

Living and learning

Rachelle Collett has come from tough beginnings and turned her life around by enrolling in adult and community education (ACE). She hopes her story will inspire others to do the same.

What were your early years like? I come from a family of seven kids. I went to four different primary schools and I never really caught up. By the time I left in year 10, I'd been to seven different schools in different states. I fell pregnant when I was 17 and had Jessica when I was 18. I was a single mum after that and I didn't have much ambition. I wasn't going to let Jess fall into the trap of feeling the way I did about myself.

What made you think you'd like to start learning again? After my other two kids were born, I was going through a very rough patch personally, so I started going to counselling. The counsellor was friends with a lady at the Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre and she encouraged me to make a start in adult and community education.

How did going back to education change things for you? The Rosewall Centre's Making Tracks program was perfect for me, because it's for people who are unemployed and want to make their way into the workforce. I'd always been a nurturing sort of person so I thought aged care would be rewarding. For once in my life I thought I could actually do it.

What study did you do? I did a Certificate III in Aged Care. I also did a computer course, because I'd never learnt how to use a computer. Using a computer for the first time opened up a whole new world for me. I was so clueless before that! I also did courses in first aid, food handling and health and safety. That meant I had different work options, especially in hospitality.

Has the training helped you find work? I did a placement at an aged-care home as part of my Certificate III training and fell in



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love with it. I loved the residents and I got along really well with all the staff; it was excellent. I was actually happy to get up at five o'clock in the morning to make the seven o'clock shift!

The placement was for three weeks and the lady there was really impressed with me. When I finished, they told me to put in an application for a position. That's really my goal now. The kids are starting school next year so that will give me time to work.

What are your hopes for your children? I want all my children to find a job that they love. It's not just about dollars, it's about [finding something] rewarding and [giving] them a reason to get up in the morning.

What advice would you give anyone who'd like to return to education but lacks confidence? Just make a start! Get out there and talk to people - it's about networking. Get advice. Just being out there in the community helps you get ready.

FRESH START

The Victorian Government's reform of the TAFE and training system is making it easier than ever for you to get the skills you need for the job you want. Under the Victorian Training Guarantee, every Victorian is guaranteed a government-subsidised training place to raise their qualification levels. If you want to return to education to get job ready, TAFE and training is a great way to start. In particular, there are over 340 ACE providers in local areas across Victoria who specialise in helping learners like Rachelle.

For information on courses and training providers, including ACE organisations, call the TAFE course line on 13 18 23 or visit www.skills.vic.gov.au.