

“A Strong, Full, Varied and Vibrant Employment and Education Program”

Andrew McLean and Shannon Keys, Stepping Stone Clubhouse
Australian Clubhouse Conference 2016
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

The key message of our presentation is that the Clubhouse Employment and Education program needs to be considered as a whole and integrated into the Clubhouse in the best way it can be. Each component of the Employment and Education program is only as strong as the others. Each component's success depends on the foundations that support it.

A strong Employment/Education program depends upon a strong foundation of close relationships, quality individual support and meaningful opportunity in the Work Ordered Day. Building on this foundation, a Clubhouse employment and education program empowers its members.

One of the most special things about Clubhouse is that we offer members meaningful opportunities to fulfil their personal and vocational goals. Having a strong employment and education program really changes lives.

The Clubhouse Model

Members come to Clubhouse and engage in social interaction and relationships with other members and staff. Outreach is effective in encouraging members to come in and participate in the Work Ordered Day (W.O.D.). Engagement of members occurs through the pre-vocational program as part of the W.O.D. and social recreation.

Members get support (including help with writing resumes and cover letters) within the work of the unit, which can lead to employment outcomes such as TE/SE/IE. Depending upon members' goals and career paths, members can access Clubhouse Transitional, Supported, and/or Independent Employment.

Members can also utilize Clubhouse supports to further their education. Support is provided through each unit for this to occur. Member tutors are encouraged but staff also help in proofreading assignments or in planning study. A member who has a relapse can continue to access Clubhouse supports in any manner that best supports him or her in the journey of recovery.

Strong, Full, Varied and Vibrant

The strength of any Clubhouse program is demonstrated by the way in which it meets the needs of its members, achieves its goals, and upholds the integrity of the Clubhouse Model. A strong program is grounded within the Clubhouse structure, is constantly evolving to improve access for members, and is driven by passionate staff and members. A strong Clubhouse is resilient and trusts that the model works, regardless of external influences.

A fully developed Clubhouse has numerous opportunities available for members to address every aspect of their personal growth or career development. Clear pathways exist allowing members to move through the various elements of the program, such as TE to SE. A fully developed Clubhouse contains all of the puzzle pieces needed to complete each member's bigger picture, and to connect the dots between the Work Ordered Day, employment and

education. A full program engages external partners and resources and educates the Clubhouse community on what opportunities are available. It works on the notion that “If we build it they will come.” Sometimes members don’t know they want to do something until it is available to them.

A varied Clubhouse employment and education program considers potential areas of both personal and career development. It provides access to many different types of experiences in the community, and actively engages members in this process. A varied program actively pushes to source an opportunity for every Clubhouse member, especially members with the most significant vocational challenges.

The best evidence that a Clubhouse program is vibrant is how many members want to be involved. A vibrant employment and education program is exciting, dynamic, fun, important to the community, accessible, celebrated, and has a high visibility within the Clubhouse. A vibrant program carries with it a culture that empowers its members, and is delivered with energy and enthusiasm.

The importance of providing education and employment opportunities are highlighted in the International Clubhouse Standards, Accreditation, training and are a critical part of Clubhouse philosophy.

Critical Foundation for a Strong Program

A full and varied employment and education program is only successful when relationships, Work Ordered Day and individual support prepare members for employment and study. For all this to occur, the Clubhouse must have strong internal processes for members’ involvement – meaningful, engaging work that is delivered through the units in a full and vibrant Work Ordered Day that includes career development and has quality individual support. Members have close relationships with their chosen staff member, who actively encourage and support them in connecting with the employment and education program. Using the Work Ordered Day, staff help members realise their potential.

It is in the units that the engagement of members in employment and education support occurs. Units must offer access to current technology to be able to build capacity and skills for popular industries. The Work Ordered Day tasks needs to offer opportunities and match what is out in the community in terms of what members might do in their workplace. There should also be exciting displays on the wall about TEs available and the provision of TE/SE/IE/Education support within the W.O.D.

Education

Education is one of the most exciting components of a full and varied program. A strong education program is well supported, and well prepared. Members and staff find the best training providers, courses, access to qualifications, and gain the knowledge needed to assist members to follow their chosen pathway. A strong education program doesn’t wait for a member to express interest in study, and then collect the information needed. It recruits quality resources and makes them accessible in the Clubhouse. Education is celebrated and supported throughout the Clubhouse, and supports are determined and delivered within the unit structure. Clubhouse education supports address a wide range of member goals, including the following:

- *Education to Restore Confidence*

One of the highlights of a strong education program is seeing members tackle areas of learning that they feel hold them back from other opportunities. One of the best examples of this are members who have had the courage to face their challenges with reading and writing, and complete Literacy and Numeracy courses. One Stepping Stone member has gone from being nervous and avoiding reading to now facilitating morning meetings and reading out Clubhouse Standards, and working in a TE.

Another example is members who are overwhelmed with using computers in the Clubhouse. We have sourced some great entry-level computer courses that teach basic computer skills, such as emailing, using Office, calendars, and spreadsheets. A number of our members have completed these courses, and then used their knowledge and confidence to move onto Certificate level courses and TE jobs. This is another example of the impact of a full and varied program.

- *Education to Work Towards Employment*

A strong education program provides quality pathways towards employment for members. Most employers now have minimum requirements and qualifications in order to be considered for the position. Clubhouses need to know how to support members from A to B.

- *Education as a Tool for Self Discovery and Career Development*

One of the most powerful things about a strong education program is that it can help members realise their own potential, and assist in building confidence and decision-making skills. Members who are 'stuck' and do not have a clear idea of how they want to proceed in their recovery journeys, need an accessible, supported and exciting education program to complement the benefits of participation in the Work Ordered Day.

Study provides an opportunity to explore an area of interest, and learn specific skills along the way to help them feel more confident that they can do the job. And even if they decide the area isn't for them, they've still developed skills and knowledge that they can apply to their future career.

I have worked closely with a member over the last six years, through TE jobs, Work Ordered Day, and educational courses. She has learnt what she enjoys, has discovered she is actually good at things she thought she couldn't do, and each experience is helping her get closer to deciding what she wants her career to be.

A strong, full, varied and vibrant Clubhouse education program has to create an opportunity for members to achieve their goals. Success will be dependent on the culture and the Clubhouse empowering members to pursue education as a pre-cursor to their career development.

Strong TE Program

A strong TE program is more than meeting the Clubhouse Standards, having multiple positions, multiple employers, and different hours per week and types of work. A strong TE program works in conjunction with a vibrant Work Ordered Day to offer members what is often their first opportunity to leave the safety of the Clubhouse and work towards their goals

in the wider community. Due to the negative experiences many members have faced relating to employment, a strong TE program needs to create an environment in which members are nurtured back into the workforce, but in a way that is dignified, meaningful, and true to the expectations and normal experiences of any entry level position. So how can we as a community ensure that our Clubhouse develops and maintains a strong TE program?

- *TE Everywhere!*

TE needs to be everywhere. Every unit, all meetings, staff and members, should be constantly talking about TE and encouraging each other in their work units. Helping members to see their strengths through the WOD, and discussing their employment goals, creates a culture within the community that conveys the message that employment can be achieved, and that you aren't alone in that journey.

- *Skilled, trained excellent Placement Managers*

Excellent placement managers are essential for a strong TE program. Placement managers who are excited and energised about TE, and who actively strive to educate as many members as possible about TE positions, create a buzz within Clubhouse. Many members who have successfully completed Transitional Employment have commented that if it wasn't for a staff member suggesting it, they wouldn't have thought they could do it.

Excellent placement managers don't only work their magic within the Clubhouse, but also on the employer and their staff. They focus on developing good relationships with key people, and support the employer throughout the TE as needed. Excellent placement managers get to know the member working in the TE, and work closely with that member to ensure TE support is delivered in line with what each member desires.

- *Demystify TE*

The more members know about the TE program the better. This includes hearing from members currently working in TE, taking interested members out to a TE site to see the position and environment, and communicating well during the TE selection process.

- *Developing Good Employers*

Clubhouses can develop 'good employers.' Good employers are critical for delivering a strong program, and for the future development of our TE systems.

THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP GOOD EMPLOYERS IS TO DO TE WELL!!!

We focus on building close relationships with key people in the business, as well as with staff on the ground who directly interact with the TE member. We provide presentations on mental illness, barriers to employment and TE. We show our appreciation regularly (with nice emails, baked treats from café for the staff room, or through official networking and employer appreciation events). And we focus on managing the TE well.

Like everything within Clubhouse, successful TE partnerships rely on strong relationships. Good employers create a positive environment for our members to experience working in a TE. Good employers have many times offered us additional SE positions or additional TE positions, and have advocated for our program and provided networking contacts. Most importantly, good employers work side by side with Clubhouse to give our members an employment experience which can often be life changing.

- *TE Development is Driven by Members*

Genuine member involvement and investment in the program is a culture we create by being responsive to members goals, engaging members in constantly auditing the TE program to find gaps, and involving members in the excitement that comes with searching for the next TE opportunity. Members and staff identify barriers to employment and actively aim to navigate these in TE development (such as providing TE opportunities with employers where no criminal history check is required). Access to TE is accessible, available and obvious from every Clubhouse work unit.

- *Summary*

Clubhouse is the only organisation to offer such a supportive and innovative employment program. Our members deserve the best TE program we can possibly deliver. A strong Standards-consistent TE program is built upon strong internal processes. It delivers a top quality service to its employers and members, is responsive to members' needs and wants, and engages the whole Clubhouse community in its constant evolution. It is also essential to have a strong TE program to support a strong SE and IE program.

Supported Employment

The Clubhouse plays a pivotal role in helping members access ongoing employment. It is often one of the most common goals of Clubhouse members, and can often be the final piece in a person's recovery.

However, it can also be one of the hardest things to achieve. Members sometimes secure their own SE, but this is becoming increasingly difficult due to the changes in the way employers recruit and the new hoops members have to jump through. This is why we need a good strategy for securing and supporting SE.

Built on a strong TE program and a solid foundation of relationships, individual support, and the Work Ordered Day, the SE program actively pursues employment for members. This may involve weekly Job Development meetings, quality marketing materials, processes for tracking members in SE and seeking SE, learning about the labour market and having the knowledge needed to assist in job development with employers, finding good resources and forming good community partnerships.

The success of the Clubhouse SE program depends on upskilling members and staff to seek out and secure employment, by having a good development strategy, supporting the program through integrating the effort into a Clubhouse work unit, and supporting members during their SE as needed.

Members who have mastered TE need access to the next step in their recovery.

Independent Employment

Independent Employment is often the unseen program within Clubhouse. Whilst members secure their employment independently, the role of the Clubhouse is to support that member as needed, and ensure they continue to have access to the community.

In addition, we can create an empowering culture within the Clubhouse for members seeking IE. We find ways to assist them in accessing and applying for quality jobs

Critical to maintaining a connection between Clubhouse and members in IE is strong outreach practices.

Strong Community Linkages

A strong, full, varied and vibrant employment and education program engages with the best providers for its members. By managing the program together and being responsive to members' needs and wants, community resources can be identified and researched. The most successful community resources are those with whom we have taken the time to build a partnership. We aim to build quality partnerships with bigger providers offering a wide variety of work opportunities, as opposed to trying to maintain relationships with dozens of different providers.

Andrew's Employment Journey Through Stepping Stone Clubhouse

I had a breakdown in 2014 and couldn't continue in my position as a cleaner in the PA Hospital. I was thinking of a return to work with limited hours when Brad, our executive director, approached me and offered me the 20-hour waste management TE at the PA Hospital. This was to be my way back to employment, after I successfully completed the TE in 5 months.

I was able to have Clubhouse support when doing my cleaning in the hospital. The staff helped me to keep in contact and I knew there was support when I was having difficulties with my mental illness at work. I knew that there was someone I could go to, to talk with and to have my back. As a result I felt that I was supported in my job and that someone cared about my situation.

I wouldn't have my job as a cleaner if it weren't for the TE program and the TE position in the PA Hospital.

Without Clubhouse I don't know what I would do. It is a place to come that is supportive and welcoming, where I feel wanted, needed, expected and valued. A place I can go for help and also just hang out. A place that got my cleaning career back on track. A place that I needed when I have been unable to work due to a medical condition.

I am so grateful for the opportunities I have had with Clubhouse – like travelling to the USA for the 17th International Seminar and to Cairns and Mackay for training visits to other Australian Clubhouses. Without Clubhouse I would never have dreamt of being useful in the community and being able to enjoy the relationships that Clubhouse brings.