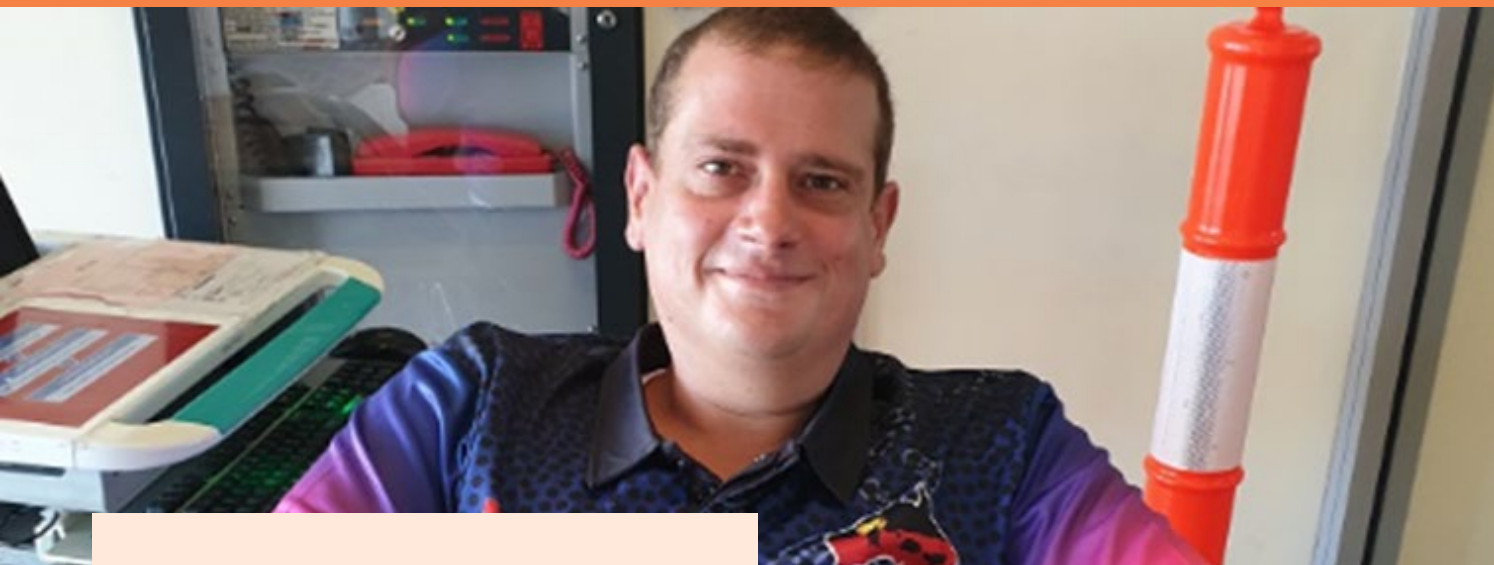


DIVERSITY INCLUSION BELONGING

CASE STUDY: Living with a disability is not a barrier to success



Jarrod Thatcher is a proud Aboriginal man and a COVID-19 screener at Manning Hospital. He was also born with spina bifida, which occurs when the spine and spinal cord do not form properly and has been in a wheelchair his whole life.

Jarrod started working for Hunter New England Local Health District in late 2020 after moving to Taree from Sydney and struggling to find work.

“I’d done some work with one of the health services in Sydney and thought I might as well go in and ask if they had anything at Manning Hospital. Someone mentioned they were recruiting for COVID screeners and I put my name down.”

Jarrod is enjoying the role and the team he works in and wants to spread the message that living with a disability is not a barrier to success in the workforce. “Having spina bifida has never really stopped me from working, even if I quickly realised I’d never be able to achieve my boyhood dream of becoming a police officer,” he said.

He believes part of the reason for this is the increase in public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities today. “People are much less afraid to ask questions, whereas once upon a time there was a stigma that is my legs don’t work then my brain mustn’t either”.

3 December is International Day of People with Disabilities. Jarrod says this day “is a chance to bring the discussion even more out into the open and gives people like myself a chance to make our voice heard and boost understanding further.”