CAFE HORIZONS CABRAMATTA:
Serving up a Career

CONTEXT
Located at 219 Cabramatta Rd, Cabramatta, Cafe Horizons is a fully-functioning cafe that provides early intervention, intensive case management and nationally accredited vocational training for young people who have disengaged, or are disengaging, from education.

The concept of the Cafe was developed in response to community concerns about the lack of vocational training and employment opportunities for youth in the Fairfield area.

Operating since 2001, Cafe Horizons is an initiative of the Salvation Army and is managed by Youthlink, its specialist youth service in Western Sydney.

TARGET GROUP: COMBINED – STUDENTS AT RISK AND EARLY LEAVERS
Cafe Horizons provides a one day a week program for students enrolled in school and a full-time program for post-compulsory youth at risk.
PROJECT AIM
• to assist young people who are disconnecting from school or who have already left school, to gain the skills and experience necessary to be able to compete more equitably in the employment market.

PROJECT OVERVIEW
Open to the public four days a week, Cafe Horizons is a youth training cafe with a commercial kitchen and a dedicated training classroom.
Two discrete programs are offered at Cafe Horizons. They are:
• a one day-a-week part-time program designed to re-engage school students by giving them an understanding of how what they learn at school connects to the world of work. On completion, students receive a Statement of Attainment in two units from the Certificate II in Hospitality.
• a full-time program designed to provide young people who have disengaged from school with the qualifications, work attributes and practical experience they need to get a job. Students who complete the course receive a Certificate II in Hospitality.

The Cafe Horizon program is staffed by a Youthlink manager, a youth worker (who also doubles as a ‘front-of-house’ supervisor), a qualified chef and a hospitality trainer.

REFERRAL PROCESS
Since the increase in the school leaving age, referrals to Cafe Horizon have increased tenfold. Students are referred to the program by schools, by agencies such as Juvenile Justice and Centrelink or by a range of service providers in the areas of accommodation, youth, health and employment.

Schools primarily nominate students for inclusion in the part-time program but the referral process, whether it is for the full-time or the part-time program, tends to be the same. Students are identified by school welfare/learning support teams with input from school counsellors, year advisors and the home school liaison officer.

Irrespective of whether students are being referred by schools or other agencies, all referrals are sent to the youth worker employed by Cafe Horizon who then interviews students to assess their suitability for the program.

To ensure that student numbers in the full-time and part-time programs are maximised, the Cafe manager regularly emails all referring organisations to inform them when a vacancy has occurred, to remind them of the service and to advertise any promotions happening in the Cafe.

PROGRAM FEATURES
Cafe Horizons is about providing vocational education programs and work experience options so that young people have a better chance of gaining employment and thereby a better chance of turning their lives around. It is a targeted needs-based intervention program that helps students accept responsibility, grow in self-esteem and confidence and learn how to set goals and work towards them.

The Cafe provides a supported flexible enterprise environment where young people:
• participate in valuable real-life work experience
• are assisted with personal issues
• gain employability and life skills training, and
• have the opportunity to attain a Certificate II in Hospitality.

Supervised by professional chefs and hospitality trainers, the Cafe’s daily sessions incorporate practical work, such as cooking, cleaning, waiting, barista and money management, as well as life skills such as washing, presentation, personal hygiene, communication and conflict resolution.

The part-time program, which caters for up to twelve school students, runs every Monday for sixteen weeks, twice a year. It includes some theory with practical work in the Cafe and two six-hour shifts as kitchen hands.

Ongoing communication with schools about a student’s progress is a built-in feature of the program. The Cafe’s youth worker works closely with the ‘Links to Learning’ coordinator in each school to assist students throughout the program and as they transition back into school. Students, who find school is not the most appropriate outcome for them, are supported into alternative education, training or employment. Some students choose to enrol in the full-time Cafe Horizon program.

Full-time program participants attend Cafe Horizon six hours per day from Tuesday to Friday. The morning is spent on theory-based hospitality training. In the afternoon, when the Cafe is open to the public, students are involved in preparation, cooking, serving and cleaning.

Delivered by Booth College, a Registered Training Organisation, this four day-a-week, twenty-week program has a rolling intake of up to twelve students at any one time. The program covers seven areas of service (till, wait staff, kitchen hand, salad hand, foccacia, stove and grill and barista) and includes industry visits. Additional time is provided to help students to catch up on missed work or to meet Certificate II standards.

The Cafe Horizons’ full-time program has no set entry and exit dates; students can enrol at any stage in the program’s cycle. For example, if a student joins at the beginning of module 5, they will complete modules 5-12 and then complete modules 1-4. This ‘rolling’ enrolment policy delivers quick program admission and allows experienced students to mentor new students. It also enables the program to meet and maintain the required student numbers to run a course in Certificate II in Hospitality.
No one day at Cafe Horizon is the same as the needs of the young people are challenging, complex and demanding. It is not unusual for staff to have to cope with a student experiencing a 'massive meltdown' or to deal with issues related to homelessness, family dysfunction, abuse or alcohol and other drugs.

It takes a considerable amount of intensive work on the part of the dedicated Cafe Horizon staff to get many students to a place in their lives where they feel safe and are able to function effectively.

**BENEFITS, SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES**

Cafe Horizons is a practical program that connects vulnerable young people to further study, full-time work and the public. It helps stabilise their lives by improving their self-management and employability skills.

The personnel at Cafe Horizons form a highly-trained, dedicated and passionate team who are approachable, empathetic, non-judgemental and supportive. They provide a safe place in which students can train and where they develop meaningful and rewarding relationships that see students returning to the Cafe long after they have finished the program.

Cafe Horizons is successful because it provides wrap-around support that addresses a student's personal and vocational needs through intensive case management and access to specialised service providers.

Attaching a youth worker to the program is an important strategy as this position:

- supports staff through professional development in behaviour management and counselling
- helps students to understand and modify their behaviours
- facilitates access to a range of services on a holistic and integrated basis, and
- delivers the capacity to conduct weekly follow-up of present and previous students.

The continuous process of program refinement makes sure that students enjoy their experience at the Cafe and want to keep coming. Training approaches, structures, systems, timetables and menus are frequently reviewed for improvement. For example, staff, concerned that the literacy levels of the training packages were far too difficult for most students, researched and introduced new material that was more accessible, interactive and visual. Similarly, to expand participants' repertoire and skills (and avoid monotony), the concept of a 'Special Menu Days' was introduced. Ten international menus, planned and developed in conjunction with the students, are now available at different times throughout the program. Both these program refinements saw a marked positive improvement in students' attitudes and skills development.

Supporting program participants to attain a Certificate II in Hospitality leads to better employment options for students. It demonstrates to prospective employers that the student possesses the required competencies, skills and work ethics. Just as importantly it shows that the young person can commit to learning over a sustained period of time.

Student outcomes include:

- improved self-esteem and confidence and reduced social isolation
- demonstrated improvement in employability and life skills for all participants (part-time and full-time)
- all part-time participants remaining in school except for one student who chose to enrol in the full-time program
- 63% of full-time participants receiving a Certificate II in Hospitality or a Statement of Attainment
- completion of negotiated activities by all participants.

Students exit the Cafe Horizons program with an accredited training qualification, job seeking assistance and a greater sense of self-esteem. Most importantly, they leave optimistic about their future having been given a very practical opportunity to gain productive employment and change their lives.

**The continuous process of program refinement makes sure that students enjoy their experience at the Cafe and want to keep coming.**
Selena’s interest in hospitality and taking care of herself became a priority for her.

**STUDENT SNAPSHOT A**

Selena, a 17 year old Year 10 student, was truanting, misbehaving and engaging in illegal activities when she was referred to the Café Horizons program in 2013.

Throughout the year Selena found it difficult to maintain attendance and motivation, particularly with continued negative outside influences impacting on her. However with the ongoing support of Café Horizons staff, Selena’s behaviour and attendance turned around. She attended the program everyday and took a lead role in the kitchen and café. Selena’s interest in hospitality and taking care of herself became a priority for her.

At the beginning of the program, Selena had said she wanted to get a credential in hospitality and then either get a full time job in hospitality or hairdressing. At the end of the program, she had achieved her Certificate II in Hospitality. Selena has been recommended for The Salvation Army’s Employment Plus, Youthlink and McDonalds partnership employment program, ‘Going for Gold’.

**STUDENT SNAPSHOT B**

Jake was a 17 year old student in Year 11 when he attended the Café Horizons program for 5 months in 2013. Jake had an identified intellectual disability and was facing a multitude of issues at school including learning difficulties, a lack of social skills and little peer support. He was referred to the Café to assist with the development and enhancement of his social skills, confidence, learning and self-esteem.

Throughout the year Jake’s confidence and self-esteem developed. Whilst initially there were concerns regarding his ability to complete the theory part of the program, Jake managed to complete his theory and practical tasks independently. As his confidence grew, Jake was able to talk and socialise and form friendships with other young people in the program.

Jake completed the Café Horizons program with a statement of attainment. His goal had been to complete Year 11, which he is now currently doing.

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## PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

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<td>Cafe Horizon Cabramatta</td>
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