



Navigating a future to stay in school and out of trouble

Struggling with anxiety and other mental health problems, sixteen year-old Alex found it increasingly difficult to stay in school and was at risk of dropping out altogether. That's when our Navigator worker stepped in.

The Navigator program works intensively with young people, families and schools to help young people overcome barriers that stop them from making a successful return to school. The risk of not intervening is significant - about two-thirds of children and young people in prison in Victoria have been previously suspended or expelled from school.

With the support of Pete, his Navigator program worker, Alex is turning his life around and is now attending school regularly. Alex's story is not uncommon.

Fifteen year-old Adam started missing school when he was in grade five. Struggling with a learning difficulty and anxiety, Adam fell behind in class and dropped out in year eight.

Adam doesn't use the word 'anxiety', but has described to Beth, his Navigator worker, that his heart starts to beat quickly when anyone discusses school with him and when his mum comes to wake him up in the morning to get ready for school.

In conversation with Adam's mother, Julie, Beth quickly realised that the secondary school was unaware of Adam's previously diagnosed learning problems, despite Julie's attempts to raise her concerns.

Because there had been a number of different service providers over the years, it seemed no one held the complete

story about Adam, and understandably it took a while for Beth and Adam to build a trusting relationship. Gradually, Adam got to the point where he felt comfortable opening up. Once all the relevant information had been gathered and the appropriate tests had been completed, a tailored plan was put into action.

It was decided that a mainstream school setting would not work for Adam so he enrolled into a flexible learning program which was better suited and more responsive to Adam's specific needs.

Although Adam isn't completing his full timetable just yet, he is attending school regularly. He also attended an interview for a casual job. These achievements, his mum says, are huge successes and significant signs of Adam's building confidence.

Intervening early is critical to ensure young people like Alex and Adam stay in school and out of trouble. We welcome the Victorian government's recent funding announcement about the continuation and extension of Navigator's vital work.

Names have been changed to protect identity.

Jesuit Social Services staff member and a program participant

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A pathway of hope

When we send our little ones off to start school for the first time, we have big hopes for them – that they'll settle in, make friends and develop a lifelong love for learning.

Everyone has the right to an education. Our hope is that all people get to reach their potential and go on to become contributing members of the broader society as adults.

However, for some people this hope gets derailed along the way. There are many factors that can lead to someone leaving school early – including problems at home, behavioural problems, and cultural and language barriers - and these factors are often experienced more severely by people on the margins who don't necessarily have the support they need to overcome these obstacles and stay on track at school.

At Jesuit Social Services, we are committed to supporting people who have struggled with mainstream education, training and employment. We believe that in the right environment, and with the right support, everyone can make steps along the pathway to social and economic inclusion – whether it be completing training to become job ready, gaining manageable employment experience or finding a role fitting their skills and qualifications.

You'll read about a number of our education, training and employment programs in this newsletter, including our own Jesuit Community College and Corporate Diversity Program.

You'll also read about the way we're working with young people who look like they're at risk of dropping out of school or being expelled. By intervening at this early stage with people like Alex (featured in this newsletter) we can divert people from a life of disadvantage and exclusion, help them to stay in school and receive the support they need to continue their education.

We can't do this work without your support, so thank you for joining us as we work to build a just society for all people.

Julie Edwards
Chief Executive Officer

College a pathway to successful career

Yvonne emigrated to Australia in 2016 with hopes of a new beginning. Upon her arrival, she found that her experience working in hospitality in Rwanda was not recognised by employers – and lack of work experience in Australia was a barrier to her gaining work here. This is a common problem confronted by migrants when they settle in Australia.

Yvonne says she found it "hard to get jobs in Australia because I wasn't experienced here, and didn't know how things were done".

Jesuit Community College provides people with real skills for life, learning and work, offering pathways to education and employment through accredited training programs, as well as short courses that help people with their work readiness.

In the past financial year, the College supported more than 3,500 students who faced barriers to mainstream education and training. In late 2017, Jesuit Community College also marked its 10,000th participant since our doors opened and the first students enrolled in May 2011.

Yvonne says that Jesuit Community College provided her with the skills, training and confidence she required to successfully navigate the process of applying and interviewing for jobs. The College "coached and encouraged me, helping me work on my CV, my confidence levels and some of the weaknesses that hindered me in getting jobs".

With the support provided by Jesuit Community College, Yvonne was able to find work as a catering assistant with a school in Melbourne's east, which she feels has placed her on the pathway to a successful career.

"Working with the College has made a huge impact on my personal journey in Australia. I went from not having any offers at all to having a job that helps me pay the bills and get into the workforce."



Yvonne is now working as a catering assistant

Education making dreams a reality for Akol

When he arrived in Australia in 2017 after several years spent in a Kenyan refugee camp, Akol was ready to make the most of his new start. Akol and his family received intensive settlement support from Jesuit Social Services and partner agencies to help them to establish themselves in their new country. However it was the support to find a pathway into education that has made the biggest difference for Akol.

"The most important thing I came to Australia for was to study and have the opportunity to achieve a qualification, however I was older than I was supposed to be to be enrolled in school," Akol says. With the help of the Migrant Resource Centre and Jesuit Social Services' Settlement Program, 19 year old Akol was able to negotiate with the Department of Education and Training to be admitted into Year 11 at Victoria University Secondary College.

Being allowed to go to school has made a huge difference to Akol. "Without an education I don't think you can succeed in life. I want to study medicine at the end of the year so that maybe in the future I can become a doctor."

While making a new start has been challenging at times, Akol says that the support and encouragement he has received has helped him to dream of a better future. "Believe in yourself and you will have a better life. Don't listen to what people say you cannot do, it's up to you to make the right choice, to live a better life".



Akol has dreams of becoming a Doctor

Education and employment key to overcoming disadvantage

Jesuit Social Services works with people who are often frustrated at the lack of access to job opportunities. This is most acute for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who often lack employment experience.

Research by the Productivity Commission notes that more than 30 per cent of people who are unemployed experience deep social exclusion. In a recent report, Brotherhood of St Laurence identified that youth unemployment and disadvantage are continuing to increase in particular communities while continuously decreasing in others.

This is consistent with Jesuit Social Services' 2015 Dropping Off the Edge report, which similarly highlighted that the most severely disadvantaged postcodes experience higher unemployment rates than the national average.

Education, training and employment play a powerful role in addressing many of the overlapping issues facing disengaged, highly vulnerable people in our community. Through a place-based framework, unemployment can be seen as a key component of disadvantage which demands a holistic response.

We know the value of this approach.

For example, the Victorian Government's place-based Neighbourhood Renewal program, launched in 2002, worked across government, in partnership with local residents, businesses and the community sector, combining social investment, service coordination and community involvement in decision making. Jesuit Social Services provided the community development component for Neighbourhood Renewal at a number of sites.

A 2008 evaluation of the program found that Neighbourhood Renewal reduced disadvantage and narrowed the gap between renewal areas and the rest of the state, as well as lowering unemployment, increasing further education qualifications, and raising perceived levels of community participation.

Based on our research and practice experience, we have called on governments around Australia to develop long term place-based initiatives targeted to communities of greatest disadvantage.

One of the ways we hope to achieve this is through a network of local employers who have expressed a strong desire to set up targeted employment pathways for local and disadvantaged people in Mount Druitt, in particular in Willmot.

In Mount Druitt, our relationships with long-term unemployed people have grown alongside networks providing employment preparation, training and support. Yet there is still a component missing. We have identified the need for a dedicated and skilled person, working in the community, to combine these resources to create an accessible pathway to successful local employment, and work to reduce place-based and entrenched disadvantage. As outlined in our submission to the NSW Budget, we hope the NSW Government will invest in establishing such positions.

Involving the community, local industry and employers to create real jobs and pathways to employment – particularly for young people – can result in lasting benefits, and we look forward to working with Governments across Australia to adopt innovative approaches that will help get our most marginalised citizens into work.

Growing opportunities

For Stuart Muir Wilson, Program Coordinator of the Seedwell Project, which recently became part of Jesuit Social Services, permaculture is the ideal way to create meaningful and sustainable pathways to employment.

Stuart says "Permaculture helps support people in need, and that's why I'm really excited about working with Jesuit Social Services".

"My background is in architecture, building, business and education, so I've got a different approach to what is commonly found in the social sector."

The Seedwell Project is one of a range of programs being delivered at the Brunswick campus of Jesuit Community College. These programs include barista training, animal studies, carpentry skills (including the Hammertime project developed especially for young women), mushroom growing and permaculture. Also in planning stages is a Tiny Homes project, both as a skills development initiative and an example of how to build an environmentally, economically sustainable and affordable housing option.

Stuart says that the training at the Brunswick campus of Jesuit Community College often has a deep impact on the young people who come through its programs. "It's a bit of a respite for kids who might have trouble at home or at school, helping them build up their confidence and self-esteem. When they see they can grow and eat something, something changes in their eyes, and they come alive and get engaged with their education which is really inspiring to see."

Stuart is seeing social benefits in the programs offered at the site. "It's amazing to see partnerships and friendships develop. The distinction between being a program participant or a volunteer falls away; you're just people gardening together, which is the really nice thing about permaculture. We have volunteers, people who are unemployed, and refugee kids all working in the garden together, creating community and learning from each other".

"I've seen this model work around the world, it connects people back to their food and environment and it changes employment, training and education outcomes across the board."

If you're interested to learn about volunteering opportunities with the program, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Branka Mladjen at volunteers@jss.org.au

The Seedwell Project is funded by Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation through the Eldon and Anne Foote Trust.

The Hammertime Project is funded by the Inner Northern Community Foundation.



Stuart is the Coordinator of our new permaculture program.

Opening doors at the ATO

Many people who settle in Australia from other countries face a range of challenges – from learning a new language, understanding and navigating health and housing systems to finding a job.

For Abdikadir, who settled in Australia from Somalia in 2002, his hope in arriving in the 'lucky country' was that the opportunities would be waiting for him – however that wasn't the case.

Abdikadir first taught himself English by reading the national papers and his two favourite writers Annabel Crabbe and Waleed Aly. Once he had grasped the language, he commenced study as he believed this would enable him to secure employment.

"I am a Bachelor of Business graduate with a Masters in Financial Analysis and an advanced Diploma in Accounting," he says.

"When you apply for hundreds of jobs and don't get a single reply, not even for a phone interview, you keep studying because education is an attractive way to exploit the opportunities that are not available in our homeland.

"It [education system] is also a system assumed to be based on merit and less affected by the racial discrimination and prejudice encountered by migrants in other areas.

"I kept thinking if I got another degree, that would put me in a better position to get me even an entry level job in my field, but that wasn't the case. I was still unemployed after completing three qualifications driving a cab seven nights a week.

"I have only ever had two professional job interviews since arriving in Australia, and one of those was with Jesuit Social Services who then linked me with the Australian Taxation Office."

Abdikadir had heard that the Australian Taxation Office was working in a new partnership with Jesuit Social Services to recruit to the refugee stream of the ATO Opening Doors program. The Opening Doors program taps into talent pools that are often overlooked. It provides employment opportunities for qualified individuals from refugee or humanitarian entrant backgrounds with Australian citizenship. Abdikadir decided to apply.



Abdikadir and Federal Minister David Gillespie at a recent meeting between Jesuit Social Services staff and the Minister.

He was one of 23 successful participants to commence with the program in February. Abdikadir now works as a service delivery officer in the ATO's Moonee Ponds office, and loves dealing with clients as well as the variety his role offers.

Over six months, both Jesuit Social Services and the ATO support participants to refine their job readiness skills, develop their soft skills, enterprise behaviours and ways of thinking that will be of benefit as they embark on their future career journeys in Australia.

"Every day there is someone or something different to investigate in order to help the clients," he says.

When his six months is complete, he plans to apply for a permanent position with the organisation or in the wider public service.

"I hope to continue to serve the community – as my dad used to say 'You can have anything you want in life, you just have to help enough other people get what they want in life.'"

Top marks for school support

Six school communities have been supporting our Western Sydney program to offer free or low cost healthy food options to low income families via The Store in Mount Druitt.

Dave Hammond, General Manager in Western Sydney, recently spoke to students at McCarthy Catholic College in Emu Plains. The student group then organised a food drive.

McCarthy Catholic College's Sean McNally says the partnership between the school and Jesuit Social Services demonstrates "communities working with communities."

"The partnership, now in its third year, continues to go from strength to strength. Staff and students have successfully donated hundreds of much-needed items to The Store and over \$1,000 to continue the amazing work within the community," he says.

If you'd like to discuss ways to support our work in Mount Druitt, please contact Dave Hammond, david.hammond@jss.org.au



David Hammond with students at McCarthy Catholic College

Murray to Moyne

In early April, 24 staff and friends of Jesuit Social Services took part in the Murray to Moyne cycling event and raised more than \$43,000 for our Support After Suicide program, which provides services for children, young people and adults bereaved by suicide.

The money raised will help fund the delivery of programs like Serious Fun, a bereavement support program for primary school aged program.



Cyclists representing Support After Suicide in the Murray to Moyne

Our Annual Dinner

On Saturday 17 March we welcomed over 350 guests to our Annual Dinner held at the MCG.

Former Australian of the Year Rosie Batty delivered the annual Frank Costigan QC Address and our CEO Julie Edwards announced Sydney Swans captain Josh Kennedy as the inaugural ambassador for The Men's Project.

We thank all those who attended our 2018 Annual Dinner and those who donated to make the night a great success.



Our Annual Dinner featured The Men's Project ambassador Josh Kennedy and guest speaker Rosie Batty.

**Supporting people to take part in education, training and employment
paves the way for people to reach their full potential and
creates a more just society for everyone.**



**Please make a gift to ensure we can
continue to support people onto a
pathway for a hopeful future.**

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make a donation of:

\$75 **\$150**

\$500 **\$1000**

\$

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