

HERVEY BAY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Doing Good. Tastes Great. Youth Training Cafe

It's inspiring sitting at the café at the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre with the CEO Tanya Stevenson. The café is one part of a social enterprise approach that has been embedded into the strategy of the Centre.

Tanya's energetic, she's got a vision and she is passionate (perhaps all crucial to this work). She has been in the job as CEO for 6+ years and local community sector worker for 20+ years. She knows local people, and they know her and trust her, which are important components of a successful social enterprise. For this case study a slightly different angle has been chosen – to tell more of the personal story. Because the person and their practice (in this case Tanya) are critical aspects to bringing a social enterprise into the world of a community or neighbourhood centre.

SOCIAL PURPOSE

This social enterprise supports the employment and skill development of young people (two cohorts, 15-18yo and 18-35yo) who face significant disadvantage and vulnerability and have been involved in the youth justice system. In a nutshell it is a social enterprise that aims to support young people to 'transition to work'. Currently about 35 young people per year benefit, engaged in an 18-week Skilling QLD on-the-job training – followed by job-placements (with three different employers) with the support of paid 'training and employment coaches'.

As Tanya calls it, the social enterprise aims to 'disrupt disadvantage'.¹

TRADING ACTIVITY

It is a three-fold social enterprise trading in:

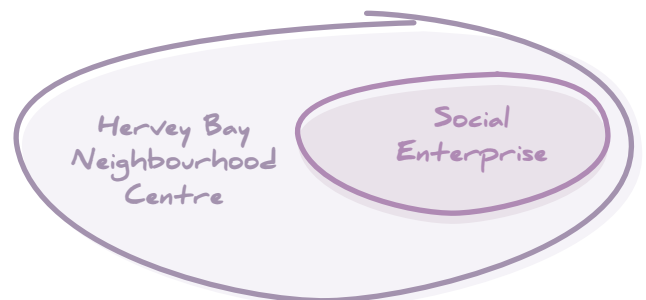
1. Selling coffee and food at an in-house café
2. Catering via a commercial kitchen
3. Facility rental / hire

At year two, the facility rental income cross-subsidies the other two (which are currently making a loss or just breaking even).

With all three enterprises at work there is a surplus which is then distributed into paying for other social activities, such as the Wednesday evening's 'Comfort Kitchen' – a free three-course sit down dinner for the homeless, socially isolated and financially struggling (with live music and other services such as free haircuts) that has 60-100 people participate per week.

While the social enterprise is clear about the three trading activities there is also a government subsidy of Skilling Queensland Grant. But the trading activity is the key.

From an **ownership and governance** perspective the SE is part of the Community Centre. It has its own budget line-item, but it's owned and governed by the centre. In pictorial form it looks like this:



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

Be prepared to have a three-year investment plan and a risk appetite. Tanya has learned that it will take one to two years to initiate, and you 'might' get a surplus in the third year. The take-away lesson: 'it's not about the quick fix'. She noted that the Board wanted to pull out after one year and she had to persuade them to shift to a three-year horizon. The Treasurer particularly had to back this venture.

Thus, it is crucial to **get the Board/Committee on-board** and ensure they understand the difference between traditional grant-oriented development and social enterprise-business development. It is not just about the financial outcomes; it is about the social impact outcomes.

Partner with the smartest people in town and get them involved: Tanya is energetic, visionary, and passionate – but she is also smart in the sense that she knows what she doesn't know and finds partners, people, other practitioners who know the business world better than her. This lesson is also about also having strong local **partners and networks**. Do not go it alone.

Finally, Tanya said '**it's a hard slog**'. Many small businesses go under. Tanya spent a lot of effort looking for a good idea. She invested in attending a world social enterprise conference (in New Zealand) to build her knowledge and skills. She checked out possible businesses and talked to many people who knew more than her. She experimented with a couple of ideas. She adapted. The point is, it is about time and effort. Don't view social enterprise as an easy fix or easy win.

PROJECT SUMMARY



MORE INFORMATION

Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre
www.hbnc.com.au

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland
www.ncq.org.au

REFERENCES: 1 <https://www.ceda.com.au/ResearchAndPolicies/ResearchPopulation/Disrupting-disadvantage-setting-the-scene>

This Social Enterprise Sector Development Grant project is proudly supported and funded by the Queensland Government.

This case study was developed by Community Praxis Co-Op and Nundah Community Enterprise Co-Op and has been endorsed by HBNC in March 2023.



▲ Skilling Queenslanders for Work Graduate



Comfort Kitchen staff and volunteers

Trainee graduate with Cupcakes for Change



Trainees for the Wandering Teapot Cafe
(Story on website)



Multicultural cooking class