



StableSteps



Empowering Women into
Healthcare Careers



Program Impact Report

Workforce Australia -
Western Melbourne
Stable Steps Program
July 2026



*An innovative pilot initiative
delivered in collaboration with the
Local Jobs Program, EQ Leaders,
Sarina Russo Job Access and APM.*

Stable Steps: Empowering Women into Healthcare Careers

Stable Steps: Empowering Women into Healthcare Careers is an innovative pilot initiative delivered in collaboration with the Local Jobs Program, EQ Leaders, Sarina Russo Job Access, and APM. The program is designed to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women aged 45 and over in overcoming barriers to entering the healthcare workforce. Through a unique combination of immersive equine-assisted learning, tailored workshops, and structured follow-up coaching, participants develop critical skills such as confidence, communication, and resilience, essential attributes for success in Healthcare roles.

The program provided a safe and inclusive environment where women can strengthen self-leadership, enhance collaboration skills, and build supportive peer networks. These outcomes position participants for job readiness and long-term career progression in a sector experiencing strong demand and growth opportunities.

CALD women in this demographic often face distinct challenges, including language and communication barriers, limited professional

networks, and confidence gaps shaped by cultural norms and previous exclusion. Stable Steps attempted to address these challenges by fostering authentic communication, emotional regulation, and future-focused thinking. By linking experiential learning with practical employment pathways, the program empowered participants to overcome systemic barriers and confidently pursue meaningful careers in Healthcare.

Active involvement of Healthcare employers are essential to the program's success. Their participation created direct pathways to employment by connecting participants with real-world job opportunities and ensuring alignment with current workforce needs. Employers validate that the skills developed, such as communication, resilience, and collaboration, meet industry standards, enabling tailored training that enhances job readiness. Engagement also provides CALD women aged 45 and over with access to professional networks, mentorship, and workplace culture, helping to overcome isolation and confidence barriers.



Furthermore, employer endorsement strengthens program credibility, signalling trust and alignment with sector priorities. In a region facing significant Healthcare workforce shortages, employer involvement ensures the program contributes to filling critical gaps with skilled, diverse talent, supporting economic resilience and social inclusion. By co-designing program elements and advising on emerging roles and compliance requirements, employers help ensure scalability and sustainability, making this initiative future-focused and impactful.

Western Melbourne faces significant workforce shortages in Healthcare and is home to a large

multicultural population. Pilot programs such as Stable Steps are vital because they deliver targeted, evidence-based interventions that align with local employment priorities while promoting social inclusion. These initiatives not only create pathways to employment for CALD women but also contribute to the region's economic resilience and diversity.

This program represented a strategic investment in community and workforce development. Its innovative approach, combined with strong alignment to the Western Melbourne Local Jobs Plan, ensures scalability and long-term impact.

Equine Assisted Immersion: EQ Leaders Training Day

The Stable Steps Equine Assisted Learning Immersion Program, delivered on 1 May 2026, engaged nine Participants seeking pathways into employment in health, aged care, disability support, childcare, and community services. The program used horse-assisted experiential learning to build confidence, communication, teamwork, emotional regulation, and employment readiness. Findings were drawn from activity observations, participant reflections, and pre- and post-program self-assessments.

The program consisted of seven structured activities designed to mirror workplace situations. Participants began with intention setting, using horse interaction to build calmness and self-awareness. They then progressed through activities involving leadership, collaboration, adapting to change, goal setting, and group coordination. Throughout the exercises, the participants received non-judgemental feedback from the horses, helping them recognise how their emotions, communication, and behaviours influenced outcomes.

Several workplace-relevant lessons emerged. Participants learned the importance of remaining calm under pressure, giving clear directions, asking for help when needed, adapting strategies when situations change, and balancing task completion with relationship building. Activities also emphasised psychological safety, encouraging participants to speak up, contribute ideas, and support one another. Goal-setting exercises introduced the BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) framework, helping participants break larger employment ambitions into manageable steps.

Participant reflections revealed significant personal growth. Many reported overcoming fears, developing confidence, learning to trust themselves, and recognising the value of patience and gentle leadership.

Several participants noted that working with horses highlighted the impact of their emotions and energy on others. Others identified communication, teamwork, persistence, and self-belief as key personal strengths.



Employment-focused goals included finding work, pursuing support work or childcare careers, improving English skills, and maintaining motivation.

The most compelling evidence of impact came from the self-assessment survey. Across 14 behavioural indicators, every measure improved following the program. Participants showed major gains in self-belief and confidence, including a 32.4% increase in believing they had something valuable to offer employers and a 29.4% increase in pride in their strengths and abilities. Confidence in overcoming challenges rose by 26.5%.

Communication skills also improved substantially. Participants reported a 25% increase in their ability to express thoughts clearly and a 21.2% increase in confidence speaking up in groups. Teamwork indicators improved across all measures, with gains of 26.5% in adapting to team needs and paying attention to others, and 19.4% in working effectively with new people.

Employment readiness outcomes were particularly strong. Clarity about next career steps increased by 25.7%, while confidence in achieving goals through small steps improved by the same amount. Readiness to present themselves to employers rose by 29.4%, and motivation to seek work or further study reached a perfect score, with all participants rating the statement as “very true” after the session.



Four key themes emerged across participant feedback: personal discovery, leadership through patience and care, horses as mirrors for self-awareness, and a stronger focus on employment goals and action. Notably, all nine participants gave the program a 5/5 recommendation score, reflecting unanimous satisfaction. Overall, the report concludes that the equine-assisted learning approach produced meaningful and measurable improvements in confidence, communication, teamwork, and job readiness, equipping participants with essential capabilities for careers in health and community services.



Ready Set Day:

One of the most impactful activities was the Ready Set Day, where participants were supported with interview clothing and received guidance on workplace presentation and interview preparation.

The outcomes from this day were outstanding:

- 86% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that Ready Set provided high-quality and suitable clothing.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the service increased their confidence in how they dress for interviews and employment opportunities.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the service improved their presentation skills. For many participants, this experience removed a significant barrier to employment and gave them the confidence to present professionally to prospective employers.

Mini EMPLOYER Expo:

The Employer Mini Expo provided participants with direct access to five employers 4 of them from the health and care sectors: Western Health, Nurse Next Door, Ethical Hire, Comfort Care, and Range Workforce. Representatives from each organisation shared valuable insights into industry expectations, recruitment processes, current workforce needs, and the qualities they seek in prospective employees.

The event was particularly significant in building confidence. At the beginning of the program, several participants expressed anxiety about speaking directly with employers. During the expo, every participant actively engaged with employers, asked questions, and networked professionally.

It was encouraging to see Participants confidently approach employers, introduce themselves, and discuss their career aspirations. These interactions provided Participants with a deeper understanding of employment opportunities within the sector and allowed them to make valuable professional connections. Several Participants have since been shortlisted for future employment opportunities as vacancies become available.

This experience helped transform Participants' perceptions of their own employability, strengthened their motivation to pursue opportunities within the health and care sector, and provided direct exposure to employers actively seeking skilled and job-ready candidates.



Participant Outcomes:

Participants	Achievements
Maria Uwimana	Maria secured self-employment in family day care during the program and therefore did not complete the activity. Her successful transition into self-employment demonstrates her initiative and confidence in pursuing sustainable work opportunities.
Eunjin Baek	Eunjin successfully completed the program and commenced a Certificate III in Individual Support on 11 July. She is actively seeking part-time employment and has already attended interviews, demonstrating strong commitment to entering the health sector.
Atosha Kangakolo	Atosha successfully completed the program and has enrolled in a Certificate III in Individual Support. She is currently completing key industry requirements including her Police Check, Working with Children Check, NDIS Orientation Module, Hand Hygiene certification, and working towards obtaining her driver's licence.
Sukanlaya Thimhan	Sukanlaya successfully completed the program and is continuing to strengthen her English language skills. She has expressed interest in enrolling in a Certificate III in Pathology through The Gordon, demonstrating her commitment to further education and career growth.
Lina Tiute	Lina successfully completed the program and is exploring pathways into support work through a Certificate III qualification. She is also engaging with local aged care facilities regarding on-site hairdressing opportunities and is investigating self-employment options through the Self-Employment Assistance program.
Sireesha Tirmalasetti	Sireesha successfully completed the program and remains actively engaged in pursuing employment in the health sector. She has obtained her First Aid certificate, is working towards obtaining her driver's licence, and has progressed to Stage 2 of the SERCO NDIS recruitment process.
Sara Fekadu	Sara successfully completed the program and is currently working approximately 12 hours per week as a support worker. She is in the process of establishing her ABN and is actively seeking additional hours within the sector.
Marni Cadiz Fuentes	Marni successfully completed the program. Despite experiencing some medical challenges, she has shown significant growth in reliability, attendance, communication, and self-confidence. Her ability to engage with others and participate in group activities has improved considerably.
Litsa Hatzipantazi	Litsa successfully completed the program and has secured employment as a Medical Administrator. She has also progressed to Stage 2 of the SERCO NDIS recruitment process, demonstrating strong employability and commitment to the industry.
Ekram Ahmed Ibrahim	Ekram successfully completed the program and continues to actively pursue opportunities within healthcare and support work. She has been applying for support care roles and remains motivated to secure employment within the sector.

Conclusion:

The CTA Stable Steps Program delivered strong outcomes in building the confidence, employability, and career readiness of women seeking careers in the health and care sectors. Through targeted training, employer engagement, practical workshops, peer support, and personal development activities, Participants gained the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to pursue employment and further education.

Program outcomes included enrolments in health qualifications, employment placements, self-employment commencements, and active progression towards career opportunities within the sector. Increased confidence was a key driver of success,

empowering participants to engage with employers, attend interviews, explore study pathways, build professional networks, and use technology to support their journey into sustainable employment.

Most importantly, Participants developed greater confidence in their abilities and potential to succeed in the health and care sectors. The significant growth achieved throughout the program highlights the impact of combining practical employment support with confidence-building opportunities, resulting in lasting outcomes that will continue to support participants in achieving their career aspirations and contributing meaningfully to the workforce.

**This program has been made possible by the collaboration of everyone,
and our team is greatly appreciative of all involved.**



Kylie Olsen – Western Melbourne Job Coordinator



Claire McArdle – National Manager APM CTA & EST



Alexander Porqueddu – Regional Manager Sarina Russo



Emma Costin – CEO EQ Leaders





SUKANLAYA

WORK EXPERIENCE

Extensive knowledge of warehousing and factory operations

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Warehousing, Machine Operating, Marketing

- **NAME:** Sukanlaya
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:** Warehousing and machine operating
- **LOOKING FOR:**

To enrol into Certificate III in Pathology once she completes EAL

CURRENT UPDATE

Sukanlaya successfully completed the program and is continuing to strengthen her English language skills. She has expressed interest in enrolling in a Certificate III in Pathology through The Gordon, demonstrating her commitment to further education and career growth.



Your top 3 values

Consistency

Accuracy

Punctual





SARA



WORK EXPERIENCE

Experience in commercial cleaning and hospitality

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Food- handling, organised and reliable

- **NAME:** Sara
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**
Hospitality + Cleaning
- **LOOKING FOR:**
More hours in her Individual Support Role

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Getting in some Uber hours

CURRENT UPDATE

Sara successfully completed the program and is currently working approximately 12 hours per week as a support worker. She is in the process of establishing her ABN and is actively seeking additional hours within the sector.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Empathy

Family



MARIA



CURRENT UPDATE

Maria secured self-employment in family day care during the program and therefore did not complete the activity.

Her successful transition into self-employment demonstrates her initiative and confidence in pursuing sustainable work opportunities.





ATOSHA

WORK EXPERIENCE

I have experience supporting and managing families and children from various backgrounds.

I now want to use this to support people professionally

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Communication Skills, Empathy and Conflict Resolution

QUOTE:

Good karma always comes around.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Honesty

Spirituality

- **NAME:** Atosha

- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**

Kindergarten Teacher in Congo

- **LOOKING FOR:**

Individual support work once certification completed

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I like to read, and make new clothing.

WHAT'S ONE SURPRISING THING ABOUT YOU?

I want to help disabled people back in Congo and help them get a better life.

CURRENT UPDATE

Atosha successfully completed the program and has enrolled in a Certificate III in Individual Support. She is currently completing key industry requirements including her Police Check, Working with Children Check, NDIS Orientation Module, Hand Hygiene certification, and working towards obtaining her driver's licence.



MARNI

WORK EXPERIENCE

A long time cleaner and detailer with history in fast paced and reliable work

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Attention to detail, motivation and positive attitude

- **NAME:** Marni

- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**

Truck Detailing

- **LOOKING FOR:**

Warehousing to cover for long term goal in aged care.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Riding my bike

CURRENT UPDATE

Marni successfully completed the program. Despite experiencing some medical challenges, she has shown significant growth in reliability, attendance, communication, and self-confidence. Her ability to engage with others and participate in group activities has improved considerably.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Empathy

Family



LINA



WORK EXPERIENCE

Background in hairdressing, customer service and inventory management.

Now seeking to build her own business with her skills

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Time management, customer service, stakeholder management

- **NAME:** LINA

- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**
Hairdresser

- **LOOKING FOR:**
Hairdressing positions while working on her business

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Work on my business for Islander accessories

WHAT'S ONE SURPRISING THING ABOUT YOU?

I had never been close to a horse before but now I can say I have plaited the horse's hair

CURRENT UPDATE

Lina successfully completed the program and is exploring pathways into support work through a Certificate III qualification. She is also engaging with local aged care facilities regarding on-site hairdressing opportunities and is investigating self-employment options through the Self-Employment Assistance program.

Your top 3 values

Happiness

Dedication

Self - Worth



LITSA



WORK EXPERIENCE

Background in compound pharmacy and quality assurance. Skilled in accurately preparing pharmaceutical products while following strict procedures & quality standards.

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Quality Control, Attention to Detail, SOP Compliance, Inventory Control, Problem Solving

QUOTE

My confidence grew working with the horses. I realised I'm a great team player and leader.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Trying

Family

- **NAME:** Litsa
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:** Compound pharmacy and quality assurance
- **LOOKING FOR:** Admin or health care roles with WFH flexibility

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Playing Badminton!

WHAT'S ONE SURPRISING THING ABOUT YOU?

I know how to box!

CURRENT UPDATE

Upon completion of the program, Litsa secured a role with a medical practice checking Medicare rebates and has also registered with the NDIS for future employment opportunities.





EUNJIN



WORK EXPERIENCE

Many years experience
family-run restaurants

Seeking a career change while
working to improve her
English skills and confidence

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Customer service, hospitality
adaptability, flexibility,
productivity, and staff coaching

- **NAME:** Eujin
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**
Many years restaurant
experience
- **LOOKING FOR:**
Factory work to supplement her
studies in Individual Support work

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Working on her assignments!

CURRENT UPDATE

Currently undertaking a Certificate III in Individual Support and applying for factory work to supplement her studies. She has attended several interviews and continues to actively seek employment within her local area.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Empathy

Family





EKRAM



WORK EXPERIENCE

Holds a Certificate III in Individual Support and a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education.

AREAS OF CAPABILITY

Ekram became known as our "Shepherd" due to her gentle approach to the horses during the EQ experience. She shared stories about the important role horses and other herding animals played in her early life and community in Sudan.

QUOTE:

Be kind, work hard and trust the process.

Your top 3 values

Kindness

Respect

Family

- **NAME:** Ekram

- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**

Early Childhood Educator wanting to transfer care to Disability Support

- **LOOKING FOR:**

Disability Support Work

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, going out, volunteering in my community and trying new things.

WHAT'S ONE SURPRISING THING ABOUT YOU?

I can speak more than five languages!

CURRENT UPDATE

Ekram worked incredibly hard to improve her keyboarding and Microsoft Office skills throughout the program, and Sarina Russo will connect her with additional training opportunities.





SIREESHA

WORK EXPERIENCE

Sireesha has worked in Early Childhood Education and has completed the theory component of a Certificate III in Dental Assistance.

AREAS OF CAPABILITY / EXPERTISE

Customer Service, Hospitality, Team Management, Empathy

- **NAME:** Sireesha
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:** Early Childhood Education
- **LOOKING TO:** Complete her dental practical placement and enrol in a medical administration course

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I like to be creative, drawing and helping my daughter in artwork.

WHAT'S ONE SURPRISING THING ABOUT YOU?

I used to run my own restaurant!

CURRENT UPDATE

Sireesha made valuable industry connections through networking with dental employers. Most recently, Sireesha and another Stable Steps participant have registered together with the NDIS to pursue employment opportunities.



Your top 3 values

Kindness

Empathy

Family

