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WORK FOR DISABLED — NEEDED

GOVERNMENT — NEEDS GATEWAY TO

FIND

Gateway president Russell Smith delivers his report.

More work and more members

By Casey Neill

Gateway Industries is seeking more work and more members.

The Dandenong-based disability enterprise held its annual general meeting at its Progress Street headquarters on Tuesday, 12 September.

President Russell Smith thanked Gateway's customers, which include Greater Dandenong Council, Greenways Retirement Village and Pacific National.

Gateway workers have disabilities, and complete jobs including gardening, maintenance, woodwork, and processing and packaging.

Earlier this month Gateway learnt that its second-biggest customer, the City of Casey, had ended its eight-year relationship. This will cause a shortfall of about \$180,000.

Overall income from work completed was up about \$1000 to \$876,988 in the 12 months to 30 June.

"More and more the government are saying that we have to get the funds from our customers," Mr Smith said.

"It's very important that we run Gateway as a business.

"Our employees not only work very, very hard, they enjoy Gateway as a place where they belong.

"It's a family."

Mr Smith said the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) involved huge amounts of bureaucracy, money and complex detail.

"It has affected us and will affect us more, particularly in the next couple of years," he said.

"It's something the board will have to really look into and investigate."

In his written report he said: "Because each employee will be considered on a case by case basis it is unclear as to how many of our people

will remain at Gateway. We hope, of course, that most if not all of our employees will stay at our industry."

Mr Smith told the AGM that Gateway needed new members and membership cost \$5.

"That means you can vote on anything and nominate to be on the board," he said.

"Think about our future.

"We'll do it for our wonderful employees."

In his written report, Mr Smith said the "enthusiasm, loyalty and work ethic of our wonderful employees continues to inspire us all".

"To see the diligence of our employees, to hear of their superb work from our customers, to witness their cheery demeanour in the parks and gardens as well as in our factory is something that very few workplaces could emulate," he said.

CEO Alan Warwick said the year had been a trying one for everyone involved in Gateway, particularly losing the Casey contract.

"That's only given us another challenge to go on, to find something new," he said.

The report from employee representatives Nicci Guttery and Peter Christoforou highlighted a graduation ceremony for certificate one in work education. "We have had some people that have celebrated a milestone of 20 years working here at Gateway and some celebrating their 10-year anniversary," they said.

Board member and Peter's father, Conn Christoforou, told the AGM that people didn't realise the pressures the place had been under during the past year.

He said the supervisors were not just a great support, but great people.

"They cover for everything and there's never anything missed," he said.

"When your kids come home happy it tells you something."

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