

15 December, 2017

## LOCAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDED SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

Local social enterprise Ability Enterprises is the winner of the 2017 Social Justice Award given by the Toowoomba Social Justice Commission. Ability Enterprises is entering its fifth year of operation and has provided meaningful work for numerous people with barriers to employment during this time.

“Ability goes beyond the charity model which gives to the poor from the surplus or left overs of a business, to one which puts inclusion at the very heart of what it does. Social enterprises like Ability Enterprises drive social change in the real economy,” stated Executive Officer for the Social Justice Commission, Dr Mark Copland.

The Social Justice Awards first started in 2004 and annually recognise the efforts of local people, groups or businesses working to create positive change upholding the dignity of the human person and integrity of creation each year.

For this year’s award the Social Justice Commission looked to the ACBC’s Social Justice Statement, Everyone’s Business, for inspiration, looking at people and businesses who are working towards an inclusive economy.

“In Toowoomba we have a number of magnificent examples of what this inclusive economy might look like,” stated Dr Copland, “Ability Enterprises runs on sound business principles, delivers great service to customers and successfully ensure that some of our community’s most vulnerable enjoy the dignity of work.”

Bishop Robert McGuckin presented the award to Mr Bruce Russell, General Manager of Ability Enterprises at a ceremony on Thursday, 14 December 2017 at the Social Justice Commission Office. Bishop McGuckin said he was heartened to see such a strong desire for social justice in the Toowoomba Community.

The Award ceremony was well attended by Ability staff, Toowoomba Mayor Paul Antonio, representatives from local council and government, local businesses and members of the public. During his acceptance speech, Mr Russell humbly thanked the Social Justice Commission for their support and recognition for Ability Enterprises’ work in bringing dignity to the marginalised by offering them gainful employment.

“When we interview people, we look for those who are impossible to find work for, they face the most barriers, they are our clients. These are the people who need work not just for financial reasons, it also has a positive impact on their mental health.”

Mr Russell went on to recall a moment that has touched him deeply, “I recently heard from someone who was on the verge of giving up and wanting to commit suicide. Giving them work and purpose changed their outlook and they were happy they could finally buy their mum a Christmas pressie. That was moving.”

Ability Enterprises has supplied staff to businesses in Toowoomba, including St Vincent’s Hospital and a contract to supply staff to Toowoomba Regional Council Waste Management Facilities.

**Media Contact for the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba:**

Ingrid McTaggart

Ph: 07 4632 4277

Mobile: 0429 489 748

Email: [imctaggart@twb.catholic.org.au](mailto:imctaggart@twb.catholic.org.au)