Interview with Verity Jaensch, Bradford Institute of Advanced Education tutor for South Australia, Diploma graduate and dedicated Kinship carer shares her experience completing a Diploma of Community Services in 2021 and becoming SA's first Bradford Institute of Advanced Education tutor for the family based carer community.

Ease of Study

This was something I knew I could achieve. I really appreciated how the course sessions were structured to be accessible for carers. Initially, I was worried about the time commitment and whether I had the capacity to complete it. I didn't want to start something I couldn't finish, so I approached it with some trepidation and nerves. However, I found that the course was perfectly tailored for flexible learning. I loved that I could choose between day or evening sessions on any given day, without needing to attend a physical classroom. This flexibility made it much easier and more successful for me as a carer.

I was also concerned about the amount of homework required. However, I was able to engage with the course content in real-time, completing tasks as the sessions progressed. With a bit of refining and tidying, I could submit my work immediately. Initially, I thought I would need to contribute much more—at a degree level—but I was overcomplicating it in my head. The facilitators were amazing at guiding me. If dot points were sufficient, they would say so. If more detail was needed, they would let me know.

Failure was also a concern—what if I didn't get it right? But the support was incredible. If something needed more content or refinement, the facilitator would provide feedback. There were no black marks—each unit was about meeting accreditation requirements, not about high distinctions. The facilitators were there to ensure we succeeded as easily as possible.

Facilitating the Course as a Tutor

As a previous graduate, I made some amazing connections with my diploma cohort, and we've remained close since then. As a carer, it's easy to feel isolated, so I'm excited about empowering carers to understand the systems they navigate. I'm also excited about the potential for carers to find meaningful work if they choose to.

Beyond employment, this course fosters connection. As carers, we often struggle to build meaningful connections. This diploma provides that opportunity, and I hope to support carers in achieving that sense of community.

Impact of the Course on Foster Carers in South Australia

The foster care system can be disempowering. However, the more I understand how systems operate, the better I can work within them. This diploma has given me the confidence to engage as an equal partner in care teams, rather than just a carer receiving instructions. That confidence has a ripple effect on the people and organisations we engage with.

Since completing the course, I have pursued further study—something I never thought I had the capacity for. This diploma led me to another diploma, and now I'm pursuing even more education. The possibilities are truly exciting.

Being a Role Model in Education

My young person is excited to see me studying. We often talk about his schooling, and now, when he comes home with homework, he sees that I have my own learning journey too. I love that I can role model lifelong learning for him.

As carers, we sometimes get caught up in “doing to” rather than “doing with.” My philosophy is to do with, not to. Studying alongside him reinforces that approach and helps him reach his potential. I truly believe that’s why he’s doing so well at school.

Becoming South Australia’s First Tutor for the Diploma of Community Services

I want to see as many carers as possible go through this diploma. Whether they use it as a gateway to further study or simply to enhance their advocacy skills, I want to help them succeed. Carers deserve a meaningful seat at the table, and I will do whatever it takes to support them.

Knowledge is power. The more we understand, the more effective we can be as a collective. By working together, we can create meaningful change while fostering connection and support.

Advice for Those Considering the Course

If you’re thinking about doing this course—don’t delay! We’ve all had that feeling of “I should have done this ages ago.” If I had started earlier, I would have completed it years ago.

Feel the fear and do it anyway. Allow yourself to be supported. Your success is my success as a facilitator. It’s my job to help you pass. The time commitment is manageable—most of the work is completed during sessions, with minimal additional work required.

I wish I had known this earlier—I would have completed the course years ago. In fact, when I first applied for a Certificate in Community Services at 18, if I had gone ahead with it, I could have completed a doctorate by now! But here I am. Don’t delay—just do it. You are worth it.

Even if you don’t pursue further study afterward, this diploma will give you confidence, knowledge, and connection—and that alone is invaluable.

This course is designed to be flexible and cater to the busy lives of carers. The course is 2 days a fortnight and offered via zoom, which means no travelling and greater accessibility for our regional carers. This format is brilliant as it allows for those times when we may have a young person at home with us on any given day. We often see curious young people pop in when we are is session. We even had one carer attend with a baby. It is this kind of flexibility and consideration in delivering of this course to carers so accessible. You won't find that anywhere else.

Final Thoughts

One of the trickiest aspects of being a carer is working with education systems. Schools do their best, but carers need to know how to advocate effectively. This diploma covers how to work in a trauma-informed way, helping carers communicate with schools and other institutions more effectively. As a result, my young person now has a much better experience at school, surrounded by safe, supportive pillars in all areas of life.

It truly takes a village to raise a child, and I know I can’t do it alone. This course has given me the skills and connections to ensure my young person—and all the children we support—thrive.

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