



# Let's go for a drive

By Briohny Robinson

briohny@setimes.com.au

OBTAINING a driver's licence can be both liberating and a key element towards independence, but for some people including Millicent's Shaun Osmond and Warren Robinson, this was a privilege they thought they would never be able to enjoy.

Just like any other person, mates and co-workers Shaun and Warren enjoy the freedom of being in their early 20's brings.

However, for both young men their learning difficulties were an obstacle which made obtaining their learner's (L's) permit a challenge.

Despite this, 21 year old Warren first attempted the learner's permit test soon after he left school at 18, but, failing this first attempt, he succumbed to thinking his learning difficulties would interfere with his ability to complete the first step of obtaining his licence. For two years after this he didn't take the test again.

In the meantime he purchased numerous cars to tinker with while he yearned to one day be able to take one for a spin.

"I had no motivation to try again after the first time and no one was able to help me understand the learner's book. I couldn't do it by myself," Warren said.

24 year old Shaun said there was no doubt he needed help with studying the learner's book.

"I was walking to work and everywhere else," Shaun said, adding that he relied heavily on his mum, Lynette Osmond, to drive him to places.

Occasionally he would also

rely on his eldest sister Joanne Osmond and mates with licences and it was much the same for Warren.

Shaun and Warren's stories are not uncommon for many in the Bedford community, in which they are employed, but thanks to Bedford Industries, they were provided with the support they were looking for.

Along with Shaun and Warren, two other Bedford Millicent Work Options Centre (MWOC) employees, Lynette Bonney and Jaana Uotila, successfully gained their L's in December 2010.

More recently, both boys successfully completed the required 100 hours of accompanied driving to receive their provisional (P's) licence.

Since 2005 Bedford has run a program that has helped South Australians with disability or disadvantage to complete the learners test.

Let's Go is a driving program designed to academically prepare students for the sitting of the test and enable them to reach their full potential and gain independence associated with driving.

The program began with pre-learning for the test followed by practical examination with a qualified driving instructor and 100 hours of on-road experience to achieve the provisional licence.

Bedford MWOC workers were first offered the opportunity at a work meeting.

Warren said, "I jumped at the chance because I knew I needed the help and I thought this would be my first and last opportunity."

"If that chance didn't come up I wouldn't have done it because I didn't feel confident doing it on my own again."

Part of the pre-learning for the test involved group and one-on-one sessions with Let's Go training officer Mark O'Connor from Adelaide.

He spent three hours once a month for three months teaching the road rules, road signs, speed limits, parking, intersections, crossings and practised for the test using a mock version on the RAA website.

"Mark broke down the learner's book into stages for our understanding," Warren said.

"He took us out for a drive to physically show us who gives way at intersections and the group also went for a drive to Mount Gambier.

"We learned about overtaking lanes and what to do at traffic lights and roundabouts. He showed us what all the different lines on the road means and explained traffic islands.

"At first I didn't understand until Mark explained. Then at the end of each visit we had to reread the section we learned and do a test before he came back the next time.

"When he came back he would go over what we learned last time to refresh our memory and so we didn't lose track of what we learned.

"The way he taught us helped a lot."

"I was rapt when I got my L's," Warren said.

Getting his P's was even more exciting for Warren, so much so that he went to the Road Transport office in Mount Gambier a day too early.



"I'm glad I now have a licence in my hands. Pretty much it's all thanks to Mark O'Connor for putting the offer there to us all and helping with our learning.

"Now I can go out with my four wheel drive and trailer and go wood cutting and moving my lawn mowing gear around. I am now able to go four wheel driving, fishing and camping and do all those blokey things on my own."

Shaun said, "I did the test because I didn't want to rely on other people. I was surprised to get my L's on my first shot. It was a good thing by Bedford."

The freedom of having his licence now means Shaun is also able to drive to work. Something he has always wanted to do.

"I drive mum around a lot now too. She's probably making me pay her back for when she drove me around," he said with a grin.

According to Bedford, since its inception the Let's Go Driving Program has achieved an impressive 97 percent completion rate.

Due to limitations on funding and resources, Bedford has been unable to further oversee the tutoring required for participants to progress from their

'P' plates to a full licence.

Mr O'Connor was reported saying that Bedford is very proud of the successful pass rate.

"It's a great feeling being able to teach people skills that will ultimately increase their independence."

On behalf of Bedford MWOC, laundry coordinator Bev Butcher congratulated the four participants.

"I've been here for eight years and I have seen them grow. I get emotional when I think about how far they have come. I'm so proud of what they have achieved here," she said.

"I drive mum around a lot now too. She's probably making me pay her back for when she drove me around"



Millicent's Shaun Osmond (left) and Warren Robinson enjoy the privileges of being the holder of a driver's licence