



Hard Cuddles

James 'The Hammer' Harding is the founder and driving force behind Hard Cuddles, the social enterprise that helps addicts and criminals work through their emotional trauma and claw their way out of the abyss. Hard Cuddles clients are predominantly those which are deemed 'undesirables' in communities; drug addicts, criminals and those who have been incarcerated and are re-adjusting back into society.

James is a recovering drug addict now 10 years sober. At his worst he was a 77 kilogram rake in desperate need of some love, guidance and support. He started Hard Cuddles nearly 2 years ago in middle of 2017.

James wrote in his autobiography, also called Hard Cuddles, that he realised through his

own experiences that criminals and addicts carry a heavy emotional burden. Furthermore, for healing to begin to, these emotions must be worked through. Currently the clients pay for this service themselves but James is currently investigating options for this to be funded through the government.

Hard Cuddles is a registered company like any other company in Australia. It has a Chief Financial Officer (CFO), an Advisory Board and 3 Ambassadors. The advisory board acts as a sounding board for ideas and guidance but ultimately the decision lies with James who is the Director. The Ambassadors assist James in running the different programs. Former Australian professional surf lifesaver Trevor Hendy, now life coach and mentor, played an important role mentoring James to follow his dream and begin Hard Cuddles.

Mission, Vision and Purpose

James sees a lot of gaps in the mental health industry, in particular as a service that males can relate to. The purpose of Hard Cuddles is to spark a shift in self-belief through an unconventional style of supportive mentoring.

The mission is to provide a program that re-engages humans with emotional balance, clarity and

self-belief. This provides the client with the opportunity to work through various levels of spiritual enlightenment, mentoring, counselling and keynote speaking, workshops, retreats and other outdoor therapy and experiences. This promotes a healthy level of connection with the true self and a deeper understanding of one's own wellbeing.

The mission is to provide an alternative process that teaches people how to move through challenges and re-evaluate what is really important in life, with the aim to create a charity arm that supports community development, male suicide and homelessness.

“The most important thing any human can learn in life is there really isn't a right from wrong, there is only what you learn from life”

James ‘The Hammer’ Harding

Programs

New clients must be the right fit for James before he takes them onboard. He meets with every new client to understand what they are



'Into The Wild' Program

looking to achieve, what their motivations are and whether they are dedicated or not.

Programs on offer include 'Into The Wild' and 'One-on-One Mentoring', among many others. The 'Into The Wild' experience enables men to get back to nature and be in the present. The essence of 'Into The Wild' is clarity, free-thinking and re-evaluation as an opportunity to look inwards and find truth through deep personal reflection.



'Into The Wild' Program

The 'One-on-One Mentoring' is an in-person consultation in which the client begins to uncover and learn what they really want from life. It covers everything from dealing with emotional challenges, intimate relationships, self-belief, clarity, balance to a greater understanding of the natural flow of the universe.

James is also busy with public speaking where he gives his audience a rare and authentic insight into the power of self-belief.

Stakeholders

The obvious stakeholders are family and friends, who have been touched by the devastation that drugs and crime bring. However, the suffering of loved ones is nothing compared to the shame and guilt experienced by the clients that come to Hard Cuddles to clean up their lives.

The impacts on the community due to drug associated

crimes are many; break-ins, robbery, violence, assaults, theft and home invasions, among others. Some of the flow on effects of these crimes are house and car insurance premium increases, a feeling of being 'un-safe' and damage to property. This puts pressure on the government's expenditure in the public health system, police resources as well as the costs of building and operating prisons.



James 'The Hammer' Harding & Robert Andersson



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The cost for someone to be in prison is \$323/day. As taxpayers, we must all ask ourselves if this is money well spent or could savings be made by investing in preventative programs? Generational cycles of violence and poverty can be broken given the correct interventions, and James believes that Hard Cuddles provides this.

Education

Through a Diploma of Counselling course, James is now an qualified therapist. It was one of the hardest things he ever had to do, as his kinaesthetic learning style made the theory almost unbearable. During the course he was told by his teachers to never share personal stories with clients. This is where James differs from other therapists, as he believes that for one human to be able to connect with another the client must feel a connection through a dialogue of shared experiences.

In the course, the teachers also told him that a relationship with a client ends at the end of the session. James thinks that this automatically makes the client no more than a number. James continues to build his clients up outside of therapy, treating them as friends. This is essential as his clients are shedding their own skin, friendships and circles of past behaviours which bring about the dangers of loneliness and isolation.

When his clients reach a certain point in their healing, they connect with the Hard Cuddles brotherhood of like-minded individuals who walked the same road and intrinsically understand that this is part of the healing process.

The Prison Presentation

James presents a self-belief workshop for inmates in prisons in an attempt to showcase the Hard Cuddles program. The workshop, like all Hard Cuddles programs, is real, raw and relevant. He also runs an ongoing case study with 10 inmates on the effects of rehabilitation support in and out of prison.

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*James ‘The Hammer’
Harding*

The future

James currently works with a business consultant that guides him to unpack his own business in terms of strategy and marketing. He imagines a company with 10,000 active cases, with less focus on profit and more focus on producing empowered staff and clients.



This can be achieved through layers of mentoring, support, external consulting specialists and effective processes. James believes that the best people practice what they preach in terms of ethics and also share and collaborate with others to bring balance.

To be able to keep the authenticity of the program, James would have qualified psychologists and therapists training mentors that have been through the Hard Cuddles program. This way, the new clients

will meet a trained mentor that they can relate to, rather than a psychologist that has never walked in their shoes.

James's wife Kate inspired the vision of a retreat, a 20 acre farm on the coast, that is fully sustainable with food and energy. Here, Hard Cuddles will host clients as they rehabilitate emotionally. The retreat will provide access to the finest professionals involved in spiritual well-being and will be centred around the power of salt water and the ocean.

Research Appendix

I conducted an in-person interview with James 'The Hammer' Harding on Thursday 4th April 2019.

The interview was held at a Guildford's Restaurant Café in Seaford between approximately 1-3:30 pm.

The interview was recorded on my iPhone.

Photos are either taken by me or copied with consent from James Harding from the Hard Cuddles website.

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