



Australian Government

# A U S T R A L I A N A P P R E N T I C E S H I P S

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## A healthy training culture

### Calvary John James Hospital

ACT region



Calvary John James Hospital is Canberra's largest private hospital, employing around 450 people, with 124 Australian Apprentices undertaking qualifications in the last three years.

The hospital's emphasis on training extends beyond Australian Apprentices to all employees, and almost 30 per cent of the hospital staff have completed nationally recognised qualifications.

Calvary John James Hospital employs Australian Apprentices in three areas—administration, sterilisation and support services (housekeeping, laundry and catering).

The Medical Administration Traineeship began in 2007 and specifically targets school leavers. Human Resources and Professional Development Manager Frances Crimmins says the program has been a great success.

'Our young trainees are a breath of fresh air. They're keen, competent, brilliant at paperwork and really lift the atmosphere,' she says.

'The average age of a nurse in the system is getting close to 50, so it's great to have younger people in the workplace. And the career paths for them are huge.'

Unlike many private hospitals, which outsource support services and sterilisation, Calvary John James Hospital does theirs in-house to guarantee a higher quality service. Frances says it's important to train people, and it also ensures quality and staff retention.

'The shortage of skilled workers in the health sector is becoming dire,' Frances says.

'All our staff who undertook qualifications have stayed with us—whereas previously we had a large turnover in our support service divisions.'

With women making up 80 per cent of the workforce, Calvary John James Hospital is an Employer of Choice for Women, and offers flexible working hours.

The hospital's current group of support services Australian Apprentices are close to graduation. Most of them have English as a second language and had no qualifications when they commenced. Since the Australian Apprentices commenced a Certificate II qualification three years ago, there has been a 100 per cent retention rate.

'A lovely example is one lady who is 59 years old and has been here six years,' Frances says.

'She came here from the Pacific Islands, with no skills. She got her Certificate II in Health Support Services, and progressed to a Certificate III in Health Support Services and she's so proud of what she's achieved after coming here with no English.'

It's these types of stories that Frances finds the most rewarding.

'The award is a great recognition for the people who are here,' she says.

'When people think of the health industry, they think of doctors and nurses but these people are cooking the food, cleaning the hospital, admitting and discharging the patients and sterilising the equipment. Often these people are mature age, have English as second language, or come to us with no skills—it's about recognising their importance because we wouldn't be able to operate the hospital without them.'

Anne Sheehan from Caloola Australian Apprenticeships Centre can't speak highly enough of the work Frances does.

'She is one of our favourite employers,' she says.

'We've had Frances as the hospital's representative as long as we can remember and the changes have been huge—the scope of apprenticeships and traineeships and the support across the board. Calvary John James Hospital is a supportive and proactive employer. It's a wonderful place to start.'

