

CAFÉ HORIZONS: A Case Study

INTRODUCTION

A typical day at Café Horizons is not difficult to articulate. It is the routine nature of the program that endears it to the student population. A retreat away from complex young lives riddled with mishap and uncertainty, when the Café doors open at 8.30am they provide a six-hour sanctum of learning, pastoral care, food and fun. At any one time up to 12 students are involved in the program. Students filter in between 8.30am and 9am to fix themselves a quick burst of caffeine in preparation for a morning of theory-based work. The structure from Tuesday through Friday is rigid; training, café service, project work and then home. Monday is slightly more flexible so that time in the afternoon is made available for students to attend the stream of appointments that come with the territory - doctor's appointments, counselling sessions and Centrelink meetings alike.

Each day a team meeting is held just before 11am where students and staff are given the opportunity to voice any work related issues from the day prior. Here jobs for the day ahead are delegated and then lunch, prepared by staff and Certificate II students, is served to the group. By 11.30am it is expected that all students be outfitted in their Café Horizons uniforms and ready to serve the public. The shop opens and over the course of a few hours a steady stream of customers are met and served by the students. Lunchtime traffic slows at about 2.30pm and students clean the Café until doors close at 3pm. It is then back to the classroom for more intensive training sessions for the afternoon. Here they work on varying projects and practice valuable life skills as they wash and iron dirty laundry in anticipation of the following day. This particular Thursday they're studying 'working in a culturally diverse environment', quite apt for the Cabramatta community, and a fine example of how learning on the shop floor meets the classroom at Café Horizons. Some of the questions might seem rudimentary - 'It is not your concern if an overseas customer cannot be understood, true or false' - but they get students thinking about real life issues in a working environment.

A week in the life of a Café Horizons student

Monday A fun morning for creative cooking for both students and staff - café is closed to the public this day. The afternoon is left free for students.

Tuesday – Friday

9.00am – 11.00am

Session 1 Class work focusing on various areas of hospitality

11.00am – 11.30am

Lunch

11.30am – 2.30pm

Café is open for service to the general public

2.30pm – 3.00pm

Clean up time

3.00pm – 4.00pm

Session 2 A little class work / project work and daily wrap up

4pm

Time to go home!

On Friday afternoon Session 2 is dedicated to intensive cleaning of the Café.

HOW THE PROJECT CAME TO LIFE

"Café Horizons was started to fulfil a need in the community for Vocational Training amongst its Youth. Run by the Salvation Army's Youthlink, we offer Nationally Accredited Training as well as work experience to the youth of the community. And in return we hope the community will help by visiting our Café and enjoy the service of our trainees"

Café Horizons information brochure

Café Horizons is an initiative of the Cabramatta Community that was developed in response to the lack of opportunities for training and employment available for young people in Cabramatta. The program is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), working under the umbrella of the Salvation Army of Further Education. Targeted specifically at young people aged between 15 and 24 years, the project was modelled on a training project of a similar nature, The Olive Branch Café in Newcastle, headed up by the Salvation Army. After seeing the flexible, hands-on approach of this program, Shops 2&3, 219 Cabramatta Road were secured with donations from the local community and businesses, and Café Horizons was born.

The initial \$250,000. to set up the Café was raised by a number of local and community groups and businesses that favoured the concept; \$110,000 of which came from Policylink, Mount Pritchard District and Community Club, Mekong Club, Cabramatta Rotary Club, Cabramatta Chamber of Commerce and Fairfield City Council. The Salvation Army and the Casino Community Benefit Fund also provided start-up costs of \$125,000.

CASE STUDY 1: **EDWARD, 17**

Edward was 17 when he was referred to Café Horizons by a job network provider. Edward was an intensive assistance client, being long term unemployed and an early school leaver with a history of Drug abuse,

Edward was extremely motivated when he joined the program as he had just completed a Worknet career development program with the job network provider. However it was not long before Edward's attendance became erratic and he appeared to be returning to some of his old ways. Café staff then discovered Edward had family issues as well. Edward was referred for counselling. However it was only when Edward became a chef at night that things turned around for him. From this point he was motivated and committed and did really well. On completion of the Café Horizons course he successfully applied for an apprenticeship.

Unfortunately Edward's employer treated him poorly and his father being a union man pushed very heavily for proper conditions. Edward fell out of the picture for a few months. Then one day he came into the Café saying he had fallen off the wagon but was back on track. Café staff sorted out his resume and helped him look for work again. Edward again was not heard of for a few months til he came in with a Café t-shirt signed by car racing drivers in Bathurst. This was presented as a gift and a way of thanking Café staff for their help.

Edward is currently working full-time in a meat processing position but still has an eye out for an apprenticeship in his local area.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

'The Café aims to provide vocational training and life skills to at risk young people, who experience difficulty in accessing traditional training, particularly those in recovery from drug dependence, through the provisions of accredited training in a supported, flexible, hands-on, enterprise environment.'

Café Horizons information brochure

Spanning over 13 weeks the accredited training program at Café Horizons provides the opportunity for local young people to gain a Certificate I and II in Hospitality (Operations). This certification is transferable to other programs run at TAFE.

Café Horizons also works in partnership with the Department of Education and Training to deliver a 'Gateways' program that provides eight days of training and work experience in the Café for 12 at risk young people from local high schools each term. Students in the Gateways program come to the Café for one day each week and are taught the fundamentals of the hospitality industry such as Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), hygiene, customer service and food preparation skills.

"The program offers young people a brighter future and the opportunity of a fulfilling lifestyle whereby they are able to achieve not only a greater sense of self-esteem by having gained a qualification and employment but also by developing a more suitable peer network. The program has been made possible with the support of the community centre and the area health service. I congratulate all of those involved. As the local member I will give it my utmost support. It is an important part of the Cabramatta project, which I have detailed to the House on numerous occasions. It is a whole-of-government approach dealing not only with the health needs of the community but also policing needs. In the final stages it is also about breaking the cycle of unemployment in the area, offering young people a future. Despite the abrogation of the Federal Government in this regard the community is taking a lead in providing hope and opportunity for its youth."
Local Member for Cabramatta, Mrs Reba Meagher

The vision of the Café is multi-faceted. Not only does it strive to engage at-risk youth in vocational training, the Café also endeavours to provide assistance with personal issues, professional development opportunities and life skills training. The Café provides personal support throughout the program and job seeking assistance after the program and whilst providing the opportunity to attain national qualifications it also gives young people from the Cabramatta area the opportunity to gain employability skills such as customer service, money management and food service and preparation.

There are seven areas of service that are offered to the young people for experience. In the sixth week (half-way) of the program a formal review takes place, giving students and trainers the opportunity to assess the structure and content of the program.



Foccacia - Prepare and serve a range of tasty sandwiches and foccacias.

Till- Handle all monetary transactions by operating the till

Wait Staff - Greet customers, take orders and serve their meals.

Stove and Grill - Prepare and serve hot food items

Kitchen Hand - Wash and put away all plates, cutlery, glassware and kitchen equipment

Salad Hand - Prepare and serve salads and garnishes.

Barista - Prepare/serve all hot drinks. These include Cappuccino, Café Latte and Mocha coffees

"Each of these positions can lead to a specialised career in the hospitality field." – Café Horizons

CASE STUDY 2:

LUCY, 14

Lucy, a fourteen-year-old student, came straight from the weekly Gateway program into the full time program. She was having difficulties at her High School where she was enrolled in year 10. She was expecting to get expelled due to poor peer and teacher relations. Part of her behaviour issues were anger related. She had difficulty controlling her anger, and this became apparent with one relationship during the course. She was given a time-out due to her behaviour towards this student. She was then asked to complete a conflict management workbook with café staff.

Her family was unstable and due to past experiences she had been to counselling. She agreed to go again with the assistance of café staff. However she attended only once, and avoided going again. She moved in with her sister, to get away from some of the disturbances at home. Café staff assisted her in gaining financial support for this.

She often had to leave work early because she also had the responsibility of taking care of a younger brother.

In all other areas she worked hard, she was competent, and skilled. Despite these family pressures she was able to work well at the café, becoming a valuable and reliable student.

Upon graduation, she received recognition for partial completion of Cert II. She recently contacted the café to tell us she had been given an apprenticeship at a local restaurant. She was very happy about her success, and was also thankful for her time spent at the café. She is going well in this new job.



STAFFING

The team of five staff at Café Horizons is comprised of two full-time trainers, Gordon Crocker, as well as Jason McMillen who has been with the Café since its inception. Heather Gorton and Karen Yates share training sessions throughout the week and youth-worker Kelly Baird joins the group from 8.30am – 11am Monday – Friday.

"I wear many hats... a business hat making sure we're running at a profit, a welfare hat to guide students through personal issues and a training hat to ensure students are receiving adequate training for the hospitality industry... and they seem to be at constant odds with one another!"

Program Co-ordinator, Jason McMillen

All staff members are accredited hospitality trainers with further qualifications in adult education. At the Café there is a personalised staff to student ratio of 1:6. Trainees (students) are not paid a wage but are eligible for unemployment benefits by

participating in an approved training program.

Staff members not only provide education and training but also develop meaningful relationships with the students that are long lasting, some extending well beyond the duration of the program. In a report released by Café Horizons in August of last year detailed under the header 'Unexpected Outcomes' was the following -

"The most unexpected outcome has been the level of on-going attachment which graduates have to the Café and the Café staff. Many of them drop into the Café on a regular basis. Others come in when things have gone wrong for them, partly to seek help and partly to ground themselves. Others ring in or write to let staff know how they are going. For many graduates, the Café is a significant milestone in their lives and can act as a point of connectedness for them for 12 months or more after they leave."

CASE STUDY 3:

MICHAEL, 17

Seventeen-year-old Michael was referred to the Café by a local youth refuge. He worked well in both the classroom and the café. He was quick to learn, respectful and followed directions easily. His easy-going nature and fun personality made him popular with both staff and students. He was very reliable at the beginning and his attendance and punctuality were great, but they progressively got worse throughout the course.

Michael had ongoing homelessness issues - he stayed at various refuges throughout the course, including a few friends' homes. He then moved in with his father, causing a bit more disruption to his lifestyle. Social activities also became a bit of an issue; late nights resulted in lateness and absences at the café.

However, despite the distractions he did complete his Cert II. He was offered extra assistance from the Café to gain RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol). Unfortunately, after the graduation he disappeared for a period of time, his personal issues overwhelmed him again. Michael has since returned to the café to help out on occasions. Michael is now using the customer service skills here learned at the Café and working in sales. He is enjoying working in a team and gaining job satisfaction.

REFERRAL PROCESS

*"Young people have been referred by 24 different community agencies with the largest source of referral coming from Juvenile Justice and the Youth Drug Court (17%) - **Café Horizons***

The majority of young people in the Café Horizons program have been referred by refuge centres. The general referral protocol is to submit a 'Referral To Links To Learning' form. When nominating a potential student for the program it requests that the referring agency offers support and encourages their clients' participation if accepted into the program; the Café is a firm believer that the likelihood of a student to complete the course is heightened by the level of support they receive externally.

Referrals to the program can include any young person who has experienced difficulty in the mainstream system, early school leavers looking for further education and work experience. Many of Café Horizons target group include young people who are; in recovery from drug dependence, homeless, long term unemployed, early school leavers, involved with criminal justice system and indigenous young people. As

of the end of 2004 a vast majority of students (62%) had completed only year nine (third year of High School in NSW) – with 88% having completed year 10 or less.

Interviews are held two weeks prior to intake dates which take place about ten times each year. Prospective students are asked to give details of their work experience, legal history, accommodation status, Centrelink benefits, education, medical background and how they envisage that they will get to and from the program. Students are also asked to articulate their short-term (1 month) and long-term (5 month) goals and any external factors that they believe may inhibit them from completing the course. This is what the Café believe to be a necessary measure to address strengths and weaknesses of the student as well as any potential barriers early in the piece.

STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM

Once a student has been granted entry into the course they are met by a Centrelink youth outreach worker who assesses each individuals entitlements to Centrelink benefits. The outreach worker is then available for consultation as needed for the duration of the program. Students also undertake an



induction process that includes a specialised booklet that outlines the course, policies and procedures, occupational health and safety, details about the training and learning agreement, complaints procedures and job descriptions.

Throughout the program students are involved in a number of activities outside of the Café including team-building days (high and low rope courses) as well as industry visits to hotels and fruit and vegetable markets.

As the student develops along with the program they are progressively given more responsibility.

CASE STUDY 4:

LYN, 19

Lyn was referred to Café Horizons by Reconnect. Lyn was nineteen, and was, at times very difficult to work with. She became more difficult when she was upset, or angry. Lyn did not follow directions well, and became very defensive and argumentative in many situations. Lyn was on disability allowance, and the severity of her disability (intellectual) was not realised until later in the course.

Lyn caused many problems at the café, and only just made it to the end of the program. The work given to her in the café needed to be simple and clearly explained and repeated many times to ensure accurate execution. She easily lost interest, and found it hard to work/concentrate for 3 hours. Class work was also difficult, and paying attention without disrupting the class was often not achieved.

Lyn continues to meet with her Reconnect worker throughout the course. Before the end of the course she was taken for a visit to AFFORD (a training / employment agency that works with people with a disability), where she was able to see some more options that were available to her once she completed her time at the Café.

At graduation, Lyn received a partial Cert II.

The week after graduation Lyn went directly to AFFORD. She was enrolled in another course through AFFORD, and recently contacted the café about some subjects she was to study, and shared that she was enjoying the new course.

EVALUATION / OUTCOMES

It is the duty of each trainer at Café Horizons to dedicate a few hours each week to follow up on the status of previous students. At this point there has been no official evaluation process, however, in late 2004 the Café released a report that highlighted some of their achievements, including:

- Each program has commenced with a minimum compliment of 12 students
- A total of 98 young people have engaged in the 8 programs, 51 females and 47 males
- All were within the 15 to 25 age criteria with 17 being the most common age (30%), and with the majority of clients aged under 20 (89%).
- In the first eight programs 40 young people (41%) gained the full Certificate II qualification
- A further 24 young people (24%) received a statement of attainment for modules completed
- 29 young people are know to have gone onto full-time, part-time or casual employment, and in addition
- 4 young people were placed into apprenticeships
- 15 young people have gone onto TAFE or back to school