

Albert's story . . .

Albert Adakpoku arrived in Australia in late November 2003 from Kenya after having to flee his home country of Sudan due to the civil war. Albert was a seminarian preparing to become a priest before the war. He studied to become a teacher in Kenya and taught for three years and was also a caseworker for refugees and asylum seekers, assisting the Australian, Canadian and US Departments of Immigration officials in the refugee camp. When he arrived in Australia he went to the university to assess his documents, only to discover that he needed to do more study to be a qualified teacher in Australia. At that time Albert decided that if he was going to do more study, he would like to build on his experience in the refugee camp and become a social worker.



**Albert Adakpoku
Youth Support Worker
Melaleuca Refugee Centre**

Albert took part in a work placement at Melaleuca Refugee Centre in the third year of his social work degree. When he finished his degree he worked as a temporary receptionist at the centre, demonstrating his skills and work ethic. After being given the opportunity to work on a complex case, a vacancy arose for the

Youth Support Worker position and Albert applied for it through the usual channels and won the job. Everyday processes and actions that are taken for granted in western workplaces often prove to be a stumbling block for newly arrived people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Albert says an example of this miscommunication happened to him when he took the work car out on business, not knowing that it had to be booked. Unfortunate at the time, but rather comical now, another staff member had booked it for that same period of time and reported it stolen to management when it made an unexplained disappearance. "Now I know about the car booking system," Albert says.

Albert believes that it helps when employers clearly define work roles and responsibilities and that a good induction can go a long way in helping to create a smooth transition into western workplaces. "The rules and norms of work relations in Australia are different—boundaries are sometimes unclear. You can be unsure if you are stepping into someone else's job if you get involved or want to help".

Albert feels that he is trusted and respected at work. "I am treated equally because my work is valued," he said. His advice to employers is to not judge individuals by stereotypes. "Why not give someone a go through paid work experience or volunteering so that they can show you what they can do?"

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