

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS....

Remember the smell of the Royal Easter show when you were a child? What special family memories it evokes. The House of Welcome is very grateful to the NSW Royal Agricultural Society for providing a very special day out for clients of the House of Welcome to visit the Royal Easter Show. We were granted a VIP tour of the Show and wonderful family memories were created for a whole new generation.



We are also grateful to Kiama For Refugees who provide the opportunity for a day trip to Kiama with a wonderful lunch & a group of volunteers welcoming us at the beach. The most recent school holiday day trip was a huge hit with 8 families and 20 children. Caseworker Jessica Punch said *"To see the faces on the kids, especially, as they arrive at the beach and their toes hit the sand, is such a privilege. It is wonderful to see the cares of the world disappear for a special time of relaxing with family and friends."*



House of Welcome exists with the help of over 100 volunteers who make our programs happen. To every volunteer and supportive community member, we say THANK YOU!!! None of this would be possible without your help.



CATCH UP

with Case Worker Tash Halay

In 2013 I was on the search for an organization to commence my study placement and after volunteering at Villawood detention centre, I knew that I wanted to work in a capacity where I was supporting and advocating for people seeking asylum. This began my journey at House of Welcome, where I am now part of the casework team.

No two days are the same. We're a small team here, so we all wear a number of hats; from caseworker, community engagements, and workshops at schools – it's great to be involved in so many aspects of the service.

We're preparing ourselves for the impacts the current policy change will have on thousands of people seeking asylum in the community. Access to the financial security net, casework and torture and trauma counselling offered to people on bridging visas will be removed, with the first wave of single men and women being impacted as early as June 4th. These changes mean the House of Welcome will receive referrals to a large number of people in crisis.

The strength of House of Welcome has always been its flexibility and ability to respond to changing needs. In this atmosphere of crisis we will always strive to empower our clients and welcome people with dignity. The Empowered to Work program is one proactive response from our service to provide assistance for clients to enter the Australian workforce.



House of Welcome is a project of St Francis Social Services.

To volunteer or donate, please visit: www.stfrancis.org.au

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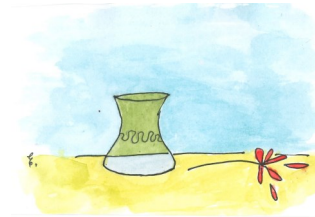
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HW HOUSE OF WELCOME

A project of St Francis Social Services

Winter 2018



If within my poems /You take out the flower/From the four seasons/One of my seasons will die.

If you exclude love/Two of my seasons will die.

If you exclude bread/Three of my seasons will die.

And if you take away freedom/ All four seasons and I will die.

Separation, Sherko Bekas

Ai Weiwei's *Law of the Journey* - a 60-metre inflatable raft installation carrying more than 250 figures - looms large and imposing in the 2018 Biennale. This epic art piece amplifies the size of the boats that people seeking asylum use to make the precarious journey from Turkey to Greece; it strikes at our very core, paralyzing us in that moment, as we try to imagine the incongruity of the lives of others. Weiwei responded in an essay that "there's no refugee crisis, only a human crisis... In dealing with refugees we've lost our very basic human values."

We're always confounded when a new policy is released that impacts even more harshly than the previous one. In the coming months, the cuts to the basic financial security net come into effect, and House of Welcome is destined to see more people seeking asylum homeless, hungry and unable to afford medical expenses. Thousands of people will lose their entitlement to income support, including financial assistance **while** they are trying to find jobs.



In these convoluted times, where we focus our efforts to rail against the absurdity of policies, we are at risk of not opening up enough spaces to hear the human stories. Anyone can argue facts, figures and statistics with us, but they cannot argue the validity of someone's story, their journey, their loss, their resilience. They cannot turn away from the human story. The power of art and culture as a platform to talk about displaced people and forced migration connects us instantly with the human, the tangible bravery, grief, humility, gratitude.

Welcome, respect, connect and empowerment are the foundational values of House of Welcome. They underpin our interactions, our services, how we create stability and safety and how we recognize the talents, skills and resourcefulness of our clients. We belong to an amazing community of volunteers and supporters who, through your energy and generosity keep us buoyed and positive. There may be policy makers that have lost their human values, but on the ground more and more people can't look away anymore.



The Biennale will hope to attract 400,000 visitors, a vast majority heading to see the work of this renowned artist. That's a lot of people whose values will resonate with the injustice this work portrays, a lot of people to join our collective communities who contribute to make it a fairer and just world.

A just and fairer world includes the right to shelter, food and employment or training. This winter, we're asking you to give what you can so we can assist the many people who will turn to the House of Welcome for help after having had their Government support removed. We're asking the community to help us provide food, emergency assistance, medical help and much-needed support in finding employment. You will help us ensure that children and families do not go hungry and homeless.

Thank you for all your support across the year,

Miriam Pellicano
Executive
Manager





HOUSE OF WELCOME CATERING IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

As an organization, we are committed to providing practical solutions to issues faced by people seeking asylum. House of Welcome Catering was created for this purpose; to provide opportunities for clients who face many barriers to finding employment in our community.

Led by Head Chef, Rui Olim, House of Welcome's catering model supports participants to gain the skills required to work in a commercial kitchen. It provides a friendly environment where participant's gain foundational culinary knowledge and necessary English language skills. Under Head Chef Rui's mentorship, participants are given the practical experience of working in a functioning commercial kitchen for commercial customers.

Rui came to HOW following an illustrious international career as Head Chef with experience in both intimate dining (Langan's of London) and large venues (London's Royal Albert Hall and Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre.) At the height of his career, Rui sought a change of direction.

The mission of HOW Catering resonated with Rui on a personal level. Having migrated to England from Portugal as a child, Rui has seen first-hand the challenge of being new to a culture. He

knows what it is to be on the fringes of society; something that many of our clients experience.

"After being a kid in a strange place, I can identify with being an outsider in the community, and I also appreciate the powerful contribution different cultures can make."

Rui's team includes 11 chefs, with four going through formal training in the first round. With chefs from Pakistan, India, Iran, Sudan and Egypt, the kitchen is a space for sharing. *"What excites me most is the different flavours, textures and stories our chef's bring to the kitchen. They're passionate about the cultural dishes they prepare and they take such pride and joy in sharing them with others."*

As Head Chef, Rui ensures the kitchen is a respectful and welcoming environment; a change from his previous workplaces. *"Our kitchen has to be different to other commercial kitchens. I'm not allowed to be the stereotypical 'Head Chef', I've had to learn to practice calm and be really emotionally aware of where our chefs are at, given the challenges they're facing in their out of work life."*

Working in the HOW Kitchen is a learning process for all the chefs, including Rui. *"Just the other day, one of our chefs had gone missing during service. I was worried about her and sent out a search party. Then I realized, I'd forgotten the literal complexities of the English language. I'd asked her to 'take the platter outside'...so, she did....I found her outside and the passers-by were thoroughly enjoying her mushroom risotto balls! How we laughed."*

Being a part of the close knit team, Rui sees the chefs are gaining skills that go beyond a post-employment reference: *"It's the everyday practical experience our chef's gain through working with us that makes the big difference."*

CATCH UP

with HOW Catering Chef, Jamil

Why did you sign up for the Catering Social Enterprise Team?

Because I really enjoy cooking and wanted the opportunity to improve and learn new skills and different ways of cooking and to be given the opportunity to work and earn money and cook food from my culture.

Can you describe what it's like working at HOW?

I feel very happy when I work at HOW, it makes me fulfilled, gives me more confidence, gives me a purpose to my life and I feel safe. When I'm at HOW, I lose sense of time, but when I leave, I'm always looking at the clock.

What have you learned about yourself on this journey?

I can do more for myself because I have more confidence. It gives me more energy and I feel I can always come to the house when I feel sad or lonely. I try and help others as well and my family are very proud of me.

What difference has the opportunity made to your life?

It's improved my confidence. I feel I am part of a family. I'm learning and want to learn more. It's given me the opportunity to be independent.

What hopes do you have for the future?

I hope to get a permanent visa, a permanent job, to learn new skill and improve my English. I hope to make new friends, get a home and see my family again. I also want to give something back to the House of Welcome.

The HOW Catering team is ready to share their cuisine at your next occasion. Specialising in high quality cultural fusion inspired cuisine, they can tailor menus to suit anything from corporate boardroom lunches to extra special private occasions.

To view sample menus and enquire, please visit: stfrancis.org.au/house-of-welcome/catering or call Rui Olim: 9727 9290

EMPOWERED TO WORK

under strain with Federal Government changes to SRSS Funding

Empowered to Work was established to equip refugees and people seeking asylum with the knowledge and skills necessary to find employment. The program provides individual mentoring for work readiness. This includes: resume writing; WHS & English training; interview preparation; assistance with job-search; and referrals to other training and job placement opportunities.

Since launching in mid-2017, there have been 145 people who have attended a consultation with Empowered to Work. The program has proven effective with one in three people being helped to transition successfully into work, further study and/or training.

Financial security and employment have long been a key priority for our clients at the House of Welcome. Empowered to Work Coordinator, Leonie Dyer, sees the program and support provided as vital: *"Employment allows people to feel some control in their lives. It enables access to food and housing and reduces the risk of mental health issues and reliance on welfare."*

With the recent Federal Government changes removing financial support for thousands of people seeking asylum, employment and the pathways to it, will become a critical priority for our clients. The House of Welcome is expecting to be flooded with requests for help in finding employment.

For Leonie, the main concern caused by the changes is the safety of our clients.

"Unfortunately, the barriers that people face in trying to find employment will be forced down as people scramble to find ways to make a living. Clients will be vulnerable to exploitation due to the



forced nature of their circumstance. They may be put in danger through lack of training and knowledge of the rights of workers or through not having access to a safe work space. People are also likely to find ways of making money that will leave them open to abuse."

Furthermore, staff are concerned that the responsibility forced upon some of our clients will be overwhelming. *"Remember these clients haven't had the right to work prior to this change. They will be scared and panicked about what is expected of them. This is likely to result in risk-taking behavior and will lead to a decline in mental health."*

House of Welcome is currently recruiting additional volunteers to assist with providing assistance to clients through the Empowered to Work program. At the same time, we are also challenged with seeking funding to ensure the Coordinator position can continue for another year.

The Empowered to Work program needs assistance to meet the needs of those affected by SRSS funding changes urgently. We are currently looking for:

- ◆ Businesses that can offer paid work placement opportunities
- ◆ Businesses that can offer work experience opportunities
- ◆ Volunteers who have experience in recruitment, employment pathways and/or job search and writing skills.
- ◆ Funding for the Empowered to Work Coordinator position

**If you can help the Empowered to Work program, please contact:
Leonie Dyer Ph: 9272 9290 or Email:
leonie.dyer@employmentproject.org.au**

JACOB'S STORY

Jacob* fled Africa seeking asylum. He began his life in Australia alone, struggling to meet basic living expenses during the protection application process. He came to HoW fearful and full of self-doubt.

"I didn't have confidence and thought, maybe I can't cope," he said.

HoW provided Jacob with emergency accommodation and casework support, and in September 2017 he joined our Empowered to Work employment program, funded by City of Parramatta and Cumberland Council through the Stronger Communities Grant.

Jacob's warmth and empathy prompted us to link him with Northcott, a not-for-profit disability service provider. With Northcott's focus on inclusion in the wider community for everyone, this was a fitting match. It was also a great fit in terms of Jacob's suitability: an initial interview quickly revealed his strong interpersonal skills, and Northcott took him on as a trainee disability support worker, paying him during training.

Once qualified, Jacob was soon working full time, and able to afford his own accommodation. He now lives in a share house in Sydney's west.

"Making money has opened doors to a house, my own space and security," he says.

House of Welcome are grateful to Northcott for providing the opportunity.