

NEXT SHOWCASE

A new upskilling pathway for leaders in the social service sector

Background

The social service sector is Victoria's largest and fastest growing industry. It is also an industry with significant workforce development needs and issues, some of which have been identified in outcomes of or responses to a series of Royal Commissions. While there are specific workforce capability issues identified that are linked to specific sub-sectors (e.g. disability, aged care), common themes include:

- Retention and recruitment challenges;
- Lack of clear career pathways;
- Mid-level leadership and management capability;
- Skill gaps in the front-line workforce;
- Need for skill development in key areas including case management, digital literacy, business acumen and innovation; and
- Ability to leverage cross-sectoral synergies.

While some parts of the sector, such as family violence, are introducing new standards around qualifications the process of introducing new qualification standards, these kinds of reforms take time to implement. Social service organisations and the communities they serve need solutions **now** which is why in 2019 the Future Social Service Institute (FSSI) teamed up with RMIT's School of Vocational Design and Social Context and a diverse group of partner organisations to develop a new upskilling pathway for mid-tier managers through the Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project.

Overview

The Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project is one of two pilot schemes that have together received \$5.6 million in Victorian government funding through the Department of Education and Training. While apprenticeships are an established mode in trades, they are a relatively new pathway in social services. As recognised in "[the FSSI model](#)", collaboration is critical to understanding and solving complex problems. And so FSSI is working closely with its industry partners - BaptCare, Erhma, Jewish Care, Scope, St John of God Accord, Villa Maria and Aruma – to ensure that the model that is developed supports industry needs and responds to industry challenges. The objectives of the Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project include:

- Increasing capability and capacity of leaders;
- Increasing organisational capability and adaptability; and
- Creating a sustainable model of development for sector leaders.

Through the Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project, 24 team leaders and supervisors who are currently working in the sector are provided an on-the-job up-skilling and credentialing pathway to become managers. The pilot uses the nationally accredited RMIT Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management (ADCSM) as the base qualification to support this up-skilling pathway. As part of the pilot, a co-design process is being used to identify gaps in the training and address those gaps through the development of new content and approaches. An evaluation of the pilot, led by FSSI, is providing insights and evidence to help shape the design and delivery of the Higher Apprenticeships program for the current and future cohorts.

To find out more about this project and other FSSI initiatives visit the [FSSI website](#) and [subscribe to the FSSI Link e-newsletter](#)..