

2017 International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership Exchange

Match Summary

Name of Match: Employment through Social Enterprise

Location of Match: Toowoomba Clubhouse, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia.

1. Brief summary of the outcomes of your match:

The Toowoomba Clubhouse offered IIMHL guests the opportunity to visit some of Toowoomba's leading mental health focused social enterprises; Ability Enterprises and the Vanguard Laundry.

The group was shown how the Toowoomba Clubhouse has created more than 150 entry level employment positions for people with a lived experience of mental illness to get back into the workforce through social enterprise and social procurement strategies. Toowoomba Clubhouse social enterprises are not sheltered workshops, pay participants a full working salary and partner with local universities and skilled social workers to provide on the job support and career development pathways. All social enterprises are self-sufficient, do not require ongoing government funding and create sustainable revenue for local mental health programs.

Those participating were able to see the different models of social enterprise in action in just one visit and the group was given a good understanding of how each was structured and governed including the respective opportunities and limitations. Sharing the learning's of each of the models was valuable for participants giving an in-depth understanding of the key benefits and challenges of each of the businesses.

A variety of learning opportunities were used including group discussions, guest speakers and site visits to social enterprises. Evidence based tools; open workplaces, personal stories, funding models and sustainability were key focuses in the discussions.

The group was small which enabled significant time to be spent resulting in strong connections being made and great shared knowledge flow. These relationships were subsequently further built upon at the group meeting in Sydney. Two of the matches who participated are working for organisations in Queensland which provides a further opportunity for these new relationships to be continued supporting further information sharing and collaboration. The information shared during the match has provided participants with additional knowledge and confidence to further develop their own initiatives and projects. Participants were provided a guide on how to kick start this work in their own community.

2. Resources used in your match

Luke Terry – Vanguard Laundry

Jo Sheppard – Toowoomba Clubhouse

Frank Dineen – Qld government Social Procurement Advisor

Jake Stewart – Toowoomba Clubhouse Social Enterprise Development Manager

The combined knowledge of this team of people who have a wealth of experience in mental health recovery, social enterprise, social procurement and commercial business provide a significant resource for the match.

Links to resources and organisations working in this space also available for the match participants

provide useful background and evidence for employment's important role in mental health recovery.

<http://www.toowoombaclubhouse.org.au/>

<http://clubhouse-intl.org/>

<http://www.vanguardlaundry.com.au/>

<http://www.socialventures.com.au/assets/Employment-Perspective-web.pdf>

<http://socialventures.com.au/assets/Solving-Employment-Exclusion-using-Social-Enterprises.pdf>

3. Brief description of how your match has accelerated change towards mental health, well-being and inclusion

The match gave participants the opportunity to see the positive impact employment through social enterprise and social procurement is having on the lives of individuals suffering from mental illness in the Toowoomba community. The match enabled discussions between the group of global examples of employment support strategies, models and techniques and facilitated an analysis of different approaches and corresponding results. The key role that successful employment can play in the recovery of an individual recovering from mental illness was highlighted and supported by the outcomes of the initiatives showcased in Toowoomba. These on the ground outcomes were useful for the group to see first-hand and have provided the confidence and necessary evidence for the group to further accelerate their own thinking and commitment towards adopting employment strategies as a key component of their own organisational and community approach to mental health recovery and employment inclusion. Connections made through the match now allow for ongoing future support to be provided as individuals move to progress and incorporate social enterprise and social procurement in their own organisations and communities.

4. Brief description of how your match has built leadership for the future

Through providing a tour of local social enterprises and facilitating group discussion, participants saw first-hand how social enterprises are changing lives and changing communities. They had the opportunity to meet both the employees and the business owners to gain an understanding of the benefits these social enterprises are making in the lives of their employees and the community at large.

The match gave individuals in the group the opportunity to reflect on the innovative approach the Toowoomba community was taking towards using social enterprise as a mental health recovery tool and also allowed the group to share global learning's in this space. The information shared and first hand, on the ground experiences in Toowoomba in establishing successful social enterprises gave the matches a valuable insight and the confidence to pursue similar opportunities in their own respective communities. The links to resources provided outlines work and learning's to date that already exist for matches to further build on – can move forward immediately from a strong platform of research and experience already in place.

The connections that were made in the match are ongoing and will provide ongoing opportunity for further knowledge sharing, leadership and growth in social enterprise and social procurement as well as connections and future advice on emerging projects in the individual participant's communities and organisations.