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An inclusive workforce

Making a world of difference to this international café.



Mel with Misha Laurent

8 Things Café Katoomba, located in the NSW Blue Mountains, caters to both local and international patrons offering global delicacies which owner-chef Misha Laurent, calls: "around the world in 8 dishes".

But, it's the work ethic of his casual cleaner and maintenance woman, Melissa, or Mel, who he said really takes the cake.

According to Laurent, Mel, who has an intellectual disability, has become a valuable team member, with all their chefs relying on her skills to be able to achieve their tasks.

Mel works 15 hours a week cleaning

and maintaining café equipment which Laurent said has never looked so good.

"She is meticulous and reliable, always arrives on time and is now responsible for accepting deliveries from suppliers."

Mel follows a very detailed work schedule which was developed by Laurent and NOVA Employment staff.

Laurent said NOVA spent days putting a work program together and came in every day to train and make sure Mel felt comfortable.

He contacted NOVA Employment Springwood in February 2020 when he

needed help because as he said: "We like to give people with disabilities the opportunity to become independent through having a regular job to fulfil.

"Working builds self-esteem and pride and is helping the community too.

We all have positions in our businesses that could fit the profile, given the opportunity and the appropriate training," he said.

NOVA Employment Springwood manager, Carrie Garner said: "It's about making sure that every person in our community has the opportunity to work, earn money and thrive." ●