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# The Body Shop Linked Access Project

## An evaluation

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and  
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Brotherhood of St Laurence  
1995

ISBN 1 876250 09 7

The Body Shop linked access project : an  
evaluation.



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

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**Brotherhood** Brotherhood of St Laurence

**DEET** Department of Employment, Education and Training

**EAC** Employment Action Centre  
The Brotherhood of St Laurence established the Employment Action Centre in Fitzroy in 1986 to implement programs for unemployed young people. The mission of the EAC is to 'enable disadvantaged job seekers in the community to live and work independently by providing effective employment, training and support programs whilst advocating for appropriate community responses to employment issues'. As the Brotherhood of St Laurence has established a regional EAC in Ballarat, EAC refers to the Fitzroy EAC in this report.

**JPET** Job Placement and Employment Training program

### **The Linked Access Project**

The Linked Access Project is a three-year joint Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Body Shop project that operated from January 1992. The project integrates training, work experience, housing and other supports to assist a group of young people to move toward independence through stable employment and housing. The project is the subject of this report.

### **Traineeship Access Course**

The Traineeship Access Course is a ten to twelve week preparatory training program conducted by the EAC. It has been designed to improve access to traineeships, employment or further education by providing participants with basic vocational and life skills and work experience. Counselling, advocacy and advice are also integral components of the course.

**TAFE** Tertiary and Further Education colleges.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 1992-94, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Body Shop collaborated in providing an intensive work experience and training program for a group of young people who were 'homeless or at risk of homelessness'. Named the Linked Access Project, it provided a wide range of supports along with paid employment and training opportunities to assist the young people.

This final report of the evaluation explores the success of the project for the young people who undertook the traineeship. It assesses the value of the components of the project and identifies issues in replicating the program for other organisations.

### The project

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has undertaken a number of employment and training programs for young people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. The Body Shop, a major retailer, provided substantial funds, staff expertise and commitment aimed to ensure this work experience and training program was a success for the participating young people.

The Linked Access Project was based on the assumption that most young people want a meaningful place in the community and that they would be helped to achieve this through full-time regular employment. The project was unique in that it provided employment and training opportunities which were integrated with housing, material and personal assistance. There was an expectation that by participating in this project the young people would gain employment with The Body Shop or another retailer.

The young people selected were in most cases 'homeless or at risk of homelessness', unemployed and aged between 15 and 19 years. After being interviewed, suitable young people undertook a 12 week Traineeship Access Course conducted by the Brotherhood's Employment Action Centre. Upon completing this, the young people commenced a one year traineeship with The Body Shop. The trainees worked three days a week in The Body Shop stores, warehouse or head office; and they undertook off-the-job training at TAFE two days a week. Trainees received specialist on-the-job training and support from a designated supervisor. The trainees received a wage set at 75 per cent of the award wage for their age.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's Employment Action Centre provided individual support through the project Co-ordinator. Trainees also received housing, material and personal assistance. At the end of their traineeship, the young people received three months of post-program support. During this time of job searching, The Body Shop provided the young people with paid employment.



The Linked Access Project commenced in 1992, with two further intakes of trainees in 1993 and 1994. In the first two intakes, 29 young people commenced the preparatory Traineeship Access Course, of whom 14 went on to the traineeship. Of the 12 completing the traineeship by August 1994, six were employed full-time and three had gone on to further education or training. According to outcome measures used by the Department of Employment, Education and Training, this represents 75 per cent positive outcomes for the trainees. Four young people from the third intake of 14 were expected to complete their traineeship in May 1995.

This report looks at the experience of the trainees and staff for the first two intakes. It also provides some information about changes to the project model for the third group of trainees. Interviews and consultations were held with trainees and other staff from the Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Body Shop involved in implementing the project.

### **Lessons from the project**

The three stages of the evaluation have provided an opportunity to examine the implementation and development of the Linked Access Project since its inception in 1992. The following elements seem of particular importance in providing a program for very disadvantaged young people which combines work experience, training, housing and personal and material support.

1. Integration of the employment, training, and support components of the model were central to implementation of the project. This confirms the premise of the project that young people who are 'homeless or at risk of homelessness' often have a range of personal support and housing needs which are not usually addressed in labour market programs. Underpinning the integration of the project components was the need to provide an adequate income to the trainees, many of whom were unemployed for long periods, had accumulated large debts and who lost eligibility to the Health Care Card at commencement of the traineeship due to their income level.
2. High levels of disadvantage among the target group required a high initial investment of resources in order to provide the range and level of financial, housing, employment and personal assistance many in the program needed. Unstable housing and poor health were among the most significant issues for the young people which often threatened their ability to complete the project.
3. A designated staff member was necessary to supervise the trainees and to provide on-the-job training and guidance during their traineeship. The role of the supervisor was strengthened with assistance and training from a worker who also directly supported trainees. Formal support integrated with informal mentor relationships assisted many of the trainees to complete the project.



4. Integration of the project components was important, but flexibility in the overall structure was also required. In particular, the time-based training and work experience components of the model and the inability of trainees to leave and return during the program were too rigid for some young people. Punctuality and time-management are important requirements in the workplace, but some disadvantaged young people required flexibility in the program structure which accommodated their efforts to stabilise their personal lives (such as overcoming health problems) so that they may have access to further employment and training opportunities. Other young people in the program will bring a range of skills and competence (vocational, educational and personal) which require recognition and credit in the program.
5. External training conducted by TAFE imposed further limitations and rigidity in implementing the program. Both the employer and trainees were constrained by the TAFE system. Application of an accredited and modular-based training program which is portable (for the employer, trainer and trainee) would reduce reliance on an external training provider. Training which is linked to work experience, accredited, competency-based and paid seems most valuable to the trainees.
6. It was important to provide a program for young people which was non-stigmatising. Avoiding language in the promotion of the program which negatively labelled the young people was critical. Paying award wages for their time on-the-job and a training wage for the time spent training would improve the level of the trainee wage and help to avoid the many problems of low-wages including financial hardship and the stigma it can create.
7. The program has benefited from the large commitment of the employing organisation which has contributed considerable financial and staff resources and remained committed to assisting a group of very disadvantaged young people. The contribution of the employing organisation has been enhanced by a good working relationship with the Brotherhood of St Laurence which has provided the support and training infrastructure to the project.

Overall, the Linked Access Project was a very important program which assisted a group of young people who were 'homeless or at risk of homelessness', many of whom had been unemployed long term. It demonstrated the importance of integrating personal, housing and labour market assistance in one program. While the project was expensive in terms of financial and staff resources required to assist the trainees, the cost can be justified in that it improved the lives of many of the young people who experienced very high levels of disadvantage.



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## **Background to the project**

This is the final report of the evaluation of The Linked Access Project conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Body Shop. The project is a work experience and training program undertaken by a group of disadvantaged young people. It is the intention of this report to provide information to employers and organisations involved in providing work experience and training programs, and organisations interested in promoting work experience and training programs for disadvantaged young people, in particular for young people who are ‘homeless or at risk of homelessness’.

The study evaluates The Linked Access Project over the first two years of implementation. The evaluation was undertaken in 1994 at a stage when the third intake of trainees was underway.

In 1991, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Body Shop agreed to undertake a joint program for homeless young people. The implementation of the program and the contractual obligations between the two organisations were for three years (1992-1994). The first intake of trainees commenced in January 1992.

The original proposal was to combine the resources and staff expertise of the two organisations to create a labour market program which would integrate support, housing, training and secure employment for a small group of homeless young people (Carter 1991, p.1). The combined expertise of the two organisations created a suitable partnership for this specialist and intensive labour market program.

Since its original inception The Linked Access Project has altered according to feedback from this evaluation process and according to the needs of the participants. Chapter 2 explains the main features of The Linked Access Project and identifies some of the changes in its implementation. Chapter 3 provides an assessment of the value of the components of the project, and Chapter 4 identifies outcomes for the trainees and issues in replication of the project by other organisations.

## **The labour market for disadvantaged young people**

The decline in the availability of full-time employment for young people is part of the long term restructuring of the Australian labour market. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 19 years is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate. In October 1994, the national youth unemployment rate was 28.2 per cent and the Victorian youth unemployment rate was 31.6 per cent. At the same time, the national unemployment rate was 9.1 per cent and the Victorian unemployment rate was 9.8 per cent (ABS 6202.0).



Research has shown that disadvantaged young people have aspirations regarding work which are little different to those of other young people. Disadvantaged young people make considerable effort to gain access to the labour market (Boyce 1991, p. 12). In a study of young people in supported accommodation, de Vries and Turnell (1990, p.21) found that 36 per cent of these young people were ready for work, but only 8 per cent were actually in work. A number of reports have shown that the unemployment rate for homeless young people is extremely high. For example, Hirst (1989) found an unemployment rate of 80 per cent while Chamberlain, MacKenzie and Brown (1991) found an unemployment rate of 87 per cent in their sample of homeless young people.

Boyce (1991, p.14) argues that some young people with multiple disadvantages are ready for work. Others have suggested that the most disadvantaged young people are only able to access the secondary labour market. A number of barriers exist for disadvantaged young people seeking access to either the primary or secondary segments of the labour market. Poverty and other problems beyond their control can make it difficult for some young people to gain full-time or permanent employment.

Barriers to the labour market often relate to the young people's personal and social characteristics. In a Perth study, 25 per cent of the disadvantaged young people said that their own psychological status was a barrier to their gaining access to employment or labour market programs (de Vries and Turnell 1990, p.23). Young people who have suffered major problems within their families or as a result of social conditions, can require a nurturing work environment to develop work based competencies and a work focused lifestyle. Burston (1988, p.6) found that poor presentation in terms of speech and dress was a barrier to disadvantaged young people accessing employment. Disadvantaged young people require support services as well as a supportive work environment.

### **The Body Shop**

The Body Shop is a major retailer of cosmetics. With some 1050 stores in 45 countries it is a significant international commercial success. According to The Body Shops founder, Anita Roddick, the company has an approach which assumes that you have a product so good that people will give you a profit for it. The company's focus includes concerns about sustainable resources and human, social and civil rights. Ms Roddick espouses a holistic approach to business (Scott 1994).

The Body Shop's involvement in The Linked Access Project is a part of their 'community care philosophy', a corporate ethic which seeks to return something to the community from which profits are derived. With its involvement in The Linked Access Project, the organisation sought to make the young people feel 'part of the structure of the company, not a charity case' (The Body Shop 1992).



The Body Shop provided major project funding for a three year period and received subsidies from the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to train and employ the young people. Some of the benefits of the project for The Body Shop included 'social input' which involved their staff in developing and operating the traineeship. One comment was that it 'enriches our lives, we go home happier people. And out of this scheme we get some staff we really want to hire at the end of it' (The Body Shop 1992). At the same time The Body Shop planned to network with other companies to encourage other employers to take on a number of the trainees who had completed the traineeship.(The Body Shop 1992).

### **The Brotherhood of St Laurence**

The Brotherhood has become increasingly concerned with the issue of youth homelessness since the late 1980s in both researching the needs of homeless young people and developing programs to directly assist them (Magree & Elkington 1993, p.2).

In 1993, the Brotherhood operated employment and training services for a range of people who are disadvantaged in the labour market at a total cost of \$5.7 million. These employment services are provided throughout the four regions of the Brotherhood: Peninsula, Metropolitan, Central Highlands, and Barwon. Resourcing The Linked Access Project has occurred through the Metropolitan Region's Employment Action Centre (EAC) based in Fitzroy.

#### *The Brotherhood's labour market programs for disadvantaged young people*

Most labour market programs for young people have sought to improve their work related competencies and attitude to work (Baker 1984) and the range of labour market programs available to *disadvantaged* young people is relatively limited. The Brotherhood has had a long-standing involvement in labour market programs for disadvantaged young people.

The Micro-Energy Project was funded by the Brotherhood and sponsored by an independent group of women in 1986. The Commonwealth Employment Service was used to recruit young women with 'special disadvantage' who had been unemployed for 12 months. The recruiting process focused on selecting five motivated and enthusiastic young people who were disadvantaged enough to be unlikely to access the labour market without undertaking a labour market program. The Commonwealth Employment Service started with a group of 250 young women who had been unemployed for 12 months, and then applied a 'special disadvantage' criteria to identify a group of 25 young women. Five young woman from this group of 25 were selected for the Micro-Energy Project.

In 1987, the Brotherhood commenced a program for disadvantaged young people in which seven trainees undertook placements in the Australian Traineeship System. Sheen (1992) identifies that



the trainees required the full 12 months of the traineeship before beginning to consolidate their skills in order to access employment in the primary labour market.

Since 1990, the EAC has been working with young people who are 'homeless or at risk of homelessness' with the aim of assisting them gain regular employment (Nelson and Wise 1992). While The Linked Access Project was not the Brotherhood's first attempt at working with disadvantaged young people, it was the first opportunity for the organisation to work jointly with private enterprise to design and implement a unique labour market program. (Nelson and Wise 1992).

The Brotherhood has also been delivering the Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) Program which is based on The Linked Access Project model. JPET is a Commonwealth Government labour market program funded through the Department of Human Services and Health which uses a combination of pre-work experience training, and employment placement, and provides a support service to the young people. Young homeless people (or young people at risk of homelessness) aged 15 to 19 years are the target group for JPET. Since its commencement in November 1992, the Brotherhood JPET program in Oakleigh has supported 17 young people (Brotherhood of St Laurence 1994).

### **The evaluation**

This is the report of the third and final stage of the evaluation of The Linked Access Project. Overall the evaluation has sought to assess the value of the components of the project to young people and other participants, and to examine the integration of those components.

The first stage of the evaluation was undertaken in 1992 when the first group of trainees were half way through their traineeship (see MacDonald 1992). The information gathered by the study was fed back into the project to inform its operation.

The second stage of the evaluation was undertaken 12 months later when the first group of trainees had completed their traineeship and the second group had begun their traineeship (see MacDonald 1993). The purpose of the second stage of the evaluation was to explore program issues, such as integration of the components of the program and changes since stage one; to examine trainee issues which were identified in stage one including health, income and debt, and eligibility for Health Care Card; and to identify the characteristics of the young people who seem to benefit from the project in its current form and the needs of those who drop out (MacDonald 1993 p.2).



The objectives of the final stage of the evaluation have included:

- ◆ assessing the value of the components of the project to the participating young people and other participants;
- ◆ examining the integration of the components of the project, and the project's relevance to other labour market programs; and
- ◆ assessing the value of the project for replication in other organisations.

Most of those involved in the implementation of the program were interviewed or consulted for the evaluation. The consultation included

- ◆ two Group One trainees,
- ◆ four Group Two trainees,
- ◆ seven staff members of The Body Shop who had been supervisors for the trainees,
- ◆ Community Projects Manager for The Body Shop,
- ◆ two of The Body Shop Directors,
- ◆ four staff members at the EAC, and
- ◆ Director of the Brotherhood's Metropolitan Region.

Two separate group discussions were held with the Group One and Group Two trainees. Interviews were held with three of the trainees' supervisors and another four supervisors returned a brief evaluation questionnaire. A joint interview was completed with two of The Body Shop Directors. All the other information was collected using an open ended interview schedule. Time constraints prevented an interview with the training providers.

## CHAPTER 2: PROGRAM DESIGN

The rationale for The Linked Access Project was outlined in the project proposal. Overall the project was developed on the premise that all young people have the potential to gain a secure and meaningful place in the community, and that most young people want to establish themselves in the community through full time employment. To achieve its goals the program was designed to be consistent, comprehensive, targeted, and to address the specific needs of the target group (Nelson & Wise 1992; MacDonald 1992).

The primary aim and broad operational guidelines of The Linked Access Project were:

*'to provide 'at risk' and homeless young people with a range of experiences that will culminate in permanent, regular employment. Each young person will have an individual plan which seeks to move them through a series of stages and addresses their particular needs. It would be expected that each individual plan while having a number of stages would cover a period of approximately 18 months to two years. Each plan will be flexible and allow for re-direction as required. The primary employment focus would be in the retail/clerical areas' (Nelson and Wise 1992).*

The uniqueness of this labour market program came from its focus on providing integrated assistance to the trainees incorporating training, work experience, workplace support and supervision, housing support, personal support, and material support. It was envisaged that The Linked Access Project would assist these young people towards independence as they would be in stable employment and all efforts would be made to stabilise their housing.

### **Support and labour market programs**

The majority of disadvantaged young people want to access the labour market. Cynicism amongst the fringe youth is not an expression of a lack of motivation to work but a reaction to their lack of prospects (van den Berg & van der Veer 1992). These authors go on to explain that to create a useful labour market program for fringe youth, the young people must have a trusting relationship with the person helping them to gain employment. The Linked Access Project worked on establishing a trust which extended beyond the normal client and professional relationship as in many labour market programs.

The Linked Access Project falls outside the usual range of Australian labour market programs, characterised as wage subsidy schemes, direct job creation schemes, or training schemes (Sloan 1993), because of its focus on integrating housing, social and material support with employment and training assistance. According to Hasan (1991), access to employment through a holistic labour market program is the best way to increase disadvantaged young people's long term earning capacity. The Linked Access Project is a specialist labour market program which seeks to address the individual needs of its participants.



## **History and structure of the project**

The Linked Access Project aimed to assist disadvantaged young people move towards independence through stable employment and stable housing. The Directors of The Body Shop and the Brotherhood expected that the trainees would move through the program, completing the traineeship, and then work for The Body Shop or another (retail) company.

The Brotherhood focuses on a wider 'at risk' group in its other traineeships. The Linked Access Project model provided an intensive support focus due to the decision to target young people who were 'homeless' or at risk of homelessness'. Therefore, the resource requirements of the model were intensive and the cost per trainee relatively high. Appendix A outlines the costs of the project.

## **Inter-agency support for trainees**

A unique feature of this labour market program was the integrated approach to service delivery which attempted to meet the range of needs of the young people through the input of staff from both the Brotherhood and The Body Shop. A designated staff member (usually the store Assistant Manager for retail trainees) was the trainee's supervisor. The Body Shop's Community Projects Manager had responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the program. In addition, The Linked Access Project Co-ordinator was located at the Brotherhood's EAC and worked closely with The Body Shop's Community Projects Manager. A housing support worker was also located at the EAC. The two workers with major responsibility for the project were the Co-ordinator and The Body Shop's Community Projects Manager.

A worker who could focus on the individual needs of the disadvantaged young people was an important part of this program, allowing a holistic approach to service delivery and recognising that people can be discouraged from seeking support if the services they need are geographically isolated from one another.

The role of the worker located at the EAC has changed over time. Initially, The Linked Access Project Co-ordinator was involved in the administration of the project, but the role was subsequently redefined to focus on supporting the trainees.

It has been the main role of the Co-ordinator to provide personal support for the trainees for issues other than work. There has been some overlap with the Community Projects Manager from The Body Shop and both workers have shared the role of supporting, and providing formal and informal training for the supervisors. The project Co-ordinator has also liaised with the TAFE colleges regarding the performance and support requirements of trainees during their off-the-job training. Guidance associated with job seeking, follow-up and linkages to full-time employment after the



completion of the 12-months traineeship have also been undertaken by the Co-ordinator sometimes in association with other EAC workers.

The Body Shop's Community Projects Manager supports a number of The Body Shop's projects. The Manager's role in The Linked Access Project was central to assisting the supervisors in the stores, warehouse and at head office. Constant liaison between the EAC and The Body Shop's Manager was also pivotal in implementing and administering the project.

### **Recruitment and selection**

MacDonald (1992) describes the recruitment and selection process of the trainees in detail. The primary target group for The Linked Access Project were 15 to 19-year-old job seekers who had been unemployed for at least six months and who were 'homeless or at risk of homelessness'. They were usually recruited by publicising the project in youth accommodation services, or by referral from the Active Placement Unit within the Brotherhood's EAC. Young people who were referred to The Linked Access Project were interviewed to determine their eligibility for the project and their housing support needs.

By the second stage of the project (1993), preference was given to older trainees, aged 18 to 19 years, in order to better match the average age of existing Body Shop employees, and because older trainees often had clearer career goals and fewer income support needs than younger trainees.

The third (1994) intake for the project involved an information and briefing day for a large group of young people (28). The Co-ordinator and the Community Projects Manager directed the group interview and then assessed the group to decide on 14 young people they believed would be best suited to undertake the Traineeship Access Course.

### **Traineeship Access Course**

The Traineeship Access Course is a ten to twelve week orientation course designed to prepare trainees for paid employment and accredited training at TAFE. On average, 14 young people were accepted into each of the three intakes for the Traineeship Access Course which was conducted by the EAC.

During the Traineeship Access Course, the trainees spent three weeks in stores or other workplaces to gain a general experience of where they would be working. This gave them an opportunity to meet their proposed supervisor and provided paid work experience in an operating retail outlet.

The Traineeship Access Course incorporates an opportunity for trainees who have already completed The Linked Access Project to give new trainees some insights into what they might



expect during the traineeship. Part of the course involved work orientation and the specific organisational culture of The Body Shop. Vocational skills associated with office technology, point-of-sale systems, inventory and stock control, business documentation, and cash handling methods were all covered in the course. Communicating with customers, personal development and basic business maths were also covered, and peer support was fostered through team building exercises.

The course was increased from ten to twelve weeks in 1994. This extra time had been spent on practical training. In 1994 a specialist staff member from The Body Shop was present once a week to teach product knowledge, which provided a practical link between the trainees and the stores.

### **The Linked Access Project Traineeship**

Traineeship Access Course graduates were interviewed and selected to commence either a Retail, Warehouse or Credit Control Traineeship with The Body Shop. Trainees were located at one of the stores, a warehouse or at the head office. The traineeship involved a 12 months placement with The Body Shop. Each week trainees spent three days at work and two days in TAFE training. Trainee's received a training wage which was paid by the employer, and DEET met the cost of the TAFE training. During the traineeship, the trainees received individualised support, and support with housing and other material needs from workers at the EAC. At the end of the 12 months traineeship, the trainees were offered three months of paid work and assistance while they were job searching.

#### *Work experience and on-the-job training*

During the 12 months traineeship period the trainees spent three days per week in the workplace. This involved paid work and extensive on-the-job training. During the work experience period the trainees were offered the opportunity to undertake training such as learning the history of a product, its ingredients and the production process. Staff from the training unit of The Body Shop set up a situation where the trainees could take a product home each day to test, and pick out five points about the product. The trainees completed five training sessions at Head Office during the year.

#### *Off-the-job training*

Trainees attended an accredited TAFE course two days each week. They were able to undertake one of three traineeships: a Retail Traineeship through Collingwood Campus, a Warehouse Traineeship through Oakleigh Campus, or a Credit Control Traineeship through Prahran Campus. The TAFE certificate would enable trainees to obtain cross-credits for other courses.

### *On-the-job support from supervisors*

There was a suggestion at the commencement of the project that a workplace mentor would be allocated to each trainee to provide support and encouragement. This was found to be unnecessary as several supportive, informal relationships developed between staff and trainees (The Body Shop 1992).

Trainees received formal support from supervisors who were usually the store Assistant Managers. The tasks of the supervisors were to train the trainees, to assist with their studies, to oversee their work performance on-the-job, and to set objectives for their work. It was also the supervisor's role to support the trainees if they had a problem (MacDonald 1993).

### *Housing Support*

The housing support worker at the Brotherhood 's EAC provided housing advice and support, as well as some counselling. A major emphasis was given to the practical task of helping trainees move accommodation and helping them prepare a budget. Developing a good relationship with real estate agents was also important as this led to a working relationship which maximised the young people's access to accommodation.

### *Material and personal support*

The support arrangements for the young people provided them with regular access to personal support and material assistance (such as clothing for work in the store) which was provided by the project Co-ordinator.

### *Training wage*

The Linked Access Project trainees were paid a 'trainee wage'. Each trainee received 75 per cent of the award wage. This was funded by the employer and paid by a special unit within the EAC. As the awards were age based, wages depended on the age of trainees.

MacDonald (1993) explained that the after tax trainee wage for an 18-year-old was \$175.15, which was 88 per cent the Henderson Poverty Line and the trainee wage for a 19-year-old was \$202 which was 101 per cent of the Henderson Poverty Line (March quarter 1993). This suggests that these 19-year-olds would have just enough income to cover their basic living costs and would have had an 'austere' living standard (Brotherhood of St Laurence 1990).



*Post-program support*

After 12 months in the traineeship the young people received three months of post-program support. The post-traineeship period provided three months paid employment with The Body Shop and trainees could apply for positions outside The Body Shop or compete with external applicants for permanent positions within the company.

## CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter examines the success of the components of The Linked Access Project. The information has been provided by the trainees, and Directors and staff from The Body Shop and the Brotherhood. Information has also been drawn from previous components of the evaluation which includes information from the TAFE training providers and young people who withdrew from the traineeship (MacDonald 1992 and 1993).

### Recruitment

For the third and final intake of trainees information fliers were sent to local refuges, supported accommodation groups and hostels for homeless youth; follow-up phone calls were made to emphasise that priority access to the project would be given to homeless unemployed youth. A working definition of homeless was used to assist selection of the 14 young people. The definition of homeless was 'a young person who was living in a refuge, hostel, supported accommodation, at friends' houses or on the street'. Eight young people were identified as homeless according to this definition and recruited to the project. In addition, young people who were at risk of becoming homeless were identified for inclusion. They were defined as 'young people who had left home before and were in volatile and unstable situations ie. with parents now but sleeping in a car a month ago'. Four young people were identified in the 'at risk' group and recruited to the project. An additional two places in the project were filled by two severely disadvantaged young people who were known to have little chance of accessing employment because they had been five years unemployed and living in an unstable home environment.

From an employer perspective there was a need to recruit young people with a specific interest in retail work. The difficulty was matching the aims of the employer and the trainee, where the employer was looking for a long term commitment to retailing and some of the young people were simply looking for a year of work experience.

Some staff felt that some trainees failed to appreciate their opportunity. However for many of the young people The Linked Access Project was a period of attempting to re-establish a link with the routine of work. This involved both dealing with change within their own lifestyle and the threat of the traineeship to their existing personal relationships with other young people. Stickels (1994) discusses the same problem occurring in the Spotlight placements as part of the Breaking the Cycle program.



## Traineeship Access Course

As outlined above, the Traineeship Access Course is a ten to twelve week program conducted by the EAC in order to prepare the young people for the formal work experience and training components of the traineeship. Table 1 below shows the characteristics of the young people from the first two intakes who completed and did not complete the course. Of the 14 young people selected in the third intake for the project, six dropped out early during the Traineeship Access Course. All of the six were from the 'homeless' category of young people who were originally recruited.

**Table 1: Characteristics of young people completing and not completing the Traineeship Access Course in the first two intakes**

<b>SUCCESS CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Not completed</i>	<i>Total</i>
Males	3	5	8
Females	11	10	21
Total	14	15	29
Average Length of Unemployment in weeks	76	68	72
Average Age	18	17	18
Average Education Level	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10
Special Needs	9	12	21
No previous employment	2	6	8
Living at home or with family	11	8	19
Living in refuge/hostel/supported	3	7	10

Table 1 shows that 21 of the 29 young people starting the Traineeship Access Course in the first two intakes were women. Those recruited to undertake the Traineeship Access Course had an average age of 18 years. The average level of education of the young people recruited was Year 10. Almost three out of every four young people had special needs, such as ill-health, drug dependency, pregnancy or low literacy levels. Eight had never worked before in any form of employment. While 19 trainees lived at home with their parents or family, ten were living in a refuge, hostel or supported accommodation at the time of being recruited to do the Traineeship Access Course.

The young people who did not complete the Traineeship Access Course were likely to do so because of ill-health, personal instability in their lives, or because they identified that retail was not suited to them. Some young men did not want the perceived stigma of working in a predominantly female environment.

The three week work experience period of the Traineeship Access Course provided the young people with choices because it allowed the trainees to assess whether they could work with their potential supervisor. The young people used the Traineeship Access Course as a period of

beginning to stabilise their lives and it allowed them to begin to develop work habits such as turning up for work on time.

### **Off-the-job training**

The benefits of off-the-job training have been identified during consultation for the evaluation and listed below.

- a) The off-the-job training was positive for trainees because 'taking the young people back into the education system was important'. Trainees, who may have had unsatisfactory educational experiences in the past, benefited from the positive schooling experience and by becoming familiar with the requirements and structure of formal training.
- b) One unanticipated consequence of the TAFE training was that it offered an opportunity for trainees to discuss their actual retailing experience. It allowed them an opportunity to discuss their experiences in the store during a particular week. Off-the-job training had been more than just 'mental' stimulation and learning about retail for trainees, it had been an opportunity to socialise with others.
- c) In conjunction with the off-the-job training, trainees were given a specified period of time at work to complete assignment work from TAFE. This allowed supervisors to check that the assignment work was being done and the standard of the assignment work being completed. This provided a process which ensured that trainees were not falling behind in their TAFE assignments.
- d) Trainees saw the TAFE training as irrelevant when it was not synchronised with the on-the-job training. Trainees might have complained about having to go to TAFE, but once they finished their off-the-job training some of them began to 'miss going to TAFE'. It was then that they began to see the value of further education and some trainees considered further training. It is possible that the fact that trainees were not paid for attending TAFE encouraged them to undervalue the experience. For example, one study found that job seekers felt little enthusiasm for training (directly associated with work experience) when it was not related to their income (van den Berg and van der Veer 1992).

### *Meeting the employer's requirements*

The TAFE curriculum is a nationally approved curriculum. The Co-ordinator of Labour Market Programs at Collingwood Campus believed that there was scope for greater input from employers into the general content of courses within the overall framework (MacDonald 1993, p.12).



The TAFE system appeared to be too inflexible for The Body Shop and the off-the-job training was seen as not intense enough and it took the trainees away from their work environment. The employer's inability to directly influence the off-the-job training was a frustration, to the point that the employer wanted to do the training in-house or at least more flexibility in defining the structure of the off-the-job training.

### *Realistic expectations*

In assessing success in the off-the-job training component of the project it is important to recognise the low skill level of many of the trainees. Many had completed only Year 9, and others had completed higher years without actually being committed to their schooling because of other problems in their lives. The success of many trainees and the difficulties they faced in completing their training suggests they were talented and committed, but they were forced into a training system which was inflexible in accommodating their varying levels of competencies.

### *Improvements*

Overall the off-the-job training needed to be better structured to match the different rates of learning of the trainees. Early in the program they might have done the off-the-job training once a week, allowing the young people more time to adjust, with a more intensive period of off-the-job training half way through the traineeship.

The relevance of the training to the employer might be improved by taking it away from the TAFE system and having another registered training provider deliver the service. Employers may be well placed to deliver the most relevant training, but there is a need to ensure industry wide competencies are developed and that accredited modules are provided.

### **Workplace experiences**

The average length of unemployment for the trainees commencing the project was 18 months, and some had never worked since leaving school. Working changed the way the young people spent the hours of their day, but most of the young people said that they wanted the experience of working and to develop work related skills. As one trainee said, 'with no skills no-one would employ me'. For some young people the work experience was very valuable because they hoped that they would eventually be employed somewhere either with The Body Shop or some other employer. One trainee made the point that she treated the traineeship as a job and she got work experience in her preferred occupation.



### *Workers or trainees*

There were some problems for the program with trainees avoiding coming to work, especially early in their traineeship or when conflict was occurring at work. Trainees raised what they said was an important internal contradiction within the program. During the traineeship, trainees were usually told that their non-attendance was a burden on other staff, as they were part of a team and with a team member missing others were left under pressure. One supervisor made the point that a benefit for their store lay in the extra help they received from the trainee. The trainees felt if they were extra help the team should not be let down by their absence, but if they held a real position they felt they should be paid as other staff members.

Trainees in other traineeships have also 'coped poorly with the discipline and pressure of work,' especially early in the traineeship (Burston 1988). The problems faced by The Body Shop in implementing The Linked Access Project highlighted the difficulty of undertaking a labour market program which dealt with disadvantaged young people who have been long term unemployed and who may not have had any work experience.

### *Mentoring*

Mentoring was an informal component of the project. In addition to a formal supervisor on the shop floor, informal relationships emerged for some trainees who felt they trusted other workers. Early in the program development there was discussion about supervisors being trained as mentors, who would 'adopt' a trainee. However, this would have been a potentially conflicting role for supervisors providing direction at work and then providing support around conflict.

### *On-the-job support*

The necessity of supervisors monitoring trainees' work performance was stressful for some of the young people. Different perceptions of acceptable behaviour in a retail store appear to have created some conflict. Some trainees appeared to misunderstand the monitoring that took place and its implications for promoting sales because, as one young person suggested '(my supervisor was) watching me and ... they expected you to jump on the customer'. The monitoring might have been better explained. It appears likely that some trainees lost confidence when they felt their supervisor or other staff were watching them. A couple of trainees felt their nervousness on occasions had been interpreted as an inability to understand what to do, when all they required was a bit of support.

To assist with monitoring the progress of trainees regular monitoring sessions, monthly or more often if required, would be useful. If particular young people are finding it difficult to meet the requirements of the work, they should be offered employment counselling, and consideration needs to be given to the issue of whether they are suited to a retail traineeship.



## **Supervisors**

The experience of supervisors who were interviewed for the evaluation depended on the period they had been involved with the traineeship. It was generally acknowledged that the first year was more difficult for supervisors. Experiences of supervisors also varied according to individual needs of the trainees they supervised.

### *Communication*

The development of The Body Shop manual for supervisors was seen as a great help by all supervisors. It was acknowledged that supervisors needed information if they were to take on the role of supervising a trainee. There was a need for a greater role for supervisors informing the program from commencement, during implementation, and at the end of each intake. A regular flow of information via some form of circular to improve communications between Head Office and the supervisors would have been useful.

### *Value conflicts*

Supervisors were generally very committed to their organisation and had a strong work ethic. Trainees often entered the traineeship with a value system which reflected their long period of exclusion from the mainstream work values. A conflict of values was therefore evident.

The lives and experiences of the trainees did provide supervisors with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and experiences. It made them aware that 'my own life had been so sheltered'. Supervisors could then appreciate the opportunity they had to make some difference to the life of a disadvantaged young person.

### *Creating competent supervisors*

The need for support and back up for supervisors was seen as important by them. It is likely that some staff who became supervisors required more training before they were asked to supervise a trainee. Some supervisors were not in a position (or skilled enough) to 'take on these kids and their problems'. This led to some feeling 'helpless' as they felt they could not directly help. Supervisors tended to rely on their own skills and knowledge rather than recognising that support was available for them within The Linked Access Project. The network of support was well established but some supervisors needed to be encouraged to use support. Training which included existing supervisors training potential supervisors would have been beneficial.

Good communication skills were a critical part of being a good supervisor. The role of being a supervisor necessitated an on-going, direct and straight forward approach in which the explanation

to trainees was consistent and clear. Supervisors needed to explain why an action was required, but they also needed to be compassionate. To this end supervisors needed to be willing to give constructive criticism and to use performance counselling.

The role of supervision had implications for relationships. Trainees sometimes found it difficult to trust their supervisor, because of the supervisor's role of monitoring their performance. Trust between supervisor and trainee was very important, but supervisors felt it took a variable amount of time before they could trust trainees. Once the relationship of mutual trust was established, a real partnership could be developed.

#### *Indirect benefits for supervisors*

An indirect benefit for supervisors was their opportunity to learn from the knowledge that trainees gained in their off-the-job training at TAFE. This allowed supervisors to combine their own retail knowledge associated with The Body Shop's retailing approach with a retailing knowledge gained from the TAFE retailing course.

The experience of supervising sometimes forced supervisors to reassess their own work patterns and standards in terms of speed and efficiency. It was important to lead by example, showing how they did a task themselves which meant some supervisors had to put more planning into their working day. One supervisor also noted that the challenge provided by working with a trainee and dealing with the difficult issues made her feel better equipped in her job.

Some supervisors expressed pride in The Body Shop's willingness and commitment to the traineeship. The Body Shop acknowledged that staff felt good about their company's decisiveness in implementing and resourcing this traineeship. Supervisors could see from the promotional material that they had a central role in ensuring the project's success.

#### *A demanding job*

The time required to supervise trainees was an issue. Meetings regarding the trainees, support for the trainees in their TAFE work, following up the trainees, including making sure they received training on the shop floor, while ensuring the trainees took initiative made the role of supervising very demanding.

The supervisors who were interviewed were mainly positive about their role. None stated that they did not want to work with trainees again, and several supervisors were disappointed that the project would be finishing.



Supervisors need recognition and affirmation from the organisation. Appropriately, The Body Shop has sought to show its recognition of the important role that supervisors play by providing an annual dinner for them. Organisationally this shows a respect for the supervisors and the importance of their role.

### **Inter-agency commitment**

Both the Brotherhood's EAC and The Body Shop provided key staff support to The Linked Access Project. This inter-agency co-operation created an approach to support for the trainees in all aspects of their life. By combining the roles and resources within the two agencies a wide range of assistance could be provided, sometimes by a referral to an outside agency.

Regular meetings to discuss the project's progress at the senior level within organisations had been overlooked. While there had been regular meetings in the first year, there was a need expressed for quarterly 'action focussed' meetings throughout the project. According to The Body Shop, the need for regular meetings may have been overlooked because there were different expectations from each organisation.

The Linked Access Project had an unexpected outcome of reinforcing the communication links within the company. The Community Projects Manager found it important to meet with Assistant Store Managers, Store Managers, and Training Unit, Pay Office, Warehouse, and Merchandising staff. Establishing links with external organisations had also been an important unanticipated benefit of operating The Linked Access Project. For example, the Community Projects Manager had developed links with ESPRIT.

While The Body Shop were very positive about the continuing, good working relationship between the two organisations, they felt that instability associated with staff changes at EAC was a weakness within the project. The changes in support staff also caused problems for the young people in terms of having to build new relationships. The EAC agreed that this had been a problem. The problems created by staff changes had only been overcome by the dedication, commitment and extra work of The Body Shop's Community Projects Manager.

### **Income, housing and other support**

#### *A reasonable income*

The Linked Access Project Traineeship was conducted in accordance with the Australian Traineeship System. The wages payment structure and rates were dictated by national award standards, so that The Linked Access Project trainees received a training wage which was 75 per cent of the award wage. The training wage took account of TAFE training and was calculated on an



annual basis of 66 per cent work attendance and holidays. The trainees received an income which was at or below the Henderson Poverty Line and often inadequate to meet their expenses, especially younger trainees and those who were largely without family support.

The trainees were very constrained by their low incomes. For example in 1992, a 16-year old would have received \$106.61 which was almost exactly what they would have received on Young Homeless Allowance/Job Search Allowance as an unemployment payment. As working would make them ineligible for rental assistance they may in fact have found themselves worse off (Boyce 1992). The link between age and traineeship income meant being able to survive the financial costs associated with working was particularly difficult for younger trainees (MacDonald 1993). As Boyce (1992) stated this situation created an unjust income level for the younger people. He suggested that top-up of incomes should have come from the Brotherhood housing budget, from The Body Shop paying an over award rate, or a combination of both sources.

The trainees felt that receiving less wages than other workers created a stigma. Some trainees felt they were treated as 'cheap labour' and given the 'dirty work' to do. Instead of associating their training status with their lower rate of pay, the young people linked their lower rate of pay with their social position.

Findings from the first two stages of the evaluation highlighted low wages as a recurring problem for the trainees, especially those who had to pay rent (MacDonald 1992 & 1993). A rental subsidy/wage supplement of \$30.00 per week was introduced in August 1994 to increase trainee's weekly payments. It was paid directly to the person who received the trainee's rent (usually a real estate agent).

As documented in earlier stages of the evaluation (MacDonald 1992 and 1993), many young people brought existing debts to their position as a trainee which compounded the difficulties of living on a low wage. At least two trainees had debts of over \$1000 and two had debts of over \$200 when they commenced their traineeship. Therefore, while attempting to cope with commencing a traineeship they had the worry of paying off a debt, while receiving only a low training wage.

The issue of paying trainees for non-attendance at work created difficulties. Failure to pay the trainees for not attending created a further financial burden, while paying trainees for not attending created a situation where they were not held responsible for their decisions. The decision not to pay trainees was implemented to replicate conditions in open employment, and the Co-ordinator consulted the Community Programs Manager before a final decision was made.

The Body Shop were flexible and creative in that they attempted to address financial problems with short term loans. Without a small loan, for example to fix the car, some trainees could not have



continued the traineeship. A few of the young people used the regular support of donated goods from the Brotherhood Material Aid Store. Some trainees also needed food parcels.

### *Secure and affordable housing*

Stability and adequacy of housing were seen as important but access to stable housing was a problem for these young people, some of whom were not ready for independent living.

Considerable resources and money were required to meet the housing needs of these young people. Housing is linked to independence and as the young people got older they wanted to be more independent. The income of the traineeship was more than Department of Social Security income support for some of the older trainees, and one trainee pointed out that the increase in income meant 'I could move out of a refuge and go to a flat'.

The Body Shop saw the importance of housing as extending the peer support within the project. It was felt that mistakes had been made during the project in placing the young people in single unattached housing, for example, by themselves in a flat.

Housing was also related to the issue of travel time and costs for getting to work. Expecting trainees to move into a new area was difficult because they lost their informal network of support.

Given the absence of appropriate and accessible public housing, the best and most simple option would have been to place trainees in private rental accommodation as close as possible to their workplace. Meeting the costs of this accommodation required a top-up which was provided later in the project. Problems with this option included that the trainees may have been required to move geographic area, and in some circumstances they had not developed the skills required for independent living. As one supervisor pointed out, some trainees 'don't [even] have cooking skills'.

By the third intake of trainees for the project, a full-time housing worker had been employed at the Brotherhood EAC. Young people were no longer assisted to live alone in a flat, rather they were assisted with bond payments, furniture maintenance, moving house and loans. The housing worker advocated for trainees when dealing with real estate agents, and provided one-on-one budgeting training and advice which has increased their ability to control their finances. Arranging housing for the young people was made easier by the fact they had a job.

### *Health issues*

The links between health, housing and employment created a chronic problem for some trainees. Without stable accommodation, health problems could become worse and health effected their work performance. Many trainees had chronic health problems as has been documented in the earlier project evaluation (MacDonald 1992 and 1993).



The third intake of trainees in 1994 were linked directly with local Community Health Centre doctors and other specialists. Appointments with medical practitioners were made on request by the trainees, and time off work was not granted for medical appointments unless arrangements were made through the Co-ordinator. In addition, The Linked Access Project trainees participated in a contraception workshop at the EAC and their health was monitored closely.

The Department of Social Security's rules relating to Health Care Cards were a problem for trainees who expressed frustration about losing access to their Health Care Card. The 19 year olds were receiving a traineeship wage of \$202 a week, while the cut off point for the Health Care Card eligibility was \$201 a week.

### *Peer support*

The Body Shop allowed the trainees time to do their 'homework' from TAFE and the trainees also used a peer support group to support each other and assist with 'homework' problems. The two hours per fortnight that the peer support group met was a success. It allowed trainees to share their experiences, whether these had been related to 'shop culture' or dealing with workplace problems. The peer support process was also responsible for retaining some of the trainees who felt like leaving. Although some of the trainees were not performing well, they were sometimes encouraged to stay by other trainees.

### **Post-program support**

Three months post-program support seemed a reasonable period to ensure a good outcome if trainees were not at a point where they could be retained by The Body Shop. During this period the trainees were employed by The Body Shop until they found a position and they were released for job interviews. This arrangement also allowed for other options to be developed for trainees, such as the EAC exploring their broader needs if they were still not work ready. The Body Shop planned to network with other retail companies to employ the trainees, but this has not resulted in the placement of any young people with other companies.

The end of a traineeship placement is a time when young people need special attention and intensive support because of their uncertainty about further employment. The supervisors found the three month post-traineeship a difficult time to work with the trainees because trainees were unsure what was going to happen to them. Often this time coincided with Christmas casuals in the stores, which was threatening for some of the trainees, and it was a busy time in the shops.



The EAC noted that once the three month post-placement support period ended, they found it difficult to provide on-going support although once-off support was possible, and contact was maintained so that if a job became available the young person could be contacted.

No trainee expressed any negative comments about the post-program support. The only comment was, 'this three months is really valuable to help you look for other jobs'.

### **Stigma**

There is a potential problem of stigma with a labour market program which seeks to address the needs of disadvantaged young people many of whom are 'homeless or at risk of homelessness'. When promoting the program and encouraging other companies to offer a similar program, labelling the young people as 'homeless' could be negatively stereotyping. Some of the young people felt like they were 'Brotherhood' trainees and that they were treated differently because they were seen as a 'disadvantaged kid' or 'street kid'.

To try to reduce the incidence of stigmatising labels in the project, The Body Shop Community Projects Manager undertook one-on-one training sessions with supervisors and managers in the stores in order to clarify the aims of the project and to emphasise the need for sensitivity when introducing trainees in the stores.

### **Summary**

The Linked Access Project has worked with extremely disadvantaged young people providing training, work experience and a range of supports. The project has integrated employment and training assistance in a relatively long term labour market program with a range of housing and personal assistance. This chapter has outlined the implementation of the program for the first two intakes of trainees since 1992, and identified changes to the program model for the third intake of trainees in 1994. The chapter has illustrated some of the difficulties encountered in implementing The Linked Access Project from the point of view of trainees and central staff from The Body Shop and the Brotherhood. This is not intended to paint a negative picture of the process, but instead to emphasise the commitment and resources needed to provide a successful program and to point to some of the ways these difficulties could be overcome.

## CHAPTER 4: OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examines the value of The Linked Access Project as a labour market program. Two specific questions are addressed: what were the main benefits for the trainees of being involved in this labour market program? and can this labour market program be usefully replicated to benefit the most disadvantaged young people in our community? The benefits that are considered relate to both their working life and their lives in general.

### Labour market outcomes

The successful outcomes of The Linked Access Project began with the positive attitude of the young people involved in completing the Traineeship Access Course and deciding that they wanted to do a traineeship. Some of the potential trainees were not interested in working in retail and others did not want to commit themselves to a full time program. One younger person did not have the literacy skills for TAFE. Disability or chronic health problems prevented some young people from being able to cope in a shop. There were also the 'normal' problems of work, for example young people not being able to get on with someone at their workplace.

Table 2 below shows the outcomes and destinations of many of the young people who have been involved in The Linked Access Project. In assessing the labour market outcomes for the trainees, it is useful to examine the situations of those young people who have completed the traineeship. For the 12 young people from the first two intakes who have completed the traineeship, as many as nine of them have gained full-time employment or gone on to further education or training. This would be regarded as a positive outcome for 75 per cent of the trainees.

**Table 2: Outcomes for trainees from the three intakes (August to October 1994)**

Outcome	Intake (number)		
	First	Second	Third
Resigned during Traineeship Access Course	8	3	6
Resigned during traineeship	2	2	4
Completed or completing traineeship	6	6	4
Employed full-time	(4)	(2)	
Further education/training		(3)	
Job Searching	(1)		
Moved for family reconciliation		(1)	
Unknown	(1)		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>



Many of the young people who did not complete the traineeship were able to develop knowledge and skills which brought them closer to being able to participate in open employment. Some of these young people had deep seated problems from early in their life, which meant they were not ready for a full-time program which included work. Some trainees left to find their family or live with their family in other locations. Other young people left for health reasons. If they really wanted to participate in The Linked Access Project some of the young people had to make decisions which broke their ties with parents or friends.

When they entered the store environment the young people needed to leave old habits behind. Being exposed to a work environment within the retail sector stimulated some young people to think about their career and it provide them with alternative relationships and alternative role models. Table 2 shows that a few went on with their education following their TAFE experience. Returning to further education will probably enhance these young people`s career prospects. While some of the trainees did not gain employment, for some the traineeship was a catalyst for resolving personal issues. These changes may result in long-term benefits for these young people.

As the supervisors acknowledged, the main success of the program was the fact that some trainees got work at the end. Without The Linked Access Project, some of these young people would still be unemployed. As one young person explained, without traineeship she would still be 'stuck in the unemployment circle'. She thought she might have been able to get some part-time work but she would not have been able to 'keep a job'.

The traineeship was an opportunity for trainees to 'get a foot in the door' of employment. Trainees received a good appreciation of what it was like to work in retailing.

Young people who had finished The Linked Access Project were concerned about their long-term employment prospects. The young people were not necessarily all dedicated retailers, but were keen to utilise their skills and knowledge to achieve sustainable employment. One young person expressed the desire to operate her own business. The Body Shop traineeship gave her a good grounding in retail and the way businesses operates. She felt she was still learning, that it would take time, but she would eventually create this opportunity.

Trainees reported a range of skills they achieved from their traineeship. These included link selling, merchandising, communication (especially with customers), patience (with other staff) and cleaning skills. Some of the young people enjoyed the customer orientation of the work and made positive comments about this aspect of the work.

It is important that participants gain employment at the completion of a labour market program, otherwise skills and routines can be lost in a short period of time. Those young people who failed to find employment at the end of their traineeship suggested that they had started to lose the skills they



had developed during The Linked Access Project. As one young person pointed out, without having the routine of going to work she had started to get back into her previous unemployment routine.

### **Life opportunity outcomes**

The success of The Linked Access Project can be related to the improvements in the young people's life opportunities. Through the changes in social lifestyle incorporated in the participation in this traineeship, the young people were able to become more independent, reduce their reliance on others, and to feel more confident. One staff member explained, 'you can see it in the way they speak, the dignity they now have, they have lost that shyness and have become very positive'.

The increase in 'independence' of trainees was acknowledged by all those associated with implementing the traineeship. The project was a success in that it allowed the trainees to develop a life that was stable. No matter what the young people's employment situation after the traineeship, they did not want to go back to the lives they had left, they wanted to go forward rather than backward, although some feared they were going back to old habits. The enhanced independence of the trainees can be attributed to both their experience in their working life and their student life.

Life had definitely changed for some young people because of the wage they received once they had completed the traineeship and started working. As one young person said, 'now I have got savings in the bank, living independently and not worrying about money each week.'

### **Replication**

The advice of The Body Shop to other employers who may be thinking of starting a similar scheme is to start small, be flexible and be prepared to write off the cost (The Body Shop, 1992). As one of The Body Shop Directors stated, it is 'more work than we thought it would be, especially with regard to training our store supervisors'. Employers may underestimate the level of resources they need to put into this type of program, but the rewards are great. Another company with the interest or willingness to replicate a traineeship which seeks to support young people who have had constrained opportunities must assess the extent of its commitment.

Organisational integrity and the resultant commitment by trainees to their employer are linked. The Body Shop's high standards and high public profile in the community made it an attractive organisation for many trainees.

Building success depends on organisational credibility and commitment within all levels of the organisation. If another organisation took on this type of program they would also need to have a



commitment from senior people. Staff supervising a young person need access to a staff member who has senior authority.

To answer the question, 'Can this labour market program be usefully replicated to benefit the most disadvantaged young people in our community?', the components of the program need to be considered. The program's holistic nature also requires examination to assess its suitability and applicability for replication.

### *Project aim and target group*

#### Wanting to change

Factors outside work greatly affect the capacity of homeless or very disadvantaged young people to remain in a traineeship. There is no doubt that they require more support than would be required by other unemployed young people. Some young people may not be ready for a traineeship. They may be unable or unwilling to change their behaviour to fit into the traineeship and this prevents them progressing and causes frustration for their supervisors. While these young people need to be supported to change, at some point there is a need to let them go, to let them know that an unwillingness to change leads to separation. Given the resources and assistance available in The Linked Access Project model, the young people who failed to gain from this model are unlikely to have benefited from any other less supportive program. It is possible that some young people require intensive emotional support rather than a traineeship. This type of traineeship provides a challenge that can help these young people to deal with unresolved issues. There is a need to acknowledge that some young people will be inappropriate for this type of labour market program.

The Linked Access Project model was set in a context of a relatively feminine retail environment, which stopped some young men from wanting to participate. The industry choice influences the type of young people who will be attracted to it, but employers need to recognise that the majority of young people simply want a job.

#### Matching employer and trainee aims

There was an expectation that the trainees would move through the traineeship and then work for The Body Shop or in another (retail) company. It is helpful if organisations have a clear goal in mind when they take on the task of providing a traineeship for a young person and whether they want the trainees to become retailers or merely ready for employment. The goals of the program need to be made explicit. Young people need clear, consistent and explicit information from their employer about their expectations from the traineeship.

Trainees say that the most important part of undertaking this type of labour market program is the experience it gives them in having paid employment. Later trainees may come to understand and



appreciate the opportunities that such a labour market program offers them in terms of other outcomes such as career development within a particular occupation.

#### Target group

Evidence from the project suggests that age influences the ability of the young people to complete this type of traineeship. One of the problems associated with age would be overcome by paying the younger trainees the same training wage as the older ones.

As would be expected those people who were in the most unstable and in the most short-term accommodation were more likely not to complete this traineeship. Young people with chronic health problems had difficulty remaining in this program. However it is these most disadvantaged young people whom the program was aiming to assist.

A labour market program of this type which offered combinations of part-time and full-time employment may assist young people who are having difficulties in making a rapid shift in their lifestyle. In this case the employment/training may start off at two to three days a week and then after a few months become a full-time program. Consideration would need to be given to the adequacy of income on a part-time program, and continued eligibility for income support would be required.

#### Resource efficiency

The amount of support which can be provided by a program support worker depends on both trainees needs and the size of the particular labour market program. There was some evidence from this labour market program that a larger intake of trainees would have been possible.

A process of 'topping up' or replacement could be incorporated into the traineeship model. Allowing intakes to occur during the year would encourage participants to feel comfortable about withdrawing from the program if they find it unsuitable. It creates a more efficient program as it allows a constant level of support to a fixed number of participants no matter how many participants withdraw.

#### *Program structure*

#### Stigma

In this type of traineeship a young person can feel like 'the homeless one' of the staff. Trainees resent the label 'homeless' and the stereotypical ideas that can be associated with that label. It is therefore important that when the program is promoted it does not portray the participants in a way that is likely to be perceived by the community as degrading. It is important to focus on using language which does meet the ideals of trainees.



### Income and payments

The low level of the training wage created a financial burden for many of the trainees, especially the younger trainees receiving the lowest wages, those with the least family support and trainees with large debts. The level of the trainee wage in The Linked Access Project has been constrained by national standards. An adequate wage is necessary for success in the program. It would be preferable for trainees to receive 100 per cent of the award wage for the time spent working on-the-job and a training supplement to assist with the costs of attending training off-the-job and to compensate for a reduced wage. It would be helpful for trainees to be offered the same opportunity as other staff members to work overtime and to be offered the same work conditions as other staff members.

Employers may find greatest flexibility if they employ the young person as an employee rather than a trainee. If the young person is paid an award wage, it is possible to expect the trainees to work up to five days per week and then have them in a training arrangement which is mutually acceptable to the employer and to the trainee. Employers may find that this is more applicable when they want to provide their own training.

Any labour market program addressing the needs of this target group needs to accept that some trainees will have debts which can greatly impact on their ability to function appropriately within the traineeship. A loan system deals well with this problem.

### Creating an unrealistic workplace

The issue of too much support being provided to the trainees has been put forward as a potential problem. Support which creates 'cocooning' may promote unrealistic expectations in the minds of the young people. However in an environment with limited support the young people may find it difficult to remain with the employer. This suggests that while support should be intensive for the first half of the traineeship, it could be gradually be withdrawn for those who are likely to be work ready at the end of the traineeship.

### Retention upon completion

The first group of trainees were promised a job at the end of their traineeship and the second group were not given this promise. This had an effect on the attitude of the young people to their traineeship. Employers offering jobs to the work ready at the end of a traineeship will find the young people more likely to match this level of commitment. Overall there was a strong desire expressed by the trainees to remain with their employer. Employers need a consistent process for judging whether a trainee should be employed at the end of traineeship.



### Length of traineeship

Some flexibility could be given to the 12 month traineeship. An alternative would be a competency based traineeship, where trainees would be guaranteed a 12 month position but eligible to complete the traineeship earlier. However 12 months may not be a sufficient period of time for some of these young people to develop permanent work patterns

It may be preferable to have two different types of traineeships: one for a 12 month period, and another for a six month period. This would allow young people who were finding it difficult to complete a full 12 months to withdraw from the traineeship, and still have accredited training and be viewed as having completed a traineeship. This proposition could be combined with the part-time option which has already been proposed. A system which incorporated unpaid leave or the option to re-enter at some future point may assist some young people, such as those with health problems, to complete the traineeship.

### Traineeship occupations

The occupational categories of traineeships needs to be varied if the 'personality', skills and interests of various disadvantaged young people are to be accommodated.

### The Brotherhood's role

The EAC experience showed that a welfare-focused agency can provide support that an employer cannot provide to young people in this type of labour market program. The Brotherhood's services allowed it to establish contact with the young people and recruit those who met the selection criteria. Many employers may find it difficult to access a similar target group. Applicants who did not proceed into this specialist labour market program were able to participate in other services within the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood was well placed to support young people who had unstable housing and to liaise with other agencies to provide a wide range of supports as required.

### Support of staff

The experiences of The Body Shop staff in the project demonstrate the benefits to the employer organisation by having staff involved in this form of labour market program. Staff gain a large amount of esteem through being involved in such a rewarding and educational program that focuses on the benefits for young people who have not had the same opportunities as these staff.

An employer organisation will require a large input of resources to train and support those supervising the young people. Organisations need to acknowledge that it is inappropriate to place a disadvantaged young person with a supervisor who has little or no training, no support and no backup. Staff need support from experienced and competent specialist welfare staff and encouragement by the employer to use this support. Supervisors benefited greatly from the training and knowledge passed on to them by a support worker. This support role provides advice and



understanding and provides a bridge between the background and experiences of the trainees, the expectations of the training system, and the support organisation and their actual employer.

The supervisors need a manual to enhance communication and competencies amongst supervisors. Organisations interested in replicating this program would benefit greatly from utilising the knowledge built up in The Body Shop's manual.

### *Pre-traineeship course*

#### Establishing links

The relationship between the supervisor and the trainee is enhanced if they have a chance to before the trainees start the traineeship. Trainees benefit from a pre-traineeship exposure to both the workplace and the place where they will be doing their off-the-job training. This focus on contact and familiarisation during their pre-traineeship course enables the trainees to come to terms with what can be mystifying and intimidating environments.

#### Time management

Trainees demonstrated a lack of understanding of time management and the pre-traineeship course is a chance to stress its importance and to provide tuition. While it is appropriate to understand that trainee's connection with work is tenuous at the beginning of their traineeship and their punctuality is likely to be a problem, there is a need to place an emphasis on punctuality as an important part of undertaking their traineeship.

### *Non-work support mechanisms*

#### Underlying problems

A labour market program with an adequate income that provides secure and affordable housing is something that can support the young people to move into the primary labour market. Experience shows that these young people may also have a range of personal support needs which go beyond the notion that they are simply homeless. It shows that these young people may require a wide range of assistance which seeks to address the underlying causes of their homelessness and which is integrated in one program.

In a retail environment employers need to appreciate that many of these young people have low self-esteem which promotes behaviours that are counter-productive to approaching customers and this requires addressing if they are to become valuable staff members.



### Income and material assistance

Income and material aid support, such as clothing and other types of personal care assistance are likely to be necessary. The worker best placed for overseeing this type of support would be a trusted worker providing other types of support. The support worker would assist with access to agencies which provide financial and material support to people on low incomes. This assistance helps the young people to cope with the low income often associated with age-related awards.

### Loss of concessions: travel and health

Trainees are disadvantaged by losing their entitlement to Health Care Card. The Department of Social Security has a responsibility to ensure that the young people can access Health Care Cards if they are to be paid low incomes. Experience from The Linked Access Project shows that young people without the capacity to access a reasonable income are likely to have lifestyles and health problems which undermine their capacity to complete the labour market program. Income support measures assist to some extent by providing travel concessions and prescription concessions.

### Housing

Trainees require housing that is reasonable, subsidised and in a location which is close to their work. They also need to remain linked into their existing support networks. The Linked Access Project experience indicates that trainees are often not at an appropriate level of independence to allow them to live in unsupported accommodation.

### Other assistance

Young people need assistance with personal development, training and advice. Such assistance and advice needs to be concerned with their skills and behaviours related to health, nutrition, contraception, drug and alcohol, time management, punctuality, organising, conflict resolution, anger management, assertiveness, stress management, communication, and counselling. Young people also need basic skills training in budgeting, paying bills, debt consolidation and repayments, literacy and numeracy. Support is also required in terms of legal and other forms of advice, which may be provided by the support worker in the program or by specialist agencies.

### *Training arrangements*

#### Level of competency

Many of the trainees are likely to have low levels of education. Arrangements for training need to relate the experiences and values of the trainees to the work-based competencies required by an employer. There is a need for trainers to provide training to match the occupation and industry competencies. These young people may have low levels of education but they generally have a high level of enthusiasm for their training.



### Interaction

Trainees benefit greatly from a labour market program which combines work experience and training because they are able to apply the knowledge from off-the-training to their daily tasks on-the-job. This reinforces their experiences in training and in the workplace.

### **Summary of the project model**

The Linked Access Project model has involved the following components.

- ◆ Recruitment of 'homeless' and disadvantaged young people 'at risk of homelessness' through the Brotherhood's Employment Action Centre. The Brotherhood can supply assistance with alternative employment, housing and other supports.
- ◆ A 10 to 12 week pre-traineeship course which has introduced the potential trainees to The Body Shop and the culture of work. The Traineeship Access Course was conducted at the Employment Action Centre.
- ◆ A 12 month traineeship involving paid work experience at The Body Shop and off-the-job TAFE training.
- ◆ Three months post-traineeship support for job seeking incorporating paid employment.
- ◆ A designated supervisor for each trainee in The Body Shop stores.
- ◆ A support worker within The Body Shop and one at the Brotherhood of St Laurence for trainees and their supervisors.

### **Lessons from the project**

The three stages of the evaluation have provided an opportunity to examine the implementation and development of The Linked Access Project since its inception in 1992. In providing a program for very disadvantaged young people which combines work experience, training, housing and personal and material support, the following elements seem of particular importance.

1. Integration of the employment, training, and support components of the model has been useful and central to implementation of the project. This confirms the premise of the project that young people who are 'homeless' or 'at risk' of homelessness will have a range of personal support and housing needs which are not usually addressed in labour market programs. Underpinning the integration of the project components is the need to provide an adequate income to the trainees, many of whom have been unemployed for long periods, accumulated large debts and denied eligibility to the Health Care Card.



2. High levels of disadvantage among the target group require an initial investment of high levels of resources in order to provide the range and level of financial, housing, employment and personal assistance many in the program may need. Unstable housing and poor health were among the most significant issues for the young people which often threatened their ability to complete the project.
3. A designated staff member was necessary to supervise the trainees and to provide on-the-job training and guidance. The role of the supervisor was strengthened with the support and training of a support worker who also directly supported trainees. Formal support integrated with informal mentor relationships assisted many of the trainees to complete the project.
4. Integration of the project components is important, but flexibility in the overall structure is required. In particular, the time-based training and work experience components of the model and the inability of trainees to leave and return during the program was too rigid for some young people. Punctuality and time-management are important requirements in the workplace, but some disadvantaged young people require flexibility in the program structure which accommodates their efforts to stabilise their personal lives, such as overcoming health problems, so that they may have access to long-term and ongoing employment and training opportunities. Other young people will bring a range of skills and competence (vocational, educational and personal) which require recognition and credit in the program.
5. External training conducted by TAFE imposed further limitations and rigidity in implementation of the program. The employer and trainees were constrained by the TAFE system. Application of an accredited and modular-based training program which is portable (for the employer, trainer and trainee) would reduce reliance on an external training provider. Training which is linked to work experience, accredited, competency-based and paid seems most valuable to the trainees.
6. It is important to provide a program for young people which is non-stigmatising. Avoiding language in the promotion of the program which negatively labels the young people is critical. Paying award wages for their time on-the-job and a training wage for the time spent training would improve the level of the trainee wage and help to avoid the many problems of low-wages including financial hardship and the stigma it can create.
7. The program has benefited from the large commitment of the employing organisation which has contributed considerable financial and staff resources and remained committed to assisting a group of very disadvantaged young people. The contribution of the employing organisation has been enhanced by a good working relationship with the Brotherhood which has provided the support and training infrastructure to the project.



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## APPENDIX A: PROGRAM COSTS

### 1. CONDUCT OF A PRE-VOCATIONAL COURSE (TAC) PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF TRAINEESHIP

Salary and related costs	\$25,800
Materials and operational costs	\$10,700
Other - equipment, training costs	\$4,000
<b>Total cost per course - 12 participants</b>	<b>\$40,500</b>

- Note:* 1. Government funding likely to be accessed by accredited training provider for delivery of this program.  
2. Cost of program could be met by sponsor/host employer/s.

### 2. PROVISION OF A MENTOR TO SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS AND/OR HOST EMPLOYERS

Salary and related costs:	\$30,000 - \$35,000
Administrative and operational costs:	\$20,000
<b>Total cost per annum</b>	<b>\$50,000 - \$55,000</b>

- Note:* 1. Funds to be sourced from sponsor as unlikely that government funds available.  
2. Cost of mentor support could be met via increase of STEP administration charges, enabling additional support to participating host employer/s.

### 3. WAGE COSTS INCURRED BY HOST EMPLOYERS

Refer to attached schedule.

<b>Total cost per annum - 12 trainees</b>	<b>\$48,000 - \$100,000</b>
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- Note:* 1. Trainee costs will vary because calculated on highest level of education, age and time since left school.

## EMPLOYER COSTS

Highest level of school and age	Years since leaving school	Time Training	\$ per week at skill level "A"	Details on 12 months TRAINEESHIP
Year 12	1 year	20%	\$250	\$250 x 50 weeks = + 25% on Cost sick leave + annual leave, superannuation Workcover & Administration  \$12,500  <u>\$ 3,125</u> <u>\$15,625</u> <u>\$ 3,000*</u> <u>\$12,625</u>  SUB TOTAL
Year 11	1 year	20%	\$215	\$215 x 52 weeks = + 25% on Cost sick leave + annual leave, superannuation  \$11,180  <u>\$ 2,795</u> <u>\$13,975</u> <u>\$ 3,000*</u> <u>\$10,975</u>  SUB TOTAL
Year 10	1 year	20%	\$175	\$175 x 52 weeks = + 25% on Cost sick leave + annual leave, superannuation Workcover & Administration  \$ 9,100  <u>\$ 2,275</u> <u>\$11,375</u> <u>\$ 3,000*</u> <u>\$ 8,375</u>  SUB TOTAL
ADULTS 21+		20%	\$333	\$333 x 52 weeks = + 25% on Cost sick leave + annual leave, superannuation Workcover & Administration  \$17,316  <u>\$ 4,329</u> <u>\$21,645</u> <u>\$ 3,000*</u> <u>\$18,645</u>  SUB TOTAL

\* DEET subsidy to employer