

Partnership – What's It About?

Places like Milparinka often talk about being in partnership with others to bring about opportunities for people. When we talk about partnerships at Milparinka we are usually talking, not about partnerships between organisations, but connections between individuals that brings about opportunities for one person at a time. This is an example of one partnership and what we each bring to it.

James tells us he is interested in cars, loves being around them, now has three part time jobs where he washes them, loves talking about them and loves car and motorbike racing. James can concentrate on jobs for short periods of time and needs very specific roles to stay on focus.

Cars are not something that Milparinka knows a lot about so we needed to work in partnership with someone who knew about cars and could help James extend his involvement in them. Our role in a partnership was being able to understand with James, his interests and what he could do, what support he may need and the best ways that this could happen. James already had a job at cleaning cars and enjoys this and wanted to be involved in car racing. We went with James to the racing track and looked around at the things he might be interested in. Working in the Pits didn't look right as everything happened so quickly and needed quick reactions and great focus. James came across the racing cars, that between races were being constantly polished in public view so people could see all the advertising and said this is something he could try. This meant that when we made contact with the owner of the racing car we were able to introduce James as someone who loves cars, has experience in looking after them and had already identified a role in which he thought he could help them with. This was an important part of our role in the partnership, knowing what it could look like and what each person could offer.

The owner of the car, and others, was wrapped to meet someone who also loved cars and welcomed James involvement. His role in the partnership was to give James a role and ensure that he had efficacy or value when he joined them. The day James rolled up to start he had only met the owner and not the rest of the crew. As soon as he walked in all of the crew said hello, knew who he was and had a uniform and his orientation worked out. When the driver came off the track in the racing car and got out of the car and saw James he immediately said "hello, you must be James, welcome". The owner of the car had played his part in the partnership really well. James is now a regular member of the racing team – his job polishing cars – his role – being a member of the team.

The lessons that we get from this:

- Developing partnerships that work are not always complicated needing the most senior levels of the agency. This partnership was developed from James and a

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staff member knowing what James wanted and pursuing ideas that made sense to him

- Partnerships that work for people don't have to start as relationships between organisations that create opportunities for lots of people. Partnerships that start with a focus on one person can and do work better for many people.
- Partnerships are not about one person looking after someone else. It's about each person bringing something to the table. When they start from a shared interest, in this case cars, it's a head start.

Milparinka has lots of partnerships that look like this one. Partnerships that are developed to respond to the interests of one person and after a while become relationships with mutual and shared responsibilities and commitments. 5 years ago we had a lot more organisational partnerships than we have now. Whole organisational partnerships have their place they are certainly in the minority here. Our partnerships are built around one person at a time. This is because we have learnt when we start from the perspective of one person at a time partnerships that work are those that are developed around shared interests and relationships.