

# Today's special

Give Me a Break  
SBS, 7.30pm

It is one of the crueller realities that we must determine our career paths long before we really know who we are or what makes us tick. As we struggle through the latter years of high school, troubled by bodies raging with hormones, the system demands we choose our calling.

By the time we reach an age when we know what we truly want to be, often as not we are trapped in a career less exhilarating than we envisaged.

Still, today's teenagers will track a career path different from that of their parents. Experts predict by the time they reach retirement the average generation-Y-er will have had eight distinct careers.

But what careers should they choose? *Give Me a Break* is work experience for adults, a four-part documentary that offers a dose of reality TV without the hype as workers get the chance to try on the uniform of their dream career.

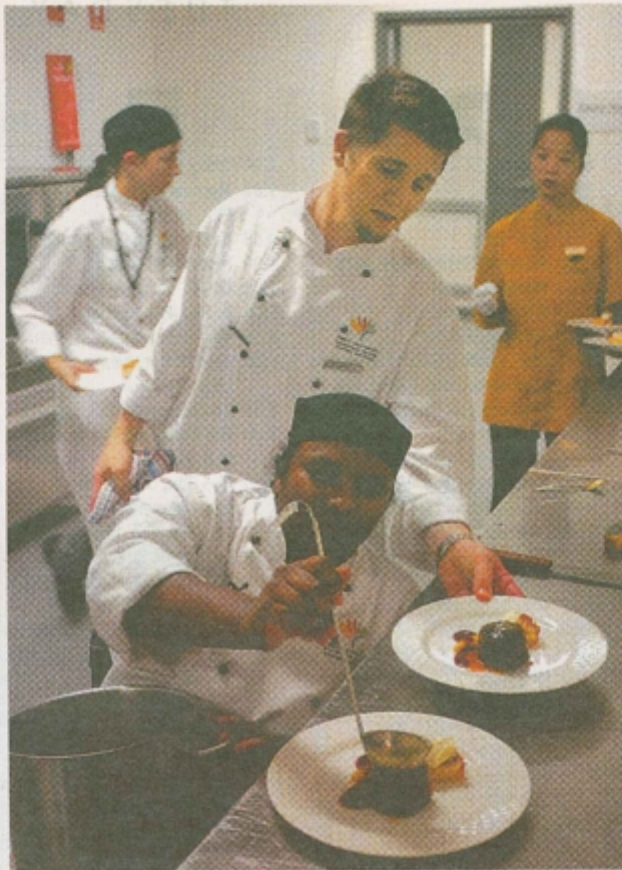
The subject of the first show is Mallika Macleod, 28, a policy officer with a thing for cooking. Macleod is given a shot at becoming a chef in one of the largest kitchens in Australia.

The kitchen at the Perth Convention Centre is not exactly Gordon Ramsay's and Macleod's mentor, head chef Adrian Tobin, is not a Ramsay-esque character, meaning girl tries out as chef should not be riveting viewing.

But Macleod brings a special challenge to the table; since the age of 10 she has been wheelchair-bound. Cooking up to 5000 meals a day is no mean feat, but when you are negotiating the world from a seat with wheels, it takes on a whole new meaning.

Macleod has nine days to whip her suburban kitchen cooking skills into shape before she has to cook a banquet.

Soup, it seems, is a good place to start until Tobin



Grilling: Mallika Macleod in the heat of the kitchen

**Can a woman in a wheelchair with dreams of being a chef overcome not just her disability but the attitudes of those around her?**

it is with the help of others that tasks are completed, though rarely on time.

Macleod has just a hint of arrogance and Tobin finally suggests that sprinkling her language with the occasional please will do wonders for her cooking.

Even with the best intentions, though, a commercial kitchen must run seamlessly, and the tone our young chef takes on when she is left to sit and watch as other chefs battle to get meals to the table on time is a fascinating window into the burden that disability must bring to even the most positive individual.

This episode sets out to demonstrate one thing yet achieves an entirely different, perhaps more entertaining and educational, outcome.

Had *Give Me a Break* been a straight doco about disability, it would have been weighed down by trying to demonstrate the challenges facing people such as Macleod. Yet ignoring her disability delivers a forceful message perhaps never intended.

Simon Canning

informs her that, in the world of high catering, soup is not considered a course. Things get no better for Macleod when Tobin slurps her watery version of leek soup and emerges with a chicken bone caught in his mouth.

The documentary shadows Macleod constantly and we discover her disability throws up challenge after challenge. Even the simple act of getting the food on a plate in an assembly line is no mean feat.

Although the antics of the kitchen may lack a certain televisual pizzazz, this show operates on another level that makes it all the more watchable. Can a woman in a wheelchair with dreams of being a chef overcome not just her disability but the attitudes of those around her?

Time and again we see the simplest of tasks rendered nigh on impossible and watch as Macleod tries to find a way through. Often