



Settlement Council of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

Young people (aged 15-25) from refugee and migrant backgrounds



Aim

To support young people in developing skills to improve their employability



Organisations Involved

Wyndham Community and Education Centre



Location

Wyndham, Werribee, Tarneit & surrounding areas (VIC)



Funding

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Victorian Government



CASE STUDY

Wyndham Community and Education Centre

Wyndham Community and Education Centre runs training workshops to support young people to develop their employability skills and access job opportunities in their Fresh Start program.

About the program

The Fresh Start program supports young people between the ages of 15 to 25 years old from refugee and migrant backgrounds, primarily from Pasifika and South Sudanese backgrounds, who are living in Werribee, Tarneit, Wyndham and surrounding areas. The Fresh Start program aims to empower youth to develop their employability skills and access local job opportunities.

The program involves a five-day workshop which supports young people to increase their job readiness and confidence to seek employment and training opportunities. The groups for the workshop are small (around 10 to 18 participants) and each workshop has two Fresh Start facilitators running the workshop. Fresh Start workshops are run every school holiday, with additional workshops added depending on demand. By October 2020, Wyndham CEC had run around 8 workshops in the school holidays, and an additional 2 within the school term.

Fresh Start uses an early intervention model to help guide young people to refocus their priorities and identify pathways into education or employment. The Fresh Start program is customised to address local employer needs in the area, enabled through partnerships with a range of local employers to help meet their needs.

The program aims to develop skills in:

- Communication
- Confidence
- Public speaking
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Emotional Intelligence
- Employment Coaching
- Interview Skills



Participants are also provided with post workshop support for up to 12 months to support young people to reach their vocational and non-vocational goals. This includes a post workshop group mock interview opportunity, which allows participants to get real feedback on their interview, and access to an exclusive network of job opportunities with local employers following the completion of the workshop. This is enabled through the support of the local community employment program, West@Work, as well through established links to Wyndham Council. For example, Wyndham CEC has had more than 10 representatives attend face to face group interviews from different retail and hospitality organisations and some young people are immediately short listed for employment as a result.

Challenges

Challenges have included:

1. Due to COVID-19, many hospitality and retail employers have been unable to commit during the pandemic. As a result, the industries involved have diversified, and the program now includes industries such as warehousing, cleaning, disability services and apprenticeships in trades.
2. Due to the success of face to face engagement, it was initially challenging to transition both the workshops and the mock interviews to an online format in response to COVID-19. However, the online format has allowed them to reach a greater audience, and will likely continue to be an option, even after face to face workshops are able to resume in Victoria. The mock interviews have been reworked to include an individual 'online mock interview' with West@work.

Outcomes

1. Improved confidence of participants to seek employment and training opportunities, and participants being able to apply that confidence across other areas of their life.
2. 15 participants have currently secured employment, with another 9 currently awaiting outcomes of roles they were referred for.
3. The workshops have had a 95% completion rate.
4. Many school-aged young participants have received post workshop support and been linked into other programs (such as Jobs Victoria for work, and Skills Reconnect to reenter education) and have since gone on to further study.
5. Employers have been impressed by the maturity and desire to work exhibited by participants, many of whom had applied for jobs in the past and never progressed to the interview stage.



Key Learnings

This experience has generated three key learnings for Wyndham CEC:

1. Young people are very resourceful and genuinely want the opportunity to succeed.
2. Confidence is key in communication, and this was a key gap that Fresh Start was able to fill.
3. Barriers including no work history and largely written application processes are common for young people, and providing opportunities to connect with employers have helped to overcome this.

Participant's Story

The participant is 20 years old, from a South Sudanese refugee background, and the eldest of eight siblings. Prior to commencing the Fresh Start Program, she had been struggling to find employment and unable to secure interviews. She had applied for many jobs, until she stopped applying.

After hearing about Fresh Start from a friend who had been a Fresh Start participant, she registered to take part in the online program as she had a strong desire to learn, improve her employment opportunities and build her confidence in herself. During discussions with the Fresh Start lead facilitator, she realised that she had not identified her strengths well enough nor known how, or have the confidence, to market the ones she had identified when she was previously applying for jobs. After the mock interview component of the program, she told the team that prior to Fresh Start, she would have really struggled to have the confidence to even take part in the interview.

The skills she has developed in the Fresh Start Program and in the post-workshop support have continued to build her confidence. Her long-term career goal has been to work in disability. She had previously gained Certificate III Individual Support in 2019, and through the program, she identified first aid training as a necessity certificate to have when applying for positions in this area. Fresh Start helped her undertake this training, and also linked her to the Wyndham Council and partner network Wyndham One.

The confidence, knowledge and skills gained from the Fresh Start workshop and ongoing support when looking and applying for jobs, led her to actively return to independently searching for positions, especially those in the health sector. After applying for several positions, retaining self-belief and with encouragement from the program when unsuccessful, she gained a position with a disability service as a disability support worker. The program provided back up assistance with the application and interview, provided a character reference and support with the initial paperwork when she started the position.

Following the success of the program, she encouraged three of her siblings to enrol in Fresh Start. Her contact with Wyndham Community and Education Centre also provided the opportunity for her mother, who was also struggling with unemployment, to link into the organisation's Jobs Victoria program.

More information

For more information, visit: <https://www.wyndhamcec.org.au/wpmain/fresh-start-job-readiness-program/>

