

Access Online

PRESS RELEASE 13 JULY 2020

"During these strange and trying times everyone at Access has been amazing, thank you." - Sandra Chester (family member of an Access participant).

These are not words we take lightly at Access. When we realised we would have to suspend physical programs due to Covid-19, we were devastated because at Access everyone knows each other by name and cares about each other's wellbeing. However, in true Access style, we didn't dwell for long and looked to turn this challenge into an opportunity.

Thus, Access Online was born. Based on research and feedback from participants, it became clear that simply moving our physical programs online would not work so we developed a new suite of programs which remained true to Access' values but which better suited online skill development and engagement in complex times.

While we knew continuing services online would be important for participants, we have been overwhelmed by the messages we have received outlining the positive impact Access Online has had. For some participants and their families, disability has magnified the current challenges and as the Ruschinek family put it, "Access Online has been a very creative way to help feel they still belong and haven't been abandoned."

Access is also about community and a key tenant of our programs is engaging with the community both for participants to gain real-world experience and to demystify disability. We were thus honoured to be this year's joint recipient of the City of Glen Eira's Community Group of the Year Award. We have continued this commitment with guest presenters joining our online sessions to share, connect and grow. At the same time, seeing the familiar faces of our amazing volunteers has assisted with continuity and it has been wonderful for participants to recognise that now as much as ever, their involvement with Access contributes to the lives of others as it does their own.

We had planned to complement Access Online with some return to onsite programs from today. Like many, we are frustrated and saddened that we can no longer do this but health and safety must be the priority.

We know from feedback from Term 2 that Access Online helped many participants to manage their time in lock-down so we are pleased to be able to continue to provide these opportunities for Term 3.

We have further developed our Access Online programs and will be offering a robust program schedule that will support participants in both capacity building and skill development as well as lower intensity opportunities for personal growth, social connection and meaningful engagement.



Term 3 of Access Online starts on Monday 20 July 2020. To learn more visit our website www.accessinc.org.au or phone (03) 9272 5603.