

# CREATING PATHWAYS IN YOUTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

## CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS



A staged approach to developing skilled staff



Collaborative training design and strong training partnerships



Returns from investment in training and workforce development

Allambi Care provides support for the most vulnerable in society, serving individuals, families, communities, and government agencies. Allambi's more than 800 staff work across residential out-of-home care, disability care, foster care, early intervention and restoration programs in NSW.

In 2015 Allambi began revolutionising training for new and existing staff, setting a goal that all direct care staff would achieve at least a Diploma in Community Services.

They worked closely with Bradford Institute of Advanced Education to design the Diploma training and with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to develop a pathway into their Bachelor of Human Services.

## ABOUT THE TRAINING

All new employees do a comprehensive induction program, introducing them to Allambi's values and expectations, policies, procedures and approach to therapeutic crisis intervention. A six-month probation includes ongoing learning modules to further understanding, skills and knowledge, as well as supervision, support and feedback to help employees understand what's expected in their role.



Following completion of the induction and probation, employees are offered the opportunity to enter the Diploma program to complete the remaining units over the following 8 months.

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***From the very first day a new employee comes to our organisation, they're actually working towards their Diploma. The probation period gives us feedback about their suitability for the role. Over the years, we've found it difficult to get robust feedback... this gives us a solid understanding of someone's involvement and understanding of their role.”***

***(Simon Walsh)***

Allambi's approach to training is driven by the needs of children and families they serve, who need people with skills, but also stability and longevity.

***“They don’t need our staff coming into their lives, poking through their information and then leaving. This process allows us to put staff on permanently...which gives stability to the kids and holds staff for at least the 12 months of their training.”***

Allambi sees this as being proactive, rather than relying on recruiting qualified staff.

***“We’re actually developing our own people, which is our preference anyway.”***

## HOW TRAINING WAS DEVELOPED

Allambi engaged Bradford Institute of Advanced Education to design training that was relevant, holistic and provided a career pathway. David Bradford (CEO) says it's always been a partnership with a shared goal and vision.

***“The goal was to deliver a new path to your degree other than showing up at the sandstone University every week. These people are working, paying mortgages, feeding children. Unless we find an industry-led way of leading people through their qualifications, we’ll keep seeing real labour supply problems.”***  
(David Bradford)

It was a collaborative process that began with trainers understanding Allambi's needs and processes. For example, a senior trainer sat through Allambi's entire induction process to learn about the organisation.

As Allambi Care CEO, Simon Walsh, explains:

***“Dave helped us refine our diploma delivery model. It’s like you’ve got a shell that’s been contextualised to Allambi - our culture and framework – but still meeting the qualification. We’re doing more than required. But our focus isn’t just on the qualification, it’s on developing a really robust person, who knows how to fulfil the role they’re taking on.”***

## BENEFITS FOR ALLAMBI

Allambi has invested considerably in learning and the benefits are significant.

- High completion rates - about 80% of staff complete the Diploma.

***“If you said to some youth workers ‘Hey we’re going to get you a bachelor’s degree’, they’d resign that day. But if you start with the first piece, then the next, do it incrementally, and integrate the workplace into assessment, so they’re applying the theory to real live situations...then you get a motivated person who’s looking for workplace solutions and sees the utility of the learning.”***

(David Bradford)

- Staff retention - a shift from 'this is a job' to 'this is my career'.

***"People's mentality shifts. By the time they finish the diploma, they've stayed long enough to apply their skills, to have done closed-loop learning, so they feel confident and competent. 'I have a future here. This is a career. I can get a degree here. I'm not going to get this opportunity anywhere else.'"***

***(Simon Walsh)***

- Positive workplace culture.

***"...there's a great culture at Allambi, and it's a bit of a family and this program has just strengthened that. I think it's strengthened people's sense of capacity and belonging."***

***(David Bradford)***

- Better outcomes for clients.

***"We have young people saying 'at my old placement, workers changed every three months. I've had the same worker now for two years'. That's settling, it reduces anxiety, incidents and the high escalation stuff. It actually gives kids a connection."***

***(Simon Walsh)***

- Opportunities for staff - who wouldn't otherwise study.

***"We create a safe environment for those who may have had negative educational experiences in the past. Some are the first in their family to achieve a diploma or degree and they feel really proud."***

***(Simon Walsh)***

- Staff cohesion - training workshops allow staff to reflect on their practice in a non-judgmental way, and to bond with each other.

***"If (staff) are facing challenges and difficult scenarios...training provides a safe zone to reflect on their work and critique themselves. This really builds the strengths in their connections. In our work, you need that. You need to be able to call on your colleagues and others to help you through."***

***(Simon Walsh)***

- Contribution to the sector - even if staff move on to other employers, the sector benefits from a highly skilled practitioner who is collaborative in their practice.

## KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

According to David Bradford, this successful partnership relies on:

- Executive sponsorship - with direct engagement between CEOs of each organisation.

***"...because it's been CEO to CEO, that's kept momentum and stopped things getting sort of bogged down or losing the imperative."***

- Clear goals - both partners being committed to skilling people for their own benefit, the benefit of clients and the whole sector.
- Regular meetings and communication.
- An alignment of values.
- High levels of trust.

***"There's a very strong thread of trust there. There's no taking advantage of each other."***

- Investing time in the relationship.

***"We've spent the time together to get to know each other. And that's been really important in terms of that trust in those relationships and the strength of that bond."***

