

## GHD

### *Diversability*

GHD's commitment to providing an environment where everyone can succeed has allowed a staff member who uses a wheelchair to have a long and successful career with the company, and encouraged a raft of benefits for all staff.

In 1988 Jason Ross was in a car accident that resulted in spinal injuries that meant he needed to use a wheelchair.

After rehabilitation, he completed his engineering degree and, after a frustrating search for work, was hired by Manukau Consultants (which has since merged with GHD).

Right from Jason's first days at the Auckland branch of the global engineering, architecture and environmental consulting company, his health and safety were paramount.

He was provided with a carpark that allowed easy access to his workplace, team members were always on hand to offer assistance at the office or at site visits, and a specialised workstation was installed.

Jason has now been with the company for 24 years and is a senior water engineer. Initiatives have expanded as Jason's needs and responsibilities have changed, and the company moved to new premises.

General Manager New Zealand Al Monro has worked with Jason for nearly two decades and feels strongly about supporting his success.

"I am delighted this has been recognised through his appointments as a Technical Service Line lead and recently a GHD Associate. Jason challenges us to ensure our workplace is diverse and inclusive of everyone, and I am proud as an organisation that we can offer Jason the flexibility he requires to be able to succeed in his job, deliver for his clients and continue to develop his professional career."

GHD regularly consults with Jason on any significant office changes to ensure accessibility. Over time, this has included altering the disabled toilet doors to open and close more slowly, providing priority car parking, and checking the width and accessibility of any new office spaces.

More broadly, GHD has developed a number of initiatives around flexible working hours. These include 10 days sick leave as opposed to the standard five, the opportunity to fulfil working hours anytime between 6am and 7pm, and the scope to work from home and buy extra holiday leave.

Asia Pacific People Manager Sheryl Cornelius says ensuring flexibility for Jason's disability has had other benefits for the business.

"Health and wellbeing is something that we as a company take very seriously, with at times some of our staff working long hours to deliver for our clients and our communities.

"With Jason helping to influence a number of our flexible working policies, staff with other health issues have also been able to take advantage of these policies. Seeing Jason being able to work around his



own health issues has provided a fantastic role model for flexibility for others who may be looking for a way to support their overall wellbeing."

Jason's success in the workplace has helped staff members in their own journey towards being more accepting and understanding of those with disabilities.

In 2017, architect Justin Leadbetter worked with Jason to get an understanding on how to design buildings that were more flexible and accessible for wheelchair users.

"I wanted to understand the daily challenges wheelchair users face, especially around access to and movement around buildings. We discussed these, and as a result I was inspired to spend a few days in a chair myself to get a deeper understanding of what I should be thinking about as an architect. Jason's input was invaluable for my future design work, and I really appreciated the support I received from GHD in doing this."

GHD's core values are safety, teamwork respect and integrity. These are reflected in the initiatives adopted to support Jason and other staff.

"Having Jason supported by GHD, and an integral part of the Water team, reinforces GHD's company culture of being like a family. It reflects our values and makes employees proud to work here. When our people know they work for a business that cares and looks after its people, it creates loyal and motivated employees," says Sheryl.

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