

# Patricia Arora

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## Are you nominating yourself or someone else?

Someone else

## Does the nominee know that you are nominating them?

Yes

## Qualification name

Diploma of Community Services

## Name of Registered Training Organisation

Australis College

## Overview

I migrated to Australia with my family in 2008. Once settled into Australian life, on Tamborine Mountain, I wished to work within the local community. Whilst I taught French privately, I wanted my daughters to see me go out to work, as well as enhance my self sufficiency and confidence despite having a kind husband who provided generously. I wished for my daughters to imbibe this commitment, early in life.

I sought employment unsuccessfully at local libraries and schools. Even a Bachelor's Degree in French from the University of Bombay, India, Diplomas from the Alliance Française de Paris, France as well as 15 years of work experience in the fields of Software Design, Journalism and Library Documentation, both, in India and France, were not adequate to obtain a 'job', in Australia, particularly after being a mother and home-maker.

I realised the need to re-educate myself in an Australian, vocation-oriented Institute. It was TURSA who pointed the way to work-related study at Australis College as well as the possibility of VET Fee assistance, for which I am extremely grateful.

I was deliberating between working with Youth or Seniors. The aging Australian population and acknowledgment of my personal nature prompted me to choose the latter. This is the reason I chose to study the Diploma in Community Services Work - Case Management with Australis College from October 2016 and completed it in January 2018.

This Diploma required a 'work placement' at a Community Organisation and in this manner, I reached Tamborine Mountain Community Care Association (TMCCA), a not-for-profit organisation providing first-level aged care to Senior Citizens and persons with a disability.

I continued to volunteer here after completing my work placement. I am permanently employed (part-time), as the Volunteers Coordinator of TMCCA since May 2017.

## **Criterion 1: Career and study achievements**

### **CAREER GAINS**

My studies in the Diploma of Community Services - Case Management, at Australis College with VET Fee assistance boosted my self-confidence immensely and helped me secure employment. This was apparent during the interviews I attended, while applying for the Volunteers Coordinator job position at TMCCA. The knowledge I gained was practical and oriented to securing a career involving the 'art of efficient communication', responding to clients diverse needs, service delivery, work health and safety procedures, managing legal and ethical compliance and the importance of adhering to 'duty of care', etc. I was and am able to draw from this knowledge quickly and easily, to assist Seniors live independently in their own homes, with dignity, using services provided by Community Care, e.g. Domestic and Garden Maintenance, Social Support, Volunteer drives, etc.\*\*

As volunteers are the 'lifeline' of TMCCA, I am grateful to be instrumental in coordinating TMCCA volunteers to attend to the needs of clients. Whilst my course resources and faculty had provided me with relevant material, training and attitude required to fulfill my role effectively, this career is valuable in as much as it makes me feel extremely useful in the community and happy to be an 'Australian working mum'.

### **STUDY ACHIEVEMENTS**

The studies provided by the VET system was particularly significant for me because after twenty-nine years of 'not being a student' in an Institute, I was able to put my 'head down' for about a year and achieve a Diploma. I did not imagine I would be able to study again. The entire learning experience has honed many skills such as effective communication techniques, person-centered counselling, time management, goal setting and prioritisation, etc.

It is one thing to learn skills theoretically and another to actually get to use them under supervision. The Faculty at Australis College encouraged me to practice these skills by way of sessions, that had to be video-recorded and uploaded to Canvas. I was more accustomed to a theory-based, academic learning modus operandi - not so much work-related learning. I even got to upscale my use of technology. Australis College helped me learn what experience would feel like in a job, before I obtained the job.

## **Criterion 2: Communication, team and leadership skills**

Communication - is the backbone of my job be it written, verbal or non-verbal; a delicate network of daily human interactions with Management, Workmates, Clients, Volunteers and Committee. Thanks to study modules such as Develop Workplace Communication Strategies, Establish and Confirm the Counselling Relationship and Manage and Promote Diversity, I learnt how to continually work at refining the art of active listening and clear and congruent speaking.

Tamborine Mountain is a microcosm, whose local residents hail from approximately fifty ethnicities across the world. A strong 'community spirit' prevails here and this usually indicates the use of effective communication.

TMCCA is a multi-cultural organisation established in 1992, whose current staff comprises of persons from England, America, New Zealand, Australia and India. The modules Develop Workplace Communication Strategies and Reflect on and Improve Own Professional Practice offered excellent support to me.

Team - Blending into a team is not a piece of cake. The current TMCCA team has been in place and running for several years. Having achieved my latest goal of securing a job, I was bubbling over with enthusiasm. Initially, at work, there were a couple of unexpected 'hiccups'. I started using the 'active listening' skills taught through the live classes in the Australis Canvas. Once I realised where these hiccups stemmed from (my over-enthusiasm), I stepped back and asked the Management to guide me onward. This helped restore a healthy working balance in my work role. It is a learning curve and with clear communication, professional respect and a little kindness any team can flourish. I built resilience through this experience, as it was a challenge for me so early on in my new job.

Leadership Skills - I am a person who instinctively takes the first step. A month into getting the job at TMCCA, I requested Management to host an event to raise awareness about 'Elder Abuse' in our community. My idea was implemented on June 15, 2017, when TMCCA welcomed about 25 persons to commemorate the UN designated World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, by sharing a Purple Morning Tea. Information on Elder Abuse was distributed and awareness raised. The study module Provide Advocacy and Representation Services prompted me to take this step.

I have strongly recommended the VET system to friends on Tamborine Mountain who are seeking employment and wavering about restarting work. I have handed them contact information and suggested they call me if needed.

### **Criterion 3: Ability to represent the national training system at a broader level**

#### **Industry Developments & Trends**

The Aged Care Industry is experiencing a spurt in growth of 'In-Home Care' where these services are provided to clients in their family homes and where these care packages are growing at a percentage that is noticeably higher than 'residential aged care'. This high growth is probably due to its 'cost-effectiveness' and the 'demand by the seniors' to remain in their own homes (a familiar environment), for as long as possible.

As a Volunteer Coordinator, allocating appropriate volunteers for client support is my key function- whether driving individual clients to and from their medical appointments

(Individual Support) or assisting with hospitality services at social events/ allied healthcare (Group support).

The role of coordinating volunteers, is increasingly significant with the growth of 'In-home Care' services and will certainly benefit from regularly updated vocational training in this area.

Another new trend is the National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS) that is currently being rolled out region-wise, in Queensland. This new scheme calls for current training pathways and swift transmission of knowledge regarding its dynamics. Aged Care sector and Disability workers, will benefit from up-skilling their knowledge through training offered by the VET system.

#### **Messages to others regarding entering this training pathway**

As an ambassador, I would definitely recommend this vocational pathway for anyone wishing to set out in search of a career or simply restart one (eg. myself). It is a support system par excellence, that orients you towards the job of your choice. It wastes no time, highlights and discusses essential features of your role, the professionalism required and will equip you with a confident edge over the other potential job applicants, as it is regularly updated to meet rapidly changing industry standards.

My unique message for persons in remote /regional locations, who find it difficult to travel to classes each week is - take a good look at the VET system. Most of your study, training and assessments can be done online. You will also amaze yourselves at how proficient you can become in using the technology required to attend your online classes. I live in Tamborine Mountain, a regional area about 76 kms from Brisbane and have recently completed a Diploma in Community Services - Case Management... ONLINE, with Australis College. I will visit my Faculty at Australis to thank them for their amazing support - but I have completed my Diploma without going there. Go for VET!

#### **Criterion 4: Other pursuits**

Mother Teresa, a frail, yet charismatic person, considered a saint today, shook my hand in Bombay, India, when I was about 14 years old and left me with an indelible experience. In the handshake were her silent words, " One of the greatest diseases is to be a nobody to anybody". She certainly was a somebody to me. Grace packed a gentle punch and made a dent in my inner armour, without my knowledge. This message was transmitted nonverbally thoughtfully.

Whether the thought manifested as being a volunteer at the Aid Bhopal Concert, a musical fundraiser for families of victims of the Union Carbide Disaster in India (1984), or whether it gushed out playfully through volley ball games at High School, whilst captaining my team on to win, even when we were losing miserably, I cannot be sure. What I know, is that I tend to focus on doing something, to reach the happy ending.


This focus included freelance writing for magazines (Diners Club India and Auto India) and translating French documents into English (thanks to my B.A. degree in French). I translated French Software design manuals into English for the English-speaking Indian engineers in Paris working on the development of the Internet in the late 1980s.

How come the French connection? A 12 year-old's unexplained yearning to learn this beautiful language and visit the country that spoke it, an unplanned goal-setting spanning nine years, until I set foot on French soil at the age of 21 years. In Paris, I started out as the proverbial 'au-pair' student and found myself employed a year later, by a software design company with an Indian connection. Life seemed to come full circle. A French literature student in a world of software engineers and technocrats from MIT, Boston, USA. I learnt a lot. I needed something more esoteric and meaningful, hence Reiki (healing with Chi energy) and Feng Shui (the art of placement of objects for optimum flow of Chi - energy in a given space).


I played entrepreneur for seven years in my own company (NuLife), involved with the marketing/distribution of alternative health systems. Success followed, yet I realised that I did not have the business stamina.

After an interesting marriage and two delightful daughters, I am happy to serve seniors in my local community and keep teaching French privately to those who want to learn it.


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