

## **PM with Mark Colvin**

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# Inclusive Brisbane cafe Australia's best small social enterprise

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Nance Haxton reported this story on [Friday, July 10, 2015](#) 18:50:50

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PETER LLOYD: A humble cafe in Brisbane's northern suburbs has won Australia's best small social enterprise of the year award for its efforts employing a mix of people with and without disabilities.

The Espresso Train cafe has run successfully for the past 15 years, becoming an integral part of the Nundah community.

After wages, all the profits are ploughed back into the business to keep it open and employ more people with a range of abilities.

The owners hope to inspire other businesses to do the same, as Nance Haxton reports.

BARRISTA: Best coffee in town!

NANCE HAXTON: Walking into Espresso Train cafe, one of the first things that strikes you is the laughter and the beautiful food.

(to worker) What's this going to become?

CAFE EMPLOYEE: We're doing some pesto potatoes, so stuffed potatoes, stuffed baked potatoes with cheese and spinach.

NANCE HAXTON: Oooh, sounds nice.

CAFE EMPLOYEE: Yum. Comfort food.

NANCE HAXTON: Nestled next to the Nundah train station, the cosy cafe is full to the brim with people on their way to work, or stopping in for a chat and a treat.

It was recently listed as one of the top breakfast spots in Brisbane by Gourmand and Gourmet.

Like many small businesses, it's the staff behind the scenes that keep the register turning over.

Manager Kirsty Leigh has decades of experience in hospitality, from London to the Brisbane 'burbs. She says this is the best crew she's worked with.

KIRSTY LEIGH: I think it's a tribute to the cafe that we've been able to stay open so long and it's quite remarkable, a lot of our staff have been with us since the beginning and in the hospitality industry that's quite something.

NANCE HAXTON: Espresso Train is a social enterprise, or a not for profit cafe and caterer, that employs people with a range of abilities.

KIRSTY LEIGH: It's absolutely just a real cafe and it just operates a little differently behind the scenes and on paper I guess. We serve food, we serve drinks, people get served quickly, with a smile, we work with our guys to give them tasks that are within their comfort zone.

For me, it's not about what they can't do, it's about what they can do and finding those little bits of talent. We've got some guys that are fantastic at making cakes. We've got some people that would just prefer to wash dishes.

NANCE HAXTON: Danny Thomas started working here a year ago, after an accident left him in a wheelchair, and struggling to find work.

DANNY THOMAS: Mostly a lot of unemployment. People out there didn't want to employ people with disabilities or mental issues and all that. But it's good to have the establish of this co-op because it helps people to earn a living wage and all that and sort of, there's not many co-ops around like that to help people with disabilities.

NANCE HAXTON: Bernard Denny's main task is to wash the dishes that pile up in the busy cafe. His infectious manner keeps the staff and the patrons entertained.

BERNARD DENNY: There's always heaps of washing up to do when I get in here so-.

NANCE HAXTON: It shows you're a busy cafe I suppose.

BERNARD DENNY: Yeah, well, that has to be done. That is part of catering so it has to be done, but I always make sure that after each shift that everything is nice and clean.

NANCE HAXTON: Well if they don't have clean dishes you can't have good food.

BERNARD DENNY: That's right.

NANCE HAXTON: While Ian Williamson has proudly worked at the cafe ever since it started 15 years ago.

IAN WILLIAMSON: I do most of the catering orders that come in.

NANCE HAXTON: So you've got to make sure all that happens.

IAN WILLIAMSON: Oh yes.

NANCE HAXTON: What do you like about working here?

IAN WILLIAMSON: Making all different types of food.

NANCE HAXTON: I think after your big award hopefully you'll go for a while yet!

IAN WILLIAMSON: Yeah I hope so!

NANCE HAXTON: Espresso Train's success was recently honoured with the award for Best Social Enterprise in Australia.

The cafe is established on a triple P principle, which is written proudly on the blackboard beside the menu.

KIRSTY LEIGH: It's 'People' with a disability in meaningful work, P2 is the 'Planet protected' -

we recycle, we've got 12 kilowatts of solar on the roof, and the 'Profit' stays here. If we do make a profit it goes back into the cafe.

NANCE HAXTON: For co-op member Paul O'Dea, his biggest thrill comes from seeing a full house.

PAUL O'DEA: It's been good to see how it's started from a small business to a large sort of business. Most Sundays it's pretty packed. Yeah, during the week it can be pretty packed too. So yeah, yeah.

NANCE HAXTON: That must be the best reward I suppose?

PAUL O'DEA: It is, yeah. I think it's good to sort of see customers come and go and recommend it to other people.

PETER LLOYD: That's Paul O'Dea from the Espresso Train cafe ending Nance Haxton's report.

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