

# SUPPORTING APPRENTICES TO COMPLETE THEIR STUDIES

## HOLMESGLEN INSTITUTE – A SKILLS FIRST TRAINING PROVIDER CASE STUDY

---

Holmesglen Institute operates an Apprentice Support Centre that supports trade students to successfully complete their studies.

Holmesglen's trade apprenticeship training attracts mainly young people into areas including general construction, furnishing and upholstery, food trades, electrical and electronics, engineering and horticulture.

### Identifying that students need support

When Holmesglen identified that a significant proportion of apprentice students were not completing their studies, the Institute sought to understand why, and to identify how it could increase completion rates.

In early 2016, the Institute launched a pilot Apprentice Support Centre, which included an applied research project to understand how to better support students. The research project engaged 180 apprentice students, as well as students who had disengaged from their studies at Holmesglen.

The Institute's Manager of Compliance and Corporate Improvement, Keri Bailey, says the research highlighted that many students find the apprenticeship system complex and difficult to navigate. Life challenges add an additional barrier for some.

Responses from the disengaged apprentices indicated a range of issues, including falling behind due to a lack of time allowed to complete study at work, or employers who did not allow time off to attend school. Some students said they had struggled to understand the course requirements, others said they had a learning disability, and/or were unable to afford tuition fees. Personal issues were also a barrier, with some students experiencing unstable accommodation.

---

*“Our research identified that some apprentices require additional specialised support to overcome learning, life and work hurdles to successfully gain their qualifications.”*

Keri Bailey, Manager of Compliance and Corporate Improvement, Holmesglen Institute

---

### The Apprentice Support Centre

The Institute launched the Apprentice Support Centre across all its campuses in mid-2016. The Centre operates offices at each campus, and these are located near classrooms so they are visible and accessible to students. Apprentices are informed of the services and support available from the Centre.

Holmesglen now tracks the attendance and performance of each apprentice more closely. It also ensures that all information about apprentices is accessible to Apprentice Support Centre staff. For example, the Apprentice Support Centre can access student attendance, assessment and fee payment records to help identify and support apprentices who are at-risk of non-completion.

For those students identified as being at-risk, the Apprentice Support Centre offers support in addition to the assistance they receive from their classroom teacher and their Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) provider, who liaises between apprentices and their employer. This enables 'wrap around' support for each apprentice.

A student counsellor with a specific focus on apprentices is also available, who can arrange assistance with fees, housing, and support with understanding course requirements and managing learning difficulties.

### Keeping apprentices engaged

Twenty-five disengaged apprentices who participated in Holmesglen's research project have subsequently returned to study with support from the Apprentice Support Centre.

Increasing numbers of students are accessing advice and support from the Centre. In the first quarter of the Centre's operation in 2016, support officers engaged with 139 apprentices. In the first quarter of 2017, officers engaged with 237 apprentices, representing a 71 per cent increase in the number of apprentices receiving advice and assistance to help them successfully complete their studies.

Keri says pastoral care, mentoring, financial and academic support are the key areas of support the Centre provides.

While the completion rate of apprentices varies from trade to trade, Holmesglen's average completion rates are now significantly higher than the national average.

Holmesglen continues to build understanding of the support that apprentices require to successfully complete their studies and to develop responsive strategies and services.

---

*"We support apprentices to complete their studies, and they leave us knowing they can reach out and overcome hurdles in their lives."*

Keri Bailey, Manager of Compliance and Corporate Improvement, Holmesglen Institute

---