



# 2013 Winner's case study

## TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute

### Social Responsibility

A transformational approach to strengthening the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities...

#### Section 1: About the project

##### Summary

Cana Communities Incorporated and TAFE NSW - Western Sydney Institute (WSI) formed a partnership to deliver vocational training to a diverse range of people with high support needs. Training is delivered on the farm increasing student's capacity to effectively socialise in the community and increase their employability skills. A lease on a property was negotiated,

work quickly commenced with students and staff making it both habitable as an outdoor classroom and as a working community farm. The program has successfully engaged a wide range of partners who with educational specialists have transformed the farm into a working community classroom. Most recently the program has restored buildings that provide shelter and housing for homeless people.

The program's target group includes new and emerging communities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; Bhutanese and Karen; refugees; disengaged young people; homeless; long term unemployed; ex-offenders; people with mental health conditions and physical disabilities.

By building on individual and community strengths, the project aims to address social and educational disadvantage by empowering students, providing opportunities to improve economic outcomes, increase self-worth, instill a sense of belonging to a community, all focusing on environmental and social sustainability by providing vocational opportunities through accredited TAFE training.

##### Project partners

Can Communities Inc, TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute's Outreach Unit and Darlinghurst restaurateur, Beppi's three hectare farm at Orchard Hills.

Since inception, WSI and Cana Communities has formed strategic industry, government and community partnerships (some of our over 40 partners include Anglicare, Bhutanese and Karen Communities, Blacktown City Council, Centrelink, Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Emu Plains Correctional Centre, Juvenile Justice, Mission Australia, Nepean Migrant Access Centre, NSW Police, NSW Farmers' Association, Parklea Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre, Penrith City Council, Wise Employment) all of who have specialist expertise and contribute to improving the wellbeing of marginalized members of our society through strengthening communities and pathways leading to sustainable employment outcomes.



#### Institutional Profile

- 130,000 students studying - full-time, part-time, distance and flexible delivery
- Provides post-secondary vocational education and training options



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## Section 2: The results

### The problem

Cana Communities Incorporated is a not-for-profit organisation which was set up over 35 years ago to work with people who are most in need and suffer from loneliness, mental illness, addictions, homelessness and other factors which alienate them from society.

### The approach

TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute's Outreach Unit was introduced to Cana in early 2011 requesting a range of courses be delivered to people with high support needs on site at the farm to increase their capacity to engage with the community and maximise their employability skills. The Orchard Hills Farm Project uses a transformational approach to strengthening the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities through strong partnerships with government and non-government organisations, led by Cana Communities Incorporated.

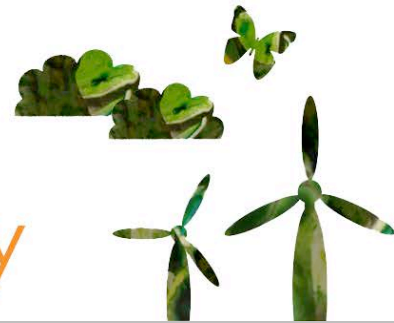
These strong partnerships maximise community connectivity, with tailored services embedded within accredited TAFE courses delivered on-site at the farm. These partnerships are integral to the success of the project. Using a locational approach, the project provides evidence and integrated data to inform policy and incorporate whole of government solutions. The Orchard Hills Farm Project represents an expansion of community expectations. The evolving nature of the project promotes change and reflects continual development. The project underpins the work of government and non-government agencies.

### Our goals

The Orchard Hills Farm Project aims to renew environments, improve social and economic outcomes, increase self-worth and community responsibility by addressing disadvantage through individual and community empowerment. By building on individual and community strengths, the project enables a greater voice for the most marginalised and disadvantaged.

The Orchard Hills Farm Project has been designed to provide not only educational & vocational opportunities for students with special needs through accredited TAFE training but also give back to the wider community, harness a sense of community belonging and offer participants an holistic approach to learning.

Cana Communities Inc and Western Sydney Institute share a vision which aims to improve the wellbeing of marginalised members of our society through strengthening communities and pathways leading to sustainable employment outcomes. The project's target group includes: Unqualified unskilled job seekers; Long term unemployed people; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; New and emerging communities e.g. Bhutanese and Karen people; Homeless people; People with mental health conditions; People with disabilities; Clients of Juvenile Justice under supervision orders; Ex-offenders; Refugees and Disengaged young people.



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## Performance and results

From 2011 – 2013 TAFE NSW, Western Sydney Institute's Outreach Unit has delivered 57 courses for over 700 students with special needs on the farm in partnership with Cana Communities. Incorporated to address disadvantage through education and training in a safe, accessible and supportive community learning space. As a result of the training, the farm, residence and shed have all been restored using recycled and/or donated materials.

As a result of community interest and the outstanding results from the 2011 project, from 2012 - 2013 WSI delivered a further 49 courses in Landscaping, Home Maintenance, Building Sustainably, Agriculture, Horticulture, Recycle Rebuild, Pre-fabricated Frames and Structures (Awnings and Carports), White Card, Café Skills, Hospitality, Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations), Trade Skills, Building Furniture, Furniture Restoration, Communication & marketing, Indigenous Art & Sustainable Living Skills including 35 courses at Certificate 1 and 11 level. The programs were expanded to further develop the concept and goals set by Cana Communities for the Orchard Hills Farm.

## Section 3: The future

### Lessons learned

The long term goal is to provide opportunities for alienated people across Sydney to work and retreat to the farm in the future.

### Sharing your project

ABC Gardening Australia's Costa Georgiadis visited Cana Farm to find out how it is helping people get back on track – or create a new life. Costa's visit covered all aspects of the farm including eating at the Café, gathering eggs from the chicken coup and wandering through the orchard with its heritage plum trees. The show aired on ABC on 11 May 2013.

### Further information

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