



Innovation,
Applicability and
Transferability

SA Innovation Hub's mentoring program supports emerging talent at Resthaven

Background

The SA Innovation Hub ('the Hub') is a group of aged care providers who collaborate to translate ideas, innovation, learning and research into practice.

The Hub's membership includes ACH Group, Barossa Village, Bene, Boandik Lodge, Helping Hand, Kalyra, Lifecare, Resthaven and Southern Cross Care - with COTA SA and Aboriginal Elders Council providing consultative support to projects.

Mentoring Program

In June 2017, the Hub launched a six month mentoring program to support and develop talented managers in the aged care sector. The Hub's mentoring program paired participants with senior executives from amongst the Hub's membership, with 17 managers completing the program.

From the outset of the program, mentoring was tailored to individual needs and objectives. Participants were able to review mentor profiles and identify potential mentors with the skills and abilities most relevant to their development needs.

A briefing session was held for mentors and participants to clarify and align expectations of the mentoring relationship and its outcomes.

Participants met with their mentor for six sessions over the course of six months.

Encouragement and feedback were key features of the mentoring process.

Mentors worked with their mentees to build knowledge, skills and understanding in key development area.

Many participants reported that the mentoring experience offered opportunities for personal and professional development.

Leadership skills were another area for development. Other gains were on a more practical level, such as time management tips.

The Hub's mentoring program is one component of the broader 'My Home Life' Leadership Support Program – an evidence-based program with its origins in the UK.

Two Resthaven managers participated in the SA Innovation Hub's first mentoring program, Melanie Howard and Jane Abbot.



Above: Melanie Howard

Case Studies

[Melanie Howard](#), Senior Manager Community Services at Resthaven was invited to join the program after stepping into a more senior role in 2016. Sara Blunt, CEO Kalyra Communities, acted as her mentor.

Melanie explains, 'It's an opportunity to work with someone who's "been there, done that" and can share their experience – you can't really pay for that.'

'The program gave me the opportunity to learn more about myself as a manager and respect my larger role at Resthaven,' said Melanie. 'This included appreciating the value of extending my network beyond Resthaven and aged care in general.'

'The mentoring program is as much about personal development as leadership development,' Melanie commented.

'In my conversations with Sara, we'd discuss how I could be a better mentor to my managers, and the difficulties of working effectively between an operational and governance mindset when dealing with day-to-day matters.'

Melanie met with Sara six times over the course of six months.

'Having regular meetings kept me focused on my goals and objectives for development – which can sometimes be lost in the busy-ness of work.'

Melanie reported the experience of being mentored was less daunting than she expected.

'I found Sara motivating and inspiring – just by knowing about her experiences and what she does – I'd be very excited about our next discussion.'

'Sara was very encouraging. She was a good support as well as offering excellent advice.'

'It was an opportunity to stop and reflect and learn more about myself.'

[Jane Abbot](#), right, is Relieving Manager Residential Services at Resthaven, and also participated in the mentoring program.

Jane was mentored by Mary Patetsos, ACH Group Chair.



Jane found the Hub's mentoring program complemented her current studies at Flinders University where she is enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Health & Aged Care Administration.

'The mentoring program gave me the opportunity to take a broader look at the management of aged care services beyond Resthaven. In conversations with Mary, I was able to talk through big picture issues that are so pertinent right now - such as governance, ethics, creating age-friendly environments and social inclusion - to learn more about how other organisations were responding to these key issues.'

'In particular, I felt I benefitted enormously from Mary's experience in policy development and governance in aged care organisations, as well as her understanding of aged care reforms.'

Summary & Recommendations

The final evaluation report indicated that the majority of participants in the pilot Mentor Program reported high levels of satisfaction with their involvement and advised they gained valuable experience with opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Following a successful pilot program in 2017, plans are underway to run the program again in coming years.

For more details about the SA Innovation Hub visit: <http://sainnovationhub.org/>