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Education funding for care leavers

BY JAMES BENNETT



The funding has been welcomed by La Trobe University Fryers St campus.

Georgia Linton is a prime example of someone that has beaten the odds.

Before becoming a teenager she went into state care but has since graduated from La Trobe University and now is working full-time.

Yesterday, Miss Linton, 27, was one of three Shepparton locals attending the Victorian Government announcement to fund renewing Raising Expectations by more than \$1 million.

The program is designed to support people going through higher or tertiary education that have at some point of their adolescents being in state or out-of-home care.

Miss Linton started studying a Bachelor of Business at the Fryers St campus in 2014 but in 2016 knew she needed that little bit extra financial support.

She said part of her course involved a work placement subject but she also needed to balance her work commitments.

"I did a work placement based subject so it required me to do an internship of 80 to 120 hours and during the semester I needed to step back on paid work commitments.

"I was looking at ways of doing my course and still financially exist so I came across care leaver bursary.

"Between the ages of 10 and 12 I spent a bit of time in care and thought why not apply.

"It helped me to do the work placement subject which I think was one of the best subject's I did in my degree because it was practical and an advantage on the resume.

"The bursary helped me get a more well-rounded degree by financially providing me with assistance during a time I could do full-time work," Miss Linton said.

In 2017 she graduated and is now studying an online Masters in Management while working as human resource and compliance manager at Gouge Linen & Garment Services.

She has been promoted twice since starting.

The program was set up four years ago and already 200 care leavers have been part of Raising Expectations including 100 attending TAFE.

The government couldn't provide the exact number of people from Shepparton who had been through the program.

Making the announcement yesterday at La Trobe University Fryers St campus was Training and Skills, Higher Education Minister Gayle Tierney.

She said added funding would provide surety the program will continue on the back of its initial success.

"It's well documented only one per cent leaving care participate in post school education compared to the rest of the community where it's 40 per cent.

"We have a wrap around services, firstly in terms of information so they can make a decision of what they want to do but also counseling financial advise and scholarships.

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Federation University Australia, La Trobe University and Swinburne University are all in partnership with Raising Expectations.