

MCCSA

# Community Voices

SPRING 2024



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## FROM THE CEO

HELENA KYRIAZOPOULOS OAM

# PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY: SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SKILLED MIGRATION STORY

Migration profoundly shapes Australia, enriching our nation through both humanitarian arrivals and those joining us through the Skilled Independent stream. While we often hear stories of the challenges faced by humanitarian migrants, the journey of independent migrants, though different, is equally compelling. These individuals, who bring their skills, knowledge, and determination, face their own significant hurdles as they settle into Australian life.

Every day across South Australia, in hospitals and schools, construction sites and tech startups, laboratories and family businesses, skilled migrants are weaving themselves into the fabric of our community.

While they bring valuable expertise and qualifications, they also face unique challenges. Many encounter the paradox of being both highly qualified and initially underemployed, navigating the complex maze of credential recognition while rebuilding professional networks from scratch.

But it is precisely these challenges that make their achievements more remarkable. Within this edition of Community Voices, you'll read first-hand accounts of resilience, adaptation, and triumph. You'll meet families who have transformed obstacles into stepping stones and individuals who have reimaged their careers whilst enriching our community with their diverse perspectives and experiences.

As South Australia continues to grow and evolve, skilled migrants are not merely filling gaps in our workforce—they are helping shape our future. They are establishing businesses, mentoring others, and contributing to innovations that keep our state competitive in the global economy. Their determination not only transforms their own lives but strengthens South Australia's cultural and professional landscape.

I invite you to explore these stories that reveal how cultural diversity and professional expertise together create a stronger, more vibrant South Australia. Whether you are a skilled migrant yourself, an employer, or a member of our broader community, these narratives highlight our shared journey towards a more inclusive and prosperous future.

*Helena*





## SUPPORTING SKILLED MIGRANTS: MCCSA'S VISION AND ACTION

The Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA) has long recognised that skilled migrants represent not only a valuable workforce but also a vibrant source of innovation, diversity and cultural enrichment for our state. Our commitment to supporting these professionals has taken significant steps forward with the establishment of our dedicated Skilled Migrants Committee and the launch of targeted support programs.

We are delighted to welcome our inaugural Skilled Migrants Committee members: Cristabel Gigena, Esaaf Alsoki, Hassan Hashmi, Julie Rapebach, Min Chen, Saeed Bolhassani, and Subha Parida. These dedicated professionals bring diverse expertise and lived experience to guide MCCSA's initiatives

in supporting skilled migrants across South Australia.

Our recent flagship event and a series of monthly networking events exemplify this commitment. Working alongside the Community Connections Program, funded by the Department of Human Services, we hosted Associate Professor Shohreh (Sherry) Majd, a distinguished neuroscientist and motivational expert. Her presentation on "Unlocking Your Potential in a New Land" provided participants with scientific insights into adaptation and resilience-building - crucial skills for professionals establishing themselves in a new country.

Through our Community Connections Program, MCCSA is dedicated to creating supportive spaces and opportunities for skilled migrants by building bridges

between newcomers and established communities while facilitating professional networking and providing practical career development support.

Our commitment extends beyond individual events. We are developing a comprehensive framework of support, informed by our committee members' insights and experiences. By bringing together expertise, lived experience and community connections, we aim to create pathways that enable skilled migrants to fully contribute their talents to South Australia's growth and development.

Stay tuned to our social media channels and upcoming issues of Community Voices, where we'll showcase the achievements of our Skilled Migrants Committee.

# FOSTERING SUCCESS:

## SUPPORTING SKILLED MIGRANTS AND EMPLOYERS THROUGH INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Australia's economy thrives on the invaluable expertise and fresh perspectives that skilled migrants bring. Yet, their journey into the workforce is often fraught with challenges. From navigating unfamiliar job markets to overcoming cultural and language barriers, skilled migrants must adapt to new professional landscapes while embracing a new way of life.

But these challenges aren't theirs alone to bear. Employers, too, face the crucial task of integrating this diverse talent into their teams. It's a two-way street—one that requires both parties to evolve, fostering environments where inclusivity

isn't just an ideal but a lived reality.

Intercultural training, such as the training offered by culturalQ, is pivotal in this effort. By cultivating cultural awareness, these initiatives empower employers to create workplaces where everyone can thrive. Enhanced communication, inclusive leadership, and greater employee retention are just a few of the tangible benefits.

The stakes for neglecting cultural competence are high. Without a genuine commitment to inclusivity, organisations risk high turnover, diminished engagement, and the loss of opportunities for innovation

and growth. Moreover, they may fall short of the standards set by the South Australian Multicultural Charter, which calls on all of us to build inclusive and accountable workplaces.

Investing in cultural intelligence and organisational cultural competence isn't just about ticking boxes; it's about building a future where skilled migrants and their employers can succeed together, driving our State forward.

Take the initiative today: Embrace cultural intelligence and cultural competence and foster inclusive workplaces that empower skilled migrants and drive mutual growth.

*Image: Staff from the Skilled and Business Migration team at the Department for Industry, Innovation and Science (DIIS) participating in a culturalQ session, promoting intercultural training within key government sectors.*

**culturalQ**

**Unlock the power of  
cultural intelligence  
with culturalQ**



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# MCCSA **Skilled Migrant Stories**



## *Ali Akbar*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Afghanistan

CAREER: IT Analyst

I am a 37-year-old Afghan man. Before coming to Australia, I obtained a Bachelor of Computer Science from Qom University, Iran. After completing my studies, I returned to Afghanistan and worked as an MIS Analyst for the Ministry of Urban Development and Land for two years. Seeking to advance my education, I pursued a master's degree in Global Information and Telecommunication Studies from Waseda University in Japan. Upon finishing my master's degree, I returned to Afghanistan and took on the role of an IT lecturer at Gawharshad University in Kabul. I arrived in Australia in July 2021 under a partner visa.

In Adelaide, I faced challenges securing interviews in the tech industry, which led me to take manual labour jobs in the construction industry. I identified that the main barriers to access the IT job

market in Adelaide was due to no local experience and no local connections. After many applications and no interviews, my confidence was significantly affected.

Fortunately, I was referred to Community Corporate through the Port Adelaide Enfield Council, where they assessed my situation and provided with career advisory support. I was then accepted into one of the PIPEline programs, Digital Cadetship through the DEWR funding, which included coaching support and orientation to Australian workplace culture and employer expectations. This training was exactly what I needed to rebuild my confidence and follow my dream of working in IT.

In November 2022, Community Corporate introduced me to Peregrine/OTR, one of their inclusive employer partners.

I was offered a 12-week paid cadetship as an IT Specialist, where I worked on upgrading SharePoint and creating automated flows for tasks.

This opportunity, facilitated by Community Corporate, transformed my life. I received ongoing coaching and remained with Peregrine/OTR until May 2023, when I transitioned to a permanent role with another key employer partner, Accenture.

I am currently employed at Accenture as an Analyst. Through this cadetship, I not only secured meaningful employment and entered the IT industry in Australia but also achieved financial stability, allowing me to purchase a house. This opportunity marked a significant milestone in my professional journey and provided a foundation for long-term financial security and personal growth.



# *Binit Tom*

ORIGINALLY FROM: India  
CAREER: Lecturer



My name is Binit, and in 2009, my husband Johnson, our two children—Chris and Chrisa—and I moved to Adelaide, Australia from Kozhikode, a vibrant city in Kerala, India. At that time, social media was not widespread, so we had limited information about what to expect in Australia.

Fortunately, I found a job in a laundry the day after our arrival. Although this job was quite different from my previous role as a Lecturer in India, it provided a stable foundation for us as we began our new life. We were also fortunate to have a few fellow Malayalees nearby who offered invaluable support.

As my husband and I took on various jobs, I completed a transitional program to qualify as a nurse. This led to a position as a Registered Nurse, and within a year, I was promoted to Care Manager at Southern Cross. Interestingly,

I might have been the only manager there who couldn't drive at that time. One of the major challenges we faced was the lack of reliable public transportation; we couldn't always afford taxis, making getting around quite difficult. Learning to drive and gaining independence was a significant milestone for me in Australia. Despite our solid English skills from India, we found they weren't quite enough here, and we were unfamiliar with the local food and culture, although our kids adapted more quickly than we did.

After a few years, we felt homesick and decided to return to India. However, after a year we realized that coming back to Australia was the better choice. Returning was one of the best decisions we've ever made. We now live in Aberfoyle Park, a tranquil suburb, and have established a fulfilling life here.

Johnson spends most of his time gardening and continually seeks ways to enhance his garden. Chris is a final-year law student at Adelaide University, and Chrisa is actively involved in volleyball, dance, and debating. I work as a Lecturer at TAFE SA Noarlunga campus and serve as an executive member of the South Adelaide Malayalee Community. I dedicate my time to supporting new migrants, children, and women in our community. I also enjoy cooking Indian dishes and spending quality time with my plants and family. We were fortunate to visit a lot of places in Australia.

I am truly grateful to live and work in Australia, where I can pursue my interests and career. My children have easily adapted to Australian culture, while we continue to celebrate our Indian festivals and traditions, blending the best of both worlds.

## *Xusheng (Leslie) Li*

ORIGINALLY FROM: China

CAREER: International Student Services



Hello! My name is Xusheng (Leslie) Li, and I am currently working full-time at Flinders University as part of the International Student Services (ISS) team.

I hold a master's degree from the University of Adelaide and have been actively involved in student services, particularly supporting international and sponsored students to navigate their academic journey smoothly.

Outside of my professional role, I am deeply passionate about volunteering, having dedicated over 700 hours to 30 different organizations and events in the past two years.

I arrived in Australia in February 2022 from China, drawn by its renowned international reputation for higher education. As an international student,

I faced significant challenges, primarily starting afresh

without established resources or networks. To overcome these obstacles, I proactively sought opportunities to connect and integrate.

I began volunteering at the university, which was instrumental in building my social network. By helping others, I not only made lasting friendships but also established a broader professional and social network.

My efforts in volunteering and my commitment to community service led to significant achievements. After eight months in Adelaide, I was honored with the StudyAdelaide International Student Award for peer support, and later in 2022, I received the Volunteer of the Year award at the University of Adelaide. These accolades were pivotal in affirming my sense of belonging and contribution to my new community.

My journey from volunteering to securing a casual job, and eventually a part-time role at the university, culminated in graduating in September 2023 and landing my first full-time job in Australia just two months later.

I continue to volunteer not only because it aligns with my passion but also as a means to assist others, particularly new international students, in embracing their new life in Australia. My experiences have shown me that Australia values dedication and hard work, and I am committed to supporting others on their journey, just as I was supported.



# *Irina Zvereva*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Russia  
CAREER: Historian



My story is typical of the category of migrants who came to Australia to reunite with their adult children who chose Australia as a place to live. I came from St. Petersburg (Russia) in 2015.

In Russia, I was a PhD, book historian, author of research and publications on the history of Russian culture.

In Australia, I found no application for my professional qualifications. Like most newcomers, I was not well acquainted with the Australian system of reception and adaptation of migrants.

The first organization I joined was Uniting SA, Ethnic link services. At the time, Uniting SA worked with groups of people who shared a common language. Here I met many people who became my friends. I received important information about my rights and responsibilities, Australian laws to support retirees, and

my own opportunities to fulfill myself in a new place.

From 2016 until Covid, I volunteered with Uniting SA. At the same time, I attended English courses at TAFE and elsewhere. It's great that Australia has ample opportunities to learn English in a wide variety of institutions such as Churches, Libraries, Community Centers and others. For a while, I did some community work at the Firebird Association. Also, in 2016,

I started doing art education in an art class led by artist and teacher Alla Tolmacheva. This class was created at MCCSA and has been around for 10 years. This creative endeavor has proven to be very exciting and rewarding for me. I even had the opportunity to participate in several amateur art exhibitions. I am still practicing there to this day.

All the above-mentioned activities allowed me to get to

know my new homeland better, find an interesting hobby, avoid isolation, loneliness, improve my quality of life and, hopefully, bring at least a small benefit to the community.

My experience has shown that migrants who come to Australia, even if not at a young age, can find their place here, thanks to Australia's multiculturalism policy.

Such organizations as MCCSA contribute to its real realization by creating events, conditions and various platforms for positive activities of migrants, their adaptation in a new place and integration into the Australian society.

I am very grateful to the MCCSA manager and staff for their hard work, as everything I have described, including the Uniting SA classroom sessions, has always taken place at MCCSA with their direct involvement and support.

## ***Mohit Rau***

ORIGINALLY FROM: India  
CAREER: Project Officer



My name is Mohit Rau, and I am originally from Mumbai, India. In 2018, I relocated to Australia to pursue a Master's in Business (Sports Management), choosing Melbourne for its reputation as the hub for sports in Australia. Before this, I earned a Bachelor's in Computer Engineering and worked in IT for three years in India. Despite a promising start, I realized that IT wasn't my true passion. My parents, both former basketball players, instilled in me a lifelong love for sports, which ultimately led to my decision to move to Australia in 2017 to chase my dream of working with a State or National Sporting Organization.

The relocation process was both exciting and challenging. While I didn't face significant cultural differences, as I was already fascinated by Western

culture, I did have to quickly adapt to the Australian emphasis on volunteering. Volunteering is a significant aspect of life here, and it was inspiring to see how much people give back to their communities without expecting any financial reward. This experience deepened my understanding of the importance of community engagement.

The most challenging period of my journey came when I graduated in July 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Melbourne. The pandemic led to the cancellation of sports and a severe lack of job opportunities, causing me to experience an identity crisis. The first of six lockdowns lasted over six months, during which I had to work as a school cleaner—a far cry from my career aspirations.

Frustrated and disheartened, I turned to reading, a habit I had long avoided. This simple act transformed my life, giving me a sense of purpose and teaching me to dream big. By May 2024, I had completed reading 100 books, a journey that began in 2020.

In February 2022, I moved from Melbourne to Adelaide, where I currently work as a Project Officer with the Office for Recreation, Sport, and Racing. I married Aishwarya Puthran in July 2022, and she joined me in Adelaide. When I'm not working, I am dedicated to educating migrants and international students about the transformative power of reading. I use LinkedIn as a platform to inspire others through my writing. I am currently on a journey to read 150 books and learn from the experiences of 500 migrants.

# Neify

ORIGINALLY FROM: Colombia  
CAREER: Engineer



Hello THERE!

This is Neify, originally from Colombia. I started this journey in Melbourne in March 2019.

My partner and I were thrilled about new beginnings, but I was also devastated by the tough reality of leaving my son in Colombia with my mum and his dad, while we settled down. The first few months were a struggle, filled with daily tears, but the excitement of embracing a new culture and hoping for a better quality of life kept us going.

After months of long hours of work, the new year brought a major change when, on January 1, 2021, my mum finally flew my son to Melbourne. I was the happiest person in this world. However, our joy was momentary as just ten days later, we relocated to Adelaide.

We made the move to improve our chances of securing residency, a decision fuelled by the challenges of the COVID, which had made everything more difficult.

As the pandemic unfolded, I faced depression and a sense of uncertainty. Despite these struggles, I decided to actively seek employment in my field. I was fortunate to find a position with KELLY Tillage, who offered me a role even with my visa restrictions limiting me to 20 hours a week. My dedication paid off, and within a year, I transitioned to a full-time position when the government allowed students to work full-time.

In 2021, I began the hard process of applying for a skilled visa. This journey involved preparing for and sitting the

PTE test, and validating my engineering qualifications with Engineers Australia. The process was challenging, but when I received my results in March 2022, it felt like a second graduation.

By October 2022, we achieved permanent residency, and this April, we celebrated becoming Australian citizens. Our journey has been filled with challenges and achievements, but every step has been worth it. I'm forever grateful for all the people who supported our journey, and I hope I can inspire others to dream big and not give up during hard times, because every crisis comes with a blessing.





## *Dr Tania Dey*

ORIGINALLY FROM: India  
CAREER: Economist, BDO

I am an Economist, a Manager at BDO, and a mother to two primary school-aged children. I am a Bengali from Kolkata, India, so I take my music and misti (sweets) very seriously.

I came to Australia as a student for various reasons: to escape the marriage mart, continue my studies in economics, and, most importantly, build my own identity. I was offered a scholarship at Monash University, so I lived in Melbourne for a while. After completing my PhD, I moved to Adelaide with my partner.

It hasn't been easy at the beginning. Moving to a new country and culture at twenty-four was a challenge. I realised how ill-equipped I was, with almost no practical survival skills. I didn't know how to cook dal-bhat (lentil rice) or use household appliances!

Eventually, I started liking my life here and appreciated my freedom and opportunities. And I decided to migrate to Australia and make it my

adopted home. I fell in love with the gum trees, roos, and lorikeets. Like most migrants, I moved to Australia hoping for a better life and dreams that I could work towards.

During my PhD days, I realised I wanted to pursue a career in consulting. There were some technical difficulties in that. While a PhD equipped me with excellent research and analytical skills and helped me think out of the box and develop innovative solutions for complex problems, they were not particularly useful or necessary for starting a career in the private sector as an analyst. I also faced twin problems of being unable to apply for graduate programs due to my visa status and Adelaide not having economics consulting firms back then.

My passion for solving problems and participating in ongoing economic discourse motivated me to work hard and acquire the necessary skills. I worked at reputed research

centres at universities and in the government.

My path to achieving my goal of consulting in economics took me several years of hard work and a few fantastic mentors. No matter how challenging the journey is, nothing is impossible if you stay focused and work hard.

I enjoy providing solutions and offering independent economic advice to clients from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. I enjoy working in health and wellbeing, infrastructure, travel and tourism, and migration.

I truly enjoyed advocating as Co-Chair of the Women in Economics Network, upholding the work of female economists, and promoting economics among women as a rewarding career option. I volunteer my time as a producer on community radio, promoting community engagement. I love meeting new people and hearing their stories.



## *Ranielson Santana*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Brazil

CAREER: Accountant

Two of my latest shining moments were being interviewed on national television about economic indicators and participating in a panel discussion with the South Australian Treasurer about the state of the South Australian economy and opportunities and challenges going forward.

As a migrant who came to Australia armed with two suitcases and many dreams.....I think the success story is broader than achieving career objectives. It's assimilating into the culture here, feeling at home, accepting the people as your own, and understanding and solving their problems. My mother often says that my Adelaide family is more extensive than mine in India and is growing bigger by the year.....I think that is the true success story for a migrant.

This Bengali migrant has found her home and loves celebrating her life and career amidst nature, a glass of beautiful South Aussie red and the sweetness of pavlova.

My name is Ranielson Santana, and I moved to Australia from Recife, Brazil in 2018. I chose Australia for its abundant opportunities, especially in education and professional growth. Arriving as an international student with English as my third language, I faced significant challenges. However, my strong background in Economics and Accounting provided a solid foundation as I embarked on this new chapter of my life.

The relocation process was not without its difficulties. During the first six months, I worked as a kitchen hand while I settled in and established my life in Australia. Although this job was outside my area of expertise, it gave me the stability I needed to adjust to my new environment.

After six months, I secured my first position in my field of accounting. However, the workplace culture and practices were vastly different from what I was accustomed to in Brazil.

Despite these challenges, I persisted, consistently putting in my best effort and gradually adapting to the new professional environment.

Finding my place in a foreign country was daunting, especially with the language barrier and cultural differences. However, I was determined to overcome these challenges. Volunteering became a crucial part of my adaptation. It not only allowed me to give back to the community but also served as a bridge to reconnect with the job market.

Through volunteer work, I developed new skills, expanded my network, and gained valuable experience that helped me establish myself professionally in Australia.

In 2023, I was honoured to be recognized as Employee of the Year by a national company in Australia—a testament to my dedication and hard work since arriving in this country

## *Saeed Bolhassani*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Iran  
CAREER: Civil Engineer



The journey of a skilled migrant coming to Australia does not end upon reaching its shores. The challenges faced by newcomers are well-known to many. However, despite these difficulties, there are opportunities that can help new residents integrate into society and better understand the people around them. These new horizons broaden our vision and help us thrive.

Coming from a small city in Iran with a master's degree in engineering and a high level of English fluency may seem impressive, but these qualifications can feel almost insignificant when navigating the challenges of migrating to Australia.

It all starts with something as simple as finding a good plan for your mobile phone, and no one knows where it ends. One of the most tangible obstacles for a skilled migrant is finding

an affordable place to live and securing a job. The first challenge rears its ugly head when you try to rent a property without any rental history, and as expected, the outcome is often rejection.

It gets even worse when, after many attempts, finding a job seems like a distant dream—constantly facing rejection due to the common excuse of needing "local experience." The list of challenges goes on, and I could talk about them endlessly. When you find yourself alone without any support, things can change in unpredictable ways.

Despite facing tremendous obstacles ahead of us as skilled migrants, we fight day in and day out to reach a better place, one we believe we at least deserve. Along this journey, we encounter people who change us in significant ways—those who have been in our situation

before, whose mentorship and support become our greatest assets. These are the people who trust us, help us step out of the zone of denial, and encourage us to experience life in its true form.

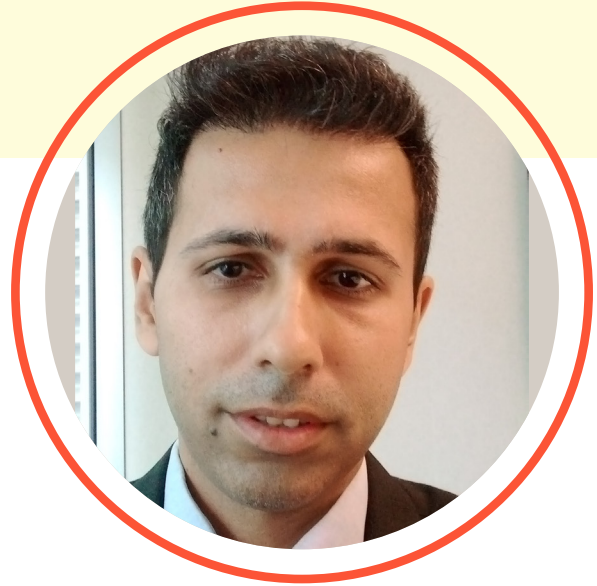
In our new journey, we find friends with a mindset of acceptance and kindness—people who support us every step of the way, and we are proud to stand by their side when they need us.

Our journey does not end here; its true meaning lies in the decision we made to be here. Some may call it a regretful decision, feeling that the challenges are not worth the opportunities. But for me, being around people who make me feel valued and supported is what truly matters, and I am fortunate to have found them here.



# Asad Bukhari

ORIGINALLY FROM: Pakistan  
CAREER: Claims Management Officer



## My Journey to Australia: A Tale of Adaptation and Resilience

In 2015, I was granted a State Sponsored Visa 190 for South Australia. With a master's degree in business administration from Karachi, Pakistan, and several years of experience in the banking industry in Dubai, UAE, I sought a place that could provide a promising future for my family. My wife, a passionate doctor who had worked in a government hospital in Pakistan, shared this dream.

Although we received our PR grant, family commitments delayed our move for a few years. We finally arrived in Australia in February 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. As we attempted to settle into Australian society, we faced an unexpected challenge: our youngest child, born after our visa grant, had to remain in Pakistan while we applied for his visa separately.

The pandemic brought unprecedented difficulties. With flights suspended and uncertainty looming, it was the most challenging time for our family. When our youngest child's visa was finally granted, my wife traveled to Pakistan to bring him home. Upon their return, they had to undergo a mandatory two-week hotel quarantine.

Meanwhile, I focused on networking and updating my CV. It was a period of unlearning and learning, adapting to the new professional landscape. Although my initial job wasn't in finance, my preferred field, I persevered. After two years, I finally secured a position that aligned closely with my expertise.

Our children, being quite young, initially struggled to adjust to the new culture and school environment. However, they soon made friends and began receiving invitations to

birthday parties and playdates. As a family, we faced multiple challenges at various stages, but we quickly adapted, seizing opportunities to network and acquire new skills. The strong support provided by the Muslim and Pakistani communities proved invaluable during this transition.

While I'm grateful for our move to Australia, one challenge remains: facilitating visits from our parents. Although they managed to visit last year, our community often faces difficulties in obtaining parent visas, with applications frequently denied on seemingly unjust grounds. We hope this issue will be addressed and resolved in the future.

Despite the hurdles, our journey to Australia has been one of growth, adaptation, and new beginnings. It has reinforced our resilience as a family and opened up a world of opportunities for us all.

# MCCSA *Skilled Migrant Stories*



## *Esaaf Alsoki*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Syria

CAREER: Physicist, Radiation Protection

My name is Esaaf Alsoki, originally from Syria. As a university lecturer in physics with a deep passion for wellbeing, environmental awareness and radiation safety, my life is a blend of professional and personal commitments. I am also a proud mother of two wonderful boys in primary school. My husband, an interior designer, has recently embarked on a new career path in cabinet design at a local company.

For over a decade, we lived in Kuwait, where we enjoyed stable jobs, built valuable connections, and led a fulfilling life.

However, we yearned for a country where our children could truly feel at home and where we could contribute positively to a safe environment. Prior to relocating to Australia, we spent a year in Chile, visiting my husband's family and introducing our kids to their relatives. Receiving our visa was one of the happiest moments in our lives, marking the start of a new chapter filled with hope and excitement.

The move to Adelaide required extensive mental, psychological, and logistical preparation, especially given the significant changes our kids would face. Initially, we knew no one in our new city, but we were fortunate to connect with a local resident through WhatsApp. She provided us with invaluable information

on schools, neighborhoods, and living costs, and even introduced us to her family and friends once we arrived, which was immensely reassuring.

Our first steps included updating our status and address, visiting Centrelink, Service SA, and applying for a Photo ID and medical care, all of which proved to be very beneficial. We're now actively engaging with the community by attending skilled migrants' events, many of which we find through LinkedIn or are introduced to by the state. As we build our network and explore job opportunities, we remain optimistic and committed to making the most of this new chapter, hoping for acceptance and support from employers and the community.

# Gopal Golyala

ORIGINALLY FROM: India  
CAREER: Kumon Instructor



Gopal's journey to Mordialta Rotary Club in 2021 began amidst the fertile fields of a small village 60 km from Hyderabad, India, where his family farmed rice and maize under the tropical sun. Life on the farm posed numerous hazards beyond scorching summer temperatures. Once, while enjoying a ride on a bullock wagon loaded high with hay, Gopal fell off, narrowly escaping serious injury as the wagon's wheel passed over his lower back. On another occasion, during lunchtime studies at the kitchen table, Gopal felt a sharp sting—a snake bite. Promptly managing the venom, he recovered, though the cobra's fate remains unknown. Gopal navigated an educational path differing significantly from Australia's, learning from village mentors, and passing a rigorous government exam at age 11, alongside other students drawn from the population of about the size of South Australia.

His exceptional talent secured him free higher education in Hyderabad, graduating in 1988 with an Electronic Engineering degree from Osmania University. Armed with his degree, Gopal embarked on a career at HPCL (Hindustan Packaging Co. Ltd.) as an electrical supervisor. In 1995, with his wife Suvarna, an archaeology graduate, Gopal made the challenging decision to migrate to South Australia with their six-month-old daughter on skilled migrant visas, successfully navigating two demanding exams for visa approval.

Securing a job in South Australia proved daunting, taking Gopal three years before landing a full-time position at CSC (Computer Science Corporation) in Mawson's Lakes Technology Park as a software engineer. After a decade at CSC and a stint at BAE Systems, Gopal took a hiatus in 2010 to care for Suvarna, who battled severe kidney problems until her passing in 2020. From

2015 Gopal began running a Kumon Magill centre which is a freelance Japanese education company, teaching mainly Mathematics and English. He is at present running that centre for 3 days a week and 3 days at home preparing for online learning.

Seeking community and cultural connections, Gopal found Rotary's values aligned perfectly with his own, leading him to join Mordialta. Drawn to the club's Wednesday meetings, he became a member in 2021. He cherishes a community-focused life and enjoys time with his children at home. Outside Rotary, Gopal indulges in gardening, playing keyboard, and reading fiction and biographies.

Amidst an atmosphere of camaraderie and dedication, the President Changeover Ceremony on June 30, 2024, was a resounding success, warmly welcoming Gopal as the president of Rotary Club of Mordialta.



## *Leon Mistica*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Philippines

CAREER: Social Innovation and Impact Manager



In 2019, I left the Philippines and moved to Adelaide to pursue a Master's in Social Work, aiming to deepen my knowledge and skills in supporting vulnerable communities. During my first placement, I collaborated with two fellow international students to create an innovative 'Armchair Travel' program for elderly residents at a local facility. We designed immersive cultural activities with sensory experiences. This program was well-received, with many residents requesting it regularly, and it was featured in StudyAdelaide's "Our Student" segment on YouTube.

After graduating from Flinders University and receiving my skilled visa, I embarked on a career path marked by both challenges and rewards. I experienced difficulties finding work due to a lack of local experience. To gain relevant experience, I volunteered as

an Emergency Assistance Officer for an emergency relief nonprofit organisation and as a Social Support Officer for a refugee nonprofit organisation. To support myself financially, I took on casual jobs in cleaning, factory work, fruit picking, and also as a hotel receptionist.

After a year of volunteering and various roles, I discovered Community Corporate, an organisation that supports refugees and migrants into employment. I was fortunate to find an employer willing to give me a chance. I began as a Community Project Officer, providing job support and coaching. Over time, my role evolved to Social Impact and Inclusion Coordinator, and eventually, Social Innovation and Impact Manager.

As a Social Innovation and Impact Manager, I am now involved in incubating new employment programs,

collaborate with employer partners to co-design and customise diversity and inclusion frameworks, lead the skilled stream program, and oversee social impact portfolio. I am proud to use my skills to make a difference. Notable achievements include providing job support for 42 refugees who joined the Woolworths customer fulfillment centre in Brisbane and leading skilled programs at Community Corporate, including the Refugee Digital Cadetship, where we supported 50 cadets in securing ongoing roles. I am also working with StudyAdelaide Careers in IT and Employment Placement Support to help international graduates find meaningful career opportunities in South Australia. Additionally, I volunteer for the Philippine Consulate to support Filipino international students in South Australia

# Xueqian Zhang

ORIGINALLY FROM: China

CAREER: Singer-songwriter, emcee, storyteller and cultural ambassador



My name is Qian, from China and have been living in Australia for 11 years. I am a singer-songwriter, emcee, storyteller and cultural ambassador. Meanwhile, doing student services part-time. My dream is to become a full-time artist.

## Why Australia - Random migration

Migration was outside my plan. Initially, I just wanted to see the world, as I'd never been overseas. But after a year of doing my master's degree, I started to like this country, the chill vibe, the big space, the diverse culture and people. Seeing many of them choose their career because of their pure love instead of something else was very inspiring. So, I decided to apply.

## Biggest challenge

English. I found it hard to understand locals because of their accents and slang. Also, it was difficult to express myself so others could understand me. Therefore, in the first month, I mostly talked to my family and friends back home. But one day, a moment arrived, "Doing this is not going to help me. I should make the most of my time and resources while I am here instead." That changed everything. I started to talk to strangers whenever waiting for the bus or on the bus. It was nerve reeking. I had to encourage myself again and again before approaching a stranger. But looking back, it was so worth it. After a year, my fluency improved a lot. That boosted my confidence, helped me make friends, and scored more job opportunities afterwards.

## Achievement - finding myself

I've never thought I would become an artist before coming to Australia. But two years ago, I started to perform, sing, MC, deliver cultural sessions for different city councils, and act for the first time in a Fringe theatre show. I am so happy that finally, I am doing something I like and am naturally good at, and people appreciate my talents, too. This is such a big surprise to me.

Looking back, I am so grateful for my resilience, courage and many friendly people who encouraged me to be myself and follow my own path. That's what I want to encourage others too, especially international students and immigrants. We are as good as everyone else here, so never underestimate your abilities. Instead, be confident in sharing and shining your natural magic.

## *Nabin Shahi*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Nepal  
CAREER: Trainer



Nabin's Journey: From Nepal to Australia

My journey from Nepal to Australia has been one of resilience, adaptability, and perseverance. I moved to Australia seven and a half years ago, excited about the new experiences and opportunities that awaited me. With a background as a lecturer and experience in both education and hospitality, I was confident I would find a job in my field. However, the reality hit hard—I encountered numerous rejections and silence from colleges and universities.

A turning point came when a friend suggested I apply for a job in the hotel industry. After facing more rejections, I walked into a café and offered to work for free just to gain local experience. This bold move paid off when the café owner not only accepted my offer but also paid me \$50

for the day. This experience opened new doors, and soon after, I secured a paid position in a hotel, starting as a Food and Beverage Attendant and eventually working my way up to a managerial role.

Despite this progress, the toxic work culture in the hospitality industry took a toll on my mental and physical health. I realised the importance of prioritising mental well-being and decided to return to my passion for education. Even though I lacked local teaching experience, I earned my certification as a trainer after two years of study, researching and seeking guidance along the way.

Today, I am proud to work as a trainer, helping others achieve their goals. My journey has shown me the value of perseverance, adaptability, and the willingness to start over. It also reinforced the importance

of networking and finding support from others.

Throughout my experiences, I've come to understand the critical role mental health plays, especially for migrants adapting to a new country. The challenges I faced in hospitality highlighted this issue, inspiring me to become an advocate for mental health awareness. Now, I am passionate about promoting mental health, particularly for newcomers to Australia or those starting their careers.

As I continue my journey, I remain committed to supporting mental health initiatives and making a positive impact on others, drawing from the lessons I've learned along the way.

# Rehana Usman

ORIGINALLY FROM: Pakistan  
CAREER: Textile Designer, Artist



I am an accomplished textile designer and artist, holding a bachelor's degree in Textile Design from the prestigious National College of Arts (PNCA), Pakistan, established in 1875. From an early age I knew that I wanted more from life and was aiming to deliver to the best of my capacity. My final thesis on film and stage costumes earned me widespread recognition from institutions like the Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design.

This success quickly propelled me into my professional career, where I was hired by Pakistan Television Network (PTV). After a few years in fashion, I transitioned into the mainstream textile industry, leading creative teams for some of Pakistan's largest textile companies. My exceptional leadership skills and keen aesthetic sense gained the trust of international clients. I represented my companies at major international trade

shows, including Heimtextil Frankfurt, Intertextil Shanghai, and Texworld Paris.

My passion for education led me back to my alma mater, where I served as an Associate Professor at NCA. During my academic years, my involvement in the Mime Club, Puppeteers Club, and Eastern Music, along with my participation in the International Puppet Festival of 1997, reflected my diverse artistic talents. Upon relocating to South Australia, I founded "STUDIO RAGS," where I offer art and craft workshops to local communities.

Known for my signature workshops in Indonesian Batik and Japanese Shibori dyeing, my unique expertise has been recognised by councils, schools, and organisations across Adelaide. I received a Weekly Workshop award for my Indonesian Batik class in last fringe festival. I mentored a group of young artists for

Indonesian Batik through National Gallery of Canberra. I also revived the lost art of puppetry, presenting a Shadow Puppetry show at the 2024 Adelaide Fringe by training young students.

Despite facing challenges in restarting my career in Australia, my resilience led me to establish a small business and pursue Certificate IV in Entrepreneurship. I am a compelling story teller and write children's stories for my Urdu podcast. I continue to share my talents as a homemaker, gardener, and active community volunteer. I help new migrants to restart their lives in a new country. Proud of my heritage and achievements, I aspire to represent my community as an artist, bringing creativity and joy to others.





## *Valeria Reategui*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Peru

CAREER: Finance, Logistics, Food Photography

### A New Beginning in Australia

I'm Valeria, a Peruvian who migrated to Australia eight years ago. My husband, a Peruvian engineer, had been working here in a FIFO role for a while, and during our visits, we fell deeply in love with the country. We decided to apply for residency, and when it was approved, I resigned from my corporate job in Peru and embarked on a new adventure.

With over fifteen years of experience in finance and logistics at large companies, I naively assumed finding a job in Australia would be a breeze. However, I quickly discovered that my extensive experience

wasn't as valuable as I had hoped due to the different professional landscape. It was a humbling realisation that forced me to reinvent myself.

Always passionate about cooking, I decided to start a food blog as a potential income source for our family. As I began documenting my culinary creations, I realised the importance of high-quality photography. Inspired to improve my blog's visuals, I delved into food photography.

I enrolled in specialised courses to learn about food styling, lighting techniques, and other essential aspects of the craft. As I honed my skills, I found

a newfound purpose in life. My past experiences, while valuable, paled in comparison to the joy and fulfilment I derived from my newfound passion.

Being an entrepreneur is undoubtedly challenging, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to turn my passion into a profitable venture. I love helping clients discover their unique voices and develop a strong brand identity. It's gratifying to see the impact my work can have on their businesses.

# Ciaran Dolan & Vanessa Rojas

ORIGINALLY FROM: Peru

CAREERS: Service Engineer / Senior Payroll Specialist



We arrived in SA on a state sponsorship visa for skilled migrants from Peru at the end of 2018. My partner is Irish, and I am originally from Peru, a globetrotter with a German passport.

Our first job was as farm workers on a potato farm in beautiful Kangaroo Island. We felt very fortunate to be able to see most of the stunning island in seven weeks at the end of 2018. Then I worked as a service attendant on a mine site close to Coober Pedy for half a year while my partner was working for a big company as an electronics engineer in southern Adelaide.

Being apart from each other for six months was hard, especially because we were new to Adelaide. The experience of working remotely through day and night shifts on 2:1 and 1:1 rosters was quite unique and contributed positively to my personal development.

I then landed a job as a compliance administrator for a Registered Training Organisation in the CBD that was severely understaffed while the owners were making a lot of profit. After three months, I started applying for new jobs while still working there. Luckily, my contract wasn't extended after the total of six months working for that RTO, which gave me the opportunity to find a good role in the disability sector.

I then started as a quality and safety assistant for a disability services provider and progressed quickly to a finance/payroll officer position. I got this job a month before COVID hit Oz, which I joyfully performed for over four years.

At the same time, my partner was made redundant. I was still very confident he would find a better job at the start of COVID, which did happen.

He has been working for a European company in his field since then that allows him to meet new people and travel a large part of the country. I currently hold a senior payroll position for a corporate in the CBD since it was time for the next step in my career.

In summary, Adelaide has treated us very well. We adopted a beautiful, smart American Staffy cross in April 2022 and bought a modern townhouse in artistic Bowden a year after. Adelaide will always be home, one home of so many!

## *Yeon Kim*

ORIGINALLY FROM: Korea  
CAREER: Hotel Management



I'm from the Republic of Korea and moved to Australia at the age of 23 to study Hotel Management in Adelaide. After graduating, I worked in hotels in Adelaide and Sydney. However, I struggled with career progression due to my service skills and networking, as English is my second language. I found it hard to connect with colleagues and deliver strong verbal service to customers, so I focused on physical tasks in function rooms and banquets, avoiding English communication when possible.

I developed my skills in finance and accounting, studying at the University of Adelaide while working at a public accounting firm. This career path required less communication than hospitality.

After graduation, I obtained a CPA qualification and moved to the public sector. I worked at various government agencies, including the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), ReturntoWorkSA, and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) as a forensic accountant.

Alongside my work, I studied Business Law part-time at the University of Adelaide. Recognising that communication skills were still important for advancement, even in accounting and the public sector, I joined Toastmasters as a Vice President and attended various trainings to improve my public speaking abilities.

During this journey, I married a Korean woman I met at hotel school, and we have three children aged 15, 12, and 7. My wife and I wanted to create a better environment and more opportunities for our kids, so we decided to migrate to Australia.

My commitment to lifelong learning, shown through years of study and professional development, has been rewarded. This investment in education has enabled me to successfully settle in Australia and provide for my growing family.

# Yuliya Klymenko

ORIGINALLY FROM: Ukraine

CAREER: Interior designer



My name is Yuliya Klymenko, and I'd like to share my journey with you. I'm originally from Lviv, Ukraine, and my family and I now live in Adelaide. Our move to Australia was not planned; it was shaped by the unexpected outbreak of war in our home country.

Before the conflict began, my family and I had a comfortable life. We had bought an old house on the outskirts of Lviv and were in the process of renovating it. My husband worked in logistics, I was a self-employed interior designer, and our children were attending school. My son was also actively involved in judo.

When the war erupted, I had to make the difficult decision to leave Ukraine with our children and seek safety. We found refuge in Adelaide, thanks to my cousin Pavlo Smoliy, who organized our stay and connected us with a host family Nicky and Kevin Irons.

Their support was invaluable in helping us adjust to our new life.

Just three weeks after arriving in Australia, I secured a job at a 3D visualization company, Eagle Vision, where my skills and qualifications were a perfect match for the role. This opportunity allowed me to continue working in my field and provided a sense of normalcy.

My husband joined us nine months later, which was a challenging period for us, but his arrival marked the beginning of a new chapter. Our life began to stabilize, and our children resumed their activities such as swimming, dance classes, soccer, tennis. My son continued with judo, achieving a notable level and earning several gold medals.

To provide for our family and ensure our children had ability to have an active life, my husband worked hard. He juggled two jobs: a full-

time position as a warehouse supervisor and a part-time role in a kitchen. We also managed to buy a car, and to get another one on lease which enabled us to explore Australia and made our life easier.

With the help of Tania Jarema-Norton, I held my first art auction and exhibition, which was successful. My paintings, featuring portraits of Ukrainian women, symbolize the resilience and struggles faced by mothers and women over the past two and a half years.

Currently, our biggest challenge is the visa situation. I had planned to apply for a skilled visa as an interior designer, having passed the English test and completed my skills assessment. However, the government removed my occupation from the skilled migration list, preventing me from applying. Despite the difficulties, we remain hopeful and determined to build a bright future here in Australia.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## MCCSA's diverse programs for a vibrant community



### Transport Services

MCCSA's affordable and reliable transport solution for community organisations and individuals in South Australia. MCCSA has four buses in its fleet, including one wheelchair accessible bus, and can accommodate up to 12 people. MCCSA also offers volunteer drivers and is seeking expressions of interest for 'Going Places' guided tours.

For more information, please contact Geoffrey Brown via [geoffrey.brown@mccsa.org.au](mailto:geoffrey.brown@mccsa.org.au) or call 0481 948 728.



### Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

CVS has expanded and has been renamed to ACVVS. This program facilitates one-on-one friendships between older people and visitors speaking their language. They visit to build relationships and add warmth to the lives of senior citizens, reducing their loneliness and isolation.

If you would like to volunteer, please email Maggie Asaad via [maggie.asaad@mccsa.org.au](mailto:maggie.asaad@mccsa.org.au) or call 8213 4604.



### Community Facilities

MCCSA offers a variety of community spaces for meetings, forums, workshops, and functions. These facilities include a 50-seat hall that is *free of charge* for registered MCCSA community groups, with a donation appreciated for rubbish removal and electricity. The hall is also available for commercial hire.

To hire an MCCSA community space, call us on 8345 5266 or email [mccsa@mccsa.org.au](mailto:mccsa@mccsa.org.au)



### Men's Group

MCCSA's Multicultural Men's Group aims to improve mental health outcomes for men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The group provides a safe and supportive space for men to connect, share experiences, and learn about mental health and wellbeing. Through a range of activities, including guest speakers and social outings, the Men's Group encourages men to break down cultural barriers and if necessary, seek help when needed.

For further information, contact Ukash Ali Ahmed via [ukash.ahmed@mccsa.org.au](mailto:ukash.ahmed@mccsa.org.au)



### Community Development

Community Development is focused on providing individual support to vulnerable and emerging culturally diverse communities and their members. The program offers a range of activities, including workshops, leadership and networking events, and capacity-building activities.

For further information, please email Somi Lindsay at [somi.lindsay@mccsa.org.au](mailto:somi.lindsay@mccsa.org.au)



### Building Employer Confidence

Building Employer Confidence in Disability and Inclusion is a program that aims to create inclusive and diverse workplaces by providing training and support to employers, and supporting skilled CALD workers with disabilities to find suitable workplaces. This program offers a range of resources and services, including training workshops, internships, employer and diversity audits.

Want to know more? Contact Perrin Abbas on 8213 4603 or [perrin.abbas@mccsa.org.au](mailto:perrin.abbas@mccsa.org.au)





## Multicultural Playgroup

MCCSA's Multicultural Playgroup provides a safe and inclusive space for parents and children from diverse cultural backgrounds to connect and socialize. It aims to support children's development and help families overcome isolation through a range of social activities.

To get involved, contact Abby Liu via [abby.liu@mccsa.org.au](mailto:abby.liu@mccsa.org.au)



## Cultural Intelligence Training

Unlock the power of cultural intelligence with culturalQ! The service is designed for organisations that want to develop and implement diversity and inclusion strategies, and ensure that their services and products are provided inclusively, equitably, and effectively.

To book your session, email [culturalq@mccsa.org.au](mailto:culturalq@mccsa.org.au)



## Consultancy

MCCSA prides itself on its connection with the multicultural communities of South Australia, understanding their needs and advocating for them. MCCSA and experienced staff are available to provide consultancy services on a range of topics that impact the CALD communities of South Australia. This provides a direct link for stakeholders and service providers to access and understand the needs of their communities more clearly.

Contact MCCSA via email [mccsa@mccsa.org.au](mailto:mccsa@mccsa.org.au) or call 8345 5266.



## Cultural Connections in Disability

Cultural Connections in Disability is a project that develops and delivers culturally sensitive activities and resources for CALD people with disability. This aims to enhance their understanding of available support and services, build their capacity

to overcome social isolation, and explain their right to lead a good life. MCCSA produced a Disability Inclusion Video Series in collaboration with various communities and stakeholders across South Australia.

For more information, contact Katherine Greer at [katherine.greer@mccsa.org.au](mailto:katherine.greer@mccsa.org.au)



## Interested in Volunteering?

MCCSA offers many exciting volunteer opportunities for those seeking a meaningful way to give back to their community. From Playgroup volunteers to tour guides and bus drivers, community visitors, and guest speakers, there's something for everyone. By volunteering with us, you'll be making a positive impact on the lives of CALD individuals and families, while also gaining valuable skills and experience.

Join our team today and make a difference! Email your CV and cover letter to [mccsa@mccsa.org.au](mailto:mccsa@mccsa.org.au)

Building Successful Communities



# Your Voice Matters.

Share your story by emailing [communications@mccsa.org.au](mailto:communications@mccsa.org.au)