

Ballarat Business Awards Committee 2015

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Equine Learning Experiences Australia Program – Director Emily McVeigh

I would like to express my support for this fantastic program. I work with at-risk children and young people through the care collaboration component of the School Focused Youth Service program.

Any school can ring me to discuss therapeutic options for students at risk of dis-engaging from school. They may already be attending alternative programs such as REAL school or be on limited hours at the school due to various issues, usually behaviour based.

I have researched evidence-based therapeutic experiential programs world-wide and have found equine therapy to have the most profound effect on participants of all ages who are experiencing a wide range of difficulties – depression, low self-esteem, violence, abuse, body image, low confidence, alcohol and other drugs etc.

Approximately 18 months ago, Karen Snibson, Vice-Principal of Phoenix College here in Ballarat recommended that I look at ELEA as the equine program I was searching for. She was so enthusiastic when she spoke about the results they were seeing at their school. Paul Deacon, DEET's Behavioural Visiting teacher also talked to me about equine therapy and the positive impact it had on some of the most disadvantaged, dis-engaged children.

Since that time, I have taken many children from 8yo through to 13yo to her program with amazing results. But what I would really like to stress is that Emily never stops trying to improve her program to meet the changing needs. She is self-reflective, passionate and a great advocate for children in her program. The door doesn't close when they finish their session. Emily connects with schools, carers, parents and other workers trying to effect positive outcomes for these children. Research shows that programs in isolation will only have so much effect – an holistic approach will always work better. Emily goes above and beyond what you would expect. She does so much in her own time with these students.

I consider Emily's program to be a foundation program that all students could gain benefits from – as an early intervention, as a leadership program, as a therapeutic intervention etc.

Emily is paving the way with this program to see Ballarat shine. To help our disconnected families connect and contribute to schools and community.

Where would they be without this program?

*Shayne Carr
School Focused Youth Service Co-ord.*



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