

Chef comes full circle to lead first social enterprise cafe

Jodie Bruton

ACCLAIMED chef David Kapay will head up Wodonga's first social enterprise cafe run by Junction Support Services.

On Friday, February 2, not-for-profit Junction Support Services announced it would open Close Collective Cafe at the iconic art deco building fronting Woodland Grove in Wodonga CBD during March.

Junction Support Services chief executive Megan Hanley said the project, which was in the pipeline since 2020, combined high-quality cafe fare and the chance for patrons to give back to their community.

She said all cafe profits would be reinvested in local youth and community support programs through Junction Support Services.

"As a community service organisation, we are committed to innovation, and we believe that embracing innovative approaches can enhance the impact and sustainability of programs, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for the communities we work alongside," she



Megan Hanley and David Kapay. Picture by Tara Trehwella

said. "David is also passionate about building strong, thriving communities by investing in and empowering young people, so naturally we are thrilled to have him on board."

With the former operator of Wodonga restaurant Miss Amelie, Kapay, at the helm, Close Collective Cafe will employ a core staff of

eight and roll out training programs for youth within six months.

Having started at Cafe Grove on the same site 25 years ago straight out of high school, Kapay himself had come full circle back to the heart of Wodonga.

"I started my apprenticeship in this kitchen back in 1999," he said.

"Since those Grove days over 20 years ago, I've worked my way to the top, so returning to where it all started and giving back is very important. It completes the full circle.

"I'm excited to sink my teeth into this new chapter and re-activate this Wodonga landmark."

Having worked alongside

celebrity English chef Jamie Oliver at Fifteen London, a non-profit restaurant that trained people from disadvantaged backgrounds, over four years from 2005, Kapay said he had gained invaluable insights early in his career.

"It's all about patience, communication and connections with individuals and working out their passions and what interests them," Kapay said.

"It's sharing a feeling of empowerment they may not have experienced before."

Kapay said the chance to give back to the community while sharing his passion for fresh, local produce was compelling.

He sold Miss Amelie in mid-2023 and now relished a return to the commercial kitchen.

"Close Collective Cafe is about the bigger picture; the core values of the cafe and Junction really inspired my return to the kitchen," he said.

Ms Hanley said Close Collective acknowledged the work of Junction Support Services staff member Kate Close, who died in 2022

from cancer.

"Kate was a strong advocate for young people and her passion is reflected in this new enterprise," Ms Hanley said. "Junction works day-to-day with youth who may find it challenging to gain work experience."

"Close Collective Cafe will become a platform for empowering and uplifting local youth by providing them with meaningful employment and skills development opportunities."

"The future vision is that the cafe will operate as a training ground for young people, offering them valuable experience in hospitality and business management."

Junction Support Services cafe project lead Colleen Tait said the venture was a labour of love that would invest in future generations.

Trainees will develop skills such as baristas, front of house or back of house.

"It's about them learning transferable skills," Ms Tait said.

Situated at 198a High Street, Close Collective Cafe will offer weekday breakfast and lunch service between 7am and 3pm.

Python presides in Pulletop

Andrew Mangelsdorf

RIVERINA resident Richard Wilton was greeted with a slithering sight when he walked out of his home early on Monday morning, January 29.

Looking up, he noticed a python of more than two metres with a diameter between 70 and 80 millimetres curled up on the beam under the verandah.

"It's probably the biggest snake I've seen out in the wild," he said.

Mr Wilton said the snake must have become aware of human activity because it then began to move.

"It must have seen us looking at it and tried to work out what was going on because it went up and was trying to get up into the roof.

"It ended up going up into the gutter, underneath the corrugated iron sheets and into the roof cavity."

Despite some concern from his wife, the Pulletop couple decided it was best to let the snake be.

"She was a bit worried," Mr Wilton said.

"It's up there somewhere."

"We decided not to worry about it in the end because it would be too difficult for (the snake catcher) to get up there and look for it and we live nearly an hour from Wagga," he said.

Besides, he said they have both heard "funny noises" coming from the roof space before.

"I reckon it's probably been this or another snake which ran up there before," Mr Wilton said.

"They probably go up there because there's bats, mice and rats in the roof."

Seeking professional advice from the snake man, Mr Wilton said he was told the python probably went in for a "look around and see if there's something to eat, then it will move on".

Reflecting on the amount of snake activity this summer, Mr Wilton said there had been more around.

"I've seen quite a few black and brown snakes around the garden," he said.

"We also see a few pythons, they're not unusual where we are."

Man arrested, charged over stabbing

A MAN has been arrested and charged following an alleged stabbing at Baranduda.

It's alleged Anthony Campbell's roommate suffered multiple wounds during the incident on the afternoon of Tuesday, January 30.

Anthony Campbell is facing charges, with the Wodonga court told there were

concerns about his declining mental health.

Campbell appeared briefly in court on Wednesday, January 31, with magistrate Peter Mithen told he would seek bail.

But police said the home nominated as his bail address raised safety concerns, given Campbell's mental

state and a lack of supports that would be in place if he were to be released.

The court heard he has schizophrenia.

Campbell will undergo a mental health assessment, and Mr Mithen said he wanted to see the results before considering his bail application.

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