

Simple Solutions Training and Consulting

Organisation summary

Simple Solutions Training and Consulting is a proud regional RTO that specialises in providing consistently excellent training in the Community Services sector. Our organisation has experienced remarkable growth and change over the past year with a number of exciting and innovative initiatives coming to fruition. These initiatives have included the development and implementation of industry driven programs which are directly connected to employers and customised to suit the needs of specific sites where required. The two key programs that have been designed and delivered have become known as the ACE and PLUS programs. As part of these programs the qualification study timetable is designed in consultation with the key vocational placement host and potential employer including sequence of delivery, additional training for students in key skills that are not a usual part of the training package, training on site at the employer's workplace, volunteer opportunities and vocational placement. Satisfaction and employment outcomes from these programs have been exceptional with students being supported to achieve their personal goals whilst also building a workforce for the aged care and disability sectors that reflects the professionalism and expertise these sectors require.

In addition, Simple Solutions Training and Consulting has been successful in securing eight international scholarships under the Australian Government's Endeavour Mobility Grants program. These grants will allow eight eligible Certificate IV in Leisure and Health students to participate in a study tour to Thailand where they will get the opportunity to learn at the Global Care Resort of the Year for 2016. This is a unique opportunity for students from regional Queensland, many of whom come from low socio-economic backgrounds and who have experienced barriers to learning and employment. We look forward to sending the first of our international bound students on this experience in September 2018.

Simple Solutions Training and Consulting is not just about training however but we are about community engagement, flexibility, personalised learning and the development and maintenance of an exceptional team of educators and support people. To this end our organisation has undertaken cultural safety training with a representative of the local indigenous community, has engaged with a local Aboriginal Corporation and is working on the development of a range of initiatives with this organisation, supported numerous students with disabilities and barriers to learning and employment to complete their studies and gain employment, supported our own staff to complete further study including traineeships, employed a person with a disability in a mainstream role, partnered with a local organisation to support people with dementia through a weekly community support group planned and facilitated by our staff free of charge, and many other activities.

We are proud to take this opportunity to showcase the excellence that our team has achieved as a regional RTO growing from one person 9 years ago to 22 staff delivering training from Caloundra to Townsville in 2017-18 as part of our application for the Queensland Training Awards 2018.

Criterion 1: Leading practice in vocational education and training

Simple Solutions Training and Consulting established our own Learning Management System (LMS) many years ago in recognition of the need to have flexible training and assessment resources which could be customised to suit specific industry requirements and easily updated to meet changes in the training package and industry standards. This has proven to be extremely beneficial to our students and industry partners as we can not only update our training and assessment resources on demand but we can also showcase new and emerging initiatives in industry and develop high quality resources to meet the non-accredited training needs of industry on demand. Most recently, we are in discussions with an industry service provider to move all of their induction and professional development training resources to our LMS to allow their staff to have ready access to this on an ongoing basis. Direct access to these resources also facilitates the possibility of RPL applications for their employees as it provides clear evidence of organisational training and assessment which can be readily mapped to units of competency.

As an organisation we are consistently reviewing our course content with industry, trainers and students to ensure we deliver not only the basic required content but additional information to enhance the students experience and prepare them for improved career opportunities. In specialised skill areas we offer students additional training at no extra cost to enhance their skills. We are able to offer additional training in selected clinical skills, positive behaviour support and dementia and are proud to be the only Australian RTO that we are aware of that is approved to deliver the evidence-based programs "ASiST - Ageing Simulation Sensitivity Training" and "Dementia 24/7 - Simulation Training". These programs equip students with not only their qualification when they complete but an additional dimension of understanding of the needs of the people they will be supporting in employment.

We have been very successful in creating a partnership with Churches of Christ in Hervey Bay and Maryborough to create a program called "Aged Care Experience – ACE" in which we ensure students are provided with an opportunity not only complete the required Vocational Placement but also volunteer work to add value to their total aged care experience. This process was developed in response to the view of Churches of Christ Care that graduates of the Certificate III in Individual Support benefitted from additional exposure to industry that is only gained through time beyond that achieved through vocational placement. Notably, employment rates from this approach have been outstanding.

We also provide enhanced course content to address Industry requirements such as Medication Assistance, First Aid, Blood Pressure and Manual Handling. In our new Training Facility in Hervey Bay we have developed a dedicated Personal Care Training Room with hospital bed, patient hoist, wheelchairs and other equipment so students have the opportunity to practice in a real life simulations. This facility is available during class times and can be accessed with trainer support at other times for students who feel they need additional practice prior to vocational placement to support their confidence.

In addition to our classroom and online learning we also offer students access to our Learning Lounge in Hervey Bay where they can access online resources with the knowledge that there is usually a trainer on site who can assist them if they are having difficulties. We have found that this has increased student confidence to study independently.

Simple Solutions has recently signed a number of MOU's with various Industry Partners and have created a Aged Care and Disability program we call the PLUS Program. This program delivers students a dual qualification in Certificate III Individual Support with both Aged Care and Disability specialisation streams. With the implementation of the NDIS we recognised the need to deliver a program that would provide students with this dual qualification to enhance their career opportunities and give them the skills to work with people with younger onset dementia as well and those with other disabilities should they choose to seek employment under the NDIS.

Our Trainers have come from industry and some continue to work part-time in the aged care and disability support industries to ensure current industry knowledge. This practical and current approach to training is a foundation for our delivery of exceptional VET services to learners and industry.

Criterion 2: Strategic planning processes

With a focus on community services, aged care, disability support and dementia, Simple Solutions is delivering training designed to prepare the future workforce in Australia. Simple Solutions works hard to ensure that strategic planning process stays well-informed of the needs of these industries and the changing priorities of industry, peak bodies, state and national government policies and priorities. To facilitate our knowledge in these areas we engage in various face to face and online networks as well as having representatives attend relevant briefings, forums and conferences to obtain information directly. This process has enabled us to not only inform our own planning processes but to also be able to share valuable intelligence with our industry partners to help them to prepare for changes that are mooted.

By holding weekly leadership team meetings with the key Simple Solutions Training and Consulting staff (affectionately known as the "Brains Trust") – CEO, Operations Manager, Senior Trainer, Business Relationship Manager and Administration Team Leader we ensure we stay focused and on-track and that new opportunities, changes and ideas are able to be discussed, developed, planned and implemented in a collaborative and collegiate environment. The leadership team are then responsible for sharing the direction of our organisation with the other members of the Simple Solutions Team. This is further facilitated through regular trainer meetings and periodic whole of staff meetings where the vision for the organisation, future directions and business strategies are discussed. All staff are actively encouraged to identify and seek new opportunities and to share ideas that they may have for utilising their personal skills and the collective skills of our organisation more fully to meet the requirements of our stakeholders. This process has proved to foster staff engagement and commitment towards the organisation and a vibrant, creative working environment.

When hiring new trainers and support staff we spend time inducting them not only into our systems and procedures but into the Simple Solutions Training and Consulting culture to deliver quality training over quantity and to maintain the person-centred approach to our work that has been the basis for our development. Our growth in the industry has been thought out and measured to ensure we only deliver the top quality possible and that we do not compromise to meet the level of others but seek to break new ground and be leaders in the field of best practice.

As a whole team we see change as a constant in our industry as we strive to pursue the best outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our community, those who are ageing and/or living with disabilities, who are the real end-recipients of our training as they receive support from our graduates. To do this we have a well-developed Continuous Improvement strategy which is a proactive strategy to improve for the sake of excellence rather than simply to correct errors or meet compliance requirements. This approach gives us excellent mobility and responsiveness to engage with VET reform agendas and initiatives as well as initiative from relevant state and federal government departments that impact upon our industry partners.

In order to be truly flexible however it is vital that we are a sustainable and secure organisation. To support this sustainability we focus on having a diverse range of services available to our clients including fee for service opportunities and consultancy roles to ensure security of our organisation. Through our subscriptions and involvement in the community we review our strategies on a regular basis to ensure that they remain sustainable and with capacity for growth into the future. Part of our weekly Leadership Team Meeting is devoted to a discussion on current and future risk. From training facilities, trainers and support personnel to changes of scope, new business opportunities and changing government and industry priorities we consistently review and adjust operations to suit.

Criterion 3: Student, employer and marketing focus

With the growing number of retirees (Baby Boomers) living in regional areas and the roll out of the NDIS Simple Solutions has customised the delivery of our training programs to ensure the future requirements of a quality, trained and experienced workforce to deliver to industry. We have focused our training and vocational placements to give students real-life experience and the confidence to work in this changing and demanding industry and to give industry confidence in our graduates.

We employ a range of strategies to meet the needs of our students, employers and the market. These include:

Students

- All certificate II and III students undertake an FSAT assessment to identify additional foundation skills support that they may require. Where required, FSK groups are set up to support additional needs as identified through the FSAT and consistent with the students training and employment goals
- Provision of a learning lounge with tutorial support
- Student surveys following workshops and completion of course of study
- Additional learning support provided by trainers as required and when required

Industry

- Regular attendance at industry forums and workshops
- Site visits to employers to discuss their needs and review resources
- Program review meetings with senior staff
- TRG attendance

At Simple Solutions Training and Consulting our Business Relationship Manager works closely with industry to identify current and emerging training and recruitment needs. Through regular face to face meetings with our industry partners we receive feedback on how our programs are working. We have employed a Business Relationship Manager – note the difference between BRM and BDM. We are focused on the Relationship not the development of business. We believe business will grow and develop in line with how we manage relationships and not on how we market and “sell” a training product.

Without real outcomes, like jobs, having a certificate of training is meaningless. So, to this end, we also actively monitor post course placement into employment rates and “reverse market” our students and graduates to potential employers to assist in matching students to employer needs.

Throughout our Vocational Placement process we gather feedback through trainers, students and host employers that help us monitor needs of all parties.

Simple Solutions also recognises the unique needs of specific groups within our community including our indigenous community. We seek to engage these groups in their environment and through the communication methods that work for them including indigenous community forums, workshops and regular meetings. This has proven to be very effective and by using our listening skills rather than focussing on our own message we have found synergies with these groups that can be developed into further partnerships such as the “Equip” program that we are currently developing with the indigenous community in response to their needs.

Through our direct involvement with our industry partners we have regular discussions to review our effectiveness. Our trainers are mostly on a permanent part-time employment which allows them to work or volunteer in the industry and remain current with changes and the ability to flex working hours to accommodate both the Trainer as well as the organisation and to provide direct information on industry needs.

In addition, we have designated our regular face to face training schedules to deliver between 9.00am and 2.45pm to accommodate students with children at school. We have made an informed decision to support single parents with dependent children as they have been traditionally disadvantaged in the job networks but will provide a needed cohort to deliver services in the NDIS, aged care and dementia support realm.

We are fortunate to have come to the point where we do not market or advertise our services broadly as we have built a reputation of delivering quality programs with real outcomes that is known through reputation rather than marketing tactics.

All of our students are given an induction into our organisation as well as the class and course. Part of our student induction includes the opportunity to approach the Trainer, Operations Manager, Senior Trainer and even the CEO to give and receive feedback.

On completion every student is given the opportunity to complete an on-line survey to help improve our service. These surveys are reviewed by the CEO and improvement actions taken where required.

Our student outcomes and completions are above average. We recently attended a Graduation Ceremony for a group of SQW graduates with our partner, Community Solutions, in Certificate III Individual Support. At the time of Graduation 39 out of 45 students had gained employment which is an exceptional outcome for a cohort of students who were identified as having barriers to training and employment.

Criterion 4: Human resource capability

Our staff are selected based mostly on referral from industry and their professional success in their chosen field. Trainers are provided with professional development opportunities from workshops and conferences to self-study and mentorship. Trainers are given the opportunity to buddy with other trainers in the classroom to learn different approaches to training and to receive feedback on their performance. Simple Solutions Training and Consulting also holds regular trainers meetings using webinars and online conferencing facilities to ensure all trainers are able to participate. These webinars are recorded to allow for trainers who could not attend at the scheduled time to watch them back at a later day to ensure that they receive all of the relevant information and so that they can provide feedback on the content after they have watched the meeting.

Our employment conditions allow for flexibility where trainers need to attend to personal or professional issues. As an organisation we have a focus on the value of family and the benefits that this brings to our organisation as a whole.

One of the unique aspects of the Simple Solutions Training and Consulting culture is the encouragement that comes directly from the CEO for each individual staff member to identify their personal talents and ways that they would like to use these talents in the workplace either now or in the future. This is based on the belief that people who are utilising their talents will have greater job satisfaction, productivity and creativity that contributes to a positive and amiable working environment.

The training team at Simple Solutions are an extremely diverse and capable group of professionals who are able to adapt training to meet the needs of students and organisations, not conforming to the one size to fit all concept of training at all. This is encouraged and an open door policy is in place with the CEO for staff to share their ideas of how this can be done and opportunities that might be available.

Our Operations Manager makes regular visits to our regional based staff to provide feedback and support to Trainers who traditionally are over-looked in the training industry. These staff are also invited periodically to attend team professional development events at our Hervey Bay office to benefit not only from the education provided but the peer support from the wider Simple Solutions team.

Consultation and inclusion of staff for delivery and growth of the organisation is another valued aspect of our organisation. We believe that anyone can have an excellent idea and that although they may not all be able to be acted on in their current form at the time of sharing you never know when the possibility may occur so that no idea should be disregarded.

Our staff are encouraged to keep abreast of industry and ensure that the quality of their training is incomparable. They do this through recognising the latest trends in training and industry developments along with regional and cultural needs as opposed to metropolitan-focussed solutions.

The Simple Solutions Training and Consulting Team is truly outstanding and we enjoy celebrating both personal and professional achievements, no matter how big or small. We have held Team days with a BBQ for staff, cake for International Women's Day, recognition of significant community days and corporate philanthropic activities.

Person-centredness is not something that is just taught by Simple Solutions, it is something that we live with our team each and every day.

Criterion 5: Partnerships and links

Industry engagement is a daily activity at Simple Solutions Training and Consulting. We see our partnerships with industry as being the starting point for excellence in training delivery, rather than simply a necessary compliance activity to meet compliance obligations. Our partnerships and links with industry drive the direction of our organisation and are a cornerstone to ensuring that our training and assessment processes are truly reflective of contemporary industry practice and emerging industry needs.

Simple Solutions Training and Consulting has established working partnerships with Community Solutions, Blue Care, Churches of Christ Care in Queensland, CentaCare, Endeavour, Red Cross, Flourish and all regionally based job active providers in the areas where we deliver training. These strategic partnerships help us to identify local and regional issues and adjust our activities to suit and to assist our partners when they need it.

Our relationships with our partners can be both formal and informal and we value both relationships equally. Through a set of MOU's with industry as well as informal meetings and networks we provide our partners with the opportunity to comment on our content as well as the delivery of our programs.

We have a dedicated Business Relationship Manager who spends 80% of his time in the field to ensure our clients are kept in the loop on our services and opportunities in the industry and we receive feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of our training products.

A recent example of a new and innovative program was to meet with local Indigenous elders and leaders to discuss how we as a Registered Training Organisation could better engage with local indigenous youth and bring them into the field of aged and disability care workers. It was identified that the strength of the cultural background of these young people made them an ideal fit for these industries however there were barriers to them entering the industry and completing studies. This culminated in the idea to develop a new program called "Equip" to address these issues and equip these young people appropriately for this industry. This program is currently under development and we look forward to implementing this program in 2018.

We take an employment outcomes, based approach to our training services and customise our products to meet our industry partners recruitment and staff training requirements.




We have established the ACE program with Churches of Christ Care and integrated student recruitment processes with Job Actives to get best candidate fit for industry.

We have engaged with Blue Care and listened to what their organisational needs were and created the Plus Program.

Our product design is in direct response to the feedback received from our industry partnerships to ensure currency and applicability.

Without the partnerships we have in place Simple Solutions Training and Consulting would not be the organisation that we are so proud of and we like to think that without Simple Solutions Training and Consulting our partners wouldn't have the positive experience with training and development that we offer them.

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