



A Better Future

Stories of Change: Open Employment Trials

A partnership between Good Sammy Enterprises
and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, 2023-2026



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Stories of Change: Open Employment Trials

For every person with intellectual or other disability who has ever been told what they can't do, this is a report about what happens when someone finally asks them what they can. Over three years, Good Sammy Enterprises and the Paul Ramsay Foundation set out to build real pathways from supported employment into open employment - not as a policy exercise, but as a promise to the people who came through the door.

What follows are the numbers behind that promise, and the people who lived it: those who learned to travel independently, spoke up for the roles they wanted, completed training, opened bank accounts for their own wages, and started imagining futures - in politics, in games design, behind the wheel of a bus - that once felt out of reach.

The mission was simple to state and hard to deliver: build practical, choice-based employment pathways that help people with disability gain confidence, skills, income and independence- while helping employers become genuinely inclusive workplaces.

Three years on, the results speak for themselves. Three participants moved into full award-wage open employment. Dozens more gained invaluable employment skills, tested new workplaces, and discovered (many for the first time) what it feels like to be trusted with real work and real responsibility. Every number in this report represents a person who chose to try, and a network that chose to back them.



85+

people expressed
interest in open
employment



60

Completed
open-employment
planning



33

Traineeship
participants



3

Moved into full-
award wage
employment



The Challenge

For too long, the pathway from supported to open employment has been more theoretical than real. People with disability continue to run into the same wall: limited work experience, low expectations from the people around them, unreliable transport, funding settings that don't flex with a person's progress and employers who want to do the right thing but don't know how.

Meanwhile, employers told us the same thing from the other side: goodwill was never the problem. What they lacked was practical support- help turning good intentions into accessible recruitment, tailored roles, on-the-job mentoring and genuinely inclusive workforce planning.

Our Approach

Built with people, not just for them

The trials paired Good Sammy's employment expertise with participant choice, family input, employer partnership and independent evaluation from the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW and the Centre for Social Impact at UWA. What began as a pilot grew into a structured Service Delivery Model, with Employment Development Partners guiding every step- discovery, onboarding, referrals, plan reviews and exits.

Adjustments that met people where they were

Job carving. Tailored tasks. Flexible hours. Transport solutions. Mentor support. Gradual, supported exposure to unfamiliar workplaces. For many participants, the hybrid model was the safe bridge between the world they knew and the open employment they were working toward.

Training that opened doors

Job-readiness support and mentoring ran across Good Sammy's business streams and partner workplaces. Giving employers hands-on experience of inclusive employment, and participants the qualifications and confidence to back their ambitions.

Stories of Change

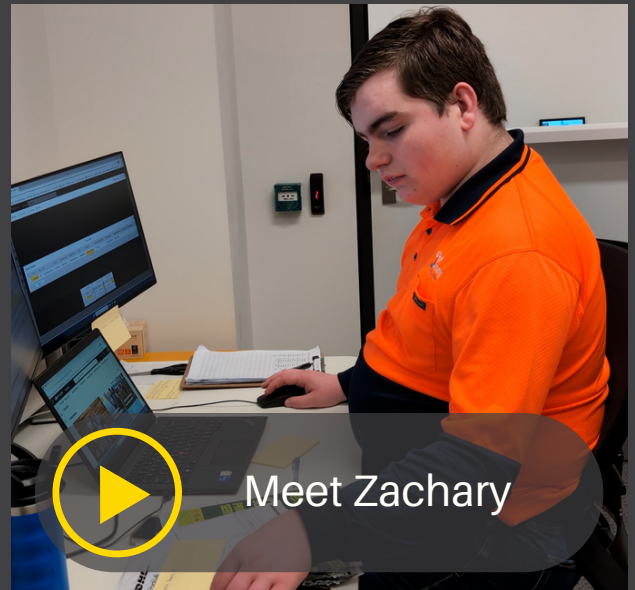
Behind every statistic in this report is a person who took a risk on something new. These are their stories, in their own words.

Zachary — Future supply worker

Zachary has been with Good Sammy for almost three years, beginning in retail before moving into a contractor role with Western Power.

Since joining the Open Employment Trial, he has grown his goals, completed a traineeship certificate and earned his forklift licence.

Zachary enjoys the professionalism of his new workplace and the steady, meaningful work it offers.



“As you grow your skills and confidence, your go from this is the only place I’ll get to work, to I might be able to go to this place or this place.

Zachary

He has become more independent, stepping up to support others in the mailroom when training was limited. His next goal is a paid role at award wage, ideally in warehousing, supply or even FIFO work. Zachary’s story shows him learning that his progress is earned on his own merit.



“I was really nervous when Zachary started working – He came and he gave it a go and he absolutely loves it.

Sherri, Zachary’s Mum

Keisha — Aspiring mentor

Keisha is a hip hop dancer who enjoys meeting new people, getting out of the house and staying active. After completing a Certificate III in Retail, she joined Good Sammy's Open Employment Trial when her Maddington store closed and she wanted to stay in paid work rather than return to volunteering.

Since starting, Keisha has taken on mailroom tasks, met contractors, learnt new systems and built confidence juggling different responsibilities. With support from mentors, she is developing goals for the future and hopes to become a mentor herself.

Keisha says she is kind, friendly, funny and always ready to help others at work.



“ I care for other people and I want to give back what they gave to me.

Keisha

**Endorsing the trials impact,
Good Sammy CEO Kane Blackman said:**

“ This partnership shows how inclusive employment journey's that cater and adapt to different learning needs can empower people with disability, not penalise them. This way they build knowledge, gain independence and access the same choices and opportunities in employment and study as people without disability.

”

Ava, 18 — Aspiring baker

Ava loves sketching, hot baths, and snuggling with the family's cats, dogs and rabbit. She joined Good Sammy to get work experience in a kitchen, to be part of a team and to move closer to her dream of running a bakery of her own. She already knows her way around a cake, and she's proud of it.

“ **My dream is to own my own patisserie**

Ava

Ava started on simple cleaning tasks—boring, by her own admission, but she understood she had to master the basics of the kitchen before anything else. She was anxious at first, so she began taking notes and memorising recipes to build her confidence.

When the chef first trusted her with savoury items like pizza dough, she rose to it — and when he later needed cakes made, Ava stepped up again, eventually testing her skills further by baking eclairs from scratch.

Today, Ava is working towards obtaining her driver's licence and enrolled at TAFE completing her Certificate III in Patisserie.

“ **[Good Sammy has] completely transformed our life and given Ava an amazing opportunity to be something more.**

Amanda, Ava's Mum





Xavier, 17 — Recycling Centre Attendant

Xavier came to Good Sammy through a genuine interest in recycling and the environment, drawn by a program that supports people who, like him, have struggled at school and in other workplaces. Outside work, he's a PlayStation player, a kayaker, and a devoted rewatcher of favourite TV shows.

Work hasn't always been easy for Xavier - fast-paced shifts, noise, and processing pressure had been overwhelming, and maths-heavy tasks made some career paths feel out of reach. But with a dedicated mentor and patient colleagues, he pushed through the nervousness. Today he is proud of how far his confidence has come.

Jude, Xavier's mum, reflected that his journey with Good Sammy has been life changing, giving Xavier something every parent hopes for: purpose, pride and a place to belong.

Through his work at Containers for Change, completing the DRIVE program, undergoing forklift training, work experience at REMONDIS Australia and now open employment with TOMRA, Xavier has grown into a confident worker who knows his contribution matters.

Good Sammy has walked beside him, adapting, learning and finding better solutions along the way.

Today, Jude sees Xavier blossoming - proud of his work, connected to community and gently inspiring friends to seek purpose too.

“It's just life changing, and I see it every day in my son.

Jude, Xavier's mum





This job has given me hope that I can find worthwhile jobs even with my difficulties. GSE has the best approach to being inclusive I have seen.

Xavier



See where Xavier is now

Tyler, 19 — Data Entry

When Tyler finished school in 2024, he wasn't sure where he would fit in the workforce. With support from Good Sammy, he found a role that is building his skills and his confidence.

During his final year of school, Tyler signed up for a workplace skills traineeship with Good Sammy. The program gave him practical experience, a nationally recognised certificate, and his first taste of real-world work.

"It was pretty convenient," Tyler said with a grin. "Plus, you get paid for it."

Armed with his traineeship, Tyler landed a role at financial services company Paywise. His role involves processing receipts and member data, and Tyler approaches the work with focus and energy.

"I like to make it a bit of a game," he explained. "I see how many I can get done in a day. It keeps me focused and makes the time go faster."

Tyler began with a single four-hour shift each week. Over time this grew into three shifts, and recognising his dedication, Paywise offered Tyler a permanent role which has continued to grow.

And while Tyler is thriving at work, he already has his sights set on the future. He is completing a university readiness program that will open the door to a degree in security studies and international relations.



Channel 9 Interview with Tyler



Tyler's journey highlights what open employment can achieve. With almost 30 people supported into open employment in 2024/25, stories like Tyler's are only the beginning.

Inclusive employment works. It benefits individuals, strengthens businesses, and builds a more connected community.



Looking Ahead

This trial proved something worth proving: that with the right support, structure and belief, people with disability don't just participate in the workforce, they thrive in it, on their own terms and toward their own goals.

The strongest outcomes came from trusted relationships, flexible pacing, tailored roles, practical transport solutions, and employers genuinely willing to learn and adjust. Just as importantly, the trial changed Good Sammy itself, shifting it from being primarily a destination employer to a pathway service that helps people explore, test and progress toward whatever employment goal is theirs.

Good Sammy will build on this work by consolidating the Service Delivery Model, deepening employer partnerships, embedding participant voice at every stage, and continuing to advocate for the funding and policy reform that makes economic dignity achievable for more people with disability, in more workplaces, across Western Australia.

Thank you for partnering with purpose and impact.