CCA Conference – Evolve: The Era of Change

Forming Strategic Alliances with Human Services Organisations

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The Journey to Creatively Evolving Together

• In April 2014 a group of NSW Mid North Coast NGOs shared their fears about a rapidly changing landscape.

• Governments are forcing marketisation, giving new contracts to private providers to force competition.

• Believing in Person-Valuing & Community-Building approaches they decided to start working together.
Partnerships for Development

• Which human services? Ageing, Disability, Mental Health, Education & Training, Youth & Women at risk, Child Care, Indigenous, Multicultural, Refugees

• How to collaborate? Finding duplicated functions where cost-sharing can work well – Fin/Admin; HR; Transport & Logistics; Ordering etc

• Creating One-Stop-Shop places for customers & carers to access multiple services
Barriers to Collaborating

• Fear of losing personal and organisational roles & identities – “siloes of self interest”

• Worries about being gazumped, or stealing ideas – Not being comfortable to share people or projects

• Resistant boards, management or frontline staff – who don’t want to change their ways, or are frightened of being made redundant
What role should Alliances play?

- Lobbying and Advocacy with Governments, Business and Community Groups – plus liaising with other industry sectors to find out how they join forces

- Brokering new partnerships for development with NGOs and others wanting guidance in how to do it

- Helping to Plan for regional business, jobs and community development
How will staff and customers feel?

• Most staff feel supported when management share their own uncertainties and need to explore new ways forward.

• Multiskilling is scary at first, but can actually make work more interesting in the long run.

• Some people discover new talents they didn’t know they had – and sharing with others disarms it all.
Combining forces in experiential learning

• Community Colleges and their local community allies can play a central role in assisting vulnerable people (people with disability, mental health challenges, traumatised groups) to learn new skills, develop confidence and become part of entrepreneurial new community ventures.

• By respecting people’s different learning styles and speeds, adult learning approaches can help people to gain confidence and take risks.
Taking small steps to new ventures

- Developing whole-of-life learning programs, where creative classroom activities combine with hands-on experience in community ventures.
- Personal confidence & skills for employment strengthened.
- Exploring new skills & opportunities for developing their own small businesses by people with disabilities.
- Providing a Business Incubator support service helps people to run their own businesses and still have a place to belong and share socially while working on their business.
Collaborating to support local development

• Bringing people with disabilities together with other vulnerable groups to support each other’s creative, personal and vocational development builds social cohesion and inclusion.

• MNC HSA’s Conference on “Sustainable Services: Creating a New Future in Human Services,” 16-17 November at Panthers, Port Macquarie:
  Register now at
• [http://www.successandsustainabilityconference.com](http://www.successandsustainabilityconference.com)
Community Ventures with diverse abilities:

- Companioning in nursing homes and retirement villages (and soon individual homes)
- Animal Companions

- Catering for community group gatherings
- Community Gardening, horticulture and permaculture
- Creative arts & crafts
Port Macquarie Hastings School of Hard Knocks

- SkillsLink Community College is also establishing a branch of the School of Hard Knocks for the Mid North Coast of NSW with Dr Jonathon Welch.

- This Creative Arts for Recovery Program will provide a range of activities: from choir activity to musical performances, creative writing to percussion groups.

- This will also align with LifeSkills Express College for 18-25 year olds living with disability, where students can engage in experiential learning, develop skills through work experience in community ventures, and continue learning & growing for up to seven years if it suits their personal plans.
CONCLUSIONS

• Human Services Alliances can share practical ways of running NGOs more effectively. They can also engage with and support self-development of vulnerable communities in collaborative networks. Community Colleges are natural local allies of such initiatives, and they bring good business in as well.

• Partnerships for such development among local individuals, families, carers, NGOs and businesses share the community & business benefits more widely.

• True sustainability will come when the community is deliberately choosing to employ people of diverse abilities and to use their small businesses as part of improving everyone’s quality of life – and it’s a heap more fun!