



# THE SIDNEY MYER HAVEN PROJECT **SOCIAL CURRICULUM**



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*haven*  
HOME, SAFE

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Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

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**Helen Macpherson Smith Trust***

*in making it possible to explore the development of a Social Curriculum program,  
to assist those homeless and disadvantaged in breaking the cycle of homelessness.*

*The report was written through the combined efforts of Kir Larwill, Kerry Ashley and Rick Christie.*



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## SUMMARY

**The Sidney Myer Haven (SMH) Project is an initiative of Haven; Home, Safe (HHS). It is a housing development that will combine medium term accommodation with a range of supports and independent living and early learning opportunities. Participants will be young people in the first third of their lives, in a range of household types. All will have experience of homelessness, a need for sustainable and safe housing, and the desire and the drive to build better lives.**

Participation in the project will be very much about partnership, collaboration, and agreed-upon exchange. Tenants will commit themselves to working to make positive change in their lives through personal development, education and training. SMH program staff and collaborating organisations will commit to working alongside participants to identify strengths and opportunities, make plans, and build the kinds of skills and know-how necessary to successfully sustain their future tenancies, make and keep relationships, and participate meaningfully in community and civic life.

This education component of the project is called the SMH 'social curriculum'. It will encompass: personal growth and development, social and emotional skills; training and

employment; living, home-management and tenancy skills; awareness about health and well-being; and advocacy, leadership and civic participation. Participants in the project will be supported to develop a personalised plan that sets goals for making positive change in their lives, and steps to enable them to make those changes. Through this process, participants will articulate learning goals and identify what they would like to learn, selecting their own curriculum and style of learning that will best suit them.

In its first half, this report contextualises the SMH program in the experience of HHS and the experience and effects of homelessness generally. It draws on documented research and experience in the areas of education, engagement and inclusion, and looks at how related programs have approached the provision of education programs for people whose lives have been characterised by poverty and disadvantage.

The second half of the report sets out a learning program developed from these foundations. It explores and articulates the ethos and logic of this program, and what in broad terms it will provide for people participating in the SMH project. The program goal is to provide life learning and foundational skills that engage, open doors, and build participants' capacity and potential to sustain tenancies, gain financial control, develop self-reliance, build trust, friendships and belonging, participate meaningfully in community and civic life, and build healthy lives. It is

premised on the notion of a two-way investment between participants and SMH. Program principles, conditions of delivery, objectives, approach to assessment and planning, participant pathways, available learning areas, evaluation and key SMH roles are all articulated.

What this provides is a platform for decision-making by SMH and participating partners about which agencies provide components of the learning program, how this can be organised through existing education and training structures, and how the mix and logistical arrangements of in-house and off-site learning will be arranged.

## INTRODUCTION

### HAVEN; HOME, SAFE

**Haven; Home, Safe (HHS) is Australia's only fully integrated affordable housing and homelessness provider<sup>1</sup>. A Bendigo-based not-for-profit company, HHS was established in 1978 and has been operating in its current form, providing innovative, multi-dimensional affordable housing solutions and delivering a range of case management services, for nearly 20 years.**

With offices in Bendigo, Preston, Geelong, Mildura and Robinvale, and outreach services in Echuca and Kyabram, HHS employs more than 130 staff and has an annual operating budget in the order of \$24 million and an asset balance sheet exceeding \$250 million with more than 1200 properties owned or under management across the state.

These properties include a variety of housing types, from short term emergency accommodation through to transitional and long-term affordable rental housing. Alongside this, HHS provides specialist support services across a range of diverse funded programs.

Clients of HHS are a diverse group. They include families, single parent families, older people, people with a disability, young people and single adults – all identified in the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011-15 as 'high risk' cohorts. Whilst most HHS programs are focussed on early and crisis intervention for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, it is the area of prevention of homelessness that HHS is beginning to have an impact. This is evident through the Back on Track Homelessness Innovation Action Project, Support for Families at Risk of Homelessness, Intensive Case Management Initiative, Department of Justice Corrections Housing, Saver Plus and Meminar Ngangg Gimba programs. Many of these programs draw on collaborative links with a broad range of service providers, and formal partnership arrangements with other organisations.

The ultimate purpose of all HHS activities is to support people experiencing homelessness to connect with broader community supports and to participate as valued citizens.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE SIDNEY MYER HAVEN PROJECT

**The Sidney Myer Haven (SMH) Project is a residential development that will combine medium term housing with a range of supports, life skills and education programs<sup>2</sup>. Based in Bendigo, and provided by HHS, there will be 23 one and two-bedroom units. Participants will be young people in the first third of their lives, in a range of household types, and tenancies will be for up to two years. All will have experience of homelessness, a need for sustainable and safe housing, and the desire and the drive to build better lives.**

Social inclusion and cohesion will be encouraged within the housing development and in the broader community. Program features include:

- A community support building with counselling rooms and training facilities
- A recreation/BBQ area and vegetable gardens
- 24/7 on-site support
- A secure children's play area
- Tutorial groups supporting shared learning

- Pre-parenting and maternal health planning and support
- Access to family violence, safety planning and trauma counselling
- Child-focused programs addressing school-readiness
- Access to a range of skills programs
- Provision of post-graduation support

Participation in the project will be very much about partnership, collaboration, and agreed-upon exchange. Participants will commit to working to make positive change in their lives through personal development, education and training. Staff and management from HHS and collaborating organisations will commit to working alongside participants to identify strengths and opportunities, make plans, and build the kinds of skills and know-how necessary to sustain tenancies, make and keep relationships, and participate meaningfully in community and civic life. In this way, SMH is a two-way investment on the part of HHS and partnering organisations, and participants.

People will be required to go through an application and assessment process to be part of the project. Once they are accepted into SMH, they will commit to active engagement in the Learning Program. Each participant will have the support of a Pathway Support Worker throughout the time they are living in the SMH program.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE SOCIAL CURRICULUM**

**The 'Social Curriculum' is the term given to the learning components of the SMH project. It's a 'broad church' in both content and delivery. There is potential to encompass: personal growth and development, social and emotional skills; training and employment; living, home-management and tenancy skills; awareness about health and well-being; and advocacy, leadership and civic participation. Similarly, possible avenues for delivery of the curriculum include workshops, courses, one to one sessions, mentoring, online and via program applications (apps) or group programs.**

Participants in the project will be supported to develop a personalised plan that sets goals for making positive change in their lives, and steps to enable them to make those changes. This planning process will include articulating learning goals, identifying what they would like to learn through the curriculum, and what style of learning will best suit them.

The Social Curriculum coordinator will manage the educational aspects of the project, working in close cooperation with Pathway Support workers, and supported by volunteer learning partners.

## INTRODUCTION THIS REPORT

**This report is the result of brief research which aimed to:**

1. Explore and develop the content of the SMH social curriculum, within three broad areas of learning: life skills, training and employment; living, home and tenancy skills; well-being, self-awareness and social and emotional skills
2. Explore and develop related components of the social curriculum
3. Engage interest groups in the process, ensuring their experience and ideas are incorporated and linked to the program formulation

## CONVERSATIONS

Ideas have been gathered through meetings, group and one to one conversations with representatives of various interest groups. This included:

- Two sector meetings, with representatives from the following organisations and services in attendance (NETSchool, On Track, Bendigo Community Health Services, YWCA, YMCA, Kangan TAFE, Goldfields LLEN, HHS, Skills Plus, Department of Education and Early Childhood, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne City Mission, On Track, Goldfields LLEN, City of Greater Bendigo, CatholicCare Sandhurst, Consumer Affairs Victoria and Future Employment)

- Two group discussions with HHS workers
- Individual meetings and involvement of consumer representatives who have used HHS services, to provide regular feedback in the development of the program

While efforts were made to arrange individual or group discussions with current tenants of the Transitional Housing Program via their support workers, this aspect of the client interview process was not as successful as hoped with only two tenants interviewed. Factors at play here included the short time frame of the research period, the low response to approaches made via staff and the time of year being school holidays.

People who did take part were asked to contribute their views about:

- What might be the best approach to providing 'social curriculum' alongside housing (what principles might guide the program, what advice they would give to anyone delivering it)
- What skills and know-how they think participants might want and need, and (in the case of providers)
- What they could contribute and how as partners they might be able to collaborate to maximise opportunities for participants

In addition, extensive prior research and development work by HHS Program Development team has included numerous one to one meetings and telephone conversations to discuss the project with representatives from the organisations mentioned above, as well as with St Lukes, Centre for Adult Education, Centre for Non-Violence, Primary care Partnership, Whitelion, Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre, Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Quarry Hill primary School and BRIT VCAL program.

## WRITTEN AND ONLINE SOURCES

A brief 'snapshot' survey of research and practice in related areas of homelessness and alternative education was also carried out, and yielded some useful information and ideas. A full list of references is provided at the end of this report.

The HHS Program Development team also worked with internal working groups who developed components of the project under the categories of Mentoring, Living skills and Well-being, Education, Employment and Training and Evaluation. They also developed and wrote proposals, funding applications and background documentation for the SMH project. This foundational work has fed into the content of this report.

## CONTEXT

### HOUSING NEED AND THE HHS EXPERIENCE

**HHS currently sees 55 people a day at its Bendigo office. 80% of these people are seeking crisis accommodation. Many have experienced chronic homelessness and, whilst they may have used services and participated in programs during times of crisis, this has not resulted in permanent housing, or in sustainable change in their lives. As a result, they can become trapped in a cycle of homelessness. This includes having very little means or opportunity to develop life skills, undertake education or training or to secure employment. What's required is structured and sustained support. Focussed on the individual, this support should be aimed at developing the skills required to experience long-term tenancy success, establish and sustain relationships, and participate fully in community and civic life.**

This perception is firmly based in HHS's experience as an established provider<sup>3</sup>. This experience consistently shows that current supply of appropriate safe and affordable housing does not meet the demand. This, in turn, results in blockages in available crisis and short-term housing.

Whilst Transitional Housing Management (THM) properties are intended to house people experiencing housing crisis for periods of 4 to 6 months, average tenancy durations have grown. A recent analysis of HHS THM tenancies shows that the average time in a property is around 33 weeks, with some tenants staying between four and five years. Of current THM tenants, the average period of time they have been in the property is nearly 11 months.

Even where THM tenancies are prolonged in this way, it does not translate to extended support for clients, or an increase in their capacity to sustain affordable, safe and appropriate housing in the long term. Intensive support of the kind and duration that's needed to enable clients to develop the capacity to secure permanent housing or achieve economic sustainability is largely unavailable.

Of the 230 clients who vacated HHS THM properties in recent years, 10% transferred to another THM property, while 30% moved to Public Housing and 13% moved into private rental. Of the remaining THM tenants who moved out to other accommodation, their destinations are sometimes unclear. The concern of HHS is that they are returning to housing that's both unsafe and unstable – moving in with family, staying on friend's couches, or sleeping rough. It seems that many people who move from crisis housing are poorly equipped to survive, let alone thrive. As a result they frequently fall back into the homelessness system.

## CONTEXT

### THE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS

***"Poverty stops people 'from having an acceptable standard of living', deprivation is 'an enforced lack of socially perceived essentials' and social exclusion means people do not fully participate in the community .... These three overarching elements, though distinct, do interact to bring about social disadvantage and the exclusion of people from their rightful choices in attaining their personal aspirations. Many Australians experience exclusion from the essential services they require, an exclusion from the social activities within family and community as well as an educational exclusion from learning and study structured appropriately to meet their personal needs".***

Being homeless can mean all these things. And defining this meaning is important. The way homelessness is understood shapes the kinds of interventions services choose to make in their efforts to prevent homelessness, reduce the risks of homelessness, or mitigate its effects<sup>5</sup>. This is relevant to designing a program like SMH. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) argues that<sup>6</sup>:

- Explanations of homelessness have to move between structural accounts (ie social and economic structures

and cultural traditions affect the level of homelessness for people of different social backgrounds) and explanations that focus on agency (ie homelessness is a 'lived experience', people actively engaged in 'making their own history', and "we need to understand what happens when people move into and out of homelessness").

- Homelessness is a process, a "trajectory", rather than a time-specific event. Connected with this idea, improving housing circumstances is slow and not necessarily linear<sup>7</sup>. This means that programs can be designed to assist people at various critical moments (eg when a family presents in housing crisis, or when an adult who has become homeless appears to be making a "transition to chronicity", where homelessness may become a "way of life" or ongoing cycle)<sup>8</sup>.

The SMH project is particularly targeted at families and individuals experiencing this kind of cycle. All too often, this experience is intergenerational, and is compounded by "multiple disabilities and histories of trauma"<sup>9</sup>. An AHURI study exploring the experience of this cycle across generations in Australia found that around half of the respondents indicated their parents were also homeless at some point in their lives<sup>10</sup>.

The cycle of homelessness, and the experience of being stuck in this cycle, has a cumulative effect. Being aware of this provides direction in working out how best to provide homelessness services and, more specifically, what tack might be taken

in the provision of education and support with housing. Homelessness has been variously described as being about:

- Marginalisation and exclusion<sup>11</sup>
- "Disconnection from others in the community"<sup>12</sup>
- A lack of control<sup>13</sup>
- Loss<sup>14</sup>, and
- The erosion of "a sense of place in the community", belonging and a sense of identity<sup>15</sup>

Hulse and Sharam's research provides insight into how families see homelessness, and their experience of it. A few points are of particular interest to this project, and how the support and education components of it are designed, promoted and delivered. The experience of homelessness meant that families "faced considerable difficulty in being recognised and supported as citizens in practice"<sup>16</sup>, and faced responses and behaviours from people in a range of community and service contexts that lacked compassion and respect. Despite this, they "actively resisted any erosion of their agency and presumptions of their exclusion from mainstream society"<sup>17</sup> and "did not consider they were marginalised or excluded"<sup>18</sup>. What stands out here is the families' sense of agency and capacity, and clear evidence of both resilience and strength.



## CONTEXT EXPECTATIONS AND HOPE

***People will have different expectations of what's possible. There will be big family histories of not doing these things (HHS worker).***

In the context of how homelessness affects people, the notions of expectation and hope are central. The idea of learning, of taking up the kinds of opportunities on offer through the SMH Project, is very much intertwined with expectations.

"Expectations can be so subtle, ingrained and unconsciously applied and yet they lay the foundations for what we believe possible and achievable. Expectations project our assumptions and beliefs for what we believe could and should happen in any given situation. Within the disability world, expectations set the tone of discussions about which school an individual should attend, the sort of work they are offered, what their home should look like, who they spend their time with, and, in a broader sense, how much control they have over their lives. Raising expectations opens up new worlds of development, self-expression, opportunity and choice."<sup>19</sup>

What's expected of us, and what we in turn expect of ourselves, has considerable influence on our imaginations, our sense of what is and isn't possible, and our choices. It may be difficult for some people to envisage activities and experiences other than those they have already done or

had. If these experiences have been limited, it can be hard to "imagine better"<sup>20</sup>. These issues have been much explored in the context of disability, and are sometimes referred to as 'poverty of expectation'. They are, however, issues pertinent to disadvantage, poverty and marginalisation generally.

Planning with people and 'setting learning goals', whilst it can draw on families' sense of agency and strengths, is complicated by the expectations, conscious or otherwise, each individual brings to the table. Experience may have lead them to feel that "education is not available to them"<sup>21</sup>. Given this, considerable time and support may be needed to enable a person to be able to "imagine better", and start making choices accordingly. As one provider put it: "Identifying what people want takes a long time in itself"<sup>22</sup>.

Equally, the stated aims of any program, and the unstated expectations of those providing support, are also brought to the exchange. There is an awareness amongst workers in particular about the responsibility for HHS and individual workers to exercise a 'duty of care' with the social curriculum, and to work very much with where the individual is at so as not to create 'false hope'. The idea of "realistic possibilities" came up in discussion. So too did the notion of taking whatever time is needed for people to plan and make choices, 'keeping it real' and remembering the structural barriers that are also in play:

*"There is a big expectation that people will come out of this and get jobs... but there may not be jobs available. It envisages a lot of good change, but we need to be careful that we are not promising too much. It's important not to forget reality, and to convey this" (HHS worker).*

*"People are not used to committing a lot of time to self-improvement. It will vary for people a lot. They may take a while" (HHS worker).*

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

***Education is a foundation capability. It improves a person's employment prospects and earning capacity, and the evidence points to a relationship between education and better health and raised civic and social engagement<sup>23</sup>.***

*"Education has been a big thing for me .... Being able to think reflectively has really helped. I never had that [capacity] before I went to uni" (HHS client).*

*"I [have learned] how to talk to someone and not just end it straight away in an argument ... I am finally sorting things out and being able to talk to people .... Like neighbours .... I feel like I am a 10 times better mum because I'm not just getting angry around them" (HHS client).*

Social inclusion is "people having the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to"<sup>24</sup>: *Learn* (participate in education and training); *Work* (participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities); *Engage* (connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities); and *Have a voice* (influence decisions that affect them). Some of what's known about engaging disadvantaged people in education and training, and its connection with social inclusion, is worth brief exploration as part of the context of designing and providing social curriculum in the SMH project.

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION RESEARCH

**In Homeless people and Learning Skills, the authors stress the urgent need to engage people who have been homeless longer term<sup>25</sup>. This is echoed in the Australian context by Melbourne City Mission:**

*"The longer a young person is disengaged from education, the harder it is to return. Helping a person return and stay engaged requires a significant level of support and flexibility"<sup>26</sup>.*

The statistics are startling. In 2011 more than 107,000 young people aged 20-24 (8.1% of this age group) were considered 'most at risk' because they did not hold Year 12 or post-school qualifications and were not engaged in study or full-time work<sup>27</sup>. Research has shown that, once people are engaged, and supported to stay engaged, relevant education can lead to improvements in<sup>28</sup>:

- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy
- Self-understanding
- Competencies, communication skills, and civic engagement
- A sense of belonging to a social group
- Substantive freedoms and capabilities

Other studies reviewed by Howard et al link these benefits to long-term health outcomes, including "improved well-being ... protection and recovery from mental health difficulties, and more effective coping, including coping with physical ill-health"<sup>29</sup>:

*"Furthermore, education can enable people to obtain qualifications, find employment, increase their level of social engagement and civic participation, develop their careers, and form healthy interpersonal relationships".*

At school-level, results of learning programs for disadvantaged students, supporting them to stay in or return to education, has also been positive. This is particularly so where there is a mentoring role that enables students to build relationships with positive role models:

*"Learning support programs have been found to assist student transitions into higher education or the workforce by offering workplace skills, opportunities to work in small groups and develop teamwork and leadership skills, and interaction with mentors to learn about different fields of interest. .... An additional role of such programs, particularly those with a mentoring component, is building the cultural capital of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. While family is considered a key determinant of cultural capital and decisions about tertiary education, such capital can also be built externally .... Examples include programs that foster academic achievement, self-development and confidence and that provide role models"<sup>30</sup>.*

'Social curricula' in particular have included, in a secondary setting, a focus on "general capabilities"<sup>31</sup>. Within this, learning has been centred on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management. The following sums up the general purpose:

*"Social curriculum is a means to teach students how to interact and empathize with one another. It is how to ensure students feel good about themselves and their relationships. When students learn a social curriculum they are socially aware and emotionally intelligent. They understand their emotions as well as the emotions of others"<sup>32</sup>.*

In practice these curricula seem to be variously delivered across subject areas in a school setting as well as through specific subjects. Social outcomes are gained through participation in the learning process and the experiential ways that each subject is delivered.

Linking education with housing in community rather than secondary education settings can, in similar ways, lead to improvements in social, economic and personal aspects of life, as has been found in programs based on the Foyer model. These models are "an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people during their transition from dependence to independence by linking affordable accommodation to training and employment"<sup>33</sup>.



## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

### INSPIRING PRECEDENTS

**In the context of homelessness and disadvantage, the examples of alternative education programs described briefly below, as well as an Australia-wide study into flexible learning programs, have a lot to offer program development in the SMH project.**

#### MELBOURNE CITY MISSION

Melbourne Citymission (MC) delivers education and support services to young people across Melbourne as an alternative to 'mainstream' education<sup>34</sup>. The young people they work with face "multiple and complex barriers" to participating in education and achieving life goals<sup>35</sup>. Operating in partnership with education and community providers, the program is delivered across a number of community based locations.

The MC model aims to re-engage young people with education and training, providing each individual with social and educational supports, and working with them to achieve their goals. Outcomes they are working towards include<sup>36</sup>:

- *Educational engagement: building confidence to return to education and ability to stay engaged*
- *Educational attainment: assisting [a] person to achieve qualification that leads to further education or employment*

- *Building relationships: connecting [a] person with wider community, ongoing supports needed to feel part of the community and have somewhere to turn when things get hard*
- *Improving well-being: building confidence and overall wellbeing, improving mental and physical health, reducing negative behaviours*
- *Employment: "supporting young people into appropriate and sustainable employment that will provide them with a pathway for life"*

The program intention is to address the underlying causes of disengagement while integrating learning through all aspects of a person's life<sup>37</sup>. Education is viewed as "a tool to help a young person deal with crisis and build their confidence to manage other aspects of their lives"<sup>38</sup>. Their experience shows that what works in re-engaging young people in education is<sup>39</sup>:

- *Well-being: focussing on wider needs*
- *Outreach: easy access to information, learning opportunities taken to the young person*
- *Pedagogy: making learning less formal, more flexible, in more welcoming environments, tailored to individual's needs, and building in development of foundational skills*

- *Pathways: helping people understand connection between who they are, education and wider life goals, and mapping a clear path to achieve them.*

Young people stay in the program for three years.  
Key ingredients are:

- The involvement of youth workers in supporting participants
- The consistent focus on each individual as the centre of any learning or support plan
- The provision of the program in community-based settings that also act as social gathering places and hubs for community activity
- Small groups "This approach seeks to minimise the number of relationships a young person needs to manage"<sup>40</sup>

Also integral to their approach is their capacity to deliver education and training directly rather than through another provider (the organisation is registered with RTO, ACFE Senior Secondary, JSA and Youth Connection).

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION INSPIRING PRECEDENTS

### NETSCHOOL

NETschool Bendigo re-engages young people, aged 15 to 19 years, who have left or are at risk of leaving mainstream schooling but want to achieve their Senior School Certificate<sup>41</sup>. Students undertake highly individualised programs, and are provided with support that enables them to develop autonomy and potential to thrive. The focus in working with students is on choice, with well-being a priority, followed by readiness to learn. The overall goal is "for every Learner to move forward from NETschool to happily participate in mainstream education, skilled employment or further training"<sup>42</sup>.

Students can start at NETSchool with either centre-based or progression learning<sup>43</sup>. There are a variety of learning approaches used, including a program called MOVE, for example, which sets students up in placement-like experiences that: "allow them to see what's possible, think about choices, and experience being able to do something – this responds to the common experience that students have of feeling like there aren't choices, and that education is not available to them"<sup>44</sup>.

10% of NETSchool's clientele are homeless at any one time. Safety is a primary need. Given this context, NETSchool takes a "wraparound approach to education". The support enables people to develop autonomy and potential to thrive<sup>45</sup>. Significant features of the NETSchool approach include:

- their focus on re-engagement, not only how to support this successfully in their work with students, but how to measure that success. A tool has been developed with this end in mind, and centres on self-appraisal.
- the goal-setting process with students, one that is gradual and highly supported, particularly where people are "steeped in survival mode and find it so hard to see possibilities"<sup>46</sup>.
- Mentor-learner relationships that support students throughout. Building a relationship of trust between student and mentor is integral to the student engaging with the program, and beginning to set goals for learning.

### CLEMENTE AUSTRALIA

This program, originating in America, is a supported learning program designed to enable disadvantaged people to undertake tertiary education. University level humanities courses are provided in community-based settings, with business, education and community organisations working in collaboration. It's run in 9 locations across Australia, including Ballarat. The stated aim of the Australian program is "to break the cycle of poverty, inequity and social injustice for Australians facing multiple disadvantages and social isolation"<sup>47</sup>. Their goals are to:

- *Enhance participants' self-confidence through rigorous learning and so bringing about personal change*

- *Promote a positive view of the future for those who have been marginalized from society thus enabling them to re-engage with society*
- *Make university education accessible to disadvantaged Australians*
- *Use the potential of Humanities education to change lives and promote social inclusion*
- *Engage in genuine inter-sectoral collaboration for the benefit of disadvantaged Australians*

Student fees are covered by Australian Catholic University (ACU), and those who successfully complete four units are awarded a Certificate in Liberal Studies by ACU. Coordinator positions and learning partners (a voluntary role) support students to stay engaged in their studies and negotiate life difficulties and set-backs. They use a strengths-based approach, one "that sees students as having the strength and capability to shape their own goals, change their dispositions, and improve their life choices. Through greater social interaction and focused reflection the students become agents in their re-engagement with society":

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION INSPIRING PRECEDENTS

*The approach to learning is respectful and open, recognising that the various life experiences of the students contribute an opportunity to create rich knowledge together. The design of space, place and activity promotes a balance between social support and self-direction and a sense of taking ownership of learning within the group<sup>48</sup>.*

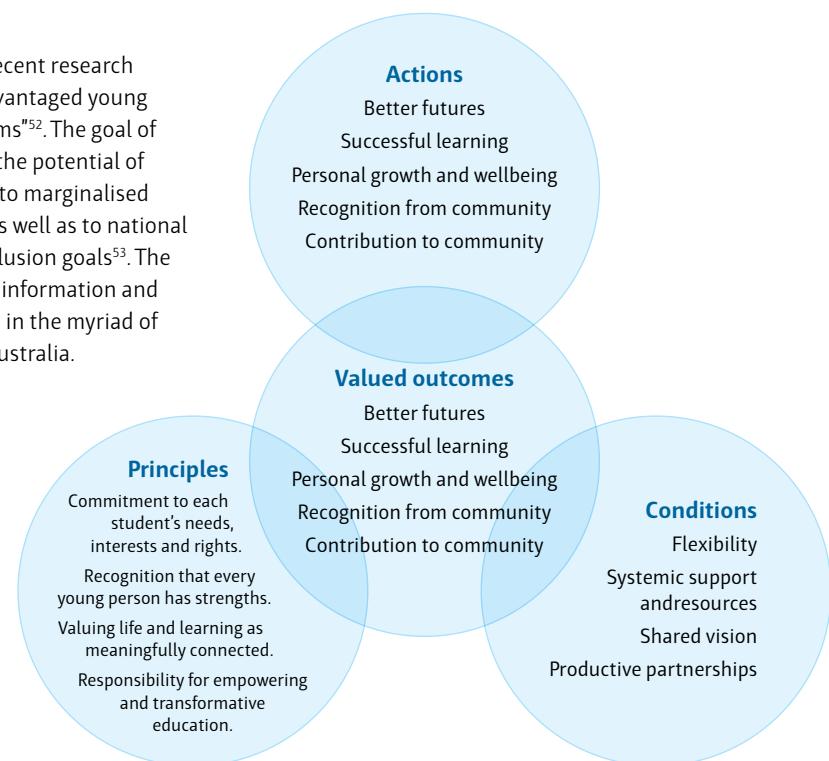
*Clemente Australia provides students access to a range of educational choices and opportunities, not simply welfare to work training. Students study the humanities subjects such as history, literature, ethics and art: content that is relevant and connected to the lives of the students. A key benefit of studying the humanities is that it enables people to think about and reflect on the world in which they live. They examine, question, contemplate and engage in activity with other people at every level and become engaged 'public' citizens<sup>49</sup>.*

Characteristics of the Clemente program include mutual benefit and reciprocity in the delivery, delivery in a community setting, and participatory styles of delivery via various methods (including group discussion, excursions and drama presentation)<sup>50</sup>. The model has yielded inspiring results. Students report that participation has had beneficial impacts on their lives. They experienced positive change in the areas of self, social interaction, relationships with others, learning, community participation and future<sup>51</sup>.

### FLEXIBLE LEARNING PROGRAMS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

*Putting the Jigsaw Together* reports on recent research into the provision of education for disadvantaged young people through "flexible learning programs"<sup>52</sup>. The goal of the research was to assess and enhance the potential of flexible learning programs to contribute to marginalised young people's learning and wellbeing, as well as to national education and attainment and social inclusion goals<sup>53</sup>. The result is an extremely valuable source of information and 'practice wisdom' about what has worked in the myriad of alternative education programs across Australia.

Looking at how these programs work, why, and what they achieve, the research developed a "Framework of Quality Flexible Learning Programs". This distils collective good practice into four categories (Valued Outcomes, Actions, Principles and Conditions) and is duplicated below<sup>54</sup>:



## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

### INSPIRING PRECEDENTS

Whilst flexible learning programs are largely focussed on 15-18 year olds, the learnings of the research are applicable in designing the social curriculum component of the SMH Project.

Some of the findings that stand out are that:

1. Learning experiences work best when they are personally engaging, linked to learner's lives, often with 'hands-on' or vocational elements<sup>55</sup>. For learning experiences to be meaningful, it's important that they are shaped by the interests and skills of the young person, and based on individual plans.
2. Participants want "formal educational credentials"<sup>56</sup>, so there needs to be a good balance between activities that engage and those that lead to accreditation. This includes "genuine educational pathways" such as into TAFE and University courses<sup>57</sup>:
3. Research in the field has identified "five core pedagogical strategies"<sup>59</sup>:
  - *Making learning less formal*
  - *Providing flexible learning options*
  - *Addressing literacy and numeracy skill development needs*
  - *Making learning applied and hands on*
  - *Offering programs that integrate technologies*
4. On the topic of curriculum delivery, research has shown that, to be successful, alternative learning programs need to be delivered in a way that<sup>60</sup>:
  - *Provides pathways towards further education and work*
  - *Is flexible, enabling creation of curriculum that is responsive to students' needs and goals*
  - *Enables young people to acquire new knowledge, skills and ways of seeing the world*
  - *Uses a curriculum that is connected with students' worlds as well as being intellectually challenging*
5. The concept of "curricula justice" is also pertinent<sup>61</sup>:

*A key challenge for flexible learning programs is to provide curricula justice; that is, connecting curriculum to the lives of young people, and also providing access to powerful knowledge that has high status in society. The former is necessary as a hook to engage young people and as a recognition of the validity of their life experiences. The latter is necessary to open doors to future opportunities.*
6. For the learning experience to work, alienated students need opportunity to express their perspectives and influence change in their learning environments<sup>62</sup>.
7. The teacher-learner relationship is crucial. It should be characterised by "trust, understanding, patience, and respect", and requires teachers to engage with the social and emotional lives of young people<sup>63</sup>.

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

### INSPIRING PRECEDENTS

8. Learning programs that work are characterised by curricula that are purposeful, relevant and enjoyable<sup>64</sup>. Short courses and electives that have been shown to be popular include white card, first aid, barista training, food handling and responsible serving of alcohol, woodworking, mechanics, music, photography and drawing. Project-based approaches also work well (the report gives the example of building sets for a theatre production)<sup>65</sup>. Similarly, successful programs recognise a wide range of activities as having learning potential (eg camps or cooking meals together)<sup>66</sup>.
9. Personal learning plans are vital. Through these the teacher gets to know the learner's interests and learning styles and gives credit for what they have already achieved. This extends to welcoming young people's input into what and how to learn, drawing on areas of interest to develop the learning experiences, and facilitating young people to take ownership of their learning<sup>67</sup>.
10. Small class sizes work best, and having access to the right kinds of physical spaces (Connected with this, in an English study, homeless people reported that their preferred environments for learning were comfortable, light and airy and conducive to social exchange<sup>68</sup>; young people in another study wanted environments that were differentiated from regular service provision<sup>69</sup>).
11. Fruitful collaboration with suitable partners, including local government, is of great value.
12. Recognising that it's important to "spend time to collaboratively reflect and agree on the vision and aims of the program, and the actions to be taken to achieve those aims" is pivotal<sup>70</sup>.
13. Ensuring there is common commitment to a set of principles in critical<sup>71</sup>.



## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION BELIEFS AND VALUES

***"Everyone who chooses or creates curriculum needs to develop a personal philosophy of teaching and learning, examine the values and beliefs behind that philosophy, and design or select a curriculum that reflects those beliefs and values. In doing so, they must also recognize that they exercise a lot of power: their choices will convey to students a particular world view"*<sup>72</sup>.**

Curriculum development is by its very nature political and value-laden. Given this, it seems relevant to extract and articulate the beliefs and principles that have arisen, explicitly and implicitly, in the course of this SMH project research. Two frameworks in particular seem relevant: adult learning principles and strength-based approaches.

### ADULT LEARNING

*"For it to work, it can't be just talking. I couldn't listen to that. There needs to be possibility of small group learning, or one to one. It's hard to take it in in a large group" (HHS client).*

*"You need a more hands-on approach. More conversational" (HHS client).*

Adult learning principles provide a good foundation for curriculum development. They also draw attention to what is common ground for *all* adults, without focussing on the particular experiences of homelessness and disadvantage. The following tenets of adult learning have been developed by Adult Learning Australia<sup>73</sup>:

1. Adult learners want respect and to be seen as capable learners.
2. Adult learners want to know *why* they need to learn something. They want to understand the value. They want their learning experiences to meet their needs, be relevant and help them achieve their goals.
3. Adult learners are self-motivated and self-directed and should be offered choice and be encouraged to set their own learning goals. Once these goals are clearly defined, they tend to be goal focused, want timely learning, and seek meaningful learning experiences.
4. Adult learners want to be involved in planning their learning. They are independent, like to find their own way, make their own decisions and manage their own learning
5. Adult learners are a valuable resource because they bring the richness and diversity of their lives with them. They should be given the opportunity to use their existing knowledge and experience, which they can apply to new learning experiences.
6. Adult learners have diverse experience and knowledge, and may have ingrained ideas about things
7. Adult learners apply their life experience and knowledge to new learning, use their problem-solving, reflecting and reasoning skills, want to be engaged in life-centred or problem-centred learning experiences and are practical – their learning should apply to their lives, job, etc.
8. Adult learners are *ready to learn* when they identify something they want to know or become proficient at, or when they experience something that connects with their life situations. They become ready to learn things in order to cope effectively with real-life situations.
9. Adult learners are responsive to external motivators such as a better job or increased salary. However, the best motivators are internal; for example: increased job satisfaction; heightened self-esteem; better quality of life; personal growth and development.

## EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION BELIEFS AND VALUES

### A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Recognising a person's strengths and what they contribute to civic life, communities and those around them, provides a positive foundation for program development and, in particular, learning. A strengths-based approach gives precedence to essential human needs rather than particular needs. It has at its base a recognition of the importance and power of giving and receiving, and the ways that this social exchange shapes the place and roles people have in community life. Also at its base is a belief in *everyone's* gifts, capacities and potential. In Fighting for my Family, for example, Hulse and Sharam advocate approaches that begin with "recognising the resilience of families and their resistance to being marginalised"<sup>74</sup>.

St Luke's has a long-established history of research, program development and service provision that draws on a strengths-based approach. They summarise the principles that guide this approach as follows<sup>75</sup>:

- All people have strengths and capacities
- People can change
- People change and grow from their strengths and capacities
- People are experts on their own situation

- The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem
- Problems can blind people from noticing and appreciating their strengths and their capacity to find solutions
- When people appreciate their strengths they are free to learn and grow

This approach has been neatly summarised as: planning *with* rather than planning for; having a life rather than following a program; starting with what matters, not with what's wrong; plans constantly updated rather than "dead plans updated annually"<sup>79</sup>.

### PERSON-CENTRED PLANNING AND SUPPORT

*"In supporting people in the community we need to focus on the whole person, not just their deficits or needs. If we understand what is important to the person we will ensure that if services are needed, those services support their lifestyle rather than the person fitting their life around the service. We also need to consider that the best support may not necessarily come from a service but from informal networks or community resources instead"*<sup>76</sup>.

Person-centred practice is built upon a commitment to social inclusion and valued roles and an emphasis on strengths, capacities and assets. It seeks to support people in their autonomy<sup>77</sup>. It views individuals as the experts on their own lives. It focuses on the essential human needs that make life worth living, and is about "honouring all aspects of people"<sup>78</sup>.



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM GOAL

**To provide life learning and foundational skills that engage, open doors, and build participants' capacity and potential to:**

- sustain tenancies
- gain financial control
- develop autonomy and self-reliance
- build trust, friendships and belonging
- participate meaningfully in community and civic life, and
- build healthy lives, in mind, body and spirit

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

**The SMH learning program is premised on the notion of a two-way investment between participants and SMH and is based on the following values:**

- A commitment to each participant's needs, interests and rights
- A recognition that each individual is the expert in knowing what they want and need
- Acknowledgment and valuing of each individual's gifts, capacities and potential
- A commitment to the participant being at the centre of planning and goal setting
- An understanding that everyone has capacity to learn, change and grow
- A belief in the inter-connectedness of life experience and learning
- A belief in the potential of education and training to empower and transform
- A commitment to participants being recognised by and contributing to the community, and taking an active place in civic life



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

**To support its goal, the SMH program will sponsor participants to make positive changes in their lives. It will do this by:**

1. Working alongside participants to identify strengths, interests and opportunities and to make individual plans
2. Building genuine, trusting, respectful and caring relationships
3. Providing significant practical, social and tenancy support to each participant
4. Creating meaningful, relevant and enjoyable learning opportunities
5. Supporting engagement through learning within SMH and pathways and opportunities *beyond SMH* (learning, community involvement, civic participation, work)
6. Engaging with the community to ensure participants are recognised by the community and meaningfully participate in community and civic life
7. Reflecting, making changes and taking risks at a program level, as well as at the level of individual plans

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM CONDITIONS

**In order to enable people in the program to enact the principles, achieve the objectives and reach the SMH goal, the following conditions will be created and promoted:**

- Flexibility in the learning experiences offered and the environments they are offered in
- Flexibility to enable the curriculum to adapt to the interests, skills and plans of each participant
- Flexibility to ensure that 'if at first you don't succeed' new directions can be taken and new approaches tried
- Availability of support and resources, through HHS as well as through a cooperative network of organisations and services
- Staff and volunteer mentors who are engaged and knowledgeable
- Learning environments that are comfortable, accessible and conducive to social exchange and connection with the broader community
- Opportunities to influence change – participations have a say in design and development of learning opportunities and in planning and decision-making about learning and living environments
- Cooperative and active partnerships between organisations, including engagement in the delivery of learning experiences
- A shared vision for the SMH project

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM

### CURRICULUM CONTENT

**The 'social curriculum' content below has been compiled from working group reports, advice from the education and training sectors prior to and during this research, conversations with HHS staff and desk-based research.**

Acknowledging that learning choices will be dependent on each individual, the learning areas listed are intended as options. Many are not 'subjects' in themselves. Rather, they are strengths, skills, knowledge or activity areas identified as being relevant and important. Some, for example, are more likely to be gained as a 'bi-product' of a learning experience, or through project-based or experiential learning, rather than being a specific subject.

In **Table 1**, learning areas are organised into broad categories. These are by no means mutually exclusive. There are four categories: Building foundations; Financial control, housing security & getting organised; Health and well-being; and Belonging, inclusion and civic participation.

**Table 2** covers specific foundational, pre-vocational and vocational paths.

**Table 3** incorporates 'streams' or project-based approaches. These do not fit into any one category or learning area. The expectation is that they will generate experiences relevant to each area of learning, and involve processes to engage participants with the program and the idea of learning in general.

Participants will commit to undertake the Learning Program as part of their agreement to participate in the SMH Program overall. Individual plans will include active engagement in personalised learning goals and an individually designed curriculum. This will incorporate selected learning areas, streams and vocational paths over the two years of a participant's involvement in SMH (see also later Section titled "Collaborative Planning").

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM

### CURRICULUM CONTENT

**Table 1: Learning areas**

Building foundations	Financial control, housing security and getting organised	Health and well-being	Belonging, inclusion and civic participation
Building confidence	Work readiness (interviews, resumes, workplace etiquette, culture and norms, communicating with different audiences)	Mental health	Being part of a neighbourhood (friendship program; "Neighbourhood Nanas"; street BBQs)
Autonomy and resilience	Legal rights and responsibilities, RTA	Grief and loss	Democracy, elections, levels of government, having a say
Choice and consequences	Rent-ready program	Stress triggers	Lobbying and getting your voice heard
Healthy relationships	Applying for properties	Coping skills	Leadership
Making and sustaining friendships	Budgeting	Physical health	Organising events
Self-esteem	Bills management, Debt management	Sexual health and sexuality	School communities
Parenting (connecting, child development, play)	Making a home (maintenance, organising and routine, housework, cooking, shopping)	Gender equity	Kindergarten communities
Resolving disputes	Self-advocacy	Safe relationships (in person and online)	Connecting kids (and parents) with community activity
Negotiation	Resources, services, where to find them	Self-care	Homework clubs
Assertiveness and saying 'no'	"System connectedness"	Nutrition, understanding food, planning and preparing meals	Making connections with new groups
Communication and listening	Dealing with Centrelink, meeting requirements	Impulse and addiction	Volunteering (community events, social enterprises, community lunches, planting days, working bees)
Social skills	Personal administration (documents, paperwork, filing, making appointments, filling out forms)	Gambling	Fundraising
Recognising and managing emotions	Transport training	Drugs and alcohol	Community ed. and awareness, promoting successes
	Learning to drive	Smoking	
		Understanding health: mind-body-heart connection	
		Dental health	
		Fitness and physical activity	
		Spirituality	



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM

### CURRICULUM CONTENT

**Table 2: Vocational paths**

**Foundational** – Literacy skills; Numeracy skills

**Pre-vocational** – How to learn; Starting point Certificates I & II

**Vocational** – Short accredited courses;  
Food handling; barista training; childcare certificate; administration/office work; aged care; disability; trade preparation; White Card; building your own website

**Table 3: Streams**

**Understanding disadvantage** – Causes, effects and pathways out of poverty Getting Ahead Program, Bridges Out of Poverty (trained facilitators BCHS)

**Choices and inspiration** – 'Taster' experiences (NET School MOVE program); Film and speaker nights

**Sustainability** – Food gardening, composting, recycling, re-using, re-purposing, making things from scratch, neighbourhood exchange (labour, goods, services, meals), farmers market tours, household energy audits, community sustainability projects eg tanks, solar panels, bikes and bike maintenance, DIY, landcare and conservation volunteering, Sustainability Group involvement, bush walks

**Books and arts** – Short humanities courses philosophy, art history, literature, film

**Yoga and therapies** – (Massage, reiki ...) (cf Eaglehawk model, gold coin donation)

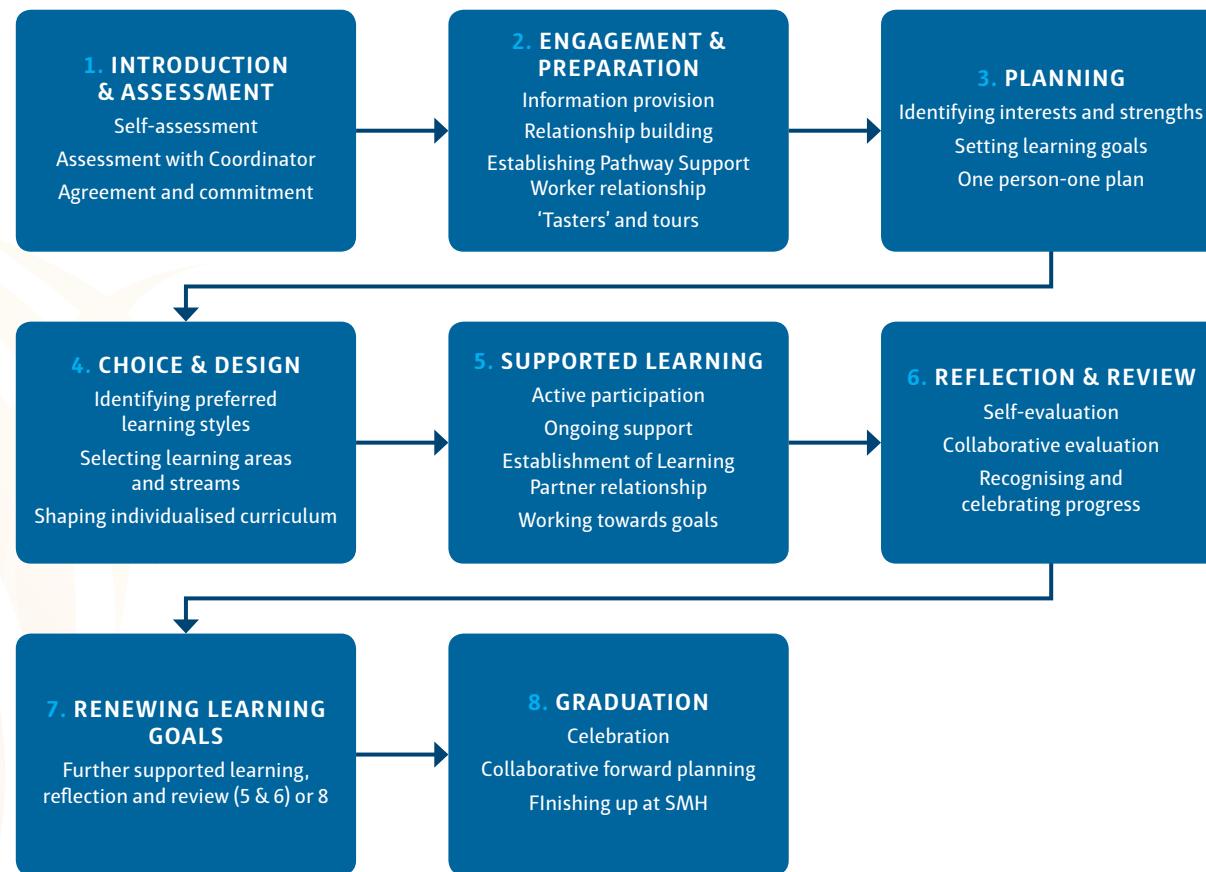
**Creative workshops and courses** – Drawing, photography and film-making, carpentry, furniture-making, dance, fashion design and sewing, music

**Cultural exchange** – Exploration of joint projects or activities with settlement program at BCHS, also BDAC, LCMS

**Connecting communities** – Planning and organising social and community events and gatherings



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM PARTICIPANT PATHWAY



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM PROGRAM DELIVERY

### PROVIDERS

The program will be delivered by a range of providers working in partnership with HHS, coordinated through the SMH Program Coordinator. Interested organisations include NETSchool, On Track, Bendigo Community Health Services, YWCA, YMCA, Kangan TAFE, Skills Plus, Department of Education and Early Childhood, Melbourne City Mission, On Track, City of Greater Bendigo, CatholicCare Sandhurst, Consumer Affairs Victoria, Bendigo Sustainability Group and Future Employment.

### PARTNERSHIP

*"It matters how we work together not just what we work on" (provider).*

Education and community organisations will form a partnership to work together to achieve the program goal. This will be guided by a Memorandum of Understanding and agreed partnership terms (yet to be developed). Principles of this partnership will incorporate a stated commitment to the program principles alongside statements of commitment about how organisations will work together in the interests of participants. This might include agreement that:

- Leadership and participation in the SMH project will embody and enable new ways of working, new relationships between partner organisations and networks beyond, and shared responsibility for the work ahead.
- As a cooperative partnership we welcome the opportunity to be active co-producers in the development and delivery of the SMH learning program. We are more than ready to share the opportunities and challenges that come with new processes and cross-sector alliances. We understand that this may mean changes in how we do our work, giving up 'turf', changing roles, and aligning resources to where they are best placed to support participants' goals.

### LOCATIONS

Learning will happen on-site at the SMH housing development and in venues and organisations in the community. Locations will vary, to be determined by learner preferences, subject or activity, provider resources and facilities. The SMH learning centre and community hub will be a focal point for the program. All learning environments will be safe, comfortable, multi-purpose, away from 'service' environments, and in the community.

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

**Self-assessment and person-centred planning are central to the approach of the SMH learning program, and to the two-way relationship between participants and the program overall.**

### SELF-ASSESSMENT

NETSchool encourages initial self-assessment by potential participants via their website. The following selected questions have been adapted from the NETSchool questions to the situation of someone considering participation in SMH<sup>80</sup>:

Is the SMH program right for me?

- I want to take responsibility for my thoughts and actions so I can make positive change in my life
- I am motivated to make plans, learn new skills and gain confidence and control so that I can build a better life
- I would like to be supported by HHS to establish myself and my family in stable, secure housing
- I have a good, stable relationship with a supportive adult (e.g. parent, aunt, uncle, youth worker, etc.)
- I am not violent

- I am linked in, or I want to link-in, with a worker, doctor, mental health specialist, etc.
- If using drugs - I have evidence that I am committed to minimise use or get clean, e.g. I am linked in with services that can help me do that.
- I will uphold the values of Trust, Honesty and Commitment

### COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

SMH will make use of the Outcomes Star in working collaboratively with participants to support them to plan and make positive changes in their lives. This is a 'whole of person' approach. It is designed to ensure the participant is at the centre of decision-making and action, and is supported to identify the life changes they want to make, how they want to make them and (in the case of SMH) what areas of learning will build their capacity to succeed in their goals:

*The underpinning philosophy of the Outcomes Star™ is the 'journey of change', which acknowledges the significance of personal motivation and agency for a service user in achieving sustainable change in their journey towards independence and choice in critical areas of their lives. Each Star has a set of relevant domains. Clients initially identify 'where they are at' in each domain, providing evidence to support their perceptions. This positioning is discussed with, and sometimes challenged by, their worker<sup>81</sup>.*

Participants will be expected to develop learning goals that are integral to the plans they develop using the Outcomes Star. In this process, they will be encouraged to set goals that, over the two years of their involvement in SMH, enable them to develop capacity across all learning areas.

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM COORDINATOR, PATHWAY SUPPORT WORKER AND LEARNING PARTNER ROLES

**The following broad descriptions outline the roles of the Coordinator, Pathway Support Workers and Learning Partners respectively.**

### SMH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Coordinator's role is in the coordination of the SMH Program. In particular, they will manage:

- Coordination and programming of on-site learning space, including organisation of learning streams
- Partner-provider liaison, including planning and coordination of in-house and external learning opportunities
- Liasing, training provision and coordination of Pathway Support Workers and volunteer Learning partners
- Program planning
- Program evaluation
- Supporting assessment and planning with participants
- Community engagement and promotion
- Close collaboration with Pathway Support workers

### PATHWAY SUPPORT WORKERS

The Pathway Support Workers role will be embedded into the current participants support worker role under MOU providing the key support to the SMH participant during their continued stay. They will be the central person for that participant while they are involved with the SMH program. In particular, Pathway Support Workers will work alongside participants in the development, implementation and review of their individual plans and learning goals.

This will include:

- Engagement and preparation, providing information, building relationships and supportively 'orienting' program participants
- Planning, supporting participants to develop their individualised plans and learning goals and choose the components of the learning program they will undertake
- Providing information and supporting participants' to build relationships and take up community opportunities and supports, according to their individualised plans
- Supporting participants in their ongoing learning and their participation in SMH during the two years of their involvement
- Assisting participants to evaluate and review their progress, and celebrate success

### MENTORS OR LEARNING PARTNERS

Volunteers will work one to one with participants to support them in their learning, and assist them to develop confidence and connections in the process. The role will include<sup>82</sup>:

- Building a constructive relationship with the SMH participant
- Engaging with the person as they take part in the SMH learning program, through the pursuit of common interests and the sharing of experience and skills
- Maintaining the mentoring relationship throughout the person's participation in SMH
- Providing non-judgemental support and friendship with the participant
- Committing to and upholding the principles of the SMH program
- Meeting with the participant for at least 2 hours per fortnight



## **THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM**

### **COORDINATOR, PATHWAY SUPPORT WORKER AND LEARNING PARTNER ROLES**

- Contacting the participant at least weekly by phone
- Committing to a minimum of 12 months matched with the participant
- Maintaining, at a minimum, monthly contact with the SMH Program Coordinator, to include: supervision as required; providing information about the progress of the mentoring relationship; seeking guidance when dilemmas arise; and responding to invitations for training and activities
- Attending ongoing Learning Partner training and other SMH organised activities
- Making every effort to attend SMH community events to encourage a sense of community at SMH
- Having respect for the systems and services with which participants are involved and the key people in their lives
- Representing SMH positively and act as a positive role model in all interactions in the community

## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM EVALUATION

### Evaluation of the SMH Learning Program will measure impact and the extent of engagement.

#### AIM

Evaluation will aim to:

1. Build a picture of how the program is perceived by participants, workers, partners and interested community members
2. Identify and analyse what worked, what didn't, how and why
3. Document what was put into the program, the process and the impact of the program, and its engagement and learning outcomes, and
4. Identify what change, development and further actions need to take place

This will involve direct participation of and feedback from all interest groups as well as participant self-appraisal.

#### APPROACH

The approach will draw on health promotion and mental health promotion evaluation methods and ideas. This seems suited to a project that takes a strengths-based and community building approach, is focused on social, cultural and environmental determinants of well-being, relies on community engagement and adult learning methods, and takes a collaborative approach with other organisations.

Broadly, this approach incorporates:

- Focusing on participants as the primary reference group and their interests as the primary criteria shaping judgments about the Program
- Taking all secondary interests into account (partner organisations, workers) and recognising that each can throw light on the others
- Seeing the participants and community as the 'measure' in assessing the quality of the project, looking at identified needs and measuring the intended and unintended effects of the Program's efforts to address those needs
- Using direct discussion methods – group and one to one discussions with participants, workers, providers - alongside self-appraisal methods with participants

In seeking to 'measure' the value of the process undertaken by all involved, the evaluation will rely on a number of 'indicators': input (time and resources required to carry it out); process (the way it is carried out); Impact (the positive changes identified by participants); and outcome (the cumulative results of activities). In general, the purpose will be to find out what changes take place through the Program and reflect on the value of those changes.

#### QUESTIONS

The questions to do with impact and learning outcomes have been adapted from those used to evaluate the Clemente Program. They are here phrased with participants in mind, but can be adapted for conversations with those on the 'provider' side of the partnership. The areas for measurement listed in the Engagement (self-appraisal) column have been extensively developed in the NETSchool Learner Engagement Matrix, and are listed here in summary only. This will be complemented by the client self-reporting methodology *Most Significant Change* that will inform evaluation of the SMH program overall<sup>83</sup>.



## THE SMH LEARNING PROGRAM EVALUATION

Impact and learning outcomes		Engagement (self-appraisal)
At the start		Well-being
1. What do you hope to get from the program? 2. What are your hopes for yourself? 3. What are your reasons for participating? 4. What do you think you will need to support you in participating?		Emotional condition, Physical condition, Confidence, Locus of control, Goal setting, Dealing with change, Organisation, Pathway Support Worker support, Learning Partner support
Mid-way		Relationships and belonging
1. How is it going? 2. What have you found most satisfying about the program so far, and why? 3. What have you found most challenging so far, and why? 4. What have been the benefits of your participation in the program? 5. Are there any obstacles that have been an issue for you during the program? 6. What feedback or advice can you give us about the program, and how it's being run? 7. Anything else you'd like to say?		Peer connections, Cooperation, Empathy, Values, Social inclusion, Pathway Support Worker support, Learning Partner support
At the end		Involvement in learning
1. How have your expectations of the course been met? 2. How have your expectations of the course not been met? 3. Looking back over the whole course, what did you get out of it? 4. What has been the most significant change that has resulted from the course? 5. Are there any other significant changes you'd like to mention? 6. How has your experience on the course had an impact on your life?		Attention and memory, Participation in learning, Literacy and numeracy levels, Aspirations and pathway, Resilience, Class participation, Satisfaction in work, Dealing with feedback, Pathway Support Worker support, Learning Partner support
		Basic needs
		Survival, Freedom, Power, Love, Fun, Mentor support



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