

## Mie Mie's story . . .

Mie Mie Aung arrived in Australia in 2001 from Burma (Myanmar), having studied a Masters Degree in Literature and Linguistics and worked at the Burmese Language Commission for 10 years as a compiler and assistant editor.

When she first arrived in Australia she was concerned about which jobs would be suitable for her in her new life here because of the language barrier and because her qualifications were not formally recognised.

After taking on a few jobs unrelated to her qualifications, Mie Mie then applied for the role of receptionist and administrative assistant at the Melaleuca Refugee Centre as well as a business apprenticeship with another company. She was offered both roles, but chose Melaleuca because of her association with the centre on her arrival in Australia.

Since starting with Melaleuca, Mie Mie has returned to the Thai/Burma border in her holidays to do voluntary work with illegal migrants and refugee children and with the experience gained there has since taken up the position of Health Support Worker.

Unfortunately Mie Mie feels that there are times when people judge her based on her background, but she says the staff at the centre understand her culture and respect her as an equal colleague.

"I have never felt isolated here because it is a very inclusive workplace. I have noticed that everyone looks after each other. Even when I have been unsure of my rights or entitlements, management has made sure to explain. This is very different to a Burmese workplace," she said.

Mie Mie's advice to employers is to take into account the differences in expectations in western workplaces. "In my culture it is not appropriate to promote our capabilities, skills or experiences. It doesn't mean that we're not honest, it is just a 'differing' cultural expectation."



**Mie Mie Aung**  
Health Support Worker  
Melaleuca Refugee Centre

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