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Media statement

FPC committed to equal opportunity employment

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Equal opportunity at the Forest Product Commission (FPC) has become a finely-tuned appreciation of the benefits of employing a disabled worker.

In 2008, FPC hired a very independent, 27 year-old, Angela Barnes as receptionist at its Rivervale office.

Angela is legally blind and as the FPC had not previously employed disabled staff, the agency worked closely with specialist recruitment provider Edge Employment Services to help overcome the obstacles which may have prevented Angela from reaching her full potential and interacting with colleagues.

FPC General Manager Dr Paul Biggs said that while modifications to computer software were required, the FPC had shown that with a paucity of effort and a lot of commitment, disability was no barrier to workplace entry.

“Not only is Angela is a delight to have in the office, but she is also very conscientious and frequently receives compliments for her cheerful telephone manner.

“Two members of FPC’s staff, Jonathan Smith and Michael Harris, have been formally recognised for their efforts in working with Angela and for providing quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

“FPC also received a nomination in the *‘2009 Count Us In’* awards in the State Government category.

“Angela has integrated seamlessly with the FPC’s team and she loves her role which provides her with financial freedom, confidence and new social opportunities,” Dr Biggs said.

For Angela, the satisfaction of learning new skills, being respected for her contribution and being able to interact with colleagues had been enormous.

“FPC staff never deny me new opportunities, they just find a way for me to have a go,” Angela said.

Thanks to donations from Casual Friday events, the FPC demonstrated continued commitment to equal opportunity with a donation to the Association for the Blind WA's Guide Dogs program.

Staff at the FPC's Rivervale office had raised more than \$4,000 over the past three years for various Western Australian charities and organisations including:

- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation;
- RSPCA;
- Princess Margaret Hospital for Children;
- Father Chris Riley's Youth off the Streets; and
- Motor Neurone Disease Association of WA.

FPC's donation to Guide Dogs WA helps more than 35,000 vision-impaired Western Australians to minimise the effects of sight loss and realise the highest level of participation in daily life.

[ENDS]

Pictures accompanying this release:

Picture 1: Receptionist Angela Barnes demonstrating Disability isn't a barrier to workforce participation.

For more information contact:

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