

STRENGTHENING THE NDIS WORKFORCE



Full project name: NDIS Future Workforce Capability Project

Lead organisation: Victorian Council of Social Service

Collaborators: Future Social Service Institute, RMIT University, Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc., Early Childhood Intervention Australia, Melbourne City Mission, Breakthrough, The Salvation Army, Careers Australia, Women with Disabilities Victoria

THE FRONTLINE OF CARE – THE CONTEXT

Due to the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and shifting demographics, there is massive growth in the demand for workers in the disability and aged care sectors. The number of jobs in health care and social assistance in Victoria is expected to grow by almost 17 per cent by 2023.

At the same time, research and feedback from industry and other experts has highlighted a need to improve the way sector workers are trained – particularly in terms of preparing them for the complex judgements they will have to make when they begin work.

WHY DON'T WE ... – THE INNOVATION

The Future Social Service Institute (FSSI) is a collaboration between the Victorian Council of Social Service and RMIT University. FSSI designed a set of resources for the Cert III in Individual Support (Ageing and Disability) based on the perspectives and needs of people with lived experience – recognising that those people are the experts on what makes a great support worker.

As part of this work, FSSI designed five new topics for the course, covering ethics, human rights, working with diverse people, using technology, and power and abuse. These were co-designed with industry, experts by experience and course alumni, and will provide micro-credentials for learners.

The project has also hired an independent film-maker to produce 24 high-quality videos that cover each of the five new areas. The videos feature real disability support workers and people with disabilities, talking about their experiences and answering questions.

Two virtual reality resources have also been delivered, allowing students to learn in an interactive and immersive environment.

For workers who want to update their knowledge, the project has produced four RMIT micro-credentials. These will also prove useful to people who want to change careers and work in the disability sector.

SUPPORT STRUCTURE – STUDENT RETENTION

Participants are offered a high level of support to boost retention rates. This also aligns with one of the project's goals of encouraging workforce diversity, including people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

The support includes:

- Language, literacy and numeracy teachers in class
- One-on-one in-class IT familiarisation, in addition to the supply of iPads
- Material support, including Myki passes and lunch allowance, depending on eligibility
- Provision of learning services such as AUSLAN interpreters, participant assistants and note-takers, if required.

FSSI director Micaela Cronin recalls meeting Carmen, a Cert III student, at an end-of-course celebration. Carmen had progressed from lacking confidence in her ability to complete the course, to being offered a job on the morning of the event.

"It was a powerful moment for me, hearing Carmen speak about her gratitude for the support of her teachers – they had believed in her when she didn't believe in herself," Ms Cronin says.

"She told me about walking into her first interview feeling nervous and intimidated, but with each question her confidence grew as she realised she'd been taught everything she needed to know to find a job in the aged care sector."

INVALUABLE INSIGHTS – THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

The foundations of this project were built on listening to people who need disability and aged care services, and to people who already work in the sector. FSSI took curriculum designers out to meet these individuals so their experience and expertise could be fed into the units.

One co-design session was facilitated at an aged care home in Melbourne's east, where residents and workers told designers what good care means to them.

Residents spoke about the value of feeling the workers really know them – down to small but important details, such as how they take their tea. Such insights from co-design sessions have shaped the course content.

FSSI has built strong partnerships through this project that it can rely on for future resource design and content work in other areas.

MAKING THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE – THE OUTCOMES

- The new micro-credentials and resources are now available to the Victorian training sector for licence. The complete set of videos can be viewed and shared, with attribution, via YouTube.
- The training products have been tested by industry and Cert III alumni and the first cohort of students to take the revamped Cert III started at RMIT in July.

Founded in 2017, the Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) is a targeted *Skills First* funding stream. WTIF creates opportunities for partnerships between industry and the TAFE and training system and encourages them to explore bold, innovative approaches that challenge existing practices in skills development and training methods.

Ultimately, these new ideas and solutions aim to enhance workplace productivity, particularly in Victorian Government priority sectors. More than \$90 million of funding has been committed to date.

The next round of WTIF funding is now open for applications.

To find out more visit www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/wtif.aspx or email the WTIF team at wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au