

# Employment Solutions.

Making a difference to the lives of migrants and refugees in your community.



**A collection of  
inspiring accounts  
from our clients,  
showcasing the  
transformative  
power of this  
program.**



Michael, Career Coach  
and Rukusa, Employment  
Solutions client.

Rukusa was a refugee  
from the Democratic  
Republic of Congo who  
now proudly works at  
a leading entertainment  
venue in Adelaide.



## About Sonder

Sonder is an inclusive, not-for-profit organisation that has been providing better quality health and support services to the South Australian community since 1993.

At Sonder, people can access multiple services to address their health and wellbeing needs from a range of locations across South Australia.

**Our services support people across seven key domains.**



**Mental  
health**



**Employment**



**Chronic  
disease**



**Aboriginal  
health**



**Alcohol and/or  
other drugs**



**Disability**



**Homelessness**

**Sonder** *noun.*

The realisation  
that each random  
passerby is living  
a life as vivid and  
complex as your  
own.

Learn more  
**[sonder.net.au](https://sonder.net.au)**

## About



**Tania Manser**

Executive Manager,  
Community Services  
*Sonder*

# Employment Solutions.

Amidst the challenges faced by migrants and refugees in adjusting to a new country, the unemployment rate among this resilient community stands 2% higher than the national average.

Recognising this pressing need, Sonder has been at the forefront, striving to make a difference through its Employment Solutions program.

Employment Solutions is a unique program that provides wrap-around employment and wellbeing support for migrants and refugees. Since 2019, our program has transformed the career outcomes of individuals, empowering them to secure meaningful employment, improve their wellbeing and live better lives.

With a combination of culturally appropriate and flexible support, our team of Career Coaches and Wellbeing Coaches work together to address complex barriers that prevent talented and dedicated people from achieving their aspirations. By adopting a person-centred approach, we forge pathways to independence, dignity, and happiness.

This success is built on invaluable collaboration with hundreds of businesses across South Australia. Working closely with employers, we diligently understand their needs to ensure the perfect match between talent and opportunity.

The true significance of Employment Solutions, and its profound impact on the lives of individuals and their families, cannot be fully expressed without the voices of those it has touched.

That's why we are delighted to present the third edition of our collection of client stories. Within these pages, you will find inspiring accounts that showcase the transformative power of this program. Enjoy!

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**Employment Solutions unlocks the potential of migrants and refugees with a person-centred approach to integrated employment and wellbeing support.**

# Adele.

Overcoming barriers with targeted, personalised support from relatable workers who offer an understanding ear.

**Adele's journey is one of incredible resilience and determination.**

Growing up in a refugee camp and losing her mother at a young age due to war, Adele faced numerous challenges in her life. After being arranged to marry a man she had never met and moving to Australia, she found herself abandoned with her young daughter to fend for themselves.

Despite Adele's consistent efforts to make the most of her opportunities, she faced difficulties in finding a job that could align with her skills, training, and experience, while also accommodating her parenting responsibilities.

Working with a dedicated Career Coach at Sonder, Adele was able to prepare her resume, cover letters, and applications for various job opportunities. Adele's Career Coach was uniquely qualified to guide her and provide relevant and personal support, having lived in the same area as Adele had grown up and being familiar with the challenges and barriers that migrants and refugees face when coming from other countries.

Now that Adele was job-ready, with the help of her Career Coach, she was able to land an interview for a Disability Support Worker position at Minda, which she successfully secured.

**As a wrap-around service, Adele was also able to receive support from a Wellbeing Coach to help her to process her past and her present and think more positively about the future.**

**Together, they worked to develop self-management skills to reduce Adele's anxiety and stress, and improve her overall wellbeing.**

Throughout the onboarding process, Adele and her Career Coach worked together to navigate through the various forms and requirements.

In the early months of Adele's employment, she overcame numerous obstacles, including the COVID-19 pandemic, unaffordable housing, and the theft of her car. But, she persisted in her efforts, balancing her work responsibilities and caring for her daughter.

The advice and support from Adele's Career Coach kept her motivated, and Adele was thrilled to share with her Career Coach the news that she had finally achieved her dream of buying a house!

Adele's success is a testament to her resilience, resourcefulness, and hard work. With the help of her Career Coach, Adele overcame significant obstacles and achieved her goal. Her story is an inspiration to anyone who faces adversity in their lives, and it shows how targeted, personalised support and guidance can make all the difference.



# Solomon.

From homelessness to employment:  
Solomon's inspiring story.

**Solomon needed to rebuild his ability to tackle life's challenges.**

Solomon faced homelessness, unemployment, and mental health challenges after moving to Tasmania from Ghana. Despite facing many obstacles, he refused to give up and moved to Adelaide hoping for a fresh start.

Although he applied for hundreds of jobs, Solomon received no response, leaving him feeling invisible, until he joined the Employment Solutions program.

Solomon was able to express himself freely with his Wellbeing Coach who provided culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support. Solomon's Wellbeing Coach assisted him with processing his experiences and developing strategies to strengthen his resilience and mental health, along with connections to other community services.

While his wellbeing improved, Solomon worked with his Career Coach to identify his interest in working in mining, a dynamic industry with growth and training opportunities. He acquired several certificates and was mentored on job applications and interviews.

Solomon now works as a trade assistant and his manager is thoroughly impressed by his excellent work ethic. He continues to plan for the future to support his employment pathway in mining and has ambitions to buy a house and have a family.

"This program is special because young people like me that are stuck can come here and find someone that thoroughly listens and pays attention to their needs.

“

**My life has changed greatly; I feel more in control of my emotions and confident in doing the things I need by myself.**

**This program has given me back the trust in myself to accomplish my goals.**

I had lost the direction of my life, but now I feel the way I approach my life has positively changed. I hope this program lasts forever.”

Guiding Solomon into the Australian workforce required a person-centred approach that recognised his unique barriers, and adjusted support according to his needs at the time. Solomon's journey proves that with the right support, anyone can overcome their challenges and achieve their dreams.

# Miss Bano.

Feeling valued with meaningful employment.

**Miss Bano needed the right support to unlock her potential.**

After arriving in Australia with her mother and siblings in 2019, Miss Bano joined Sonder's Employment Solutions program with the goal of finding a professional job in her field.

With her rich professional experience as a Customer Care Executive in a multinational company in Pakistan, a Bachelor Degree in Commerce, a Diploma in Graphic Design, and a Certificate III in Business Administration from TAFE, Miss Bano was well-equipped to achieve her dreams.

However, she faced significant challenges due to her lack of local work experience and confidence issues.

With the help of a dedicated Career Coach in Sonder's Employment Solutions program, Miss Bano worked tirelessly to overcome these obstacles. Together, they had her educational qualifications assessed and worked on improving her communication skills, resume, cover letter and interview techniques.

With the guidance and support of her Career Coach, Miss Bano was able to secure an interview with the Royal Automobile Association (RAA) as a Claims Services Officer. After a rigorous and extensive recruitment process, Miss Bano was offered the job.

Joining the RAA team allowed her to gain invaluable local experience, further build her confidence, and approach her future with a sense of hope and optimism.

Miss Bano is grateful for the support she has received from Sonder through the Employment Solutions program.

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This program gives newcomers the tools we need for understanding the Australian workplace culture and how best to utilise our previous skills and professional experience.

With her eyes set on the future, Miss Bano plans to continue upskilling herself in finance and accounting with the goal of becoming a Taxation Officer.

Her Career Coach at Sonder will be by her side every step of the way, helping her achieve her professional goals and build a better life.





# Hawa.

Persevering in the face of adversity with resilience, determination, and the right support.

**Hawa's story is a true inspiration to anyone who faces adversity in their lives.**

Having lived through war and traumatic experiences as a young child in Liberia, including a stay in a refugee camp, Hawa was sponsored by the Australian Government to live in Australia at the age of 18.

After three years in Australia, Hawa sponsored her boyfriend from Liberia to join her. They married and started a family with two children. Unfortunately, their relationship hit a rough patch, resulting in Hawa's husband abandoning her and their children, leaving Hawa without an income and with no knowledge of English to support herself and her family. Determined to overcome these hardships, Hawa turned to Sonder for support.

With the help of a dedicated Career Coach from Sonder's Employment Solutions program, Hawa learned the basics of work etiquette and gained a better understanding of the employment process in Australia.

Her Career Coach provided her with invaluable guidance and support, eventually leading to Hawa securing a position as a Cleaner at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

Hawa now finds happiness and security in her workplace, and that she can rely on the Employment Solutions' post-placement support if she ever encounters any challenges.

**Hawa's dreams of providing for her kids and becoming a homeowner are becoming more of a reality, and she credits her Career Coach with providing her with a sense of belonging and equality that she had never experienced before.**

Her resilience, determination, and dedication to providing a better life for her children are a testament to her character.

With the support of Sonder, Hawa has overcome significant challenges and is well on her way to achieving her dreams.



Celebrating narratives of resilience, change and hope.

**Lily's journey to finding fulfilling work was not without its challenges.**

Born in Myanmar, she arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa in 2009. However, adapting to life in a new country was difficult for Lily, particularly as she didn't speak English well at first. Despite this, she was determined to learn the language so she could communicate effectively with others.

After some time away from the workforce as she cared for her children and recovered from major health issues, Lily decided to volunteer as a cleaner at the Australian Migrant Resource Centre and later worked as a support helper at an aged care facility. It was there that she discovered a passion for helping others and decided to pursue a qualification in Individual Support.

Despite having successfully completed studies in her chosen field, when Lily joined Sonder's Employment Solutions program, she lacked confidence and wasn't sure which direction to take with her career.

Fortunately, Lily was assigned to Rose, a Career Coach in Sonder's Employment Solutions program who helped her attend job expos and communicate with potential employers. Though Lily was initially hesitant, Rose encouraged her to apply for roles and build her confidence. Lily attended various events and engaged with employers, gradually developing her self-assurance and communication skills.

While Lily enjoyed working in community services, she realised the hours were not ideal for her family.

**With Rose's guidance, she applied for a Production Worker position at RM Williams, a role she had previously applied for unsuccessfully. This time, with Rose's help, she was successful and began working there happily.**

Throughout her journey, Lily has expressed her gratitude for the support and encouragement she received from Sonder's Employment Solutions program and Rose.

She continues to keep in touch with her Career Coach and has been offered a permanent position at RM Williams.

**Rose admires Lily's resilience and compassion for others, saying**



**It has been a pleasure to get to know Lily and support her on her employment journey and career path.**



# Rafik.

Resilience in the midst of challenges: The story of Rafik's success.

**Rafik's story is a tale of perseverance and triumph over adversity.**

Despite spending most of his life in a refugee camp, Rafik was determined to provide for his family and build a better life in Australia. However, he faced many challenges, including poor English-speaking skills, health issues, and a lack of local work experience.

Rafik's situation improved dramatically when he was referred to Sonder's Employment Solutions program, which provided him with the support he needed to find meaningful employment.

Under the guidance of his dedicated Career Coach, Michael, Rafik underwent vocational training, including an English course. Michael also worked closely with Rafik to build the skills he needed to succeed in the workplace. Together, they applied for a sewing position at a food packaging company and Rafik completed a trial. Unfortunately, Rafik experienced challenges with some of the finer work due to his vision issues. Michael engaged with Rafik's job provider to arrange prescription glasses but unfortunately due to miscommunication, the job opportunity slipped away.

Michael persisted in advocating for support from Rafik's job provider. Eventually, Rafik was able to get prescription glasses, and the food packaging company offered him a full-time position.

Today, Rafik is thriving in his role and has even started a sewing business on the side, with plans to grow it into something more. He is no longer reliant on welfare and is able to provide for his family while watching his children embark on their own journeys to university and beyond.

Reflecting on their journey together, Michael commented,

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It's frustrating to watch talented, dedicated people fall through the cracks because of a system that struggles to recognise their value. At the same time, it's encouraging that Sonder's client-centred approach gives us the freedom to concentrate on the client, rather than a checklist.

Michael is proud to have played a small part in Rafik's inspiring journey and is grateful for the opportunity to work with clients like Rafik who demonstrate such dedication and resilience.

Hear from  
employers.

## GAVAL Community Services.

Finding the right fit: How Employment Solutions helped GAVAL Community Services build its team.



In 2020, Victoria (or Vicky) and Alphonse Rutayisire founded GAVAL Community Services, a registered NDIS provider that offers community nursing, disability support, and home care services. GAVAL's mission is to make clients smile, feel better and live better in their homes.

As CEO and General Manager of GAVAL, Alphonse and Vicky have always strived to build a compassionate workforce where challenges are seen as learning opportunities. They have instilled a common goal among their workforce, which is to be comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Vicky understands that to be successful,

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it takes someone with resolution to  
make a difference in peoples' lives.

With most of their staff coming from culturally diverse backgrounds, GAVAL prides itself as an equal opportunity employer. However, finding the right employees that match the company's strong values has proved to be a difficult and time-consuming task.

This is where Sonder's Employment Solutions program has been instrumental. By partnering with the program, GAVAL quickly resolved its recruitment needs and acquired qualified workers who are passionate about caring for the wellbeing of others.

As demonstrated by Alphonse and Vicky with their own company, by connecting with a recruitment service like Employment Solutions, businesses can not only find the right employees for their team but also promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

# Ikarus.

## Creating meaningful connections with migrant and refugee employees.



Originating from Serbia and Macedonia, Zivan and Jadranka migrated to Australia and established their family-owned cleaning business, Ikarus, over 25 years ago in Adelaide.

Zivan and Jadranka include migrants and refugees within the Ikarus workforce because they understand how a crucial first chance can impact someone who has little connections in a new country. Jadranka acknowledges, "if it were not for someone else giving us a chance when we migrated to Australia, then we would not be in the position we are today."

Today, Ikarus is run by Zivan and Jadranka's sons, Stevan and George and together with their combined experiences, the family are thrilled to be able to develop meaningful connections with their migrant and refugee employees.

Zivan sees the same qualities in his migrant staff that were instilled in him when he first arrived in Australia in 1965. These individuals are not only strong-willed but also enthusiastic about learning new skills, even during the initial stages where communication can be a challenge. "Language barriers are always challenging to overcome at first when migrating to a new country, however we don't let this stop us from giving people an opportunity."

Since connecting with Sonder's Employment Solutions program, the family have been successful in finding employees that match the hard working and dedicated ethos at Ikarus.

"We have worked with a lot of recruitment agencies in the past and we have never come across a recruitment agency as effective and reliable as Sonder.

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**Before we started working with Sonder, we faced a lot of issues finding reliable and honest staff.**

**Sonder has provided us with many effective employment solutions.**

Employment Solutions is supported by the Transition Funding for Successful Try, Test and Learn Projects program (an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Social Services).

On behalf of the Employment Solutions team at Sonder, thank you to all of our clients for sharing your stories with us.

Thank you to the employers who have worked alongside us and contributed to the lives of our very passionate and determined clients.

**Get in touch today!**

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