

Trainings

Bringing out best in

by **Angela McCarthy**
angela@careerideas.co.nz

Bicultural emphasis helps attract many to social worker course

A social worker's role is to provide professional assistance to individuals, families, groups and communities experiencing difficulties.

Manukau Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Applied Social Work focuses on preparing graduates to work with a diverse range of communities.

The degree, which began in 2007, was developed to fulfil requests by South Auckland social agencies for graduates with the same world views as the people they would be working with.

As a result non-traditional students are encouraged to apply, bridging programmes are in place and academic support, such as essay writing and research tutorials, is offered throughout the degree.

There is a strong bicultural emphasis throughout the course.

About 80 per cent of students are female but male numbers are increasing. Twelve out of 50 first-year students are male this year. About a third of students are Maori, and a third Pasifika.

Over the three years students study topics ranging from social policy, research methods and social work and the law through to working with difference and diversity, an introduction to Maori world view and approaches for empowering individuals and communities.

Students do a three-month practicum in their second year and again in their third where they put theory into practice under the guidance of experienced social workers.

Graduate

Viliani Ahokava, 33

Social Worker

Youth Justice, Child Youth and Family

(GYF)

Graduate starting salary: \$42,230 pa



Viliani Ahokava says social work is rewarding. Picture / Ted Baagrurst

I've been working with Child Youth and Family for 10 months in the youth justice division. I work in a great team. Lisa is a supportive supervisor and the team always go beyond the call of duty.

We work with young people who have offended and support them to get back on track. We are not there to pass judgment but to encourage them make change.

We need to be pragmatic. It is very

People in worst times

Social worker

Bachelor of Applied Social Work (level 7)

Manukau Institute of Technology Faculty of Education and Social

Sciences

Contact: 0800 62 62 52 (inquiries) or 09 9688 8000; info@manukau.ac.nz;

www.manukau.ac.nz

Entry Requirements: General: Over age 20, full driver's licence, police record check, interview, written entry test; Academic: NCEA university entrance or MITT certificates in either bicultural social practice or social services — introduction, or relevant life/work experience. Non-English native speakers need minimum overall score of 6.5 ELITS, or equivalent.

Tertiary fees, 2011: Domestic, \$4920 (approx) pa; International, \$16,260 (approx) pa.

Start date: February

rewarding work. And yes, some young people choose not to change, but we work hard to help young people be safe, strong and make good choices going forward.

A lot of our work is about encouraging change and modification of behaviour in families. We believe families have the answer and work with them to identify their needs and the needs of the young person. I was working in distribution and

warehousing and got to the point where I realised there was no future in what I was doing. My fiancée suggested I study to become a social worker.

I chose to study at MITT because it was close to home and I liked the bicultural emphasis of the degree.

However going back to study was scary. I had left school early so I started with the introductory social work certificate which prepared me

well. We had wonderful lecturers with a real passion for social work who still work in the community.

Most assessments were essays. I'd never written an academic essay so that was my first challenge.

Fortunately, lecturers helped me with the format so I got on top of it.

We had a three-month practicum in year two and year three. It was very different from the classroom and a great opportunity to apply what you're learning while being monitored and supervised by a senior social worker.

Some students had negativity towards CYF but I didn't know much about CYF until I did my placement there. Then I realised how interesting and challenging it was as a work-place.

Supervisor

Lisa Sepuloni
Acting Supervisor at CYF Youth Justice Division, Otara

To work in this field you need a passion and interest in children,

young and families. You need self-confidence and belief in your own judgment. You have to be able to self-manage, self-plan and work independently but also within your team.

You need resilience. There is a huge workload and it can be very stressful. You have to know the community well because you work with many stakeholders to put support in place.

Report writing and analytical skills are very important, especially when doing reports for the courts. A big change in legislation in October last year means as well as dealing with young people's offending, we're now required to identify any underlying factors that cause the offending and make recommendations for sentencing options to address those issues.

Vitami originally did a placement here which meant we were able to gauge his potential as a social worker. We really liked his skills, his personality and his core values.

He has an innate ability to build good rapport and relationships with young people and their families.