Work & Welcome participant Cha Koma, Jess Sillett and MDA staff member Mohammad Azad at St Brendan’s College, Yeppoon

Breaking records and new ground in 2014!

Dear friends and supporters,

With yet another year coming to a close, it’s the perfect time to take a minute and reflect on all we’ve achieved together this year – a year in which Work & Welcome truly broke new ground and created more employment opportunities for new Australians than ever before.

Six new workplaces have joined the program in 2014, including the first two non-schools, as well as other schools based in regional Queensland and New South Wales. The interest and support from new partners like the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) and the Brisbane Catholic Education Office (BCEO) hold the exciting prospect of further expansion into the private sector in the year ahead.

The generosity of partnering workplace staff saw donations to Work & Welcome in 2013-14 nearly double from the previous financial year, translating to a record 16 participants successfully placed across 13 host employers. In addition to SLQ and BCEO, Work & Welcome was adopted by the following new workplace partners this year:

- Loreto Normanhurst (Sydney)
- St Patrick’s College (Shorncliffe, Brisbane)
- St Brendan’s College (Yeppoon)
- Mt Alvernia College (Kedron, Brisbane)

Making a world of difference

Work & Welcome is a workplace giving program with a grassroots difference. Staff at participating workplaces know their contributions matter. They get to work alongside the very individuals whose lives their generous donations are changing.

If you would like to support Work & Welcome through regular payroll deductions, visit the MDA website to download the Payroll Deduction Form for your workplace.

Alternatively, donations can be made via the GiveNow website.
Work & Welcome wins Premier’s Award

The Premier’s Cultural Diversity Awards are awarded each year to recognise the valuable contributions of Queenslanders who support our state’s cultural diversity and help build an inclusive and harmonious community.

The 2014 winners were announced on 30 August 2014 at a gala dinner attended by 280 people. Work & Welcome was thrilled to be declared joint winner of the Education and Training category in recognition of its 20 year history of helping newly-arrived refugees and migrants find employment.

Program founder and coordinator, Mark Taylor, and MDA’s Manager Employment & Training, Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum, shared a table at the awards with Jane Connolly and Enrique Ramirez from BCEO along with BCEO’s first Work & Welcome program participant, Samir Hussain.

For more info, visit here.
Introducing our Term 4 participants

Placements for the final school term this year are now well underway. Introducing the latest proud Work & Welcome participants:

Luz Mosquera – Mt St Michael’s College

Originally from Colombia, Luz arrived in Australia in 2011 as an asylum seeker before being granted permanent protection in 2013. She has a strong background in community education, including launching awareness-raising initiatives to help promote healthy diet and lifestyle choices amongst people from low socio-economic backgrounds. Coordinating ‘breakfast clubs’ for students in her home town is one shining example, along with the coordination of food parcel drop offs for families in need. Luz is excited to bring her passion for education to her new role with the Mt St Michael’s College through Work & Welcome.
Oscar Zambrano – Brisbane Catholic Education Office

Oscar is also originally from Colombia, where he had developed advanced professional skills in IT; in an unfortunate twist, these same skills were in demand amongst local guerilla groups, and he was forced to work for one such group against his will. He eventually escaped, finding safety in Australia in 2009, and now hopes to resume his professional career once more in his new home country.
Tamin Amini – Villanova College

A former refugee from Afghanistan, Tamin was living with his family in Pakistan before moving to Australia to seek safety from the constant risk of persecution and violence at the hands of the Taliban. He has well-honed sales, organisational and administrative skills from earlier work roles in Pakistan and hopes to use his Work & Welcome experience to help shape and influence his future decisions about employment pathways in Australia.

Saied Ghouschi – Nudgee College
Saied left Iran with his family in search of safety before eventually being granted protection in Australia. He initially spent time improving his English language and literacy in the hope of someday being able to utilise his professional training once more. Saied has a strong professional background in sports education and sports centre management, including a university degree in physical education and applied experience in delivering programs in sports and nutrition. Through Work & Welcome, he hopes to set himself on a pathway to using these skills once more.

**Abdirahman Arte – John Paul College**

As sad as they are, refugee camps also sometimes bring out the best in people as they strive to gain a sense of normalcy and civic pride in places that no one should have to live in. Abdirahman's story is one of these, as five years spent as a refugee from Somalia in a Kenyan refugee camp were also the context for him developing skills in leadership, education and logistics, which saw him become a valued member of the community he found himself living in. Now resettled in Australia, Abdirahman hopes that Work & Welcome will open up opportunities to further unleash his entrepreneurial spirit.

**Godeberthe Gwahezaki – St Saviour's, Toowoomba**

A mother of four and originally from the Congo, Godeberthe Gwahezaki has a natural flair for working with people. A nurse in her native Congo, she completed all modules for a Certificate III in Aged Care last January. Godeberthe is undertaking a variety of administrative and classroom support roles during her time at St Saviour's.

**Khaja Mohammed Yusuf – Loreto Normanhurst, Sydney**

Yusuf has a wealth of experience in IT and marketing in both his home country of Bangladesh and abroad in Dubai, Kuwait and Pakistan, along with 4 years of experience as a high-school science and maths teacher and as a small business owner. Coming to Australia with his wife and two young children in early 2014, Yusuf was determined to find employment that would support his family and put his broad experience to use whilst they await the outcome of their asylum application; an ambition now realised through his placement with Loreto Normanhurst in Sydney.
Work & Welcome redemption for double survivor

An incredible tale of survival against all odds, Aruna’s story brings together both the best qualities of the human spirit with the true power of employment to realise one person’s potential as a productive, contributing force in the Queensland community.

It was not long after arriving in Brisbane as a refugee from Nepal that Aruna, a single mother with a thirteen-year-old daughter, was confronted with the unthinkable. A seemingly innocuous lump on her tongue - first addressed by physicians with courses of antibiotics - continued to grow and on further consultation with specialists in the early months of this year was diagnosed as cancer.

“It was hard for me, so hard. Not so much for me (personally)…but I was in a new place with a small child. If I was alone and became sick, then ‘my time is my time’. But if anything happened to me here, what would happen to my daughter?”

For the second time in as many years Aruna was plunged back into survivor mode, persevering through surgery, intensive radiotherapy and other treatment that would continue for several months.

“After finishing my radiation therapy, I was so sick. But also, psychologically I was so
tense. My mind was full of all the bad things. I was worried it (the cancer) would come back.”

MDA case workers connected Aruna with counselling support, while also supporting her to engage with speech pathologists to help her learn to speak again. But the biggest break came when Aruna’s case worker suggested she consider applying for a job placement through the Work & Welcome program. After some encouragement, Aruna applied and was the successful applicant for a placement with Padua College in Kedron.

“I was very excited, but scared! I felt if they don’t understand me, it might not work.”

“But just to get to talk to the people at work has been good. My health is improving. I talk with different people every day. Every time there I do a good job. In the beginning, sometimes people couldn’t understand. But now they understand me very well.”

Aruna believes the employment experience through Work & Welcome has played an important role in her settlement and recovery from illness.

“I have my voice again,” she said.
Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum
(07) 3337 5423
0432 324 573
SebastianRH@mdaltd.org.au
www.mdaltd.org.au