

Nineteen locals begin training to strengthen early childhood workforce

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Uni Hub Spencer Gulf is helping to build a skilled local workforce, with **19 students starting their studies this semester** through the *Strengthening Futures: Early Childhood Workforce Project*. The initiative is tackling one of the region's biggest challenges - the shortage of qualified early childhood educators and teachers in Port Augusta and the Upper Spencer Gulf.

Led by Uni Hub Spencer Gulf and funded by the Port Augusta City Council and the Office for Early Childhood Development, the project is building a strong local pipeline by supporting residents to study, qualify and stay in the region. The Uni Hub's partner CQUniversity will deliver the program.

Project Coordinator Sue Barry said the new intake marks a practical step toward easing pressure on families and services.

"When parents can't secure a childcare place, it affects the whole community," Mrs Barry said.

"These 19 students are the start of a homegrown workforce, people who understand our region and are committed to building their careers here."

Students are supported with wraparound services tailored for regional learners, including mentoring, literacy and study skills assistance, wellbeing support, and access to the Uni Hub's Port Augusta University Centre.

"We're removing barriers that often get in the way of study such as distance, confidence, and competing commitments," Mrs Barry said.

"The goal is simple: help students succeed, gain qualifications, and move into local jobs where they're needed most.

"This is about building from within rather than relying on external recruitment.

"Every graduate who stays local strengthens early learning for children, supports parents to return to work, and adds capacity to our communities."

Port Augusta City Council CEO John Banks said council's partnership in the Strengthening Futures project was an investment in the region's future.

"Early childhood education supports parents to work, gives children the best possible start in life, and helps keep our community strong," he said.

"By working with Uni Hub Spencer Gulf and CQUniversity, we are growing our own skilled workforce, reducing reliance on external recruitment and ensuring local people have every opportunity to build their careers right here in Port Augusta."

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