

STREAT:

Providing a Fork in the Road for Young People

Rebecca Scott, Chief Executive Officer, STREAT

STREAT is a Melbourne-based social enterprise that provides support and training to homeless and disadvantaged young people aged 15 to 25 years. Since its inception in 2009 the organisation has been building a scalable social enterprise model in the hospitality industry. Since it pushed its first little food cart out onto Federation Square in 2010, the organisation has now scaled to be running a portfolio of seven hospitality businesses (five cafes, a coffee roastery and a catering company) where its young people train and which also generate the profits for the organisation to be able to support its young people.

Having served over 1.25 million customers, the organisation is now over 70 per cent self-funded through its business operations. To date this has allowed STREAT to work with over 400 young people and provide over 38,000 hours of support and training. Outlined below is the organisation's model, and also some of the key things they've learnt in the last five years.

STREAT's Recipe

STREAT want their young people to thrive in all parts of their lives and they help them achieve a stable self, stable job and a stable home.

1. **Stable self** — providing wrap-around support including individual case management, linkages to other specialist service providers as needed (drug and alcohol, mental health, legal, housing services), a group life skills programs, and creative and social activities.
2. **Stable job** — providing a range of vocational training programs that can either be done as

stand-alone programs, or as a pathway of opportunities. These include:

- **'Taster'** — short half day programs introducing young people to the world of hospitality.
- **'Entree'** — for young people wanting to access supported work experience or to give STREAT a try before committing to a longer program. Most young people undertake this program for eight to ten weeks.
- **'Main Course'** — a fully supported six month program which includes obtaining a Certificate II in Kitchen Operations, on-the-job training and mentoring, a Life Skills program, creative and social engagement and individual case support (including linkages to specialist service providers).
- **'Dessert'** — a creative arts program encouraging young people to creatively express themselves and their stories. STREAT works with a range of arts professionals in this project. This program can be undertaken by young people who are not quite ready to start a broader program (for example, young people who need to further stabilise their mental health or drug and alcohol issues), or by young people already enrolled in another program.

3. **Stable home** — STREAT works to secure its young people safe, affordable and long term accommodation through partnerships with a wide range of Melbourne housing services.

Social Outcomes

External research undertaken by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) into STREAT's model has confirmed the following social outcomes for young people: social inclusion, increased resilience, confidence in abilities, increased income, learn socially-acceptable behaviours, reduction in unlawful activities, reduction in drugs and alcohol, improved mental health, and improved housing stability. The overall impact of these outcomes is a young person's ability to pursue independent living and become self-reliant.

STREAT's own internal qualitative and quantitative evaluation has consistently demonstrated what the external research has also shown — that the most valued outcome of STREAT's programs to young people is their social inclusion and sense of belonging.

Some Key Learnings

Over the last five years STREAT has learnt or confirmed the following key lessons:

- **Prevent and intervene early** — the earlier that you can work with a young person, the faster change can occur and the stronger the results will be.
- **Join up services** — when working with the most complex young people, there is a critical need for programs to be "wrap-around" and navigation between different parts of the service system to be seamless.
- **Focus on strengths** — despite the young people in STREAT's programs being highly unemployable when they enter a program, the organisation has always worked with enduring positivity and unconditional positive regard of each young

person. In the words of one young person, 'STREAT believed in me before I believed in myself'.

- **Offer a pathway** — originally STREAT only offered a six month Certificate II program but over time has developed a suite of flexible programs to meet a young person wherever they're at.
- **Be highly flexible** — STREAT has had to tailor its vocational training to be delivered in more flexible ways than originally through a standard TAFE. This is particularly necessary with young people who have low levels of literacy and numeracy, who may need extended breaks from the program due to their mental health and drug and alcohol issues, or who may have significant learning difficulties. This flexibility may be seen in class sizes, teaching style or methods, how knowledge is tested, the pace of learning, additional support that is given to particular trainees, and the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills honed within the cafe environments.
- **Workplace support should be intensive** — one of the complexities of providing training and work experience within real operating businesses is the need to get the right intensity of support within the business environments. For example, whilst a life skills class may be able to smoothly operate with up to 12 young people, STREAT has consistently found that workplace training and mentoring is most effective one on one.
- **Integrate internally** — STREAT has successfully built a seamless organisation that provides intensive support whether a young person is working with their youth worker or their barista. This has been achieved a number of ways including providing strong professional development and support of hospitality staff in working with young people, providing a very rapid response (phone and in person) available from trained youth workers and social workers within each of the businesses, and regular case management meetings between the hospitality and youth teams.
- **Offer a wide range of skills and opportunities** — by operating a

portfolio of businesses STREAT can usually find the right job fit for each young person at the right time. For example, a 'Back Of House' kitchen job or work within STREAT's catering company might be the ideal first workplace for a young person with autism or an anxiety disorder because the work is consistent and non-customer facing. However, that same young person with the right supports months later might be comfortable in a fast-paced 'Front Of House' environment serving hundreds of customers each day. STREAT's portfolio of businesses also ensure that young people get to engage and form relationships with a broad range of customers, from university students in the casual environment of RMIT to the suited corporate consultants in the marbled foyer of Price Waterhouse Coopers.

- **Ensure transitions are smooth** — the transition points into and out of the program are critical. For example, without maintaining the necessary levels of support as a young person transitions into their new job, a young person can quickly lose the gains they have made at STREAT over six months. In 2016 STREAT has been piloting the 'STREAT's Ahead' program with the Fonda Mexican restaurant chain that

provides a 'soft landing' for young people through a six month scholarship to STREAT graduates. Within this program STREAT continues to strongly support a young person, but also provide the necessary supports and expertise to Fonda's team.

- **Create the right culture of inclusion** — the key ingredient of STREAT is that it creates a sense of belonging for its young people. Recruiting the right staff, and particularly those in the frontline hospitality roles is critical.

STREAT has just started further large-scale expansion of its social enterprise model through the development of a major new flagship training academy and business site in Collingwood, Melbourne. This site will enable STREAT to expand its programs and work with 250 young people each year. However, the organisation has far bigger dreams and has set itself the goal of helping the equivalent of one young person each mealtime by 2022. That's 1,095 meals — and young people — each year.

We hope that you can become part of this dream either through referring young people to the program or through becoming a customer.

Bon appétit!



Conference Program