



Global Educators

Melbourne - Australia

Media release: case study

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Grant backs Mum to pursue nursing dream

When Melbourne mum Fiona Dicioccio dreamed of returning to work the vision was always the same – to be a nurse. But to the mother of three kids, nearing 40, the dream seemed impossible. A lack of money and over twenty years since her last go at formal education made the barriers seem too tough.

That is until she learned about an Victorian educational grant available through Box Hill Institute. The Returning to Earning grant provides \$1000 towards study expenses at participating registered training organisations for eligible Victorian parents (further details in box below).

Fiona tells us about her Box Hill Institute nursing experience via the Returning to Earning grant.

Why did you want to become a nurse?

Since the birth of my first child, I'd always harboured the dream of becoming a nurse. The nurses at the hospital just seemed so kind and encouraging, and I thought it was a wonderful job for them to have. With the birth of each child the dream became stronger. Finally, my husband asked me one day what I might like to do when I returned to work and I said I'd like to be a nurse but that it was impossible. I'd left school in Year 10, never done any further study and that along with the expense just made it seem unachievable. But my husband said as I'd been talking about it for ten years, I should find out whether it was a possibility. It was soon after that I found out about the Returning to Earning grant through Box Hill Institute.

How did the grant help you?

To be not working, and have three young children, it would have been really hard to find the money to return to study. With the grant I was able to pay for my first semester and up-front fees, and for half my books. Once I had that paid for I became a lot more positive about the course, as I felt it was 'meant to be'. Without that assistance I wouldn't have been able to do the course as it would have just seemed all too hard.

Was it difficult to apply for?

The grant wasn't hard to apply for, as there was an officer at Box Hill Institute to help me. I just had to fill out the form asking for my work and study history hand them into her and than a few days later she called to say I'd been accepted.

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What was it like to return to study after such a long time?

My whole family had to make sacrifices as it was such a big turnaround for all of us. Once I'd settled in I really enjoyed the study and getting my results. When I received results it was such a great thrill because I knew that it was all linked to my hard work. It was the most satisfying feeling; in fact, I don't think I've ever had as much satisfaction career wise as getting those results. On graduation I received four Distinctions and the rest were Credit passes.

How did your family react to your return to study?

My Mum thought that with three young children, studying, and running a household, it would be too hard. But I was determined to complete the course. I am currently working for an agency which allows me to work at different hospitals and facilities which is great experience. After each shift my Mum will call me to find out where I have been working and what it was like. I had a lot of support from my husband throughout the course and he is so proud of my achievement. In fact, my whole family is exceedingly proud of me, which is a lovely feeling.

I still can't believe it when I say, "I'm a nurse". It just seems surreal, but really wonderful.

About Returning to Earning

The Returning to Earning program is a Victorian State Government initiative which provides support to parents to return to work after an absence caring for children. Grants of up to \$1000 are available which can be used to cover any costs associated with approved training, such as books and materials, course fees, transport and childcare.

To be eligible Victorian parents must have been absent from education, accredited training and the workforce for over two years while caring for children, currently unemployed and have not worked for more than four months full time, or equivalent part-time, in the last two years.

If you don't live in Victorian, why not contact your local member of parliament to make this type of grant available nationally.

For further details and eligibility criteria visit: www.parentsreturntowork.net.au or phone 1 300 303 413.

For further information about using a Returning to Earning grant at Box Hill Institute's contact Kerry Barrett, coordinator - Employment Services (03) 9286 9761.
