

# SINGING THE BLUES AWAY

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• Toby Hill and Craig Hanlen from Chorus. Photo by Jenny D'Anger

CHORUS help disabled people and those recovering from mental health issues find work.

Recently Willagee local Toby Hill became the first client to become a staff member at the non-government agency.

As a support worker he reconnects clients with the community during their journey back into the workplace.

Mr Hill's been so successful Disability Employment Services have trained up a further five former clients.

"We want to be an organisation that walks the walk and talks the talk," says Chorus program manager Craig Hanlen.

A refrigeration mechanic for eight years, Hill went to the Fremantle branch for help after suffering depression so bad he couldn't work for two years.

Now 27, he jokes about having his "midlife crisis" early, and says Chorus was a turning point in his career.

His first job through the agency was working as a gardener, but it wasn't a good fit, so Chorus put him on a 13-week bridging program at Notre Dame University that led to enrollment in a mental health course.

"I coached Toby through the process...I could see he was very much a people person and a square peg in a round hole," Mr Hanlen says.

"He was looking for employment that had more meaning."

Hill says his first-hand experience of mental health issues has been invaluable in helping others.

It's estimated that 2.1 million working-age Australians have a disability, and nearly 10 per cent of them are unemployed.

People with a disability aged 15–24 are 10 times more likely to experience discrimination than those aged 65 and over.

For more information go to [chorus.org.au](http://chorus.org.au) or call 1800 264 268.

by JENNY D'ANGER