**It’s impossible to wipe the grin off the face of local teenager, Oliver, after receiving an award for delivering outstanding customer service to the patrons of Bunnings Warehouse, Mentone. Oliver was presented with this award at a recent staff meeting in front of his friends and work colleagues. Of this award, Oliver said, “I feel proud and happy to be working at Bunnings and get this award”.**

Oliver began his journey with Bunnings in 2012, when he commenced a School Based
Traineeship with the national retailer through Ticket to Work. Ticket to Work is a national program that provides work experience and traineeships to secondary school students with disabilities. The program aims to ensure that young people with disability remain engaged in education while simultaneously preparing them for a life beyond school. Ticket to Work is predicated on research which suggests that, given the opportunity, people with disabilities are more than capable of being productive members of the Australian workforce.

In 2013, upon completion of his traineeship, Oliver was offered an ongoing position with Bunnings in the nursery. Oliver’s smooth transition from school to post-school employment is testament to the success of Ticket to Work and the positive outcomes that it has for both employers and employees.

Oliver’s Store Manager, Andrew, said that “Ticket to Work has worked for our business because they were able to match us with a student that was interested in our workplace. We also got lots of support from Ticket to Work partners so that we could ensure Oliver received all the assistance he needed at work. Because of this Oliver has grown to be a really valuable member of the team and we were thrilled when he agreed to continue working with us after finishing his traineeship”.

Paula Barnett, Principal of Berendale School, is extremely proud of her ex-student Oliver and said that “Ticket to Work has successfully broken down barriers with employers and parents concerned about the employment of students with intellectual disability and the success of the program is generating a lot of community interest”.

Young people with disability are not successfully transitioning from school into further training or employment; a factor that is an indicator of long term, and often life-long, disadvantage. In Australia, young people with disability are more likely to drop out of school early, be excluded from the labour force, have fewer educational qualifications, experience poverty and be socially isolated. Ticket to Work aims to redress this situation by bringing local communities together to create training and employment opportunities for students with disability.

Ticket to Work seeks student work experience and employment opportunities across an array of industry areas and all participating businesses receive considerable support from local schools, employment agencies, training organisations and disability support services.