

Switch to Social Work

At a glance overview

Switch to Social Work (STSW) is a 2-year trial which aims to improve the job readiness of 67 social work graduates, increase workforce capability, and enable career switchers from diverse communities to move into a social work career. It is an adaptation of a successful United Kingdom program which has been running since 2013.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Department of Families Fairness and Housing, and La Trobe University have partnered to deliver STSW. The trial will enable government to test the economic viability and scalability of a new community services sector workforce pipeline.

STSW will provide participants with coordinated support to undertake intensive workplace skill development while studying for a professionally qualifying Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice) over two years. The program aims to see a minimum of 56 program participants graduate successfully from STSW and take up employment in the child and family services sector.

There are six elements of STSW:

1. An earn and learn model:
 - (i) Tuition fee support for participants.
 - (ii) Living wage bursary (cost of living allowance) and paid employment for participants.
 - (iii) Supervisor support subsidies for host organisations to facilitate supervisor capability uplift.
 - (iv) Salary subsidy payments to host organisations to support employment for participants.
 - (v) Participants matched with host organisations to provide them opportunities to integrate theoretical learning into practice.
2. Customised curriculum content and delivery:
 - (i) A customised curriculum based on an existing accredited Master of Social Work (qualifying) program to create the new Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice).
 - (ii) Includes core social work curriculum ensuring graduates have knowledge and skills to practice in all social work areas with focussed examples and materials.
 - (iii) Features specialised units of study emphasising the practice skills required to work in the child and family services sector.
 - (iv) A flexible work integrated learning placement model that includes program-provided industry placements in the child and family services sector.
 - (v) La Trobe University deliver the Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice) from campuses in Bendigo, Bundoora, and Mildura in 2024 and 2025.

3. Targeted participant recruitment and selection:
 - (i) Degree-qualified career changers: people already in work and seeking a career change *and/or* recent graduates of degrees (other than social work) seeking an alternative career pathway.
 - (ii) A selection process that identifies candidates with evidence-based attributes signalling suitability to a career in the child and family service system.
 - (iii) State-wide recruitment, supporting candidates from regional and metropolitan areas.
 - (iv) A focus on attracting and supporting diverse applicants, including Aboriginal Victorians and Culturally and Linguistically Victorians, LGBTIQ+ Victorians, and Victorians with disability.
4. Host organisation recruitment and selection:
 - (i) State-wide host organisation recruitment.
 - (ii) Host organisation eligibility and selection processes to identify community service organisations that have capability to provide suitable work integrated learning placements.
 - (iii) A focus on onboarding community sector organisations to provide positive workplace learning experiences for participants, including Child Protection.
5. Supervisor and participant support and development:
 - (i) A program delivered 'concierge support service' to deliver system navigation and proactive tailored support to participants and supervisors based on their identified needs.
 - (ii) A bespoke supervision model and selection and training of high-quality workplace supervisors.
 - (iii) Ongoing professional development and support for STSW supervisors including tailored training and coaching services.
 - (iv) Support for participants to engage in professional development pathways.
 - (v) Establishment of alumni program for program graduates.
6. Evaluation and monitoring:
 - (i) Urbis will undertake an independent evaluation to provide evidence-informed recommendations for improvements, including assessing the economic value and potential for scalability and sustainability of STSW.

For more information about the program, please contact the Concierge Support Service at the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

Email: switchtosocialwork@cfecfw.asn.au

Phone: (03) 9614 1577