

A Story by tutor Nancy

Robert was referred to the Read Write Now program by an employment agency in November 2013. He was 21 years old and had never had a job. He'd left school in Year 10 after years of being in 'special classes'. Neither his parents nor his grandparents are literate and he was third generation unemployed in the family. His mother and younger brother both have an intellectual disability. Robert was his mother's support for shopping, cooking, coping with doctors and support agencies, and providing company for her during the day. His mother was reticent about Robert learning and getting a job as she worried she would lose her only support.

When Robert came to Read Write Now he was assessed at Level 1 with a reading age of approximately 6 years. He was matched with Nancy, who had just completed her tutor training. Nancy is retired with a work background in Aged Care. She detected that Robert needed glasses, which he admitted, but he had thrown them away because he had been so cruelly bullied at school. Nancy being so motivated, encouraging, patient and with a great sense of humour, meant that Robert now had someone in his life to teach him at a pace that he could cope with. Nancy focused on topics of interest to Robert to keep him engaged and kept a very detailed album of his work so he could see first-hand the progress he was making. The album is a wonderful visual record that shows Robert's progress in literacy over the year. Robert had an interest in cooking and with support from Nancy he joined a 4 week food and nutrition workshop run through the local library and this benefited all of his family.

Robert and Nancy talked a lot and she sensed that he did in fact want to be employed, he just did not think he could ever get a job. She encouraged Robert to consider applying for positions and helped him with his resume and application forms. A few months later, he was asked to attend an interview with a fast food chain. Nancy helped him with 'dummy' interview questions, vocabulary relating to the fast food industry and general job interview techniques. She suggested he have a haircut, a shave and helped him choose appropriate clothes. Robert was successful at the interview and offered initially 15 hours of paid work a week.

He then needed to complete an online induction and had been told this would take about an hour. Nancy scheduled tutoring sessions around supporting him with this and although it took him two and a quarter hours, he finished it with a good understanding of the employer. The next session was timetables for buses and trains to get him from home to work. For the following three weeks, Nancy encouraged him to talk and write about the duties he had been given on the job.

After 12 months Robert completed his time with Read Write Now and no longer meets with Nancy. He continues to work 22 hours a week at the fast food chain. At this stage he is content with his new level of literacy and his part-time job. This gives him the best of both worlds as he can work and still support his mother and brother.