



# Sonder Employment Solutions.

A program for migrants and refugees

**Sonder Employment Solutions is a free and voluntary program for migrants and refugees living in Adelaide's Northern and Western suburbs, who receive income support payments and need help with finding employment.**

Sonder Employment Solutions is based on a modified version of a successful evidence-based model known as Individual Placement Support (IPS) which has been implemented in Australia and internationally with outstanding results.

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an initiative of the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

**Hear from our clients.**



# Sopheak's Story



“  
**During that first appointment, I felt worried because I had a lot of things going on, but after I talked with Meg she helped me to feel more confident... less lonely.** ”

- Sopheak

With support from her Career Coach, Sopheak's past experience in clothing alterations aided her to successfully glide through R.M. Williams' three-stage screening. Just recently, she attended a work trial, which is the final step before the offer of employment.

Sopheak is a busy mum. Therefore, her Career Coach has found her a training course to reach her long-term dream in beauty therapy, which is compatible with work and other commitments.

Meeting over a cup of coffee, each session is an opportunity to share work and life updates. Sopheak appreciates that her Career Coach provides a listening ear. It is not just about finding work – Sopheak says the encouragement and support is just as important for building her confidence in her own future.



# Marzia's Story

Marzia discovered that her passion was working with children, and so she enrolled in a Diploma of Early Childhood. During her studies, she found that her training school had difficulties with finding her a placement. She was directed to Sonder's Employment Solutions program through TAFE and was connected with our Career Coach, Miguela.

Her Career Coach understood how vital work experience was for building professional skills, and how having local referees allows job-seekers to stand out to potential employers. Miguela was dedicated and persistent in finding a placement provider who would offer Marzia that crucial first chance to demonstrate her abilities.

Marzia is now undertaking her placement at Goodstart Early Learning and is taking the final steps to completing her Diploma.

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**Sonder helped me to find a work placement, which is very impossible for me to achieve because I don't have connections before.** ”

- Marzia



**When employers choose to support employee wellbeing, they are also supporting productivity and innovation. An integrated employment and wellbeing service means people can enter the workforce giving their best from day one.**

**One of the main barriers refugees and migrants cite is lack of local work experience. Having a program which can facilitate that first opportunity opens the doorway for migrants and refugees to move forward, forging their own networks.**

# Perspectives from a Wellbeing Coach

The job-searching process can be a lonely one. Unemployment can exacerbate life stresses, both financial and familial.

For many migrants and refugees, motivations to find work include a desire to begin their lives as active citizens and continuing the next chapter in their careers. Not being able to find work can disrupt their sense of identity and self-esteem.

These factors can compound and make job-searching even more challenging, and can be detrimental to personal wellbeing. Stigma about mental health across migrant and refugee communities can cause people to shoulder these difficulties alone and lead to feelings of isolation.

**By talking more about mental health, we can normalise it as something that everyone faces. This can reduce stigma to access mental health services across our communities.**

**“Migrants and refugees have always been so resilient. I see my role as a wellbeing coach as convincing people that they don’t need to carry everything by themselves anymore.”** - Winnie, Wellbeing Coach

“

**Six months ago, I felt like zero. I couldn’t look people in the eyes. This organisation helped bring me from the dark to the light.**”

- client



**Providing the time and support to build an individualised career plan has long term ripple effects. Clients not only see their aspirations taking shape, but simultaneously contribute to the community, gain economic independence and priceless skills and experience.**

## Flora’s Story

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**Here, there is dignity, recognition of who you are, and what you are capable to do. Here, I feel well-heard.**”

- Flora



Flora had been working in many jobs, but felt discontent without knowing what she really wanted to do. After hearing about Sonder Employment Solutions from her GP, she decided to give it a go.

Flora’s goal was to find work that was sustainable and satisfying. Together with her Career Coach, Juan Pablo, they took time to understand what drives her, and what she has to offer. The second step was to understand market needs, and how to develop professional experience relevant to her ultimate goal of working within the medical field.

Flora built a plan to bring these two elements together. For her, this meant using her love of caring for others in the support work role that she obtained since joining the program.

# Sediqa's Story



Sediqa found a job that was an excellent fit for her within a month of meeting her Career Coach. She reflects on how her experience and perspectives were able to meet a key employer need - a support worker able to create an instant connection with a client sharing the same home country.

When Sediqa heard from her own networks that an employer was hiring, Sediqa's Career Coach encouraged her to apply. Sediqa was guided by her Career Coach in preparing for the crucial first contact with the employer, including resume and cover letter support and interview preparation.

Then, Sediqa took the lead and provided her application to the manager, attended an interview, and was offered the role soon after.



**It's good, my clients are happy, all the time giving me good positive feedback, that also helps motivate me to do the job.**

**- Sediqa**



The business landscape increasingly recognises that a diverse workforce can better service a diverse client base. A specialised employment service provides access to a talent pool that can enrich the experiences of both employers and their customer bases.

# Perspectives from a Wellbeing Coach

Mark views mental health through a culturally specific lens. The way communities approach and nourish wellbeing differs across cultures.

Many cultures view wellbeing from the perspective of the community but this can be overlooked by services with a more individualistic view of wellbeing. This can lead to an initial distrust of mental health services and pose barriers that prevent migrants and refugees from engaging with mainstream services.

Research shows that migrants and refugees experience higher rates of trauma, but access mental health supports at a lower rate.

Mental health can be an important factor in finding and retaining employment. By allowing a pathway for migrant and refugee job-seekers to receive wellbeing support, obstacles to employment can be overcome.

**The current mainstream mental health system can cause migrants and refugees to fall through the gaps, and not reach those who need it. Having culturally appropriate pathways to mental health services is key to ensure that the system services all members of our community.**



**This program is about establishing trust, first and foremost, before anything else. Then that wall is broken a little bit.**

**- Mark, Wellbeing Coach**



**It was like magic – I've had lots of appointments with doctors, social workers, and no one could make me speak from the first appointment about how I feel until now.**

**- client**



The job market is competitive for young people entering the workforce. Migrants and refugees can face additional barriers. Career Coaches can support young people to secure that first role, and build a toolkit of job-searching skills to carry into their working lives.

## Opportune's Story



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**The hardest thing about finding my first job was being rejected because I don't have enough experience – I've been looking since I was 15 years old.**

**- Opportune** ”

Opportune had been looking for her first part-time job to balance with her studies for 6 years before she joined the program. She speaks about the usual challenges faced by young people - trying to find work that fits around study, and the need for experience. She also speaks of language fluency as an additional challenge for migrants and refugees in the job search.

Since entering the program, her Career Coach was able to provide tailored feedback to her resume, support her in job applications, build confidence and provide encouragement to persevere.

She has since obtained a role working evenings at Sunfresh Salads, in which she has formed fast friendships with her co-workers. She continues to study business at UniSA by day, in pursuit of her dream to one day own her own fashion business.

## Paul's Story

Paul came to the program juggling different jobs to support himself and his family. For him, entering the program was a chance to find a job that was fulfilling and provided stability. Sitting down together to explore different career paths, Paul's Career Coach remembers his smile when he saw the sterilisation course - he says it was something he always wanted to try.

Once everything was ready for Paul to start his course, feelings of self-doubt left him anxious about beginning something new and unfamiliar. By linking up with the Wellbeing Coach, he was able to build his confidence, identify what motivates him and what gives him meaning, and became comfortable to take the next step.

He has since found employment in cleaning while he completes his course in sterilisation, has more time to spend with his family, and feels optimistic about what the future holds.

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**Before I started wellbeing sessions, I felt a bit uncertain about what I could do. Now I feel like I am embracing uncertainty better and feel confident that I can be part of the workforce.**

**- Paul** ”

**Sometimes, the barriers to work can be invisible. Building confidence and fostering mental readiness are an essential foundation to sustainable employment.**



# Contact us today!

Sonder Employment Solutions is separate from Job Active and Disability Employment Service (DES) providers so clients can choose to work with both Sonder and their job services.

- It's a free service.
- The program is voluntary and independent from the targeted compliance frameworks.
- Client has access to a wellbeing coach which is a qualified Mental health Clinician. This service is also free!
- If a client is to gain employment we are able to assist with post-placement support and the employment can be tracked for an outcome for JobActive and DES contracts.
- This program can meet Annual Activity Requirements for Job Active, Work for the Dole participants.

## **Migrants and refugees have a strong desire to work and, through employment, make a valuable contribution to Australia.**

The Sonder Employment Solutions team is always working towards meeting and learning more about employers and their hiring preferences so that the best client can be matched to their business needs. If your organisation would like to get involved in this program, please contact Sonder.



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