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WORK AND WELCOME



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Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Work & Welcome Newsletter.

With half the year already behind us, it is a perfect time to reflect on the many program achievements over the year to date. Work & Welcome remains a unique program offering invaluable job opportunities for refugees and migrants in a very supportive environment. There are now 22 workplaces who partner with MDA in the

program, and more than 90 refugees and migrants have participated in it since the year 2000.

We have been delighted to partner with four new workplaces this year:

- Lourdes Hill College (Hawthorne, Brisbane)
- St Rita's College (Clayfield, Brisbane)
- Loreto College (Coorparoo, Brisbane)
- Maurice Blackburn Lawyers (Sydney)

With Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, the third non-school partner has now joined the program, helping us to provide an ever increasing breadth of placement opportunities.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the generous staff at each workplace who make this program happen and also provide the encouragement and support to welcome our new arrivals. You have enriched the lives of many people we now call friends.

Thank you also to every new Work & Welcome participant who has shown the courage and determination to step forward and start re-building their lives in Australia. We wish you every success on the exciting journey ahead.

Mark Taylor
Work & Welcome Program Coordinator

Josie Romanelli
MDA Employment Advisor



Yasir Rehman – Loreto Normanhurst

Yasir is a stark reminder of the diverse skill sets that many migrants and former refugees bring with them on their arrival to Australia. Fluent in four languages, Yasir is also a qualified scientist, having obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Pakistan. Since arriving in Australia, Yasir has gained qualifications in security work and was the successful applicant for a Term 2 Work & Welcome placement with Loreto Normanhurst College in Sydney. Having left a great impression on his colleagues, Yasir is now employed by the school on an ongoing basis as an Admin Assistant.



Albert Kariyo (left) – Marist College

The sense of community offered at Marist College, Ashgrove, has been an integral part of Albert's journey towards establishing himself in Australia. Everybody has the right to share their culture, and Albert got to do just that in a series of presentations to students and staff. In time, the school community came to feel like family to Albert, who spent much of his Work & Welcome experience putting his fluency in French to good use in the classroom.

In turn, the school community rallied behind Albert's application to enrol in the Bachelor of Psychology program at Griffith University. With his application successful, Albert is now pursuing his studies full time, while continuing to work one day a week at Marist and volunteering at the Greenslopes Private Hospital. In time, Albert hopes to become a psychologist, offering support to others, including migrants and refugees with similar experiences of dislocation.

Mudeser Kelifa (right) – Marist College

Originally from Ethiopia, Mudeser fled to Egypt as a refugee in 2010 where he lived for four years until gaining the opportunity to resettle in Australia a year ago. Previously a qualified nurse with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing, Mudeser has focused much of his energy building English language proficiency through TAFE Queensland's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) over the past 12 months. With his studies in English nearing completion, a Work & Welcome placement with Marist College has enabled Mudeser to apply his existing skill once again through working in the school's Health Centre. Through this experience, Mudeser is now on track to his ultimate career goal of becoming a nurse in Australia. As a stepping stone on this pathway, Mudeser is currently undertaking certificate studies in Aged Care.

Continuing the journey

For recently arrived refugees and migrants, participation in the Work & Welcome program offers a vital first step towards unleashing longer term career goals and aspirations. It's



therefore a pleasure and privilege to retain contact with past program participants and to see their individual journeys unfold.

Ambreen Shah

Ambreen was a Work & Welcome participant with Loreto Normanhurst in Term 2 last year. With Librarian and Teacher Aide qualifications already under her belt, her Work & Welcome placement enabled her to apply these skills in the school's library, in turn opening ongoing casual work as a Library Assistant with Loreto Normanhurst.



Gabriel Ukuno

From Work & Welcome to New Australian of the Year, Gabriel's 2001 placement at Padua College, Kedron, set the foundations for more than a decade of outstanding professional and community contributions. Originally from Sudan (prior to the creation of a separate South Sudanese state), Gabriel's life was turned upside down when his brother, a prominent politician, was murdered at the hands of rebel forces only a stone's throw from where he was standing. Himself a journalist at the time, Gabriel used his profession to criticise the state and its complicit role in enabling the corruption, violence and extrajudicial killings that were tearing his nation and life apart. This undertaking made him the target of numerous death threats and eventually forced him to leave his own country in search of safety. A bright young scholar, Gabriel lived the simultaneous life of refugee and student in numerous countries, though a permanent settlement solution proved hard to find. Down to his last dollar and on the brink of being forced back into Sudan where he would face near certain death, a last minute encounter with a priest with Australian connections would open the permanent resettlement pathway that Gabriel and family so desperately craved.

Gabriel was one of the early Work & Welcome program participants when it was called 'Job Pledge' and coordinated solely by Mark Taylor out of Padua College. The completion of his placement quickly opened doors that have seen Gabriel make enormous contributions in the fields of settlement, education and community development. Gabriel was one of the founding members of the Queensland African Communities Council, the peak body representing African communities in Queensland. In the realm of education, Gabriel has been a passionate advocate for systemic reform to better accommodate the learning needs of thousands of African people who arrived as refugees. The remnants of this reform are still seen in the pedagogical approach used by TAFE Queensland and in secondary schools with diverse student cohorts, including Yeronga State High School where he continues to work to this day.

On top of all this, Gabriel remains a committed family man, and immensely proud of his grown-up children and their accomplishments.

The New Australian of the Year Award, introduced by the Australia Day Council this year, acknowledges the contributions of people who have migrated to Australia within the last 18 years. It came as an enormous surprise to Gabriel, who remains characteristically humble and gracious. Although quietly proud, he says he wishes the trophy could be carved up and its pieces distributed equally amongst the many African Queenslanders who have contributed to the settlement wellbeing of their respective communities, often involving countless hours of voluntary service performed outside the remit of their regular jobs. "The award belongs to the entire community," he said.

Read more at <http://catholicleader.com.au/news/honour-humbles-gabriel>



Apande Gong

As a Work & Welcome Ambassador, Apande is for many people the public face of the program, delivering inspired presentations to prospective partnering workplaces that provide the impetus to come on board!

Originally from South Sudan, Apande arrived in Australia in 1998 before undertaking two Work & Welcome program placements - at Padua College in 2006 and at Marist College in 2007. Her natural flair as a communicator was instantly apparent as she delivered captivating presentations to the two schools' respective staff and student cohorts.

It's this same flair that has been an invaluable asset to the program ever since, as she continues to showcase the unique strengths of the program through generously sharing her personal experiences to new audiences. Every new Work & Welcome partner means the creation of new opportunities to recently arrived refugees and migrants. In this way, Apande's talents and spirit have created pathways to employment for people she has never even met.

These achievements are just the tip of the iceberg for Apande, who has worked as a youth worker with Youth Housing Project in Brisbane for the past six years. She has successfully completed a Diploma in Community Services and more recently, a Bachelor Degree of Social Science making her the first person in her entire family to obtain a university degree. On top of all this, Apande is the proud single mother of 5 beautiful children.

Congratulations and thank you Apande - we are so proud to have you as our Ambassador!

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