



CAPACITY BUILDING AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN A TRANSITIONAL LABOUR MARKET PROGRAM

**DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH REPORT
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
MISSION AUSTRALIA
AND CHARCOAL LANE**

**LYN HARRISON
CHRIS HICKEY
PERRI CAMPBELL**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCOR	National hotel/restaurant chain supporting employment pathways at Charcoal Lane
ADRI	Alfred Deakin Research Institute
ALG	Action Learning Group
BOH	Back of House refers to the commercial kitchen at Charcoal Lane
CLOWG	Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group
FOH	Front of House refers to the restaurant or service area of Charcoal Lane
GTO	Group Training Organisation Apprenticeships Plus (2011) Link Employment & Training (2012–2013) AFL Sports Ready (2014)
IWS	Indigenous Work Stars (supported by Indigenous Employment Pathways, IEP)
KAE	Koorie Academy of Excellence
KHT	Koorie Heritage Trust
MAYSAR	Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Services and Recreation
NIE	Northern Indigenous Employment Network
PAB	Program Advisory Board
RTO	Registered training organisation (i.e. William Angliss)
TEO	Training and Employment Officer (at Charcoal Lane)
TLMP	Transitional Labour Market Program
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VACSAL	Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd
VAEI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
VAHS	Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
VRL	Victorian Regional Leader

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GLOSSARY

Action Learning

Action Learning is a research method that allows knowledge and information to be shared between different individuals and groups in a cycle of observation, reflection, planning and acting. Individuals from different situations involved in different organisational activities each with their own issues, come together around a common goal and learn from each other's experience (Dick, 1997). Rather than limit, prescribe or pre-empt the kinds of knowledge that are considered 'valid' – through this process 'knowledge' is able to 'emerge as part of the process of change' and does 'not have to be fully worked out in advance' (Friske, 2011: 256).

Social Enterprise

'As "hybrid" organizations, social enterprises seek to both sustain a social mission and maintain commercial viability' (Gonin et al., 2012: 4).

Transitional Labour Market Programs

Transitional labour market programs (TLMPs) or active labour market programs work within the transitional labour market (characterised by *diversification*, *decentralisation* and *individualisation*) framework to create pathways into employment for those facing temporary or lasting exclusion (Anxo and O'Reilly, 2002: 343. See also Schmid, 2003; Reci and de Bruijn, 2006).

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (from the Centre for Theory of Change, available online):

- supports a causal pathway from here to there by specifying what is needed for goals to be achieved (e.g. you might argue that children attending school a minimum number of days is necessary if they are going to learn)
- requires you to articulate underlying assumptions that can be tested and measured
- changes the way of thinking about initiatives from what you are doing to what you want to achieve and starts there.

Program Logic

Program Logic refers to a road map of goals and aims that guide the project and record its activities and outcomes. The aims, goals and outcomes of the program are recorded by staff members, along with their important reflections on the successes and challenges in implementing an idea or reaching a goal.

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A special thank you to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS) who partner with Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia providing the health services building for the Charcoal Lane training program and restaurant.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charcoal Lane offers young marginalised and Aboriginal people a bridge into employment through education, intensive support, cultural understanding and pastoral care.

In July 2011, the Deakin research team began an Australian Research Council Linkage funded project in partnership with Mission Australia, focused on Mission Australia's social enterprise restaurant, Charcoal Lane. The research project, titled 'Capacity Building and Social Enterprise: Individual and Organisational Transformation in a Transitional Labour Market Program', consisted of two related studies. The first, the *Action Learning Project*, gathered data, which was then fed back to key stakeholders at regular intervals intervening in the organisational practices of the enterprise with the aim of facilitating the program's sustainability. The second part identified factors that influence *young people's experiences and outcomes* in this program. This research aimed to provide significant insights into the ways in which social enterprises can support marginalised young people's transitions into increasingly precarious labour markets.

Many changes within the Charcoal Lane program unfolded over the course of the research project, between July 2011 and July 2014. In many respects these changes can be understood in the context of challenges commonly faced by organisations running social enterprise based transitional labour market programs (TLMPs). These challenges included:

- **Young people and self-transformation:** Working with young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, to transform them into young people who could be workers in other contexts.
- **Organisational transformation:** The organisation that conducts these types of programs is often encouraged to transform itself or is transformed in the process of delivering the program. The

organisation is encouraged to transform the way it thinks about itself, what it does and the ways in which it does it, because these sorts of programs, with the challenges they present, encourage reflexivity. For instance, Mission Australia embraced Action Learning tools to inform the growth and development of Charcoal Lane.

1. Action Learning and Social Enterprise

In partnership with the Deakin research team staff at Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane have embraced Action Learning methods to learn from the experience of key stakeholders, internal and external staff members and trainees. This *Action Learning process* began with a group of key stakeholders in 2011 known as the Action Learning Group (ALG). The group consisted of representatives from William Angliss, Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia, and met monthly. It provided a forum in which *research issues* were identified for further comment and action. Initial meetings addressed significant questions about the philosophy of the program and allowed group members to come together to focus on the future of Charcoal Lane.

A series of four *Action Learning meetings* was chaired by the Deakin research team, and at the end of 2012 the group was absorbed by Mission Australia's new governance and support structure for Charcoal Lane. This governance structure is one of the most significant changes to emerge from the Action Learning centred approach. It supports the transfer of knowledge between Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane and enables informed decision-making at different organisational levels. As Lumley (2013) argues, the flow of information between key staff members is crucial: 'the front line staff are the people providing the service and interacting with the beneficiaries. Their perspective is paramount'. The creation of *strong communication channels* has enabled the program to develop practices that benefit trainees who learn and work in the restaurant.

2. Oversight and Organisational Support

In 2011 *background interviews* indicated that the organisational structures supporting Charcoal Lane did not support avenues for two-way communication between Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane staff. Communication was also impacted upon by continuous staff changeover causing institutional knowledge to be lost with departing staff members. Due to high staff turnover rates characteristic of the hospitality industry, high numbers of new staff members were recruited for the program and restaurant between 2011 and 2014. In addition to *loss of institutional (program) knowledge*, another equally significant consequence of staff turnover was the introduction of new knowledge into the program. Different approaches to training and to supporting the trainees led to uncertainty and conversations about levels of support. These informal debates required an official venue through which a common approach could be articulated and recorded. In late 2012 and 2013 new *governance and support structures* were put in place. The governance structure brought Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane staff together for regular, focused meetings. It was intended that the *Program Advisory Board (PAB)* would meet three to four times per year to oversee all decision-making; the *Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group (CLOWG)* would meet monthly to discuss operations in the program and restaurant; the Restaurant Group would meet weekly to discuss restaurant business and planned events.

Recent research indicates that horizontal governance structures enable organisations to provide informed and strong support to social enterprises (see: Gonin, 2012; Lumley, 2013). Through new governance structures individuals and information were able to move between Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia (see also Figure 1). In this way key issues – for instance, the level of support that trainees’ receive in the workplace – can be communicated at the CLOWG level, and then carried through to the PAB level. This governance structure has supported a number of program developments since it was initiated in 2012. One of the most significant changes is the development of a *flexible training framework*. Through the exchange of information about trainee experiences in the program at CLOWG meetings, the need for in-

house, flexible and culturally appropriate education was realised and appropriate changes were implemented. As this framework develops and is adjusted to meet the needs of trainees, the CLOWG will play a vital role facilitating communication between William Angliss and Charcoal Lane staff.

3. Community Relationships and Charcoal Lane’s Identity

In the early stages the goals of Mission Australia’s social enterprise included supporting young marginalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; engaging with local Aboriginal organisations through the program; and engaging with Aboriginal culture through the restaurant. However, these goals shifted between 2009 and 2011. In 2011 we conducted a number of background interviews with *Action Learning members*, who communicated to us that these goals were no longer guiding the social enterprise, rendering the identity of Charcoal Lane uncertain, particularly to local community members, trainees and involved Aboriginal organisations. Connections to community and emerging partnerships significantly shape Charcoal Lane’s *identity* and perceptions of the program within Aboriginal communities. The identity of the social enterprise impacts upon the restaurant business and sponsors, trainees’ experiences of the program, and community support. At an initial Action Learning meeting the goals and the identity of the social enterprise were discussed. We asked the question: *Is this a program for young and marginalised Aboriginal people?* It was agreed that this was an Aboriginal program. Between 2011 and 2014 Charcoal Lane strengthened its identity through building relationships with local community members, groups and Aboriginal organisations, including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Victorian Aboriginal Education Institute (VAI), Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Services and Recreation (MAYSAR), the Koorie Heritage Trust and Koorie Academy of Excellence (KAE), The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), and the Men and Women’s Rec Group (Parkies Inc.).

Key staff members were integral to the development and direction of the program. For instance, the Regional Team Leader and the

Program Manager impacted on the ways in which Charcoal Lane was perceived in the community through strengthening the program's commitment to young Aboriginal people and building community relationships to support the participants. The Program Manager's *pastoral approach* towards supporting young people and knowledge of the complex cultural and political realities of Charcoal Lane enabled greater understanding of the needs of participants and the significance and meaning of community involvement in the program, with trainees reporting '*This is the best Charcoal Lane has been*'. Levels of Aboriginal participation in the program have increased significantly and in *October 2014 all trainees identified as Aboriginal*.

4. A Working Transitional Labour Market Program Model: Flexible Education

The ways in which the program has developed to better meet the needs of young trainees can be seen by looking back at the issues identified by Action Learning members in 2011 and 2012. The following key issues were identified:

- **Trainees' diverse needs** are recognised by staff, however the 2011–2012 program structure does not enable staff to meet these needs. Trainees face strict timelines in regards to the completion of training modules conducted through the learning institution William Angliss. Trainees require greater educational flexibility.
- Some **funding** avenues were thought to be problematic, placing pressure on the program to perform in ways that were incompatible with the interests of the cohort.
- **Business aspects** of the program had become problematic. Staff at all levels felt the pressure of the financial burden and not 'breaking even'.
- The nature of the **restaurant** as a 'high-end' fine dining restaurant placed pressure on staff in the Front of House and Back of House. Trainees in the Back of House felt they were sometimes excluded from participation in the development of the food. Particular aspects of food preparation could not be performed by the trainees at their skill level. In the Front of House, trainees felt the atmosphere was 'uptight' and this caused some trainees to be stressed.

In 2013, there was a noticeable shift in the culture of Charcoal Lane. The goal of *supporting young marginalised Aboriginal people* came to the forefront, providing clarity, purpose and structure to the program. The identity of Charcoal Lane as an Aboriginal program and restaurant focusing on indigenous food was reinforced – particularly through working relationships with local Aboriginal organisations. Looking back once again, we can see how the following developments effected change:

- In developing **Action Learning** practices within the organisation, key stakeholders and staff developed a willingness to practise **reflexive thinking** regarding the past and future of the Charcoal Lane program.
- In order to better support Charcoal Lane staff **governance and support structures** were introduced by Mission Australia. These structures enabled greater communication between Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane.
- Staff with **Aboriginal cultural knowledge** were introduced into the program, recognising Charcoal Lane's unique place in community and demonstrating a willingness to participate and impact community in a broader sense.
- In mid 2013 Charcoal Lane staff began to develop a **flexible largely in-house, training program** to better meet the learning needs of program participants. This was a significant innovation and one that continues to unfold as we write this report.

One of the greatest questions facing Charcoal Lane as it moved forward in 2014 is: *How will relationships with community be sustained and grown?* Many involved with the program saw it not only as a restaurant, but also as a second home and a safe space. The future of Charcoal Lane was written within this unfolding identity, which was strongly influenced by community relationships. Through change and expansion Charcoal Lane held the promise of strengthening its commitment to creating new options and opportunities for young Aboriginal people in Australia. The *sustainability* of the program was enhanced by *flexible education* structures. These structures included mechanisms such as a 'rolling intake', which ensured a maximum number of trainees participated in the program at any one time. Because Charcoal Lane offers specialised intervention into the lives of young people, numbers of trainees in the program at any

one time are necessarily limited. Trainees benefit from high levels of support and one-on-one tutoring and mentoring. The needs of each trainee are different and the program recognised this by adjusting education and support for individual success. The flexible education framework made individualised support possible. In supporting the trainees particular aspects of their lives were taken into consideration at the outset: housing and home life; health and well-being support (access to counselling, health or support services); transportation; and financial situation (work travel costs).

5. Employment Outcomes

Charcoal Lane is committed to *employment outcomes* for its trainees. Working in partnership with Mission Australia, Link Employment & Training and ACCOR many participants have been placed in employment positions after exiting the program at different stages. Employment outcomes for the 2012 January intake of 13 trainees at Charcoal Lane showed that the majority of trainees (five) were working in the hospitality industry; there was one trainee working/training outside the hospitality industry; one trainee was currently unemployed; two trainees were currently involved in a training course (four trainees did not maintain contact with Charcoal Lane). Trainees currently participating in the program are already working towards employment opportunities with the support of AFL Sports Ready, ACCOR and Indigenous Work Stars.

In the past, *successful outcomes* have been perceived as high numbers of trainees completing the program. However, due to the significant amount of work involved in enrolment, participation and completion of the program, numbers alone cannot communicate the outcomes for Charcoal Lane. By understanding the work required by staff and trainees to participate in the program and take on challenges outside the program, success has been imagined in other ways.

Additionally, many trainees *exit the program successfully* (before completing training modules) to work or engage in further education. There are significant benefits in participating in the program for even a short amount of time, these include increased support, connection to other support services, developing friendship groups, work and

Everyday success at Charcoal Lane

- Punctuality
- Completing tasks and modules
- Attempting tasks and modules
- Taking on challenges
- Practising new skills (i.e. public speaking)
- Working in groups

Trainee challenges at home affecting participation and longevity in the program

- Disrupted home life from an early age: alcoholism, eating and psychological disorders
- Mental health issues ranging from low level to serious disorders
- Homelessness, movement and relocation with no stable residence
- Domestic abuse experienced mainly by the young women
- Difficulties at school – academically and with teachers and peers (i.e. bullying)
- Young parenthood (50% of trainees in Group 1 finishing the program have had children)

educational experiences and opportunities, development of aspirations, and life and career goals. *Between 2012 and 2014 approximately 46 young people entered and were supported by the program.* This entry point to training and education is a primary function of the social enterprise. The impact of the Charcoal Lane program includes not only increases in educational and employment outcomes, but also the things that lead up to that, such as students being more engaged in work (Lumley, 2013).

2011–2014 Changes and Positive Impact

Table 1 shows positive changes put in place by program staff at both Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane to achieve successful program outcomes for trainees.

Table 1: Positive changes and outcomes

Program changes	→	Outcomes
<p>August 2011</p> <p>Action Learning Group (ALG) is formed in 2011</p> <p>Key ALG issues: identified in initial 'Issues' document, four Newsletters, and Monthly Briefing Notes throughout 2013.</p>		<p>August – December 2011</p> <p>Communication strategies and systems are identified.</p> <p>Common challenges are identified by the group, initially composed of Mission Australia staff and the Deakin research team.</p> <p>In October 2012 the ALG is absorbed by the newly formed Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group.</p>
<p>November 2011</p> <p>Key stakeholders agree that Charcoal Lane is an Aboriginal program</p>		<p>December 2011</p> <p>Realignment of the social enterprise mission.</p> <p>Relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders and VAHS are strengthened. Working towards strengthening ties with community.</p>
<p>March 2012</p> <p>Strategic, business and operational changes to Charcoal Lane</p> <p>(see points 2 and 3 in executive summary)</p>		<p>April – May 2012</p> <p>Cultural engagement is a program outcome.</p> <p>Skilled personnel are recruited into Charcoal lane (i.e. ACCOR Restaurant Manager is seconded; Social Enterprise Operations Manager plays a key role).</p> <p>Key staff members take responsibility for Charcoal Lane, centralising decisions.</p>
<p>July 2012</p> <p>Charcoal lane is reconnected with Mission Australia's 'shared services infrastructure'</p> <p>Implementation of a new support structure for Charcoal Lane: PAB, CLOWG, CL</p> <p>(see pages 12 to 13)</p>		<p>August 2012</p> <p>Steps towards program sustainability are made.</p> <p>Strengthening practical ties between Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia.</p> <p>The flow of information is organised with staff experiences and practice informing decisions at higher levels of the organisation.</p>
<p>August 2012</p> <p>From welfare to a training and education focus</p> <p>The development of prevocational, preparatory and half-day courses</p>		<p>September 2012</p> <p>A focus on <i>training and education</i> contributes to Charcoal Lane's emerging identity, which is also significantly shaped by community engagement and partnerships (continuing changes in 2013).</p> <p>Certificate I and half-day food handling courses introduce trainees to the program. Introductory courses enable staff and trainees to gauge interest in the program before committing for a longer period (6- to 12-month courses to be offered in January 2014).</p>
<p>October 2012</p> <p>Discussions are underway to include Aboriginal Elders and Mentors in the program</p> <p>The first CLOWG meeting is held (part of the new support structure for Charcoal Lane, which includes ALG members)</p>		<p>November – December 2012</p> <p>The idea of a Culture Committee consisting of trainees and a mentor is developed.</p> <p>Staff take up issues identified by the research team: absenteeism, selection, milestones, support structures, educational approaches, cultural engagement, cultural symbolism in the restaurant, training support in the Back of House, coping with the stress of the service periods in the front and Back of House. Communication is strengthened and program issues are proactively addressed by staff members. The CLOWG encourages team building, solidarity, new ideas and development of Program Logic (see page 32).</p>

Table 1 cont.

Program changes	Outcomes
<p>November 2012</p> <p>ACCESS to Work program revised (see page 23)</p>	<p>January 2013</p> <p>In 2014 the ACCESS program is accredited Certificate I training and renamed 'Bush Pepper: an Introduction to Hospitality and Events', supported by Marist Youth Care, supported by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and Wurundjeri Elders including Aunty Dianne Kerr.</p> <p>ACCESS program contributes to rolling intake at Charcoal Lane; numbers of participating trainees are maintained (ideally between 10 and 15).</p>
<p>January 2013</p> <p>The Trainee Handbook is created by program staff</p>	<p>August 2013</p> <p>Trainee Handbook is finalised with contributions from stakeholders. Trainee roles and responsibilities are clarified, as are staff roles. Trainees have a clear pathway of who to contact for different needs and the roles of stakeholders involved with Charcoal Lane.</p>
<p>February 2013</p> <p>Milestones are developed within the program: Induction days, quarterly reviews (via individual meetings with trainees) participation in community events, end of training lunches, end of year Culture Camp.</p>	<p>2013 (throughout the year)</p> <p>Milestones support sustained trainee engagement with the program.</p> <p>Proactive staff engagement with trainees needs.</p> <p>Increased community engagement and development of relationships with local community and Aboriginal Service Groups.</p>
<p>March – May 2013</p> <p>Mentoring and community connections are developed</p>	<p>September 2013</p> <p>Participation in workshops such as 'Cultural Wellness Workshop' (9 September 2013), a pilot program running at VACSAL.</p> <p>Charcoal Lane begins to produce a monthly Newsletter with contributions from the trainees, managed by the Training and Employment Officer.</p>
<p>June 2013</p> <p>Recognising positive pathways in addition to employment outcomes</p>	<p>June – December 2013</p> <p>Success at Charcoal Lane takes on many different forms and can be understood in a number of ways.</p> <p>Key areas include friendship, housing, mentors, education, work and training, connection to support services, and developing vocational and educational aspirations. Between 2012 and 2014 (March) 46 young people were supported at Charcoal Lane with training and education, mentors and guidance, community and peers, personal development, life skills and cultural engagement activities.</p>
<p>July 2013</p> <p>Selection criteria developed</p>	<p>July 2013</p> <p>Through this process trainee support requirements are identified, external caseworkers and supports are connected with, providing insight into the individual needs and skills of each trainee. The capacity of Charcoal Lane to provide necessary supports is assessed case by case.</p>

Table 1 cont.

Program changes	Outcomes
<p>August 2013</p> <p>Charcoal Lane Flexible Education Program initiated</p> <p>The program leads the restaurant: 'A United Front'</p>	<p>August 2013</p> <p>The flexible approach has enabled staff to tailor the program to the young people's needs. Pedagogical changes support curriculum and trainee learning needs.</p> <p>Trainee house protocols have been developed as part of the program to support trainees: 'house rules; use of lockers; pigeon holes for module work; weekly follow-ups' (see page 22 and Monthly Briefing Notes Volume 2 Issue 2).</p> <p>Staff work to bring the Front of House and Back of House teams together around a common endeavour: to support and work with trainees and provide a unified training environment.</p> <p>The identity of Charcoal lane develops with a focus on <i>training and educating young people in a culturally safe environment, with access to mentors, employment options and cultural engagement activities.</i></p>
<p>September 2013</p> <p>A new chef is Introduced to Charcoal Lane (with the support of a second chef)</p>	<p>October – December 2013</p> <p>Menu change enables trainees to practise basic skills and participate in the preparation and plating of meals.</p> <p>Trainees learn about produce and horticulture skills.</p> <p>Employment and vocational opportunities are broadened beyond the field of hospitality.</p>
<p>June – December 2013</p> <p>Action Learning approach adopted by Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane</p>	<p>December 2013</p> <p>Action Learning approaches are embedded in CLOWG meetings. CLOWG members proactively discuss and reflect upon emerging and potential issues planning for appropriate action.</p> <p>CLOWG provides a space for <i>forward planning</i> regarding cultural events, workshops, life skills training, camps, excursions, functions and funding opportunities, employment options for trainees, employee connections and the role of the legal employer. This is also a space for culturally specific issues to be engaged, for example the role of service providers Connecting Home and Link-Up for Stolen Generations.</p>
<p>2014</p> <p>CLOWG membership includes community mentors, a new GTO (AFL Sports Ready)</p>	<p>Community involvement with Charcoal lane continues to grow, for instance through partnerships with Indigenous Work Stars, AFL Sports Ready.</p> <p>Charcoal Lane develops its capacity to be regarded as a social and cultural hub for young Aboriginal people in Melbourne. Strengthened relationships are indicated by the participation of Aboriginal trainees in the program. In October 2014 all participants identify as Aboriginal.</p>

Recommendations

- 1 Maintain the Action Learning approach:** Mission Australia have benefited from embedding an Action Learning structure via CLOWG meetings. Future Action Learning practices may be supported by CLOWG meetings, particularly through the involvement of a 'critical friend' at CLOWG meetings. This critical friend would sit outside the organisation, but have knowledge of the social enterprise sector and/or operations at Charcoal Lane.
- 2 Program Logic and Theory of Change** are vital to the advancement of program goals. The CLOWG is a potential space for continuously engaging with monthly and annual Program Goals and maintaining a cohesive and consistent Charcoal Lane story line.
- 3 Use of existing expertise** and knowledge within Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane has the capacity to stimulate and support continued Action Learning. Data housed at Charcoal Lane – on absenteeism, and the aspects of the program that absenteeism is connected to – may inform future practice and program innovation through Program Logic models.
- 4 Continue to build the cultural capital of Charcoal Lane** through relationships with local community members and groups, Aboriginal organisations and continued participation in community and cultural events. Grow Charcoal Lane's identity through relationships with culture and community.
- 5 Charcoal Lane Staff Handbook** outlining the anticipated relationships, particularly between trainees and staff, assists new staff settling into their roles and should be maintained. This would also minimise the loss of institutional knowledge and articulate expectations regarding the support of trainees.
- 6 'All of program' approach:** Our research indicates that roles within Charcoal Lane should not be divided into Restaurant, Business and Program sectors. Because all roles impact upon the trainees they should all be considered in relationship with each other.
- 7 Milestone or quarterly reports** involving one-on-one discussions with trainees play an important role in facilitating trainee transitions. Knowledge about trainees' interests for transitions into employment (or other training pathways) could assist AFL Sports Ready (GTO), Indigenous Work Stars, William Angliss, ACCOR and other education and employment partners in preparing the necessary supports for individual trainees.
- 8 Diverse employment pathways:** Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane can assist trainees to follow a variety of employment pathways, including those outside the hospitality industry. It has been recognised that this requires putting employment pathways in place at different stages of the program – not just at the completion of the Certificate III training.
- 9 Recognising success** in the achievements of staff and trainees as they progress through the program resists a deficit viewpoint. 'Early exiting' and 'successful exiting' are just two types of engagement with the program that can be viewed for their positive effects on young people's lives. Providing an entry point to training and education is a primary function of Mission Australia's social enterprise, which must be recognised as a key program outcome.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Readers' Guide

This report features a number of tables, figures and three attachments. These resources have been developed by the research team throughout the life of the project.

At the end of this report you will find:

- *key issues presented to the Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group in 2013*
- *a compilation of **Monthly Briefing Notes***
- *a compilation of **Action Learning Newsletters**.*

These attachments are explained in Part I of this report. We refer to these documents throughout the report to indicate where you can find more information.

Mission Australia's Charcoal Lane program is a relatively recent addition to Melbourne's social enterprise landscape. In July 2009 Mission Australia opened the high-end restaurant Charcoal Lane in Melbourne, as a social enterprise based transitional labour market program (TLMP) for marginalised, unemployed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people. The social enterprise, established in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), celebrates Aboriginal food and culture, provides training for unemployed young people, and aspires to be a sustainable and profitable social enterprise.

In July 2011, the Deakin research team began an Australian Research Council funded Linkage Scheme research project in partnership with Mission Australia. The research project, titled 'Capacity Building and Social Enterprise: Individual and Organisational Transformation in a Transitional Labour Market Program', focused on Mission Australia's social enterprise restaurant, Charcoal Lane. The research team initially involved Associate



Professor Peter Kelly, Associate Professor Lyn Harrison and Dr Perri Campbell. At the beginning of 2013, Associate Professor Chris Hickey stepped into the role of Chief Investigator (replacing Peter Kelly). (The project was initially submitted to the Australian Research Council in 2009 for the Linkage Scheme and was funded in 2010. During this time Peter Kelly and Lyn Harrison liaised with Annelies Kamp – State Manager of Strategy and Development at Mission Australia.)

The research project consists of two related studies. The first part, the Action Learning Project, gathers data on, and intervened in, the organisational practices of Charcoal Lane with the aim of facilitating program sustainability. The second part identified factors that influence young people's experiences and outcomes in this program. This research aimed to provide significant insights into the ways in which social enterprises can support marginalised young people's transitions into increasingly precarious labour markets. The following key questions guided the project.

Part A: Action Learning Project

1. *What are the important organisational processes and practices in determining the possibilities for sustainable social enterprise based TLMPs?*
2. *What processes, relations and practices facilitate (or hinder) knowledge transfers about social enterprise and TLMPs within the organisation and between other policy, commercial, training and third sector organisations?*

Action Learning studies involved key staff members from Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane, regular interviews and discussions of day-to-day practices and governing structures, regulations and policies.

Part B: Biographies study

1. *What factors influence marginalised young people's experiences and outcomes (successful or otherwise) in this social enterprise TLMP?*
2. *What effect does completion of the training demands of this TLMP have on the transitions of marginalised young people into full time employment?*

The biographies study involved past, present and future trainees, for instance, trainees who had participated in the program since 2009. We developed an account of their experiences and the impact of the program on their identity and employment status.

Many changes unfolded over the course of the research project, between July 2011 and July 2014. These will be discussed in this report. In many respects these changes can be understood in the context of challenges commonly faced by organisations running social enterprise based TLMPs. Such challenges include: (1) working with young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, to transform them into young people who could be workers in other contexts – from unemployable to employable young people; and (2) the organisation that conducts these types of programs is often encouraged to transform itself or is transformed in the process of delivering the program. The organisation is encouraged to confront itself and change the way it thinks about itself, what it does and the ways in which it does it, because these sorts of programs, with the challenges they present, encourage reflexivity. The research team produced a number of documents that explore these issues, including:

- Working papers
- Newsletters
- Monthly Briefing Notes
- Research report summaries
- Biographies for 2012 Charcoal Lane participants
- Biographies for 2013 Charcoal Lane participants.

This report draws on research themes explored in these, to trace significant developments within Charcoal Lane over the past three years.

ETHICS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Aboriginal Representation

This project's designs and aims were developed in extensive and prolonged consultation with Mission Australia's State Manager for Strategy and Development, and National Manager of Research. These managers were also involved in extensive consultations within Mission Australia and with a variety of stakeholders in the Charcoal Lane social enterprise restaurant including the VAHS.

We sought Aboriginal representation on this project in the following ways:

- Mission Australia's **National Indigenous Affairs Advisor**.
- The project's **Action Learning Groups** and Program Advisory Board included the National Indigenous Affairs Advisor, employees of Mission Australia and representatives of the VAHS. These groups were constituted in the early stages of the project before any data gathering occurred.
- The project was also developed in consultation with these individuals and agencies through **Mission Australia's State Manager of Strategy and Development**. The project design built in ongoing discussions, consultations and collaborations with these individuals and organisations, all of whom had significant knowledge, expertise and experiences in working with, supporting, mentoring and managing marginalised young people from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds.

All aspects and stages of the research were subject to consultation and review with these individuals and organisations with a primary concern to ensure an appropriate level of understanding of, and respect for, the diversity of cultural practices, beliefs, experiences and values of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people involved in the project.

Literature Reviews

The project team conducted extensive, up-to-date reviews of the research and policy literature in key areas relevant to the project including the challenges and opportunities related to the conduct of social enterprises by third-sector organisations: the emergence of TLMPs as a means to manage precarious forms of employment, and the conduct of these TLMPs by third-sector organisations and the historical and contemporary characteristics of the marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal young people. The project published the results of three of these reviews in the Alfred Deakin Research Institute (ADRI) Working Paper Series.

Data Gathering

- 1 **Action Learning:** In the Action Learning Project participants were involved in ongoing informal conversations; semi-structured and structured interviews; and Action Learning Group meetings. All of these activities related to observing, reflecting, planning and acting (the Action Learning cycle) on issues as they arose.
- 2 **Biographies:** Data gathering with a sample of young people took the form of biographical, qualitative, one-on-one interviews. Narratives generated were given back to the participants for checking and then de-identified. These narratives were also distributed to key individuals at Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane.

PART I: DOING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: THE EVOLUTION OF CHARCOAL LANE

An Action Learning Organisation

Action Learning begins when a group of interested participants are brought together to work on issues in a reflexive and structured manner. This was the purpose of the Action Learning Group (ALG), which was initiated at Mission Australia in November 2011. Mission Australia identifies itself as a learning organisation (Mission Australia, 2012). In keeping with this organisational approach the Deakin research team developed Action Learning strategies with Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane staff members. We began the Action Learning process by engaging with a number of individuals who had been involved in establishing the program and operational and business aspects of the social enterprise. We held a series of background interviews with these key stakeholders and informants. During this process a number of views regarding the history of the building and purpose of the program came to light. Informants discussed the significance of the building itself within the local community and amongst Aboriginal people in Victoria, the ways in which the business side of the social enterprise (the restaurant) had been managed, and the attitudes of individuals within the organisation to the social enterprise.

We found that the question of culture, of Aboriginality and the involvement of the VAHS were important issues amongst a number of interviewees. Early in the research project one interviewee explained that the social enterprise's cultural connections were not often clear to stakeholders. Many interviewees suggested that the meaning of the social enterprise had changed, as different generations of trainees and staff had come and gone. In particular, Aboriginal history and knowledge about the old building where the restaurant is housed had been diluted by organisational change over a period of time.

The issue of Aboriginality and community engagement were linked to geographical and political tensions surrounding the restaurant. From the contested land which the building itself stands on, to the historical and symbolic importance of the old Victorian Aboriginal Health Service's location in the building. The building was seen to offer the community a meeting place with special significance. As 'Charcoal Lane', it was unclear what the building now offered Aboriginal people. The name of the restaurant has a deep resonance with the Aboriginal community, being the title of a song written by famous Aboriginal artist Archie Roach.

In response to these issues we identified key individuals and invited them to become part of an ALG. In many respects the ALG was a great success. Key stakeholders were brought together to discuss the social enterprise program and share their individual concerns. Members were encouraged to think of themselves as participants in the research process, with Deakin researchers acting as guides and facilitators.

During ALG meetings it was decided that different issues should be discussed at different levels. The General Manager of Social Advocacy and Public Affairs noted that business and operational decisions needed to be made and that the ALG was not necessarily the place for this. The ALG was a place for general discussions regarding Charcoal Lane and discussion of research and field work information. Discussions at the first ALG meeting

were given structure by a research document called an 'Issues Narrative'. This consisted of a themed analysis of the key, recurring issues/themes raised in the series of background interviews, accompanied by a series of questions. These issues were divided into the following sections:

- *Philosophical issues* (the mission/aims/goals of the social enterprise).
- *Operational and business issues* (the restaurant and financial sustainability).
- *Program issues* (the trainees, attendance and absenteeism, selection and support/counselling systems).

Given that the strategic and operational elements of the social enterprise program were governed by the philosophy or logic of the program, it became particularly important for all stakeholders to agree on the program philosophy. ALG members viewed this discussion as an opportunity to rearticulate the philosophy and goals of the social enterprise. The ALG was a space for building the social enterprise into what supporters and the staff wanted it to be through critical reflection, discussion and engagement with the dominant research themes we had developed.

At the second ALG meeting held in December 2011, a key question was posed to Action Learning participants: How might imagining Charcoal Lane as an Aboriginal program put into practice a movement from a position of white/organisational privilege/advantage? The outcomes of this discussion were ALG conversations that attempted to rearticulate the aims of the social enterprise and rebuild confidence in the expressed objectives of Charcoal Lane. The group were able to clarify what the social enterprise uniquely offered: a training and employment program for young marginalised Aboriginal people.

To facilitate discussion at the ALG meeting a Newsletter was also developed. The Action Learning Newsletter acted as a way of making information accessible so that it could be fed back into the organisation to provoke further conversations. These conversations unfolded in the context of weekly/fortnightly/monthly catch-ups (interviews) with key stakeholders, ALG meetings and Project Reference Group meetings. The first Newsletter was presented to the ALG in July 2012 on the issues of absenteeism and the Access to Work program. In

October we circulated the third (and final) Action Learning Newsletter with the theme: Transitions. The final ALG meeting was held on 22 October 2012, to discuss the issues raised in the Newsletter.

A New Support Structure for Charcoal Lane

One of the most significant issues to emerge from background interviews and ALG meetings in 2011 was the need for a governance structure to support Charcoal Lane, and communication between the social enterprise and Mission Australia. In response, and working with the Victorian State Manager in 2012, the Victoria Regional Leader (VRL) at Mission Australia (then known as Operations Manager, Social Enterprise) developed governance structures within Mission Australia for Charcoal Lane. ALG meetings were incorporated within this new structure.

The necessity of frequent and structured forms of communication to support the social enterprise, and facilitate relationships and understanding between stakeholders, was recognised with the creation of a three-tiered support structure: a Program Advisory Board (PAB), and Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group (CLOWG), and an already existing restaurant/business team. The Operational Working Group addressed the day-to-day operations of the social enterprise training program through monthly meetings. Rather than continue with individual meetings, reporting on the Action Learning Project was made a permanent agenda item for each CLOWG meeting.

The PAB was a decision-making body and included senior representatives from Mission Australia, William Angliss, Link Employment & Training, Deakin University and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services. The purpose of this structure continues to unfold in 2014. In late 2013 the PAB was put on hold until the participation of key stakeholders could be secured. The role of the advisory board as a decision-making body was devolved to the State Director for Victoria in 2014. The VRL was integral to this model linking the social enterprise to Mission Australia, through communications with the State Director and participation in organisational-level meetings.

The VRL plays an important role in the process of communication between Mission Australia and these three groups, liaising with program staff through CLOWG meetings and also with key stakeholders in high-level meetings. In this role the VRL was able to develop a thorough knowledge of internal and external processes. These structural developments between 2011 and 2013, demonstrate an organisational evolution within Mission Australia, which involved using the research team to facilitate constant communication, feeding back into the social enterprise and processes of change. There is benefit in having an external voice and critical friends to provide feedback into such a program. The social enterprise research arm within Mission Australia has the capacity to contribute to

and continue this Action Learning structure, in particular through participation in newly established governance and organisational bodies concerned with Charcoal Lane. The following governance structure (Figure 1) was instituted by the VRL and the State Manager for Victoria.

A Proactive Model: The Charcoal Lane Operational Working Group

The CLOWG is one of the most significant governance structures to emerge from Mission Australia’s restructuring of communications with

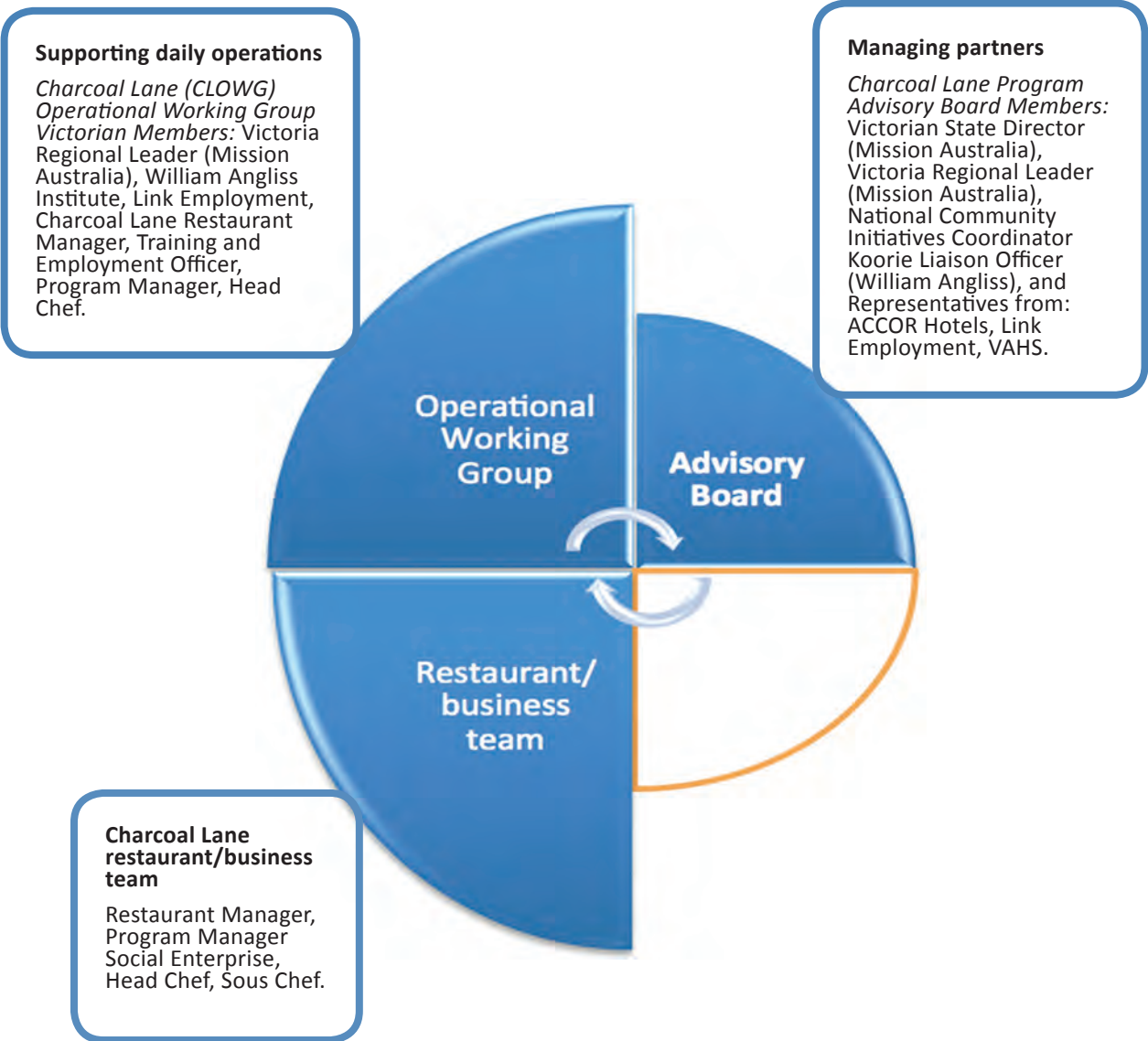


Figure 1: Charcoal Lane governance structure

Table 2: Key CLOWG issues and comparison

October 2012	→ November 2013
Selection and intake for the next group	Selecting trainees for the program
The question of how the program prepares trainees for work outside Charcoal Lane	Benchmarks and milestone reviews for trainees as they progress through the program and into employment
Trainee motivation and attendance at shift work Pay rates differ between trainees	The fast-paced hospitality industry Flexible education and support
Community engagement	Community engagement and Charcoal Lane culture Culture committee
Engagement and early exiting (why are trainees exiting when they have almost finished the program?)	Classic social enterprise tensions Successful exiting Mapping the future goals of the social enterprise through a Theory of Change model

Charcoal Lane. CLOWG meetings (commencing in late 2012) enabled forward thinking and proactive decision-making, encouraging communication amongst members and awareness of current issues and barriers within the program. The CLOWG prevents cycles of crisis mediation from occurring, by dealing with issues as they begin to emerge.

In 2014 CLOWG membership consisted of the William Angliss Course Coordinator (or William Angliss National Manager of Community Initiatives), Coordinator for Link, Mission Australia Operations Manager for Social Enterprise, Deakin University representative, Restaurant Manager, Training and Employment Officer, and the Charcoal Lane Social Enterprise Program Coordinator.

As the ALG was merged with the CLOWG a research agenda item at each CLOWG meeting provided the opportunity for the research team to raise issues that had been frequently discussed in Action Learning (or 'catch-up') interviews held in the previous month. Many of the issues raised in the initial ALG meetings were now embedded in the CLOWG. The first CLOWG was held in October 2012. The intake and selection process for the next group of trainees (G3) was discussed along with trainee transitions and engagement. In 2014 CLOWG meetings, the selection process was discussed as it happened; the gradual transition of trainees through the program was monitored, as was cultural engagement.

Table 2 provides a record of key issues discussed at the first CLOWG, compared with the major issues discussed at the CLOWG just over one year later in November 2013.

The table shows how issues like trainee motivation and attendance, became to be understood in a different context. For instance, motivation was linked to the nature of work in the hospitality industry (which can be stressful and repetitive), and was also impacted upon by various challenges trainees faced in their everyday lives. How to best address motivation and attendance issues has been part of the 'cotton woolling' debate (i.e. How much support is too much?). This issue continues to be relevant today as new staff members enter the program. New staff grapple with questions like: What should I expect from trainees? and How much responsibility is enough?

From the table we can see that while many of the concerns of the CLOWG group changed, issues of selection and community engagement continue to be areas of interest. In 2014 it was agreed by members of the CLOWG that these areas strengthen support for Charcoal Lane and they should be a continuous agenda item. There is now a strong understanding amongst CLOWG members that through the participation of trainees and engagement with community, intangible cultural value is created within Charcoal Lane.

Table 3: 2011 and 2012 Newsletters compared to 2013 Monthly Briefing Notes

Newsletter themes (2011–2012)	Monthly Briefing Notes – research themes (2013)
ACCESS to work program	Flexible education
The problem of absenteeism (Newsletter 1: April–May 2012)	Social enterprise tensions
Absenteeism (Newsletter 2: May–June 2012) Absenteeism case studies 1 and 2	Mentoring
Selection	Selection
Transitions (Newsletter 3: September–October 2012)	Transitional framework (January 2013)
Workplace environment and safety	Aspirations
Outcomes and success	Expectations for staff–trainee relationships: Strong support
	Trainee achievement and recognition
	Faced-paced hospitality industry
	Measuring trainee success
	Charcoal Lane’s identity
	Knowing who to talk to – Trainee confusion
	Menu change and café-style food

We can look back even further to see how program concerns have changed between 2011 and 2013. In Table 3, research themes from 2011 and 2012 Newsletters are compared to research themes from 2013 Monthly Briefing Notes. By looking across the table we can see developments in the program.

These program concerns are discussed in detail in the pages that follow. It has been the purpose of this section to demonstrate the ways in which relationships and communication structures are vital in the progression of the program, and in Mission Australia’s support of social enterprise. The ALG, PAB and CLOWG are significant organisational outcomes, enabling a shared language to develop between Charcoal Lane, Mission Australia and the research team.

PART II: ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CHARCOAL LANE'S IDENTITY: PARTNERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND STAFF

Developing Charcoal Lane's Cultural Identity Through Strong Community Relationships

As a program for Aboriginal and marginalised young people, Charcoal Lane has been able to grow through developing relationships with community groups and local Aboriginal organisations. These Aboriginal organisations include the Victorian

Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI), Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Services and Recreation (MAYSAR), the Koorie Heritage Trust and the Koorie Academy of Excellence (KAE). Through the Action Learning process particular concerns about the identity of the restaurant, and how this is connected to relationships with local community and Aboriginal organisations, became more visible. Figure 2 provides an example of key concerns raised by ALG

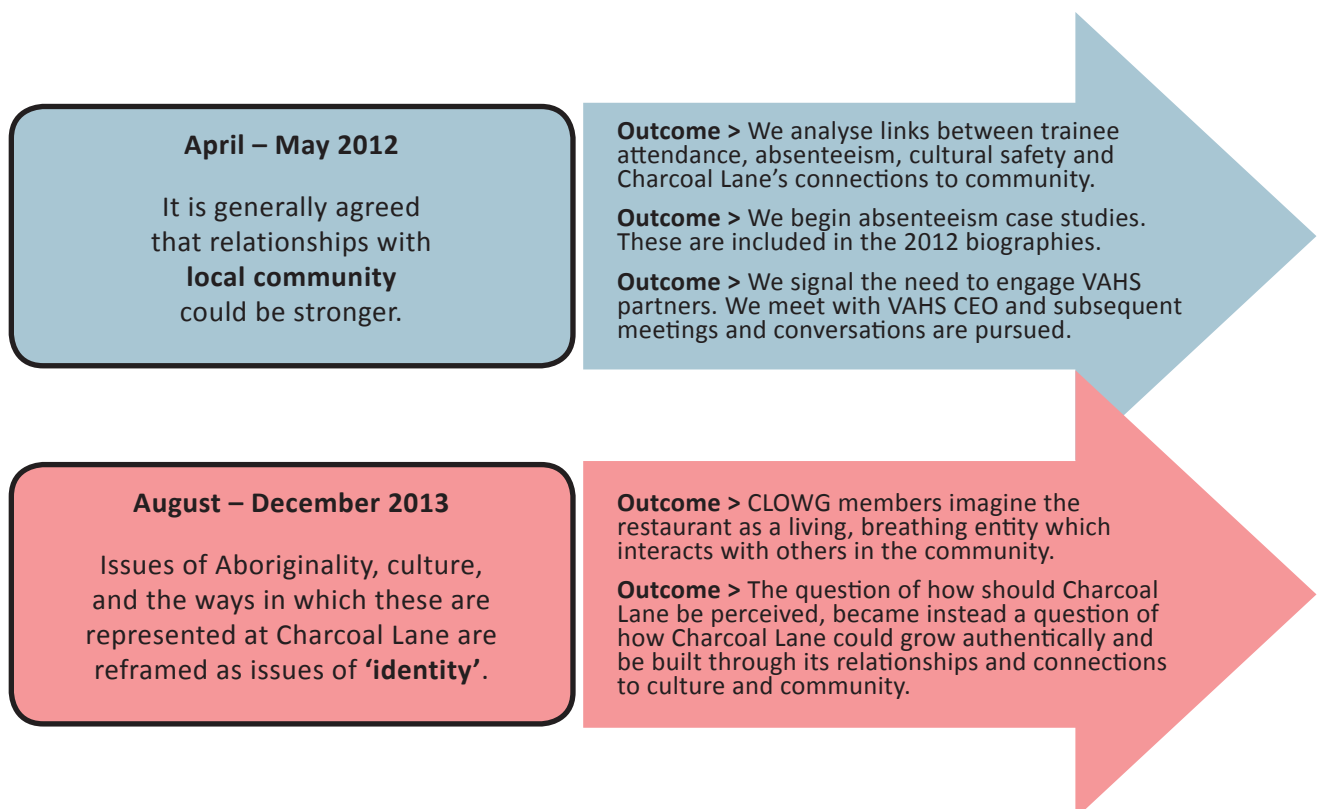


Figure 2: Identity and community

members in the left box; the arrow shows developments in the direction of the research project and program responses.

Developments between 2012 and 2013 involved key staff members at Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia. In late 2013 the Victorian Regional Leader (VRL) at Mission Australia (in liaison with the State Director) and Program Manager at Charcoal Lane implemented changes in response to the challenges Charcoal Lane faced regarding stakeholder relationships, business and program operations. These changes involved the following.

Recruiting New Personnel with Training Skills

As the VRL explains:

The personnel we've needed have changed as the business has changed. As a direct result of the work from Deakin the result that we're seeing is that the way we are reporting and evaluating is more meaningful than the way we've been reporting in the past. There is more consistency now and people are clearer around their roles ... in the past we placed a lot of importance on particular people and their relationships with community and now we have broadened this out to include other Aboriginal organisations and community groups and all their stakeholders.

Engaging with Issues of Identity

Through the restaurant: Developing a café-style menu with a casual dining approach provides a more inclusive dining experience to local community members. Changes to the menu have enabled greater trainee participation in food preparation and service.

Through the program: The Social Enterprise Program Manager impacted on the ways in which

Charcoal Lane was perceived in the community through strengthening the program's commitment to young Aboriginal people, addressing their individual needs in the program through a student-centred approach, and building community relationships. The Program Manager's pastoral approach towards support and his knowledge of the complex cultural and political realities of Charcoal Lane enabled him to understand the needs of participants, and the significance and meaning of community involvement in the program.

Strengthening Support for Young People

Key to building community relationships is being an active member in supporting young people, not just through training and education but in all areas of the young person's life.

We need to work with our partners to find ways of providing opportunities for young people that we can't currently support because of our resource limitations.

Monthly Briefing Notes 2: 2, p. 3



For the VRL and Program Manager, knowledge of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Service Sector and how to build these relationships successfully will be relevant to the program and Charcoal Lane culture for some time to come. The Program Manager commented:

It is important to embed Charcoal Lane in this landscape and this is something that we are currently doing. The question of how to do this as we move forward will be relevant. We will also need to develop our knowledge of training and alternative training models.

With this goal in mind, the Program Manager revised the training program with particular attention to delivery, engagement, life skills and cultural relevance. Changes included:

- connecting face-to-face with community groups, significant community members and local Aboriginal organisations
- recognising the need for and developing a flexible education framework
- embedding cultural awareness and life-skills training into the program framework
- recruiting a Training and Employment Officer and a Head Chef with experience training and working with young people
- organising and hosting community engagement events and building groups within Charcoal Lane that directly engage the issue of culture. For example, the development of a 'Culture Committee' at Charcoal Lane involving trainees, Aboriginal Elders and a VAHS representative.

Team Building Excursions and Cultural Wellness

Wellness events allow trainees and staff to engage with complex historical, cultural and political issues. As an institution, Charcoal Lane becomes tied to these significant issues and part of the historical landscape amongst community members. For instance, a 2013 Cultural Wellness Workshop with Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL) enabled trainees to explore notions of personal identity based on

knowledge and experience as Aboriginal young people. Trainees are offered support in tracing family histories through the services of Link-Up and Connecting Home.

Focus group interviews with trainees regarding the cultural environment of Charcoal Lane indicate that the program has the capacity to learn from the trainees. Trainees are eager to see engagement with Aboriginal culture, through the involvement of Aboriginal mentors in the program. However, trainees' reflections of what is Aboriginal about Charcoal Lane indicate that 'Aboriginality' may not resemble the symbols that are commonly recognised within broader society. Rather the concerns, questions and practices of the trainees themselves are part of the culture that the program attempts to identify with. As a response to trainees' concerns, a Culture Committee was formed with trainees as members. It was acknowledged that it was important to recognise their voices in promoting Aboriginal culture rather than imposing views from the outside.

Community Relationships and Employment Outcomes

In 2014 Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane's relationships with the Victorian Aboriginal Community continue to grow which has substantial affects for trainee's employment opportunities. These outcomes are not limited to the trainees who complete certificates through the program. Charcoal Lane provides broader support to relatives and friends of trainees. Charcoal Lane works with the Group Training Organisation (GTO) AFL Sports Ready and other organisations, including Indigenous Work Stars (IWS), an Indigenous Employment Pathways (IEP) provider. IWS offers school-based apprenticeships and assists trainees in attaining and maintaining employment. It is affiliated with John Pearson Consulting, a Queensland-based organisation. Through IWS, Aboriginal Elders and respected community members will be available to trainees as mentors. Trainees also receive support through the Career Education Support Officer at VAEAI, MAYSAR and Fitzroy Stars. Charcoal Lane's engagement with Aboriginal employment issues was recognised in early 2014 when the Program Manager and two trainees were asked to take part in a forum hosted by the National Indigenous Employment Network.

Education and Employment Partnerships: the Role of William Angliss Institute, Link Employment & Training and ACCOR

In 2012 and 2013 the GTO **Link** was responsible for the legal aspects of the trainee's employment and assisted with employment outcomes for the trainees after they exit the program. In 2014 Charcoal Lane began working with **AFL Sports Ready** as its GTO.

As part of their community initiatives commitment, the registered training organisation (RTO) **William Angliss** provided Certificated Hospitality Services Training on-site at Charcoal Lane.

Mission Australia's business relationships with education and employment partners have evolved to clearly articulate joint responsibilities regarding trainees. The need to articulate these relationships was discussed at initial ALG meetings in 2011. Interviews indicated 'culture gaps' between and within Mission Australia, Charcoal Lane, William Angliss and other stakeholders in terms of understanding different organisational contexts/people/processes/practices. CLOWG meetings facilitated shared understandings among partners, particularly in regards to trainees.

In 2013 Link and Mission Australia articulated joint responsibilities regarding trainee *transitions into employment*. It was identified that there had been difficulties in finding placements for the trainees, and that in future cases locating apprenticeships and employment opportunities would be one of Link's responsibilities. It was agreed that Link would negotiate employment opportunities/pathways for trainees before the trainees finish their training at Charcoal Lane to allow for a smooth transition into paid work.

Mission Australia has also developed a placement plan with ACCOR to secure the trainees placement opportunities after they have completed training at Charcoal Lane. In late 2013 there were plans to embed work experience in the Back of House and Front of House, with the support of ACCOR. This was designed to ensure that the trainees got the experience in the field they needed. ACCOR

guaranteed that they would create a position for every young Koorie person who came through the program – providing the young person wanted to work in their network. In the past Charcoal Lane had waited until the end of the program (Certificate III) to introduce the trainee to ACCOR; however, trainees are now introduced to ACCOR when they commence at Charcoal Lane.

In order to further clarify partners' responsibilities regarding trainees, a Trainee Handbook was developed in the early months of 2013. This handbook is a shared understanding of the needs of trainees, the expectations surrounding trainees, and responsibilities of partner organisations towards them. Partner William Angliss clarified their educational role in the program, which is discussed through the flexible education model (on page 26). The RTO works with program staff – in particular the Program Coordinator and Training and Employment Officer – to meet the educational needs of the trainees through a flexible approach.

In 2014 Charcoal Lane ended its employment relationship with Link and partnered with the GTO AFL Sports Ready who have an Indigenous employment program. AFL Sports Ready has an existing relationship with ACCOR providing supported employment outcomes. This new relationship enables Charcoal Lane to sustain contact with trainees and create long-lasting relationships.

Charcoal Lane: Internal and Staff Relationships

Finding the right staff to ‘fit’ the roles at Charcoal Lane has been pivotal in moving the Charcoal Lane program forward. Positive program changes have resulted from an ‘untied approach’ towards the training program. Rather than view the restaurant and program as separate entities, staff began to view training and supporting young people as the key focus of the social enterprise. This brought different areas of Charcoal Lane – the kitchen, the restaurant, and the program staff – together in support of the trainees. This change, paired with a new café-style approach to dining at Charcoal Lane, has eased social enterprise tensions experienced by staff, enabling them to focus on trainees and their skills. Staff no longer perceive themselves as part of one particular function – that is, preparing food, running a business or supporting trainees – but are each committed to the program and supporting the education of the trainees.

Staff must take on a number of roles in any one position, as one staff member told us: ‘I’m asked health questions, I’m asked parenting questions. I’m not just a trainer’ (Front of House Trainer, Monthly Briefing Notes 2012–2013). Often, one of the most difficult obstacles for new staff is learning what sorts of relationships with trainees and staff should be anticipated:

How much support is enough? What sort of boss should I be? Should I expect more from trainees or allocate greater responsibilities? How can I strike the right balance between professional and personal support?

With a high staff turnover experienced at Charcoal Lane – and in the hospitality industry in general – it is important that new staff are aware of the nature of the role they are entering (Gonin et al., 2012: 9). What is required is an awareness of what ‘makes it work’: what the trainees and other staff members require from the *person* in the role. This information – which could contribute to the institutional knowledge and strengthening of the program – is often lost with the departing staff member.



Figure 3: Charcoal Lane program staff

PART III: TRANSITIONAL LABOUR MARKET PROGRAM CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS

June 2013: Interviews (between February to May) with trainees and staff indicate there is a lack of **Aboriginal culture**/presence/objects/atmosphere and music at Charcoal Lane. Outcomes >

- There are plans to create a **mural** at Charcoal Lane involving trainees and local Aboriginal artists. This would have significance given the history of the building, the murals that were painted over in the initial development of Charcoal Lane, and would bring community into the restaurant.
- Program staff develop the idea of the **Culture Committee**.
- In January 2014, trainees participate in a **Culture Camp**.

July – August: For many trainees and early school leavers the classroom-based learning environment is not conducive to success in education. This issue was discussed as different modes of education; that is, the Extended Service Schooling model in July 2012 interviews. Outcomes >

- In July in partnership with the William Angliss Institute **flexible training** with **rolling enrolment** is established at Charcoal Lane. This type of training model requires particular skilled staff in the front of house, back of house, and at the program level (negotiations with William Angliss continue).

August 2013: There is a lack of **program systems** in place at Charcoal Lane. Outcomes >

- We discuss selection at the ALG July 2012. **Rolling enrolment** and refined selection criteria are developed in July and August (Monthly Briefing Notes, July 2012).
- **Trainee Protocols** are developed in July and August implemented by the Training and Employment Officer and Restaurant Manager.
- Trainee transitions (discussed in Action Learning Issues Newsletter, September/ October 2012) are supported by **Quarterly Reviews** with trainees.

September 2013: Charcoal Lane attempts to balance the **tensions of being a social enterprise** with commercial and social obligations. Community are alienated by the fine dining restaurant, yet an integral part of the social mission. Outcomes >

- The issue is raised at the first Action Learning Group meeting (2011).
- In June 2012 the Regional Leader articulates the key messages of the business and social enterprise for external communication.
- In 2013 we discuss social enterprise tensions and how they are managed in a number of documents and meetings, including the CLOWG and Monthly Briefing Notes for March, April and May–June; and in the special **Social Enterprise Tensions issue for September**. The roles and responsibilities of staff are discussed in relation to the need to balance profit goals with training aspirations .

December 2013: The **identity** and **future** direction of Charcoal Lane is strengthening through community relationships and forward planning. Outcomes >

- Relationship building among Charcoal Lane Staff. Relationship building with community groups, members and local Aboriginal organisations continues.
- The in-house *Charcoal Lane Newsletter* is produced by the Training and Employment Officer, Program Coordinator, with contributions from trainees.
- The October 2013 Monthly Briefing Notes present a Theory of Change overview, and track the program's cultural developments.

Figure 4: Action Learning developments and program responses

In the sections that follow, we discuss how Action Learning themes have been addressed, how staff and trainees have responded to the issues, how responses have been embedded in the program, and areas that may benefit from further Action Learning development. Figure 4 provides an example of Action Learning developments and program responses in 2013.

Selection of Program Candidates

In the early stages of program development there were few structures around how trainees were selected for the Charcoal Lane program. Early feedback indicated that the selection process was influenced by the understanding that selecting the *right* participant – who could attend shifts at night and during the day, who had adequate literacy and numeracy skills, who had access to transportation – was key. The issue of selection of trainees or ‘intake’ was discussed at Action Learning Group meetings and the following questions were raised:

Which people should participate in the selection processes?

What activities during training can create greater connections by trainees to the program (to their peers, trainers, staff)?

Can the Access to Work program help to establish these connections more strongly at the start of the program? If so, how?

ALG members agreed that a number of people should be involved in the selection process, that there should be a system for selection, with criteria that candidates should meet.

In 2013 the Charcoal Lane Program Manager developed a framework for selection and an application form which trainees are asked to complete. The form contains questions such as *Why do you want to work at Charcoal Lane?* and asks for basic demographic information. We were told that one of the most important initial steps is *connecting with the trainees’ support system and caseworkers*. This enables staff to understand the particular needs of each trainee, their history of support and the kind of support they need. There should also be consideration of whether or not Charcoal Lane has the capacity to provide the necessary support.

Other criteria have since been identified by the Program Manager; these are outlined in the Monthly Briefing Notes (Volume 2 Issue 1).

During 2013 recruitment techniques involved distribution of a Charcoal Lane poster asking for Indigenous candidates in particular. These posters were distributed among community groups and Aboriginal organisations in Melbourne. The Program Manager committed time to building relationships with respected local community members and explaining the goals and aims of the program.

The selection process is now a continuous, year-round activity, with rolling enrolment practices (as part of the flexible education framework). Rolling enrolment enables new candidates to enter the program if other trainees exit early. We have been told that selection in this context will be discretionary or case by case and will engage the above criteria. In 2014 this method ensured that the program assisted the greatest number of trainees possible with the addition of four new trainees entering to make a group of 13 trainees (in January 2014).

The Access to Work Program

The Access program, it can be a bit dry just because we all really just want to jump into it, get into the William Angliss course and get into the kitchen and start perfecting everything.

Charcoal Lane Trainee

For many trainees the Access to Work program is their first encounter with training at Charcoal Lane. The Access to Work Program is a preliminary training program run for trainees at Charcoal Lane. It is a four week, unpaid, Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations funded program which the trainees must attend five days per week. Feedback from staff and trainees indicated that the program was difficult to attend for financial reasons (i.e. the four week unpaid period) and that the learning material was not motivating. Attendance and absenteeism became an issue in this context. (In Newsletter 1, April–May 2012, we raised the issue of engagement and the Access to Work program.)

In late 2012 the Access to Work program was revised to include *team building, culturally specific and food oriented activities, hands on activities*, as well as the required units for completion of Certificate I at the Access level. In 2014 the program was accredited Certificate I training, and renamed 'Bush Pepper: An Introduction to Hospitality and Events', consisting of five weeks of training with Charcoal Lane and one week with ACCOR. This program is provided by Marist Youth Care, supported by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and Wurundjeri Elders including Auntie Dianne Kerr. Participants have the opportunities to work with community, gain work experience and are paid for their attendance (five dollars per day, plus the costs of transportation, which is approximately 15 dollars per day). At the end of the program trainees planned a community event at Atherton gardens with Wurundjeri Elder Colin Hunter. In this revised program a number of trainee concerns have been addressed, including the cultural relevance of training, workplace environment and financial pressures. The program addresses relevant prevocational issues such as how to find employment and how to retain employment. *Six young people were involved in the pilot program in 2014. All of the participants have gone on to employment, three with ACCOR and three with Charcoal Lane.* Significantly, the program contributes to the rolling intake mechanism maintaining the maximum number of trainees in the program at any one time.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Prior to the implementation of the flexible framework, attendance and absenteeism were a significant challenge in the program, particularly throughout 2011 and 2012. Action Learning Newsletters discussed the issue of absenteeism, flexible learning and the various challenges trainees face. In Newsletter 2 we discussed particular case studies of absenteeism, which indicated that trainees face a number of challenges at home and at work while participating in the Charcoal Lane program. Key among these challenges were *housing and transport difficulties, issues with family life and drug use, and social and emotional well-being issues*. Our case studies found that family/domestic issues had a significant effect on the trainee's ability to attend training and work.

Responses to absenteeism within the program impact upon trainees' likelihood of staying in the

program. In 2012 we noted that if a trainee has been absent in the past he or she is less likely to be given shift work. This affects trainee moral and interest in the program.

A cycle is created in which only reliable trainees are given shift work. What happens to the trainees who cannot build a 'reliable' reputation? The question becomes, have they been given the appropriate opportunities?

In 2012, a 'warning system' was in use, whereby trainees were provided with three official warnings before they were exited from the program; this process involved the employer, Link. This system was not shown to be effective. If a trainee has not spent enough time at Charcoal Lane and made 'a connection' with other staff and trainees, then verbal warnings seem less likely to be effective. We were also told that trainees may not return to the program after a period of absence if they feel 'ashamed' or are made to feel ashamed of not being able to attend their training and shift work.

In 2013, approaches towards absenteeism were refined in line with the *flexible education approach*. Staff supported trainees who had been absent from training or work by attempting to tailor the program more to their needs. Program staff developed the following questions to structure their engagement with the trainees:

What are the trainee's unique needs and what can program and support staff do to meet these?

Does this involve learning style? Can the delivery of TAFE modules be altered to meet the trainee's learning style?

Does the trainee need time away from the program to work out personal issues? If so the program allows for such absence.

Does the trainee need greater support? Can program staff liaise with external support staff to provide this? Relationships between existing support services and Charcoal Lane will already be in place following initial candidate selection.

Does the trainee want to continue in the program? Is it suited to the trainee? Are there other options that Charcoal Lane and Mission Australia and partners can provide?

Trainee Transitions

As trainees transition through the program their support needs change. We have found that it is important to provide consistent and reliable support, while at the same time being flexible enough to be able to respond to the individual needs and goals of trainees. Transitions can be facilitated by in-program milestone or quarterly reports involving one-on-one discussions with trainees. These sessions allow trainees to discuss their aims and goals in the program, whether or not they want to pursue work in the hospitality industry (for instance through work experience or placement with ACCOR) or move onto other employment or educational opportunities. With a strong support base Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane can assist trainees to follow a variety of employment pathways, including pathways outside the hospitality industry. This requires putting in place employment pathways at different stages of the program – not just at the completion of the Certificate III training.

Milestone reviews are advantageous in that they also indicate other outcomes of the program. For instance:

- the number of trainees who want to pursue further education and training after training at different levels at Charcoal Lane
- whether or not trainees have experienced changes in living conditions, health or relationships, and how these were impacted upon by their time in the program.

In 2014 mechanisms for milestone reviews were put in place with AFL Sports Ready.

Gender and Pressure in the Hospitality Industry

The gendered experience of trainees from the Front of House is vastly different to experiences of trainees in the Back of House. In the past there have been more male than female trainees in the Back of House. In 2012 we were told that the kitchen is a space in which trainees felt they must 'harden up': become stronger, more resilient and not complain about the various challenges of working and training. In the kitchen, trainees felt

they had to find ways of transforming into hardened and resilient workers and chefs in a difficult environment. For instance, one young female trainee Donna told us:

Until you're in the kitchen, when the pressures on, that's what will make you or break you. You'll know then whether you're meant for the industry or not. That's what's good about this place, you can be in those high-pressure situations, still be at a training level, but get a taste of it.

Donna, Focus Group Interview, 10.09.2012

During 2012 the Back of House was a space in which trainees felt they would to 'sink or swim'. As Donna and Alan said:

Donna: You're going to be put in the deep end. You've got to step up straight away and if you don't ...

Alan: You're going to get burnt.

Donna: You know, I think you need to keep going back and looking at what you do here...why you have all this here! Because it's a training restaurant, we get good reviews. Yeah we do pump out some good meals, but at the end of the day it's a training restaurant. And I think a lot of the people forget it.

Focus Group Interview, 10.09.2012

In 2013 there was a noticeable shift in the Back of House environment. This was largely due to menu change and change in staff. Previously, kitchen staff would often site the 'fast-paced' and high-stress nature of the hospitality industry as an environment that trainees would need to adjust to. This pressure seems to have been alleviated by changes to the menu to café-style dining, and changes in staff.

PART IV: FLEXIBLE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

A Flexible Education Working Model: William Angliss, Charcoal Lane and Flexible Education

What I found is that the first program I was involved with was mainstream – timeframes are tight and fixed, there are deadlines around delivery and completion of certain units and there was an expectation that young people would be at TAFE from 9.30 to 4.30 and if they were 15 minutes late they wouldn't be allowed in class. I understand those parameters but I didn't think that these fit with the success of those clients. Many trainees may have left because they couldn't transition quickly enough.

Program Manager, Interview, 14.08.2013



Smyth points out that for many students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, experiencing success at school 'means having to suppress their own identities and act within a narrowly defined and institutionalized view of what it means to be a "good" student' ... Participation may require a similar suppression of young people's identity in ways that sit oddly with the empowerment that it promises.

Black, 2010: 12

Those working in the Charcoal Lane program realised the limitations of traditional forms and understandings of education. As it developed, the program was tailored to meet the needs of the young people involved so that they were afforded the chance to achieve greater success. Flexible learning involves 'a shift from formal, whole class didactic teaching towards individual or group management of learning' (Arfield et al., 2013: 13). The approach is focused on assisting learning and promoting autonomy. Developing 'flexible learning' at Charcoal Lane was another advance in the TLMP designed to support the learning and cultural needs of the young people involved. This student-centred approach was introduced into Charcoal Lane in July 2013 by the Program Manager. The following provides a snapshot of the program.

Flexible Training – Key Program Developments

Flexible training commenced on **5 August 2013** with Certificate III in Front and Back of House. The new training package has 25 units over 16 months.

Training personnel

- 1 The William Angliss Victorian Coordinator Community Initiatives (VCCI) and Charcoal Lane Training and Employment Officer (TEO) will be responsible for Front of House training. Every three or four weeks (or more frequently if required) the VCCI will visit Charcoal Lane to do a practical demonstration.
- 2 The William Angliss Training Chef (TC) will be responsible for Back of House training. The TC will visit every three or four weeks to do a practical demonstration. Trainees practise in the workplace supervised by the Head Chef and Sous Chef. The TC will return to assess trainees.

Training routine

The TEO is a qualified trainer and will deliver some training modules with, or instead of the VCCI. The VCCI visits Charcoal Lane every second Monday to deliver modules and assist the TEO. Modules are set out in workbooks developed by the VCCI and William Angliss Institute.

Points of comparison

Old program

- Front and Back of House groups participate in training in a classroom setting either at William Angliss or at Charcoal Lane on a Monday.
- Trainees work through set tasks and modules within the parameters of this training day (10am – 3pm).
- There are few guidelines for working on modules outside of the classroom/training sessions.

New program

- Front and Back of House groups will participate in **three-hour study groups every two to three weeks**, where trainees are self-paced in working through set tasks, practising skills or completing assessments (facilitated by the TEO and at times WAI trainers).
- The two groups will come together in the middle of the day to participate in a collective personal development program (facilitated by the TEO and other relevant presenters).
- Over the course of a day this training program would be broken into the following sessions:
- 9am to 12pm – **Front of House study group**
- 12pm to 2pm – Charcoal Lane Personal Development Program (life skills, career planning, group project/event) – **All trainees**
- 2pm to 5pm – **Back of House study group.**

Assessment

The relevant trainer assesses trainees via oral questions, work projects, and everyday observation of trainees performing tasks in the workplace. This model of training requires increased contact between William Angliss and Charcoal Lane, and a greater workload for Charcoal Lane because they will be tutoring and holding catch-up classes.

Prior to the adoption of this flexible approach staff and trainees faced a number of challenges. Flexible educational provision has a number of benefits:

- **Cost and autonomy:** minimising travel costs and disruption to work, introducing choice into the timing and duration of study and relevance into the content of the study material. It is seen by many as more effective than traditional forms of education in meeting the needs of individuals and groups (Calder and McCollum, 1998: 86).
- **Attendance and early exiting:** Many trainees reported a range of challenges and responsibilities at home that made their attendance at every training session at the allocated day and time extremely difficult. For instance, in the absence of reliable childcare alternatives (family or spouse), trainees with children would either have to stay home themselves or pay for childcare. The cost of childcare for the day often outweighed the financial benefit of coming into work. With the pressure created by the 2012 warning system and the possibility of being exited from the program if they missed a certain number of shifts, trainees educational and training needs were not being met with the amount of flexibility necessary for them to succeed. Trainees exiting early were also affected by health problems and unstable living conditions.

- **Participation rates:** in January 2013, as previously mentioned, the Program Manager under the flexible education approach implemented ‘rolling enrolments’. This was important for a number of financial and practical program reasons. While the need for trainees to continue to enter the program was/is connected in a very real way to funding, it is also connected to the impact and function of the program.

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of how trainees during the month of March 2014 entered the program. Half of the total number of trainees in the program at this time was made up by the intake from the rolling enrolment; the other half entered the program before the rolling intake method was officially implemented.

Trainees and staff responded to the flexible education framework differently. Morale for both groups increased. Staff were empowered to assist trainees by tailoring education to their needs, and as a result, trainees gained more autonomy and control over their own education.

The development of the flexible framework is a work in progress. There are significant consequences of bringing the training in-house for the TEO, the chefs and the Restaurant Manager in particular. The TEO becomes responsible for coaching the trainees in their completion of Hospitality Training Theory modules, and also liaises

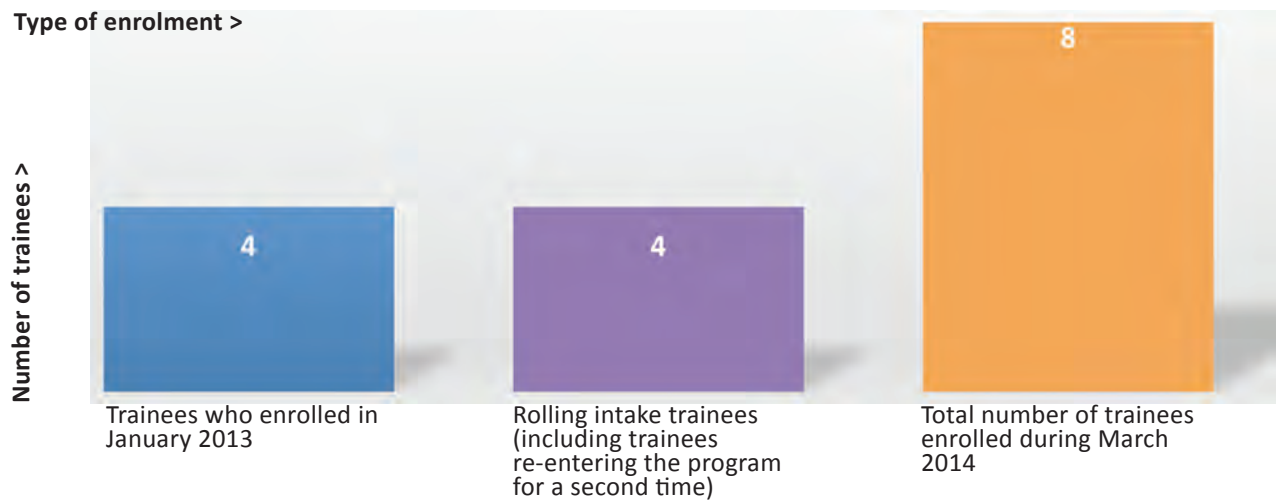


Figure 5: Style of intake (for trainees during March 2014)

with the Head Chef and Restaurant Manager to ensure the alignment of practical skill training in the Front of House and Back of House. The degree to which the flexible program is successful depends upon the skills and oversight of the TEO who acts as a conduit between the different members of staff and areas of the social enterprise. To facilitate this mode of training the partner organisation William Angliss Institute has designed specialised study guides for the trainees that cater to a number of different learning styles.

The learning process involved in the development of the flexible program requires responding to training/schedule issues that arise for both staff and trainees. In particular, without weekly sit down classes – which would under the previous system cover large amounts of material – trainees are struggling to meet the reading requirements. This means that their completion time for the course is longer. This can be frustrating for trainees who are keen to move onto paid work with their qualifications. The Program Manager and Training and Employment Officer have explored additional supports available to trainees, for instance Doors Funding and additional classroom support offered by Marist Youth Care. With appropriate adjustments to the program this issue was addressed (and flagged pre-emptively through CLOWG conversations). CLOWG discussions about the duration of training classes (four hours or all-day training), and their frequency (weekly or fortnightly) were, and will continue to be, vital moving forward.

The flexible framework has resulted in:

- **Increased attendance:** Previously, trainees faced difficulties in attending TAFE training at William Angliss and developed the flexible training structure at Charcoal Lane (in partnership with key staff members). This student-centred approach attempts to match the program to the learner. Flexibility for trainees to complete their course while still having the support to attend to family needs has encouraged many trainees to maintain their position in the program. Rather than dismissing trainees from class if they arrive late, trainees were able to participate and therefore build stronger relationships with the Charcoal Lane team.
- **Building relationships and trust:** The program requires its young trainees to develop relationships with mentoring and pastoral staff.



In a recent report called 'Perceptions of social work practice with Indigenous communities: Findings from a national study', Harms et al. (2008) argue that an understanding of 'Aboriginal culture, values and beliefs' affects the degree to which social workers are trusted amidst a 'continuing legacy of distrust'. One interviewee from the Harms et al. (2008) report said: 'Social workers have in the past shown very little ... understanding of the emotional trauma. Rather than compassion we've come up against a wall of clinical professionalism coupled with bookish clichés that have little meaning in "real time"'. The 2013 trainee biographies provide a glimpse into the relationships between staff and trainees and how they have developed. The TEO's open door policy has been crucial in creating a safe space for trainees. This space has been built through the TEO's policy of always being available to trainees on-site at Charcoal Lane.

- **Aboriginal knowledge:** The flexible program creates space for Aboriginal knowledge to become part of the curriculum and part of the approach towards learning. In many respects the program operates 'between two worlds' as Karina Lester (Aboriginal Language Worker from the University of Adelaide) would argue – or different cultural spaces (see Osbourne et al., 2013). Lester argues that for many young Aboriginal learners, particularly in remote communities, identity needs to be reinforced in the classroom and other learning spaces. In this way young people know they belong and have a sense of purpose. For Lester there should be an opportunity for young Aboriginal people to learn information about their culture, land rights, and how this relates to their life.

In this sense, Charcoal Lane program excursions and life skills sessions offer vital opportunities for self-development for trainees. The January 2014 'Culture Camp' at Camp Jungai (situated in Rubicon, Victoria: <http://www.campjungai.org.au/>) provided trainees with a positive experience, enabling cultural identity to be explored. Trainees learned to cook with native ingredients, learnt about native plants, herbs, and fauna, made artwork and clap sticks, participated in reliance training activities, taught the camp staff how to cook a Charcoal Lane menu item, and enjoyed a billabong experience which many trainees referred to as a 'rebirth'. The TEO commented:

Connection to culture has inspired our trainees to connect with services and community. The camp was so thrilled they have offered trainees a free weekend away at their convenience.

Employment Outcomes and Success at Charcoal Lane

In the past success at Charcoal Lane has been recorded as trainee completion of the program. During interviews in 2012 program staff suggested that success takes on different forms. Biographies produced by the research team detail the various achievements of trainees as well as the challenges they face. Program development in 2013 encouraged the recognition of this everyday success, such as punctuality, completing tasks and modules, attempting tasks and modules, taking on a challenge – in the context of trainees' broader life challenges. This supporting framework relies on the rejection of a deficit view of trainee activity and experience within the program. Across the two groups of trainees we interviewed, we recorded a number of successful outcomes which indicated the development of friendships and support networks; mentors and models for behaviour; housing solutions for individual trainees identified by Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane staff; development of confidence and skill levels; and the development of educational aspirations. Figure 6 shows the pathways of eight trainees from the January 2013 intake who exited the Charcoal Lane Certificate II program before completion. The majority of pathways indicate trainees have exited the program *successfully*, following up other opportunities in training, education and work.

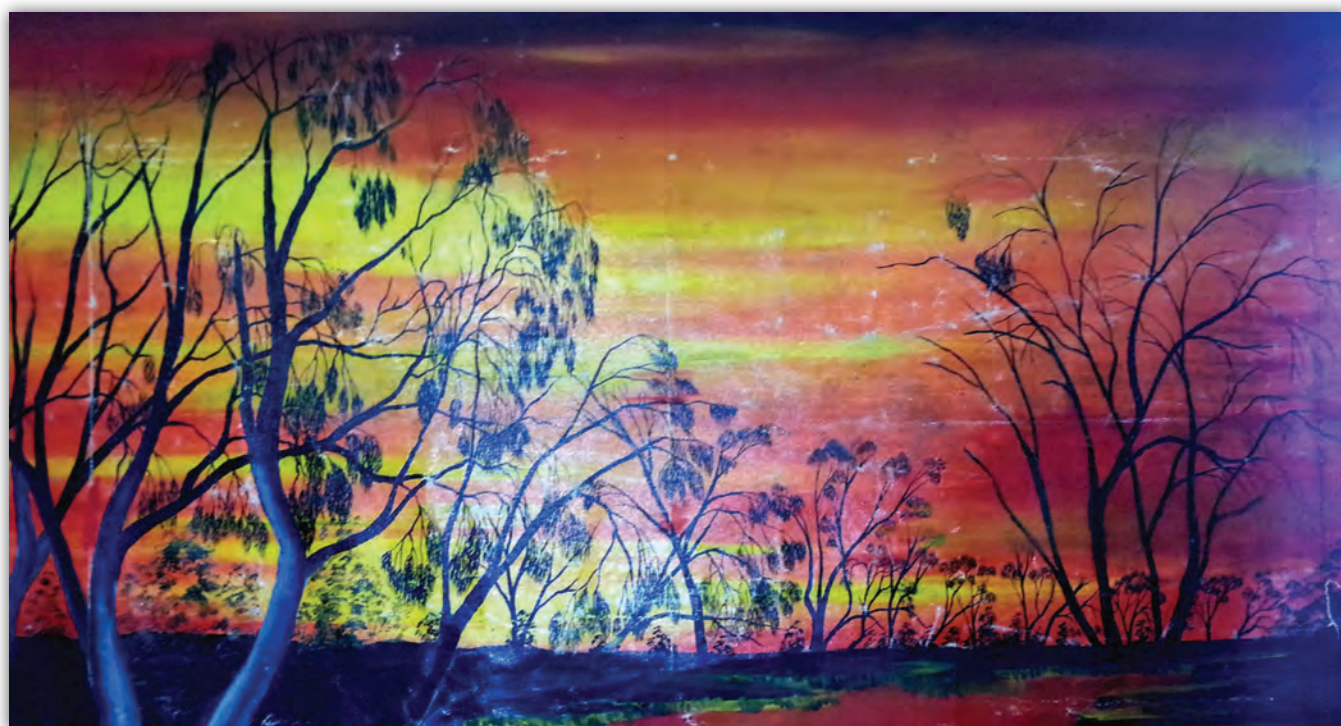




Figure 6: Successful pathways after Charcoal Lane: 2013 intake Certificate II

Column 1: Three trainees exiting Charcoal Lane have **educational aspirations**. Two of three trainees did not come into the program with specific educational aspirations

Column 2: Two trainees exited to pursue work and/or training opportunities in the **hospitality industry**.

Column 3: Four trainees are placed with **support services** and continue to work on health and well-being issues with the support of Charcoal Lane. At least one of these trainees did not have support services in place prior to entering Charcoal Lane.

Column 4: One trainee maintains **educational commitments outside Charcoal Lane** following engagement with the program.

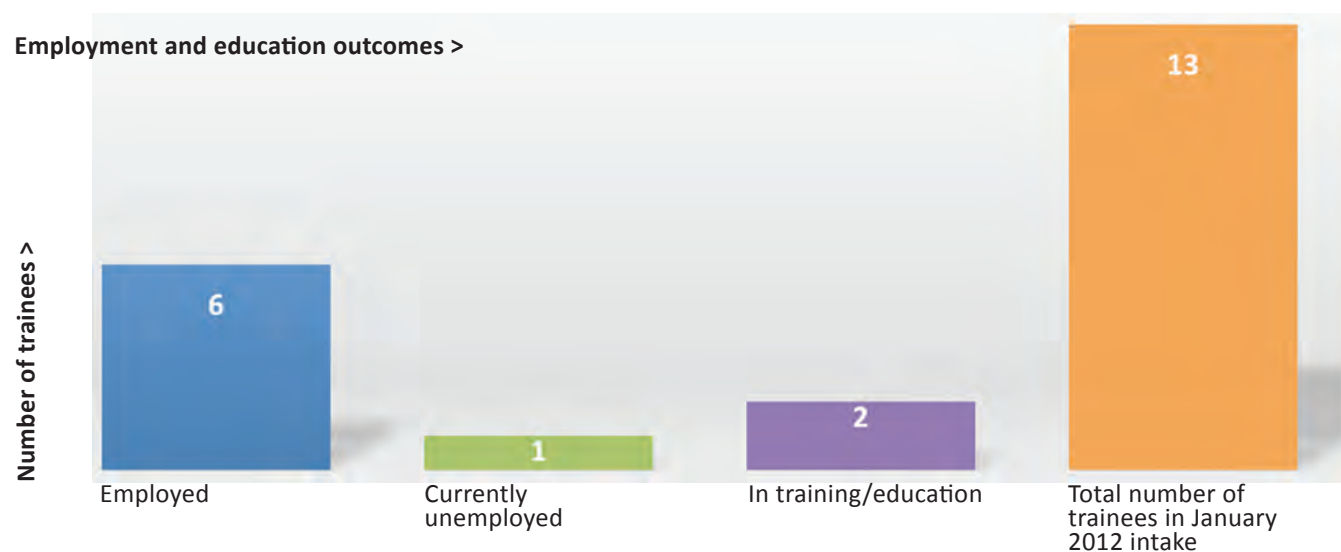


Figure 7: 2014 Record of employment and education outcomes for 2012 January intake

Figure 7 shows the employment outcomes for the 2012 January intake of trainees at Charcoal Lane. In blue we see the majority of trainees (five young people) are working in the hospitality industry and one trainee is working outside the hospitality industry. The green column shows one trainee is currently unemployed. The purple column shows two trainees are currently in training and education.

Reflecting on their own achievements, trainees have told us that they would like more recognition in the program at regular intervals. These milestones provide incentives and encouragement for trainees. This was recognised at the program level in 2013 with a graduation day organised by the Charcoal Lane staff. The event was a casual barbeque for trainees, family and friends. Trainees were awarded chefs hats and aprons depending on their role in either the Front of House or Back of House, along with cards which described their character and skills demonstrated during their time in the program.

Large numbers of trainees are accepted into the Charcoal Lane program and offered support. This can also be recorded as a successful program outcome, linking young people to caseworkers and support teams they might otherwise not encounter. Figure 8 shows the total number of graduating trainees against the total number of trainees through the program between 2012 and 2014.

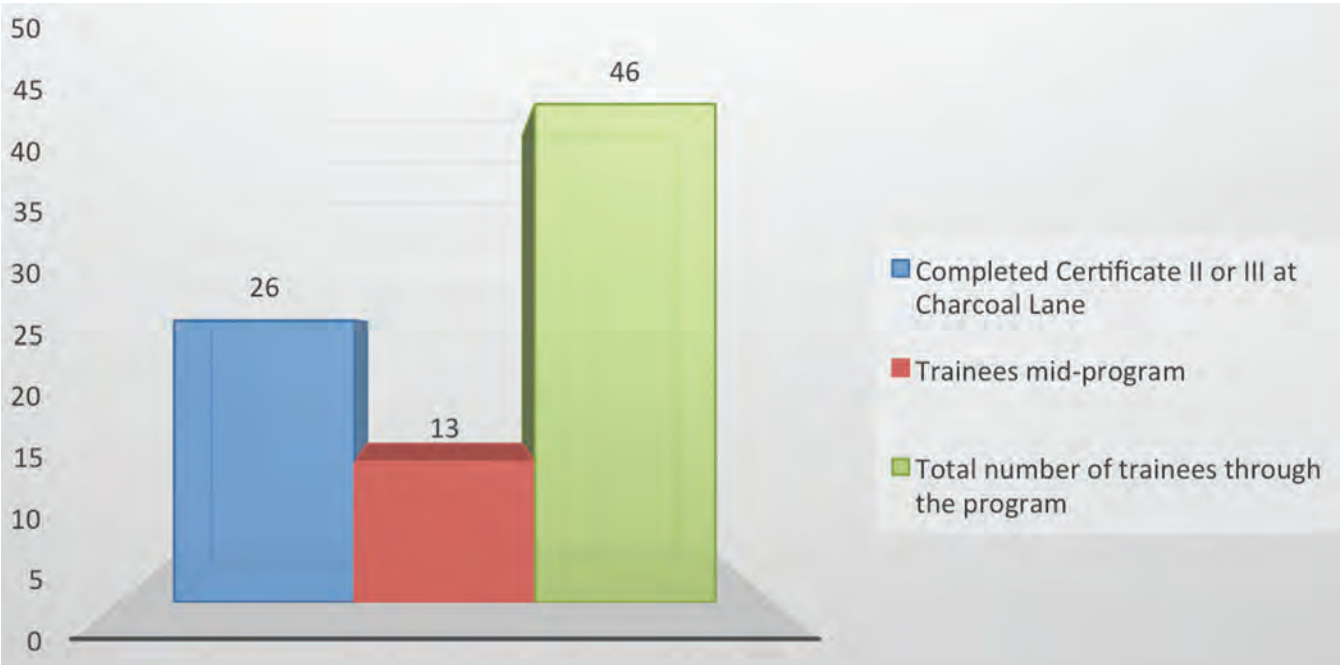


Figure 8: Overall numbers of graduating trainees 2012 (January) – 2014 (March)

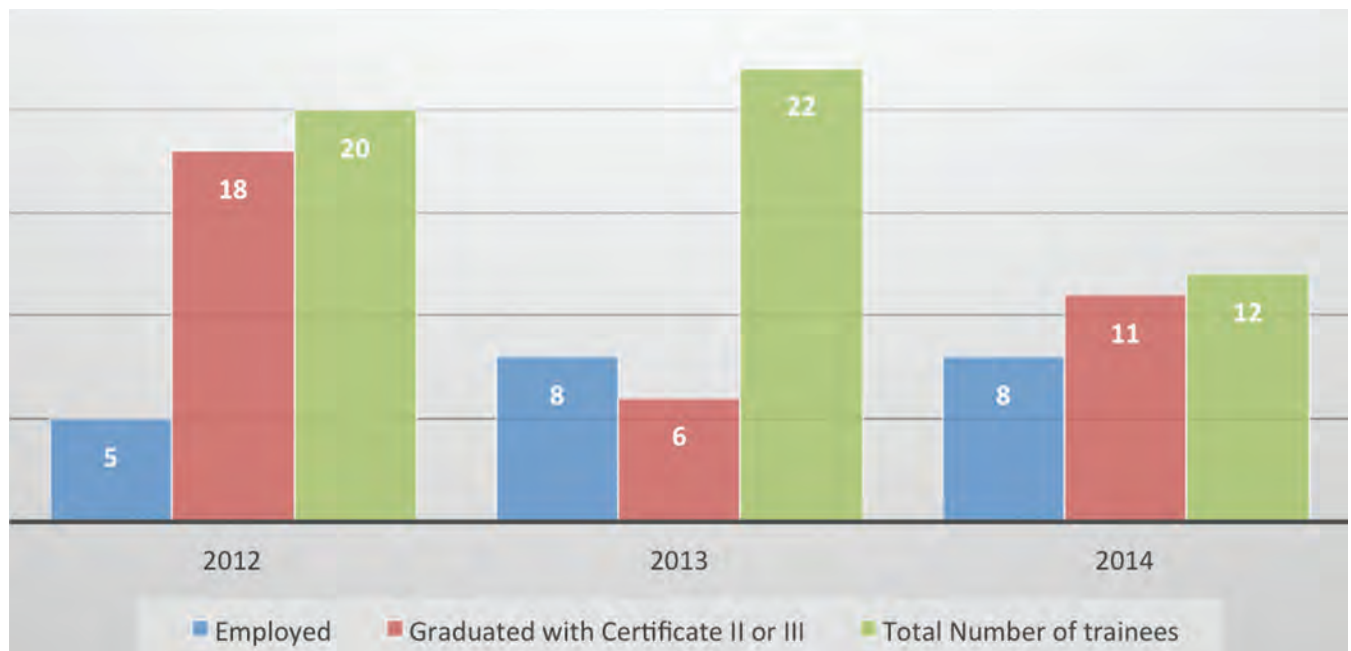


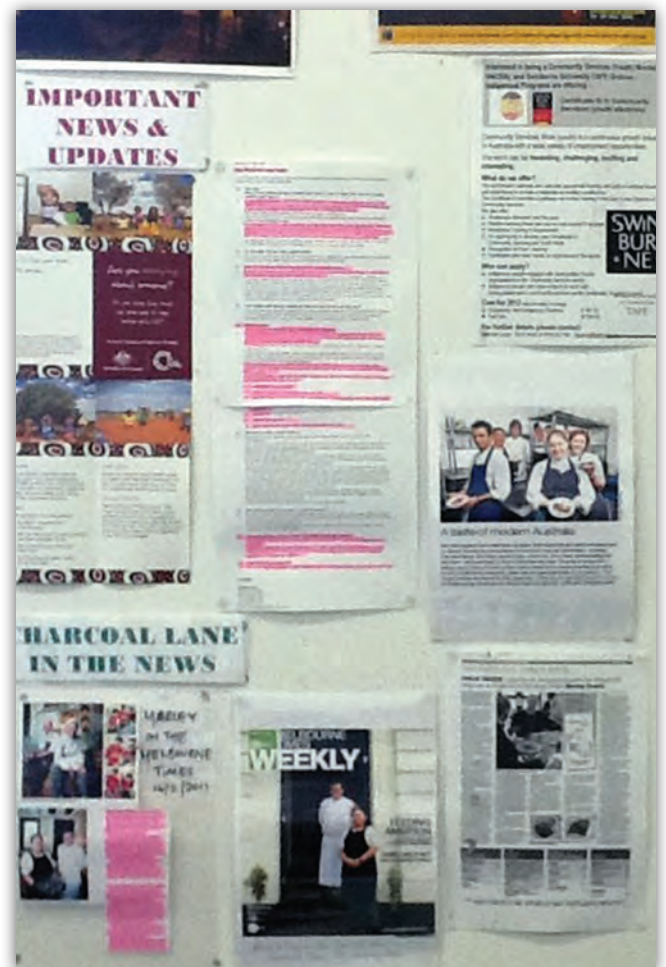
Figure 9: Employment and education outcomes 2012–2014

Figure 9 shows Education and Employment outcomes for 2012, 2013 and 2014: the number of trainees who entered the program, graduated with a Certificate II and III, and the number of trainees who are now employed. *Some trainees choose not to stay in contact with Charcoal Lane and in these particular cases of early exiting employment outcomes cannot be measured.*

2012: Between January and December 20 trainees entered the program: 13 gained their Certificate II at Charcoal Lane; five trainees graduated with Certificate III; eight trainees have stayed in contact with Charcoal Lane and five are employed.

2013: Between January and December 22 trainees entered the program: six gained their Certificate II at Charcoal Lane; no trainees graduated with Certificate III; eight trainees have stayed in contact with Charcoal Lane and are employed (nine trainees did not stay in contact and their employment outcomes are unknown).

2014: Between January and March 12 trainees entered the program: 11 trainees have their Certificate II; 10 trainees have stayed in contact with Charcoal Lane and eight are employed.



Program Logic, Theory of Change and Social Impact

Your theory of change or program logic model underpins all of your data collection and evaluation, so that you'll have a golden thread of data that you draw on for different communications.

Lumley, 2013

The ways in which Charcoal Lane's identity is represented to community members and stakeholders contributes significantly to the sustainability of the program. Key program messages and outcomes can be communicated to wider audiences in varying ways, however a consistent message is important in this field of 'belonging tensions' (Lumley, 2013 and 2013b; see also Gonin et al., 2012: 10). The advantage of having a Theory of Change and Program Logic is that a consistent story line emerges through the articulation and documentation of monthly and annual goals (Lumley, 2013). Deliberately building the identity of the social enterprise shows an understanding of the specific social benefits the enterprise links to. This process also allows managers and staff to reflect on and continuously engage with 'belonging tensions', program aims and goals.

The Charcoal Lane story line can be drawn from trainee, staff, community experiences, and stakeholder involvement. As Lumley (2013) argues the involvement of frontline staff is significant:

Firstly, the front line staff are the people providing the service and interacting with the beneficiaries. Their perspective is paramount and any approach to measuring impact won't really stick, won't get embedded in an organisation, unless it fits with practice. Listening to frontline staff and working with them to develop approaches that do work should be a high priority.

Working with Action Learning members we have developed aspects of this story line through the data we have collected with them over the past three years. In the October 2013 Monthly Briefing Notes, we described the program theory as:

If Charcoal Lane provides a space of support and education for young marginalised and Aboriginal people, in partnership with local community, both will benefit and young people will have greater career options and sense of physical and emotional well-being.

We provided a brief analysis of the ways in which program goals had changed between 2012 and 2013. Program Logic models plan and calculate inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes to prove this theory. The aims, goals and outcomes of the program may be recorded by staff members, along with their important reflections on the successes and challenges in implementing an idea or reaching a goal. This also creates organisational ownership of data.

Figures 8 and 9 provide examples of significant program outcomes. Charcoal Lane supports and provides educational opportunities for a large number of trainees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Approximately **46 young people** in two-and-a-half years have entered the program establishing pathways into education, training and work. More than half of these young people identify as Aboriginal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Maintain the Action Learning approach:** Mission Australia have benefited from embedding an Action Learning structure via CLOWG meetings. Future Action Learning practices may be supported by CLOWG meetings, particularly through the involvement of a 'critical friend' at CLOWG meetings. This critical friend would sit outside the organisation, but have knowledge of the social enterprise sector and/or operations at Charcoal Lane.
- 2 Program Logic and Theory of Change** are vital to the advancement of program goals. The CLOWG is a potential space for continuously engaging with monthly and annual program goals and maintaining a cohesive and consistent Charcoal Lane story line.
- 3 Use of existing expertise** and knowledge within Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane has the capacity to stimulate and support continued Action Learning. Data housed at Charcoal Lane – on absenteeism, and the aspects of the program that absenteeism is connected to – may inform future practice and program innovation through Program Logic models.
- 4 Continue to build the cultural capital of Charcoal Lane** through relationships with local community members and groups, Aboriginal organisations and continued participation in community and cultural events. Grow Charcoal Lane's identity through relationships with culture and community.
- 5 Charcoal Lane Staff Handbook** outlining the anticipated relationships, particularly between trainees and staff, assists new staff settling into their roles and should be maintained. This would also minimise the loss of institutional knowledge and articulate expectations regarding the support of trainees.
- 6 'All of program' approach:** Our research indicates that roles within Charcoal Lane should not be divided into restaurant, business and program sectors. Because all roles impact upon the trainees they should all be considered in relationship with each other.
- 7 Milestone or quarterly reports** involving one-on-one discussions with trainees play an important role in facilitating trainee transitions. Knowledge about trainees' interests for transitions into employment (or other training pathways) could assist AFL Sports Ready (GTO), Indigenous Work Stars, William Angliss, ACCOR and other education and employment partners in preparing the necessary supports for individual trainees.
- 8 Diverse employment pathways:** Mission Australia and Charcoal Lane can assist trainees to follow a variety of employment pathways, including those outside the hospitality industry. It has been recognised that this requires putting employment pathways in place at different stages of the program – not just at the completion of the Certificate III training.
- 9 Recognising success** in the achievements of staff and trainees as they progress through the program resists a deficit viewpoint. 'Early exiting' and 'successful exiting' are just two types of engagement with the program that can be viewed for their positive effects on young people's lives. Providing an entry point to training and education is a primary function of Mission Australia's social enterprise.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Table A1 shows key issues presented to the CLOWG by the research team via Monthly Briefing Notes. The first column summarises research issues in May and June 2013, compared with a summary of the issues emerging over the next seven months. Looking across the table we can see how key issues affecting the program have been taken up in successive CLOWG meetings in 2013 and resulted in changes at the program level.

Table A1: Issues presented to CLOWG in Monthly Briefing Notes

Monthly Briefing Notes: May–June 2013	Monthly Briefing Notes: June 2013 – January 2014
Certificate III Trainee Biographies: Different Stories, Shared Experiences (January) <i>What do the trainees have in common? What are their shared experiences?</i>	Meeting the Needs of Trainees: Flexible Education (June) <i>For many trainees and early school leavers the classroom-based learning environment is not conducive to success in education.</i> <i>How can flexible education be provided to students at Charcoal Lane? What might this involve? Who would be involved?</i>
Mentoring and Community Connections (February) <i>What aspects of Charcoal Lane should local community be consulted about?</i> <i>Would a community consultation group be useful?</i>	Community and Charcoal Lane Culture (August) <i>How do we now keep community connections going? How do we continue to embed Charcoal Lane in the community?</i> Culture (November – December) <i>What have trainees got to do with the culture of Charcoal Lane? How does their everyday activity contribute to the restaurants unfolding identity?</i>
Transitions in the Back of House (February) <i>How can staff be supported during this transition?</i> <i>How can trainees be best supported during the final stage of the program?</i>	Benchmarks and Milestone Reviews (August) <i>In the flexible framework, should there be benchmarks or recognition for trainees as they move through the program?</i>
It's Fast-Paced (March) <i>How can pressure in the workplace be reduced in known high-pressure periods?</i>	The Fast-Paced Hospitality Industry (July) <i>How can time-sensitive Charcoal Lane business concerns be fast tracked?</i>

Monthly Briefing Notes: May–June 2013	Monthly Briefing Notes: June 2013 – January 2014
Communication: A Staff Handbook? (March) <i>Is a Front of House or Back of House staff position a hospitality position only? Or does this role involve a number of other duties?</i>	A United Front (August) <i>Staff work to bring the Front of House and Back of House teams together around a common endeavour: to support and work with trainees and provide a unified training environment.</i>
Transitions and Milestone Reviews (April) <i>Did trainees leaving the program exit at Certificate II or III level?</i> <i>Why did they exit the program?</i> <i>How many work placements have been made within a particular group of trainees?</i>	Selecting Trainees for the Charcoal Lane Program (July) <i>The Program Manager provides an insight into the selection process: it is important to understand trainee’s background and speak to the trainees’ other caseworkers.</i> Classic Social Enterprise Tensions (September) <i>What level of work preparation does the program offer? How can this be articulated? How does this connect to Charcoal Lane’s identity?</i>
Is Employment the Only Outcome? (April) <i>Trainees participating in the Certificate III program in 2012 experienced a number of positive outcomes in their personal lives as a result of the relationships they built at Charcoal Lane. How can these experiences be captured and represented?</i>	Employment is Not the Only Outcome: ‘Positive Pathways’ (June) <i>Success at Charcoal Lane takes on many different forms and can be understood in a number of ways.</i> <i>Key areas include friendship, housing, mentors, education, work and training, connection to support services, developing vocational and educational aspirations.</i>
Charcoal Lane’s Identity as a Training and Employment Program (April) <i>How can these achievements – support, education and workplace environment – be understood in the context of Charcoal Lane’s key messages, aims, goals and ‘outcomes’?</i>	Program Logic at Charcoal Lane (October) <i>What monthly and annual goals will structure and guide Charcoal Lane’s endeavours in 2014? Does ‘collective impact’ (working on the same issue with other organisations) have a role to play?</i>

