

Connecting the dots: Case studies of deaf people who have graduated from VET or who have just commenced study in a VET course—Support document

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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

NORTHERN MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TAFE

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<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

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Contents

Contents	2
Case Studies	3
Jasmine: First interview	3
Jasmine: Second interview	5
Dylan: First Interview	6
Dylan: Second interview	8
Scott: First Interview	9
Scott: Second interview	10
Phillip: First Interview	11
Phillip: Second interview	13
Stephen: First Interview	13
Stephen: Second interview	16
Brent: First Interview	17
Brent: Second interview	20
Glenn: First Interview	22
Glenn: Second interview	25

Case Studies

Overview

The research project utilised case studies of seven deaf people who were between the ages of 15-30 years of age and who had either just completed secondary school and were enrolling in a VET course or who had just completed a VET course and were looking for work. The seven participants represented a broad cross section of people with hearing loss drawn from both metropolitan and rural areas. Four of the subjects had graduated from secondary school in 2004 and were commencing their first year of studies in the VET sector in 2005. There were also 3 students who had completed a VET course at the end of 2004 and who were looking for employment during 2005. There were six males and one female in the group.

Each participant was interviewed face-to-face twice over a 6-month period. A total of fourteen interviews were conducted, and these are summarised below. The interviewer herself was deaf and communicated using Auslan (Australian Sign Language). Four of the participants were also Auslan users, with the remaining three communicating using speech.

Jasmine: First interview

Jasmine is 27 years old and studied Certificate III in Business Administration at a regional TAFE institute in western Victoria, graduating at the end 2004. She describes her high school years below:

My secondary high school education was quite mixed up. In Year 7 and Year 8 I went to a (Melbourne) metropolitan Secondary College School. In Year 9 and 10 I was in Kalgoorlie Western Australia. There was no support for me there. I had to lipread and try and write my own notes. There were a lot of barriers for me there, and a lot of frustrations. Then we moved back to Victoria and I went to (a high school in the western suburbs of Melbourne) at the end of Year 10 and for Year 11. I had an interpreter, which was a great relief, but I wasn't really happy with the curriculum I was being taught, so I moved to (regional Victoria) for Year 12, which I really enjoyed. That was the best support I ever had. The TOD (teacher of the deaf) and I worked closely together and we had a very good rapport. They assisted me with the improvements that I required. My academic grades rose significantly because of that. (Interview with Jasmine, November 2004)

Whilst at school, Jasmine wanted to become a policewoman but *'people always told me I couldn't do that because I was deaf'*. Prior to Year 10 at school, Jasmine was keen on a career helping the community which was *'part of (her) desire to become a policewoman'*. However, due to people advising her that deaf people could not become member of the police force she talked about her options with the teachers of the deaf at school. It was through those discussions that she chose to become a teacher of the deaf- *'we discussed options and decided on becoming a teacher of the deaf in the primary level'*. The teachers knew that Jasmine loved kids and really wanted to make a future that was good for Deaf children and also try to give them a better experience of education than she had received. Jasmine also spoke to the local careers teacher at her school and felt that the teachers really wanted to *'make sure that (she) would stick with her choice.'*

On reflection, she feels that the advice she received was not really suitable for her situation. She was given careers information to look at and review but looked at it and felt that nothing really

'struck' her and she *'didn't really understand it.'* She feels that it would have been more appropriate to meet a lot of deaf role models and have them provide information about their career choices.

'Literature is not much help. It would be much better, much more enjoyable for me to meet someone face to face and find out what they do in their jobs. I had some problems reading it (the literature). I wasn't sure about the different options and I couldn't quite make head or tail of it so it didn't help me in defining a focus for me.'

Jasmine recalls that she did work experience at the local Deaf Society. She worked in the office doing *'computer work, filing and doing things that the staff wanted such as sending faxes and general office work.'* This work experience was not related to her choice of career, but because other Deaf people worked there it was an opportunity for her to understand the Deaf community.

It was a good experience because it got me involved in the Deaf community. But it didn't help me with information about working with Deaf kids. I needed information what was involved in those jobs.

After she left school, Jasmine applied to do a Bachelor of Education (LOTE) at a large metropolitan university. After studying for one year, she dropped out due to the high academic content of the course. She decided to do some travelling, then in 2003 decided to attend some courses for deaf people at the local TAFE.

Here in (Western Victoria) they have a number of short courses that were suited for Deaf people, like Computers and the Internet. So last year I was involved in short course like that which had been conducted weekly, on Fridays.

From the short course, Jasmine decided to enrol in the Certificate III in Business Administration and applied to the local TAFE College. She had an appointment with the Disability Liaison Officer who discussed her support needs. The Disability Liaison Officer knew Jasmine before she started the Business Administration Course as Jasmine had enrolled in a bridging course to become a nurse. She withdrew from that course after one week *'because (she) found it too scientific, way too hard (for her).'*

Jasmine decided to study part time rather than full time and she was able to get an Auslan interpreter for the duration of her course as well as a notetaker. Jasmine's thoughts prior to enrolling in her course were as follows:

I just wondered if it would be a good or bad year, whether people would be nice to me, whether I would fit in the group, whether the interpreter would be good enough and will there be availability of interpreters?

On the first day it was a really bad day, in fact. The interpreter didn't turn up. The notetaker I had was no good, she was really lousy. She was trying to control me, and I was telling her that it was her job to write notes and not to tell me what to do! On the second day, a fellow classmate approached me and said that she was interested in learning how to sign. She has become my friend since then.

Jasmine's experience at TAFE was a positive one, despite problems with interpreters and notetakers, *'all of the class have been learning to sign, not just that one person although she did start it.'* This certainly helped her confidence and her ability to feel part of the class. *'They've been very inclusive as a group.'*

She is currently looking for employment as a clerical officer and has registered with a disability employment agency which does not specifically specialise in assisting Deaf or hard of hearing people only. Jasmine's primary communication mode is Auslan and she has a profound hearing loss.

If I don't get a job then I'll come back here and do the next certificate – Certificate IV.

Jasmine: Second interview

Jasmine completed her Certificate III in Office Administration at the end of 2004. In her last interview, Jasmine spoke of her hope that she would obtain employment within six (6) months of completing her certificate. She is currently on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) while she looks for work. If this did not occur, she would consider returning to complete Certificate IV in Office Administration.

They helped me to keep my resume updated with information about my recent graduation. They've distributed my resume, but still I haven't been able to find a job. I haven't had any luck at all. I've sent my resume to a number of places. I've sent resumes in response to jobs that I saw advertised on the internet or in the newspaper. I keep trying but I've had no luck so far. (Interview with Jasmine, June 2005)

Her employment officer is aware that she is Deaf and is experienced in working with people with disabilities; however, Jasmine needs to communicate using Auslan and her employment officer knows how to sign 'a little bit'. Some of her appointments that are detailed and complex are conducted with the services of an Auslan interpreter, but the agency had limited funding - *'They would supply an Interpreter to talk to me about jobs, or if I had an interview.'* Many 'disability' specific organisations are not familiar with working with deaf people and are not experienced in dealing with people who use Auslan, which creates an additional barrier for people like Jasmine. She feels that the employment officer is trying her best to assist her but is not fully familiar with her needs and how to advocate for adjustments for her to enable her to get a job.

Jasmine would like to work in an office environment and use her business administration skills. However, she is unable to use the telephone and it is presumed by both employers and the employment agency that she cannot work in an office because of her deafness. She feels her studies in office administration have not helped her get a job as the assumption is that she cannot get a job in that field. She also feels that they are *'shunting her off'* and are not trying to match her skills to the job she wants, instead pushing her to accept manual labour type roles.

Yeah a bit like that. They also don't give me any real suggestions about office work. I'm aiming for office work, and they try to give me other jobs like kitchen hand. They say 'Oh, it's awfully hard to find you an office job', but that's what I want to do and that's what I'm qualified to do. They want me to try to apply for jobs that are easier for me to get. But that's not the point.

But, I'm really quite adamant that I want to work in office admin because that's what I'm qualified to do. I feel that they haven't given me a proper chance to find a job in that area. They're worrying about whether my English is good enough, or whatever. I'm not quite sure what their concerns are?

To add to her concerns, Jasmine feels they are judging her English grammar by how she writes her emails and expresses herself. When there is no Auslan interpreter present, they communicate using pen and paper, which is not an adequate form of communication for anyone, and more complex for someone who has English as a second language (Auslan is her first language). Jasmine has been with this agency for around 6 months and has not had a single job interview despite applying for numerous jobs.

Because they haven't been able to find me a job. Despite sending out all these resumes I haven't been able to get a single interview in the past 6 months.

I'd say around about 3 or 4 times per week by however many weeks have passed. I'd say over 150 different applications during that time. I get very few responses. I've had no success whatsoever.

Some were for data entry positions, some for office work and a few have been for other computer-related jobs, but not all specifically for office work. It hasn't been broader than that.

Jasmine is aware that she is Deaf, communicates using Auslan and that English is her second language. She feels that she is being judged and that employers may perceive that she cannot 'communicate'. However, she can communicate – *'but I do have communication skills. I have sign language. So maybe they speak English but I can still communicate with them.'* She believes she can overcome barriers in the following ways and has discussed these with the employment agency:

Like there are ways around the telephone. There is the NRS (National Relay Service www.aceinfo.net.au). All I need to do is make businesses aware of that, and to understand that Deaf people can make a call through the relay service. As far as communication goes, that's a harder barrier. I'm sure that in the workplace everyone could learn a little bit of sign language in order to communicate with me. It's really a matter of teamwork, and having a good work environment and being able to use different communication skills, such as a bit of fingerspelling, a bit of writing, a bit of this and a bit of that to help us all communicate together. I'm quite confident that I would be able to work on an equal footing with hearing peers. As I said before I'm happy to teach people some sign language, and I can also learn from them. They could teach me English and I could teach them sign language. I see that as very much a situation of equality.

Jasmine is reflecting on what she will do next, she has been unemployed for 6 months and if she is still unemployed at the end of the year, she may consider returning to TAFE to do the Certificate IV in Office Administration. *'I'm giving myself a year to look for work and if I'm still unemployed at the end of the year then I'll think about further study'*. She is also considering doing other courses because she feels that she will not get work in an office. She has kept in contact with people from her course last year and knows that the majority of people in that course have already obtained employment:

Well, to be honest, last year was really good and I tried some classes again this year, but there were only three people from my Cert III who progressed into Cert IV. The rest of them got jobs. They all had contacts. Some got jobs in the medical area, another one got a job at the Council, another one got a call centre job and here I am without one. I find it really interesting that there were 8 people who got jobs, so I don't see the point in getting a Cert IV. Those 8 people had a Cert III and they got jobs.

I really don't think managers, or whatever, should think like that. I don't think I need to be more highly qualified than a hearing person to get a job. It shouldn't be like that. They should just accept my deafness as they would accept a hearing person.

Dylan: First Interview

Dylan is 17 years old and completed his Victorian Certificate in Education (VCE) at a Metropolitan Deaf Facility (mainstream secondary school with a special deaf facility to support students with hearing loss) in 2004. His primary communication mode is Auslan and he has a profound hearing loss. Dylan was school captain for the entire school and was certainly a role model to his deaf and hearing peers. Dylan describes his primary and secondary school years below:

I went to (primary school with a Deaf facility) in (outer Melbourne). It is an integrated school. Then I went to (metropolitan high school deaf facility), which was also integrated. Both schools had (deaf) facilities (Interview with Dylan November 2004).

I went to Princess Elizabeth Junior School (deaf kindergarten) first, and then the deaf facility was introduced in (outer Melbourne). It was the first one in Australia (Interview with Dylan November 2004)

I was integrated with hearing kids (with an Auslan interpreter). If I was not sure about something, if I didn't understand the work then I'd go to the deaf facility and they'd make it clearer for me. On my timetable there was also a regular time for deaf facility (Interview with Dylan November 2004)

Dylan has decided to defer his tertiary studies for a year and look for work. His reasons for this are outlined in the story below:

Well, I'll tell you a bit of a story. I have two friends, Simon and John*. Simon decided to study for another year at TAFE. He went straight into TAFE. John, however, decided to get a job first. One year later Simon still hadn't finished TAFE but he decided to leave. He couldn't be bothered continuing with it. Whereas John knew that he wanted to go on to TAFE. He felt motivated to study. He was bored with the job that he had, so that made him motivated to continue with his study. I look at my two friends and think that I'm probably better to follow John than I am to follow Simon.

*Simon and John are not their real names

During Year 10, Dylan was thinking about a career in information technology and did two weeks work experience in an IT company. He really enjoyed his time there, he was *'really motivated'* to work in IT. He knew it was *'good pay and that he had the brains to do it.'* This year however, he has changed his mind and decided that IT would be *'fairly boring, isolating work.'*

Dylan's family were keen for him to do IT work as has a passion for computers and has a computer at home that his is always using. However, teachers within the deaf facility at school noticed that he was a good leader, a good people person, a good communicator and advised him that 'it wasn't such a good idea' to study IT. They thought he should explore his options more.

...they suggested that some other fields would be more suitable to me, not really IT. They knew that I loved communicating with people and interacting so that's how I came to realise that maybe it wasn't the best option for me.

Dylan was fortunate in that he had many people to talk to about his future especially his parents, friends, people at school and other people that he would meet who worked for employment agencies. They were all able to explain various options to him. He felt though he had to *'listen to (his) own heart'*. Dylan has not, as yet, firmly decided what he wants to do, as he puts it:

I know that I have to do something that I really like, something from the heart. It can't just be about money, I have to do something that I really enjoy. I need to work in a field that I'm attracted to and passionate about.

At the moment, Dylan does not know what he wants to do in the short term. He does think in the long term, he might do psychology, which requires going to university and doing a lot of study. He is however, not keen to study at a university in Australia. Gallaudet University is a university for deaf people in the United States of America. Dylan knows of Gallaudet and it is something he would like to do in 2008 or 2009. He explains why he would like to go to Gallaudet University below:

Well here in Australia there are some issues with interpreters and notetakers, whereas at Gallaudet I'd learn directly from a lecturer and I wouldn't have to go through a third party. I'd rather the direct communication.

Dylan like many people who communicate using Auslan find it a challenge to watch interpreters all the time; it is very draining and very tiring having to watch the same person for several hours. *'It makes it harder to concentrate'* but if the lecturer communicate directly in sign language as they do

in the USA, it is much more direct and more personal and therefore requires a lot less concentration. *'I feel that if I was communicating directly with the lecturer then I would feel more in tune with them.'*

Until he feels ready to go to Gallaudet University, Dylan is content with the short term goal of doing a TAFE course in 2006. Dylan is extremely bright but wants to do a 'simple' something not too in-depth. He is worried he may withdraw from the course if he does anything too intensive so *'I can build up my confidence and my skills and build on from there. If I go straight for the top I think that I might lose heart and withdraw too easily.'*

Dylan: Second interview

Dylan left school at the end of 2004 and decided to defer his studies until 2006, preferring to work for a year to earn money and have a break from study. He was also looking at the possibility of a long-term goal to attend Gallaudet University, the only university in the world for Deaf people, and study psychology. However since our last interview, he has changed plans and no longer wants to attend Gallaudet University since he has become aware that as an international student the fees are quite substantial.

Because I've heard from a lot of people that America could cost \$30,000. I said 'What! \$30,000 for one year of study!' Whereas, here in Australia, it might be quite different. America would cost way too much money. So I've given away that idea and I'm going to stay in Melbourne and pay HECS and then go on from there.

Over the last 6 months, Dylan has also changed his mind about working. He has his own car and a driver's licence and enjoys tinkering with his new car. He would like to fix his car a bit and is considering completing a short course in mechanics in the second half of this year and applying to do an apprenticeship in mechanics in 2006. He believes that by doing this, he will reduce his apprenticeship by 12 months.

I've changed my plan a bit for this year. I had said that I wanted to have a year of rest and relaxation but I have started to look for jobs, and I want to fix my car and make some modifications. That has to be done soon. I was wondering what I should do next, for the rest of the year, and I thought I might do a short course, like a 10-week course in mechanics ... a quicky (sic) course! Then, I was thinking about next year starting an apprenticeship in mechanics. That's a possibility. I think that would be pretty good. My hobby already is to work on the cars and I'm pretty good at it. That's quite a change from what I said before. I think mechanics would be quite a good job for me. So I could do the 10-week short course in the near future as preparation, and it could potentially save me one year off my apprenticeship. I think that's pretty cool.

Dylan is quite vague about where he will do his course and how to arrange communication support for this course (Auslan interpreters and/or notetakers). He would like to apply for a course and is not sure what he needs to do in terms of completing the application forms, how to get communication support or where to get help when he goes to TAFE. He thought it would be good to have one of his friends interpret for him, which is not how the interpreting industry works.

I have a mate who signs and they could interpret for me. He has his own business, with people working for him. He has his own business, booking Interpreters, so I could approach him.

Often when people do an apprenticeship, they need to already be working with an employer who sponsors them. In Dylan's case, he was quite prepared just to apply for the apprenticeship and then apply for a job when that was done. He did not realise he needed to actually be working in

that field. He is registered with a Job Network agency in Melbourne that specialises in helping Deaf people find work.

Scott: First Interview

Scott is 18 years old and has completed Year 10 at his local public high school in the western region of Victoria. He was fully mainstreamed with an integration aide who provided support in his English and Maths classes. Upon completing Year 10, he has been nearly successful in obtaining an apprenticeship with a motorbike repair shop. He is currently working full time at that shop which is in his local town. If this employment opportunity continues to be successful, he will be offered an apprenticeship with employer. Scott has a moderate hearing loss but has a Deaf mother and sister. He uses Auslan and speech to communicate. Scott describes his high school years below:

I went to (local) High School. I'm the only deaf person at this school. (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Yeah, I have plenty of support at school. If I had problems in the classroom, I had integration people to come into the class with me. (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

She comes every Friday (Visiting Teacher for the deaf). They have integration people there who come to me in class from (another local) High School. (Specialist people who come here and help with work) (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

(The Visiting Teacher of the deaf) helps me with my work, and she lets me know if the teachers say I need to catch up with my work. She tells me to catch up, and helps me through it. If I have problems at school, such as bullying, she is always helping me. (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott found the VCAL subjects at school manageable as he was able to cope with the workload better and the VCAL teachers were able to provide him with ideas of what he could do when he finished his studies. The school was very supportive towards him. The teachers would talk to him after class. Scott did have some problems at school, mainly with other students bullying and picking on him because of his hearing loss - *'That's because I'm the only Deaf person in the school'*.

During his school years he had an integration aide to assist him with schoolwork. The aide was there to ensure he was able to understand both Maths and English so he would not fall behind. The integration aide would also act as a notetaker during some of his classes. Over time, Scott started to take more notes himself because he *'wanted to learn, and do more spelling so that when I get to work then I'll know how to write.'*

Sometimes it's a bit hard when the teacher's talking while they're writing and you want to write notes at the same time. I have to read lips.' (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott had an FM system that was supposed to assist him with hearing. An FM system is designed to cut out the background noise as the teacher wears a lapel microphone and the student has the main FM system attached to the hearing aids. Scott outlines his reluctance to wear the FM system as follows:

I did but I did not like wearing it. Sometimes I'd take it to class and the other kids would like playing with it. They all loved to talk into it. It was really hard for me to concentrate, you know. (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott is enjoying working in the motorbike repair shop and really hopes that the apprenticeship will work out. *'I really love this work. I didn't want to go back to school'*. He did not enjoy school and is not interested in further study academically. The types of jobs Scott is interested in are: Diesel

mechanic, welding, plumbing etc. He developed his interest in study by doing VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) subjects at the school.

The school offers VCAL, the course, so instead of doing VCE... I did VCAL instead.
(Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott was given information relating to apprenticeships and what they involved. He learnt that you do *'one week of work and then one week of school, and then just keep going back. But you get paid'*. That was what attracted him the most, the idea of getting paid and attending school to learn new skills.

I had a big book with different kinds of apprenticeships in there. I looked under 'Mechanic' and read about it. I had some help from the teacher to help me understand it.
(Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott is vague on his understanding of the support services he will get while he is at TAFE. Currently he gets some support at school with an integration aide available most days a week to assist him with his school work. When asked if he thought he would get the same support at TAFE, he said he would *'have to find out first'*. He would like to have an integration aide while he does his course at TAFE just like he had at school. *'It'd be the same as I had at school'*. Scott did not know anything about the role of the Disability Liaison Officer at the local TAFE and nor did he know where to ask for help if he was successful in obtaining an apprenticeship. Scott expects TAFE to be different from school and is looking forward to the change.

When I got to tech school, a lot of people talk to me. That means I go to school there like I have. (Interview with Scott, November 2004)

Scott: Second interview

In February 2005, Scott was looking forward to commencing a motorbike apprenticeship with his employer at the motorbike repair shop. Unfortunately, since that time, the apprenticeship has fallen through and Scott is back finishing his secondary school education.

The head mechanic left and they needed someone more experienced, and they couldn't have another apprentice there. But I'm working there part time.

He is still working at the motorbike repair shop on a casual basis *'fixing trail bikes and making them look good'*. He is studying the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) doing a Certificate II in Mechanics - *'in tool skills and a bit of knowledge about cars and motorbikes'*. He has a teacher's aide at school to assist him with English and Mathematics but not for mechanics. This is due to the fact that the integration aide is attached to the school and since he is studying mechanics at the local TAFE college. The reason for this, is that funding to support students with disabilities in the school sector and the TAFE sector are managed by different state government departments. Consequently, if a person is studying a subject at a VET in schools or VCAL at a TAFE college whilst still enrolled in school, the assumption is that the school should provide funding to cover the support not the TAFE, which the school believes they cannot do as they need to use their personnel to support other students with disabilities. What often happens in this situation is that the student ends up not having any support in the TAFE system and is disadvantaged which is in direct breach of the *Disability Standards in Education 2005*.

Scott continues to work casually at the motor bike repair shop at least one afternoon a week after school, to keep up his skills. He hopes that in the future another apprenticeship opportunity will arise and continues to look for opportunities to work as an apprentice in Western Victoria. However, he recognises that those opportunities are limited so is looking for an apprenticeship in areas such as motor mechanics, engineering and steel fabrication.

We (Scott and his father) applied for one apprenticeship, which was a very interesting one. It was an engineering apprenticeship in steel fabrication. He (Scott) likes welding and using metals and just making things with his hands. We applied for that apprenticeship but we didn't get it. So, that's another thing that he would like to do, and he probably prefers to do something like that as it would be a good apprenticeship to have. We're going to see what we can do about finding one. (Interview with Scott and his father, June 2005)

Scott has registered with a few different employment agencies in his effort to obtain an apprenticeship. All of the agencies are generic employment agencies that do not have experience in working with people who are Deaf. He is registered with one agency, which is a New Apprenticeship Centre for people with a disability. To date though, he has not been able to obtain an apprenticeship and this may be due to the fact he wants to be in his local community and near his family. It is unclear as to whether or not his hearing loss may be a barrier to his obtaining apprenticeship. Certainly anecdotal evidence suggests that employers and employment agencies can be over vigilant when it comes to determining OH&S laws and whether the workplace is safe when there is a person with a disability working there.

Scott will continue his VCAL studies at the local technical college until he either obtains an apprenticeship or he completes his Year 12. After that, he will assess his options at the end of the year and if there is no local employment he may consider living further away from home.

Phillip: First Interview

Phillip is 18 years old and has completed Year 12 at his local high school. He was fully mainstreamed with support from the Visiting Teacher Service once a term at his local high school in western Victoria. He has a moderate to severe hearing loss and his primary mode of communication is speech. He describes his high school years below:

I attended (local) Primary School and then went on to (local) P-12 College for secondary school. At primary school I had a visiting teacher until about Grade 5. Then at high school I continued having a [visiting] teacher until about Year 8, and then (a different Visiting Teacher) started seeing me in Year 10. At primary school in Grades 5 and 6 I had an FM unit and then started with a new model at high school in Year 10. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

I had a teacher's aide from Year 8 through to Year 12 but only for English and Maths.

They (the teacher's aide) helped out by clarifying and helping me understand the context. If I didn't need any help they'd help other people in the class as well. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

I had an FM unit and I relied a lot on lipreading and clarifying with the teacher, and also asking my other classmates. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

Phillip was offered a hospitality apprenticeship in 2005.

At the start I felt a bit left out because I was a different person, but as I grew and got older they understood me and helped me so I started to feel like one of them. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

During Year 10, all the students at Phillip's school started thinking about their future careers. Given that Phillip was fully mainstreamed at his school, he was able to participate in this process. He states that all Year 10 students did special career classes that covered goal setting and career aspirations. Phillip had two separate work experience opportunities while at school. At one stage, he was interested in becoming a teacher of the deaf.

At (a regional deaf school), I was a teacher's aide at the School for the Deaf. At Sunnyside House, which is a nursing home, I was helping there. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

For a while there, for about two years, I wanted to be a primary school teacher, but since then I've changed my mind and am now interested in hospitality. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

I recently got a job in a café, and did some work at functions and I greatly enjoy cooking so that's why I changed my mind. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

To assist Phillip in his career planning, he spoke mostly to his family, '*my family were number one*' as well as the careers advisor at his local school. In year 11, Phillip did a VET course, which was over three terms of the school year. The final term VET subjects were going to take place at (the local) TAFE. He was keen to continue this course but the subject times clashed with his timetable at school and his school subjects were his priority. At the end of 2004, he 'fell' into the hospitality field and someone offered him employment in a café. He has not looked back since. He was to start his apprenticeship at the café three days after the interview took place.

I'll be working four days on and having three days off. I'll be working from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm and then 4.00 until whenever I've finished. And I'll be going to TAFE in (western Victoria), for three weeks in Term 1 and two weeks each in Terms 2 and 3. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

Phillip and his family have spoken to the TAFE teachers to inform them that he will be in the class and will require an FM system to assist him in the classroom. The teachers will need to wear a lapel microphone in the classroom while Phillip is there to ensure he is able to follow class discussions. Phillip does not believe he will need any additional support, as the course is quite practical, so there is no need for any outside support such as that he had in school.

Phillip believes he can cope effectively during any theory subjects using his FM system and by consulting with teachers for clarification. This is what he did while he was doing his VET subjects at school in Year 11.

The course I did in Year 11 involved some theory work and it worked very well with just my microphone and me clarifying with teachers. (Interview with Phillip February 2005)

Prior to finding a job and having the opportunity to do the hospitality apprenticeship, Phillip did apply for courses through VTAC. He completed the application form and also the Special Education Assistance Scheme (SEAS) application to recognise his disability. Since obtaining the apprenticeship, he has applied to go to TAFE through his employer and has contacted various institutions to see what they have in relation to the course he wants to do. He also attended a number of TAFE open days at TAFE institutes. Phillip expects TAFE to be different from school in the following ways:

With the short amount of TAFE work I did two years ago, the main difference was that it was a more practical lesson, which I enjoy more. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

(Attending the open days) was very useful especially when I spoke to the Chefs that I'll be working with. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

Phillip looks forward to going to TAFE but recognises there may be some challenges he will need to face in relation to his hearing loss. He describes how he will handle it:

Probably the hardest thing would be the other students getting to know me and how they need to communicate with me, and how they can accept me for who I am. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

I'd inform them on the first day and let them know what they need to do to help me. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

Phillip starts his new job next week; he has already met the people he with whom he will be working. He describes the experience as follows:

I did one week's work experience at the place where I'll be doing my apprenticeship, and during that week the staff got to know me really well and they all know how to communicate with me. They know that I rely on lipreading so much because of the loud fans and all of that. (Interview with Phillip, February 2005)

Phillip: Second interview

Phillip finished school at the end of 2004. During the first interview, Phillip was looking forward to commencing a hospitality apprenticeship with a local employer in his town. He has now commenced the work and it is *'going well and I am enjoying it lots'*. He is doing lots of cooking and learning new skills.

Phillip will need to go a regional TAFE Institute to do two-week blocks once a term and stay away from home during this time. When he was at school, he did some VCAL subjects related to hospitality and because of this knowledge, he was exempt from going to the first two-week block. He will go to the next one in August this year. In preparation for this, he has told the TAFE that he has a hearing loss and needs to wear an FM unit to assist with his comprehension in the classroom. Phillip does not have any concerns about doing the two week blocks and believes that he should manage the course effectively without any additional support.

Phillip is continuing to work at the local restaurant in town. He admits his hearing loss creates some problems within the workplace but he is slowly developing strategies to overcome this. He has difficulty understanding people on the telephone but will ask other colleagues to take the call if he has difficulty understanding customers.

Sometimes I can't understand people on the telephone at work, but I usually then hand the telephone to one of the other workers.

He also has difficulty with background noise with his hearing aids especially with the fans in the kitchen. When a person is wearing hearing aids, the hearing aids amplify ALL noise and works in the same way as a radio that is slightly off the channel, if you turn the volume up on the radio, the noise is louder but not clearer. Hence background noise is a major problem for hearing aid users. Phillip talks about a strategy he uses to overcome this problem:

They've learned to show me the dockets / orders and to talk a bit louder under the fans

Phillip seems to have made an excellence career choice, with his support from school and from his family; he has chosen a hospitality apprenticeship. He has enough residual hearing that he can understand a great deal using hearing aids and is able to communicate in most situations. Many people are willing to support him and adapt to his needs and it appears he is on his way to achieving a good career for himself within the hospitality industry.

I'd like to go along the coast, possibly near Apollo Bay or Lorne and open a little café / restaurant.

Stephen: First Interview

Stephen is 18 years old from Western Victoria. He completed year 12 at his local high school with support from the Visiting Teacher Service (once a term visits). Stephen has applied through VTAC to enrol into a Hospitality Management course at this local TAFE. Stephen is severely deaf and his primary communication mode is speech. He describes his early school years as follows:

I attended (local Catholic) primary school. Then I attended (local TAFE) College for my secondary years. In primary school, at about the age of 5, I was diagnosed with my hearing loss up at the Base Hospital Speech Pathology Department when my brother was undergoing a speech therapy course. I didn't really have any support in primary school, being in the Catholic education network there wasn't much around. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005).

Stephen has a severe hearing loss, which meant that he required significant support to hear what was going on in the classroom. However he was involved in an independent Catholic primary school and there was limited support available. It is because of this lack of support that Stephen had difficulties with English literacy. To overcome this problem he was involved in a 'Reading recovery' program in year two, and then during year six, he once again had to complete a special literacy program called 'Bridging the Gap'. By receiving this additional support he was able to significantly improve his English literacy skills. Delayed literacy development is common for students who are deaf and without early intervention literacy can be a problem throughout adulthood.

In primary school I wasn't fitted with the PEEL (an FM system). I just had to cope the best way I could and just make sure the teachers knew I had a hearing loss, which usually meant I just sat up the very front of the classroom. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

Looking back, at times it was very hard when teachers didn't understand how to really communicate with me, or other uses of communication. I suppose one advantage of primary school was though (sic) because I did have a very bad literacy problem at the start, in year 2 I did a Reading Recovery programme, and then again in year 6 I did a 6-month Bridging the Gap literacy programme which definitely did help to perfect my literacy and numeracy skills. (Interview with Stephen, February 2005).

Stephen continued his secondary schooling without any support from specialist teachers or other personnel who understood what it was like for students with hearing impairment. Finally, a local support group in western Victoria was able to lobby the local education department and Stephen was able to get much needed support from a visiting teacher of the deaf within that region. This finally occurred when he was in year 10. For most of his schooling Stephen coped with minimal support, which proved quite challenging and posed many difficulties. Stephen's experience of his schooling is common for students who are in mainstream settings without appropriate support that enables them to maximise their learning.

It wasn't until I really got the support in year 7, from the Disability Liaison Officer, when I went to (local) College, and I was transferred to Australian Hearing Services. Around year 9 I was fitted with a PEEL unit, or an FM radio with microphones for myself and a microphone for the teacher. Then about 6 months ago I was also fitted with a hearing aid system called a Cross hearing aid system. I got access to the visiting teacher from about Year 11 onwards, because there'd been no Visiting Teacher in the south-west district for at least 4 years or so. Without the Visiting Teacher Service in the last 2-3 years I think it probably would have been an absolute personal hell to try and get through VCE, especially if I hadn't been able to get the special considerations, and so on, for exams and extended writing time and the like. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

The exam modifications were that I got the use of a Clarifier...special considerations were that I got an extra 15 minutes writing time, an extra 5 minutes reading time and all exams were done in a separate quiet environment. For the GAT, in the middle of the year, there was also the use of a Clarifier with the same extensions as mentioned before. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

When Stephen was in year 10 he was asked to start thinking about his future career. As Stephen was in a mainstream school he did this with his other classmates. He participated in what was

known as the Goal Scorer Program. All of the students at the school worked closely with their school's careers adviser using this program. Stephen looked at a number of different courses for future study:

I'd done two VET subjects over the past 4 years. I did an Office Administration course that was a joint course through (the local) TAFE, as well as being taught at my school by (the schools careers adviser) I looked at office administration. I also looked at the VET hospitality field which I later went on to study for two years. I also looked at tourism and rail transport. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

During year 10 Stephen undertook some work experience placements. He worked closely with the visiting teacher to determine where the work placement would be. One particular area of interest for him was in rail transport where he could undertake an apprenticeship. However, he was rejected due to his hearing loss.

I predominantly had an interest in the rail transport area, which is what I applied to do my year 10 work placement in, but that was knocked back on the grounds of OH&S. At that time, when the (local railway company) was still operating here, they also had a maintenance depot in their yard which meant I probably would have spent two or three days in the maintenance depot, some time on the train, and also some time in the station office. Due to the fact that I would have to walk around a yard, or be getting on and off trains that weren't at platforms, and with engines moving around it was a health risk that I could have been run over or something if I didn't hear a train approaching. So, then I also decided to look into hospitality as a future field as well where I might even be able to combine my interest with tourism, hospitality and rail into one sector where it might have been a bit safer and where I wasn't having to necessarily work in railway yards and so on. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

Stephen's experience of being denied the opportunity to explore fully certain career choices is extremely common for Deaf or hard of hearing people. This is because the appropriate people to guide them through this time are unaware of the true impact of hearing loss and they are unaware of the abilities of deaf people. In a 1992 a hard of hearing man successfully won a claim through the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) against the State Rail Authority of NSW (*Willis v State Rail Authority of NSW (1992 EOC 92-455)*) that the 'employment of a hearing impaired person was not in breach of safety laws as with a hearing aid, he was no greater risk than any other employee' (Ronalds, C: 1998 pp 151) When he lodged a complaint with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on the grounds of discrimination in employment, the Commission found that his hearing loss did not affect his ability to complete the inherent requirements of the job and his employer was ordered to reinstate him. It is unfortunate that neither the visiting teacher nor the careers adviser at Steven's school were able to inform the local rail authority of how Stephen would have been able to work and how the workplace could have been adapted or accommodated so he could work within the rail industry.

Steven spoke of his experiences undertaking VET subjects at both his school and at the local TAFE college. When Stephen was in Years 9 and 10 he commenced Certificate II in Office Administration at school and was taught by the school's careers adviser. During Years 11 and 12 he moved on to do Certificate II in Hospitality Operations. He did one unit at the school and the rest of the units were done one afternoon a week at the local TAFE college. Stephen was able to receive good support at school, but this support did not extend to the local TAFE college; however his school teachers were able to talk to the TAFE teachers and inform them of his hearing loss. He was also able to wear his PEEL FM unit which enabled him to participate in class discussions. Steven also discussed the differences between the learning environments at school and at TAFE and is now better prepared for what to expect when he undertakes an apprenticeship this year.

I'd say from the previous two years I've been down there, even only for one day a week, and from my course this year when I attended there at least three afternoons a week in the restaurant, you notice the difference in that you're not as sheltered, I suppose you would say. You didn't constantly have teachers looking over your back making sure you were doing things. It was very much an adult environment where you were your own boss, and you contributed to your own education. So, I guess, from doing the VET course I've had a bit of a look into what the TAFE environment is like already before I start. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

As Stephen's school enabled him to participate extensively in VET subjects during his secondary school years, Stephen was able to gain a good understanding of the types of careers available to him within the VET system. Stephen had one setback during his quest to obtain an apprenticeship within the Victorian railways; however he was able to find another career opportunity in the hospitality industry as a result of his participation in VET and he has decided to undertake a hospitality management course through TAFE this year. Stephen applied through VTAC but cannot recall if he indicated that he had a disability on the application form. However he did talk to the Disability Liaison Officer at the local TAFE College after his offer was accepted to discuss possible support needs.

Yes, the Disability Liaison Officer said she'd send out regular emails to the teachers just to remind them. If I was having trouble hearing at times then I could just get a notetaker. I only have to go to her office and she'll be able to organise something for me. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

Stephen is looking forward to going to TAFE later this year and is looking forward to taking part in the college community. Obviously he feels there will be challenges due to his hearing loss as he may not be able to fully understand what the teachers or students may be saying; however, he believes he has strategies in place to manage this given that he has currently working part-time in a local restaurant.

At this stage I'd say the kitchen component of my course, which will span about a term or two, might be a bit tricky with the overhead rangehoods and a lot of noise going on. Sometimes hearing teachers or fellow students, if they're not facing me directly, might be a bit tricky. I'll just have to work around it. I think I'd be able to work quite easily with most students in the restaurant type area. Where I'm working at the moment, at a (local Italian restaurant), I cope with the noise alright. I get along well with my fellow work colleagues, and they understand I have deafness and they don't really make anything of it. (Interview with Stephen: February 2005)

Stephen: Second interview

A few weeks after the first interview, Stephen commenced Certificate IV in Hospitality Studies and Management in a western Victorian institute of TAFE. Stephen is coping quite well in the class and does not need to use his FM Unit as many of the classes are of a practical nature, which means it is more 'hands on' and less classroom interaction. The building where he is attending is relatively new and the acoustics are quite good which works well with his hearing aids, making it a lot easier to participate in activities without too much assistance. He has informed the Disability Liaison Officer at the local TAFE of his attendance in the class but has found that he does not need to contact that person to discuss support needs *'She said I could get a notetaker, if I needed one, to help me in class. I'd only have to ask and they could arrange it for me... I know that facility is there to use.'*

Stephen feels he is treated more of an equal at TAFE compared to secondary school as he feels the students are mature and they are all working together to support each other to complete the course.

I'd say I feel more part of the class than what I would have at high school because everyone's there to study the same course. There's that joint effort to get everyone through.

Most of the students have just finished high school last year so it's probably that different learning environment where you've got to be more grown up and independent.

Stephen continues to work at the local Italian restaurant and generally finds he is able to communicate, take orders and do tasks without too much trouble. In addition, he has an opportunity to go on a placement within his course to learn more about hospitality management. This will be in conjunction with a Melbourne university.

At the moment I'm sort of looking at what's going to happen with the Alice Springs placement for the Advanced Diploma next year, and I'll go from there because quite a few students end up getting employment at the resorts from the programme.

We've been shown a few videos already, and what exactly we'd do but it's more or less basically to put our training into effect because we can't really do it down here.

I suppose because of the international tourism factor and also the isolation factor, to get used to working in spots where there mightn't be very much around for thousands of kilometres.

Stephen looks back on the decision to go into hospitality as opposed to working in the railways where he was told he could not get a job in that industry due to his hearing loss. Stephen wonders if he made the right decision, especially in light of an incident that happened at his work the previous week where he had to sacrifice some of his salary to cover for a disgruntled customer. When he hadn't fully understand what the person had said and he is concerned it could happen again, but is realistic that given the industry he is working in that is one of the things he will have to manage.

This last week my confidence has hit rock bottom because of the stuff up that happened on Saturday night, a bit of discrimination that was chucked towards me from the actual customer...I sort of just got back over it again and kept going.

I just apologised to the customer and put their food through as quick (sic) as I could on the computer, then contacted (the supervisor) to check the order to make sure it went out quickly. I then contacted the manager and the customer again who got quite shitty saying they'd had to wait an hour already. But that's partly their fault, too, because they failed to notify any staff that probably after 20-30 minutes their meals hadn't come. They asked for free desserts in exchange for the error and the boss said 'Well I'm not giving them something worth \$4.40 and a cake and some sort of an ice cream. They can have an ice cream, and a scoop for the kids, and that's it' The customer then demanded their whole bill for free, which was over 22 people. It cost the boss around about \$100 or so, so he told me. But then I also lost my pay on the Saturday night for the three hours (to cover the short fall). I thought 'What the heck. Who cares'. There's not much I can do about it.

At the end of the course, Stephen hopes to work his way into a supervisory role.

A floor supervisor or work at somewhere like the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne in a supervisory position. I could go on to somewhere like Victoria University and do a HR Management degree or Events Management Degree as to what I can actually go in to.

Brent: First Interview

Brent is 23 years old from Melbourne and is currently undertaking a traineeship while working as an administrative assistant in the Disability Liaison Unit at a Victorian university. Brent has a profound hearing loss and communicates using speech and is able to understand speech well

using hearing aids and his residual hearing. He attended a local primary school and received support of the visiting teacher of the deaf. Brent found that at his local primary school the class teachers were very keen to understand his hearing loss and learn how they could best support him in the classroom. He attended a secondary school with a deaf facility; however, he was fully mainstreamed with other hearing students and only used the deaf facility on occasion to do further study in a quiet environment.

I did have time in the deaf facility but that was really to do my own work. Instead of going to the library and studying I'd go to the deaf facility and study there. The only time I had in there, apart from that was that I did history by correspondence. They didn't offer it at the school. I did it in Year 11 and 12. One of the teachers of the deaf offered to help with teaching... well, she didn't teach me but she was like the supervisor because there was no-one at the school. The teacher didn't have time so she offered to help me out. That was really good. I enjoyed doing that subject. There was another hearing student who did it as well, and she came into the deaf facility. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

For some classes I had a notetaker, but I never really used the support in class as much. I mainly used the Deaf facility to go and study etc. (Interview with Brent, February 2005)

As Brent looks back on his primary and secondary schooling he feels that while he received excellent support from the school to cope with his hearing loss, he did not feel that his education really prepared him for life after school.

But speaking from experience, I don't think, and this is just my experience of it, I don't think it really prepares you for life after school. I learnt so much more in the year after Year 12, in TAFE, I learned so much more. In some ways there were a few gaps I was a bit unprepared. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

While this may be true for most high school leavers when they finish school, for students who are deaf and hard of hearing the support they receive at the deaf facility from the specialist teaching staff is often more than what the average student receives. However, a negative outcome of this extensive support is that it often does not allow students to develop independent study skills and this frequently makes the transition from school to tertiary study more challenging because they have to cope on their own without a support teacher to guide them through the transition.

But one example would be in TAFE, you had to be more proactive with your work. They just gave you the work to do and then asked for it when it was due. They didn't chase up. Yes, they discussed it in class but it wasn't like school where the teacher would ask you, more or less every day, how you were going with your work. It was a big change from that perspective. I just think there could be more done in Year 11 and 12 to help prepare students for the fact that the teachers won't be - I can't think of the term - on your back, or chasing you. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

When Brent was in year 10 along with the other students, he started to think about his future career and what he wanted to do when he finished school. Brent did work experience when he was at school; he worked in a legal firm for two weeks. He also had work experience as a landscape gardener and as a librarian. He described the process for choosing careers at school: the school would choose a full day where all the students focused on their future career. The students were divided into four different groups and asked to complete a questionnaire; however, not many of students paid attention to that process. Brent feels that they could have done things a bit differently:

Looking back I think that the way they did it was ... wasn't very good. It didn't get the students' attention. And what's more, the teachers at the school did it, they didn't bring anyone else in ... perhaps a careers person or someone who did that for a living. They had

the same teachers from the school conducting these sessions. I don't think they were well informed. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

I think having deaf speakers would have helped. Perhaps a way to do it would have been to get an idea from the students in Year 10 of what they, perhaps, wanted to do career-wise. If they wanted to become a lawyer or a doctor of an academic at university, I think it would have been an idea to actually try and bring in a guest speaker – a lawyer – and then the students can ask them how they got to where they are, did they do law straight after school or did they do TAFE for two years and then move into law. I think the students would have benefited from having someone up there who's in the profession and who can tell them how they got there. I think it means more. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

It is well documented that deaf people can work in a wide range of careers; however, the most common dilemma for students in making their career choices is how to overcome perceived barriers caused by their hearing loss. Many people working in the field of deafness recognise that one of the ways to overcome this fear is to create opportunities for deaf students to have access to deaf role models who are working in a wide range of careers. These professionals could provide advice to deaf students on technology and other methods of overcoming perceived barriers caused by hearing loss in workplace. This interaction then enables deaf students to have strategies to educate future employers.

From the work experience that Brent did at the legal firm he decided that he would like to study law when he finished school; however, his TER score was not high enough so he decided to enrol in a TAFE course with the possibility of entering university as a mature age student. Brent enrolled in a Diploma of Social Science -Justice at a Victorian TAFE. During this time he got involved with the student union, which resulted in his studies suffering as a result and so eventually he dropped out. For the next two years, Brent worked as a volunteer with people who had intellectual disabilities. He enjoyed the work and decided to go to university and undertake further study. Brent enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Science - Disability Studies in the 2000 and did that for about a year. However, he felt he had no application for what he was learning and decided to withdraw.

I was just learning from books, and theory and studying and in my day-to-day life I had no way to apply it, the practical knowledge, so I lost interest in doing that (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Also, in addition, I couldn't see what I was going to do at the end of the course because it was a three-year university degree, three years of full-time study and I couldn't see what I would end up doing at the end of the course. So, that wasn't very motivating. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Well, looking back firstly perhaps I made a bit of a mistake trying to study whereas I should have looked for a job etc., but there's not much I can do about that now. I think that what would have helped me is going back to the guest speaker idea ... For deaf students perhaps even deaf role models would have been a good idea (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Brent is currently undertaking a Certificate III in Business Administration traineeship at a prominent tertiary education institution in Melbourne. Brent is doing an administration traineeship, and he is working as a receptionist within the disability liaison unit. He has two supervisors; one is his line supervisor at work and the other is his traineeship supervisor who is based at the institution.

It's quite different to tertiary and secondary school study. I had to get used to it. It's at your own pace and you really can't fail because if you haven't done something to their satisfaction you do it again. I'm not used to that, so it took me a long time to get used to that. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

No I don't need a notetaker. Basically, for some students it's the only opportunity they get to actually do their study. So you go along and you've got up to 5 hours to do work on the computer and do your study. So, it's not really in a classroom format. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Well, how it's set up is that the students go along and the supervisor will come around to each student and talk to them one-to-one about their progress and ask if the student has any questions etc. The supervisor is also contactable by phone and email but sometimes it's better to have that face-to-face contact. I think that's important as well. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Brent hopes to complete the Certificate III by August 2005 after which he hopes to do Certificate IV in Business Administration and have that finished by the end of the year so he can commence full-time employment.

What really motivates me is that for the first time I'll have a real say in what I want to do, and maybe even determine what sort of job I'll do. They may even create one. There's that possibility, of coming up with something to do and then maybe creating a position. That's a huge difference from anything I've done before, so this is the first time I've really felt positive about the future. (Interview with Brent February 2005)

Brent: Second interview

At our last interview, Brent was completing a traineeship at a major post secondary educational institution. When his traineeship is complete, he needs to look for employment, hopefully in the same organisation, working in a similar role. He describes what has happened as follows:

My studying hasn't finished for the moment. It's still going. There's been a changeover of traineeship supervisor, which has delayed things a little. Also, I haven't been doing as much work as I should have. I'm still trying to get the hang of working and studying at the same time. I'm too used to do one or the other ... it's a time management thing and I am working on it. I have another assessment this week and I'm hoping to more or less finish it except for a couple of subjects, and then they'll be completed within a month. So I'm looking at definitely another month and then I'll be completely finished. In terms of the future, there's been discussions with the traineeship manager and the library to the effect that I could possibly be working in the library once I finish here.

Brent is considering doing further study to improve his skills. At the moment he is doing Certificate III in Business Administration and hopes next year to do Certificate IV in Information Technology. His new role at the library will be working with IT systems, so the course he is doing will complement his employment. He has been doing some work in a different department using computer technology.

I've been working in the Resources section, becoming involved with the digitalisation of books and resources and I've also been involved with vision impaired students so there's a disability element there.

The experience that Brent has had in his current workplace is positive. Given that he is working within the Disability Liaison Unit, he is working with people who understand his hearing loss and also understand a wide range of disabilities. He compares this with working in the general population where people may be less aware of issues/barriers that people with disabilities may have and are more reluctant to accommodate a person's needs.

I don't want to be derogatory about the hearing community as opposed to the Deaf community, or the outside community as opposed to the disability sector, but there certainly could be more done to bring about awareness just in the workplace.

I think if I was to be placed in the same office but maybe working in accounts or something, not necessarily working with students with disabilities, or people with disabilities, I think my experience would be quite different.

Brent has been working in this position since August last year and is enjoying his experience very much. He has some accommodations to assist him in his role. These include a volume control phone which amplifies the voice on the telephone making it easier to hear as well as eliminating background noise from hearing aids. In addition, he needs to educate people about how to communicate with him in meeting situations and needs to be more proactive in making sure he can follow what is happening.

I already use a volume control phone so I'd probably just take that along with me.

I feel confident enough to meet with someone one-on-one if I thought they were speaking loudly to me when it was unnecessary. I feel confident meeting one-on-one and explaining to them that even though I'm Deaf there is no need to shout. I would explain that I don't know what their experience has been with Deaf people, maybe they have an elderly mother or father who is Deaf, and that it is necessary to shout to communicate with them, but that my situation is different. I can explain that I can hear just as well as they can.

Usually there would be minutes of the meeting. But that's not quite the same as hearing what the meeting is about. At the moment when we have staff meetings I try to position myself where I can see everyone, not necessarily in order to lipread them but ... the thing is if you're in a circle, well that's not a good example. If you're in the centre and you have people either side of you it's difficult to follow what they're saying without turning around so what I try and do is try and position myself outward a bit so I can view everyone. There's not a table in there, there is a complete mess in there so people just sit wherever, but I try and sit where I can see everyone and hear them. Usually there is only one person speaking at a time which is pretty good. And, of course, they're fully aware of disability and deafness and hearing loss etc. But I would, again, if that wasn't the situation, I would feel confident in saying 'I would like to sit here so that I can hear you all'. And if someone had a quiet voice I would feel confident in asking them to speak up a bit.

So far I haven't had a problem because the acoustics in the room are pretty good. It's not a wide open room. There's bookshelves in there so they kind of deflect the noise. It's okay so far but I suppose in a bigger staff room, like upstairs which is a very wide open room, it has one half full of tables and chairs, and the other half has computers with no partitions between the two halves. This room next door, however, has partitions. In a large room I would have a lot of issues with the sound carrying and me not being able to hear it, but next door there are no problems.

Brent reflects back on his school and working life and feels he has learnt a great deal over time. For the first time, he realises he is very confident about his future and where he is heading in the workplace.

I've come to the realisation that you can't start off your career or an ambition to inspire or empower other people unless you inspire yourself first. It needs to come from yourself first and other people will see that and take that on board. I had a bit of a flaw of logic back then but I have a new focus now.

I have to admit, since leaving school, this is the first time that I've really felt confident about my future. I've encountered a few dead-ends before, and I've gained a lot of experience and knowledge, but I think this time I've come to a good thing.

Glenn: First Interview

Glenn is 20 years old from Frankston and has a profound hearing loss. All members of his family are deaf and he communicates using Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and does not use his residual hearing. During his secondary school years, he went through three different deaf facilities/schools before completing his VCE at a deaf facility.

I went to (northern suburbs) Secondary College. I went there in Year 12. I went to (deaf school) up to Year 11 and then I went to (northern suburbs) Secondary College for Year 12. I went to (a secondary school near home that has a deaf facility) for Years 9 and 10. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005)

I went to (deaf school) in Years 7 and 8. Then in Year 9 I went to (a secondary school near home that has a deaf facility) and I was integrated in that school because it was close to home. Then in Year 10, half way through Year 10, after first semester I went back to (deaf school) again and I was there for another two and a half years. I finished Year 11 at (deaf school) and then last year I went to (northern suburbs) Secondary College and completed my Year 12 there. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005)

I was with other Deaf people. I wasn't the only one in a hearing environment so that was great. I could communicate openly and comfortably with everyone. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005)

Glenn describes his experiences of his high school years as mixed. One of the reasons he moved around between schools was because he found it difficult to cope in a mainstream environment without any contact with other deaf people his own age. At one deaf facility in the southern suburbs there are other deaf students there, but they were one or two years younger than him, which meant he had to communicate with hearing students who were his own age. This was quite an isolating and lonely experience for him. It was not until he attended a deaf facility in the northern suburbs, where there were five other students who were deaf studying in Year 12 that he really started to enjoy his schooling.

So, I decided to go to (northern suburbs) Secondary College just to see how that would pan out for Year 12 and it ended up being really good. I had a good year in Year 12. There were five other Deaf students in Year 12 at that time and we all communicated and got along really well. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

While he was in year 10, he completed some work experience as part of his career development program; he did work experience for one week with an architectural firm using CAD software. The other work experience was with a carpentry business doing basic carpentry. Glenn prefers to use his hands and being creative as opposed to administrative work. He describes the experience below:

I did things like drafting plans. I was doing fairly basic stuff on the computer using CAD, for about a week. I really enjoyed that. It was a small business, there were only 4 people working there and they seemed to all get along really well. They were quite understanding about the fact that I was Deaf. There were two Australian employees, plus two people from overseas – one man who was Chinese and one man who was English. They all got along really well and were prepared to write notes to communicate. I really loved it. I enjoyed it very much. The second lot of work experience I did was in the field of carpentry. I thought that maybe I'd quite like to do woodwork in my own time. I enjoy doing things with my hands. I'm quite practical. I like making things rather than doing admin sort of stuff. So I thought I'd have a go at carpentry, just to compare that with the

drafting. But, I actually found it a little bit boring because they were just giving me fairly basic chores to do. I thought maybe I could aim for that in the future. A further work experience I did was back in an architecture firm again and they were designing a beach house. That was a bit more difficult, a bit more challenging. There was a lot more to it in terms of architectural skills. I really enjoyed learning that, in that field. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

To prepare for his future career, Glenn spoke with many of the teachers of the deaf within the deaf facility. The main reason for doing so was that he could communicate with them fluently using Auslan. There was one teacher of the deaf, in particular, with whom he chose to interact.

Yes it was. I got along really well with her. She had Deaf parents herself, so she communicated really well. We used to chat a lot about things like that. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

Also, at (secondary school near home that had a deaf facility), I spoke to one of the teachers about what sort of things they might suggest, what they thought might be best for me. We had a classroom where we had special projects and I did some reading and some thinking about careers. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

As part of his preparation for a future career Glenn was given access to a computer program about careers. This program was not deaf-specific, but was of a more generic nature and aimed at young school leavers. Glenn found the computer program of the minimal assistance because the language level used in the program was complex. He found it useful in a general sense, but was not able to understand the more complex and difficult information provided. Glenn feels that to improve understanding and appreciation of the wide range of careers and pathways available to students, it is necessary to have someone to discuss it with at length:

I suppose the information was probably useful but I didn't feel I could access it exactly because it was all in English, because it was text-based. If I'd maybe had it translated into Auslan maybe I would have thought about that again.

Well, I guess if I had someone to go and talk to give me more information, rather than reading about it and considering it myself. Someone to help me to do the research and finding out that detailed information, I guess. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

Glenn spoke to his school's careers teacher about his future; however, he felt that because that teacher did not have a full understanding of reasonable adjustments and the employment opportunities available to deaf adults, the teacher was judging him in terms of all what he is future prospects might be. He found that by talking with the teachers of the deaf at the school, that he was better understood and offered strategies of how he could maximise his deafness in an employment situation.

Yes, it was helpful but the problem was, you know, in the hearing community it's often difficult for Deaf people to access the world of employment. From my point of view, Deaf people can do anything. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

Glenn teachers approached him to ask if he would like to participate in VET in schools program to increase his understanding of career opportunities. However after discussions with his family who felt that he would be better off career wise, it was determined that he do his VCE. From his work experience and after discussions with his teacher of the deaf, he decided to apply for architectural courses at TAFE through VTAC. On his application form he stated that he was Deaf and would require assistance to complete his course.

Yes I did apply through VTAC, not only for architecture, but also for other courses, eg. Civil Engineering. I was really interested in Building Design but Civil Engineering would have been road design and that sort of thing, and I thought I could do that, so I applied for both. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

While he was still at school, he decided to visit some of the TAFE Institutes to discuss the support that he required for his studies the following year. He leaned towards study in the southern outer suburbs of Melbourne, but because of his hearing loss he wanted to make sure he had other deaf people he could talk to whilst he was studying. He had a friend who was going to a TAFE institute in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

..this was where my friend was going and I thought it would be good to have another Deaf mate to keep me company and not be the only Deaf person on campus, just doing my work and having no ability to socialise. I thought it would be good to have the company, so we both came here. But then three or four weeks later my friend lost a bit of interest. I continued on by myself. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

For Glenn, when he was at school he thought that going to TAFE would be fine and would be manageable. However when he got there he realised it was quite a different environment. At school he was with friends he had known for years and as they were all deaf he was able to develop close friendships and chat with them on a daily basis and had created strong social networks. When he got to TAFE, he found that it was a lot more isolating than he had first anticipated. When Glenn commenced at TAFE, he had another deaf student studying the same course as he, but the student withdrew after the first three or four weeks. Without any social contact, Glenn found it more challenging to participate in the course.

Well, I didn't really make any friends. But when I was on my own in the class, as the only Deaf student, my classmates would sometimes write notes to me, or sometimes the interpreter would interpret for casual conversations and we'd have a bit of chat then, just through the interpreter.

I had no-one to just chat with. I could talk to the interpreter during lunch break or in breaks between class. (Interview with Glenn, February 2005).

For Glenn to fully participate in the course and have access to classroom discussions and so forth, he requires the service of two Auslan interpreters and a notetaker in the classroom. The reason for this is that Glenn is unable to hear speech even with hearing aid amplification. In addition, the skill of lipreading is not ideal in an educational setting as it is not always possible to comprehend everything that is being said and often student questions and teacher answers move quite quickly so it is difficult to keep pace with the fast flow of information. In addition, the need to keep his eyes focussed on the Auslan interpreters as they relay information means that if he drops his eye contact to take notes, he loses valuable information, as he cannot hear the conversation. For this reason, he needs a notetaker to take notes for him. For many profoundly deaf students who use Auslan to communicate, this is a standard form of educational support.

Well the interpreters at school were able to help me a bit with my written work, my notetaking. But at TAFE, no, they just signed what the teacher said and that's all.

There were a few classes where I took my own notes, but I found it pretty difficult trying to take notes because when I looked down to my page I'd miss out on the interpretation. I couldn't see what the Interpreter was signing at the same time as I wrote my notes. But, most of my classes were actually quite practical so I didn't really need a notetaker in those.

Because he lived in the outer southern suburbs of Melbourne and studied in the north, Glenn would spend at least 1.5 hours each direction travelling to and from his TAFE institute. Glenn is an extremely personable, articulate and intelligent young man who enjoys learning and participating in activities. However, the long days travelling, watching Auslan interpreters during each class and being isolated from the rest of the class due to his hearing loss and mode of communication took its toll. He was tired, and finding it increasingly difficult to continue his motivation for the course. So, he decided to withdraw.

Partly it was the travelling and also that I didn't have enough time to finish my homework when I was at home because I wasn't getting enough sleep. I was travelling such a long

way. And also because there were problems with the Interpreters and Notetakers, particularly when they weren't able to make it to class. When they didn't turn up it made it very difficult for me. And, yes, I was feeling lonely and isolated as well. That wouldn't have been a major complaint, though. I could have coped with being in the hearing world.

In August of the (sic) year. It had become too stressful trying to study and doing all of that travelling. It made me realise I was becoming more and more stressed to a point where I just couldn't continue.

At the time of our interview, he had been out of study for three months and had been working in an large jewellery store doing tasks in the back room. He was *'taking the jewellery and watches and so on in and out of the jewellery cases.'* He is now considering coming back to TAFE in Semester 2, 2005 but may go to a TAFE institute closer to his home.

I'm wondering whether I should look for a job or try and do what I really want to do. But I think maybe it's better to go back to study because I think that would be better than ... if I can keep on doing the subjects I want to do I think it's better to get on with that and smooth that out.

Well, I've been thinking about that, thinking about what I really want to do. I don't want to place myself under too much stress. I've had 3 months break so I'm feeling less stressed now. I just want to take it easy and I don't want to be under too much stress.

Glenn: Second interview

When we last spoke to Glenn, he had dropped out of his TAFE course for several reasons. He was also considering returning to TAFE to complete his studies. He outlines where is at the moment:

I haven't returned to TAFE yet because I'm currently working. I did some TAFE subjects recently, just the subjects I needed in order to pass. At the moment I want to relax and take it easy. A few weeks ago I was thinking about applying for a university course in the city, at Southern Cross University. They have a lot of courses available. I think I might not continue on the path I originally intended. Now I might do a business course, an accounting course, but I'm not really sure. I might wait until next year and have some time in between to relax.

Glenn is employed as a laser engraver at a factory in Western Melbourne. He obtained this job through a Job Network employment agency, which specialises in assisting people with disabilities to obtain work. Glenn did not have Auslan interpreters during his case management interviews at the employment agency but *they do have some hearing staff who can sign*. He felt he could communicate well with the staff.

Glenn applied for between '5-10' other positions before he was successful in getting his current employment and was actively looking for work for about two months. He describes the interview and as the manager had worked with deaf people before, he felt that this helped him obtain the position.

Once they found a job I was interested in I attended an interview. A woman from Job Focus attended the interview with me. I was shown around the workplace, and shown what I would be doing. We had a discussion there at the factory. I got a phone call a few days later to say that I had the job. The woman from Job Focus interpreted the interview for me, and interpreted during the tour of the factory and the explanation of the job requirements.

Maybe it's to do with being Deaf and with communication. I got this factory job because there had been other Deaf people who had worked there prior to me. On the first day I

attended work, the boss asked me if I was okay. He talked to me about my safety on the job, and specifically he talked to me about forklifts in the factory. I told him that I would be okay because I have a certain amount of hearing thanks to my hearing aids. I told him that I would keep my eyes open. My manager was pleased with that. He just told me to be aware of forklifts at all times.

Glenn communicates with his co-workers using a mix of pen and paper, signing and gestures. He believes most of the people he works with are nice and some are alright. He works with around 3-4 people in his group and about 20 people in the whole factory. Glenn has had around 4 jobs since he left school and feels this job is good as it is better than staying home and doing nothing:

I have taught some of them a few signs. Some of the hearing people think it's alright. Some of them think it's cute. They generally lose interest over time, though, so mostly I write notes to communicate with them. I don't mind.

I enjoy working there because it's better than doing nothing. My first job was as a paper boy. I was 13 or 14 years old. I enjoyed that job, but I had to get up early and after a while I couldn't be bothered. I enjoyed my second job at (major electrical store) in the city. I got that job through my Mum. There wasn't anything good or bad about that job, it was just a normal job.

Glenn would like to return to study to improve his job prospects. Previously, he was interested in Building and Design but has now decided that he is not interested in that field and after discussions with his family he thinks business or accounting may be a good career option.

He would like to apply to a small specialist university in Melbourne and has approached the staff in the Student Services department at that university to discuss his options. His reasons for choosing that university was that they have experience in working with *'people who have English as a second language, so to me that means that they won't have problems with communication'*.

I feel that I needed to find something that's right for me. I had thought that Building Design would be good for me, but it's really just about the design of houses and buildings and factories. I'd like to do something more general. I think I'm still finding my way, and finding what's right for me. Hopefully I'll be successful in that area. I don't want to end up without a qualification. I want a better qualification in order to earn better money. My aim is to get a better qualification and then to get relevant work at the end of that qualification.

I had talked to my parents about it. They gave me their opinions on what would be good for me. My Mum had done some accounting when she was younger. There's lots of work in money and managing money. So I thought that would be good. I don't have any experience in it, but I thought I could do it because I am good at maths.

Glenn reflects on his time doing Building and Design at a Northern suburbs Institute of TAFE. He feels it was 'a bit of a waste, although it's good to know what I know now'. He recognises that his goals have changed and that he has to 'start over again'. He looks back on the careers advice he was given at school and wishes he had been more clear about what he wanted to do and feels he didn't have full access to the wide range of employment opportunities and career pathways when he was still at secondary school, having that increased knowledge may have helped him become clearer about his future options. He reflects on why he chose the course and how he thinks it could have been better:

In Year 11 and 12 I liked drawing, graphics. I would also do that in my own time. I liked looking at houses, so I thought perhaps that would be a good way to go for me. I didn't like going to classes because the Interpreters weren't there regularly and it was a long way for me to travel to classes.

Yes, if I had excellent Interpreters and regularity of Interpreters then I would complete that course and get that qualification.

Well, I liked doing that course. The main frustration for me was the lack of Interpreters, and the effect that had on my studies. I couldn't achieve with the teacher just talking at me. I just couldn't do anything.

You know, I can't understand your spoken language, but Interpreters would help me understand the subject. The problem I have is that I don't think Interpreters ... if I miss ... I want Interpreters to be there regularly, and I don't want to miss anything.

Glenn is in two minds about whether to complete his building and design course or embark on a new course of study in accounting. He feels that with his experience of interpreters in the TAFE sector he is reluctant to experience that again. He hopes that the experience at the other university may be more positive *I don't know, but I hope so*.