

Capturing dreams with new service

By MICHÈLE JEDLICKA

INVERELL residents with disabilities have another stepping stone to realise a dream. Pathfinders Ability Links has established an Inverell service for locals who have long-held desire, dream or ambition. The program pairs a resident with a 'linker' who aids the client toward a hope or solution. Brett Pischke is the main Inverell linker.

Ability Links is a new initiative of the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). Inverell-based Lynn Lennon is the New England North West manager for the program and has been on board before the launch on July 1 last year.

She said with the roll out of the National Disability Scheme, there were some gaps identified in the system, and Ability Links was created to target the deficits.

"You have the mainstream disability providers and they have their programs, but ADHC wanted to see ability services move away from that and become more inclusive," she said.

"So by setting up Ability Links, we were to become the advocates; the intermediaries between people with disability and community as a whole."

Lynn said linkers liaison between business owners and clients to find a job or volunteer, to learn a new skill. Participants are not required to prove they have a recognised disability to access the service.

"We come in on the ground level, we work with the participants, and our conversations that we have with them are 'What are your goals and dreams?' and then we try to make it that their dreams are attainable," Lynn said.

She added that the effort to promote inclusion within the community underlines every project.

"And community being more accepting of those with disabilities."

Lynn said there are frequent emotional moments with the linkers when a participant realises their ambition.

Brett had a simple phrase to describe the translation of his role as a linker and its application in the community.

"Life changing," he said.

"To see the look on someone's face, when you've got them in to so a program, got them in to do something that they've never been able to do before in their entire life, to see the smile and the glow on their face is unbelievable."



ADVOCATES: Inverell linker Brett Pischke and Ability Links New England North West manager Lynn Lennon.