



ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering – Sustainability Actions

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ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering strives for sustainability in everything we do. By this we mean, we aim for a balanced approach to decision making to ensure people, planet and profit are considered. Ways in which we have implemented this triple bottom line decision making are highlighted below.

People

ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering is an initiative of the Nundah Community Enterprises Co-operative (the Co-op). The Co-op was founded in 1998 by eight people with intellectual disability and mental health issues who were experiencing the 'churn' of employment agencies and training courses with no job outcomes. This small, determined group created their own employment system that's since grown into a flourishing grassroots enterprise that creates more than 8,000 hours of long-term employment annually for people facing barriers to work. The Co-op's Coordinator Richard Warner says, "We don't employ people to make coffee. We make coffee to employ people". Jobs for marginalised people is fundamental to our business plan and is the premise of our social sustainability. Further to this, ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering:

- provides a secure, welcoming and patient **workplace for 14 people facing barriers to employment**. They are paid a supported wage in accordance with the Restaurant Industry Award 2010. Under the guidance of qualified food safety supervisors and a professional chef, our members receive the training and support they need to contribute in a meaningful way to the café and catering business. Anecdotal evidence suggests working at ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering improves self-esteem and motivation. Café worker Danny said, "You feel proud of yourself working, as you are giving something back to the community. Work stops you being bored and cooped up, which feels terrible" (Hooper & Warner 2013¹).
- provides training opportunities by way of **work experience for people from refugee backgrounds**
- encourages worker involvement in **decision making**. Staff, as members of the Co-op, are on the Board and play a role in how The Co-op and Cafe is run. Regular meetings offer members a chance to have their say in business direction.
- involves customers in our sustainability goals, by:

- encouraging them to **bring their own reusable cup** for take-away coffee and offering a financial incentive to do so (\$0.50c discount).
- asking for donations of **scrap paper**, that has been printed on one side. We **reuse** it by cutting it up for use as order dockets, we then **recycle** it.
- offering “Suspended Coffees”. Customers can buy a token at the price of a small coffee, which we hold (in suspension) until someone who can’t afford one claims it. We give a medium sized drink to anyone who asks. Typically this is homeless people, newly single Mum’s escaping domestic violence, new Australians/refugees etc. Many are referred to us from Centrelink and the local Neighbourhood Centre.
- promoting discounts and offers on vegetarian and vegan food items i.e. Meat free Mondays to **encourage healthy, low-impact dietary choices**.
- **buys real milk** from real farmers, namely Cooloola Milk to ensure farmers get a fair price for their efforts.
- buys bread from a **local, family owned** bakery.
- **buys Fair-Trade, Organic Coffee** ensuring coffee producers and processors get a fair price and use environmentally friendly production methods.
- we **make everything from scratch** which not only gives our workers something meaningful to do, it also gives them pride in their achievements when they receive great feedback from customers about their products.

Planet

To reduce our impact on the earth’s finite resources, ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering:

- is **solar powered** by a total of 23kW of PV panels. With 13kW feeding the café directly meaning 40% of our electricity use is solar (Fronius Solarweb 2019²). A further 10kW system on another Co-op property “the shed” adds another 30% offset.
- we further reduce our energy consumption in the way we use energy. For instance:
 - we’ve had our halogen and florescent lights changed to LEDs,
 - our staff regularly clean fridge and freezer condensers to ensure they run optimally,
 - no air-conditioning, instead we use ceiling fans for cooling in summer,
 - in cooler months, we offer customers hand knitted “Nanna Rugs”.
- when appliances break we always take them for repair instead of disposing to landfill. Our food processor, blender and mixer have both repaired by a local appliance service centre. We love our work horse of a dishwasher. We recently replaced a major component that we hope will keep it going for many years to come.
- give **food waste** to Co-op member James who turns it into fertile compost and worm juice via a wonderful worm farm. We also **sell his bottled worm juice**

at the café, generating a small income for James whilst providing nutrients to local soils and pot plants all over town.

- **recycle** cardboard & paper, hard & soft plastic. Co-op members collect our cans & bottles to exchange for pocket money at the container refund centre.
- buy second-hand furniture and equipment. Our tables are made from a house that was a flood victim.
- buy in bulk where ever possible to **reduce packaging**. We are investigating a bulk milk device which will reduce our two-litre bottle waste.
- separate containers that are covered by the new **Container Refund Scheme** so that Co-op member Jonathon can return for a refund and keep the money generated as a tiny income.
- **reuse** wholesale food buckets to store and keep fresh prepped food.
- are conscious of our **water use** and take steps to reduce wastewater by filling buckets for rinsing dishes, instead of the big sink.
- changed from plastic to **bio-packaging** in 2017 for take-away cups, containers and cutlery. Similarly, we use paper straws instead of plastic.
- **reduce food miles** by smart buying practices such as choosing Olympus Haloumi, made in South Brisbane, instead of imported cheese. Golden Circle were chosen as our main soft drink supplier given the factory is 15 minutes down the road at Banyo.
- change the menu twice a year to **reflect seasonal variations in produce**. This helps to keep our wholesale spending down and reduces food miles by not importing out of Australian season produce.

Profit

ESPRESSO TRAIN Café & Catering is a **not-for-profit registered charity**. We are, for all intents and purposes, a real café and catering business competing in a saturated market. We don't get any ongoing government funding. Even so, we have remained competitive for eighteen years making us Australia's first and longest running Social Enterprise Café.

To operate the way we do, employing people with disabilities and learning difficulties, costs in wages almost double that of a regular business. It means our staff are not as efficient at getting things done. Our workers need close supervision meaning our chef and manager aren't as productive as they could be. Our workers sometimes make mistakes meaning recipes need to be started over and food, therefore money is wasted. Still, we wouldn't have it any other way. ESPRESSO TRAIN is a fabulous place to work with hardly any staff turn-over.

In 2013, ESPRESSO TRAIN Café and Catering had a change in management. Kirsty Leigh, in conjunction with new Head Chef Steven Goodale (formerly of Fundies, Paddington and The Gunshop Café, West End), revamped the menu, changed the layout and brought a new energy to the business. Since then café and catering turnover has increased 60% since 2013.

We are very fortunate, as a charity, to have the opportunity to access philanthropic funding, which we can use to renovate the café space, buy new (or used) equipment and reduce our barriers to market. For example, being not-for-profit means there is rarely any funds to upgrade say, the website. In 2017 we were gifted \$5000 by Ingrid Burkett from Knode to bring our online presence up to date with a new website and online ordering system. We have since implemented these and have improved the efficiency of processing catering orders and invoices. We are truly grateful to all our benefactors.

The journey continues

We continue to strive toward social and environmental sustainability. Our journey is constantly being evaluated with changes implemented on a daily basis through purchasing decisions, monthly through improved processes and annually through bigger project implementation, like solar projects.

Our next goal is to purchase more ethical food. We currently buy free-range eggs and chicken but are investigating options for more sustainably produced fresh fruit and vegetables. We hope discussions with Food Connect (a provider of local, seasonal, ecologically produced food) will prove fruitful (pun intended). We have to be mindful of pricing when purchasing ethically. A good many of our customers are from low socio-economic backgrounds where value for money and healthy eating options are especially important. We will always balance the needs of our customers against purchasing/menu pricing decisions.

Kitchen equipment, such as fridges, freezers and ovens draw a lot of energy so we're aiming to further boost our renewable energy capacity to be energy neutral by 2020. Battery storage and possibly some additional solar are being investigated as our next step toward self-sufficiency in electricity.

On our wish list is a battery-operated delivery van but it's not on the market yet. Our refrigerated Renault 2014 Trafic has a CO₂ rating of 210g/km (ADR Combined). The van is only used for local deliveries once or twice a day so is low "mileage". For example, from 2011 to 2019 we only put 60,000 kilometres on the previous van.

Reference

¹ John Hooper & Richard Warner. "Participation and Production." Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative, 2013. iBooks.
<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=630236181>

² Fronius Solarweb 2019, viewed online 18 March 2019, www.solarweb.com.