

# Guest Speakers Karen and Emily Flagstaff Industries

Our Guest Speakers were introduced by Tony and some background information of Karen's previous employment and education was given. Karen then informed us that Flagstaff Industries was a Not for Profit Organisation which began in 1966. That makes this year the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation. The concept and indeed practice was to give people with disabilities real work. This happened and continues to happen. There are now about 340 employees and the Organisation is based at Unanderra and there is now a place in Nowra. Flagstaff Industries is 85% self funded by the work that they do so is not reliant on Government funding. Some of the work areas include;

1. Flagstaff Laundry; 36 people work in this area.
2. Fine Foods; prepare over 75,000 meals per month.
3. Paper to Paper; Cardboard, paper, plastic CDs and DVDs are all recycled
4. Engineering; Light manufacturing such as tags, fencing products and canvas bags
5. Print and Mail; graphic design, digital and offset printing, mailing house and document scanning
6. Café Vizione; based at Bluescope, provides Morning Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea. Mon-Fri
7. Flagstaff Coffee; Illawarra's largest roasting facility. "Coffee with a Vision" (own brand)
8. Flagstaff Shoalhaven; provides some Assembly, Packaging and Recycling
9. Flagstaff Mobility Aides; Selling Quality, Affordable Mobility Aides. Over 1,000 products

Flagstaff are also heavily involved in Training and Development, Vocational Pathways, Transition to Work, Workskills Programme and Certificate 11 and Working with Communities.

Flagstaff have won many awards over this time and will be holding an Open Day on 14 June 2016 to commemorate their 50th Anniversary

Emily Frost, who works in Café Vizione, then spoke of herself. Emily developed Epilepsy early in life and has been treated for that for a number of years. The epilepsy has left Emily with some brain damage thus her involvement with Flagstaff after many different experiences through her still early life. Emily told us of bullying at school and at TAFE which was very difficult to deal with and very hurtful. Trying to get employment was also unpleasant as the interview would not allow her to show herself off at her best. Whilst having some brain damage the hurtfulness, whether planned or not, was still felt very deeply causing self doubt, withdrawal and leading to depression.

Flagstaff is the first job that Emily has ever held where she has felt wanted and has felt an acceptance of her disability, without judgement. Emily wants to get up in the morning and go to work to meet with her colleagues which also happen to be her friends.

For the first time in my term with Rotary, a standing ovation was given, to Emily, for her courage, insightfulness and candour during her most moving talk, by all present at the meeting

Stephen Swan gave thanks to the two speakers with special mention to Emily, with I believe a lump in his throat and tear in his eye, for her braveness in standing in front of us and giving what she did.

Well done Emily.