

family

A D V O C A C Y

PO Box 502  
Epping NSW 1710

305/16-18 Cambridge St  
Epping NSW 2121

Phone: (02) 9869 0866  
Facsimile: (02) 9869 0722

Record

287

File Number

10258

Author: Graham, Amanda

Title: The BHP Programme Agreement

Original source: -

Resource type: Written

Publication Date: 26/10/91

Publisher info: -

### Abstract

The BHP Agreement is an agreement whereby BHP gave a commitment to Essential Personnel in the Illawarra that a number of positions within its workforce would be specifically available to people with disability. The Agreement is in part an affirmative action program in that it identifies a number of jobs for which people who have disabilities can then competitively apply. This paper discusses what such agreements mean for Essential Personnel and its clients. **Keyword: Employment**

**PRESENTATION TO ASSID**

**ON**

**"THE BHP PROGRAMME AGREEMENT"**

**BY**

**AMANDA GRAHAM**

**GENERAL MANAGER**

**ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL ASS. INC.**

**THURSDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER 1991.**

**DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, GEELONG.**

Thankyou.

John has briefly discussed the history, development and structure of the Agreement and described the placements thus far; I would now like to make some further comments from Essential Personnel's point of view - focussing in on the Agreement in terms of a CETAP's mission and objectives of finding award wage open employment for people with intellectual disabilities, within the broader context of this period of economic downturn with the concomitant lack of employment opportunities.

For us, the BHP Agreement came at a good time. Wollongong, and the Illawarra region in general, was, and still is, experiencing the severest extremes of the current recession. The context in which we operate, as an employment agency seeking suitable jobs for people with intellectual disabilities, is therefore at best, restrictive, and more often totally inflexible. No doubt, this experience, is not unique to our agency or this region.

Let me briefly tell you our problems, as a specialist employment agency in the Illawarra. Influencing factors, indigenous to the Illawarra, which "set the scene" and shape our efforts no matter how hard we work include:-

\*The Illawarra is a large region of some 8,485 square kms, spanning five local government areas ( O/H NO.1 ). It is a region of highly urbanised settlement, with 94.4% of the total regional population (some 336,000 people), being urbanised. The Greater City of Wollongong itself has 221,000 inhabitants which forms the bulk of the population, making it the third largest metropolitan centre in NSW.

\*ABS 1991 suggests that the total number of people with disabilities in the region is approx. 60,000, with a handicapped population of some 46,000 people. A conservative estimate of the regional population with intellectual disabilities, would be around 2,000 people.

\* The region is largely dependent on its manufacturing sector; the fortunes of the Basic Metal Products Sector of the Illawarra Manufacturing

wage jobs for our clients.

The BHP Agreement is a creative and innovative union/employer initiative which has provided our agency, and I believe all CETAPS, with a direction for the future. The FIA deserves credit for very quickly recognising the double disadvantage of having a disability and being unemployed in such hard times, and particularly during times of award restructuring of the (steel) industry, with its emphasis on multi-skilling. BHP, the receptive employer, agreed to provide twenty employment places in recognition of those issues and in recognition of the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities and in so doing made a public statement of great importance, particularly to other employers. Our more recent agreement with Wollongong University and the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union was greatly influenced by the success of the BHP Agreement.

The BHP Agreement is not "special" except that it gives a **commitment to a number of positions that are only available to people with intellectual disabilities.** The positions are all award wage positions and employees filling the positions have equal opportunity with other workers for progression within the company system.

The Agreement is in part an **affirmative action program** in that it identifies a number of jobs for which people with intellectual disabilities can then competitively apply. The agency's role was to put forward suitable candidates as applicants. The value of following this procedure cannot be underestimated; employers had the right to choose their employees and this alleviated any hint that the Agreement was an act of patronage.

In summary, what has this Agreement and other more recent agreements meant for Essential Personnel and its clients?

Agreements of this kind with large employers are important for many reasons, not least of which is that they provide jobs.

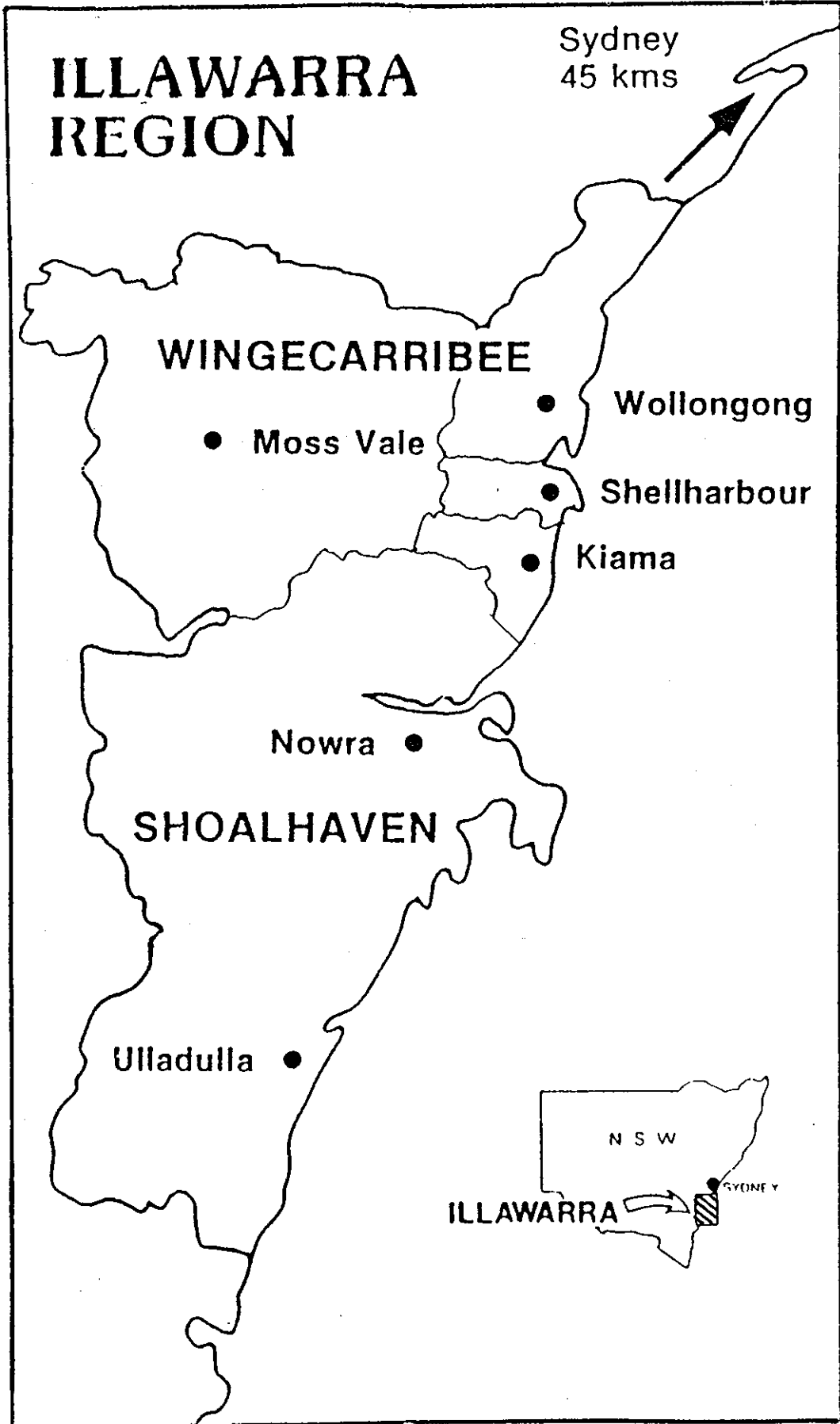
A recent ABS Survey entitled *Jobsearch Experience of Unemployed Persons, July 1990* found that the most commonly perceived barrier

according to the Human Rights and EO Commission discussion paper on *The Rights of People with Disabilities*. (OH NO. 4.) Our agency experience also substantiates that view.

Finally, by having a set of agreed jobs, these can be re-filled with new clients as employees progress to other jobs. This encourages employees who so wish to pursue career paths and allows the agency the opportunity to use some jobs in different ways eg. such as "first job" positions. The American McDonalds McJobs program which recruits, trains and retains disabled individuals, may provide some ideas for further developments for using Agreement positions for training.

In the absence of legislation we believe that this co-operative approach between employer, union and agency has many positive aspects, least of which is that there is a **total and shared responsibility** for people with intellectual disabilities in their quest for a decent (working ) life.

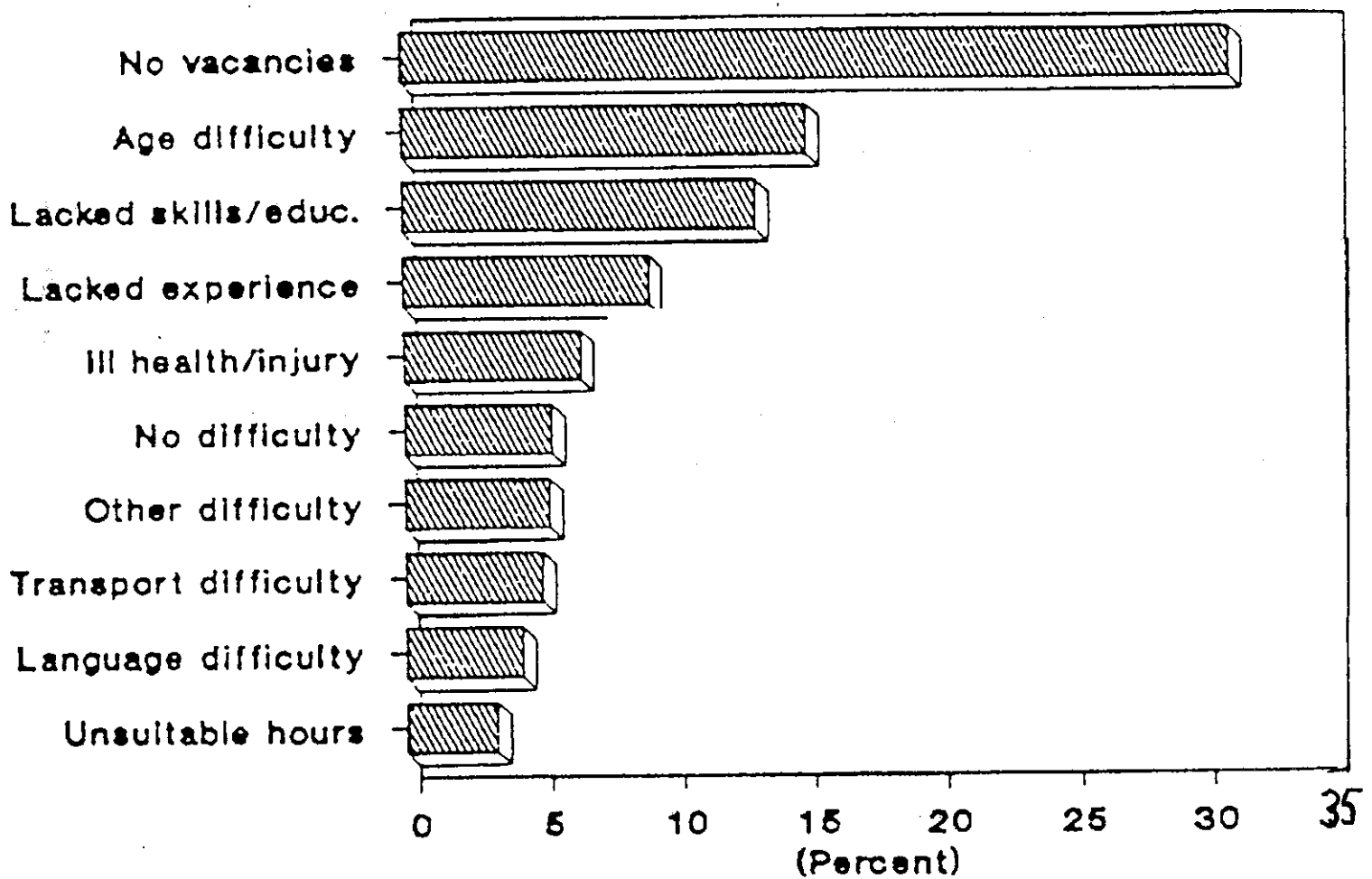
I thank the National Council for Intellectual Disabilities and ASSID for the opportunity to give this presentation and trust that our experiences may be of benefit to consumers and colleagues in the field.



Source: *Institute Illawarra* 2815 June 1991

This article is made available by the Institute for Family Advocacy & Leadership Development and cannot be used except for the sole purpose of research and study

# Unemployed Persons' Main Stated Difficulties in Finding Work



Source: ABS 6222.0