

Social Enterprise **Launch Pad Program**



Robyn Bust, Oasis Café

Social Enterprise Launch Pad program participant

The Community's Oasis

It's not often that buying your coffee or lunch will help enrich someone's life. But at Oasis Kitchen Training Café in Wyong, every sandwich or coffee sold provides crucial skills and experience that help students gain long-term employment and live productive, independent lives.

A Gateway to Employment

The manager, Robyn Bust, said the café originally targeted youth employment, but the social enterprise has grown to include all ages and people from all walks of life.

The café is a great environment for disadvantaged students, such as those with numeracy and literacy challenges who don't fit into the mainstream education model. There are also mothers returning to the workforce and others who find themselves temporarily out of work.

Students spend one day a week learning theory and the other four days gaining hands-on experience in the café under the guidance of an expert chef and trainer who teaches certificates in both kitchen operations and hospitality.

Depending upon individual circumstances, these programs are free or at a highly discounted rate as a result of the State Government's Smart and Skilled initiative.

Activating the Oasis Centre

"Situated within The Salvation Army Oasis Centre at 5 Hely Street, the café really helps activate the whole space," said Mrs Bust. "It invites the community to come and connect with each other, while also discovering everything the centre offers, such as the youth support services, driving school, music and dance programs, counselling and other community support services."

“Our success is definitely due in large part to our dedicated team and support from the community,” she said.

Balancing Financial and Social Goals

Mrs Bust admitted it was an on-going challenge to balance social outcomes with financial sustainability.

“It was essential to do a lot of homework before we started about the financial viability of the café,” she said. “We then created a solid business plan and strategy around how to achieve our goals.”

In our case we determined that skilled baristas and chefs were going to be vital to the success of the business – it’s important for any café, but especially ours, to keep the food and coffee consistent.

Mrs Bust said they also add value by partnering with other organisations on the Coast that deliver social outcomes, and they are always looking for more partnerships.

“It’s so nice to run and be involved with businesses where the profits go back into the community and you have the opportunity to solve community problems,” she said.

A True Oasis

Opened in February 2017 the café has now fulfilled its vision of becoming an oasis in its own right – a leafy, tranquil garden in the middle of Wyong where the community can relax with friends and enjoy fabulous food and service.

You can drop in between 8am – 2pm on weekdays to check out the fantastic coffee and food for yourself or order one of their many corporate catering packages.

