

Media Release

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Breaking down barriers on International Women's Day

Teenager Olivia Scott has just secured her first paid job. And while part-time employment is a rite of passage for teens, as a female with disability, Olivia's achievement is all the more significant.

Wednesday 8 March is [International Women's Day](#), a time to celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness about discrimination and take action to drive gender parity.

Unfortunately, gender is not the only precursor for discrimination.

[Women With Disabilities Australia](#) say women experience "multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage that relate to their gender as well as their disability".

A 2018 national survey of people with disability showed 91% (72% of whom were women) believed they did do not have the same employment opportunities as their non-disabled peers.

This is backed by [Australian Government](#) figures which show working-age people with disability have a lower employment rate (48%) than those without disability (80%). This is even lower for women with disabilities (46% compared with 50% for men).

A lack of access to traineeships and employment support is a huge barrier.

For-purpose aged and disability organisation VMCH is continually expanding its job skills programs across retail, hospitality and horticulture to give people with disability meaningful training opportunities. It aims to support 100 people to find and sustain award wage employment by 2025.

Olivia's time as a trainee at one of VMCH's two social enterprise cafés - [Where Is My Coffee?](#) in Wangaratta – was the boost she needed to secure her first job at McDonald's last month.

"I wanted to be independent and buy myself things instead of asking my parents," Olivia, aged 17, says.

"I used to be insecure but after the traineeship I feel more confident to get a job."

Olivia is one of five people (all females) who have secured paid work following their traineeships, with another eight to move on soon. Since the café opened in December 2021, 24 people with disability (15 females) have begun traineeships, with another four at VMCH's Torquay café.

"Supporting people in their role with job skills like food prep, coffee making and customer service is just one part of our aim here," says Café Team Leader Corneilius Scott.

"Ultimately, we're preparing them for the paid workforce; building their confidence, helping with resumes, linking them with local businesses, conducting mock interviews, and supporting them after they've left their traineeship to ensure they're tracking well."

When she started, Olivia needed to be picked up from school by café staff for her shifts. But after some coaching, she was soon comfortable enough to catch the bus on her own.

"Olivia's commitment to her traineeship was great," Corneilius says. "Even during the school holidays when others took a break, she continued in her role."

Olivia's hard work paid off when she received a call back from McDonald's last month.

"I was relieved and over the moon," Olivia says. "I am very grateful for everything I learned during the traineeship."

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart says this International Women's Day, VMCH will be celebrating females of all ages and abilities who achieve great things.

“The majority of our staff, volunteers and people we support are female, so it’s important for us to keep that conversation going around equity, respect and inclusiveness. We also need to act, so we remain committed to putting our time, energy and strategic focus into providing those meaningful opportunities for people to reach their goals, no matter what their gender.”

If you are a person with disability who would like more information about seeking employment or developing a career, visit: <https://includeability.gov.au/>

For more details on VMCH job skills programs, visit: <https://vmch.com.au/disability/for-adults/job-skills/>

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren’t just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we’ve been around for over a century, we’re always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

