



# Jobseekers lining up to be carers

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DISABILITY services are facing unprecedented demand from jobseekers who are requiring training to become carers and support workers.

A shortage of skilled workers coupled with an ageing population of people with a disability is increasing the need for trained staff.

A plan by Minda's South Australian Learning Centre to train new workers and provide career paths is starting to address both demands.

Enrolments at Minda's South Australian Learning Centre have doubled in the past year, from 525 in 2009 to at least 1000 so far this year.

Enrolments are still being accepted for its courses and more sessions will be held to respond to further demand.

The centre's senior manager Muriel Kirkby said disability services had traditionally been an area workers "fell into" and work

as carers or support officers was not perceived as offering a fulfilling career to many people. "The disability services have always been the poor relation (to health) in terms of what people want to get into," she said.

"The training need at the moment has gone absolutely through the roof.

"It's really exciting times for us - it has grown quickly."

She said most of the current Minda staff were aged in their 50s and most were looking to retire in the next few years, which made it urgent for more workers to be trained.

Australia's ratification of the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has also increased demand for more staff.

The convention means people with disabilities have greater choice in where they live, who they live with, who supports them and how they are sup-

ported.

The centre offers certificate and diploma studies in mental health, disability work and aged care and is focusing on helping people into a career, through further study or training to allow them to move into more senior positions.

Hallett Cove support worker Kate Vaughan, 19, completed a Certificate III in disability care last year and is working at Minda as she prepares to go on to study a Certificate IV.

She has always wanted a job as a carer and has a particular interest in working with people with a disability because of her school and family experiences.

She said her section at Minda was short-staffed at the moment, which indicated the shortage of skilled workers.

"I wanted to do something that made a difference," she said.



**HELPING HAND:** Bev Chatterton and support worker Kate Vaughan at Minda's South Australian Learning Centre yesterday