



MEDIA RELEASE

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From Physical Burden to Employment Hero: Tom's Story

Last night a 22-year-old wheelchair-bound man won Australia's most prestigious employment award for choosing to dismiss the prejudice of others to become a national role model.

Thomas (Tom) McGann, who lives in Mornington and now works in Dandenong, was named the 2016 Achiever of the Year at the NESa National Employment Services Awards for Excellence in Melbourne.

NESA (National Employment Services Association) is the peak body for the Australian employment and related services industry, and this award was sponsored by the federal Department of Employment.

Tom is an inspiration to everyone. Despite being born with a neuromuscular disorder, he has already completed an Advanced Diploma of Network Security, Diploma of Network Engineering and a Graduate Certificate in Digital Marketing.

Never thinking of himself and always trying to help others, he has also volunteered with numerous organisations, teaching IT skills and tutoring migrants in English as a second language.

So it may seem surprising that Tom invested more than two years looking for meaningful employment. All that changed after he went to MatchWorks. With their assistance, Tom found the perfect position.

He now works at Dandenong's Wooranna Park Primary School as an Educational Technologist. He does not mind travelling 45 minutes by taxi each way to help teach gifted students programming and other computer-related skills. "I sometimes have a group of kids that actually want to learn network engineering, which is amazing to me because it's such a dry topic so to be able to make it interesting is cool," Tom said.

"Another program I help out with is the CoderDojo program, which is where parents, students and IT experts come together to work on some amazing projects. We're 3D printing a robot at the moment!" he said.

Host of the awards, National Employment Services Association (NESa) CEO, Sally Sinclair, said "It takes incredible courage and determination to overcome the level of disadvantage that Tom faced. Thanks to his determination and his employment service provider, MatchWorks, Tom is now reaping the economic, health and social benefits of workforce participation. These Awards truly acknowledge the direct and lasting impact that employment services have on everyday people's lives," she said.

Four other awards were also announced:

- National Champion Employer of the Year, which recognises organisations that give disadvantaged Australians a fair go, was won by Sodexo, a services company that supports mining operations in Western Australia.
- National Employment Consultant of the Year recognises professionals who work to find jobs for disadvantaged Australians. It was won by Penelope Weatherall from Open Minds in Ipswich (QLD).
- Inaugural Excellence in Indigenous Employment Award honours employment services professionals and organisations who find work for Indigenous Australians. It was won by Nicole Findlay from WISE Employment in Melbourne.
- The new Innovation in Disability – Team Award, which recognises employment service providers and employment organisations who have worked together to assist people with a disability, was won by FUSO Geelong and MatchWorks.

The NESAs National Employment Services Awards for Excellence are now in their 12th year.

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Media:

Interviews with Tom – via Lachlan Cowlshaw, MatchWorks, (0407 141 271)

NESA comments – Carole Gregson, Business Manager, NESA (0411 205 717)

General award enquiries - Liz Rivers, Awards Absolute [convenors] (07 5446 4299)