



Fitted for Work

Connecting Women with Work

Newsletter number 12, Autumn 2009

Fitted for Work is committed to helping long-term unemployed and disadvantaged women obtain work, maintain employment and ultimately achieve financial independence. We offer business clothing, presentation and interview skills, and resume advice, building self-confidence and assisting women on the path to self-sufficiency.



Norma is looking for work in the travel industry. Fitted for Work aims to establish a mentor/buddy program that will help her with career transition.

Getting through the recession (depression, downturn, meltdown, economic blip...)

You can't open a paper, watch tv or listen to the radio without getting news of more people losing their jobs. The prediction is that 700,000 Australians will lose their jobs over the next twelve months. That number doesn't include people who don't have jobs to lose – among them the many women who had taken time out to have and raise children.

Fitted for Work's first three years of operation coincided with a buoyant job market, where the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, older workers and others on the margins of the workforce had a chance of getting a job.

Now it's a different story.

Most Fitted for Work clients apply for jobs in the low paying, casual and predominantly female sectors of the employment market - childcare, security, call centres, retail and hospitality. Many of our 2008 clients who gained employment, are now having their shifts cut or losing those hard won jobs altogether. Our 2009 clients are facing the worst employment market in decades.

At Fitted for Work we are not sitting around wringing our hands, nor are we joining the chorus of doomsayers. No!

With our corporate and community partners we intend to develop new and innovative programs that keep women engaged with job seeking and preparation. Most importantly we need to sustain women's spirits because unemployment is a major factor in depression and mental illness. Our programs will look to maintain and grow women's skills during, what are likely to be, extended periods of unemployment.

As part of our Social Enterprise Project, and in other new projects Fitted for Work will provide meaningful volunteer opportunities, work experience, and training programs that will position women to take up the jobs that do exist and the others that will become available once the economy improves again.

A senior US philanthropist said recently, "not for profit businesses - unlike commercial businesses - can't shut up shop and go home when the going gets tough. They actually have to do more with less".

Over the next few months we will be calling on Government, Corporations, Foundations and all our friends and resources to work with us to assist women to stay connected with work.

“not for profit businesses — unlike commercial businesses — can't shut up shop and go home when the going gets tough. They actually have to do more with less”



Letter from Jane

When I was appointed as the inaugural CEO for Fitted for Work, I was thrilled and energised to have been chosen to lead an organisation that assists women to become economically independent and thereby transform their lives. That initial excitement and respect has deepened during my first three months.

It feels heartened that so many women from different walks of life actively support other women during that particularly vulnerable time when they are transitioning to work. I am impressed by the high level of service provided, the outstanding commitment of the volunteers and the capacity of the Board.

Recently, our Research, Evaluation and Data Committee surveyed volunteers for their feedback on their experiences at Fitted for Work. We were very pleased to find that 100% of volunteers rated their interaction with clients as 'Mainly Positive' or 'Entirely Positive'. Over 90% of volunteers rated the impact of Fitted for Work and its services on clients as 'Very Positive' or 'Extremely Positive'.

The volunteers' responses have provided some excellent suggestions for extending and improving our service delivery to clients; we will implement these during the upcoming months.

One volunteer wrote that her experience at Fitted for Work 'has given me a glimpse of another world ... broadened my understanding of the community'.

Another volunteer wrote that Fitted for Work has deepened her 'knowledge that even though the clients may come from a vastly different background from myself, we all have dreams and hopes. I feel privileged to be able to help them even if it is for a very short term'.

I'd like to thank this volunteer for expressing so perfectly one of the core values of Fitted for Work.

Warm regards to you all,

You won't get thrown in the deep end — volunteer training and support at Fitted for Work.

All women interested in getting involved in Fitted for Work initially come to an information and induction session. This gives them the chance to assess what sort of involvement they want to have in the future with Fitted for Work.

Thirty-five women attended our most recent intake evening and, it turned out, that seven of them had googled "how can I support women in Melbourne?" And Fitted for Work came up! Great advertising without even trying!!

We are so appreciative of women who continually put up their hand and offer their time, talents and enthusiasm to Fitted for Work. It is our hope that we find an interesting role for each and every one.

Whilst assisting clients in the boutique is our most direct work with women, we acknowledge that it won't be for everyone. Fitted for Work's committees are staffed by highly skilled and talented women, most of whom work all day, and still have the energy, commitment and enthusiasm to give more.

All our Committees would be more than pleased to welcome interested new members. You can choose from:

- HR
- Client services
- Fundraising and events
- Corporate and government relations
- Research, evaluation and data

Recent training for boutique volunteers has included sessions for mentors who support new boutique volunteers, and a highly engaging session on "Working with clients with challenging behaviours and how to look after ourselves."

Our next all volunteers' meeting will focus on some of the benefits and challenges in running a volunteer organisation on a national level. It will be a great opportunity to discuss current relevant issues for Fitted for Work.

Below: Helen Weily and Elspeth Connor selecting clothes for a client to try.



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Fitted for Work Mornington Peninsula

The Mornington Peninsula service has just entered its second year of operation and is looking for ways to expand its core services to assist clients as they face a tougher employment market and greater budgeting challenges because of the financial crisis.

The service is doing this by setting up partnerships with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Renewal. Together, we plan to run a series of four workshops on such topics as employment choices, preparing for work and confidence building.

At "A Day at the Races" in early January we hosted 85 guests at the Balnarring Races. In addition to raising \$3500, we had loads of fun with the competition for Fashions in the Marquee. This was hotly contested by both males and females and the winners were very dashing indeed.

Joan Ciastkowski – President



Joan Ciastkowski, Jo Saunders, Brenda Langmaid and Warren Loy at "A Day at the Races".

Never too busy to smile or lend a hand

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence – Fitted for Work partnership.

The support of the Brotherhood team at 20 Barkly Street Brunswick has been fantastic.

Markela Peck, the Chair of Fitted for Work's Boutique Committee says, "They receive goods for us 7 days a week and deliver the goods to our sorting facility. They always greet us with smile and ask how can they help 'the lovely ladies from Fitted for Work'. Even at their busiest, they never decline to help me unload or load our stock.

Without the help of the Brotherhood team, Fitted for Work's highly successful community clothing sales would not be possible. They come in early to clear the warehouse, give up their lunch or morning tea time to help set up, and market the sale to their customers and within the local community.

Thank you again for everything you do for Fitted for Work.



Markela Peck at the Brunswick warehouse with some of the Brotherhood team.

Fitted for Work goes to Carlton

Fitted for Work took part in the Carlton Community Fair sponsored by the University of Melbourne on Sunday 1 March. The Fair was organised to better connect the university with its local community. Local families were entertained by Kutcha Edwards and African drummers, took advantage of basketball and soccer clinics, visited stalls that offered Ethiopian craft and coffee, participated in the African Women's Sewing Group from the Carlton Primary School, were given health advice and free check ups and experienced face and henna painting among other activities.

The Sorghum Sisters provided fabulous food and drinks. In addition there were seminars on topics such as education (offered by the University of Melbourne) and finance (sponsored by the Fitzroy and Carlton Community Credit Cooperative).

Fitted for Work was pleased to promote its services and offer tokens for clothing to women in need. On the Monday after the community sale, a number of women 'cashed in' their tokens and took away bags of clothing that will be put to good use.



Sharon Winocur with prospective clients at the Carlton Community Fair.

Another sell-out movie night

Our first fundraising event of the year and no better way to kick off 2009 than Confessions of a Shopaholic, bringing a touch of NYC style to Village Crown Cinemas.

The foyer filled up quickly as 265 excited guests arrived ready to enjoy a night out, the chance of winning a door prize, and helping Fitted for Work assist more women to gain employment.

Jane Hunt (Fitted for Work CEO) and Megan Love (FFW Volunteer) welcomed everyone as they settled into their seats and broke out their popcorn.

The night was very special for 17 of our clients. Because of the generosity of some Fitted for Work volunteers and supporters they were able to enjoy a great night out on us.

Thank you to those who donated the fantastic prizes - Witchery, Village Cinemas, Retrostar, Marc one and Margaret Purcell.

Congratulations to Sam Cook who was the winner of the "Worst Bargain Story Ever" and a very big thank you to everyone who attended and brought along friends, family and colleagues. And of course to the workers behind the scenes - Emily, Danielle, Renata and Megan - many thanks.

A key message to take away from this film is that fashion, and an amazing outfit, can change how you feel. At Fitted for Work we are committed to changing the way that clients see themselves and to improving their confidence and skills.

Below: Ruth, Rebecca and Alice Money with Emily Wild at Confessions of a Shopaholic.



Volunteer Helen Stewart assists Dorothy Attard

InNIU

If the shoe fits....

An outfit is not complete without the right shoes. Yet at Fitted for Work shoes are often the hardest of any clothing item to offer. Feet come in so many sizes and widths. Because shoes go through a lot more wear and tear, not as many of them stay in good enough condition to be passed onto Fitted for Work clients.

What a relief when InNIU began donating their brand new shoes and boots to Fitted for Work. Three hundred pairs of InNIU footwear were donated in 2008.

Thanks to InNIU our clients can choose from a range of sizes, colours, and the most up-to-date styles to complement their clothing.



Westpac banks on Fitted for Work

Fitted for Work is delighted to have been chosen as the Westpac Women's Markets charity for 2009.

Working in partnership with women in local communities that have been affected by the Victorian bush fires, Westpac Women's Markets and Fitted for Work will be developing a project to assist them in the longer term, as they struggle to re-build their lives.

Funds to support this work will come from Westpac Women's Markets national "Learn Lead and Succeed" workshops to be held in May/June and October 2009.

Further funds to assist Fitted for Work throughout the year for our ongoing program will be raised at different events held by Westpac Women's Markets around the country.

Get fit, have fun and raise money for Fitted for Work

Run Melbourne, presented by The Age, is the community fitness event for everyone. Anyone, any age, any fitness level can participate. It's also an opportunity to raise money for Fitted for Work. Set yourself a 5km, 10km or half marathon challenge and start training.

Fitted for Work has registered and is looking for people to participate and fundraise on our behalf. For example, Margaret Purcell (who will be walking not running!) will organise a team of four people to compete and these four will send the link to all their friends asking to be sponsored.

All monies raised go directly into our bank account. If we can pull together 10 groups of 4 or more, that's 40 or more people, we could earn a substantial amount.

What an enjoyable way to get into shape and have a good time. Get a gang together and sign up now. We look forward to seeing you at the start line on Sunday, 28 June.

Go to www.everydayhero.com.au to sign up and for more information. And do let Emily know that you are participating - emily@fittedforwork.org

 Westpac

therubyconnection.com.au