

# A hotel with heart

By Georgia Davidson,  
Joshua Gray and Katrina Sneath

Photos by Lisa Clarke





There is an art to making a hospital corner on a bed. It may take a few days to perfect; it may take months. However long though, it is a skill that shows you care about attention to detail and the comfort of your guests.

This is one of the many skills Georgia Davidson, Joshua Gray and Katrina Sneath have been learning over the past year as housekeeping and hospitality trainees at Hotel Etico.

Hotel Etico in Mount Victoria is not like other hotels. As Australia's first social enterprise hotel, it not only serves as a destination getaway in the Blue Mountains, but it is also a training ground for young adults with intellectual disability to develop specific expertise through on-the-job teaching, with the aim to start pathways to open employment.

The three trainees are part of the hotel's inaugural intake after opening its doors at the end of 2020, and share their experiences learning about everything from working in the restaurant to independent living skills.

## Georgia

I am a trainee doing housekeeping and hospitality at Hotel Etico in the Blue Mountains.

The first thing we learned when we started was to welcome everyone here. We also learned a lot from housekeeping, like to make hospital corners on beds.

It's quite interesting!

It's also hard. It's really hard. Because when we first made it, we didn't know how to make it.

But why not just give it a go?

I feel great to come to work. It's good to learn more skills.





We also learn life skills like housework. It's fun to be away from parents and do what you do.

It's good to have a job because of the importance of getting money. If we do work more, we get more money. That's how it works.

If you want a job, then give it a go and just be out there and do what you have to do. People will be there to support you. It's a good idea to learn more skills.

At work we love supporting each other and having a great time, and it feels so special that you have friends around you being supportive.

## Joshua

I feel happy. I am confident. For the first time I'm allowed to be independent.

I like to do good work. Having a job makes me feel confident because I like giving back to the community.

We have to make sure everything is cleaned up in the rooms at Hotel Etico. I try to make sure to pick up the bags, clean the dishes, rinse them, and put the dirty towels in the basket. Also, we help each other together doing the beds. We have to make sure everything is cleaned up in the rooms.

I also do waitering, work in the bar and kitchen and do shopping.

The hardest part of the job is balancing the dishes.

*The best part of my job is meeting people and feeling valued.*

Inclusion is important because we can learn from each other.

It is good to earn our own money. I'd like to move out somewhere. To move out and maybe have a roommate.

## Katrina

My name is Katrina, I am a trainee working towards hospitality and housekeeping.

I have been doing this for almost a year, but there has been a lot of interruption due to COVID-19.

We make beds, clean the rooms, clean the bathrooms, and make sure the rooms are clean and tidy before guests checking in. In hospitality we learn cooking skills and learn about restaurant skills to serve meals and interact with customers.



Hospitality is my favourite part of the job because I enjoy cooking and discovering new meals with lots of variety.

I really love socialising with new people and welcoming guests and getting to know them a bit.

We all have ups and downs, and there are lots of challenges at Hotel Etico. Adapting to all the changes that Hotel Etico brings is hard, but I have learned to be flexible with new things and new experiences and ways of doing things.

It's a pleasure working with the fellow trainees and that makes it very special. We are like a family when we are here.

*It's important to have a job because it brings out the best in people, so they can enjoy their work.*

Like everybody else, having a job helps with self-esteem, and I would encourage everyone to have a full-time or part-time job.

Having a job helps you to learn new skills and build up your confidence.

Inclusion is really important because people with disabilities belong in the community and should be

recognised positively. It improves our lives, and if we are included, we can show people what we are capable of.

It is really good to gain new confidence and learn from the other staff. There are lots of things I have learned through Hotel Etico. We have had experience in reception, housekeeping, kitchen, waitressing in the restaurant. I have enjoyed all of it and still have lots to learn.

I think it's important to find a circle of support to help find the pathways. Talking to lots of different people about opportunities, and I would encourage them to have faith in themselves and never give up on who they are and never give up on their dreams.

It is important for everybody to have a sense of belonging and to be part of a team.

I think we all feel special and enjoy being part of a group where people accept you for who you are, instead of only seeing your disability.

It is not nice to 'dis' your disability. I feel great when people accept me for who I am.

Find out more about Hotel Etico here:  
<https://hoteletico.com.au/>

