



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

Young people from the CALD community in Bendigo, particularly young Karen men and women



Aim

To support Karen young people to complete a Certificate II in Engineering at Bendigo TAFE to provide them with new skills and career opportunities.



Organisations Involved

Bendigo TAFE, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, local employment services, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, City of Greater Bendigo and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.



Location

Bendigo, Victoria.



Funding

Funded by organisations involved, with bilingual support funded by Victorian Government.

CASE STUDY

Certificate II in Engineering Studies Pilot Program – Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

The Certificate II in Engineering Studies program delivers a formal qualification, taught with bilingual support in the Karen language. Bilingual support provided throughout the program was essential to the pilot's success. The program is an innovative example of how local organisations are coming together to solve employment challenges faced by people from a refugee or migrant background in their community.

Background

Through their work with the multicultural community in Bendigo, LCMS has seen that many students from migrant and refugee backgrounds, even those with higher levels of English proficiency, often struggle to undertake further education to support their employment outcomes. This is often because they are not offered the right support to do so. At the same time, the manufacturing sector in Bendigo has seen an increased need for workers.

About the program

Together with key partners LCMS was able to coordinate a Certificate II in Engineering Studies, taught completely with bilingual support in the Karen language. Key partners in delivering the project included Bendigo TAFE, local job service providers, Bendigo Senior Secondary School and the Victorian Government. The program simultaneously addresses employment barriers and the need for manufacturing workers in the Bendigo region. The program generated a lot of community interest, with over 20 potential students attending the initial



Nay Thar, one of the participants giving a speech.



information session, and 18 enrolling to start the program shortly after.

At the beginning of the course, many students had low literacy and numeracy skills. It would not have been possible for students to undertake this course without bilingual and other support.

The bilingual support component was unique to this pilot, with 100% bilingual support provided to the students every step of the way as they navigated English as a second language and the complexities of engineering terminology. LCMS worked with the students from the very beginning, providing parallel teaching, tutoring and English language tuition. Students were also provided with pre-teaching to lessen the learning impact of the course and given onsite support throughout.

Towards the end of the program, LCMS shifted its focus to employment support. They worked closely with local industry stakeholders who were eager to take the students into paid employment. Students were also offered opportunities to visit industries to see the career connections and pathways linked to engineering.

Student resources and fees, time and funding were contributed by the organisations involved in the project.

Bendigo TAFE provided scholarships to the most vulnerable students, and the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet funded the bilingual support component of the project. Additional Language, literacy and numeracy support, and employment support was provided by LCMS through their Department of Education ACFE funding.



Group Photo of participants and stakeholders.

Challenges

There were three overarching challenges associated with the implementation of the program.

1. COVID-19 and subsequent restrictions meant that face to face classes had to be cancelled. The students were left in limbo and not knowing if classes would resume. Students left the course due to the uncertainty of whether the course would continue during this time. Two students went on to find work and when classes resumed, it was difficult for them to leave their jobs. Furthermore, social distancing requirements meant that TAFE would not have been able to accommodate them even if they were wanting to return.
2. During the lockdown due to COVID-19, the classes had to adapt to be over Zoom. LCMS supported students to adapt to online learning, which resulted in an opportunity to improve their digital literacy skills, with students having near perfect attendance throughout the challenging period.
3. Provision of bilingual support would not have been possible without funding.

Outcomes

Out of the twelve students, all are either working or undertaking further study after graduating from the Certificate II in Engineering Studies program at Bendigo TAFE. This is truly a testament to the success



of this program. Students have much more confidence in all areas of their studies and their English language skills have also improved as a result. This course demonstrated just what is possible with collaboration and with adequate support. The students were able to overcome the barriers facing them and are now facing bright careers in an industry that is screaming for workers. The students surpassed all expectations, with one of them even being nominated by the Engineering department at Bendigo TAFE as their pre-apprenticeship student of the year.

Out of the twelve students, two are now enrolled in a Cert 3 Welding apprenticeship, seven are working as Labourers in a Truss Factory in Bendigo whilst continuing to look for apprenticeships, two have returned to Bendigo Senior to complete their VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Higher Learning), and one is working in an unrelated field whilst looking for an apprenticeship in Fitting and Turning or Mechanics.

Students have demonstrated far more confidence in all areas of their studies in addition to improving their English skills as a direct result of the program.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated the following key learnings for LCMS:

1. Bilingual Support in a formal setting is crucial to the success of programs working with communities with low English language proficiency. According to Sylvia Phan, Senior Coordinator, Education and Employment Pathways at LCMS, this *“support was vital in the beginning of the program but as the year progressed the students have become less dependent on the bilingual support, as their literacy and numeracy skills improved.”*
2. It was important that the course could adapt to the needs of the students. For example, it was quickly realised that low numeracy skills were a particular challenge for the students, so classes were adapted to focus on industry-specific numeracy skills. This started with measurements (differentiating between mm, cm and m), and progressed to students being able to calculate surface area on complex shapes amongst other things.
3. Collaboration with partners is the key to success
4. There is a lot more demand for tailored further education opportunities for CALD community members, then there are opportunities

More information

If you are seeking further information about the project, or you are able to provide apprenticeships or employment opportunities, please contact:

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