

# Building care brick by brick

**A** former brickies' labourer, Greg Frost, who has since become a disability carer, believes anything is possible – with the right training.

Frost retrained with a Certificate IV in Disability Care and is now employed by three agencies – Australian Quadriplegic Association (AQA), Kinder Caring Home Nursing and Eastern Access Community Health (EACH) – that provide him with a good 30-hour working week.

He says it was mainly due to physical work as a brickie that precipitated the career change.

“My back suffered badly and I also worried about sun damage and the risk of skin cancer ... and at 32 years of age, it was time to do something else,” he says.

Travel that sometimes required a two-hour trip and meant he had to leave home before the sun came up to be on site for a 6.45am start provided additional hurdles.

But Frost didn't know what that “something else” would be – that is, until he received career advice from Sarina Russo Job Access at Ringwood. It was during this advisory session that it dawned on him his time looking after a good mate (who is permanently disabled) and volunteer work with the Australian wheelchair team

presented him with his future career as a carer.

This previous involvement in disability care enabled him to undertake a higher level of training for a 12-month Certificate IV in Disability Care, bypassing the need to study for a Certificate III.

As part of the program, once he completes the course later this year, Frost is required to do 100 contact hours as a carer while he continues to work through the various employment agencies.

Frost travels from home to the three organisations he now works for, as he did in his previous working circumstances, sometimes several times during the course of a day. But they are an average of 20 minutes away, making the life-work balance easier to manage.

“AQA and Kinder Caring Home Nursing specialise in personalised, flexible home care that enables families to keep their loved ones at home, or in community-based residential care,” says Frost. “EACH helps individuals, families and local communities to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing by providing health and disability counselling and mental health services.”

The agencies post or text client referrals and individual client requirements and relevant

information that ensures Frost is well prepared when he arrives for his assignments.

His days involve general personal home care such as showering, assisting in the toilet, bowel care, dressing wounds and general home care duties like doing the dishes, vacuuming, washing clothes and providing individual support as necessary.

Frost says it is important to take on additional training.

“I like to keep up with the latest industry techniques, technology and assistance aides,” he says. “I learnt most of this stuff when my friend became paralysed in 1974, the year after I started out as a brickie, but appliances, lifting and other aspects of carer support have changed considerably since then.”

He says it takes genuine compassion and the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes to be a carer: “You're not there for you, you're there for the client and if you've got compassion, you can do the job.”

**YVONNE NICOLAS**

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**‘You're there for the client and if you've got compassion, you can do the job.’** Greg Frost, carer



Play ball ... Greg Frost helps a client set up for a strike at the bowling alley.

## **THE FACTS**

**SALARY** \$17 to \$20 an hour.

**HOURS** Thirty-hour weeks, plus certificate training and study.

**ADVICE** "This role is reserved for those with compassion because it's not a highly paid industry but it is extremely rewarding ... and it teaches you not to prejudge people," Greg Frost says. "Additional job-specific training is offered by employer groups and should be taken up as it is very thorough."

## **LINKS**

[aqavic.org.au](http://aqavic.org.au);

[scopevic.org.au](http://scopevic.org.au);

[paraquad.asn.au](http://paraquad.asn.au).