

FSSI IMPACT REPORT

Future Social Service Institute
June 2021

Listen. Lead. Learn. Link.



FSSI

FUTURE
SOCIAL
SERVICE
INSTITUTE

FSSI – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

2016

Future Social Service Institute founded

RMIT and VCOSS approves the establishment of a VCOSS-RMIT Institute and the Future Social Service Institute is born.

2017

FSSI Vocational Scholarship program established

Student scholarships offered to support the workforce of the future.

Research and evaluation activities commence

Generating insights and knowledge to inform, support and strengthen sector growth and transformation.

Executive Masterclass Program launched

Helping executives and senior managers to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing social service sector.

Establishment of FSSI Fellows Network

Bringing together researchers with a shared interest in social service sector workforce challenges.

2018

Knowledge reviews to inform the Victorian Community Services Industry Plan

Informed by our evidence review of 10 priority areas identified by the community sector.

NDIS Future Workforce Capability Initiative

Co-designing a suite of values-based curriculum products for the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing and Disability).

Delivery of Family Violence Leadership Intensive Program commences

Strengthening leadership capabilities in the family violence sector via a co-designed curriculum shaped by participants.

Evaluation of Community Traineeships Pilot Project commences

Evaluation of VCOSS-led Pilot Project supporting job seekers in Dandenong, Hume and Bendigo to undertake traineeships in the community services sector.

Community capacity building project

Co-designing new pathways to inclusion for people with disability in Glenorchy.

Social Economy Report

Landmark report highlighting the importance of social service sector jobs to the economy and community.

2019

Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project commences

Growing leadership and management capacity and capability within the social service sector.

FSSI Alumni Network established (later renamed Leadership Network)

Building a strong, connected social services sector.

Data Linkages Project

Developing an integrated data set on the social service workforce to inform future planning.

Meta-evaluation of the FSSI education model

Building the evidence base on interventions to improve student retention and outcomes.

Evaluation of Reach, Train, Employ Project commences

COTA-led project to break the cycle of long-term unemployment and grow the social service workforce.

2020

Working for Victoria

Supporting community service organisations to engage with the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria job creation program.

Stories into Evidence Research Project

Joint project with VCOSS documenting the Victorian community service sector's response to the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transition of Family Violence Leadership Intensive Program to online format

Delivery of program to 3 cohorts of leaders from Victoria's family violence sector.

Disability Advocacy Research Project

Exploring the impact of the NDIS on Victorian disability advocacy and self-advocacy organisations.

Innovative Traineeships Program Evaluation commences

Evaluation of VCOSS-led place-based community services traineeship program providing a supported training pathway into the disability sector.

Expansion of FSSI Fellows and Friends Network

Bringing together researchers, educators, policy advisors and practitioners to support the growth, quality and adaptation of the social service sector.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE – WIDI

2021 and beyond...

Skills in Practice (SKIP) Project / Higher Apprenticeship and Traineeships Social Service Project (HATSSP)

Major initiative to grow the social service workforce and address skills gaps, while responding to rising, pandemic-related unemployment.

Family Violence Workforce Project

Applied research project designed to establish a clear and consistent view of the jobs, roles and functions across the Victorian specialist family violence sector.

Disability Standards Project

Research project to identify a typology of disability services and framework linking services to professional standards.

Common Workforce Dataset Project

Project to develop a workforce data set for the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and identify opportunities to enhance existing approaches to workforce data collection.

Leadership Intensive Program

Fourth year of delivery of FSSI's flagship non-accredited program - the Leadership Intensive Program.

Feminist Leadership Project

Applied research project exploring how feminist leadership practice informs the management and governance of the family violence and primary prevention sectors.

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Acknowledgment of Country

FSSI acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct our business. FSSI respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. FSSI also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

ABOUT US

Listen. Lead. Learn. Link.

The Future Social Service Institute (FSSI) is a dynamic and innovative contributor to the social service landscape in Victoria. We partner with diverse social service organisations and government to build a high-quality workforce at a time of major growth and disruption and construct scalable lifelong learning solutions for the social services sector.

Hosted by RMIT, Victoria's largest dual sector university with a long history of working directly with industry, and co-founded with the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) - Victoria's 'peak of peaks', the Victorian state government has co-invested to establish an effective institute with the capability to address intractable workforce challenges in the social service sector.

At FSSI, we have a vision of a strong Victorian community supported by a diverse, high-quality, responsive and innovative social sector. We see a sector strong enough to meet any challenge and resilient enough to withstand any crisis.

To make this vision a reality, we are driving innovation in education, training and applied research.

Our genuine partnerships with experts by experience, state and federal governments, community service organisations, unions and peak bodies are enabling us to advance the growth and transformation of the social service sector and build a stronger Victoria.

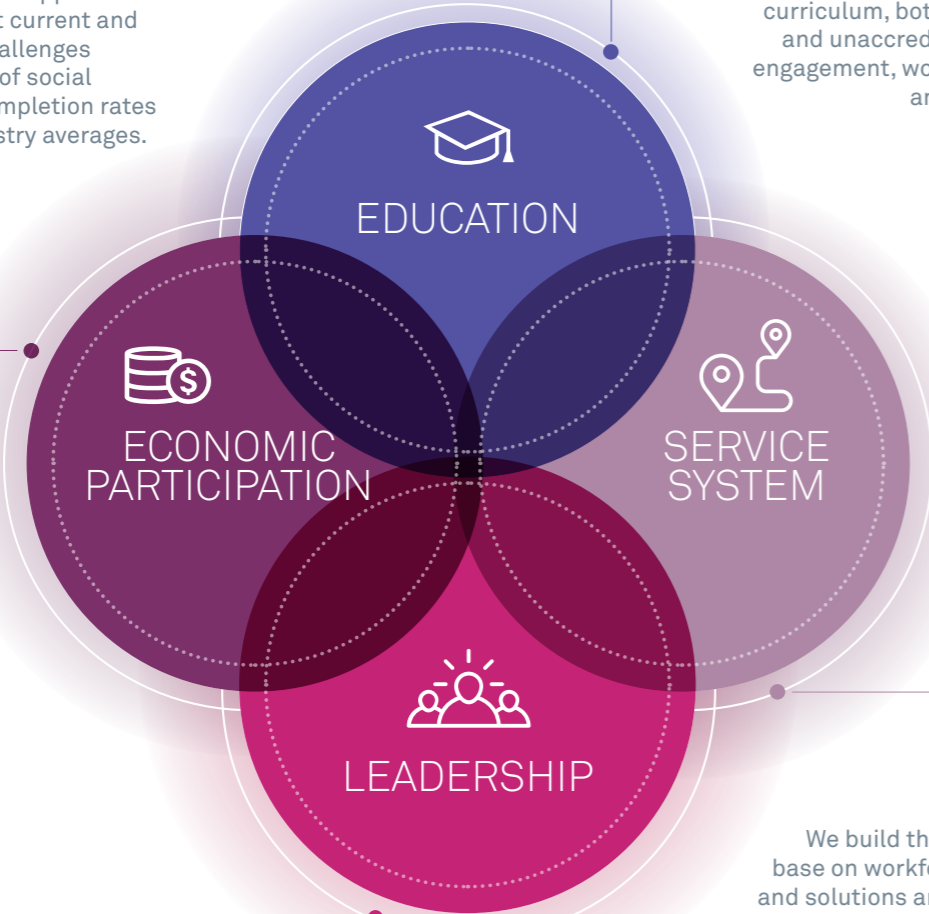
We are placing the people who are directly affected at the centre of our work to help us set priorities, co-design solutions and transform service approaches.



Our areas of impact

Over the past five years, FSSI has sought to generate impact in the following domains:

We co-design and scale up new pathways to support industry to meet current and future sector challenges in their delivery of social services. Our completion rates are double industry averages.



We work to improve curriculum, both accredited and unaccredited, to drive engagement, work readiness and capability.

We create innovative training solutions and enhance leadership capability, equipping workers to drive transformational improvement across social service delivery sectors.

We build the evidence base on workforce needs and solutions and support job creation, and develop sustainable, long-term pipelines of workers across the social service sector.



“FSSI has filled a critical gap for the sector; providing us with a go to partner to map and understand the workforce we have, to conceptualise what is needed, and to understand how to strengthen both what we’ve got and how to build the workforce we need for the future.”

Jenny Smith, Chief Executive Officer - Council to Homeless Persons

IMPACT DOMAIN #1 EDUCATION

We improve workforce capacity and fit by designing better qualifications and developing new educational pathways. We gather evidence and insights on new training approaches for diverse cohorts, understanding that there is strength in diversity. We co-design programs and qualifications with people with lived experience at the centre, ensuring they meet the needs of service users.

The Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Project, the first of its kind in Australia, is building a pipeline of future leaders for the social service sector.

NDIS Future Workforce Capability Initiative

When FSSI develops a new education program, we place the people who are directly affected at the centre of the design process. In 2019, we worked in collaboration with the sector and experts by experience to co-design five new values-based curriculum products for the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing and Disability), and four new RMIT microcredentials to assist with the training and professional development of sector workers.

Covering the **ethics of care, human rights-led practice, power and abuse, working with diversity, and enabling technology**, the innovative new curriculum has an emphasis on experiential learning. Videos and VR experiences play a key role in helping students better understand the perspectives of service users. The new curriculum is available in digital form to enable delivery across a range of contexts and is providing students with the skills needed for a successful career in the social service sector.

What students have been saying...

'People's experiences told us what Really mattered. It's wanting to be seen, wanting to be heard, wanting to be a full person in their own right.'

At FSSI, we work in genuine partnership with industry to transform the skills system and create sustainable jobs. We co-design ground-breaking new programs and pathways featuring innovative work-integrated learning approaches. We also build the evidence base on models and interventions that support diverse students to successfully complete their education and training.

Higher Apprenticeships Pilot Program

Since 2019, we have been leading the development of a Higher Apprenticeships training program for the Victorian social service sector. This work integrated learning model is based on established apprenticeship models found in trades like construction, the pilot program is supporting opportunities for workers already in the sector to build career pathways.

The program provides current team leaders and supervisors with on-the-job up-skilling and a credentialing pathway into management roles via the nationally accredited RMIT Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management (ADCSM). Working with RMIT and our industry

partners, the pilot program represents an important step towards a sustainable pipeline of future sector leaders.

Evaluation of the Reach, Train, Employ Project

Many older members of our community are struggling with long-term unemployment at the same time as the social services sector is undergoing a period of rapid growth and expansion. FSSI is currently partnering with the Council of the Ageing (COTA) and Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand (GSANZ) on a pilot project designed to break the cycle of long-term unemployment for Victorians aged 50 years and older and residing in the Brimbank, Melton and Bacchus Marsh areas of Melbourne.

We are leading the evaluation of this project, providing insights and data to help improve the design and implementation of the program in real time. As part of our evaluation, we are looking at the partnership itself – exploring partner organisations' views and experiences of the partnership approach. In this way, we are increasing understanding of the kind of partnerships that produce innovative and responsive programs that address the needs of individuals, industry and the community.



Evaluation of the Community Traineeship Pilot Project (CTPP)

Educational difficulties, economic disadvantage, homelessness, and other challenges leave the potential of many young people in our community untapped. VCOSS is leading an initiative that seeks to support young people into careers in the social services sector by providing training in aged care, disability, family violence and other community services. The Community Traineeships Pilot Program (CTPP) aims to support up to 125 young job seekers in areas of high youth unemployment through a traineeship. To date, the program boasts a completion rate of 80% as compared to 40% for the same qualification undertaken without support.

As the partner responsible for leading the program evaluation, FSSI has convened a Youth Action Research Group (YARG) comprising program participants who are helping us to identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement. By working in partnership with the young people completing the traineeship, we can ensure that the educational supports provided are the supports they need.

Evaluation of Innovative Traineeships Program

Rapid growth in the disability service industry has resulted in an urgent need for new workers. The Innovative Traineeships Program is a place-based initiative led by VCOSS to provide an attractive new training pathway into the disability sector.

The traineeships are designed to support students to upskill via completion of the Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) alongside on-the-job training. Trainees not only gain a formal qualification, but they also gain valuable workplace experience and a wage at the same time. Organisations hosting trainees gain the opportunity to grow and diversify their workforce. Two cohorts of students commenced the traineeship in October 2020, with 20 students studying at Gippsland TAFE and 16 students at Victoria University.

FSSI is leading the evaluation of this program and sits on the Project Control Group which oversees the program. Insights from the evaluation will be used to enhance the delivery of the program and inform the development of a potential sustainable scaled version of the innovative traineeship model.

FSSI's evaluation work is driving real-time improvements in student experience and retention across a number of vocational education programs.



IMPACT DOMAIN #2 ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

We co-design and scale up new pathways to support industry to meet current and future sector challenges in their delivery of social services. By supporting a more diverse range of learners, and improving completion rates, we are building a larger, more diverse social service workforce.

Scholarship Program

Investing in the next generation of social care workers is one of the ways we can ensure the growth and transformation of the social service sector.

By helping students with diverse backgrounds and experiences to access skills systems and providing them with tailored wrap-around support, innovative curriculum, and high-quality teaching, we are building and strengthening the workforce of the future.

Between 2017 and 2019, we offered 210 scholarships to prospective students, 178 of which were accepted. We also identified key barriers to accessing and engaging in quality education, training and professional development and have developed a range of strategies to address these barriers. The table on page 8 provides an outline of what made up the scholarship offerings, noting that not all students required all items. The figure below highlights enrolments under the scholarship program.

Scholarship recipient enrolments and outcomes

Certificate III

AVERAGE COMPLETION RATE **33%**

FSSI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM COMPLETION RATE

74%

93 Enrolments
69 Graduated

Certificate IV

AVERAGE COMPLETION RATE **28%**

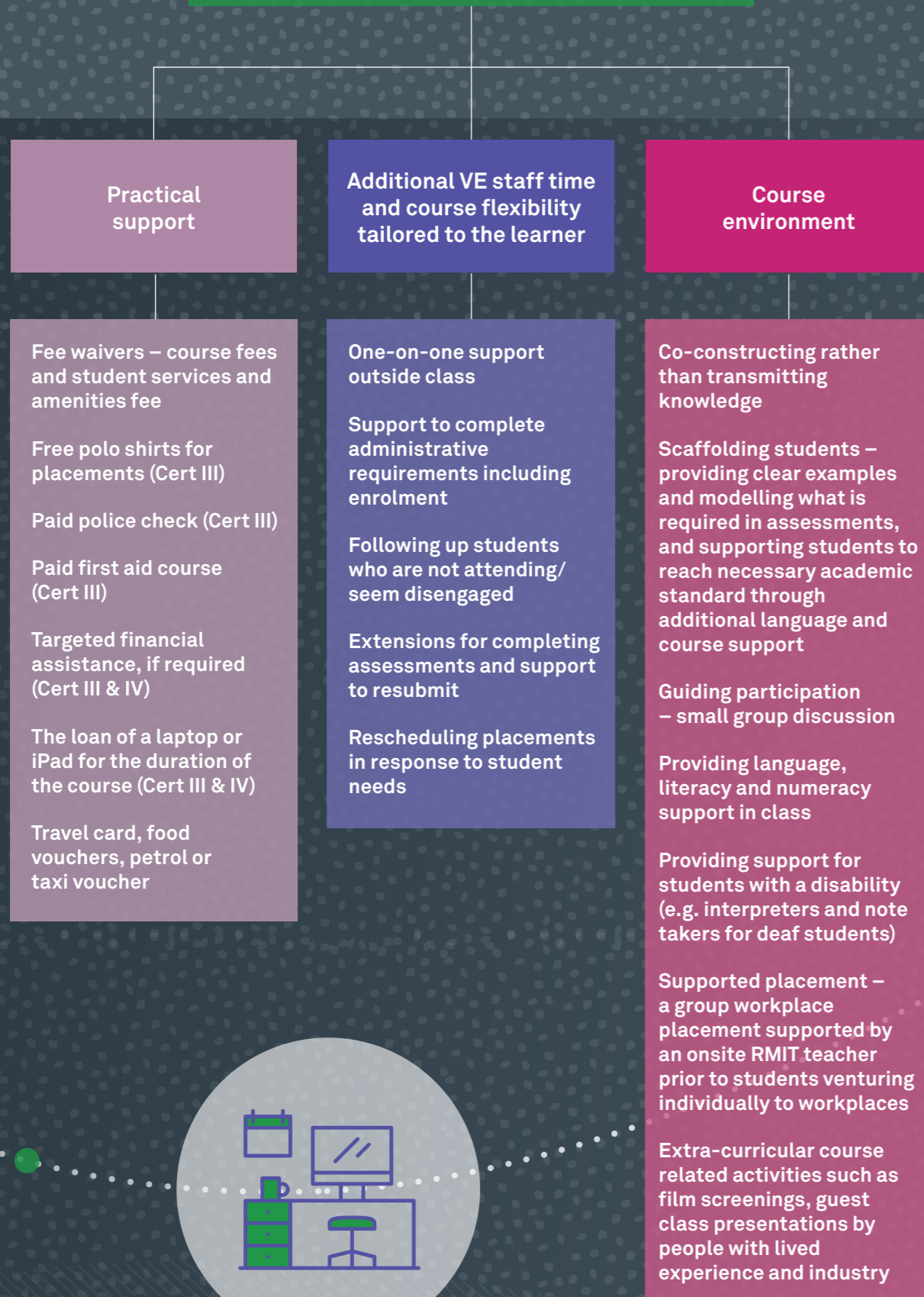
FSSI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM COMPLETION RATE

68%

85 Enrolments
58 Graduated

(includes likely graduates awaiting placement delayed due to COVID-19)

Drivers of increased student retention



Supporting sector engagement with the Working for Victoria initiative

In 2020, the Working for Victoria initiative was introduced to help Victorian jobseekers, including those who had lost their jobs due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, to find new work opportunities. Funded by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) as part of the Victorian Government's \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package, the initiative sought to create jobs and enhance the skills of job seekers across Victorian communities and sectors.

At the request of the Victorian Government, VCOSS assembled a dedicated team with FSSI as a core partner to assist the community sector

to engage with this opportunity. In the first phase of this collaboration, VCOSS and FSSI worked with community service organisations, including specialist peak bodies, to support their development of proposals that met the needs of employers and the sector and increase support to the community at a time of unprecedented need.

FSSI has also been collaborating with the Victorian government to assist with the provision of specialised workforce insights and helping to identify training needs. FSSI is continuing to work closely with government departments, peak bodies and unions to support organisations who are funded and ensure positive experiences for workers – and encourage them to stay in the sector.



Skills in Practice (SKIP) Project / Higher Apprenticeship and Traineeships Social Service Project (HATSSP)

As Australia's fastest growing jobs sector, the social services have a vital role to play in Victoria's economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. FSSI has recently launched two major projects designed to stimulate workforce growth and development: the Skills in Practice (SKIP) Project and the Higher Apprenticeship and Traineeships Social Service (HATSSP) Project.

Both projects are employer and employment-led, focusing on providers who are struggling to fill funded vacancies for new workers, and those requiring the upskilling and credentialing of their existing workforce. They utilise a three-way partnership approach, bringing together the employer, the employee undergoing on the job training, and RMIT as the lead training and assessment provider. FSSI is providing project management expertise, industry support and workplace mentoring.

The training models are based on existing 'workplace partnership' projects used by RMIT and a range of community sector providers for the Certificate IV in Disability, the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) and the Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management. They are informed by the evaluation and insights gained from the FSSI Higher Apprenticeship project and other related work-based training models in the community sector.

Workforce and Employment Growth: Skills in Employment Project (SkiP)

- Funded by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions as part of the Working for Victoria fund
- Partnerships with employers
- 600 new workers employed into disability and aged care worker roles
- Concurrent 'earn & learn' delivery on the job of either Certificate IV in Disability or Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing), with integrated two-week pre-service induction program
- All 600 workers gain an accredited qualification during employment

Workforce Upskilling and Credentialing: Higher Apprenticeships, Social Services Extension Project HATSSEP

- Funded by the Department of Education and Training
- Partnerships with employers
- 200 existing workers gain Certificate IV in Disability on the job
- 200 existing workers in emerging leadership/management roles gain Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management on the job

Joint Developmental Evaluation and Co-Design Activities

These projects are creating pathways into areas of the workforce that are struggling to fill existing vacancies, supporting 1,000 workers to gain an accredited qualification at the same time.

IMPACT DOMAIN #3 SERVICE SYSTEM

We build the evidence base on workforce needs and solutions and support job creation, developing sustainable, long-term pipelines of workers across the social service sector.

Knowledge Reviews to inform the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan

The Victorian social services industry is undergoing a period of substantial growth and change due to the introduction of complex new service models such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), sweeping changes in the family violence sector, and significant reforms across the mental health and aged-care sectors.

To prepare the sector for these challenges, the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCSS) and Department of Health and Human Services partnered to develop a 10 year plan for the community services industry. The plan was informed by extensive industry consultation and the latest research and evidence on the industry's priority areas.

In early 2018, FSSI completed an evidence review to inform the development of the Community Services Industry Plan, with contributions from academic experts in each of the ten priority areas identified by the community sector. These priority areas were:

- Flexible person-centred funding models;
- Place-based services and systems;
- Person-centred services;
- Workforce of the future for Community Services Industry Plan;
- Strengthening outcomes;
- Information sharing and technological innovation;
- Regulatory frameworks;
- Governance and leadership;
- Organisational and industry readiness; and
- Embedding evidence.

FSSI is co-designing critical workforce solutions with people who use services, the social service sector, government, training providers and unions.



FSSI's research found that demand-driven services, individualised services, new regulatory environments, and transformations in management practice and leadership had made for unparalleled change in the social service sector.

Social economy report

On 6 September 2018, FSSI launched a report entitled "Victoria's Social Economy: Social Opportunity, Economic Growth". The report highlighted the enormous growth in the social economy workforce, arguing that its workforce must be viewed as the workforce of the future. Critiquing the entrenched gender bias that has contributed to the failure to recognise the economic contribution and value of the social service industry, the report warned that "historically grounded assumptions about the gendered nature of work...continue to shape policy makers' understanding of the future".

Noting the relatively limited impact of technology in this sector, the report argued that "[t]he highly relational and personal nature of the work within the traditionally 'feminine' sectors of health care and social assistance mean it will be one of the few areas of the Victorian workforce that will not be adversely affected by the increasing automation of work". At the same time, the report noted "a growing precariousness in security and conditions" with increasing rates of casualization and low rates of pay for workers.

Data Linkages Project

The Victorian social service sector is diverse and complex. Whilst there are multiple data sets that capture aspects of the scale and composition of this growing workforce, none provide the overall picture sector leaders need to inform workforce planning, growth and transformation.

To solve this problem, FSSI has been building an integrated data set encompassing all areas of the social service workforce. Containing aggregated data on a range of metrics, including workforce demographics, skills and training, and the job market, it has enabled us to explore workforce issues in greater depth than ever before. It also allows us to combine new insights with findings from other datasets to answer priority questions raised by the sector.



The Impact of the NDIS on the Victorian Disability Advocacy Sector Project

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has transformed the way disability services are delivered in Victoria. Since its introduction, Victorian disability advocacy and self-advocacy organisations have been struggling to meet growing demand for their services.

To better understand the challenges they are facing, FSSI collaborated with VCOSS on a research project exploring the impact of the NDIS on the Victorian Disability Advocacy Sector.

We found that the introduction of the NDIS has led to a sustained increase in demand for advocacy and self-advocacy services which has not been adequately supported by additional resourcing. This issue has been exacerbated by confusion around the roles and responsibilities of advocates, with many being expected to perform tasks outside their remit.

FSSI has provided recommendations for NDIA, Commonwealth and Victorian Governments and the Victorian disability advocacy sector to address systemic issues identified in the research. The research has provided findings to support the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) and the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU), in the development of new resources and tools to alleviate pressure arising from increased NDIS related activities.

Stories into Evidence Research Project

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia in early 2020, Victoria's social service organisations had to rapidly adapt to a radically different operating environment. During the early days of the crisis, FSSI and VCOSS identified an urgent need to understand the nature and impact of the service delivery adaptations occurring, and the changes to "felt demand".

Research led by FSSI and VCOSS identified crucial adaptations implemented by social service organisations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services and launched the Stories into Evidence Project to document the Victorian community service sector's response to the first six months of the crisis. Between July and September 2020, we spoke to over 100 representatives from more than 50 community sector organisations across the state.

Our research revealed an urgent need for increased funding to improve workforce demand modelling, enhance digital infrastructure and staff training within the sector, and support further research and knowledge transfer in relation to COVID-19 adaptations.

Gateways and Gatekeepers

System level structural barriers and rationing decisions lead to different pathways for people experiencing mental illness under the NDIS, according to research recently completed by FSSI PhD candidate Elizabeth Hudson.

Submitted in August 2020, Ms Hudson's doctoral thesis explores the social justice implications of NDIS policy and design as it relates to people with episodic mental illness. Drawing on interviews with people with mental illness and NDIS professionals, she found that those deemed eligible for NDIS funding have greater access to "choice and control" and social inclusion. Those considered ineligible face a less certain future and are likely to receive little or no support. This can have a deficit impact on their mental health recovery.

It is often difficult to predict how and when people with mental illness might need supports and services, and Ms Hudson found that the NDIS is not yet well-equipped to support their specific and fluctuating needs. "The NDIS requires a policy shift to better reflect mental illness, and it needs an organisational structure which is more agile and flexible," she argues.

Her research provides valuable insights which she hopes will inform future policy and practice and improve the health outcomes of people with episodic mental illness under the NDIS.

Family Violence Workforce Project

Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its recommendations in 2016, the family violence sector has undergone a period of significant change. Although a great deal of progress has been made, for workforce reform to continue there needs to be a clear and consistent view of the jobs, roles and functions across the Victorian specialist family violence sector.

This project will involve extensive consultation to understand the current and future requirements of the family violence and sexual assault sectors. The project will develop a series of research products including generic role profiles, job descriptions, a selection and assessment template and a workforce forecasting model.

FSSI is collaborating with a range of partners on this project including Domestic Violence Victoria / Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, No To Violence, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, Australian Services Union and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

FSSI has supported Masters and PhD students to build the evidence base to improve outcomes for Victorians accessing social services.

Disability Standards Project

In early 2021, the Victorian Disability Worker Commission engaged FSSI to investigate professional standards in the delivery of disability services. As part of this project, FSSI developed a typology of disability services and a framework linking these services to relevant professional standards, codes of conduct, capability frameworks and qualifications. This research will assist the Commission to administer Part 7 of the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*.

Common Workforce Dataset Project

High quality, timely data and insights are essential to inform workforce planning and to support workforce growth, quality and adaptation.

However workforce data across the social service sector is severely lacking, particularly in the area of specialist homelessness services.

This project – which is being sponsored by the Council to Homeless Persons – will investigate workforce data collection approaches used in the social service sector and develop a methodology and tools to build a baseline workforce data for specialist homelessness services.

Together with sector partners, FSSI is creating workforce insights and forecasting models to improve planning and support workforce growth, quality and adaptation.

IMPACT DOMAIN #4 LEADERSHIP

We create innovative training solutions and enhance leadership capability, equipping workers to drive improvement, and respond to reform across social service delivery sectors. We increase worker retention by developing new upskilling pathways and innovative leadership programs.

Developing leadership capability in the family violence sector

Approximately one in four Australian women have experienced an act of violence by an intimate partner. On average, one Australian woman is killed each week at the hands of her intimate partner. We are amid a national emergency and those working in the family violence sector are on the front lines of the crisis.

In 2018, FSSI and Family Safety Victoria (FSV) saw an opportunity to transform FSSI's Executive Masterclass Program into a dedicated training course to strengthen leadership capabilities within the family violence sector. Sponsored by FSV, FSSI developed our non-accredited Leadership Intensives Program to provide advanced leadership training to leaders already working within the sector. Based upon a responsive curriculum approach, all program content and delivery are shaped by participants to meet their individual needs and an evaluation identifies enhancements to the program for current and future cohorts.

Covering topics such as Trauma-informed Leadership, Feminist Leadership Practice, and Leadership in a Time of Crisis, the curriculum is enabling sector leaders to build their knowledge and capabilities to better navigate an ever-changing social landscape.

Nearly 50 distinguished guest speakers have been involved in the program to date, including former Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police, Christine Nixon, CEO of VCOSS, Emma King, Co-founder of the Safe Schools Coalition Victoria, Roz Ward, renowned feminist academic Professor Pavla Miller and best-selling author, workplace wellbeing teacher and playful change activator Michelle McQuaid.

Family Violence Leadership Network

Through FSSI's Leadership Intensive Program, participants have developed and strengthened their knowledge, skills, mindsets and networks to support and lead the growth and transformation of the social service sector. The "Leadership Intensive Network" was established in 2019 to complement the Program and provide past participants an opportunity to reflect on how their leadership practice has changed. It also provides a forum for them to share ideas about how new knowledge has been applied in their workplaces.

Supported by Family Safety Victoria as Action 4.2 of Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019 – 2022, the Network is designed to enable participants to continue to build on their learning in relation to contemporary leadership practice. The focus and design of the Network was developed in consultation with members through an Activation Event on 26 July 2019 and follow up consultation with members.

The key features of the Network include:

- an online platform in LinkedIn, which is used to share content on leadership practice, and to facilitate member engagement and networking;
- a regular newsletter, Leadership Matters, which shares content related to leadership including interviews with diverse leaders as part of FSSI's vLog series; and
- a series of digital events – Fireside Chats – exploring topics of interest to the Network and to the social service industry more broadly.

Feminist Leadership Research Project

At FSSI, we understand the importance of building the knowledge base to inform the transformation of the social service sector. When participants in the FSSI Leadership Intensive Program observed that common assumptions about leadership often have gendered roots, we partnered with Family Safety Victoria (FSV) to undertake a research project on feminist leadership within the Victorian family violence sector.

Involving a series of interviews with sector leaders, coupled with a comprehensive literature review, the project explores how contemporary feminist leadership practice informs the management and governance of the family violence and primary prevention sectors.

The research will generate new knowledge about how feminist leadership practice in the Victorian Family Violence sector, and the broader social service sector.

FSSI is supporting Family Safety Victoria to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Family Violence. FSSI is working closely with sector peak bodies to design solutions to key workforce challenges.



FSSI Fellows and Friends Network

Over the past five years, FSSI has built relationships with researchers with a shared interest in understanding the challenges facing the social service workforce. The network has grown to 36 members and includes researchers with expertise in vocational education, social work, management, social policy, health, gender relations and feminist theory, statistics, data analytics, planning, design and creative practice.

The network provides researchers in the field with the opportunity to share their knowledge and connect with others with shared interests. Members have actively contributed to key FSSI projects including authoring knowledge reviews to inform the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan. In addition, members have provided valuable insights and guidance to inform the design and delivery of a number of FSSI projects including the Stories into Evidence Project.



Visiting Experts Series

With the introduction of disability worker registration in Victoria, FSSI partnered with Victoria's Disability Services Commissioner in early 2020 to sponsor a visit by representatives from the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and Unison. Marian O'Rourke, Interim Director for Regulation and Standards at NISCC, and Fidelma Carolan, formerly a Regional Official at Unison, helped to lead the phased implementation of the Register for Social Care Workers which was rolled out between 2004 and 2017. They played a key role in ensuring that the regulatory system provided professional development opportunities for workers, and benefits for people who access services.



As part of their visit, O'Rourke and Carolan met with Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and for Child Protection Luke Donnellan, Disability Commissioners Dan Stubbs and Arthur Rogers, as well as social service providers and practitioners, representatives from peak and advocacy bodies, unions, government officials, teachers and academics. FSSI is exploring a formal partnership with NISCC to support our shared interests and priorities and to advance learnings from the visit.

WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY...

“NDS has welcomed FSSI in the disability workforce space. The Institute has been another voice highlighting the importance of the disability workforce, and the need for a sufficient and appropriately skilled workforce to ensure high quality service provision to people with disabilities. NDS has particularly welcomed the thought leadership, research, workforce promotion and employment initiatives of the Institute.”

**Sarah Fordyce, State Manager
Victoria, National
Disability Services**

“Victorian Trades Hall Council really value our relationship with FSSI. They have genuinely collaborated to develop the SkIP project – and demonstrated they are innovative thinkers and problems solvers, helping get Victorians into sustainable jobs.”

**Wil Stracke, Assistant
Secretary of the Victorian
Trades Hall Council**

“The FSSI team clearly have deep knowledge and understanding of community sector workforce issues. They brought new and insightful ways of conceptualising and categorising the disability workforce, we will build on FSSI’s excellent work to further understand this diverse sector.”

**Dan Stubbs, Victorian Disability
Worker Commissioner**

“Doing my final RMIT Master of social work placement at FSSI and working on the Specialist Homelessness Workforce Common Dataset project was such a fantastic experience. Being at a very supportive organisation, doing important bridging work between theories, policies and practice in the social services sector, gave me invaluable insights.”

**Christel Lemmon, Master of
Social Work student, RMIT
University**

“FSSI is a much needed and valuable addition to support the growth of a comprehensive and strong family violence service system.”

**Tania Farha, CEO Domestic
Violence Victoria (DV Vic) and
Domestic Violence Resource
Centre Victoria (DVRVCV)**

“FSSI’s evaluation has been invaluable as it has allowed us to make changes in real time to ensure best practice and better outcomes for the project participants. FSSI are nimble but at the same time very clear on project outcomes which makes them great to work with.”

**Tina Hogarth-Clarke,
CEO COTA**





WHAT’S NEXT? WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

FSSI has been a five-year partnership between RMIT University and the Victorian Council of Social Service, supported by the Victorian Government. FSSI was established with a grant from the Victorian Government, with co-investment from RMIT as part of the Keeping Our Sector Strong strategy (KOSS). In June 2021 the KOSS strategy came to an end, bringing the founding grant to a close, and VCOSS and RMIT have agreed to end the founding partnership. VCOSS and RMIT continue their long-term strategic friendship, sharing knowledge and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing the Victorian community.

This report outlines how, from 2016 to 2021, FSSI has driven innovation in education, training and applied research to enable the growth and transformation of social services. The


collaborations we have established are working to create curriculum, training pathways, leadership, research insights and new models of work-based learning and industry partnership.

From July 2021 the work program will be taken forward by the RMIT-based organisation Workforce Innovation and Development Institute, reflecting the cross-sector partnership working and vision for the future. The Workforce Innovation and Development Institute (WIDI) will continue to partner in a very significant program of work with both government and the wider social service sector. Building on the collaborative success of its first five years through a time of intense challenges, the work of the Institute now moves into a new phase, where positive impact can grow through a wider ecosystem of relationships and shared contributions.

	DOMAIN	
	Activities	Impact
EDUCATION 	Develop high-quality education and training products to support lifelong learning	Workers with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to meet the needs of diverse communities
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION 	Create scaled pathways into social sector jobs	New, sustainable pathways to jobs and careers in the social service sector
SERVICE SYSTEM 	Generate insights to inform system design and planning	Mature service system grounded in robust data and evidence
LEADERSHIP 	Equip leaders to navigate unprecedented transformation and growth	Resilient organisations that can drive positive change

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**WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND
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