

A leader's innovation journey

Byron Shire Respite Service CEO shares his experience

The aged care sector in Australia is evolving rapidly, with increasing demands for quality services, effective leadership and innovative strategies. For leaders working in this sector, staying ahead of these changes is crucial.

Peter Devine, CEO of Byron Shire Respite Service, is navigating the challenges of the reforms by embracing the changes.

His decision to attend the Aged & Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA) Strategic Innovation Program – an initiative of the innovation network known as InnovAGEING – was driven by a curiosity to engage with a program that is helping leaders develop innovative solutions for long-term growth in the sector.

ACCPA partnered with Crazy Might Work to deliver the inaugural program in August, and it was our pleasure to support the facilitator Chief Combobulator Paul Hawkins, who has formal qualifications in education, business and innovation and is accredited in neuroscience and appreciative inquiry. His PhD is in breakthrough innovation and his passion is bringing leadership lessons from frontiers like space to the workplace.

Together we worked through the program to unlock participants' creative genius and inspire innovative solutions, confronting blind spots and reimagining organisational business models – working with amazing people like Peter.

"After attending the sessions, I walked away really inspired. I filled a wall with ideas from the workshop – my own drawings, notes and some of Paul's slides," said Peter.

"Over the course of two meetings, our leadership team and I have gone through this 'vision wall' and my key takeaways from the workshop.

"Following one of the meetings our operations coordinator, completely focused on systems thinking, even

began sending me messages about new insights she's discovered."

The focus of the program on neuroscience, strategy and innovation was a key motivator for Peter. One of the standout features for him was its emphasis on practical, actionable strategies that could be directly implemented within his business.

"We've already started implementing some of the concepts and processes we learned, like analogous inquiry and appreciative inquiry," he said.

"We picked out key elements that spoke to us as a leadership team, and we're focusing on embedding those into our operations. One example is using a mind map approach to innovate not just with our core group but also involving stakeholders more deeply."

Peter said one of the most valuable aspects of the ACCPA Strategic Innovation Program was experiencing a new way of connecting strategy and innovation. He initially attended with a specific strategic problem – how to expand his organisation in a healthy manner – but soon realised the program was less focused on the strategy and more focused on rethinking the approach.

This realisation challenged Peter to rethink his focus and to reflect on the organisational issues within Byron Shire Respite Service that were potentially more receptive to the concepts and processes being discussed in the program.

By the end of the first day, he had set aside his original problem and had spent time in reflection, walking around Sydney deep in thought and completely reworking his approach. He returned the next day with a new set of questions and a refreshed mindset.

Networking was also a major benefit of the program. Peter found that connecting with other leaders in the sector who were facing similar

challenges gave him fresh perspectives and new ideas.

"Another leader in attendance of the program connected me with the head of technology from another organisation," he said.

"We bonded over a practice he had been able to implement, which I had previously been told wasn't possible.

"We exchanged information and he insisted I reach out if I ever needed anything or wanted to bounce an idea off of him, so making that connection was fantastic."

Peter's experience at the ACCPA Strategic Innovation Program highlights the importance of continuous learning and strategic thinking within the aged and community care sector.

The program offered a unique opportunity to participate in a program based on the principles of neuroscience, systems thinking and design theory.

Participants like Peter gained valuable insights into utilising a collection of concepts and systems to creatively address key questions and issues.

Moving forward, Peter and the team at Byron Shire Respite Service look forward to continuing the journey of innovation as they embrace change and evolve along the way.

"Overall, the experience was incredibly valuable and has already had a significant impact on our team's way of thinking and working, I'd absolutely recommend the program to other aged care leaders."

For details about the ACCPA Strategic Innovation Program or dates for 2025, please email innovageing@accpa.asn.au

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