



OARS Community Transitions

Culture Statement

Introduction

This Culture Statement expresses the mind-set of OARS CT and our organisational way of life. It aims to communicate the values and philosophies that underpin our work. It applies to how we treat our clients and how we treat each other. OARS CT organisational culture is a product of our history, our current actions and our passionate desire for an improved and safer community. Ensuring that our culture is embedded comes not only from our Constitution, policies and procedures, but from our activities and interactions with clients and stakeholders. Setting and monitoring culture is the responsibility of our Board and CEO, but maintaining it and developing a positive culture is the responsibility of every employee and every volunteer. I want everyone associated with OARS CT to stand with me in this culture. The following statement has recently been reviewed and updated as part of our Board's Strategic Planning.

Statement of Purpose

Enhancing community wellbeing by reducing offending and victimisation

Strategic Directions

Reintegration Services
Clinical Services
Advocacy
Victims & Crime Prevention
Organisational Excellence

Our organisational culture needs to include perspectives that recognise the complex inter-relationships between the

- causes of crime and victimisation,
- ways in which crime and victimisation can be prevented,
- ways in which people who offend and create harm can be held accountable, and to whom they should be accountable,
- ways in which people who offend and create harm can achieve a pro-social life without crime,
- ways in which victims need healing and reparation.

Service Culture

OARS CT uses the Good Lives Model (GLM) as the foundation of our services for clients. This is a strengths-based approach which is based on the concept that building onto the existing capacity and strengths in our clients will provide opportunities that will reduce their risk of reoffending. By providing the client with knowledge, skills, opportunities, resources and support we are empowering and encouraging them to make decisions essential for longer term success, both for them individually, for their families, and for the community. An understanding of the harms that victims receive result of crime (restorative justice) is also very significant in our work, and separates us from most other organisations that work with people who have offended.

We are not a welfare group. We do provide some basic items, such as household goods to ease the transition back into the community, but our purpose is to empower pro-social change so our clients can access the services available, identify and make changes to their behaviour, challenge their way of thinking (including about their victims) and enable them to make positive changes to their lives and lifestyles. By valuing their input, effort and contribution to society we reinforce their value and ability to lead proactive lives and empower them to make positive choices.

The majority of our clients will improve their circumstances with our help. We endeavour to share and celebrate these successes when we can for the benefit of our clients and for us. It is important that we appreciate the many small milestones such as a client making a positive choice independently. These first tentative steps to client empowerment are the start of a life changing pattern and positive reinforcement is encouraged. Staff record such instances, which are acknowledged with the client directly at the time, but can also be used to reflect upon when a setback occurs.

To maximise our ability to help our clients it is important that we:

1. ASK clients about their needs and expectations, but also about our performance in helping them.
2. EMPOWER experienced staff to share examples of best practice, suggest improvements and are able to make judgement calls that meet business needs and assist the clients.
3. RECOGNISE the importance of the services we provide and the difference that these can make to the lives of our clients and those in the wider community when we get it right
4. INCLUDE staff, making each aware of expectations during the induction process, provide regular updates and ensure that everyone is aware of and committed to our culture, vision and mission.
5. ACT in a professional way, support our clients, colleagues and our partners, settling examples as positive role models, and celebrating successes.
6. LOOK at case notes and research best practice, to ensure that we are providing the right services in a way that is easily accessible to the client.

Staff Culture

We recognise that staff, be they employees, volunteers or student placements, are drawn to OARS CT because they enjoy assisting people and want to make a difference. The clients with whom we work almost always come to us with levels of complexity in their lives that requires careful and caring support and management, but which must also be mixed with a level of accountability for their behaviour to their families and friends, society in general, and very importantly, to the victim/s of their crime. We must never be tempted to have a “rescue mentality”. Our support must be underpinned by the notion that we need to work WITH our clients, not do things TO THEM or FOR THEM.

OARS CT staff are recruited for their professional skills and experience, but also for their compassion and their desire to affect social change. In some instances a career with OARS CT commences after a period of volunteering, for others the volunteering sits alongside employment e.g. at the OARS CT Family Centre at Yatala Labour Prison (the Boomgate) or facilitating our Circles of Support and Accountability program (COSA). Having adopted the Good Lives Model we thus utilise a strong and proven framework that helps staff to identify areas of development and provide practical advice and support to clients.

In all cases a strong sense of team is important to OARS CT. We work in a demanding environment and have a number of policies and procedures designed to support our staff and keep them safe. OARS CT provides a regular and structured Staff Supervision framework and this is important because seemingly small errors or oversights by staff can have major consequences for clients both personally and legally. The criminal justice system is also very complex and experienced supervision and peer support are vital to our success. It has also been our clear intention to bring together the Accommodation Services Teams with the Clinical Teams to implement an integrated service approach. This is working well and is designed to assist in collaborative work across all service domains at OARS CT.

There is no policy or procedure that can replace human instinct or empathy. When you see great work being done acknowledge it to the worker and tell management about it. If you see a colleague or client in distress ensure that this is raised, with the individual where possible, or with a manager if this is more appropriate. If you see an act or behaviour that contradicts our values and/or our culture we ask that you speak up. **“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept”**. (Lt General David Morrison ADF 2013)

Your involvement and engagement is essential to ensuring that we are all able to work in a positive, proactive and professional workplace. We set and maintain standards with each action and interaction that occurs. Where an issue occurs, staff are encouraged to speak up and resolve the matter promptly, using the Grievance Policy or the Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy, as appropriate. No culture is perfect but I hope that we can develop and improve the OARS CT culture over time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leigh Garrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leigh Garrett

CEO

May 2018