

Gateway to worker support

By CASEY NEILL

GATEWAY Industries has been providing employment, training and support for people with disabilities for more than 20 years.

But the Dandenong-based not-for-profit needs support itself, to grow and take on more employees.

"I might get four or five calls a day, some days," CEO Alan Warwick said.

Gateway collects litter and cleans bins and street furniture in Greater Dandenong.

Its gardening division completes mulching, weeding and planting for the City of Casey, and the processing room's main clients are in the car industry.

Workers are making bathmats in the woodwork room.

"We've got orders right up to December for them," Mr Warwick said.

He said many workers lived in Cranbourne, with Doveton, Hallam and Berwick also highly represented.

"Some of them get referred by Dandenong Valley Job Support, or one of the other jobs services, or through Emerson School," he said.

"When I came here we had 45 people. We're up to 52 at the moment."

He's been with Gateway for nine years after starting as a volunteer, looking for something to do in retirement.

"We'd like some more volunteers, just even to help in the office," he said.

"We need a supervisor in the processing area.

"Sometimes they can have 15 people in there and it's just a bit hard to control them all. Just another person there would be a big help.



Pat Patching shows Gateway CEO Alan Warwick, centre, and Dandenong Rotary Club's Ken McDonald and Trevor Harding how to assemble key rings. 125224

"The only thing you've got to have these days is a police clearance."

Nicci Guttery, from Pakenham, has worked at Gateway for seven years next month, and has held a team leader role for the past two.

"It's so relaxed," she said.

"Everyone's so easy to get along with.

"It's just a great place to work, I love it."

Ms Guttery said it would have been

hard for her to find work without Gateway.

"They cater for everybody," she said.

"I've got a bad back and I can change jobs if I need to relieve the pressure."

Pat Patching, from Hallam, worked at Gateway for nearly 14 years before retiring last March, and is now back as a casual.

"I couldn't handle staying at home," she said.

"I grew up with intellectually disabled people. I've been in institutions all my life.

"I've come to like them. They're easy people to get along with.

"And I just like the work they do here."

Dandenong Rotary's Ken McDonald said the club helped to establish Gateway in 1983.

It was the brainchild of Arthur Wren from Emerson School.



Nicci Guttery with timing belts ready for packaging. 125224

"He decided they needed something like this which would be the step after they left Emerson," Mr McDonald said.

"The first step was in the hall in Doveton."

The growing Gateway moved to Bridge Road, Keysborough, before purchasing a factory in Progress Street, Dandenong, 11 years ago.

The Dandenong and Noble Park Rotary clubs still support it financially. The cash goes toward vehicles, equipment and more.

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

BUSINESS — GATEWAY INDUSTRIES

Break-in vandals tear the heart out of disability employer

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Soul shattered

By CASEY NEILL

HEARTLESS thieves have ransacked and burgled a disability employer in Dandenong.

Gateway Industries administrator Faye Butterfield said they forced entry to the non-profit's Progress Street site on Saturday 16 or Sunday 17 April.

"There must have been a horde of them with axes or something," she said.

"They smashed every office door within an inch of its life so that all the locks are hanging off.

"They did massive, massive damage in here. It's so uncalled for."

Supervisor Jeff Pabst uncovered the destruction when he arrived to open up just before 7am on Monday 18 April.

"The windows were shattered, the gate lock had been broken into and the barbed wire was all loose," Ms Butterfield said.

"We had to close the place down because our guys were so upset.

"We lost revenue for that day but our guys come first.

"The damage was so vicious. It's horrible."

Ms Butterfield said the thieves stole a new lap top and a \$30,000 Toyota Hilux purchased just two weeks ago thanks to donations from Australia Post.

"It's fully insured but so many people worked so hard to get the money for that," she said.

"They took all of our car keys and all of the spare car keys.

"We're really worried that they'll come back and take the cars, so we had to go to the added expense of getting the RACV out here to replace the keys.

"And they took our server and our cameras and disconnected all of our internet and everything so they weren't observed.



Henry Gansel and Faye Butterfield examine the damage. 153223

Picture: ROB CAREW

"We've just got a quote for nearly \$5000 to replace our server and all our cables.

"We had to get that back up and running. We have no business if we have no computers."

Ms Butterfield said internal doors were locked to keep confidential documents secure.

"They must have thought there were millions of dollars somewhere," she said.

"One of the doors that was hit the most, it's where we keep all of our vision vests.

"I only lock the doors so that the guys don't go in and help themselves.

"They got cash but it wasn't a lot – it was our footy tipping money."

Ms Butterfield praised police for their assistance, which will include advice on securing the property against future break-ins.

"This is going to cost us a fortune," she said.

Greater Dandenong CIU Detective Sergeant Craig West said the stolen car had not been recovered.

He said officers were canvassing neighbouring factories for CCTV footage and urged anyone with information to call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.



Workers Curtis Farrugia, Robert Stevens and Charlie Lesiak in the lunch room, which bears the scars of someone trying to punch their way through to the next room.

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