



Care in the community

HELPING THE HOMELESS: Mark Krusynski, far right, leads a cooking class at Common Ground.

Picture: BRENTON EDWARDS

Social workers are increasingly in demand, writes **Melanie Burgess**

DEMAND for social and community workers has doubled in the past five years with strong growth in both full-time and part-time work.

There are 32,000 Australian workers in the sector, according to November figures from the Australia Bureau of Statistics, and that number is expected to grow. In the five years to November 2018, another 3300 new jobs are anticipated, representing a 10.2 per cent

growth rate.

Training institute Careers Australia has offered a Diploma in Community Services and a Diploma in Counselling since 2012 and acting national program manager – counselling and community services Karl Laci says the courses are in line with employment demand.

"There are a wide variety of roles that people can undertake in the fields of counselling and community services (including)

working with children and families, young people, refugees, people with disabilities, in child protection, aged care, and in hospitals," he says.

"Graduates from Careers Australia have secured a range of roles including family support worker, case manager, in-home carer, youth worker, outreach worker, and community development officer."

Laci says the best social and community services workers have a strong desire to help others, are caring and empathetic, have high-level interpersonal and therapeutic skills, can communicate with

people from all walks of life, and are professional and ethical.

Mark Krusynski is a case manager at not-for-profit organisation Common Ground, which supplies permanent and transitional housing for the homeless.

On Mondays he leads a cooking class to help tenants learn and hone their skills.

Krusynski also helps with general support work.

"What I actually do can be really different depending on each person and their situation," he says.

It is World Social Work Day on Tuesday.

EYES SET ON A LAW DEGREE

BORN and raised in the Philippines, Adela Dick studied law at university before working 13 years as a senior legislative committee researcher for the Philippines' House of Representatives in Manila.

Now, having worked as a



HIGHLY SKILLED: Adela Dick.

Filipino interpreter in hospitals, court cases, and support agencies since moving to Australia in 2008, Dick has enrolled in a Double Diploma of Counselling and Community Services at Careers Australia's Bowen Hills campus.

"As a contractor, I work in a variety of difficult and highly sensitive environments helping non-English speaking Filipinos communicate with their doctors, counsellors, the police, or other authorities," Dick says.

"Often the situations can be quite emotional and distressing for the patient, sometimes involving a serious illness, a traumatic experience such as domestic violence, or a court order decision.

"Although my role is to interpret conversations, I've always felt extra counselling skills and qualifications would improve my ability to not only relay information, but help guide and direct the conversations to defuse any stress and minimise the confusion experienced by the patient and the organisation contracting me.

"I'm looking forward to getting started this year, with the course also adding value to the law degree I'm currently studying so I can become a family law solicitor in the future."