

REACHING FOR THE SKIES

ST KILDA YOUTH SERVICE IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION COMMITTED TO PROVIDING THE MOST MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE.



HEAT Catering is one of SKYS' two social enterprises.

St Kilda Youth Service (SKYS) has been operating in the City of Port Phillip since 1982. It is a generalist youth service that works with young people who experience disadvantage and have complex needs. SKYS has long been committed to service delivery principles that maximise young people's potential through the creation of opportunities that enhance the quality of their lives and the connection to their community. The organisation believes it is a fundamental right of all clients to expect programs and services that are accessible to all who require them and that a high quality of service is maintained at all times. SKYS model of service is one that is responsive to the needs of young people, with a strong focus on early intervention, the reduction of risk factors and harm minimisation.

Prior to coming to SKYS, young people have not felt a sense of belonging and acceptance in the broader community. There is also often a breakdown in education, training and employment and, in many instances, disconnection from family support. SKYS works to the individual needs of all young people who access the

agency, with a commitment to assisting each young person to achieve their full potential. Belonging, learning, independence and care are universal human needs. Youth who experience these qualities become caring, confident and respectful people who are equipped to meet life's challenges.

SKYS' Board, staff, supporters and volunteers are dedicated to achieving these goals. SKYS always demonstrates creativity and commitment in working with young people to ensure its programs and services are reflective of their needs.

New technologies, social media platforms, and innovative classroom and case management strategies are positively used by personnel. SKYS' three strands of service delivery – case management and individual counselling, education and training, and social enterprise – are holistic and ensure that the agency can always be responsive to the needs of young people.

The recent redevelopment of the SKYS Learning Centre in Pickles Street, South Melbourne, provides a modern and industry-equipped training environment, with an industrial kitchen for hospitality training, a

sophisticated multimedia lab, music studio, classrooms and young mums' private space. The agency requires support at many levels. The establishment of social enterprise at SKYS has now become part of its strategy; this is in order to diversify its funding sources to achieve financial sustainability over the long term. It operates two social enterprises – Blue SKYS Media, a graphic design studio, and HEAT Catering, which provides corporate and event catering. Most excitingly, this strategy of running social enterprise means SKYS has become an employer of young people as trainees.

Over the years, the agency has grown and diversified its offerings for young people. SKYS now works far beyond St Kilda, with locations in South Melbourne and North Fitzroy, and carries out work in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. ■

There are many ways you can support SKYS – becoming a customer of its social enterprises or donating to the organisation is simple. Please visit www.skys.org.au or phone Emma on 03 9534 3685 to further discuss the work of this organisation.