

Call it fate. Call it serendipity.

EDGE calls it just plain lucky.

For 20 years, EDGE has been lucky enough to have Clare Power as a key member of our Board.

Clare is a commercial lawyer, by profession. She has a keen, incisive mind, and is trained to "cut to the chase" of complex legal issues. When her name was suggested as a possible Board member, it seemed she'd be a 'good fit'.

The existing EDGE Board had no idea HOW good a fit...

"I had a very firm personal interest in the area because I had a brother who was severely disabled," Clare told INSIDE EDGE.

One of seven children, Clare had grown up, part of a big family that included a much-loved, son and brother with a disability named Brian.

Subsequent conversations revealed that Clinical Psychologist and EDGE Executive Director, Greg Lewis had previously worked with Brian Power. Tragically, Brian - Clare's younger brother - died of complications from cerebral palsy, just a year before the Board approach.

"I was selected for my professional skills, but in fact - as is often the case with disability - it touches everyone in one way or another," said Clare.

Over her 20 years on the Board, Clare has seen some dramatic changes in the way society views people with disability. She credits EDGE with helping to change perceptions of what's possible, particularly in the workplace.

"EDGE provides the tools for you to live your life with dignity and self respect," said Ms Power, "Inevitably, people are meant to work, and the working life is such an important part of feeling that you belong in society and that you deserve to be respected."

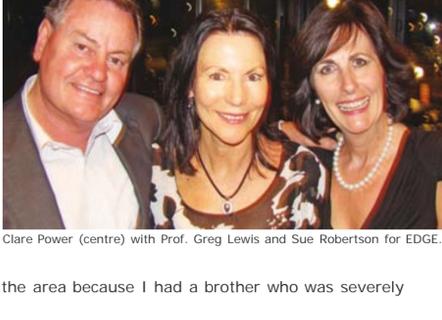
"The feedback that we get from employers is that having a worker with a disability in the workplace can be a real uplift for the entire workplace".

After two decades of service on the EDGE Board, Clare decided it was simply time to give someone else a turn.

"I thought, well 20 years, it's just downright selfish to occupy the position for that long!" she said "I'd like somebody else to have the opportunity.

It's something that many people would like to have the privilege of being part of the EDGE experience."

EDGE CEO Susan Robertson said "For the past twenty years Clare has acted as the conscience of the Board; always reminding those present of the purpose of the organisation and its commitment to people with disability. Her departure from the Board will be a great loss to EDGE".



Clare Power (centre) with Prof. Greg Lewis and Sue Robertson for EDGE.



25 Years and still going strong

25 years ago, it was 1986. Back then, Bob Hawke was the Australian Prime Minister. "Crocodile Dundee" had just been released at the movies.

And a 15 year old school boy, with a short-back-and-sides haircut, started working for Coles. His name? Adam Barnett.

First job? Trolley boy.

Fast forward to 2011. Much has changed in the world, but there are also some reassuring constants. Adam's hair's still the same - and so is his employer. When Adam notched up an impressive quarter of a century's service with the retail giant, Coles acknowledged the milestone at a celebratory morning tea.

Adam was also presented with a special certificate and a choice of a \$650 gift voucher or a gold watch. (He took the cash!).

Adam says he loves working - and having a job has given him independence.

"I can go and buy my own things," he said "Things I want for my car . . . I can go anywhere I want to go - even 10-pin bowling!".

Adam's mum, Lynn Barnett, said she used to worry about how Adam would cope when she and her husband were no longer around to help out. That changed from the day Adam went to work.

"He's come out of his shell 10-fold," she said "He used to be shy, now he talks more than me!".

"He's happy, we're happy!".

Adam started at Coles Mosman Park, later moving closer to home to Swan View, then the Midland store. He works full time in the fruit and vegetable section.

Manager John Moloney describes Adam as a "valuable asset". "He's always here and it makes a tremendous difference," he said.

EDGE Job Coordinator, Lianne Parsons, says Adam is an integral part of the team.

"He's very reliable, likes to talk to everybody and loves his job," she said.

"The manager knows that jobs will get done with Adam around".

Indeed, a few weeks after Adam received his 25 year certificate, he was recognised once again.

"He got another \$20 voucher and his name on a plaque to recognise the valuable customer service he offers," said John Moloney.

"Having him here teaches you there are opportunities for everybody".

With the right technology Alishia can do anything.

You don't have to be a "geek" to have your life changed by technology.

If you've ever "Skyped" friends overseas for a chat, checked the internet on your phone for a movie session or caught up with your favourite TV show on the laptop - whether you realise it or not, your life has been changed by technology.

Despite only having 10 per cent vision, 19 year old Alishia Anderson has a data entry and filing job she loves, thanks to the help of some brilliant assistive technology - and co-workers who were willing to give her a chance.

Alishia works full time as a Processing Officer at WA's Department of Commerce in the Building Commission Division.

"It makes me happy," said Alishia "I like having lots of work to do!"

Job Coordinator Megan Graham explains that EDGE secured funding to purchase specialised equipment and software, to help Alishia.

"Alishia uses "Zoomtext" software, which not only magnifies images on screen but also has a screen reading function to read text aloud," she said.

"Alishia listens to the computer using a wireless headset - which is also connected to her phone via an amplifier - to enable her to simultaneously use the phone and her screen reading software."

"EDGE also sourced a wide-screen computer monitor, and another large screen CCTV with a built-in camera, to magnify paper documents. And there's "Penfriend" which is an audio labelling software programme. It's been used along with recordable sticky labels to set up an audio filing system for Alishia. The technology is amazing!"

Initially, Alishia won a six month contract with the Department of Commerce.

Alishia has now progressed to become a permanent staff member.

Department of Commerce's Rebecca Hajduk, who is Alishia's mentor, said when Alishia's C.V arrived, the organisation had just been trialling new "optical character recognition" computer software programme called "TeleForm", which made it easier to input data.

"I have a nephew who has autism," she told INSIDE EDGE "In all my management training, I've focused on everyone being capable."

"Alishia has a spirit you don't see in a lot of other staff. She tries harder... she really just wants to muck in and have a go."

EDGE's Megan Graham says it's been heartening to watch Alishia's confidence grow, since she started the job.

"Alishia's a beautiful girl, always punctual, very loyal. She really appreciates having this job," said Megan.

"With the right technology she can do anything!"

Alishia's success has ignited ambition.

In the future, she hopes to work in a customer service role.

"I'm working towards that," said Alishia.

The late Steve Jobs once said that "Computers themselves, and software yet to be developed, will revolutionise the way we learn."

Perhaps Alishia might like to add "And work. And live".

Josh has a cuppa with Queen Elizabeth II

He's smashed world swimming records, taken multiple gold at the Paralympics and in 1993 was even awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services to Australian sport.

But sharing afternoon tea recently with an 85 year old grandmother in his home town, was a "once in a lifetime opportunity" for Josh Hofer.

Who was the woman? Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second. Josh was one of 1200 special guests at the Royal Garden Party at Perth's Government House, while the Queen was in Perth for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Elite athletes including cricketer Adam Gilchrist and West Coast Eagles Captain Darren Glass were on the guest list - so was Joshua Hofer OAM and Paralympian.

While many were lucky to even catch a glimpse of the Queen, Josh says he was able to speak to her.

"I shook her hand and everything, she said she was glad to see me," he told INSIDE EDGE "I told her I was going to London next year, she was quite pleased about it."



Of course, it's not a European holiday that Josh is planning. Twenty years after winning gold at the Madrid Paralympics, he hopes to be selected in the Australian team and to repeat his success at the Paralympics in London 2012.

Josh combines a gruelling training regime with a job making deliveries around Royal Perth Hospital.

It's a role he's held, with support from Edge, for 18 years.

EDGE Job Coordinator, Martin Albrecht, describes Josh as popular, independent and a hard worker.

Still, Martin admits, even he was surprised when Josh announced he was going to meet the Queen.

"He showed me the invitation and my jaw dropped!," he said.

But it's typical of Josh's motivated approach to life.

"Josh is really proud of his achievements," says Martin, "He's previously represented his country. He applied and was accepted to meet the Queen. It shows he can achieve what he wants to achieve."

It's a view echoed by Josh's supervisor.

"Josh has a very, very good work ethic," says Patrick Latouche, Receptions Officer at Royal Perth Hospital, "He goes above and beyond with people and dedicates himself to helping others."

Josh says he loves his work, hopes to continue doing well with his swimming and was chuffed to spend an afternoon with both royalty and Perth's A-list.

"I met Adam Gilchrist, Andrew Forrest, Nelson Woss (the owner of Koko from the movie "Red Dog") said Josh, "I saw Steve Hooker, Lauren Mitchell ... Jerry Hall.

I didn't get a photo with her, though. I just couldn't get round to everyone!"

But it's the memory of an afternoon tea with the world's most famous grandmother, that remains.

"It was just nice I got invited to it," said Josh, with a grin.

"I wish I could do it again."

Glen's 'office' is in the great outdoors!

It's often said "if you find something you love doing, you'll never work a day in your life."

For 19 year old Glen Hawke, going to work is a joy. Glen's "office" is the great outdoors, he spends his day learning and maintaining the grounds of Curtin University. It's an idyllic existence.

Interested in gardening since he was young, Glen is now on his way to completing an Apprenticeship in Horticulture.

"I get up early in the morning, I work in the sun," said Glen.

"Every day you have a good day."

With help from EDGE and group training organisation South Metropolitan Youth Link - or SMYL - Glen has had great success in his chosen field. He was selected as a finalist in the Indigenous Apprentice/Trainee of the Year, Awards of Excellence.

Mentor Glenn Lethan nominated Glen and believes he deserves every accolade.

"He's an amazing young fella. I'd like to use him as a role model for other kids," said Mr Lethan "I see Glen as the little Aussie battler - he gets thrown challenges, and he just keeps getting through them!"

Jacqui Addison, Horticulture team leader at Curtin University, agreed.

"Glen is such a good kid, you don't mind helping someone who helps himself. He's definitely an asset to Curtin."

Jacqui said Glen - who was born with learning problems - is the first person with disabilities employed in her team.

Still, she has been surprised by Glen's abilities.

"We threw him straight in," she said "We showed him more than we showed any first year apprentice. But he was capable, he absorbs information well."

"Glen's an inspiration to me."

Glen said the job has helped him to mature and become increasingly self-sufficient.

"I want to do more on my own," he told INSIDE EDGE, "I tell my Mum I can do these things without her worrying about me now."



On behalf of everyone at EDGE we thank you all for your continued support and wish you a safe and happy festive season.

Sue and Greg