

# VILLA MARIA

*For your wellbeing and specialised care*

The introduction of a new IT-based software system, ICARE, to improve the documentation of residential care has been a major focus of Villa Maria. A foundation skills program to support this has led to significant improvements.

Villa Maria knows that the role of carers continues to change and evolve. More than ever, the role requires an ability to read charts and document observations accurately for client (resident) safety and well-being, secure funding via the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) and to pass aged care standards. Documentation is now part of the day-to-day job and regulation puts the skills of carers under the microscope. The ACFI is based on care needs so the enterprise must have accurate and detailed information presented in correct formats. Detailed, meaningful and accurate documentation is critical because for evidence to support claims for funding.



## *Villa Maria*

Villa Maria is a not-for-profit, values-based organisation providing quality services and life enhancing opportunities for older people and children and adults with a disability, their families and carers. Villa Maria has grown to become one of Victoria's largest providers of disability, education and senior services, with more than 60 programs supporting over 5,000 people across Victoria and southern New South Wales.

The foundation skills program was designed to address language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) issues associated with understanding the ACFI language protocols and methodology. Villa Maria understands the expectations placed upon them in terms of meeting compliance requirements. In turn, this means that their workers must be able to document observations, input data and understand policies and procedures, client reports and terminology. The LLN program is focused on documentation, infection control, e.g. progress notes, charts assessment of personal hygiene and behaviour and medication.



*The program has been really useful for the IT illiterate. If they couldn't learn to use the IT systems they would be lost to the industry.*

Vicky Jacques, General Manager, Residential Services

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## Cultural diversity training is also part of the program.

The most recent training cycle has included cultural diversity and conflict resolution training. Most participants at the site have English as a second or third language and are older than the industry average. The site manager found that younger workers picked it up quickly but 1:1 training was used to increase older workers' comfort and reduce isolation.



The program has provided a number of benefits:

- increased confidence and self-worth
- being able to be more clearly understood
- being able to more effectively negotiate
- fitting more effectively into the organisation culture.

The program encourages participants to practice their new found skills. This improves the customer experience in the home and has led to a reduction in complaints.

Downstream benefits that Villa Maria expects to realise include:

- reduced sick leave
- savings on recruitment costs (\$28,524 for recruitment, training and operational costs)
- reduced turnover
- improved employee commitment.

Villa Maria's employee turnover rate was 16% for 2011-2012 and 15% for 2012-2013 – compared to the Australian average of around 25%.



A major identified benefit of the program is that supervisors now spend less time entering case notes on behalf of the personal care assistants. In some instances the carers are sufficiently comfortable entering data on the IT system themselves saving entry and checking time for the supervisors.

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Benefits for Villa Maria include increased funding, better communication and improved accreditation processes.

Since the program took place, Vicky Jacques has identified an improvement in funding for Villa Maria. All residents in aged care are funded through ACFI which is determined by the dependency of the individual. Better documented records of client dependency requirements have contributed to an ACFI funding increase of \$30 per day for each resident. This represents significant additional funding to the organisation – an increase of more than \$3 million over a twelve month period.

Improved communication between the management and line staff has also been observed at Villa Maria as a result of the foundation skills program. More teamwork and greater cohesion is in evidence and carers on the floor display increased initiative and greater confidence in problem solving.

Important benefits for the organisation were also realised in the accreditation process. By participating in this process the LLN trainer was able to explain the standards to carers and help them to understand their role. With this increased knowledge of the standards, carers are able to take more responsibility in the workplace. After their LLN training, carers were also more able to comprehend English language and respond to assessor questioning during the accreditation period.

## Key messages from Villa Maria

Foundation skills training is:

- ***A long term investment – the return may take at least 12 months - Villa Maria has seen a cumulative effect over three years***
- ***More than language, literacy and numeracy – benefits at Villa Maria have included communication, conflict resolution, cultural diversity, organisation-wide continuous improvement, improved teamwork and more proactive employees***
- ***Not just a work benefit – skills can be applied elsewhere with positive impact on individual's personal and family life.***



**NATIONAL FOUNDATION SKILLS  
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## Seven Workplace Champions have been appointed as public ambassadors for foundation skills

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The Foundation Skills Workplace Champions aim to raise employer awareness of the benefits of addressing foundation skills in the workplace by sharing positive outcomes from their own organisations.

### Foundation Skills Workplace Champions

- Anthony Kittel, Redarc Electronics Pty Ltd
- Victoria Jacques, Villa Maria Aged Care
- Yvonne Webb, CHARTTES Industry Training Advisory Council, NT
- Vince Ball, ACT Regional Building and Construction Industry Training Council
- Graeme Finlayson, Oak Training and Development, Tasmania
- Ro Coroneos, Lend Lease
- Kim Moore, Unitywater

Further information on individual champions is available on the website of the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project: <http://www.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/nfss>

Support for the Workplace Champions is being provided by Michael Taylor from the Australian Industry Group, and the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project Team.

The National Foundation Skills Strategy Project (NFSS) 2014-2015 is a joint initiative by Australian governments to support priority action areas from the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults.

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