



Waiters Union Community Work Training Options

The Waiters Union offers three options for people who want to learn how to live compassionately as a disciple of Christ in response to the distress of people in our communities.

Community Orientation Course (Two weeks)

An intensive course in the West End, Brisbane held midyear (June/July), and again at the end of the year (early December). The course is a two-week, grass-roots, face-to-face, show-and-tell, do-it-and-discuss-it intro to Christ-centred community work. A range of inputs from people involved with aborigines, refugees and people with dis-abilities in the neighbourhood. Most of the time participants live in a joint household, but will be able to stay over night now and then with people in the community. The course includes personal reflection, interpersonal interaction, group process, cooperative organisation, whole-hearted, holistic engagement, cross-cultural dialogue, practical service and nonviolent action. The costs of the course are decided by the participants in a group cost-sharing work-shop, that we run as part of the course.

Phone: (07) 3342-7724

Community Work Placement (Three months)

An opportunity for Christians who want an introductory experience of community work in general, and Christian community work with the poor in particular. Involves living in a community household in West End, and being involved in a range of community activities. Recommended for undergraduate and post-graduate university and seminary students looking for faith based community work placements.

Phone: (07) 3844-1043

Community Work Internship (Six to Twelve Months)

An opportunity for Christians who want an advanced experience of community work in general, and Christian community work with the poor in particular. Involves living in a community household in West End, and being involved in a range of community activities. Recommended for people wanting to explore faith based community work in more depth. Can be combined with part-time work and/or study.

Phone: (07) 3844-1043

For more information on any of our courses please email us at waitersunion@gmail.com.

Reflections

People come from all over Australia , New Zealand and from other parts of the world to take up the Waiters Union Community Work training options.

Lyn and Steve Hatfield-Dodds, describe their experience of the course they did.

'The daily program started with prayer. After breakfast we joined in studies. People shared of their life in the local community - involved in peace networks, community arts, housing assistance, legal aid, refugee resettlement, and offering hospitality and shelter to those without a place to stay. The afternoons were unstructured times, to allow us to get to know the neighbourhood, and its people. In the evenings we had dinner with different members of the network. Most days finished with a much-needed debriefing session. We also managed to squeeze in time to deliver meals on wheels, go on outings (with people who were intellectually disabled), and help out at an evening meal for over a hundred homeless men.

'The nine of us on the course lived in a group house for the first week, moving out to stay in boarding houses or hostels we found for ourselves in the second week. For many of us this was a difficult and sometimes frightening experience, living in the midst of depressed and often violent lives, and it was good to come back together for the last few days to the security of group living. Highlights of the course for us (included) being involved in a Murri service in a maximum security prison; hearing people's stories; developing friendships; (and) meeting people who not only talk about being compassionate, but who are trying to put these things into practice.'

Diane & Ross Coleman, Coordinators of HOPESTREET, an urban mission in Sydney, say:

'Urban ministry among the poor and marginalised has long been an interest of ours for many decades. Our initial exposure was through being involved with Baptist Inner City Ministries in inner city Sydney . Ross was involved in this ministry for many years as was I to a lesser extent. Our ministry involvement over the years since then has included prison work working with the unemployed, counselling and church planting.

'Incarnational mission and being 'Jesus' to people who you live and work amongst has been a priority for our work. Therefore as we moved back to the inner city to live and work among the urban poor we sought to find others who had trod this path before us to learn from their experience as well as their theologising about what they were doing. Our choice to attend the Waiters Union course was quite intentional to explore the above with people who had been living and working in this environment for many years. Our experience of the structure of the course, living in West End (in community) and being part of the work there reaffirmed our thoughts and experiences for our own ministry in inner city Sydney.

'Many from HOPESTREET Urban Compassion have attended the Waiters Union course. Indeed it is compulsory for our staff to attend this or a similar course (in other states) as part of their ongoing work in Sydney. There are few options available in Australia where people can explore missional contexts especially among the poor and marginalised where people are willing to live among the people they are reaching out to. Waiters Union provides a theological space to explore these issues with people who are willing to wrestle with and work through these issues and not come up with pat or easy answers. It has been heartening to find others who are continually exploring ways of being Jesus in these contexts where society generally disregards people as not worth the effort because they can not rise above their current circumstances. Being 'Jesus' in places where there is no 'upward lift' due to mental illness or poverty provides many challenges for ministry with sustainability being a constant challenge.

'I believe that the Waiters Union provides a prophetic voice to the church and society so that all people regardless of whether they can pay or not can hear the voice of Jesus in their situation. The 'in-kind' love support and friendship provided through people associated with the Waiters Union in West End challenges the most loving and giving of middle class churches that we have ever been part of.'

According to our latest research 8.5% of survey respondents said a Waiters course was 'very good', 66% of survey respondents said it was 'excellent' and 18.5% said it was the 'best thing I ever did'.