

# CATALYSING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP







**THE MILL HOUSE**  
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACCEL



Dr Yasmine Gray,  
Founder,  
Getaboutable

## THE REPORT

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BRANDING | SOCIAL IMPACT | REGIONAL INNOVATION

## OUR PURPOSE

The Mill House exists to support the development and growth of a thriving social innovation ecosystem in Canberra and the region. We believe that such an ecosystem benefits when individuals are experimenting with an innovative business model called social enterprise. Social enterprises are hybrid organisations that seek to reduce their reliance on income from grants and philanthropy through the pursuit of commercial business models.

Individuals that are passionate about solving problems in the community using hybrid models often face barriers to business education and investment. The Mill House programs are designed to address this market gap in business advisory services in the ACT and region.

Offering a place for new ventures to thrive, Mill House clients can choose to work collaboratively through skills development initiatives in the Social Enterprise Accelerator as well as access professional services through the student-led Mill House Clinic.



# THE JOURNEY

In 2016 a consortium was established consisting of the ACT Government, SERVICE ONE, the University of Canberra and the Canberra Innovation Network (CBRIN). The goal was to assess the feasibility of a social enterprise hub in Canberra. Cindy Mitchell was engaged as Social Impact Strategist to validate and report on the extent of demand social ventures development, and the availability of expertise, capital and resources to meet this demand in the region.

It quickly became apparent that a dedicated social enterprise intermediary was needed to support both entrepreneurs and social impact investors. Both SERVICE ONE and the University of Canberra agreed to establish a not-for-profit entity to operate and expand the services. The Mill House Ventures Limited was incorporated in 2018, and Cindy Mitchell was appointed its first CEO.

In 2019, the Mill House Clinic was launched to increase the reach of its services further and to strengthen our engagement with entrepreneurial teaching and learning at the University of Canberra.







## WHO WE SUPPORT

So far, Mill House has consulted with over five hundred individuals in our region. Fifty nine ventures have graduated from our Accelerator programs. We work with established businesses that are interested in incorporating measurable social purpose into the DNA of their business. Existing community organisations that rely principally on grants and philanthropy come to Mill House to iterate alternate revenue models.

Most frequently, Mill House clients are passionate changemakers with first-hand experience of the disadvantage they would like to use business to address. They sometimes have little or no business background. But, they always have a strong commitment to some new intervention to address systemic social, cultural, economic or environmental challenges.



# OUR APPROACH

The Mill House operates as part of the broader Canberra Innovation Ecosystem. We are interested in economic development whilst creating definable and attributable public benefit. The ventures that go engage Mill House are typically, hybrids—combinations of both a charity and a business that operates in a competitive trading market. We work closely with the Canberra Innovation Network and use many of the tools of the lean start-up business development. We believe that these tools are useful because they focus an innovator on early engagement and validation of their idea with their target market, developing minimum viable products that can attract the investment and support required to scale and finally, building the discipline of iteration and pivoting into the DNA of a venture.

## WHY IS IT CALLED MILL HOUSE?

A mill house or a place for the milling and grinding of wheat were traditionally funded as cooperatives. Cooperatives, which are organisations that trade for the benefit of their members, are the oldest known form of social enterprise.

The Mill House in Canberra is a place for where for-purpose entrepreneurs bring their idea for using the tools of capitalism to intervene positively in the lives of vulnerable people in Canberra and our region. Together, we grind and refine those ideas. The end product is for the benefit of the entire community.

Candice Addicoat, Mill House Season 2;  
inset; concept art designed by Candice





# OUR SERVICES

The Mill House Ventures has two primary service offerings, the Mill House Social Enterprise Accelerator Program and the Mill House Clinic. The Accelerator program has three elements depending on the maturity of the social venture: CATALYSE, GRIST and REFINE. The Mill House Clinic offers high quality pro-bono support for social and Indigenous businesses who are looking for very specific business advisory, financial, legal, marketing or other assistance.



## CATALYSE

We 'work out' new and aspiring social entrepreneurs by inviting them to pitch their very early stage business and impact narrative to a panel of experienced industry professionals mentors. This session helps the entrepreneur decide 'what's next' at a time when it may be unclear.

## GRIST

Our flagship accelerator program is based power by Social Trader. It consists of four months of intensive social enterprise business development and market validation led by experienced facilitators and mentors.

## REFINE

The REFINE Incubator is for established social ventures who engage Mill House for tailored business consultancy for a 3-6-month period.

## MILL HOUSE CLINIC

Provides 'just in time' pro bono business advisory support to address specific enterprise challenges to sustainable enterprise growth.

# OUR EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

In 2018, the Mill House, with the support of the Snow Foundation developed a framework for the on-going evaluation of its Social Enterprise Accelerator Programs.

The goal of this framework is to ensure while the program itself may change in any given year, it is in service of consistent and measurable outcomes.

At the core of this framework is the mission of producing a high-quality investible and scalable social venture pipeline that is supported by other providers in the Canberra and region innovation ecosystem.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Mainstream professional and industry service providers (providers) effectively support social enterprises start up and development
- A well-resourced social enterprise (SE) ecosystem supports program implementation, social impact investment realising growth and ROI
- Commercially viable social enterprise community contributes significantly to inclusive economic development in the region
- Social enterprises contribute to sustainable community development through social, cultural or environmental change in their impact areas

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- New providers established to serve social enterprises
- Increased networking, connections, collaboration, events and interactions for SEs
- Increased resource allocation and enabling policy supporting social enterprises in the region
- Social enterprises create employment, generate surplus and offer return on social impact investment
- SE contribute to social, cultural and environmental outcomes

## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Providers realise opportunity to service unique area appreciating value of tailoring services to SE
- Increased understanding of SE and associated opportunities in Canberra region
- Client, alumni and SE benefit from peer-to-peer collaboration toward their objectives
- SE gain investment, SE investible opportunity validated by investor interest
- Clients apply accelerator learnings and establish viable SE

## OUTPUTS

- **Partnerships with providers** to provide program input and accelerator course delivery
- **Provider capacity** to deliver professional services to social enterprises strengthened
- **Funding, and partnerships** established for increased efficiency
- **Awareness and advocacy** promote the value of social enterprise as a business model that can use commercial means to great public benefit
- **Mill House Clients have increased** capacity for impact and market traction
- **Clients** complete quality education, networking, investment opportunities via program accelerator
- **Clients** graduate from accelerator meeting knowledge and business capacity requirements



# OUR GRADUATES

## ALTINA DRINKS

Altina Drinks is on a mission to shake up the Aussie drinking culture. Altina produces a boutique collection of Zero Proof Cocktails that pack a punch without the alcohol.

Altina Drinks impact comes in the form of their alcohol-free events, occasions and corporate functions where they work to normalise making connections without the booze.

Every glass sold is potentially a glass of alcohol not consumed.

## WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

"Participating in the Social Enterprise Accelerator Program helped us develop our impact strategy and launch and execute our crowdfunding campaign. We've created and are now trialling our wholesale and retail program locally, are setting up a small-scale production facility and are creating our national go to market plan."

"We want to shake up the Aussie drinking culture by building a sustainable social enterprise that normalises alcohol free drinks and provides a delicious alternative to the booze."

-Alan Tse and Christina Delay, Founders of Altina Drinks and Mill House Season 2 participants.





An ethical brand  
supporting health  
and hygiene  
projects for  
**Australian**  
communities



*"The most important resource that the Mill House has given us is mentorship. The extent of change we have seen has been monumental."*

*- Mick Cronin and Lianne Brink, Founders Base Soaps*

## BASE SOAPS

Base produces handmade soap products with a focus on ethical sourcing and production. Base Soaps is the brainchild of Mick Cronin and Lianne Brink.

Using Base Soaps products, Mick and Lianne aim to make a positive and memorable connection between the purchase of hygiene products and the provision of health education programs to remote Indigenous communities. With their impact partner, Malpa, the proceeds of soap sales are directed to support health leadership programs for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Base Soaps are now working with an Indigenous social enterprise intermediary that facilitates connections across several remote Indigenous communities in Australia. This partnership allows Base Soaps to use its business to catalyse vital economic activities in those communities.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Economies of scale are the key to generating the kind of revenues that will sustain long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Achieving scale without sacrificing the high quality, luxe character of the products is the challenge.





*"I am feeling like a weight has been lifted after having Marika visit my home. I now have an organised office, toy/craft cupboard and linen cupboard. It was making me feel anxious and overwhelmed. Those feelings have now gone and I'm loving the tidy, usable spaces she helped me create."*

*-Space to Be Client*

## SPACE TO BE

Space To Be is a Canberra based professional organising service that helps people create more liveable, relaxing and friendly spaces in their homes. As a social enterprise, the business also seeks to help people who need decent clothing, bedding and other items but don't have the money or time to source what they need from second-hand shops or other places.

"So, I thought, what if there was a way to match the stuff from the people who no longer wanted or needed it, to the people who currently really need it? Imagine the potential good these pre-loved items could do for someone else."

- Marika Vrieling, Founder, Space to Be, Mill House Season 2 (pictured).

Space To Be finds new homes for your pre-loved items. Not only are we reducing what goes into landfill, but we partner with a charity who needs the items you have donated. We are currently partnering with four Canberra-based charities, Companion House, the YWCA Housing Support Unit, Global Sisters and Karinya House.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Helping clients understand how needed and valuable their unwanted items are while also ensuring that only high-quality items are provided to charities.

Ensuring items that are beyond use get recycled in the most environmentally responsible way.

According to Marika, "there is a fine line between donations that still have life left in them and rubbish, and I want to make sure that we never move the burden of unwanted clutter onto the charities."



# THE MILL HOUSE CLINIC

The Mill House Clinic assists social and Indigenous ventures with accessing high-quality professional services. In addition to being low on funds, our entrepreneurs often 'don't know what they don't know'. This lack of experience in clearly defining a business problem is a liability when trying to decide on what kind of professional business advisor, service or consultant to engage.

Mill House Clinic brings together multidisciplinary teams of university students with professional services providers. We take a holistic approach to understanding the client's challenges and recommending a project that is most useful and feasible. In time, we anticipate that our clients will go onto access mainstream service providers but with greater confidence than they would otherwise.

## OUR ASSOCIATES

University and TAFE students who are interested in applying their academic discipline to a social enterprise. They are typically, but not limited to, second or third year students in Business, Art and Design, Management or Finance.

## OUR MENTORS

Includes bookkeepers, accountants, lawyers, marketing and communications professionals and other highly skilled volunteers who mentor students in the delivery of projects for our clients.

## OUR SERVICES

Business Plans  
Marketing Plans  
Communications Strategy  
Event Management  
Business Incorporation  
Establishing Business Accounting and Reporting Systems  
Research reports on legal issues or other barriers to market entry  
Fundraising and Investment Proposals







# ASSOCIATE SPOTLIGHT

Elizabeth McDermott is a University of Canberra business student passionate about community development. She was part of the inaugural class of Mill House Clinic Associates.

One of her clients was Fatemeh, a new Australian migrant looking turn her passion for baking into a sustainable business. Elizabeth has the following advice to future Mill House Clinic Associates

*“Project scoping from the client’s list of needs given the time frame you have is a challenge. Having the support of Mill House supervisor and mentor made all the difference. Don’t be afraid to get involved with the Mill House Clinic; it can really change your perspective. You will learn a lot, build lasting connections and networks. It’s just a fascinating experience and I can’t recommend it enough.”*







L to R: Samuel Sebenzo, Adrian Appo, CEO Equity Health Solutions and Joshua Halliday

*“ Mill House provided the extra set of hands and insights that every new start up needs but rarely has. Sam and Josh came at the that opportune time when the business was moving from concept to delivery.”*

*- Adrian Appo (CEO, Equity Health Solutions)*

# CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Equity Health CEO, Adrian Appo, engaged Mill House Clinic with assist Equity Health Solutions with its integrated marketing message, social media strategy and the creation of legal templates, the final report delivered also focused on areas where the business can make a positive impact.

The work completed by the Mill House associates will assist EHS to focus on its purpose which is to provide premium quality and culturally appropriate health care solutions and deliver upon its social purpose.



## BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Like any other new business, the aim of the organisation is to enhance their profit margin quickly so that they can expand and help more people and communities. Here, the challenge is to raise awareness to acquire appropriate funding.



# OUR GOVERNANCE

The Mill House has two members, SERVICE ONE and The University of Canberra.

SERVICE ONE is a 100% customer-owned mutual and is part of Australia's first social enterprise banking network which aims to Do Good for Members and the Community.

The University of Canberra is a leading educational institution based in the Australian Capital Territory with 17,000 students from over 100 countries. An essential part of its strategy is to remain deeply engaged with communities in Australia's Capital Region, serving as a powerful engine of economic development, social well-being, creative thought and public discourse.

The Mill House also receives support from the Canberra Innovation Network (CBRIN). CBRIN is an ACT Government initiative - six world-class Canberra-based education and research institutions collaborate as Foundation Members of CBRIN. This partnership of prominent organisations through CBRIN has made innovation support become available to entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers, start-ups, students and established businesses throughout Canberra, ACT and the surrounding region.



The Mill House Board of Directors





# OUR PEOPLE



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**CINDY MITCHELL** 

Chief Executive Officer



# NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK AT UC

## JOIN US

To be involved in the growth of a thriving social ventures ecosystems in  
Canberra and the region  
Cindy Mitchell, CEO  
[Clinic@millhouseventures.com.au](mailto:Clinic@millhouseventures.com.au)



The Mill House Ventures Limited  
ABN: 73 628 583 611  
PO Box 5025 University of Canberra  
Bruce, ACT 2617