



Regional Specialist Training Fund Project





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project was delivered by Selmar Institute of Education to address ongoing workforce shortages in aged care across the Gippsland region. Funded by the Victorian Government, the project used a place-based, employer-led model that prioritised workforce readiness and sustainable employment outcomes over high-volume recruitment.

Across 2 Cohorts:

- 453 applications received for entry into the aged care pathway
- 32 participants enrolled in Certificate III in Individual Support
- 15 secured employment in residential aged care and home and community care roles.

Pre-employment training delivered through Learn Local partners was central to success, building confidence, employability skills and informed career choice. The project also supported participants to identify when aged care was not the right pathway, reducing the risk of early workforce exit.

Employer engagement confirmed that workforce shortages do not equate to unlimited onboarding capacity. A staged intake model aligned recruitment and training with employer capability, supporting more sustainable outcomes.

Overall, the project demonstrates that readiness-focused, community-based pathways can deliver strong workforce outcomes in regional settings and provides a transferable model for future workforce initiatives.



RSTF TEAM

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Project was delivered by a cross-functional, regionally embedded team at Selmar Institute of Education. Our approach blended workforce development, training expertise, and local engagement.

Team Member	Role	Contribution Highlights
Project Manager	Project Manager & Compliance Lead	Led end-to-end delivery, coordinated stakeholders, managed milestones, regional engagement and managed compliance.
Training Manager	Training & Curriculum Lead	Ensured quality training delivery, supported learner progression. Developed the Training and Assessment Strategy and aligned delivery with workforce requirements.
Marketing Lead	Marketing & Community Outreach Lead	Designed and implemented targeted recruitment campaigns using digital and community channels.
Community Engagement	Recruitment & Community Liaison Officer	Engaged learners via Learn Locals, ESPs, and community networks; managed learner intake.
Employer Engagement	Employer Partnerships Manager	Developed and maintained relationships with aged care employers; aligned recruitment to workforce needs.
Trainer Assessor	Training and Assessment & Learner Success Coach	Training and assessment as per course schedule. Provided 1:1 support, addressed barriers, increased retention and learner wellbeing.
Admin & Finance Team	Project Operations Support	Managed enrolment data, budget tracking, compliance, and milestone reporting.



WHY GIPPSLAND

Gippsland was selected for the RSTF Aged Care Workforce Project due to sustained workforce shortages in aged care combined with structural barriers to workforce participation across the region. These challenges are more pronounced in regional and rural communities and required a place-based response.

Aged care workforce demand

- Gippsland has a higher proportion of residents aged 65+ than metropolitan Victoria, driving increased demand for care services.
- Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in the region and continues to experience workforce shortages.
- Aged care employers report ongoing difficulty attracting and retaining job-ready staff, particularly outside major regional centres.

Barriers to workforce participation

- Around 48% of the Gippsland population has no post-school qualification, limiting access to regulated sectors such as aged care.
- The region's large geographic footprint and dispersed population reduce access to accredited training.
- Employment is often casual or shift-based, with travel distances creating additional barriers for workers.

Employer capacity constraints

- Workforce shortages do not equate to unlimited hiring capacity.
- Employers reported limited ability to onboard new staff due to supervision, compliance and rostering requirements.
- Many facilities could only employ one or two new entrants at a time, increasing risk associated with traineeships.

These conditions made Gippsland well suited to a targeted RSTF intervention that prioritised workforce readiness, community-based pre-employment training and employer-aligned recruitment. A place-based approach was essential to achieving sustainable outcomes for both participants and aged care providers.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project was designed to deliver sustainable workforce outcomes by aligning participant readiness, training delivery and employer capacity. The project objectives focused on quality, fit and long-term retention rather than high-volume recruitment.

1. Recruit and support 50 new entrants into aged care pathways

Build a local pipeline of workers to support residential, home and community aged care services in a region experiencing sustained workforce pressure.

2. Improve workforce readiness before employment

Ensure participants are informed, prepared and realistic about the demands of aged care work prior to entering training or employment, reducing early attrition and unsustainable placements.

3. Deliver tailored Certificate III in Individual Support training

Participants were supported to enrol in the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support, with delivery designed to reflect the realities of aged care work. Training was structured to support regional learners, balance study with employment or caring responsibilities, and align with employer expectations and regulatory requirements.

4. Align training and recruitment with employer capacity

Develop and refine a community-led, employer-informed model that can be adapted for future workforce initiatives in Gippsland and other regional or workforce-constrained settings.



STRATEGIC OUTREACH

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project adopted a targeted and community-based outreach strategy designed to engage individuals who were not actively seeking employment in aged care or formal training. Traditional recruitment methods alone were unlikely to reach the intended cohort, many of whom were underemployed, disengaged from education, or uncertain about re-entering the workforce. Strategic outreach focused on meeting potential learners where they already were - both geographically and socially - using trusted local networks alongside digital channels.

Key outreach channels included:

Community and Learn Local Networks

Learn Local organisations played a central role in outreach, leveraging established community trust to identify individuals considering a career change, return-to-work parents and those hesitant about formal study. Community networks such as schools, kindergartens, local groups and informal referral pathways also supported engagement.

Targeted Digital Marketing

Social media advertising, particularly through locally targeted Facebook campaigns, was used to raise awareness of aged care career pathways and the support available through the project. Messaging focused on opportunity and

preparation rather than immediate job placement.

Employment Service Providers (ESPs)

Partnerships with organisations including the Salvation Army, APM and Assuria enabled the project to reach jobseekers facing longer-term unemployment or requiring additional support to re-enter the workforce.

Employer-Linked Job Advertising

SEEK advertisements were placed in partnership with aged care employers, ensuring compliance and clarity that employment opportunities were offered by providers rather than the training organisation.

Importantly, outreach was designed to encourage informed participation rather than volume alone. Applicants were supported through staged screening and readiness assessment, ensuring alignment between learner expectations, training pathways and employer capacity.



**Regional
Specialist
Training Fund**

Supporting Gippsland

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project recognised early that life circumstances, rather than learner capability, were often the primary barriers to engagement, progression and completion. Many participants were returning to study after long periods away from formal education, managing caring responsibilities, facing financial constraints, or lacking confidence with digital systems required for training and employment.

Key supports provided included:

1:1 Case Management

Participants received individualised support through regular check-ins with project staff. Case management assisted learners to manage personal circumstances, competing commitments and periods of uncertainty, and played a key role in preventing disengagement

Practical and Financial Support

The project removed common upfront barriers to participation by covering costs associated with police checks, required documentation and compliance processes. Where necessary, the project also supported travel and accommodation costs, particularly for learners required to attend training or placements outside their local area.

Flexible Communication Channels

Communication methods were adapted to learner needs, with WhatsApp and SMS used alongside email for reminders, encouragement and practical updates. This flexibility supported consistent engagement, particularly for learners unfamiliar with formal training environments.

In-Class Coaching and Wellbeing Support

Trainers and project staff embedded confidence-building, wellbeing check-ins and practical coaching into training delivery. This approach normalised challenges, encouraged peer support and reinforced realistic expectations of aged care work.

Employer Readiness Coaching

Participants were supported to prepare for employment through mock interviews, support with resumes and open conversations about the physical, emotional and practical realities of aged care roles. This ensured learners entered employment with realistic expectations and increased employer confidence in new entrants.

This wraparound support model was central to the project's success. By addressing non-academic, financial and practical barriers, the project supported stronger attendance, improved training progression and more sustainable employment outcomes for regional learners.

WHAT WE DID

Community Engagement and Promotion

Regional Specialist Training Fund



The Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) is a state government initiative that opens pathways for Gippsland residents to receive training and employment in the aged care sector. Through this program, participants work toward a Certificate III in Individual Support while gaining valuable, hands-on experience through employment at a local aged care facility. The RSTF addresses critical staff shortages in aged care while providing meaningful job opportunities within the community.

Bass Coast Adult Learning plays a vital role in the RSTF program. As part of the initiative, all participants must complete a Learn Local workshop to acquire the essential skills and knowledge needed for a successful career in aged care before being matched with an aged care facility for employment.

To find out more about the RSTF program, fees & funding or to apply, scan the QR code or visit selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund/



Training is proudly supported by Selmar Education



Regional Specialist Training Fund



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Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre plays a vital role in the RSTF program. As part of the initiative, all participants must complete a Learn Local workshop to acquire the essential skills and knowledge needed for a successful career in aged care before being matched with an aged care facility for employment.

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Training is proudly supported by Selmar Education






Personal Care Assistants Needed in Gippsland

Regional Specialist training fund

On-the-job training to earn and learn

If caring is in your nature, this is your chance to turn it into a meaningful career in aged care. Selmar is looking for compassionate individuals for Personal Care Assistant roles in Gippsland – no experience necessary.

The Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project is a Victorian Government-funded initiative offering you the opportunity to gain hands-on training in an aged care service and a CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support with \$0* upfront costs.

Scan the QR code to enquire now!

* Visit our website or scan the QR code for more information on our aged care courses, fees and funding



selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund

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You will benefit from:

- Genuine employment opportunities: Step into a paid role in a growth sector.
- Certificate III training with \$0*. Gain your qualification with no upfront costs*.
- Ongoing support: Benefit from a dedicated Selmar Traineeship Coordinator, Trainer & Assessor and Consultants.
- Pre-employment training: Get job-ready with intensive skillset training to start with confidence.



Specialist regional training fund

Strengthen Gippsland's Aged Care Workforce with Selmar

Supporting sustainable Aged Care

Selmar is boosting the number of Personal Care Assistants in Gippsland through the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project – a funded Victorian Government initiative.

As the chosen Registered Training Organisation for the RSTF project, Selmar will support individuals throughout their traineeship by providing practical on-the-job training as they work towards their essential Certificate III in Individual Support qualifications.

In turn, this delivers meaningful career opportunities for Gippsland and a skilled, compassionate workforce.

This project is set to enhance local employment and strengthen aged care services in the region.

Join us in this important project and help shape the future of aged care in Gippsland. Contact the RSTF project manager on **0448 327 735**

info@selmar.edu.au selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund



SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE

OPAL HEALTHCARE IS HIRING!

Care Support worker Traineeship Roles available in Gippsland



If caring is in your nature, this is your chance to turn it into a meaningful career in aged care. We are looking for compassionate individuals for Care Support Worker roles in Gippsland – no experience necessary.

If hired, candidates will be enrolled into the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support with \$0* upfront costs. Staff will work through the course while working at an Opal Care Community. Training is supported through The Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF), a Victorian Government-funded initiative offering you the opportunity gain employment and upskill.

Training is proudly supported by Selmar Institute of Education through the RSTF project



* Visit our website for more information on aged care courses, fees and funding

selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund

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Apply to Paynesville



Apply to Bairnesdale



Apply to Lakes Entrance






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Scan the QR code to enquire now!

* Visit our website or scan the QR code for more information on our aged care courses, fees and funding



selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund

You will benefit from:

- Genuine employment opportunities: Step into a paid role in a growth sector.
- Certificate III training with \$0*. Gain your qualification with no upfront costs*.
- Ongoing support: Benefit from a dedicated Selmar Traineeship Coordinator, Trainer & Assessor and Consultants.
- Pre-employment training: Get job-ready with intensive skillset training to start with confidence.



OPAL HEALTHCARE IS HIRING!

Care Support Officer Traineeship Roles available in Gippsland

With critical staff shortages and an urgent need for aged carers, the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project is set to elevate the aged care sector by equipping Gippsland residents with the skills and qualifications necessary to provide top-quality care to the elderly.

Training proudly supported by Selmar Education through the RSTF Program



Gippsland, Victoria



Become a personal care assistant in Gippsland

Regional Specialist Training fund

With critical staff shortages and an urgent need for aged carers, the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project is set to elevate the aged care sector by equipping Gippsland residents with the skills and qualifications necessary to provide top-quality care to the elderly.

- Get employed by one of our partners
- Study the Certificate III in Individual Support with wrap around support
- Earn while you learn





Your goals your way



ENQUIRE NOW

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Become a personal care assistant in Gippsland

Regional Specialist Training fund

With critical staff shortages and an urgent need for aged carers, the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project is set to elevate the aged care sector by equipping Gippsland residents with the skills and qualifications necessary to provide top-quality care to the elderly.

- Get employed by one of our partners
- Study the Certificate III in Individual Support with wrap around support
- Earn while you learn

WHAT WE DID

Community Engagement and Promotion

Care Support Officers Needed in Gippsland

Regional Specialist Training Fund

On-the-job training to earn and learn

Opal HealthCare

You will benefit from:

1. Genuine employment opportunities at Opal Step into a paid role in a growth sector.
2. Certificate III training with 50%* Gain your qualification with no upfront costs*
3. Ongoing support: Benefit from a dedicated Selmar Traineeship Coordinator, Trainer & Assessor and Consultants. As well as peer support network.
4. Pre-employment training: Get job-ready with intensive skillset training to start with confidence.

If caring is in your nature, this is your chance to turn it into a meaningful career in aged care. We are looking for compassionate individuals for Care Support Officers roles in Gippsland - no experience necessary.

The Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project is a Victorian Government-funded initiative offering you the opportunity to gain hands-on training in an aged care service and a CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support with 50%* upfront costs.

Scan the QR code to enquire now!



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SELMAR INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Regional Specialist Training Fund

DO YOU NEED WORK READY STAFF?

How we support your organisation

1. Candidate recruitment: We present a shortlist of prospective employees ready to engage in employment.
2. Employment readiness: Participants undergo an aged care pre-employment program.
3. Certificate III: Candidates study the Cert III in Individual Support to enhance skills and career growth.
4. Ongoing support: Dedicated Selmar resources ensuring seamless progression and retention.

Selmar Education is boosting the number of Personal Care Assistants in Gippsland through the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) project - a funded Victorian Government initiative.

As the selected Registered Training Organisation for the RSTF project, Selmar will connect individuals with employment and support them through their traineeship, providing hands-on training as they work towards their essential Certificate III in Individual Support.

In turn, this delivers meaningful career opportunities for Gippsland and a skilled, compassionate workforce.

This project is set to enhance local employment and strengthen care services in the region.

SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RSTF PROJECT



Contact Hannah - RSTF project manager on: **0448 327 735**

ASHLEIGH HOUSE IS HIRING!

Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Traineeship Role

Are You Naturally Caring and Compassionate?

Do you have a genuine passion for helping others? Are you looking for a meaningful career where you can make a real difference in the lives of older adults?

Ashleigh House is seeking kind-hearted individuals to join our team as Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Trainees.

About the Opportunity:

This is more than just a job - it's a chance to build a fulfilling career in aged care while receiving top-notch training and support. As part of the Selmar's Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) Project in Gippsland, this traineeship is designed to address the growing need for skilled PCAs in the region.

Traineeship Details:

Study Programs: Enrol in CHC33021 - Certificate III in Individual Support with Selmar Institute of Education. Earn While You Learn: This paid traineeship allows you to start your career while completing your studies. Paid Study Time: Receive some time off the floor to do your coursework. Supportive Culture: Be part of a group of trainees, all experiences and supporting each other through your journey. Traineeship Incentives: are provided to help succeed.

Key Responsibilities:

Resident Care: Provide compassionate assistance with living activities such as personal hygiene, mobility, mealtime, ensuring residents' dignity and well-being. **Teamwork:** Work collaboratively with colleagues, contribute to a positive workplace, and participate in team meetings. **Compliance & Improvement:** Follow all policies and requirements, contribute to quality improvement efforts, accurately document care activities. **Health & Safety:** Ensure a safe environment for residents, staff, others to health and safety regulations, and respond appropriately to emergencies. **Professional Development:** Actively engage in your role within your scope of practice, and participate in performance reviews.

READY TO APPLY? SCAN THE QR CODE



selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund

SELMAR INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

New Initiative to Elevate Aged Care Workforce & Transform Lives in Gippsland

The RSTF project offers a unique blend of hands-on training and theoretical learning. Participants will gain valuable experience while working directly in aged care facilities. This isn't just a job - it's a chance to make a real difference in the lives of older adults.

Selmar's commitment to the Gippsland community goes beyond training. By partnering with local aged care providers, the RSTF project ensures that trainees are equipped with essential skills but are also supported throughout their journey. This includes ongoing mentorship, access to resources, and a supportive environment that fosters growth and learning.

Participants gain access to education and career opportunities in aged care - a field that offers a rewarding and meaningful career path. The project also provides a dedicated Workplace Liaison and ongoing assistance from Selmar consultants.

For those passionate about making a difference in the lives of the elderly, this is a chance to contribute meaningfully to the community while building a rewarding career.

Thinking about a career that really matters? The RSTF project might be exactly what you've been looking for. It's not just a career - it's an opportunity to grow, learn, and give back. We encourage you to apply through the Selmar website. Visit www.selmar.edu.au/regional-specialist-training-fund to learn more.



SELMAR INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Media release

12 September 2024

Selmar's involvement in the Regional Specialist Training Fund

We are excited to update you on our involvement in the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) Project, a vital Department initiative aimed at addressing critical workforce shortages in Gippsland for the aged care sector. As the demand for skilled care workers grows, this project provides a key opportunity for us to make a significant impact on the community and the lives of the elderly.

Here's an overview of what we're doing:

What is the RSTF Project?

The RSTF Project is a state government-funded initiative providing Gippsland residents with access to training and qualifications in aged care. Through this program, participants can study a Certificate III in Individual Support while working in a local aged care facility. Our role is to ensure these trainees are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver high-quality care to the elderly.

Why Gippsland?

Gippsland is experiencing a critical shortage of aged care workers. By focusing on this region, the RSTF project aims to upskill local residents to meet the urgent need for care professionals, enhancing the level of care for elderly individuals while creating meaningful employment opportunities.

How Selmar is involved

We're proud to be leading the delivery of this project. As a team, we are:

- Sourcing Candidates:** Noelia Panayiotidis is leading the interviews and short-listing of candidates, ensuring we select the right people for the 50 future PCA positions.
- Pre-Employment Training:** Candidates will go through pre-employment training, coordinated by Selmar and delivered by Learn Local, to prepare them for the workplace.
- Securing Employment:** Hannah Miles is building strong relationships with aged care employers to ensure a supportive environment for our trainees. After pre-employment training, Noelia works closely with local aged care facilities to place candidates into suitable roles.

Media Release

19 December 2024

Update on the RSTF Project: Employment Success and New Partnerships in Gippsland

The RSTF project continues to make significant strides in empowering individuals and creating meaningful career pathways in Gippsland. From October 2023, our first set of Learn Local classes were held at Sale, Morwell, and Wonthaggi, with exceptional feedback from participants and team members alike.

The enthusiasm and determination demonstrated by attendees highlighted the transformative impact of these sessions. Seventeen individuals successfully completed the pre-employment training program, with several already securing positions and commencing their traineeship in the Certificate III in Individual Support at Ashleigh House. Additionally, many participants have leveraged the skills gained through the Learn Local classes to pursue rewarding careers beyond the aged care sector.

Pre-Employment Training: Building Foundations for Success

Pre-employment training is a cornerstone of our approach, enabling us to identify candidates who are ready to thrive in aged care and related sectors. This process ensures sustainable employment by equipping candidates with essential skills and allowing trainers to assess readiness for these demanding roles.

Exciting Partnership with Opal HealthCare

We are delighted to announce a new partnership with Opal HealthCare, which is committed to welcoming trainees into their care communities across Gippsland. This collaboration provides invaluable opportunities for individuals to gain hands-on experience and grow their careers in aged care, supported by a network of professionals dedicated to quality care.

Our partnership with Opal HealthCare underscores the shared commitment to building a strong and compassionate workforce in Gippsland. Together, we aim to create sustainable employment pathways that benefit both the community and the healthcare sector.

Looking Ahead

We are collaborating with Learn Local across Gippsland to allocate new candidates into upcoming classes, ensuring broader access to these transformative training opportunities. These sessions are designed to prepare candidates for a March start with Opal HealthCare, providing candidates with the skills and confidence needed to thrive.

Page 1

ASHLEIGH HOUSE IS HIRING!

Personal Care Assistant traineeship roles available

Opal HealthCare

Training proudly supported by Selmar Education through the RSTF Program

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Regional Specialist Training Fund

Supporting those who need it most, where they need it most

Opal HealthCare

SELMAR INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Grant Awarded To Support Selmar's New Aged Care Initiative

Empowering and enhancing the sectors we work with is not just a goal or a value for us at Selmar but sits at the heart of everything we do. With this ...

[Read More](#)

WHAT WE DID

The program was delivered through a staged pipeline, with each stage designed to screen for suitability, build confidence and reduce the risk of unsustainable outcomes.

Community-Based Recruitment and Screening

Recruitment was conducted through community networks, Learn Local organisations, Employment Service Providers and targeted digital outreach. Applicants progressed through staged screening to assess motivation, availability, digital confidence and understanding of aged care roles.

Pre-Employment Training

Selected candidates undertook pre-employment training delivered by Learn Local partners. This stage focused on employability skills, confidence-building, digital literacy and realistic

understanding of aged care work. Pre-employment training also supported informed decision-making, enabling participants to determine whether aged care was the right pathway before entering accredited training.

Accredited Training Pathway

Participants who demonstrated readiness progressed to enrolment in the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support. Training delivery was structured to support regional learners and aligned with employer expectations and compliance requirements.

Employer Engagement and Interview Pathways

Employers were engaged throughout delivery and invited to participate in interview and selection processes once candidates had demonstrated readiness. This approach enabled employers to assess suitability and confidence prior to employment and reduced the risk associated with onboarding new entrants.



COHORT 1 & 2

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project was delivered across two cohorts, enabling the program model to be tested, refined and strengthened in response to real-world delivery conditions. This staged approach allowed the project team to identify operational constraints early, respond to employer feedback and improve learner outcomes over time.

Cohort 1 (Early–Mid 2024)

functioned as a pilot phase. It tested community-based recruitment, Learn Local pre-employment delivery and employer engagement processes. While strong learner interest and engagement were achieved, Cohort 1 highlighted several critical system constraints, particularly relating to employer onboarding capacity and timing. Delays between training completion and employment interviews affected learner momentum and reinforced the need for earlier and more structured employer engagement.

Learnings from Cohort 1 informed immediate refinements to recruitment sequencing, communication of expectations and alignment between training milestones and employer readiness.

Cohort 2 (Late 2024–Early 2025)

incorporated these refinements and demonstrated improved alignment with employer demand, particularly across Opal Healthcare sites. Recruitment numbers were intentionally moderated to better match employer capacity, resulting in an earlier employer involvement.

improved learner flow, stronger attendance and more coordinated interview and onboarding processes. Cohort 2 outcomes reflected the benefits of tighter sequencing, clearer communication.



What Changed from Cohort 1 to Cohort 2

1. Clearer Timelines and Tighter Sequencing

Cohort 1 highlighted delays between recruitment, Learn Local delivery, employer interviews and Certificate III commencement. These gaps created uncertainty for some learners and impacted momentum.

In Cohort 2, timelines were deliberately tightened:

- Recruitment, Learn Local delivery and employer engagement were more closely sequenced
- Interview timing was aligned earlier with Learn Local completion

2. Stronger Communication and Expectation Setting

Cohort 1 relied heavily on verbal explanations and one-on-one follow-up, which led to inconsistent understanding of pathways, timeframes and requirements.

In Cohort 2, structured communication tools were introduced:

- Comprehensive RSTF information packs provided at the start of Learn Local

- Clear learner journey maps outlining progression options
- FAQs addressing training, employment, traineeships and distance learning pathways

These resources reduced confusion, improved learner confidence and supported informed decision-making.

3. Increased Aged-Care-Specific Content Earlier

Feedback from Cohort 1 indicated a need for more realistic, sector-specific insight earlier in the pathway.

Cohort 2 enhancements included:

- Aged care content embedded throughout Learn Local delivery
- Direct involvement of Selmar's aged care trainer to speak candidly about the realities of the role
- Explicit discussion of physical, emotional and professional expectations

This supported better self-selection and readiness before learners progressed further.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Employer Engagement in Cohort 1

During Cohort 1, employer engagement focused on testing interest in the RSTF model and confirming workforce demand across the region. A range of aged care providers were approached through direct outreach by the project team, referrals via Learn Local partners and existing sector relationships.

While initial interest was strong, several employers — including Opal Healthcare — were unable to proceed with recruitment in the first cohort due to timing, staffing pressures and limited onboarding capacity. These early discussions highlighted a disconnect between workforce shortages and the practical ability to induct and supervise new staff at that point in time.

Despite this, Cohort 1 engagement was critical in:

- Validating the need for a readiness-based model
- Identifying employer constraints related to supervision, compliance and rostering
- Informing changes to intake size, sequencing and communication

Employer feedback from this phase directly shaped refinements implemented in the second cohort.

Employer Engagement in Cohort 2

Employer engagement in Cohort 2 was more targeted and deliberate, informed by the learnings from Cohort 1. Opal Healthcare became a key employer partner, engaging across multiple sites once onboarding timelines and learner readiness were better aligned with organisational capacity.

In Cohort 2, employer engagement included:

- Early confirmation of workforce demand before learner intake
- Ongoing communication between project staff and site managers
- Participation in learner information sessions and readiness discussions
- Site visits and direct interaction with potential candidates
- Staged interviews aligned to training completion and onboarding schedules

In addition to Opal Healthcare, other aged care providers across Gippsland were engaged through:

- Direct contact initiated by the project team
- Introductions facilitated by Learn Local organisations
- Engagement through community and Employment Service Provider networks

While not all employers progressed to recruitment, these engagements strengthened understanding of regional workforce dynamics and confirmed the need for flexible, employer-led sequencing.

Challenges and Project Responses

- Employer engagement across both cohorts identified consistent sector-wide challenges:
- Limited capacity to onboard multiple new entrants simultaneously
- Supervision and compliance pressures within existing staffing levels
- Rostering constraints and minimum hour requirements
- Risk aversion to traineeships and new workforce entrants

In response, the project:

- Reduced cohort sizes to match confirmed employer capacity
- Introduced staged intakes rather than single large recruitment rounds
- Increased focus on learner readiness and informed decision-making
- Adjusted training and interview timelines to align with employer needs
- These responses reduced risk for employers, improved confidence in candidate readiness and supported smoother transitions into employment where capacity existed



EMPLOYER & TRAINING OUTCOMES

The RSTF Project delivered measurable employment and training outcomes by prioritising readiness, employer alignment and sustained participation over high-volume recruitment. Outcomes reflect a deliberately staged pathway designed to balance learner capability with employer capacity.

Outcome Snapshot

Across both cohorts, the project achieved the following outcomes:

- 453 applications received through community, digital and employer-linked outreach
- 63 participants commenced Learn Local pre-employment training
- 34 participants completed pre-employment preparation
- 32 participants enrolled in the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support
- 17 participants progressed to employer interviews
- 15 participants secured employment in aged care roles

These outcomes demonstrate strong engagement through the recruitment funnel, with intentional attrition at each stage reflecting readiness assessment rather than disengagement.

Employment Success

Fifteen participants secured employment in aged care roles across residential aged care and home and

community care settings. The majority of employment outcomes were achieved in the second cohort, reflecting improved alignment between training completion, employer readiness and onboarding capacity.

Employers reported increased confidence in candidates recruited through the RSTF pathway, citing:

- Clearer understanding of aged care work expectations
- Improved preparedness for shift work, compliance and workplace culture
- Greater confidence during interviews and early employment

Importantly, employment outcomes were achieved without overwhelming employer capacity. Staged interviews and intakes enabled employers to onboard new staff safely while maintaining service quality.

Certificate III Enrolments and Training Progression

Thirty-two participants progressed to enrolment in the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support following completion of pre-employment training. Enrolment pathways included employment-linked traineeships and flexible distance-based delivery models, supporting participants to balance study with work and personal responsibilities.

Participants who did not progress to Certificate III were supported to explore alternative pathways, reducing the likelihood of withdrawal or non-completion.

Beyond the Numbers: Broader Impact

1. Improved learner confidence and employability

Participants developed foundational employability skills, digital capability and confidence, particularly those returning to study or work after long absences.

2. Better informed career decision-making

Pre-employment preparation supported participants to assess suitability for aged care early, reducing unsustainable training enrolments and early workforce exit.

3. Progression to further education or alternative employment

For some participants, the project built confidence, work readiness and clarity, supporting progression into further study or other employment opportunities better aligned with their skills and interests.

What We Achieved, What We Learned and What We Would Do Differently

What We Achieved

Despite operating within a challenging and highly constrained aged care workforce environment, the RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project delivered meaningful and sustainable outcomes for learners, employers and the broader regional workforce system.

The project successfully established a place-based, employer-informed workforce pathway that combined community-based pre-employment preparation, accredited Certificate III training and employer-aligned recruitment. This staged approach enabled participants to build confidence, develop essential skills and make informed decisions before progressing into formal training or employment.

A key achievement of the project was demonstrating the value of readiness-focused delivery. Rather than prioritising high enrolment numbers, the project invested in intensive support and staged progression. This approach resulted in stronger learner engagement, improved training progression and more sustainable employment outcomes, particularly evident in the second cohort following model refinements.

The project also improved access and participation for individuals facing barriers to employment, including return-to-work parents, career changers and participants without post-school qualifications. Through Learn Local partnerships and wraparound support, participants were supported to re-engage with education and employment pathways in a way that reflected their personal circumstances.

Finally, the project strengthened regional partnerships between Selmar Institute of Education, Learn Local organisations and aged care employers. These partnerships improved coordination across the workforce system and increased employer confidence in structured, supported pathways into aged care.

What We Would Do Differently

Delivery across two cohorts enabled continuous learning and highlighted areas where earlier or more deliberate intervention would have further strengthened outcomes. If the project were repeated, several refinements would be implemented from the outset.

Earlier and deeper employer engagement during program design would be prioritised to confirm onboarding capacity, recruitment timelines and workforce demand before learner intake. While these elements were refined in Cohort 2, earlier alignment would reduce delays and uncertainty for participants.

The project would also adopt smaller, more deliberately staged intakes aligned to confirmed employer capacity. This would further reduce onboarding risk and support smoother transitions into employment, particularly in facilities with limited supervision and rostering flexibility. Greater flexibility in training delivery would be built in earlier to better support regional learners managing transport limitations, caring responsibilities or remote locations. This includes earlier planning for distance-based options and adjusted scheduling.

Finally, earlier engagement with a broader range of local employers would reduce reliance on a small number of providers and diversify employment opportunities across the region.

What We Learned

The RSTF project reinforced several practical and sector-wide lessons relevant to future workforce initiatives.

First, wraparound support is essential. Learner success was strongly influenced by practical and personal supports such as case management, assistance with compliance costs, transport, accommodation and digital access. Training alone was insufficient for many participants. Second, confidence and capability development are critical. Informal learning elements - including confidence building, digital literacy, exposure to workplace realities and employer interaction - directly impacted learner engagement, progression and readiness for employment.

Third, community-based engagement drives stronger outcomes. Learn Local organisations and trusted community connectors were consistently more effective than mass recruitment approaches in identifying suitable candidates and supporting informed participation.

Finally, the project highlighted that employer constraints shape workforce outcomes. Workforce shortages do not equate to unlimited hiring capacity, and onboarding, supervision and compliance requirements must be central to program design. Short-term funding models also limit the ability to sustain regional engagement, even where impact is evident.

Future Vision

The RSTF Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project has demonstrated that a place-based, employer-led model can deliver meaningful and sustainable workforce outcomes in regional communities.

As Selmar continues to refine its strategic priorities, the organisation will complete delivery for current aged care cohorts and fulfil all teach-out obligations, ensuring learners and employer partners remain fully supported.

Through this initiative, Selmar has strengthened regional partnerships, developed robust training resources, and refined a staged workforce pathway that aligns recruitment, readiness and employment outcomes. The insights and relationships established through RSTF provide a practical blueprint for future regional workforce programs.

It is anticipated that other providers operating within the sector may draw on these learnings and pathways to continue supporting aged care workforce development across Gippsland.

The foundations laid through this project represent a positive and enduring contribution to the region.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was made possible through the collaboration, commitment and expertise of a wide range of individuals and organisations across Gippsland and beyond. Selmar Institute of Education acknowledges the collective contribution of all partners who supported the delivery of the Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) Gippsland Aged Care Workforce Project.

With Thanks to Our Partners

We gratefully acknowledge the Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) for funding the Regional Specialist Training Fund initiative and enabling a place-based response to aged care workforce needs in the Gippsland region.

We also acknowledge the valued contribution of our delivery and referral partners, including:

- **Opal Healthcare**, for their commitment to regional workforce development and their engagement in supporting new entrants into aged care employment
- **Learn Local organisations**, for delivering high-quality, community-centred pre-employment training and supporting learner readiness
- **Employment Service Providers**, including the Salvation Army, APM and Assuria, for identifying and supporting participants transitioning back into the workforce
- **Community groups and local networks**, whose knowledge, relationships and trust were critical to effective engagement across the region

Training and Support Teams

We acknowledge the project team at Selmar Institute of Education for their professionalism and commitment to person-centred delivery. The collective efforts of trainers, case managers, administrative staff and support teams ensured quality, compliance and learner-focused outcomes throughout the project.

To the Learners

Finally, we thank the learners who participated in the project. Their willingness to engage, persist through challenges and commit to building new skills and career pathways was central to the project's success and impact.



CASE STUDIES - TIKA

1. Basic Information

Name: Tika

Location: Gippsland

Background: Casual and insecure employment; limited financial stability

2. Starting Point

When Tika entered the RSTF project, she was working casually in insecure, cash-in-hand employment, earning approximately \$6 per hour. She was motivated to improve her circumstances but faced practical barriers to participation in training, including limited financial resources and reduced confidence in formal learning environments.

During pre-employment training delivered through a Learn Local provider, it became evident that Tika's ability to engage with digital learning was compromised due to broken prescription glasses, which she could not afford to replace.

3. Training Journey

The RSTF project's person-centred support model enabled early identification of this barrier. Tika's Learn Local trainer coordinated with her employment coach to ensure the cost of replacing her glasses was covered, removing an immediate obstacle to learning.

With this support in place, Tika successfully completed Digital Essentials 1 and progressed into Digital Essentials 2, demonstrating strong commitment to skill development. Her trainer noted her increasing confidence, consistent attendance and willingness to support peers during training sessions.

Although the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support was not initially Tika's preferred pathway, exposure to training, improved confidence and increased understanding of the sector supported informed decision-making about her future.

4. Employment Outcome

Through connections facilitated during the RSTF project, Tika secured employment at a local bowling alley at an award wage of \$31 per hour. Following completion of training, she also obtained her driver's licence, enabling her to take on additional employment with Domino's in hours that aligned with her family and study commitments.

More recently, Tika enrolled in the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support through the RSTF project and progressed into employment in aged care, marking a transition into a regulated and sustainable career pathway.

5. Impact

Tika's experience demonstrates the impact of targeted pre-employment training combined with practical, wraparound support. By addressing immediate barriers and building confidence and capability, the RSTF project supported her progression from insecure work into further education and aged care employment, positioning her for long-term workforce participation.

RECOGNITIONS

Learn Local Awards Recognition

The Learn Local Awards are an annual Victorian awards program that recognises outstanding learner achievement, innovation and impact across the Learn Local sector. The awards place strong emphasis on learner journeys that demonstrate growth, resilience and clear progression into employment or accredited training.

As part of the 2025 Learn Local Awards, two participants from the RSTF Learn Local Cohort 2 program were nominated, recognising the strength of their individual pathways and the quality of Learn Local delivery. One nominee, Jemma Tantram from Heyfield Community Resource Centre, was selected as one of three finalists in her award category.

Learner Journey: Jemma Tantram

After many years focused on raising her family, Jemma sought to re-enter the workforce but lacked confidence in her ability to return to study or pursue a new career. Through the RSTF pathway, she enrolled in the Be Work Ready - Care and Support program delivered by Heyfield Community Resource Centre at TAFE Gippsland's Sale campus.

The program supported Jemma to develop essential employability skills, including digital literacy, communication and an understanding of aged care sector expectations. Importantly, the training environment enabled her to rebuild confidence, set realistic goals and balance study alongside family responsibilities.

Following completion of the course, Jemma progressed into employment as a Personal Care Assistant while undertaking the CHC33021 Certificate III in Individual Support. She has since become a reliable and valued team member, regularly taking on additional shifts and supporting new staff as they commence in the workplace.

Broader Impact and Recognition

Jemma's selection as a finalist highlights the effectiveness of Learn Local-delivered pre-employment training as part of the RSTF model. Her journey demonstrates how accessible, community-based education can support learners to transition confidently into accredited training and sustained employment.

To acknowledge the nominated learners and the importance of sector recognition, Isabella Panayiotidis, Noelia Panayiotidis and Hannah Milnes attended the Learn Local Awards ceremony, reinforcing the project team's commitment to celebrating learner achievement and recognising the broader impact of community-based workforce pathways.

These nominations reflect the wider outcomes of the RSTF project, demonstrating how strong partnerships between Learn Locals, training providers and employers can create clear, supported pathways into employment while contributing to a skilled and confident local workforce across Gippsland.



CASE STUDIES - LARA

1. Basic Information

Name: Lara

Location: Gippsland

Background: Unstable employment; family separation due to financial insecurity

2. Starting Point

When Lara entered the RSTF pathway, she was experiencing significant instability in both employment and personal circumstances. Without secure income or ongoing work, she was unable to afford travel to Western Australia to visit her two daughters, aged eight and fourteen. The lack of financial security limited not only her employment options but also her ability to plan for the future and maintain family connection. Lara also faced learning challenges and was awaiting appropriate medical support. While motivated to engage in training, she required flexibility and understanding to participate effectively.

3. Training Journey

Through the RSTF project, Lara accessed Learn Local-supported pre-employment training and flexible learning arrangements. Online classes were identified as the most effective mode for her learning style, allowing her to focus on one task at a time and manage cognitive load more effectively.

Project staff worked with Lara to understand her learning needs and challenges, providing encouragement, structured feedback and flexibility where possible.

Positive reinforcement and recognition from the RSTF team contributed to increased engagement and confidence, particularly during periods of self-doubt. Lara remained committed to her studies and continued to engage positively, even while navigating personal and health-related challenges, including a recent formal ADHD diagnosis, which has supported her understanding of how she learns.

4. Employment Outcome

Through the RSTF pathway, Lara progressed into stable employment while undertaking training aligned with a recognised qualification. Securing consistent work represented a significant change from her previous circumstances, providing financial stability and increased independence. As a direct result of this stability, Lara was able to book flights to Western Australia to visit her two daughters, something that had not been possible prior to her engagement with the project.

5. Impact

Lara's experience highlights the broader impact of the RSTF model beyond immediate employment outcomes. Stable work and structured training enabled her to rebuild confidence, plan for the future and re-establish family connections that had been disrupted by financial insecurity. Her journey demonstrates how accessible Learn Local delivery, flexible training approaches and person-centred support can create meaningful outcomes for learners facing complex barriers. In this case, employment provided not only a workforce outcome, but a foundation for stability, dignity and renewed opportunity.