

## David Pearce Story

The clients at BeConnected have produced a huge change in me. They have really opened my world so much. Previously I never had much contact with older people. However, since working with BeConnected, I see people with long lives and many experiences, individual personalities and amazing strengths. I admire them greatly and really enjoy working with them. It's a privilege.

When working as a welder straight out of high school, I would never have thought this is where my life would go but I'm so glad I took the advice of the careers counsellor at Gynea TAFE. It was 2014 and I had just completed a Diploma of Business Administration following on from completing Certificates II, III and IV. I had gone to ask for advice about getting a job. She said it was very difficult to get a job without prior experience and suggested the best way to get experience was to volunteer. She led me to the website [govolunteer.com.au](http://govolunteer.com.au). That led me to Jannali Neighbourhood Aid, now BeConnected Jannali. I called in and spoke to reception who said someone would get back to me. Sure enough, the manager telephoned me soon after. She seemed very friendly and encouraging and gave me an appointment for a chat.

I decided to treat the meeting as a proper job interview, even though it was a volunteer position, so I dressed nicely and took my resume, including referees. I felt a bit nervous, wondering if I would be accepted and if so whether I would be good enough or be able to add value. I needn't have worried. As soon as the manager saw I had a Diploma of Business Administration, she said "Oh, I could really use you!". So I commenced volunteering in August 2014.

At first I did reception and various office tasks. The idea was to include that experience in my resume and get a paying job elsewhere. So I continued to apply for jobs at the same time but I didn't want to travel too far from home because I didn't have a car at the time, so it was hard to find something. The team at BeConnected supported me to do relevant courses, including MYOB in 2015, which enabled me to do some book keeping and banking work for the organisation and I was also invited to do social support work, including shopping trips. In December 2015, I was asked whether I would like to have a paid job with BeConnected. It was a great day. I said I would love to and was encouraged to do some Community Services Education at TAFE to help learn about the industry.

So in the first half of 2016 I completed a Cert III at Loftus TAFE and Cert IV in the second half of that year. This year I've commenced a Diploma of Community Services whilst continuing to work at BeConnected as a casual. Currently I work every Thursday and on an 'as needed' basis which can include filling in for the manager. I now have many more responsibilities than I did as a volunteer and I'm learning so much about the industry. The job includes things like opening the office, taking outings, managing the organisations' website and running groups – all amazing things and I really love it.

What do I like best? Well it's hard to say, but I really like the culture. I appreciate every day because I know how special the place is; the culture is so kind hearted with an emphasis on serving the community, helping others and truly caring. My job satisfaction is very high because I know my skills add value; apart from the pleasure I get from taking people on outings and running groups, I know how much my computer skills assist the organisation.

My hopes for the future? Well, ever since I was a kid I wanted to get a degree but never really thought I would be able to; now, after my experiences at BeConnected, I feel I could do it, so I intend to enrol in one next year, in a course relevant to the industry. I would really love to build a career across BeConnected. Employment in this industry is 83% female so it gives me a fairly unique opportunity in a very supportive environment to bring in a different perspective. It's not for every bloke but it really suits me.

I love the fact this industry really values volunteers and I highly recommend volunteering to others as a way of giving to the community.