The background of the entire page is a detailed embroidery on a dark fabric. It features a variety of flowers and leaves in shades of yellow, red, green, and brown. The embroidery is intricate, with visible stitching and texture. A central white square with a thin red border contains the title and subtitle.

CALLING AUSTRALIA HOME

A collection of migrant stories by Metro Assist



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FOREWORD

Calling Australia Home is a project funded by The Department of Social Services. Being a migrant myself, I felt that the many untold stories of migrants needed to be articulated so that we can learn from them. Leaving home to move to another country is an enormous task. It takes a lot of courage to start from scratch, not only learning new culture, values, and traditions, but sometimes not being sure of the way things work in the new country can be very challenging. My work in Metro Assist as Settlement Services Officer has deepened my understanding, empathy, and admiration, as I watch migrants battle through the many challenges they face every day in navigating the system. I have seen their courage, strength, tenacity and patience as they settle in this country which they now proudly call “home”.

A migrant is one who moves from one’s home country to another. There are many reasons but the foremost purpose is to improve one’s life, not only economically but also socially. Peace and security are also

important. Australia is “the lucky country”. As such it is a popular destination for migrants all over the world. It is also one of the most multicultural and diverse countries with more than 200 languages spoken and about 25% of the population are migrants!

Migrants contribute to the economic development of Australia in many ways. They not only plug skill shortages but also invest in the economy, fostering international trade through knowledge of overseas markets and business networks.

All these stories have been compiled from newly arrived migrants who have accessed Metro Assist Services. All of these participants are known to me; most of them have attended our Ashfield *Multicultural Social Support Group*. This group has provided them a safe space, helped to break the barriers of isolation, and enhanced their confidence levels. Many of them are not only actively attending the group, but also facilitating group sessions. Multicultural Social Support Group began in December 2013 and continues to meet weekly.



As coordinator of the group, I was interested in approaching the participants about a possible compilation of their personal stories which could ultimately be published. Sharing their stories, written and collected between busy lives, drafted by them, in spite of their limited English language, was humbling. In reading these stories we find that the human spirit, the dreams of a better life for us and our children are universal, not unique to one country or culture. The trust they gave me with allowing the editing of the stories about their struggles is a testament to their courage and resilience in starting afresh in a foreign country.

I have included the group photographs of the Multicultural Social Support Group, the profile pictures of participants in the publication as well as traditional arts and craft. The stories were valuable in gaining insight into each individual’s journey. This allows us to provide more tailored, individualised support depending on the needs presented within each story.

This publication would have not have been possible without the contribution of these lovely people. So thank you all!

I hope that reading these beautiful stories will not only bring hope and a measure of happiness, but also encourage other migrants and refugees to take advantage of

the many resources this country provides for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

All these migrants add value to this country, in the work that they do, and children that they raise, who in turn will become future citizens of this country and they will give back to their communities.

It really has been a privilege and honour to be of assistance to all these new Australians. And to the many others who have not had time to write their stories, I say “thank you”, for having shared your heart in your journey and settlement here in Australia. I am richer for having met you all.

Finally I would like to thank Metro Assist Settlement Services Manager Losena Fuko, whose professional and personal support for this project facilitated this final publication. We are very appreciative of her guidance and input as she manages an Settlement Services Team, made up predominately of professional workers, who themselves came to this wonderful country as migrants and refugees. That in itself is a testament to what can be achieved.

Dinaz Rather

Settlement Services Officer



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank The Department of Social Services, without whose funding and support this publication would not have been possible. Metro Assist acknowledges the Traditional owners of the land on which we work and pay our respects to the elders past and present.

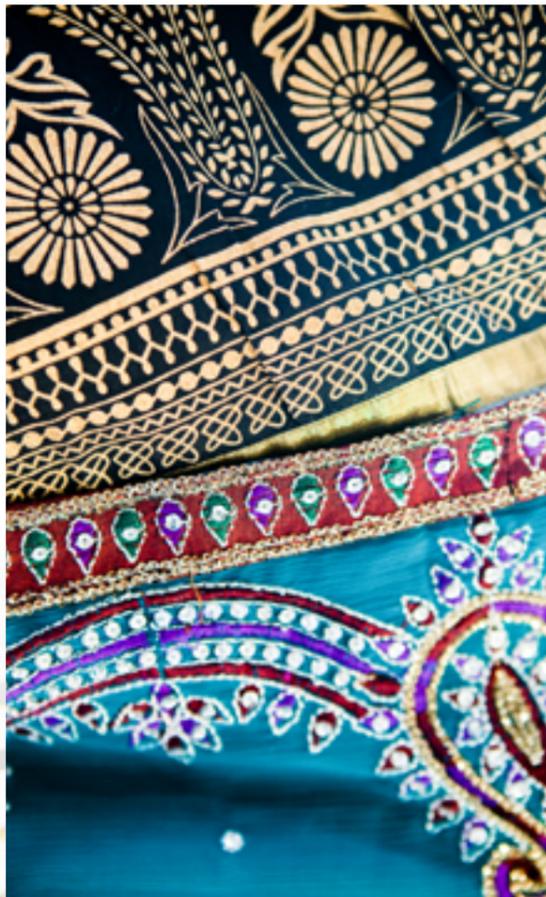
A big thank you to our CEO Lou Bacchiella, for his interest and supporting this project. I would also like to thank my Manager, Losena Fuko for her words of encouragement and ongoing support as well as mentoring. A big thank you to all the Metro Staff, in particular, the Settlement Services team members for their support. A big thank you to Evgueni Singatouline and Isabelle Whittington for their excellent photography.

To Athena Vlotis, a big thank you for the wonderful editing and putting these stories together. And thank you to Isabelle Whittington for final design and print liaison. A big thank you to the Ashfield Council (now known as Inner West Council) for providing the venue to run the Multicultural Social Support Group. Many, many thanks to all the Staff of Ashfield Council for their ongoing support. We must not forget RM Gregory for doing a great job of printing. Thank You!

Metro Assist acknowledges NSW Settlement partnership, headed by Settlement Services International (SSI).

And a big, big thank you to all the participants for sharing your lovely stories. We are the better for them.





SOWMYA

“She reminds us that if we are passionate and have a good attitude we can achieve anything.”



My name is Sowmya. I am a migrant from the Southern part of India (Chennai).

I came to Australia with my family a few years ago and we have now become Australian Citizens. When we migrated to Australia, my husband was on a work visa, so we were very fortunate. We had to learn, however, how to cope with many things we weren't familiar with.

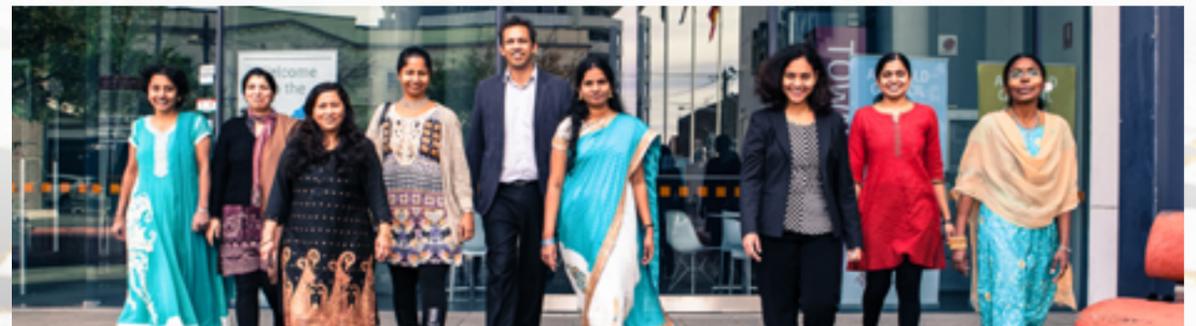
We depended on people and met new friends and as a result we found it easy to overcome challenges. Our friends here are so helpful.

I have a son who went to playgroup so it was easy for me to meet new people. All the parents at playgroup were really friendly. They were from all different cultural backgrounds. We enjoyed sharing ideas and our kids enjoyed playing with each other. Some playgroups also ran workshops, which were useful for the parents. My son has now started school, which he is really enjoying.

During this time, I came to know about Metro Assist. They provide us with great support and conducted interesting information sessions and workshops. We can learn new skills, participate in participated in different activities and programs

I also met Dinaz at Metro Assist, who helped me to become involved with different activities. I am doing some volunteering now, which brings me a lot of happiness. Dinaz conducted many employment workshops which included how to do your resume, cover letter and look for job and to get local work experience

Dinaz also conducted yoga workshops and health sessions, which were particularly helpful for everyone. Dinaz is friendly, helpful and supportive and we all learn from her. She reminds us that if we are passionate



TANIA

Coming from a country known as the pot-pourri of cultures (India), I always wondered how life could be elsewhere. I had already made the transition from being a working professional to a stay-at-home mum, but then I went through a second transition when we moved to Australia. Like most people, it took me a bit of time to adapt.

Everything we have in Australia today was made possible by our very supportive community group and friends. We came across a lovely landlord who has always been there whenever we needed them.

I was delighted to be a part of St. Vincent’s parish and team. At every point they encouraged me and were always there boosting me up and giving me opportunities. Being a part of this team introduced me to another group, the choir, and in October I participated in their concert. It was called ‘One Heart, Many Voices’, and everyone was included and made to feel welcome. All credit to my little one, as I made a lot more friends at playgroup. The playgroup was run by a fantastic volunteer. The group became a meeting place for adults and the kids were able to learn and have fun.

The Ashfield council in collaboration with Metro Assist host a number of activities for newly arrived migrants and refugees. These include rhyme time, English classes, employment and hobby workshops and many more to help people plan, relax and become independent. Most of the classes also have a one hour free child-minding option; just a little time for yourself means a lot.

On the work front, since I initially did not have my permanent residency, I decided to work in childcare as a casual worker and enter my son in the facility at the same time. The choice to eventually become a HR manager instead of a childcare worker was not an easy one, but I knew deep within that I was making the right decision. The parish at Ashfield gave me an opportunity to work as a secretary for a leave cover company that helped me to gain some local office experience and a foot in the door for casual office jobs.

I must say a big thank you to God for the gift of good friends, who have been a part of my journey and will continue to be so into the future.



“Everything we have in Australia today was made possible by our very supportive community group and friends.”

USHA

“I can say without any doubt that the help provided by Metro Assist is invaluable to new migrants like my family.”



It was after much deliberation and research that my husband and I decided that Australia was where our future would be. We arrived here with our daughter in July when Sydney was cold and miserable. In spite of the winter weather, we found Sydney to be warm and welcoming. We soon found a nice rental home in Ashfield and settled in.

Being away from our extended family in India was challenging, but we had friends who helped us with things here. Finding playgroups for my daughter was first on my list of priorities. Here Ashfield exceeded my expectations – we soon found ourselves with activities to keep us busy every morning.

Though an engineer by profession, I had hardly any work experience and a long career gap that I had to make up. Always interested in writing, I found a way to connect my background with my passion and settled on technical writing as a possible career option.

Many of my well-wishers discouraged me from this, “In a country where every second person is a native English speaker, what chance would you have?” But stubborn as I am, I persisted and completed an online Certificate Course in Technical Writing. Now I had another certificate to add to my resume, but again no work experience. The idea of doing freelance work appealed to me as I could fit it into my schedule with a toddler. Soon I found enough work writing technical articles and blog posts for websites with a couple of regular Aussie clients. I was now eager to start a real full-time job and started job-hunting in earnest.

There were quite a few job openings that I felt I was qualified for, but I did not receive any callbacks. It was around this time that I heard of the sessions conducted by Metro Assist. I started attending these quite regularly – from parenting classes to informative sessions conducted by various organisations. In addition to the informative and beneficial content of these sessions, they helped me to make new friends and talk to people from different cultural backgrounds. I was able to come out of my shell a bit and improve my communication and social skills.

Dinaz had already given me some tips on improving my resume, but the employment workshops really went into the details of preparing a good resume and writing a cover letter that would stand out. As part of the program, we were also connected with Dress for Success Sydney. Soon after, I received several calls from recruiters – one of which was relevant to my current job as a technical writer and which also utilised my electrical engineering background in part.

I was in touch with Dinaz throughout the recruitment process and she helped me with advice as to what might be discussed during the interview.

I can say without any doubt that the help provided by Metro Assist is invaluable to new migrants like my family. They helped me learn about different council-run activities and the help available to us and made me feel like I am part of a close-knit community.



NITHYA

“Now I am looking forward to having a good life with my family and newborn son here in Australia.”



I am Nithya. I am from India. I have been in Australia for four years. I got married and came to Australia in 2012. When I came here everything was new to me. I was afraid. I felt isolated as I had no family or friends. Sometimes I would start to cry. The main reason was the language barrier, because English is my second language. I did not know what to do and how to start my new life.

One of my friends told me about Ashfield Council and Metro Assist. I registered to attend Multicultural Social Support Group. They conducted different programs and activities every week, which include Life skills, Employment workshop, and other information sessions for newly arrived people. So I decided to engage myself in all the classes.

My English began to improve the more I spoke to others. Nobody criticized my English, instead everyone encouraged me to keep practicing. I met different kinds of people from different backgrounds and I also learnt about different cultures

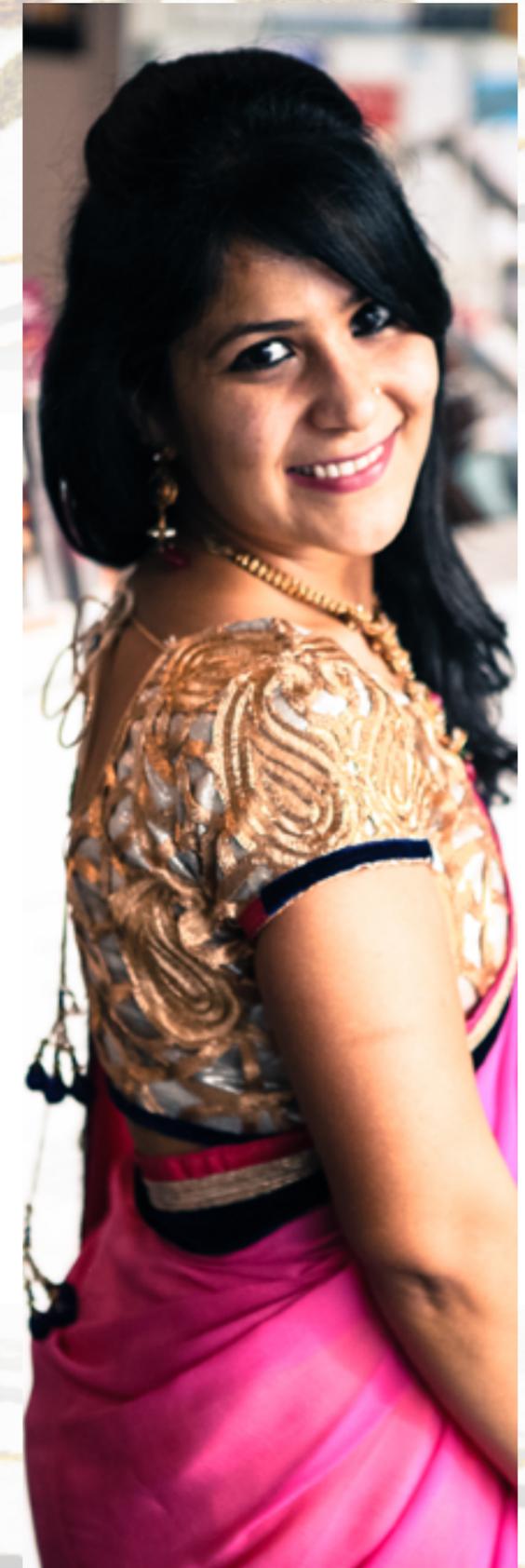
Once I received my permanent residency, Dinaz suggested I join Navitas English to improve my language. My life transformed by going to Navitas. Now I have completed my Certificate III in written and spoken English. I partially finished Certificate III in Business Administration and MYOB. I also committed myself to go to volunteer jobs to improve my confidence levels.

This year I finished my Certificate III in Children's Services. Now I have good communication skills and enough confidence to join the Australian workforce. Now I am looking forward to having a good life with my family and newborn son here in Australia.



DIVYA

“Taking part in those events and activities enhanced my overall communication skills and also helped to improve my self confidence.”

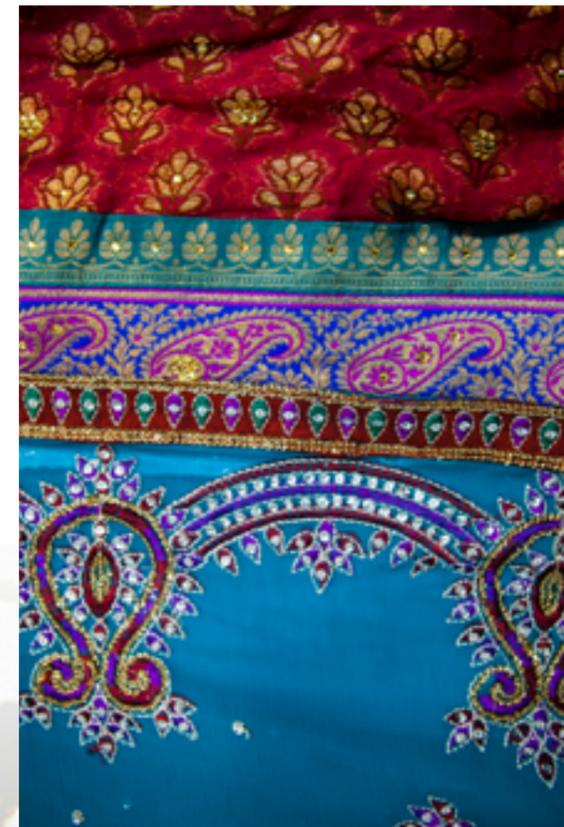


I am Divya and I am originally from Andhra Pradesh in India. I moved to Australia with my husband and five year old son. I have been living in Ashfield for the past 16 months and in the initial days of my arrival came to know about Metro Assist and Ashfield Council.

I started to come and attend Multicultural Social Support Group every week. I made good friends at the group and used to enjoy coming to Metro Assist.

I started to volunteer with Metro Assist, which gave me an opportunity to work at a number of events like Refugee Week, International Women’s Day and the Carnival of Cultures. Taking part in those events and activities enhanced my overall communication skills and also helped to improve my self confidence.

I am an artistic person and love arts and crafts. When I would volunteer at events I used to do henna tattooing and now I have started my own business where I work at weekend markets. I am now enjoying my life here in Australia. My son is also happy as he has many friends and enjoys going to school. I will continue to volunteer and look for more opportunities to enhance my communication skills and build my confidence.



TINA & CONRAD



“...we feel at home in Australia and look forward with optimism to what the future holds for us in this lucky country!”

On a cool windy morning, we arrived in Sydney with mixed feelings - anticipation, eagerness, and anxiety about what lay ahead of us. We had left behind a world so familiar and comfortable - cushy jobs in Hong Kong where we had been for a number of years, friends and family, to venture into unknown territory.

The first few days were ones of euphoria, venturing out into a beautiful new world but then reality set in. We had to pay our rent and bills and survive on our life savings.

We had first visited Sydney in 2008 and just fell in love with this place. At that moment we decided that this is a place we were going to come and live some day in the future. We never thought that it would happen so soon. We are native to Goa in India and it is very similar to Sydney in regards to the weather, beaches and multicultural population. This made our decision easier.

The first few months were very tough, firstly trying to find a house without a credit history in Australia and then finding a job. We came in touch with Melissa, the Director of Community Migrant Resource Centre at Parramatta. She gave us an insight into the services that the centre provides and helped us with references to rent out first house in Ashfield.

Our relation with Metro Assist then began at Ashfield. The centre was very helpful in so many ways. They made us feel at home in a new country and helped us with understanding the job market. We were so frustrated after applying for hundreds of jobs and not getting any interview calls. This is when Dinaz from Metro Assist in Ashfield helped us to understand the changes we needed to make to our CVs.

In order to land your first job in Australia your covering letter has to stand out and you have to make full use of your referees and contacts. Also you must be willing to accept a job below the position that you have been

used to working all these years. Furthermore you have to be quick in responding to a job opening. Once you follow these simple rules it won't be long before you start getting calls and then a job.

We were lucky to get a job in a couple of months or so after arriving in Australia. We started at lower positions in terms of pay and designations but soon got promoted. Two years down the line, we feel so much more confident in the local job market.

I am a Landscape Architect and in these past two years I have already worked on some important projects in Sydney. These have included the Light Rail Project in CBD, the Liverpool Council Project and Conrad (being in the Jewellery Industry). I have also travelled within Australia and overseas for various conferences and Exhibitions.

There's been no stopping since then. Now blessed with our one year old daughter Alyssia, who is an Australian by birth, we still have a long way to go in fulfilling our goals but we feel at home in Australia and look forward with optimism to what the future holds for us in this lucky country!



BHARAT

“I am very grateful to be living here and often ponder what is my duty and obligation towards this wonderful land Australia”

My story begins with my son, who is a citizen of Australia living in Sydney. He sponsored me to come out to Australia after my retirement from the teaching profession.

When I arrived in Australia it looked very different to what I expected. Along with my son and his family we visited beautiful beaches, the bush, the Blue Mountains and the Opera House. Christmas and New Year’s Eve celebrations at Darling Harbour were also very enjoyable.

During this time we mostly lived around the Ashfield area. The Ashfield library was always running classes and activities for the public. It offered something for everyone, from kids all the way up to seniors. I really enjoyed talks given by different authors as well as the various cultural and social events arranged by the library.

The Ashfield council then offered me the opportunity to do some volunteer work and help with different welfare activities. I then joined The Multicultural Social Support Group and they arranged many great activities to help with developing different everyday skills for migrants like me. The excellent guidance of staff like Dinaz Rather is to be commended.



The English learning program run by the council is also very popular. I benefited greatly from attending this class. Each individual is given attention according to their English level and need. People attend the classes to learn English and as a result are able to deal better with day-to-day tasks.

A benefit of being a senior is that you are detached from the everyday material endeavor. You have settled all your accounts, feel free and are more accepting of your personal shortcomings. As a result you are able to more compassionate towards other people and you enjoy listening to others. I discovered these things during these meetings.

I am very grateful to be living here and often ponder what is my duty and obligation towards this wonderful land Australia which has provided me great love, peace and happiness.

My home will be in the city of flowers

BY BHARAT JYOTI

Every home will be filled with the blooming charming fragrance of flowers.

The people living there are also like these flowers a variety of shapes and colours.

With the fragrance of love they laugh, play and work.

There prevails the constant sun light of the blessings and best wishes for all.

There they drink the nectar of peace and happiness from the earth

Swing in the wind of zeal and enthusiasm.

Bloom in remembrance and union with the almighty supreme soul .

Sow the seeds of good deeds in the garden of life.

Believe it or not, they are the shining stars on the earth.

Every home has achievements of health, wealth, virtue and power.

Every home has innovation thoughts and action,

Home is not for destruction, but for helping loving and caring for one another.





DEEPA

“It was an eye-opener for me as I got to interact with people from different cultures.”

My friend taught my husband how to write a resume and cover letter in order to successfully apply for local jobs. He attended interviews and by God’s grace was able to get a contract job. We stayed in our friend’s house for three weeks, then we started looking for our own place to stay. Our friends gave us some pointers and we managed to find a rental house in a nearby suburb.

I studied accounting in India and then became a homemaker for two years. My husband motivated me to return to study and do a course in Child Care. I finished my Certificate 3 and Diploma in Children’s Services and currently I work in a child care centre in Ashfield.

When I wasn’t working I went and visited Metro Assist in Ashfield. It was an eye-opener for me as I got to interact with people from different cultures. I have to thank Dinaz Rather for the opportunity to attend information sessions and participate in volunteer work. They encourage people to pursue their careers. Metro Assist conduct a lot of programmes on a weekly basis including resume and cover letter writing, TAFE Courses, Citizenship Test etc.

It provided me with a lot of insight into the Australian lifestyle and work environment. I am so appreciative of the opportunities and assistance that Metro Assist have provided me. Metro Assist has not only helped me but has also helped so many others to achieve their dream of living and settling in Australia.

My name is Deepa and I am from India. My childhood ambition was to settle down in Australia because of my passion for sport. I was a national gold medallist badminton player as well as a state level player. This was my main reasons to come and settle down in Australia. I love all the sports, especially cricket. I always support the Aussie cricket team whether they win or lose.

We first arrived in Adelaide in September 2010. For the first four months we struggled even to get basic jobs. Our friends guided us on how to search for jobs in Australia. One of our friends gave me an opportunity to work in her child care centre as a casual worker. I ended up working there for four months. It was a great experience and I also got to meet people from different cultural backgrounds.

My husband’s name is Sriram. He is an accountant from India but unfortunately he could not get a job in his field. He was working with Foxtel in the sales team for couple of months. As a result, we migrated to Sydney through the help of one of our family friends. We moved to Sydney in February 2011.

SHAYMAA

“In spite of all the obstacles that I have faced, I am still motivated to live a full life.”

My name is Shaymaa. I am originally from Iraq where I have a big extended family. I worked in Iraq as a General Practitioner. I had a good salary but in a politically unstable country.

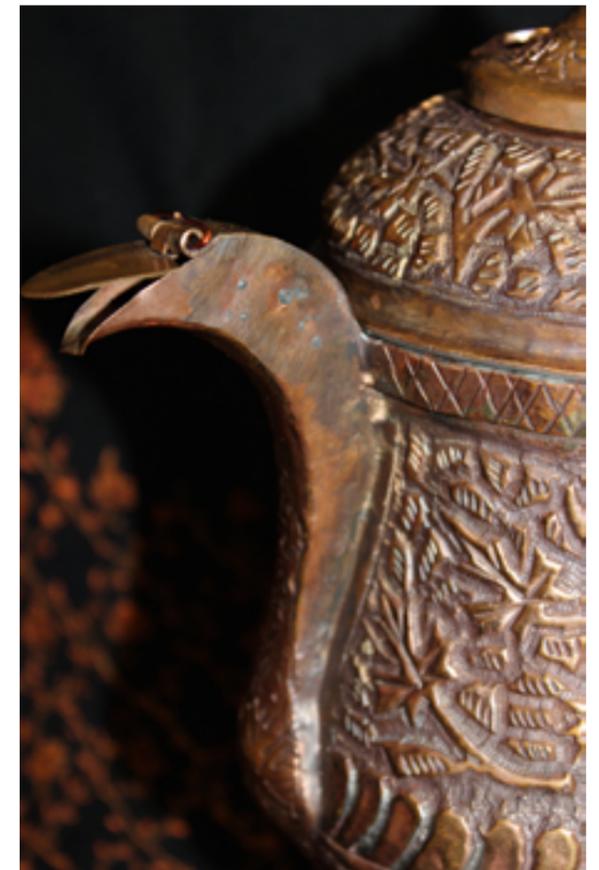
In 2013, I came to Australia after I married my husband. He was an international student in Sydney since 2011. We made a decision to build a whole new life here in Australia.

I intended to accredit my qualifications in order to continue working as a doctor in Australia. Unfortunately, however, after just 10 days in Sydney I had a car accident. I broke my left wrist and had three operations. Even after these procedures I still had limited movement in my wrist. I had ongoing health problems and as a result began to feel depressed.

However, I never gave up and insisted on continuing with my life’s ambitions. During this time, my first priority became to start a family. Thanks to God, I now have a baby boy. My son has brought so much happiness into my life. He motivates me to keep pursuing my goals.

My next priority is to overcome my fear of driving. Furthermore, next year I will start preparing to take the medical examination in order to accredit my qualifications.

In spite of all the obstacles that I have faced, I am still motivated to live a full life. Finally, I am happy with all the big changes in my new life. I am married, I have a wonderful baby and my English is good. All these factors encourage me to stay motivated and seek out a good quality life in Australia.



DR. ANJU SRIVASTAVA



“Hopefully life will continue to be interesting and wonderful in Australia. Let’s see where life will take me in the years to come.”

Prior to 2006, I was living in India with my husband and two daughters. In the intervening period, I completed my education and got married in 1993.

My husband was working in India as a chief engineer in WAPCOS INDIA (Water and Power Consultancy) for 15 years and was well settled there. Both my daughters were born in India.

My husband was then transferred to New Zealand. As a result of his job transfer, we did not face the usual difficulties of finding a job and accommodation, as these were already arranged by my husband’s employer. They even arranged an introduction to the local Indian community. Still we went through a social settlement process in terms of making new friends and understanding the local culture.

I stayed at home in order to support my family and help them settle into their new environment. I came with two grown up school-aged children. The challenge was to try and settle our children into a completely new environment. We had also heard about issues like bullying and racial discrimination and therefore were extra cautious.

I, being a housewife, had spare time to spend with my kids and talk to them on daily basis about their school routine, their friends and teachers. I also visited their school, met their teachers and other parents in order to get to know the circle around them. My daughters made good friends and overall settled into school really well. We did not force them to only make friends from one particular community. I guess this encouraged them to embrace multiculturalism and also helped them to understand their new social culture.

I then decided to join ESL classes (English as Second Language) for a couple of months to get to know people and the language as well. Having joined ESL classes, I then got an opportunity as an assistant in the ESL office as a volunteer. I found the people there were very kind and helpful. After that I completed the Certificate of Fundamental Skills, which focused on acquiring computer skills.

As a result of all this learning, I gradually started to feel more confident when interacting with other people. This enabled me to make friends from different cultures, which made my four years living in New Zealand more enjoyable.

In 2009 my family moved to Australia, as my husband was again transferred for work. My family found the Australian culture and language very similar to New Zealand’s. Our previous experience of settling in New Zealand made the transition to Australia much easier. Both my daughters got accepted into Burwood Girls High School. Now both my daughters have finished their HSC and both were accepted into University. My eldest daughter is now working after completing her degree in Structural (Civil) Engineering at Sydney University. My younger daughter is now in her first year of Advanced Science also at Sydney University.

In 2013, I joined Metro Assist in order to get to know different people and their culture. I participated in many programs like henna tattooing and other cultural activities. These were very helpful with making friends and learning about other people’s cultures. In this way, learning about different ways of living, about different people and their ways of thinking made me more open minded, thoughtful and accepting.

Because of our diligent efforts, our transition to living in Australia has been flawless. Now I have good friends, places to go, things to do. I call that living the life.

In November 2013, I started volunteer teaching English conversation classes at the Ashfield Civic Centre. I received training from the Australian Mission Program to teaching English. I teach students who have difficulty communicating and using English in everyday life. I have had amazing experiences teaching English as a volunteer tutor. I have been able to develop my self-confidence, which has been really rewarding for me. I have also been able to learn many things about the student’s culture through their food, language and customs. I have also made some great friends.



JULIA

“I love Australia very much. I think it has become the biggest multicultural country in the world. The weather is mild, the people are hospitable and they are from all different countries around the world.”

My name is Julia Widyanti. I am from Indonesia. My government always sent me abroad to study, because I was a teacher working for the government.

The first country that I visited was Australia. That was in 1972. The Opera House had just recently opened. Sydney was beautiful and peaceful. I liked it very much.

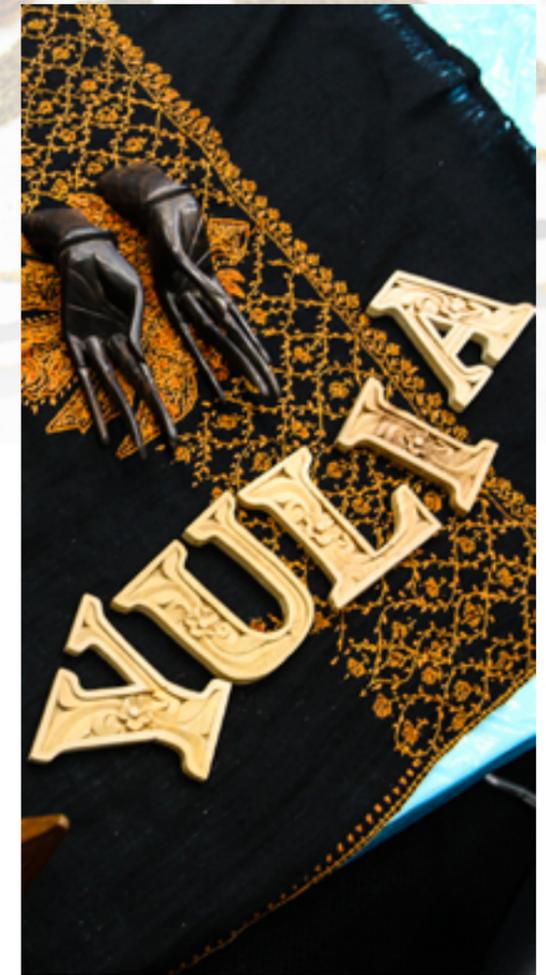
Then I was sent to New Zealand, a beautiful country. I studied in Wellington, a windy city. After I finished my placement there, I then went to Auckland to teach officers in the army. Auckland is the biggest city in New Zealand. After that I went back home to Indonesia and continued teaching there.

I was continually sent abroad to study by the government almost every two years. I was sent to England to study at Lancaster University, then to London.

After that I went around the world and studied in countries including Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, some Asian countries, America and Canada. I would then return home to Indonesia and continue to teach.

But during this time I still thought of Sydney. I always compared Sydney to the places that I visited and still, in my mind, Sydney was the best. So at last I applied for my permanent Visa to stay in Australia.

I love Australia very much. I think it has become the biggest multicultural country in the world. The weather is mild, the people are hospitable and they are from all different countries around the world. It's like a big 'melting pot', similar to Hawaii. That is why Australia does not have any racism. I am very happy and I do volunteering work. I also participate in different programs and activities conducted by Metro Assist.





CHITRA

“I have met many people from different cultural backgrounds through the group, which has been a fantastic experience.”

I am Chitra Gajendran from India. My family and I came to Australia in 2011. At first, life was very difficult because we had no friends or relatives in Australia. After few months I met my friend in the library and she informed me about the Multicultural Social Support Group at Metro Assist.

Since then, I have attended so many activities. It was very useful to me and I have made many friends. I am very happy with the group and with all the organised activities.

I have met many people from different cultural backgrounds through the group, which has been a fantastic experience. Furthermore, I have learned new craft skills such as how to design clothes, how to make flowers out of fabric and how to make costume jewellery.

I have also done some volunteering with the group. This was a really good experience. I want to say many thanks to the group. The group gave me support, knowledge and the best opportunities.

SWETA

“Thanks Australia for giving me all these opportunities and so much more!”

I was born and raised in India. I got married in 2008. My husband used to travel a lot to Australia for work. So in 2013 we made the decision to move to Australia with our four month old son. We came here on work Visas, to start a completely new life. Naturally the first year and half was very difficult for us. Every day I used to face new challenges such as trying to run daily errands and having to navigating the language and culture barrier.

The environment and culture of India and Australia are very different. For last thirty years I was never involved much in daily chores because in India we have lot of helping hands to do the daily chores in form of family member, helpers and maids. But here in Australia, from picking up the bin to building a new house, everything has to be done yourself. It took me little while to get accustomed with this way of living but gradually I started living a comfortable and easy life. I found new friends, family and a community for myself in which we understand and help each other.

In 2014, from the advice of my partner, I decided to join Ashfield Council and Metro Assist which really helped give a new meaning to my life. Working with these two organisations made me realise that I have the potential to build a career for myself. I started getting more involved with these two organisations as a volunteer.



Towards the end of 2014 I decided to start applying for jobs. But even though I had overseas work experience, being a migrant I faced two major challenges. Firstly, I should be an Australian citizen or permanent resident and secondly I should have local experience. To overcome these barriers, we applied for permanent residency in early 2015 and by the mid 2015 we got it.

In regards to my second barrier, getting involved with Metro Assist helped me in understanding the work culture and gaining local work experience. By the end of 2015 I started applying for jobs and got my first breakthrough in early 2016. Currently I am working as a contract employee, which helps me to balance my personal and professional life.

Shifting and settling myself in Australia has helped me to develop myself as an overall person, be it in terms of a wife, a mother, an employee and overall my whole responsibility towards society. I have become a more responsible, mature, caring and an adjustable person.

Thanks Australia for giving me all these opportunities and so much more!

JANE

“I was afraid to go out and explore as I didn’t know where to start. It was really hard for me. But I was determined to pick up the pieces before I became too depressed.”

I came to Australia in May 2014. I migrated to Australia to be with my husband who was based here in order to start our family. It was a big decision for me to move, because everything was so new.

My first few weeks upon arriving in Australia were good because I felt like a tourist roaming around. However, as I reached my second month, my feelings of excitement began to be replaced with boredom. My confidence levels dropped because I could not get a job and I did not know the people around me except for my husband and his relatives.

I was afraid to go out and explore as I didn’t know where to start. It was really hard for me. But I was determined to pick-up the pieces before I became too depressed. Luckily, my sister-in-law told me about Ashfield Council and advised me to go and talk to Metro Assist.

I went to their office and I was able to talk to Dinaz Rather who became my mentor to make my journey as easy as possible. She informed me about the Multicultural Social Support Group and gave me the activity calendar for the different group activities and programs that were run on a weekly basis. She also encouraged me to join so I could interact with other migrants like me.

They had art classes, yoga classes, forums for health as well as classes about driving in Australia. They had Employment workshop

which helped us to write resume and cover letters which was really helpful for me.

In addition Metro Assist collaborated with TAFE and delivered a series of Employment workshops that helped us to write our resumes. At the end of that program I gained a certificate from TAFE. To top it all off, Metro Assist told me about Dress for Success and Dress for Work programs where they give a free suit, shoes and even accessories to applicants so they can be job ready.

Along with the different Metro Assist programs, Dinaz also encourage me to go to Navitas College to broaden my knowledge of Australian culture, slang words and also to meet new people. During my time at Navitas, in addition to my English class, I was given the opportunity to take a five unit course of my choice. I decided to take Business Administration, since I had a background in that area. As a result of my classes, I became more confident and decided to go on and study AIN.

I am currently working at the Hospital for Specialist Surgery in Bella Vista as a store person. I work Mondays to Fridays and help to prepare the set ups for the surgeons. Then on the weekends I work at IGA at the check out.

Determination, perseverance and courage were the other factors that help me to stand up and contribute to making me whole again.



SURABHI

“Dinaz Rather was the first person I met here and her constant advice has helped me a lot.”



My journey of settling and living in Australia started in November 2013 and is still continuing to this day.

I was so happy, it was a dream come true to be in Sydney, Australia. My husband, daughter and I came to Australia all together. Being a totally new country and environment, we all knew that it would be difficult at first. We were about to start a new life altogether, without an extended support system (extended family and friends). As they say “determination can move mountains” and being from Mumbai, India, we are a family of determined individuals.

My husband struggled for three months to find a job, but finally found his footing in the Australian IT industry. He is now doing great for all the three of us. My daughter is a fighter. She did have her own set of struggles with new friends and a new school. However, she came through those struggles and passed with flying colours.

In regards to my experience, the initial months were fun. Just exploring the area was so exciting but gradually the excitement faded. I realised this was the place I was going to stay forever and that I was not on vacation. My routine revolved around going to school to drop off and pick up my daughter. This routine got more exciting, however, when I started speaking to other parents at school. Australia being such a diverse country, it was fun to meet people from different cultural backgrounds.

Everyone was really friendly, which helped a lot. To utilise my time, I started helping out with Hindi classes in the school. This was a good experience for me as it helped me to become more familiar with the local community. I found that volunteering is really encouraged in Australia, so I started pursuing my passion for teaching Yoga, which I never thought of doing back in India. It was healthy fun, teaching the kids and the mothers at the school. I also started helping out with Hindi classes.

At the same time, I was introduced to Metro Assist in Ashfield by a friend. This organisation provides support services to new migrants in Australia. This was a really good place. I got to know many people. Dinaz Rather was the first person I met there and her constant advice has helped me a lot. I also started volunteering for Metro Assist. I even taught some Yoga and Bollywood dance classes.

Another passion that I have pursued and have been able to start a business around is cooking. I have a small business called Surabhi’s Kitchen. It started off with takeaways or tiffins for bachelors and working families in nearby areas like Ashfield, Summer Hill and Burwood.

I have also set up stalls at festivals such as ‘The Feast of Flavour’ and ‘Carnival of Cultures’ in Ashfield. These were all very successful. The response from the crowd was so overwhelming that I booked a stall two years in a row. I plan to continue running these stalls.

This was a huge confidence booster for me. I started marketing myself and through word of mouth my tiffin orders increased. Now I have expanded into corporate orders and party orders. The party orders are a great success.

In the future I want to continue volunteering in the community and also focus on the expansion of Surabhi’s Kitchen.







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