



# AUSWIDE PROJECTS

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# AUSWIDE PROJECTS

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## Mature Workers Program Report to the Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations

Auswide Projects, formerly STEP and CoastTrain, has been operating as a not-for-profit community-based organisation since 1989, with five offices in the South-East Region of New South Wales. The Mature Workers Program is funded by the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Kathleen Boyne has worked for over 11 years in labour market programs, developing, coordinating, evaluating and delivering training for job seekers of all ages. This experience includes five years full-time work in the Mature Workers Program assisting jobseekers over forty years of age. This has been the most intensive and difficult target group to place into employment and training, because of the social ramifications of being "unemployed" and society's expectations of clients to provide for their family and to be of benefit to the community.

This results in severe low self-esteem, which impacts on their relationships and ability to be positive about themselves and their career prospects. The effects include suicide, marriage breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, and health issues. Unfortunately this is role-modelled to the younger generation, who can also fall into this grey-clouded trap.

The Mature Workers Program offers one-on-one assistance to job seekers, parallel to case management. We train our clients in job seeking skills (both through one-on-one assistance and group workshops) and provide a voluntary work scheme which enables the client to re-enter the workplace and "get their foot in the door". We approach employers, matching their needs with the skills and strengths of our clients. Over the five years the Mature Workers Program has been operating in the Bega Valley Shire, we have assisted approximately 560 clients, increasing the numbers assisted each year.

**Over the past twelve months our client intake has increased by 50%. This suggests the problem of mature age unemployment is growing.** In this area employment issues have been the decline of the logging and forestry industry and most recently the closure of Greenseas Cannery in Eden with over 100 staff retrenched (the majority of those concerned were unskilled NESB mature aged women). This problem will be compounded if the regional perception that 40% of dairy farmers in the Bega Valley Shire will go under with the introduction of deregulation is accurate. Included in this will be their wives who are partners in the business receiving an income and their children who have lost their prospective livelihood.

To date, our total employment outcomes for the Bega Valley Shire have been 331, and training outcomes 171. Our program has until recently only been servicing the Bega Valley Shire, but has now extended to include Queanbeyan and Cooma. The breakdown of ages in the outcomes is as follows:

Age	Employment	Training
45-50	49%	40%
50-55	32%	38%
55-60	17%	20%
60-65	2%	2%

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## Case Study 1

Duration of client involvement: August 1996 to July 1998

**Female**

**Age: 48**

**Unemployed 2½ years**

**14 years since leaving her profession of Nursing**

**Sole parent**

### Barriers to Employment

- ✦ Sole Parent — 1 teenage son, expelled from High School; family problems
- ✦ Recent broken marriage
- ✦ No car licence, cannot drive
- ✦ 14 years since leaving her nursing profession
- ✦ Suicidal behaviour — taking medication
- ✦ No family in Australia (all in England)
- ✦ No money
- ✦ No confidence
- ✦ Low self-esteem

### Needs

- ✦ To regain healthy emotional and mental state
- ✦ Get back into nursing
- ✦ Update qualifications
- ✦ Get a job
- ✦ Become confident
- ✦ Regain happy family situation

### How Mature Workers Program assisted client

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| August 1996    | — Spent a lot of time actively listening, therefore building trust, rapport and confidence.<br>— Referred to Community Health Centre for counselling.<br>— Identified where her emotional and mental state was at to determine how big the “first step” should be.<br>— Questioned her to identify her strengths, desires, fears, opportunities and prospects for employment and training. |
| September 1996 | — Assisted in developing her résumé.   |
| October 1996   | — Found someone to teach her to drive.<br>— Organised voluntary work experience at a photographic shop to ease back into employment.   |

- December 1996 — Identified what qualifications were necessary for employment.  
— Identified course where client could update skills relevant to her financial, educational, emotional and family needs.  
— Referred client to relaxation classes.  
— Persuaded client to attend Christmas Party for client group.
- January 1997 — Assisted client with applications for work.  
— Approached Nursing Employment Agencies in Sydney with résumé.  
— Constant monitoring of client's emotional state with regular meetings (weekly, fortnightly and monthly dependent on client's needs).
- February 1997 — Client completed course at College.  
— Client actively seeking work.
- June 1997 — Client obtained driver's licence and purchased car.
- December 1997 — Client commences part-time work at Nursing Home (1 hour away from home).
- July 1998 — Assisted client with application and interview skills for full-time position in Nursing. Client successfully obtained full-time employment.

## Case Study 2

Duration of client involvement: December 1998 to present

**Male**

**Age: 46**

### Barriers to Employment

- ◆ 26 years with ACT Government, but no other experience.
- ◆ 18 months unemployed.
- ◆ New to area, did not know anyone.
- ◆ Anxious and lacking confidence.
- ◆ Never worked in private sector.

### How Mature Workers Program assisted client

- December 1998 — Identified jobs that could fit client's skills and strengths.  
— Developed résumé relevant to local industries and jobs
- February 1999 — Trained client in interview techniques and promoting skills pertinent to the position.  
— Identified training for client Workplace Training Category 1 & 2.  
— Encouraged client to apply for positions in new areas.
- June 1999 — Client commenced full-time employment in Sales & Purchasing with local company.
- October 1999 — Client advised he will commence TAFE in 2000 in Human Resource Management

