



Course focuses on keeping people home

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TAFE PROGRAM

A TRAINEESHIP program designed by East Gippsland Institute of TAFE and its industry partner, Gippsland Lakes Community Health Service, is giving elderly people and people with disabilities access to quality care.

East Gippsland has one of the highest percentage growths for an ageing population in Victoria, with people 60 and older comprising about 27 per cent of all residents and population projections showing a rise to 44 per cent by 2021.

The double certificate in certificate III Home and Community Care and certificate III Disability Work is customised to meet the needs of clients who want to stay in their own homes rather than move into residential care.

Anne Eager, facilitator of health and community services at East Gippsland TAFE, says the aged care and disability sector has a skills shortage, with many employees also ageing. The stream of new trainees each year ensures GLCH is able to keep up with client demand.

The award-winning program has been running for five years and its success is evident in the fact 80 per cent of graduates are offered work while the other 20 per cent move into other areas or further study.

Leah McFadzean, executive manager aged care services with GLCH, says the course offers many career opportunities.

“There are examples of graduates progressing to nursing, the disability sector, administration roles attached to community health, other community services, and ongoing study is common,” she says.

There are no prerequisites for the program and people come from a broad range of backgrounds. “Some have professional or personal experience in caring for others, from ex-nurses to people who have done personal care work but never got a certificate. Many are looking to change careers. We have had candidates from trades and retail to taxi drivers,” McFadzean says. “GLCH also reaches out to those returning to the workforce after some absence, such as mothers, carers or **students**.”

While it is a female-dominated industry, men are also attracted to the

program. This year there are four men among the 25 participants.

“Men are coming from other careers, some have run their own businesses in IT or worked as labourers, painters or builders. They are mostly 40-plus and they decide they want to give back to the community,” Eager says.

The course runs for 13 months and participants are required to attend TAFE for four hours, one day a week, as well as work on the job as part of the traineeship arrangement.

Eager explains domestic assistance, as it is called, is more complex than just going into someone's house to clean. The role of the worker is to work with the client, assisting them with daily tasks so they are more independent at home and in the community.

Units in the course include topics such as:

- * Work effectively with culturally diverse clients and co-workers.
- * Support individual health and emotional wellbeing.
- * Assist client with medication.
- * Support community participation and inclusion.
- * Maintain an environment to empower people with disabilities.
- * Apply first aid.
- * Comply with information requirements of the aged care and community sector.
- * Participate in the implementation of individualised plans.

To succeed in the course, candidates need excellent communication skills and to be able to empathise, be tolerant and respectful, Eager says.

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