**BCA Inform: May, Employment**

On Tuesday, 6th May, BCA Inform centred on the important topic of Employment. The session was led by Rachael Johinke, BCA’s Project Coordinator for An Eye to the Future.

Rachael began by sharing her own employment journey, before outlining the evolution and key achievements of An Eye to the Future project. She noted the shift from live, interactive webinars to a model focused on delivering high quality recorded webinars and practical resources to better meet the needs of job seekers.

The session featured three guest speakers who shared their personal employment stories, followed by a panel discussion. Each speaker brought unique insights from their diverse experiences in disability advocacy and employment services, offering practical advice and reflections on the challenges and successes they’ve encountered in the workforce.

Tim Haggis, the first guest speaker, spoke about his journey from facing difficulties in school due to low vision to building a successful career in sales and eventually founding his own business, Sky’s the Limit Disability Support Services. Tim encouraged attendees to focus on their strengths and not be defined by perceived limitations.

Next, Kaye Jones, Employment Services Lead at Guide Dogs Victoria, shared her career path from secondary school to her current leadership role. She highlighted the importance of understanding how vision loss affects employment and how tailored support can create pathways to success.

The third panelist, Jess Kendall, spoke about navigating career changes and her current work as a Local Area Coordinator helping people access the NDIS. Jess reflected on her decision to disclose her disability in the workplace and emphasized the need for greater awareness about the capabilities of people who are blind or vision impaired.

The panel then discussed a range of practical topics including disclosing vision impairment, interview preparation and workplace adjustments.

The discussion then explored how different employers have responded to requests for accommodations. Tim, for example, shared his transition from using visual magnification tools to screen reader software, highlighting the importance of a supportive work environment.

The panel spoke about the role of open communication, transparency, and education in helping employers and colleagues better understand the needs of employees with vision impairment.

Throughout the session, the importance of self advocacy and focusing on individual strengths was reinforced. The panel also encouraged job seekers to research potential employers to identify inclusive and supportive workplaces.

The session concluded with a Q&A, giving attendees the chance to engage directly with the panelists. Attendees were also reminded about BCA’s Employment Peer Group, which meets on the first Monday of every month at 7:00pm AEST, providing ongoing support and peer connection.