

## ***Acknowledgments***

The *Learning to Work Project* is an initiative of the Heidelberg Training and Resource Centre Incorporated (HTRC), trading as E-Focus. HTRC is a Victorian community-based organisation operating on a not-for-profit basis, with public benevolent institution status. HTRC is a well-established, reputable and viable provider of training and employment services, serving Melbourne employers and TAFE colleges through trading arms, Apprenticeships Connect and Apprenticeships Matter.

This project was funded by the Department of Health & Human Services and supplemented by E-focus funds. This research will inform strategies to improve participation in learning and employment for those in our community who would benefit from further assistance.

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of women who willingly gave their time and shared their experiences of the Learning to Work Program. Participants gave their honest views and empathetic support to each other in focus groups. Interviewees were bold in their sharing. They provided valuable detailed information about their influences, both positive and negative, in working to achieve employment in Victoria.

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***SIFT Consulting:*** This review was undertaken by **SIFT Consulting**. The focus of SIFT Consulting is Strategy, Ideas, Facilitation and Teams. SIFT Consulting principal, Sharyn Cox, has a strong academic and experienced background in social research, policy development and program evaluation. SIFT Consulting is committed to carefully designed processes that are well facilitated.



## 1 SUMMARY

The Learning 2 Work Program is a holistic and flexible model for improving the social and economic participation of residents in the West Heidelberg and East Reservoir areas. Through a range of targeted initiatives including group training, pre-employment and intensive individualised case management support, a women's specific project sought to assist women gain specific skills as well as help them recognise various options and pathways that might be available to them. In addition, the program sought to better understand the barriers in place preventing the women from accessing training and employment.

This report provides an evaluation of the Learning 2 Work program as undertaken at 'The Hub' in West Heidelberg. Participants' views and opinions were gathered about the program and the way in which it was able to assist them in their path to gaining skills and employment.

For the purposes of the report, 70 women were registered as case managed clients under the Learning 2 Work Program at West Heidelberg.

## 2 APPROACH

Through two (2) focus groups and three (3) individual interviews, 13 women were recruited to participate in this evaluation. All interviews were undertaken at "The Hub" in West Heidelberg, as this was the central location where activities were conducted. As such, women were not only familiar with this environment but also felt safe and comfortable to talk about the various aspects of the program as it related to their own experiences and needs.

### 2.1 Approach of the Focus Groups

The focus groups' approach was to maximise participation by removing the barriers to be a part of the process. A relaxed atmosphere was created. Focus groups were an appropriate approach as the women had already had some interaction with each other previously, either through their participation in specific group work or through their engagement at 'The Hub'.

Women's participation at the focus groups was facilitated through a range of activities. Women were encouraged to reflect on their specific experiences of the Learning 2 Work program.

Women were asked to describe the program in one word. As the women spoke, their reflections were recorded on a large piece of paper that was visible to all women. As words and terms were recorded, women were able to articulate at length aspects of their experience and the way in which various activities and support received had impacted on their ability to gain specific skills and in many cases further training and employment.

This proved an invaluable method of inquiry as it encouraged all women to reflect on their experiences even when some may have felt they had little to offer or did not feel confident to fully describe or explain their experiences.

In addition to these reflections, women were asked to write down more specific aspects and details of their experiences. Firstly, women were asked to record what they were most proud of having achieved through the program and secondly, what stage they were currently at. For example, were they currently undertaking some form of training or paid employment?

## 2.2 Approach of Individual Interviews

Three participants were recruited to undertake individual interviews. All three interviews were undertaken at 'The Hub'.

During these interviews, participants spoke at length about the challenges they had encountered in seeking and maintaining employment.

Through these specific interviews, women's life histories became visible. These accounts revealed the challenges women had encountered. Specifically, mental health issues, homelessness and in the case of one of the participants, the challenges experienced as a recent arrival in Australia. Some of these stories poignantly reveal the way in which someone's life history can impact on their ability to gain skills and employment further down the track. Several of these stories will form part of case studies presented in this report.

## 3 BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

Women's backgrounds revealed a high level of disadvantage. This included disadvantage in terms of access to housing, income security, homelessness and health issues predominantly related to mental health and drug use. Women's main place of residence reflected this disadvantage.

The areas of West Heidelberg (and East Reservoir) have a disproportionate concentration of public housing and community disadvantage. A higher than average concentration of public housing (nearly 50% in West Heidelberg) and higher rates of unemployment have warranted the delivery of Victorian Government funded Neighbourhood Renewal programs in these areas. Both Neighbourhood Renewal programs were funded to June 2013, with MCM and E-Focus as key project stakeholders and funded agencies for the Employment and Learning Coordinator positions in respective areas.

Significant rates of unemployment, early school leaving and intergenerational unemployment are far too prevalent amongst residents in these communities. The local labour market data for the North East Melbourne area reveals that there are a total of 14,207 job seekers out of a working age population of 394,953; and realises an overall unemployment rate of 4.0%. There are specific areas in the North East area where the total unemployment rates are much higher, including Preston and Reservoir at 6.2% and Heidelberg area at 4.5% (ABS Labour Market Survey 2011; DEEWR LMIP data). East Reservoir and West Heidelberg experience even higher unemployment rates (over 10.4%) as areas with high concentrations of public housing and disadvantage.

Other indicators of disadvantage include the number of families in both areas with neither parent in the workforce (28% compared to state 19%) and the number of one parent families at over 30% compared to the state at 15.5%. A further issue that will require agency assistance is recent policy change that will shift significant numbers of sole parents on to the Newstart allowance when the families' youngest child turns eight, leaving the family \$59.00 per week worse off.

## 4 MAIN THEMES

Through these methods of inquiry, a number of major themes became apparent.

- The **success of the program** in assisting women gain specific skills and ultimately paid employment.
- The greater sense of **confidence** women experienced as a result of participating in the program.
- The importance of the **program itself** to the women. Women were extremely complimentary and positive about the program and the staff.
- The significance of the **type of support** received from staff; particularly the more intensive one-to-one support provided by staff.
- The centrality of the **'The Hub'** and the way in which it helped create links between individuals and service providers.
- The importance of understanding the **health and well-being needs** of participants when tailoring such programs.
- The importance of understanding the **financial challenges** faced by participants.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the Learning 2 Work program will use the "narrative" method. A 'narrative' framework is a particularly useful method for this evaluation given the nature of the Learning 2 Work program. With its focus on supporting the ongoing learning and employment opportunities of participants, the ability to capture participants' experiences through their own specific narratives and insights of the program is not only relevant but also critical to understanding the program's success. As Tineke Abma (2006: 33) explains, "If one is interested in the meaning of a program, it is important to conduct in-depth, conversational interviews and listen to the stories told about the program". Through the sharing of individual perspectives and stories, one is able to better reflect on exactly what was significant about the program and where benefits or deficits were encountered. In addition, a 'narrative' framework that relies on the stories told by numerous participants or clients can highlight emergent themes and possibilities not previously considered. To quote Abma (2006: 33) again, "plurality implies that the 'design' [of the program] emerges in conversation with stakeholders".

As Costantino and Greene (2003) explain, however, an individual's narrative and story can also highlight and reveal "key evaluation themes and meanings". In other words, in recounting one's experiences of the program including insights relating to how they felt about aspects such as challenges faced; what elements were most beneficial and enjoyable and so on, some of the specific aims and objectives of the program are located. This can provide significant reinforcement about the relevance and success of a program particularly if specific themes and stories are retold by numerous participants.

The importance of a 'narrative' framework is also found in its ability to contextualise people's experiences of the program. It is often only through in-depth conversations that individuals are able to provide details not just about their interaction with service providers for example but to also reveal aspects of their everyday lived experiences. That is, their family life, hopes and aspirations, histories of education and employment. Such an interaction can reinforce specific program aims or offer insights into possible new ventures or ideas.

In evaluating the success of the Learning 2 Work Program, statistical information about the program's participants has also been included. These statistics reveal specific demographic details about participants as well as aspects of the women's health and wellbeing, employment or training status.

## 6 LITERATURE REVIEW: CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

Women's return to work has often been viewed solely through the perspective of women's choices and possibilities after periods of maternity leave and/or childrearing. However, as research has suggested, women's lives are multifaceted and do not necessarily follow a linear model of career/job development. As one report titled "Lifelong learning and Work related education and training for women returning to work" (2007) reveals, numerous factors including "parenthood, elder care, family responsibilities, household chores" (pg. 6) all impact on women's life cycles to various degrees. Furthermore, for other groups of women, the role and impact of "disabilities, health and mental health problems, substance abuse, and housing instability" (2011) similarly create specific challenges and barriers for women wanting to re-engage in training and/or employment. In addition to these factors, Hargreaves (2011) highlights the influence of women's previous educational and work experiences on their ability to successfully re-enter the workforce or access training.

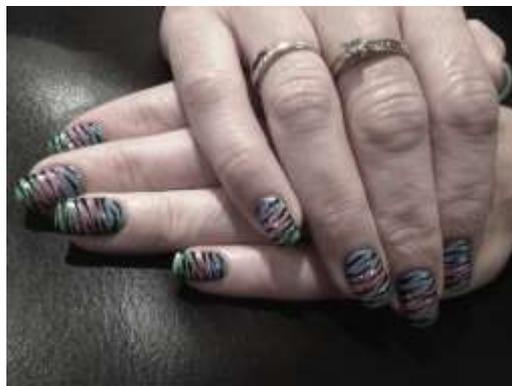
For disadvantaged women, however, re-training alone is not the answer. Hargreaves (2011) reveals the importance of mentoring, on-going support and creative training solutions for specific groups of women. This holistic approach, with links to other services can help "identify work opportunities and to overcome the structural and personal barriers affecting both training and labour market participation" (pg. 8). As the author further reveals, when issues of housing, health and income disadvantage are prevalent, attending a training course is not necessarily a first priority nor a motivation. A more targeted approach therefore is better able to identify women's specific needs and provide appropriate support.

## 7 CASE STUDIES

### 7.1 'Ruby'

Ruby has spent the last ten years looking for work. Despite her efforts, she has had little success in finding meaningful and on-going employment. A number of factors have influenced Ruby's experiences.

1. Not knowing what path to take in terms of employment.
2. Undiagnosed mental health issues.
3. Ongoing medical issues.



In addition to these three factors, Ruby's life history highlights complex needs and the way in which they continue to play a role in her later life.

For Ruby, her experience of foster care at the age of 15 is significant. She recalled having been removed from her home and placed in foster care after concerns were raised about her parent's ability to care for her and her twin sister. Ruby explained to me how she remained in foster care for two and a half years. From the age of 17 to 19, Ruby resided in a state run residential home where she experienced *"a difficult time. It wasn't a good place to live – too many problems"*.

Ruby also revealed experiences of bullying at school in both primary and high school. She explained to me how this had led to her not liking school. Ruby's experience of school was one of disruption and a lack of support.

Despite these challenges, Ruby returned to study at age 20 where she commenced an 'IT' course. *"But I didn't like it"*. Ruby later trained in beauty therapy and appears to have particularly good skills in this area. As part of the Return to Work Program, several of the women were asked to highlight specific skills during one of the sessions at the program. It was an opportunity for women to reveal something about themselves in a safe and nurturing environment. As part of this exercise, Ruby did the women's nails. As one of the staff from the program explained, *"Ruby did a fantastic job with everyone's nails. Her skills were impressive"*.

It was interesting to note that Ruby did not want to pursue this line of work despite her obvious skills. Instead she continued to try different types of work including cleaning and telemarketing.

Ruby's experience of continued unemployment highlights her complex needs. Despite applying for several jobs each week and securing a number of interviews, Ruby has been unable to find long-term employment. When she has been successful, she has been unable to retain her job. Ruby believes this has been because of discrimination due to her health issues, in particular, her undiagnosed mental health issues.

For Ruby, the Learning 2 Work program has been an opportunity to continue to seek an appropriate career/job path. She has been able to receive much needed on-going support and has been able to access specific training. However, a major barrier to Ruby's ability to gain employment is the role of her continuing health issues.

## 7.2 'Amy'

Amy arrived in Australia in 2011. She is originally from Vietnam, but had spent the last six years in Singapore as a student prior to her arrival in Australia. She arrived in Australia newly married and soon gave birth to a baby girl.

During a period of approximately three years, Amy concentrated on looking after her daughter, while her husband worked on a full time basis. Six months ago, however, Amy began looking for work and sought assistance from the Learning 2 Work program after seeing a flyer about the program.

One of Amy's main concerns about finding employment in Australia was that she had not worked in the Australian labour market previously. Her experience had been limited to some work and study in both Vietnam and Singapore. She felt ill prepared about entering the labour force here and was unsure about how to approach employers.

Given Amy's inexperience in Australia, the Learning 2 Work program assisted Amy in a number of specific ways. Initially, the program was able to assist her with her resume and how to put together an application for specific employers. For example, she was given support in understanding how to address key selection criteria often sought by employers. As Amy had not previously applied for any work in Australia, she was unfamiliar with this aspect of job application norms.

In addition to this support, Amy began to attend a computer class at The Hub to become better acquainted with software programs such as Excel and Word. She was excited about the opportunity to improve her skills, as without the program she would have not known about this class. *"I was very thankful to attend"* was Amy's comment.

Amy was eager to find employment and as she explained *"I was not fussy about kind of job I got. I just wanted to get some experience working in Australia...I also needed to find work to better provide for my family"*.

As a result of the support received from the program as well as Amy's determination, Amy was able to find employment reasonably quickly. She attended numerous interviews and was ultimately successful in gaining casual work at a large chemical company in the sales and marketing department. As a result of Amy's success in finding employment, she was unable to complete the computer class run by the Learning 2 Work program attending only three weeks of an eight-week program.

Amy's encounter with the program reflects the diverse range of support and service provision that was made available to the women. Amy's story not only provides a snap-shop of the success of the program in assisting women find employment, but also highlights the significant role a program such as this can play in supporting women in a variety of situations.



## 8 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

### 8.1 The sense of confidence experienced by participants

One of the significant themes that emerged from the women's comments was the level of confidence gained by participants as part of their involvement in the program. So noteworthy was this aspect of the women's conversations, that when asked to describe the program in one word women invariably used terms such as **'Life Changing'; 'Motivating'; 'Dignity'; 'Empowering'; 'Person Centred'**.

One example of this was the experience of 'Julie'. Suffering from anxiety and hearing loss, Julie spoke about how she had lost much confidence over time. Her interaction with the staff at the program had helped her gain a sense of confidence that she had not felt for a number of years. Her contact with the program and the assistance given to her had allowed Julie to seek out pathways that she had not previously considered. As a result she had been able to complete Certificate III in aged care and continued to receive on-going support from the program.

For a majority of the women, issues of self-esteem and discrimination had been at the forefront of the women's experience in seeking employment or support in improving or gaining specific skills. Women's participation in the program however, appeared to markedly alter women's perception of their sense of self. This was largely due to the program's ability to instil in the women a sense of purpose and confidence.

For many of the women, being able to access training and the intensive one on one support provided by the program was indeed life changing. Previously women had not had access to such support. Many had not been able to either begin or complete courses in the past due to mental health issues, family violence, drug dependence or disability.

This was visible in the way women spoke about what they were most proud of having achieved through the program:

***"I am so proud of myself. I have never ever thought I could do schooling again. I left school at 14 and I never thought I could a course let alone finish two of them in the space of two years!"***

***"My confidence has returned. My communication skills have improved and because of this program I am more willing to put myself out there and now I realise I am as good as the next person."***

***"I am so happy to have been able to complete a Certificate III in aged care and Certificate III in Disability. I didn't have the confidence before to even try this".***

***"Here at the program I have been given the chance to study and further my job prospects. I am heard. I am not just a number. I can see how I am valued and respected. This has been so life changing for me".***

***"I have improved my personal skills and now I believe in myself"***

## 8.2 Assisting women gain specific skills and employment

Women's comments highlighted the significant impact the program's had on their ability to gain specific skills. Women were able to access specific courses and assistance provided by the program itself such as computer classes and interview preparation.

For Sonia, interview preparation was particularly beneficial. It allowed her to consider the types of questions an employer might ask at an interview and how she might best answer or respond. This 'role-play' proved particularly helpful to the women.

Other support measures included accessing the 'fitted to work' program where individuals are provided with appropriate clothing as well as interview skills for upcoming interviews. Women were also able to access specific life skill classes, including budgeting skills, and computer skills as previously mentioned.

In addition to this support, it was the program's ability to present to women a variety of options about certain pathways and courses that was an invaluable resource for the participants. As numerous women explained, the program was able to provide them with possibilities and options. Simply being asked "have you considered this?" or "would you be interested in trying this course or this job" had a significant impact on the women's confidence but also their worldview about what was indeed possible. Previously women had not received such personalised support.

For the women, the program has been able to create awareness about avenues that they had not previously considered. Women were encouraged by the supportive environment of the program to try specific courses or jobs even when some of them had not considered such options possible.

Deb for example had not previously considered doing a course in community services. With the encouragement from the staff at the program, she had enrolled in the course and found that she not only enjoyed the experience but that she was also "actually doing really well!"

Importantly, the ability to receive information about specific pathways and possibilities was also significant because of women's financial disadvantage. To this end, the program was able to provide details to the women about funding options and ways in which women could access specific areas of interest given their financial situation. For the women this level of assistance was greatly appreciated. Women's limited income would not have allowed them to fund individual courses on their own.

## 8.3 The significance of the type of the support provided by staff

A critical aspect of the program was the type of support provided by staff. This was seen to be a key factor in the program's success. Women were overwhelmingly positive about the staff's role, involvement, and capabilities in their dealings and support of the participants.

In particular women commented on the staff being respectful, obliging and encouraging. In their dealings with the staff women expressed immense gratitude for their help and support. Women talked about the staff being able to provide a safe and nurturing environment where they felt comfortable to talk about, at times, extremely personal and difficult issues.

Women's comments revealed the way in which staff made women feel comfortable when attending the program run events or courses. For many, simply being able to drop in for a five or ten minute chat proved invaluable. This support created in the women a sense of well-being and empowerment that encouraged them to access specific courses and in many cases employment, as they felt respected and valued.

The way in which the staff interacted with the women therefore was significant to the program's success. This was achieved in a number of very simple, time and cost efficient ways. For example, if a participant had not been seen or heard from for several days, a staff member would ring or make contact with them. Staff might encourage a client to come in for a 'chat' or refer them to some other support service if required. Often women commented on how they were able to make contact themselves with staff when things had become difficult at home or if mental health issues, for example, had become more challenging.

Participants viewed this intensive and on-going support of clients as extremely helpful. Many of them commented that it was the staff's support that enabled them to explore and participate in courses or apply for a particular job. Had it not being for their sensitive and respectful approach they would not have attempted or enrolled in a particular program or course. Many also commented that it had been the staff's encouragement that had enabled them to complete specific group work or courses.

Many of the women, for example, made comparisons between the type of assistance received from job providers and that of the learning 2 Work Program. When asked about this, women were overwhelmingly critical of the lack of support provided by staff at job providers. In turn, women's experience of the Learning 2 Work program had highlighted to them how relevant, nurturing and caring the staff were. Women's comments around this were particularly noteworthy:

***"Here I'm not just a number"***

***" Staff always followed through with assistance"***

***"Program made me feel valued – always put a smile on my face"***

***"Staff were friendly, positive, accepting, non-judgemental"***

***"I was motivated to come because I knew staff were so caring"***

***"Staff were always available if you needed them"***

***"Staff were approachable and understood me and my situation"***

***"The people here are great – they have been so motivating"***

***"People here are always eager to listen. They are great!"***

## 8.4 The role of health and well-being in women's lives

As was highlighted in the Learning 2 Work MCM final report (2015) a significant number of mental health issues were prevalent amongst participants. Over 50% of women who were case managed in this project described, discussed current and previous episodes of chronic mental health. This issue was by far the most significant factor affecting the ability of women to become economically independent and to sustain stable employment and to pursue career paths. In addition, family violence and acquired Brain Injury (ABI) were also present amongst participants.

This was emphasised in women's life histories as revealed in the focus groups and individual interviews undertaken for this evaluation. Out of the 13 women who participated in this evaluation at least eight women experienced some form of mental health issue on an on-going manner. Furthermore, at least two of the women had experienced family violence while one participant had significant challenges as a result of her ABI.

Despite these challenges, it was found that the program was able to play a significant role in helping the women achieve specific goals including assisting women seek out specific skills, courses or appropriate employment. By focusing on women's abilities rather than their specific *dis-abilities*, the program was able to target specific areas of interest, barriers or difficulties. By working in a close partnership with the women as well as maintaining an open dialogue through the personal relationships created between staff and clients, the program was able to create an atmosphere of active involvement amongst all participants. Moreover, this allowed the program achieve its targets of engagement.

For one participant, this type of assistance was particularly heartfelt. After completing a Certificate IV in disability, Rachel explained;

***"I realised that through these learning experiences that my brain could not retain information due to my ABI. But despite this I also gained a lot of confidence and can now look towards to finding volunteer work which may lead to paid work."***

For Rachel, the sensitive nature of the program provided her with the opportunity to complete the Certificate IV in disability despite the challenges of her ABI. Significantly, this experience allowed her to develop specific skills and knowledge that was able to put her on a path that might lead her in the future to either further study or paid employment. Despite her ABI, Rachel was encouraged to participate and was able to successfully complete the course.

For another participant, her experience of family violence was significant. Penny had arrived in Melbourne after fleeing her abusive partner from interstate. She had no contacts here and very little in the way of financial or practical support. At the time of this evaluation, Penny had still not secured stable housing despite having been in Melbourne for several years.

Despite her experience of trauma as a result of family violence, the Learning 2 Work program was able to provide Penny with a sense of purpose and an opportunity to create a new life for herself. Through the ongoing support of the staff, and the friendships created through the program, Penny was able to continue her participation in the program despite the difficult nature of her experiences.

## 9 WOMEN'S SUCCESSES

At the time of this evaluation women were asked to list whether they were in paid employment, volunteering or undertaking some form of training. Below are examples of women's contributions:

- *"I am currently working two days a week in an aged care facility. I am doing lifestyle with the residents and computer course."* (Angela)
- *"On Wednesdays I volunteer at an Op-Shop. On Thursdays I attend a computer skills class and on Fridays I attend school to finish my Certificate IV in Community Services."* (Maddie)
- *"Looking to start a Certificate IV in Community Services. I am hoping to get a job in Child Protection or child Services".* (Pam)
- *"I volunteer at a children's fund raising organisation. I am also involved in a computer course here on a weekly basis".* (Maria)
- *"I am employed by a disability Company working part-time. I have just completed my Cert III in Disability and would like to look into further studies".* (Lisa)
- *"I am working and studying. I work between 1-2 days a week and study the other three days".* (Amy)
- *"I am completing my Aged Care Cert III two days a week. I am looking for work as my course will finish in October."* (Kate)
- *"I am completing postgraduate studies at university. I work two days a week and have recently made contact with a government department about a full time position."*

## 10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In reflecting on The Learning 2 Work program during one of the focus groups, Samantha remarked, **"it is a much needed service"**. Indeed, as the women's conversations revealed, the program has had a significant impact on the women's lives. This impact however has not been limited to women gaining specific skills or, as many of the women's experiences have shown, continuing employment. Rather, the holistic and nurturing environment of the program has created a new sense of well-being amongst all participants that goes beyond definable and/or quantifiable measures.

Women's life histories revealed a high level of disadvantage. In particular, issues of mental health, drug use, family violence and financial disadvantage were found to be disproportionately high amongst participants in the program. Many of the women attending the program had limited education opportunities. Moreover, as a result of these barriers and challenges faced by the women, issues of self-esteem and lack of confidence were particularly high. Women remarked on the lack of support and assistance available to them previously.

Despite these challenges, the Learning 2 Work program was particularly successful. In terms of meeting its targets and evaluation criteria as outlined in the initial submission for funding, it is evident that the Learning 2 Work program has been successful in various aspects.

### 10.1.1 Key Element 1: Skilled, Experienced Staff

It is evident from the women's responses that staff were able to deal and engage with clients in a very experienced and sensitive manner. Women's comments about the staff in particular reflect this level of expertise. Staff were acutely aware of the sensitive nature of their client's needs. They revealed to the women a good understanding of the issues the women were dealing with or had encountered in their life histories.

### 10.1.2 Key Element 2: Consistent Engagement

At the time of this evaluation, all participants had been able to a) successfully find part time or full time employment or b) were undertaking specific training.

Of those women who were still looking for work, the continuing support from the program was significant. Of great importance and interest is that for those women who had found employment, contact with staff members from the program continued to exist and proved an important measure of the way in which the program continued to engage with clients. It would appear that assisting women remain in employment was as valuable as helping clients find employment. This long-term support proved especially significant to the women in the Learning 2 Work program.

The significance of maintaining long-term engagement with clients appears to be a key feature of the success of the program. Given the women's experience of at times severe disadvantage and hardship, continuous support appears to be not only meaningful, but also extremely beneficial to women's ability in maintaining employment and continuing training.

As has been mentioned previously, the program's ability to provide one on one support has been achieved in a very cost effective manner. Simply contacting clients for a five or ten minute chat on a weekly basis was seen to be highly beneficial in helping women maintain an interest in the training they might be receiving or to explore other avenues of support if needed. What was important was the presence of the program in the women's lives.

### 10.1.3 Employment Outcomes Achieved

Contract targets of twenty employment outcomes were exceeded prior to the end of the project in June 2015 with twenty-six (26) employment outcomes (37%). Twenty (20) women were successful in gaining employment that extended over and beyond a period of sixteen weeks (Outcome A), with six (6) clients achieving employment outcomes of 8-14 hours (Outcome B). In addition, thirty-five (35) clients were placed into accredited training, with fifteen clients (15) completing the training and several women still to complete.

<b>Clients Registered</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Clients placed into employment</b>	26
<b>Clients who achieved Outcome A</b>	20
<b>Clients who achieved Outcome B</b>	6
<b>Clients placed into accredited training</b>	35
<b>Clients who completed accredited training</b>	15 >5 in process
<b>Clients placed into non-accredited training</b>	5
<b>Clients who completed non-accredited training</b>	4

Note: Data for West Heidelberg site only at 30 June 2015

Data update at October 2015 – note increased employment and training outcomes and further 6 women joined the program

Learning 2 work - based on 76 women clients												
<b>Age breakdown:</b>												
21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65				
6	18	11	6	11	7	10	5	2				
<b>Place of Birth</b>												
Australia	Germany	Hungary	India	Iran	NZ	Nigeria	Pakistan	Singapore	Somalia	Sweden	Vietnam	
41	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	20	1	2	
<b>Issues</b>												
Mental Illness	Family Violence	Disability										
29	15	20										
<b>Completed accredited or non-accredited training</b>												
34												
<b>Placed in Employment</b>												
35												
<b>Public Housing Clients</b>												
42												
<b>Centrelink support benefits</b>												
carer allowance	child support	disability	new start	youth allowance								
1	7	18	33	2								

## 10.2 Suggestions for Developing the Learning 2 Work Program

In addition to asking women about their experiences of the program, participants' views were also harnessed about aspects of the program that they might have suggestions about.

Participants' comments included:

- Better computers at 'The Hub'
- Larger range of courses be made available to participants including food handling, first aid and budgeting skills.
- Program should be better 'advertised'. Many of the women felt that the program was not as well known as it could be particularly because the women found it so helpful. They believed that more women would take advantage of the program if they knew about it.
- In addition to these suggestions one participant felt that a mentoring program could be extremely beneficial to participants. She felt that having someone who had already participated in the program take a role of mentor to new participants could enhance various aspects of the program. In particular it was felt this could provide a sense of continuity and connection for both mentor and participant.

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