



MEDIA RELEASE

18 October 2023

## Workplace excellence delivers national award for Fruit2Work

Australia's employment services sector is celebrating a Victorian employer that has taken out the 2023 National Employment Services Association (NESA) Award for Employer of the Year.

Founded on the belief that everyone deserves a second chance, Fruit2Work focuses on providing employment to people who have been impacted by the justice system.

Servicing more than 1000 customers in the Greater Melbourne area, Geelong and Ballarat, Fruit2Work is a certified social enterprise and registered charity delivering fresh fruit, milk and pantry items along with vending services.

Fruit2Work General Manager Simon Fenech said that Fruit2Work's fully inclusive employment policy ensures no barriers and no judgment.

'Our flexible employment model accommodates employees' release conditions and personal circumstances, enabling parole obligations and other appointments to be met alongside work commitments,' said Mr Fenech.

'We also want to see our employees build their vocational skills and open up pathways to broader opportunities. We actively promote talent from within and 80% of new appointments or promotions are awarded to internal candidates.

'To date, Fruit2Work has created more than 150 job opportunities and successfully transitioned over 100 employees, supporting them to back on their feet, gain ongoing employment, reconnect with family, and contribute to society in a meaningful way,' Mr Fenech said.

NESA Chief Executive Kathryn Mandla said, since the inaugural Awards in 2004, Australia's employment services sector has gone from strength to strength.

'The record number of award nominations this year is testament to the strong partnership between Australia's employment services providers, the dedication and commitment of their frontline staff and those employers committed to an inclusive workplace for people from all walks of life,' said Ms Mandla.

'Our 2023 Award winners and finalists across all three categories - Champion Employer of the Year, Achiever of the Year and Employment Consultant of the Year – represent an incredible range of professional and personal achievement.

Doreen Micallef, Workforce Australia's Victorian State Manager at WISE Employment, who nominated Fruit2Work, attests to the transformational impact that Fruit2Work has on participants' lives.

'Due to the welcoming and inclusive work environment at Fruit2Work, employees are reinvigorated and have a sense of purpose and renewed self-esteem,' Ms Micallef said.

Mr Fenech said that the award really goes to the amazing Fruit2Work employees who show up every day determined to turn their lives around.

'We are beyond proud to say that over our seven years of operation, Fruit2Work employees have achieved a remarkable zero recidivism rate, against a Victorian state record of almost one in two people returning to the system within two years,' said Mr Fenech.

Ms Mandla said Fruit2Work is an excellent example of what's possible when an employer embraces the potential of a diverse and inclusive workforce and commits to setting their employees up for success.

'My sincere congratulations to all award winners and finalists, and the thousands of dedicated employment services professionals who support more than 500,000 job seekers in this sector,' said Ms Mandla.

ENDS

**Media contact:**

Orla Thompson  
0403 852 800 | [media@nesa.com.au](mailto:media@nesa.com.au)

## 2023 NESAs Awards for Excellence:

### **Champion Employer of the Year | Fruit2Work (nominated by WISE Employment)**

This Award recognises employers who demonstrate excellence in employment inclusion of disadvantaged participants.

*Award sponsored by Readytech*

Finalists: Acciona and Ferrovial Joint Venture (AFJV) (nominated by Global Skills)  
WorkControl Pty Ltd (nominated by Sureway Employment and Training)

### **Achiever of the Year | Joseph Paley (nominated by Workskil Australia)**

This Award recognises a former participant who has overcome extraordinary disadvantage to achieve employment.

*Award sponsored by Jobs Bank*

Finalists: Nathan Bell (nominated by Sureway Employment and Training)  
Thomas Wright (nominated by ASURIA)

### **Employment Consultant of the Year | Hafez Zamani (nominated by APM)**

This Award recognises employment services professionals who demonstrate excellence in helping disadvantaged Australians achieve employment inclusion.

*Award sponsored by Aware Super*

Finalists: Amanda Baker (nominated by CoAct Connect + Youth Projects Werribee)  
Kirsty Campbell (nominated by IntoJobs)

### **Read all [Award winners' and finalists' profiles](#)**

#### [About NESAs](#)

The National Employment Services Association (NESAs) is the peak body for the Australian employment services sector. Our member organisations support more than 500,000 Australians facing barriers to work to find sustainable, ongoing employment through tailored labour assistance programs, vocational education and training, and wrap-around social and health services. Through partnerships with respected national and international research institutes, NESAs works with government, not-for-profit organisations and the private sector to support design and delivery of effective labour market assistance and social policy. We advocate for an inclusive Australian workforce that offers employment opportunities for all Australians who can and want to work.