

Dining Grows To Meet Demand

Catering Is Better Than Any That CEO Has Seen In Three Countries

A move to contract catering for the aged care facility at Sydney's Allambie Heights Village Ltd has proved so successful that management has bowed to the demands of residents of the adjoining self-care retirement village and built an additional dining room.

Allambie Heights Village's CEO, Ciarán Foley, is absolutely delighted with this response which he sees as the ultimate compliment for contractor, Catering Industries.

Ciarán, who has wide ranging experience of aged care throughout the Republic of Ireland and the UK, says that Allambie Heights' catering is better than any he has seen.

To underscore the point he cites not only extraordinary levels of resident satisfaction, but the fact that the catering has scored three successive top ratings under the NSW Food Authority's audit scheme, in the last scoring a perfect 100 out of 100.

"The 100 out of 100 was phenomenal because the auditors go through everything.

"If there's a speck of dust they'll find it," Ciarán said.

The Village has had a six year relationship with Catering Industries following an



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Ongoing Quality, Service Praised

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exhaustive tender and evaluation process with a number of catering companies.

Ciarán said Catering Industries' price was very competitive but price was not the only driver of the tender. He and his senior staff spoke with the management of other facilities and sampled meals.

They also evaluated the manner in which the tender process was approached, taking particular note of each tenderer's professionalism and communications processes.

This level of thoroughness was seen as essential.

"The aged care industry has moved from a well-meaning, well intentioned cottage style industry to what has had to become professional in everything that we do.

"It's very much driven by customer choice, customer satisfaction and, of course, regulations.

"I've worked in three different countries and the one thing that all older people have in common is that food is most likely to be scrutinised, simply because it takes up so much of their day when you're looking at breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.

"That's a lot of focus on food so we've got to get it right," he said.

"While we're relatively small, catering to around 42 aged care residents as well as self-care residents, staff, visitors and volunteers, you are still looking at 50,000 meals a year.

"To get these right as much of the time as possible is a great achievement and Catering Industries does it.



*Allambie Heights Village Ltd CEO
Ciarán Foley*

"The past year in particular, the level of satisfaction was superb."

Not only are residents' views about the food sought in a formal way at residents' meetings and the like, but at least once a month during themed meals the managers right up to the CEO roll up their shirt sleeves and serve so as to get a first-hand feel for that satisfaction.

"Overall there's a high level of satisfaction so I'm really happy. It takes a lot of pressure off me and other managers when residents are happy with the food."

From a management perspective, Catering Industries ticked all of the boxes for Ciarán from day one.

At the tender stage he met with senior management and was impressed with their professionalism and attention to detail, an impression that held true as the relationship developed.

Ciarán was determined that residents and visitors would see catering and village staff as a single seamless entity, as one team of people.

As the key to this interaction was always going to be the choice of Chef Manager, Ciarán was delighted that he was given a direct involvement in the selection of the right person for that role from day one.

"That was crucial because the Chef Manager is not just cooking.

"He or she has to manage the team and the service and we have to ensure that the interaction between the catering staff and my staff and residents is seamless."

The process over six years has worked so well that catering staff are always invited to Allambie Heights Village's staff social events. Moreover, the turnover of catering staff has been at an agreeably low level.

Ciarán said that testament to Allambie's level of satisfaction was the fact that in six years the Village has not had cause to go out to test the market for catering.

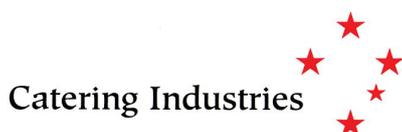
"Once a year there's a review of finances, budgeting and prices but the quality has been such it has never been necessary to formally review it. It is ongoing.

"Indeed, the fact that the Retirement Village residents asked for a dining room shows the level of satisfaction.

"I've been very impressed year in and year out. If I do have any issues I have only to ring Catering Industries' Director of Operations or the Area Manager and they address them immediately.

"Catering Industries is a family business based on good traditional values and high attention to detail.

"They're very easy to work with and if we have any problems they always provide a solution," Ciarán said.



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