognise that the community's expectations – and those of people with disability – have changed a great deal in the last 70 years. The focus has shifted to more targeted and personalised support, tailored to the individual needs of people with disability.

"That change has been reinforced by new Government funding models that make it clear to service providers that we should move away from large-scale supported employment."

Activ is in formal consultation with approximately 90 staff and over 700 supported employees potentially affected by the site closures at Bentley, Osborne Park and Rockingham in the metropolitan area and Bunbury, Busselton, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton regionally.

In place of large-scale industrial work sites, Activ will refocus its efforts on growing community-based work opportunities in smaller settings like cleaning, maintenance and gardening, which allow Activ staff to spend more time with each supported employee.

Activ is also establishing a new Academy to support people with disability to develop skills for independent living, social interaction and to access therapy under three key themes of Live, Play and Work.

"This is a big change, and we understand it may be unsettling for both Activ staff and the people we support," Mr Heath said.

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“We are committed to making this transition as easy as possible and will work closely with each affected person to identify the best available options to meet their needs. This might include transfer to smaller, community-based work sites, access to the new Academy services or transition to non-Activ services.

“We are working with the NDIS and Federal Government officials to build up our new services as quickly as possible to provide new and better choices for people with disability.

“Importantly, while the service model will change, Activ remains committed to helping people with disability to enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else, to live a life of their choice, in their community.”

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