

Dr Chris Bourke
Member for Ginninderra
Adjournment Debate
“Paperworks”

On Friday last week I was invited to open an art exhibition at the Belconnen Arts Centre which was organised by a group called Paperworks.

Paperworks aims to engage in activities that will increase the participation of socially marginalised people in our community. These people may be marginalised due to a disability or social disadvantage.

Paperworks facilitates several activities such as an Artisans Studio which is run as part of a social enterprise to create handmade and other paper craft products for sale. It also offers papermaking workshops to schools, community organisations and the wider community.

Participants in Paperworks are encouraged to become more independent, to develop their skills, to foster new friendships and to interact with the wider community and arts organisations.

I want to congratulate Paperworks on this year achieving one of its important goals - to employ artisans from socially marginalised groups in Canberra. At the moment Paperworks-employed artisans have part-time rotational employment. Paperworks is looking at other ways of increasing employment and training opportunities for socially marginalised people in the Canberra community.

Paperworks is a good local example of a social business. Social business, as the term is commonly used, was first defined by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus. In Yunus' definition, a social business is a non-loss, non-dividend company designed to address a social objective within the highly regulated marketplace of today. It is distinct from a not for profit organisation because the business should seek to generate a modest profit but this profit is used to expand the company's reach or improve the product or service as a way of subsidising the social mission.

You could describe a social business as any business which has a social rather than a purely financial objective.

The ACT Government is very happy to see the progress being made by Paperworks which has been made possible by funding provided through Disability ACT.

Paperworks also runs two socially inclusive papermaking sessions on Fridays at Belconnen Arts Centre. The purpose is to use craft and art as a tool to improve social engagement.

The exhibition that I opened was called Transience. It was a collaboration of the Paperworks-employed artisans and the participants in the Friday morning and afternoon papermaking sessions. The theme of the exhibition was to reflect upon our human life - its hidden potentials - and its transience. The ideas and imagination of everyone involved could be seen in the beautiful plant fibre art works.

The exhibition would not have been possible without Paperworks' paper maker and Artistic Director maker Susan Pieterse. I have been told that Susan is always full of ideas and has never ending patience when explaining the complexities of paper making and guiding participants in the right direction.

I should also mention Adelle Grivas who brought her experience and inspiration to the Friday sessions along with many volunteers who cut denim into small squares and dried flowers for the art works. Paperworks always appreciates the support it receives from Hannah Semler and all the staff at Belconnen Arts Centre.

I would like close by congratulating the Paperworks Committee on being very proactive in creating opportunities for artisans and especially for looking at ways to employ more people and thus grow Paperworks. (522)