



1 Community

156 Countries | 45 Faiths | 96 Languages

The Sunshine Coast is a dynamic and diverse society with many cultures, languages and religions. Our people and their diversity contribute to the colourful social fabric of the Coast.



Above: Community mosaic created by The Global Hub Multicultural Women's' Group and Currimundi Special School students at Caloundra Community Centre. This project was funded by a Sunshine Coast Council Community Grant and a Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) grant.



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Introduction

The Sunshine Coast is a dynamic and diverse society with many cultures, languages and religions.

The region has a growing multicultural population with one in every five people born overseas.

Our people and their diversity contribute to the colourful social fabric of the Coast.

Council's endorsed *2015 Sunshine Coast Social Strategy* provides a long term social direction for the region which includes a commitment to recognising the value and mix of people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The Social Strategy highlights the value of celebrating and building the region's cultural communities and ensuring cultural development contributes to social wellbeing, place, and identity and sector resilience.

An identified action of the Social Strategy is for council to develop actions and partnerships which recognise, value and support people from a multicultural background.

In partnership with the Coast's community centres and agencies who work with our multicultural community members and groups, council launched the region-wide Multicultural Conversations Program which tells a colourful and important story of our multicultural community.

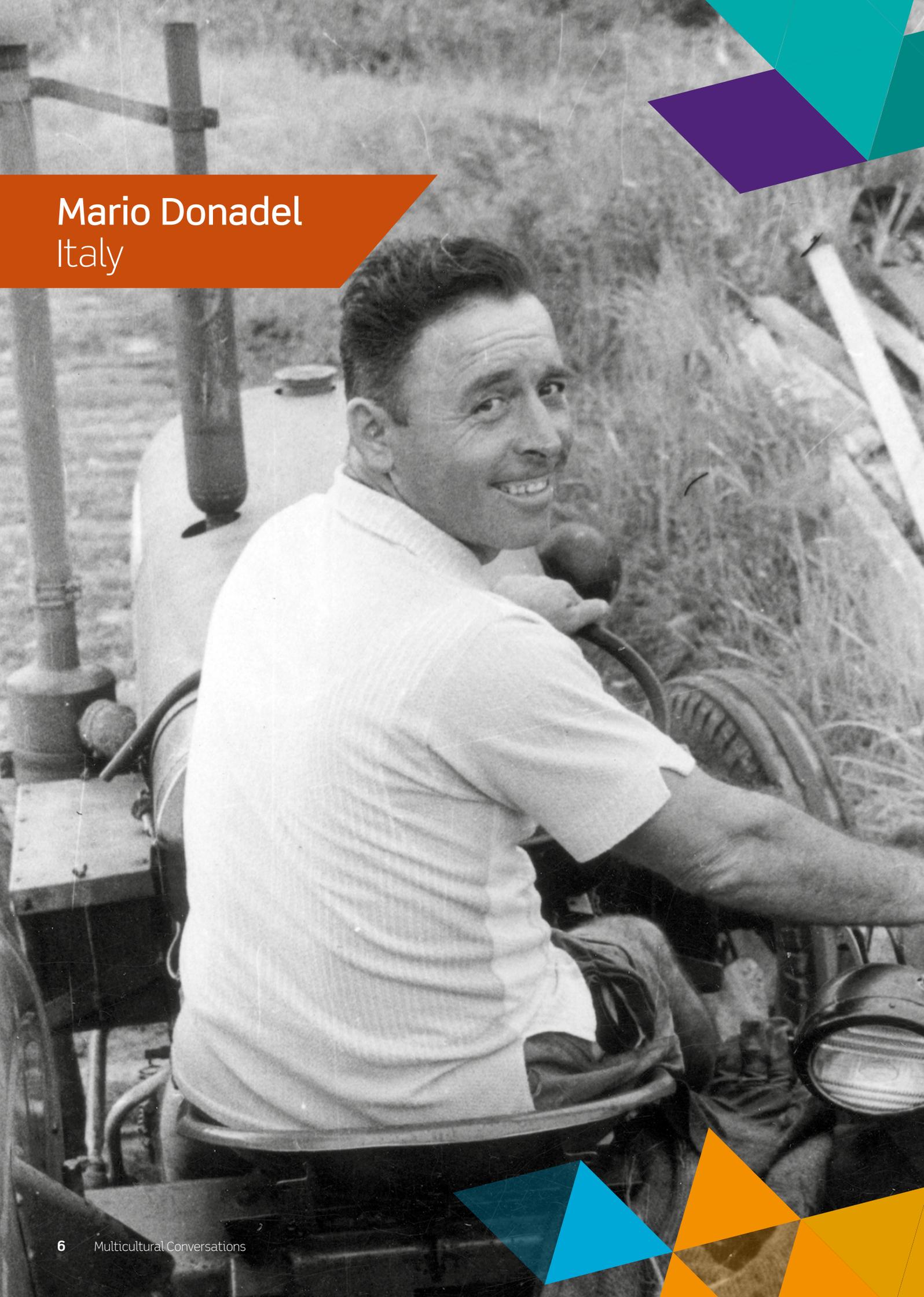
These are just some of the stories the multicultural community have shared during the many conversations which took place across our region during the three months of the community engagement. There are many more to tell. These stories add to the colourful fabric which makes our region so rich and diverse.

The Multicultural Conversations program is supported by the Queensland Government through the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants Program.

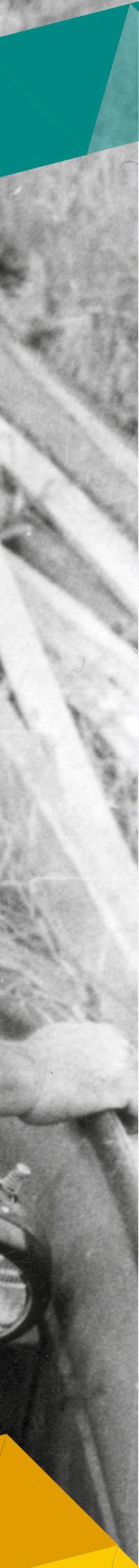
Sunshine Coast Council thanks the following partners:







Mario Donadel
Italy



Mario is believed to be one of the first farmers to introduce Cavendish bananas to the Sunshine Coast.

A multicultural story from the past

Born in 1923, Mario Donadel travelled from Italy to Australia at the age of 13, with his twin sister Maria and his mother Lucia. After taking nearly four months to travel to Australia by ship, the family then travelled from Sydney to join their husband and father, Antonio Donadel, on a farm near Alstonville.

Mario worked hard for his father and at the age of 16 he found a job at one of the neighbour's farms cutting bananas. As a reward for his hard work, Mario received a small parcel of land on which he planted his own bananas. He continued to work hard and in three years he had paid his property off.

Mario heard of land available via the Department of Primary Industry who were looking for farmers to introduce banana crops in South-East Queensland.

In 1945, Mario and his dad cut 500 of their banana suckers from their previous farm and loaded them onto their Morris Commercial and headed to Mooloolah where it is believed they were one of the first farmers to introduce Cavendish bananas to the Sunshine Coast.

Their 140 acre farm prospered as it was very rich in timber and consisted of cattle, milking cows and the farm house had a small market garden that could feed a big family.

Mario introduced pineapples to the farm which was successful and required him to employ three Australians and also sponsor two Italian gentlemen to come to Australia.

Mario sold the farm in 1972 and moved to Nambour and was employed as the gardener at the Nambour General Hospital. After 15 years of tender loving care of the hospital's gardens, Mario retired.

Leaving a lasting legacy on those who were lucky enough to meet him, Mario passed away on June 4, 2006.

Beverly Kabuya Muito
Kenya





“With a name like the Sunshine Coast you couldn’t go too wrong!”

Imagine leaving a busy capital city in Kenya and travelling to the other side of the world looking for new opportunities in a regional part of Australia. That is exactly what Beverly Kabuya Muto did after reading an ad in her local newspaper. Australia was looking for pharmacists so Beverly, who trained in Manchester as a registered pharmacist, sent in an application and Queensland offered her a regional position. Beverly was given a list of postcodes so after sitting on Google for a week and researching each area, 4556 looked like a good prospect. With a name like the Sunshine Coast she thought you couldn’t go too wrong! It was a leap of faith as she had never been to Australia before.

In September 2015 an excited Beverly arrived on a skilled migrant visa with her beautiful three year old daughter looking forward to new experiences. The first thing that surprised Beverly was how green it was on the Sunshine Coast.

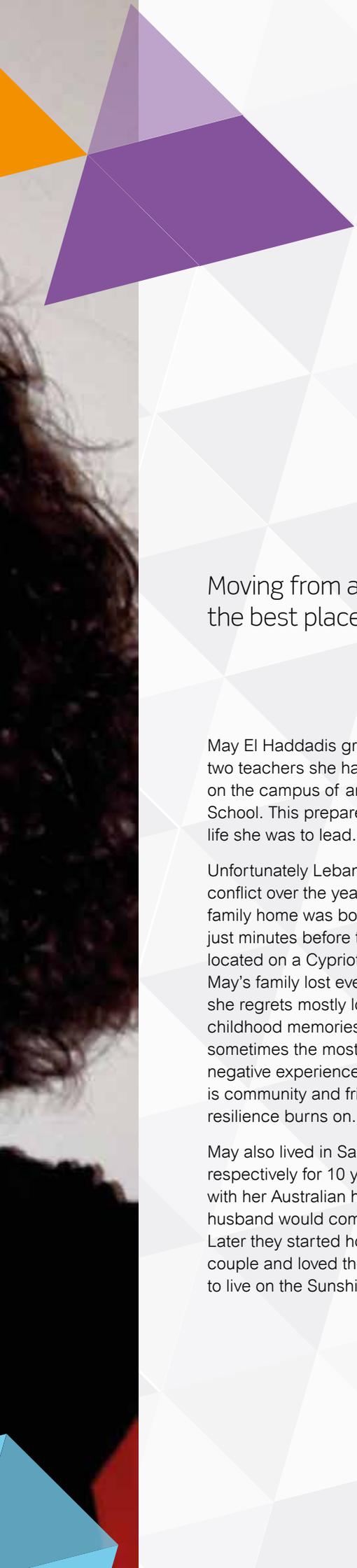
Beverly is now working as a Pharmacist Intern while she obtains her national registration, which will take about a year. Beverly initially trained and registered in England and then in Kenya, where she also had to be an intern for a year. Beverly appreciates that each country has their own laws on pharmaceuticals and was aware she would need to re-register for the third time.

When asked if she has settled into the Sunshine Coast way of life, Beverly’s face lights up. She has found the Coast a very welcoming place and the people really friendly.

Beverly and her daughter love hanging out at the Coast’s beaches and exploring the many attractions.



May El Haddad
Lebanon



Moving from a war zone to one of the best places in Australia to live.

May El Haddadis grew up in Lebanon. A daughter to two teachers she has fond memories of growing up on the campus of an International German Boarding School. This prepared May well for the multicultural life she was to lead.

Unfortunately Lebanon had experienced armed conflict over the years, and at one stage May's family home was bombed by a fighter plane. Luckily just minutes before the family had fled to a bunker located on a Cypriot University campus close by. May's family lost everything that terrible day, but she regrets mostly losing family photos and many childhood memories. May is quick to point out that sometimes the most positive energy comes from a negative experience and even in war zones there is community and friendship as the spirit of human resilience burns on.

May also lived in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE respectively for 10 years before coming to Australia with her Australian husband. As a young man her husband would come to the Sunshine Coast to surf. Later they started holidaying on the Coast as a couple and loved the area. They made the decision to live on the Sunshine Coast in 2005.

May had been a nurse for a long time and formerly worked at the Federal Department of Nursing while living in the Middle East, where she also completed a Master's Degree in 2004. When she arrived in Australia it took her approximately one year to obtain her registration with the Queensland Nursing Council. As soon as May was registered she was successful in obtaining a position at Nambour Hospital where she worked for 10 years until she resigned to complete her PHD. Dr May El Haddadis is now interested in pursuing a career in Academic Nursing.

May loves the Sunshine Coast and thinks it is one of the best places in Australia to live.

A woman with dark curly hair is sitting in a yellow tufted chair with a black ornate frame. She is wearing a dark blue t-shirt with a graphic print of a city skyline and a sun. The background is a white brick wall. There are decorative geometric shapes in purple and teal in the corners of the image.

Andrea Kirwin
Fijian ancestry



“The Sunshine Coast is a melting pot of people coming together and it doesn’t matter where you are from - you just enjoy the music.”

Singer-songwriter Andrea Kirwin was born in Townsville in 1985 and has Australian and Fijian roots, which she identifies with equally.

At the age of eight Andrea experienced the Fijian way of life for one year living in a village of 100 people. She fondly remembers an occasion when she went out to join the other children to work in the garden. They all had their own machetes except Andrea so she borrowed one from her grandfather who happened to be the chief of the village. She discovered it was a big deal for anyone else to use the chief’s knife!

Growing up in Australia provided a lot more opportunity for Andrea. Her father was a geologist and made sure she had a good education. In Years 11 and 12 Andrea was selected to sing in a well-known choir which toured through Europe and even performed at the Notre Dame Cathedral. After returning home Andrea went to university, picked up a guitar and started performing – and the rest is history!

Approximately four and a half years ago Andrea moved to the Sunshine Coast with her partner and started performing in small venues. Today she has a long list of gigs and festivals she has performed at including The Woodford Folk Festival.

Andrea’s voice has been compared to Norah Jones and has performed all around Australia. Her mellow, funk and soul style draws on her rich Fijian origin allowing her to weave beautiful melodies with storytelling.

Music has been the path to harmonious integration for Andrea and through her music Andrea has built a network of people that come from all over the world. According to Andrea the Sunshine Coast is a melting pot of people coming together in creativity and it doesn’t matter where you are from - you just enjoy the music.

A close-up portrait of a man, Abdulsalam Tokh, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a light purple button-down shirt. A young child is partially visible on the right side of the frame, wearing a teal patterned shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with a structure. There are colorful geometric shapes (triangles) in the top right and bottom right corners of the image.

Abdulsalam Tokh
Libya



“This is a country made up of many different cultures and religions and together this makes a beautiful life.”

Born in South Libya in 1984, Abdulsalam Tokh and his wife Mariam Gaji, are the only known Toubou people living in Australia. Abdulsalam is the first to admit the Toubou minority people have long suffered under the Libyan government and some are still today denied their basic rights like studying, owning a passport and voting.

You can imagine their delight when Mariam, a gifted student, was awarded a scholarship to finish her Masters of Agricultural Engineering Technology at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba in 2010.

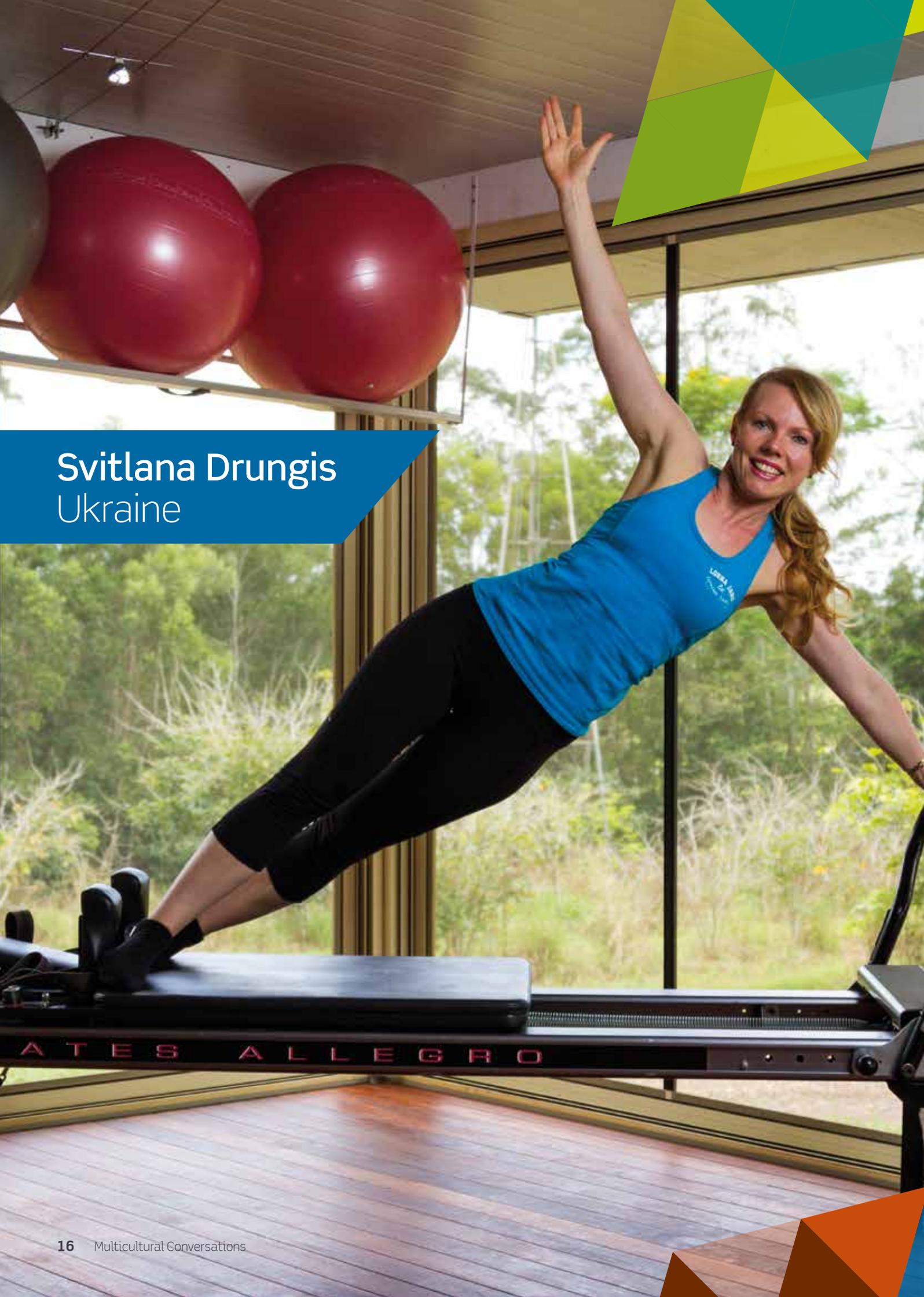
They feel their move to Australia has taken them from the darkness to a beautiful green country. On Miriam's student visa, Abdulsalam worked part-time at a farm and as a trolley pusher in Toowoomba, doing any work he could to support his growing family. When Miriam completed her four years of studies, the young family moved to Coolum Beach on the Sunshine Coast. They are loving the coastal way of life, and with their four boys are often found at the beach or at Tickle Park.

Abdulsalam trained as a specialist nurse in Libya and is now studying English so he can complete further study and gain his Australian nursing registration. English was difficult for Abdulsalam as he admits to still thinking in Toubou while trying to speak in English. He also speaks fluent Arabic.

In between studying and looking after his boys, Abdulsalam manages to find time to work with Coolum Coast Care doing a weeding and dune management project. He loves working outdoors in this beautiful environment.

Abdulsalam and Mariam recently became Australian citizens and voted for the first time in their lives! They felt extremely privileged to be able to have a voice and vote in their new country.

They have found Australia to be a country made up of many different cultures and religions and together this makes a beautiful life. The family has found a lot of support from local people and would like to thank the community for their welcome.



Svitlana Drungis
Ukraine



“The Sunshine Coast has given me a sense of independence, freedom and liberation to do my own thing.”

Svitlana Drungis is a city girl and lived most of her life in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital.

Svitlana met her husband 16 years ago while he was travelling in the Ukraine. One can say it was love at first sight as he proposed after just five days of meeting her, giving her a ring and returning to Australia a few days later.

Language was always an issue even though Svitlana studied English, Russian and Chinese in addition to Ukrainian at school.

Conversations on the phone with her future husband were difficult as they had to painstakingly translate every single word with the help of teachers and relatives. Her husband John rang her every week while Svitlana was studying at university.

It took nine months of expensive and intensive paper work to finally travel to Australia on a fiancée visa. It only took four months before the couple took the decision to get married.

In the Ukraine Svitlana was a qualified Nurse and holds a Diploma in Psychology however her qualifications are not recognised in Australia. Through the Maroochydore Neighbourhood Centre Svitlana joined a government-funded Work Experience Program which resulted in a temporary job with Education Queensland.

Svitlana was overjoyed to give birth to a son and when he was five months old she travelled back to the Ukraine with her step-son to visit her mother.

The move to the Sunshine Coast has given Svitlana a sense of independence, freedom and liberation to do her own thing. She now owns and operates her own Pilates Studio and is a qualified Bowen Therapist. She enjoys the opportunity of giving back to the community who made her welcome from the very beginning.

A portrait of Jules Cao, a young woman with long, dark hair, wearing a colorful, patterned top. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a lush green outdoor setting with large leaves. The image is framed by a yellow banner on the left and blue geometric shapes in the top right and bottom right corners.

Jules Cao
Canada



“Moving to the Sunshine Coast has unlocked her creativity and now operates her own business.”

Jules Cao was born in China and moved to Ottawa, Canada with her family at the age of four. She studied International Studies at York University in Toronto, and also worked a couple of part-time jobs at both Starbucks and the university library. Jules can speak fluent Mandarin and a little bit of French, but now has a western accent that’s a mix of Canadian and Australian. When asked where she is from, Jules identifies herself as a Canadian. People usually reply with but where are you really from?

Jules has been living on the Sunshine Coast for eight years now after meeting her partner in Toronto, Canada while studying at university. She had visited Australia a couple of times and thought it was a nice place before she decided to stay. When asked what she loves about the Sunshine Coast she would immediately respond with the beautiful beaches and national parks that the Coast has to offer. Having not grown up close to the ocean, Jules loves the magic and serenity that the oceanside has to offer.

Jules enjoys living on the Sunshine Coast as it offers an easy and ‘cruisy’ lifestyle. One of her initial cultural shocks - apart from driving on the wrong side of the road - was seeing people wander into shops and cafes without shoes or a shirt and nobody kicked them out. Jules has now taken up the Sunny Coast ‘footwear optional’ practice herself.

Jules has discovered her creative side here and started her own art and craft business named Bamboo Feather, which she sells at local markets three days a week. Jules is aware having your own business isn’t necessarily as simple as just selling products. There is a lot of research, trials and errors within the creation process before making it onto the display shelf. Jules feels that sometimes being an artist feels like you’ve put your heart on the line and hoping that people appreciate your efforts and abilities in creating these pieces.

In her opinion, people relocate to the Sunshine Coast from cities because of its laid-back coastal lifestyle, warm weather, and proximity to the beaches, the live music scene and the great markets. Jules feels you can’t find this anywhere else – not to this extent or quality of regular weekly markets. It is definitely a drawcard as visitors want to go to the markets and they want to swim at our beaches.

A photograph of a man standing in an orchard. The man is bald, wearing sunglasses, a light green jacket, and khaki pants. He is smiling and has his hands behind his back. The orchard has rows of trees with green leaves and brown ground covered in fallen fruit. There are several large, colorful geometric shapes (triangles and polygons) overlaid on the image: a gold one at the top, a green one at the top right, a purple one at the bottom right, and an orange one at the bottom right. An orange banner is at the bottom left containing the text.

Lewis Formosa
Malta



“When you grow macadamias you need somewhere to sell them.”

Lewis Formosa, formerly from Malta, has been living in Australia for 28 years.

Lewis grew up in a family with an established retail reputation spearheaded by his grandmother. He could have easily worked in the family business but at the young age of 12 he managed to secure a job at a diamond cutting company run by the British government. He worked with them for two years and started an apprenticeship.

Lewis immigrated to London aged 15 to continue his apprenticeship and in a matter of days found himself working in the diamond trade where he became quite successful. In the UK he built a company which employed in excess of 45 people and had his own successful factory with many corporate and prestigious clients.

Through his diamond business Lewis would fly into Brisbane as a stop over to his clients in Tahiti. He would make the most of his time in Queensland often paying a taxi to drive him from Brisbane to Noosa. He always felt the Sunshine Coast had the potential of the South of France with regards to the vegetation and climate. A small baked goods market in Eumundi, run by two elderly ladies who were basically taking advantage of the traffic between Brisbane to Noosa Heads, caught his eye, and the rest is history.

Lewis permanently relocated to Australia on a business migration program during the Bob Hawke era. With his wife and three daughters they headed to Eumundi in a campervan to set up a new life.

Lewis purchased a small macadamia farm located on a picturesque mountain in Eumundi which now produces about 15-16 tonnes of macadamias per year. He realised when you grow macadamias you need somewhere to sell them. That is where the Eumundi markets came in. With a vision and a desire to follow in his grandmother’s entrepreneurial footsteps Lewis now operates the successful Eumundi Square Business Incubator Precinct, which has added a new dimension to shopping for visitors and locals.

Vivienne Dawalibi
Sudan



DEN NORSKE NOBELKOMITÉ

HAR OVERENSTEMENDE MED
BEKJENT FØLT AV

ALFRED NOBEL

DEN 29. NOVEMBER 1895 OPRÆTTET
TESTAMENTE FØLGET

Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner
for Refugees

AWARDED 1981 FOR 1981

[Handwritten signatures and text on the certificate]



Vivianne loves the Sunshine Coast and has felt welcome from day one.

Vivianne was born in a small town in the northern part of Sudan to a Catholic family, moving to the capital Khartoum when she got married aged 23. This is also when she joined the United Nations. Starting her career as a bookkeeper, she was quickly promoted to finance assistant, administrative assistant and then acting admin officer and program officer and eventually manager. She served humanity for 20 years of her life supporting the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) in finding solutions for refugee resettlement and integration within new societies.

This career saw Vivianne serving in several conflict zones. In fact for over 20 years she worked in war torn countries starting from her own country Sudan serving over 2.5 million refugees, then Kenya/Somalia during the Cross Border Operation, Armenia after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the war with Azerbaijan, Belarus handling asylum seekers related issues, Bangladesh supporting the Myanmar conflict and finally in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Kosovo conflict.

During these missions Vivianne helped many orphans hoping for international aid support, minors who crossed the border alone looking for safety and peace, single women with children who were devastated by the war, elderly who were left alone struggling with their loneliness and hardships. She saw all of that and became a workaholic providing basic needs to literally millions of people displaced from their homes, as well as rehabilitation/resettlement programs for refugees. She was recognised with a Nobel Peace Prize Certificate for her dedication, genuine caring, hard work and loyalty towards refugee needs and the outcomes she achieved with little human and financial resources.

While in Sudan and after serving the UNHCR for so long Vivianne and her family became refugees in Australia as her husband's life was threatened and he was detained and tortured by the Sudanese military. For three days and three nights Vivianne was out of touch with him and upon his release, they applied and were granted refugee status in Australia under special humanitarian program for Christian Sudanese. It was very interesting to see that after all these years of helping refugees she became a refugee in Australia.

In 1994 the family moved to Sydney, however, she continued on her mission to serve humanity with UNHCR until in 1999, for family reasons, she resigned and settled in Sydney. In the years between 1999 and 2002, Vivianne tragically lost her support circle, losing her mother, father and husband to illness.

As a new immigrant to Australia, she recalls she wasn't emotionally prepared not be able to find a job. With her many years of work experience with the UN, highly qualified and experienced she couldn't get a job. She felt she wasn't even given a chance to prove herself and kept being told she was over qualified. This really shook her and she felt she lost her identity, her lifestyle and her purpose.

The family had previously invested in a unit at the Gold Coast and in 2004 looking for a life change, Vivianne and her son moved to Queensland. This was when she bought the Caloundra Bulk Billing Medical Centre and every day she would commute from the Gold Coast. This continued for three years until she moved to Caloundra.

Over the years her purpose in life to help people became alive again and invested in the Cooroy Family Practice and recently expanded her medical service for the first local Call Home Visiting Doctor. She feels it's her mission to serve the Sunshine Coast community by giving them quality of health care access on a 100% bulk billing basis.

Vivianne loves the Sunshine Coast and has felt welcomed here from day one. She really feels like she belongs, and that's why she gives as much as she can to her community. She has won several business awards on the Sunshine Coast including the Caloundra Chamber of Commerce for Business Excellence, Multicultural Excellence and named as a finalist at the Sunshine Coast Business Excellence and Telstra Business Excellence Awards.



Ranjan Muthulingam
Sri Lanka



Ranjan has found great kindness in the good hearts of the Sunshine Coast people.

Ranjan Muthulingam grew up in a small village in Sri Lanka surrounded by a large extended family. His father was a goldsmith so he could afford to send him to a boarding school in the city to obtain an education. Ranjan became a successful farmer and grew rice and vegetables, and became president of the local agricultural association.

Sri Lanka has a long history of civil war, which spanned most of Ranjan's life. Because Ranjan comes from the Tamil minority, groups of soldiers from all sides visited Ranjan's village and harassed the villagers, sometimes torturing them for hours on end, or extorted money from them. Ranjan was imprisoned for refusing to pay extortion money and his family home burnt down.

When the war finished in 2009 and the Sinhalese majority established power, government officials summoned Ranjan and demanded that as President of the Agricultural Association he sign over the collective land and rice paddies to a developer. Ranjan refused, and the government retaliated by confiscating his father's land, which had been in the family for generations. Ranjan tried to get his land back through a court case, which led to him receiving several death threats. In a land where people often go missing and disappear, Ranjan knew that these were not empty threats.

In 2012, fearing for his safety, Ranjan fled Sri Lanka and knew he may never see his homeland or mother again. Ranjan could not leave the country legally without alerting the authorities that were

threatening his life, so he was forced to turn to people smugglers. On the fateful day Ranjan, who can't swim, was terrified when he boarded a 40-foot boat, which already had 65 people on it. It took 19 fearful days in the cramped boat with no shelter, facilities or seating to reach Australian waters. Australian Customs detained him off shore of Cocos Island. The next part of Ranjan's journey lasted four and a half months and took him to Christmas Island, Darwin, Weipa, and Brisbane. It was there that Ranjan was introduced to a compassionate lady offering holiday hosting for asylum seekers to visit the Sunshine Coast. This introduction changed Ranjan's life for the better.

After a few weeks with the host family, Ranjan was invited to stay long-term. Returning to his passion for farming, Ranjan volunteered for any farm work needed, quickly establishing himself as a valuable member of the community. Ranjan was granted a bridging visa earlier this year, which allows him to work and study while his claim for a protection visa is being assessed. He has worked in a range of jobs including hospitality, cleaning, farming and retail, but his passion is horticulture, which he is now studying at SmartCity College.

Ranjan has found great kindness in the good hearts of the Sunny Coast people. He is grateful for all the support the community has shown him, and would like to establish his life here.



Kathy Young
Singapore



When filling out application forms Kathy cannot possibly list all the cultures and races that she is classified under.

Kathy Young was born in Singapore and feels fortunate to have had a really diverse and multicultural upbringing. Singapore is a multicultural country with a majority population of Chinese, Malay and Indian. A multitude of other cultures is included, such as Kathy's diverse heritage, identified as a Eurasian Singaporean. When filling out application forms in Singapore, Kathy is classified as others.

Kathy has always been interested in travelling, an interest which was life changing, when she happened to meet her future husband, Steve, on an aeroplane.

As fate had it, Kathy and Steve married 3 1/2 years later and moved to Indonesia for Steve's work. They lived in a very small village for 4 years and later moved to Jakarta. It was another 9 years before they headed for the Sunshine Coast, where they have set up a home over the last 4 years.

Kathy was looking forward to Australia after living in Indonesia for 13 years, especially after living in the bustling city of Jakarta. She remembers that there were cultural similarities, but yet vast differences between Singapore and Indonesia that she had to consider and balance.

The Sunshine Coast offers a more relaxed lifestyle, than that found in cities. Kathy has had to adjust to a different pace, but fortunately, she has a friendly nature and is confident to talk to anyone. In quiet moments, like a lot of immigrants and travellers, she can't help but miss her family and friends in other countries.

When the couple returned to Australia to settle, Kathy really wanted to get a degree and a career that will make a contribution to society. She is currently a 3rd year undergraduate at the USC, undertaking a degree in social work. She is looking forward to working in the Sunshine Coast community.



Anila Mathews
India



Anila can speak eight different languages.

Anila Mathews is from Kerala in India and can speak eight different Indian languages. This is due to the fact that her family moved to many different Indian states, to follow her father's work in the Indian Air Force.

After Anila married she went to live and work in Bahrain and Oman in the Middle East, where her husband made many Australian friends who kept telling them that Australia was such a beautiful country. The family applied for a visa in 2003 and in 2006 their Regional Worker Visa was approved. They had the opportunity of choosing between several regional locations and after a lot of research chose the Sunshine Coast as it's like their hometown.

In India, Anila worked as a teacher and her husband as a graphic designer. Anila found it easy to settle into the Sunshine Coast lifestyle as within three days of arriving she visited the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre and started volunteering in everything eventually becoming the president of Festuri from 2009-2012. With the help of the Neighbourhood Centre, who took her under their wing, she obtained her first casual job within a few months.

The neighbourhood centres became Anila's second home as they were so inviting and supportive. In the morning she would learn typing and computer skills and in the afternoon she would learn how to prepare a resume and apply for jobs, all while practicing her

English and learning the Australian culture. There were many cultural differences to overcome, one that Anila found the hardest was the tradition that Indian women will never smile to a male stranger, as this can be taken as a proposition for romance. In Australia a non-smiling female can be seen as rude or unfriendly, especially if Anila wanted to get a job in customer relations, she had to change, it took a while to get there.

Community Job Plan, an initiative by the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre to assist migrants in Australia, greatly helped Anila. After a 16 week job placement in 2007 with the Department of Justice and Attorney General's Office of Fair Trading, an opportunity arose, she applied for it and was successful. This changed the family's life considerably. In February 2016 Anila's husband opened a South Indian restaurant in Montville and is sharing their cuisine to the Coast.

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a blue short-sleeved blouse with a colorful floral embroidery on the yoke, black pants, and white and blue flat shoes. She is standing in a garden area. To her left is a wooden trellis structure covered in green leafy plants. Below the trellis is a low wall decorated with a colorful mosaic of faces and figures. The background shows more greenery and a wooden post. The image has decorative geometric shapes in shades of teal and orange in the corners.

Stella Romagnoli
Uruguay



Arriving in Australia, the family embarked on a 31,000 kilometre drive which was a journey of the soul as well as on the road.

Stella Romagnoli grew up in the South American country of Uruguay, and has an Italian ancestry.

Stella's husband had a very stressful high profile job and felt they needed to spend more time with their children, so as a family they embarked on a three-month driving sabbatical to Australia. They drove 31,000 kilometres before they decided to become an Australian family. It was a journey of the soul as well as on the road. Her eldest boys were 17 and 18 at that time and their future was paramount in the decision. The boys had participated in a Student Exchange Program to Australia and the family had hosted an Australian student for a year in return, so they were familiar with the Australian culture.

The family arrived on the Sunshine Coast during an Easter break and the place was bursting with activity. They soon discovered a primary school named Stella Maris and a Catholic Church with the same name located nearby. Stella Maris being Stella's full name, the family took this as a sign to stay on the Sunshine Coast. After 10 days in a holiday unit they knew this was the place for them.

Religion was important for the family and it has played a main role in their immigration story. The local parish priest took a personal interest in their long and winding seven year journey to become Australian Permanent Residents. The family would not be here today if it had not been for the support of the church and the community.

Learning English was the biggest problem for Stella. Her husband was fluent in English as were her sons who spent a year living in English speaking countries. As a mother, being the centre of the family, Stella felt she could not take care of her family without language skills.

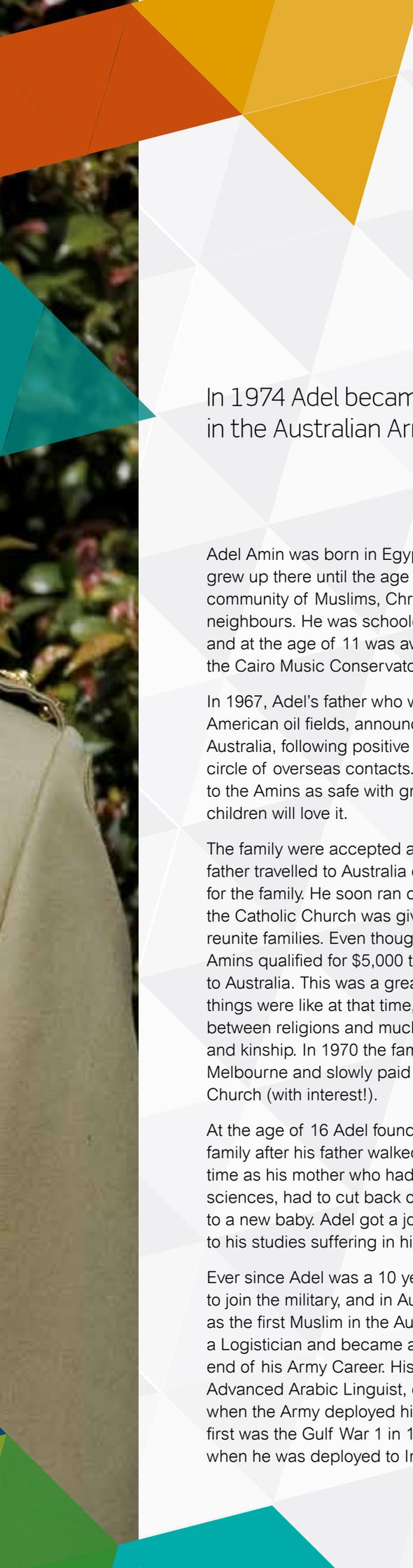
To improve her English Stella would visit her daughter's school library and borrow up to 52 books a week. She started from the ABC, and worked her way up from there. For three years Stella became a volunteer at the school library, where she would spend six hours a day three times a week.

Stella obtained work in the aged care sector, which she loved but the day Stella's youngest child completed Grade 12 she decided to follow her dreams and enrolled at University.

After graduating with a BA in Human Services, Stella wanted to do something valuable for her community, so she started a support group to engage women into the community. The Women's Global Hub is held at the Caloundra Community Centre, every Tuesday at 11am. All women are welcome.



Adel Amin
Egypt



In 1974 Adel became the first Muslim in the Australian Army.

Adel Amin was born in Egypt's capital Cairo and grew up there until the age of 14 within a diverse community of Muslims, Christian and Orthodox neighbours. He was schooled at a French College and at the age of 11 was awarded a Scholarship to the Cairo Music Conservatorium.

In 1967, Adel's father who was a Director at the Pan American oil fields, announced they were moving to Australia, following positive feedback from his wide circle of overseas contacts. Australia was described to the Amins as safe with great facilities, and the children will love it.

The family were accepted as immigrants and the father travelled to Australia on his own to prepare for the family. He soon ran out of money but luckily, the Catholic Church was giving out small loans to reunite families. Even though they were Muslims the Amins qualified for \$5,000 to cover the cost of travel to Australia. This was a great reflection on what things were like at that time, there was less animosity between religions and much more acceptance and kinship. In 1970 the family were reunited in Melbourne and slowly paid the money back to the Church (with interest!).

At the age of 16 Adel found himself the man of the family after his father walked out. It was a difficult time as his mother who had worked in computer sciences, had to cut back on her hours at work due to a new baby. Adel got a job at a bakery, which led to his studies suffering in high school.

Ever since Adel was a 10 year old boy, he wanted to join the military, and in August 1974 he enlisted as the first Muslim in the Australian Army. Adel was a Logistician and became a Quarter Master by the end of his Army Career. His additional skills as an Advanced Arabic Linguist, came in very handy, when the Army deployed him on two operations. The first was the Gulf War 1 in 1990/91 and the second when he was deployed to Iraq in 2006/07.

After 38 years of Australian army service, numerous injuries, suffering cardiovascular disease and a PTSD diagnosis, Adel was no longer able to work. This is when Adel and his wife Rowena decided to make a lifestyle change and move from the Central Coast of New South Wales to the Sunshine Coast, approximately two and a half years ago. Both Adel and Rowena are very involved in community activities and believe that by giving to the community you become part of that community and when you come from somewhere else it is important to go out of your way to do that.

In parallel to his academic and military career, Adel has always been very musically inclined. Back in Cairo he played violin, piano and percussions even appearing on a TV Show that is very similar to Young Talent Time in Australia. When Adel arrived in Australia he concentrated on his drumming, playing in many Western and Middle Eastern bands over the years – the most significant being “Boom Crash Opera”.

When Adel arrived on the Sunshine Coast he decided to start sharing his musical knowledge with the community, and started the Joyful Drumming School. He holds regular classes in Buderim and Maroochydore and conducts monthly workshops in Brisbane. Adel feels this is a part of his art and culture that he can share and contribute to the growth and benefit of this community. He teams up with a number of local musicians and artists, and plays a lot of gigs on the Coast. Music has no religion, boundaries or nationalities.

A portrait of Steffen Kelm, a man with dark hair and a goatee, smiling and looking to the left. He is wearing a dark quilted vest over a light-colored shirt. The background is an outdoor setting with palm trees and a paved path. The image is decorated with geometric shapes: green and yellow triangles in the top right, and blue and green triangles in the bottom right.

Steffen Kelm
Germany



Steffen feels he is fortunate to have an inter-racial, inter-faith family that beautifully integrates three cultures.

Steffen Kelm grew up in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the centre of heavy industry in Germany. This is where Steffen completed a Degree in Civil Engineering. It was important for him to obtain a qualification that could become a job anywhere in the world, especially since he married a Kenyan wife and together they had a desire to see the world.

Steffen's immigration to Australia was not planned. Driven by a little curiosity following some positive comments about Australia from a colleague, Steffen started researching and applying for jobs in Australia. Within three months he received a call to set up a telephone interview in Brisbane. The interview was a disaster but Steffen still continued applying for jobs in Australia to give himself an opportunity to improve his interview skills.

For his next phone interview, Steffen was better prepared. Instead of trying to impress his recruiters, he simply answered the questions and kept it simple. This approach worked better, and he received a job offer. Unfortunately following an election, the criteria on which the visa for Steffen and his family were approved on changed, so the process had to start all over again. It took two long years until he was successful in obtaining a visa and miraculously the job opening was still there for him.

The minute the family arrived on the Sunshine Coast six years ago, they realised just how lucky they were. Not only did Steffen get a great job at the company's sought after Sunshine Coast office, but they also scored a home just two streets from the beach.

Steffen feels very fortunate to have an inter-racial, inter-faith family, that beautifully integrates three cultures - his Christian Kenyan wife, he is a German Muslim and their children who are now growing up to be Australian.

One of his family's experiences on the Sunny Coast he recalls. One day a child where his children go to school remarked on the colour of their skin which upset them. It took only one conversation with the teacher and it was openly discussed in the classroom. The children were educated it was unacceptable.

Steffen feels the Sunshine Coast is multicultural and this enriches the region. He finds most of the people coming to the Coast really love the region and living here. That's the way he found it, that's the way he loves it, and that's the way he'd love to see it grow.

A photograph of two people, a woman and a man, standing in front of a red wooden building. The woman, on the left, has curly red hair and is wearing a black tank top with 'St Anargo Kruw' written on it. The man, on the right, has long dreadlocks and is wearing a black tank top with 'St Anargo Kruw' written on it and blue jeans. They are both smiling. The background shows a red building with a window and a red cabinet. There are colorful geometric shapes in the corners of the image.

Kate O'Reilly
Ireland

Derek Boogieman
Trinidad and Tobago



The Shared is a place that makes them happy, and making people happy makes them happy too!

Many people from the Sunshine Coast will know Kate and Derek Boogiemann (Boogie) from The Shared at Yandina.

Kate, the youngest of four children grew up in a cottage on the grounds of Knock Abbey castle in Co. Louth, Ireland, which has been in the O'Reilly family for over 500 years. When Kate was 7 years old, the family moved to South Africa where they lived for the next 14 years. She has fond memories of wild animals escaping the Kruger National Park all around her home area. There was a point where South Africa no longer felt safe so the family returned to Ireland and Kate settled in the artsy little port city of Galway.

Boogie on the other side of the globe grew up in Trinidad and Tobago, islands in the Caribbean Sea in South America. His passion and talent in music saw him embark on many international tours with famous bands, until one day someone suggested to visit Australia.

Like a number of European backpackers looking for warmth, Kate took a holiday to Australia where she explored extensively the far reaches of the country. The Sunny Coast was her favourite place, its relaxed atmosphere and natural beauty reminded her of South Africa and thought 'this is the place'.

Boogie arrived in Sydney in the late 90s and had a quick awakening to the fact that Australia was no tropical island and the temperature was a chilly 8 degrees. Later that night he walked into a bar at The Rocks and asked for 'A big glass of nice cold

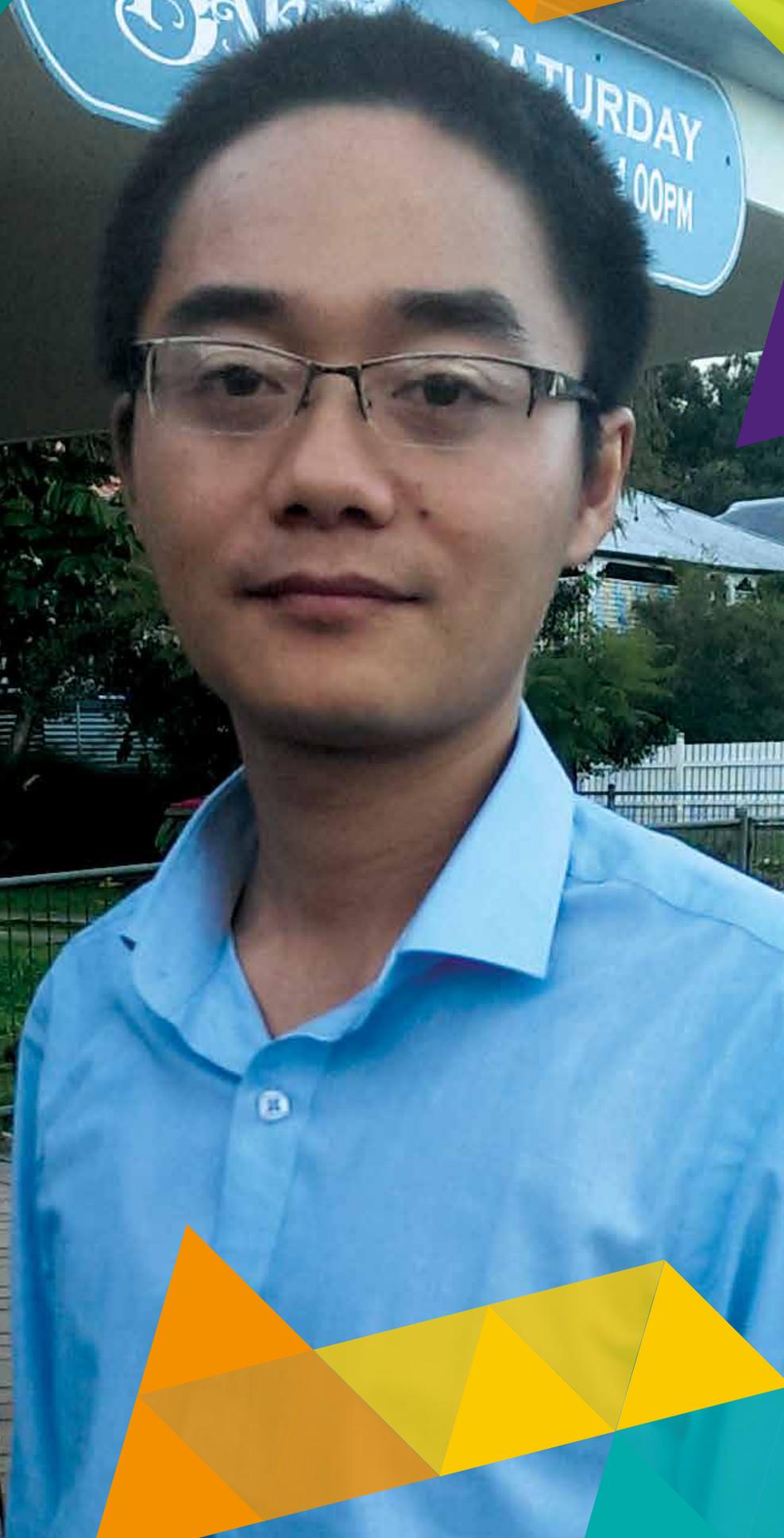
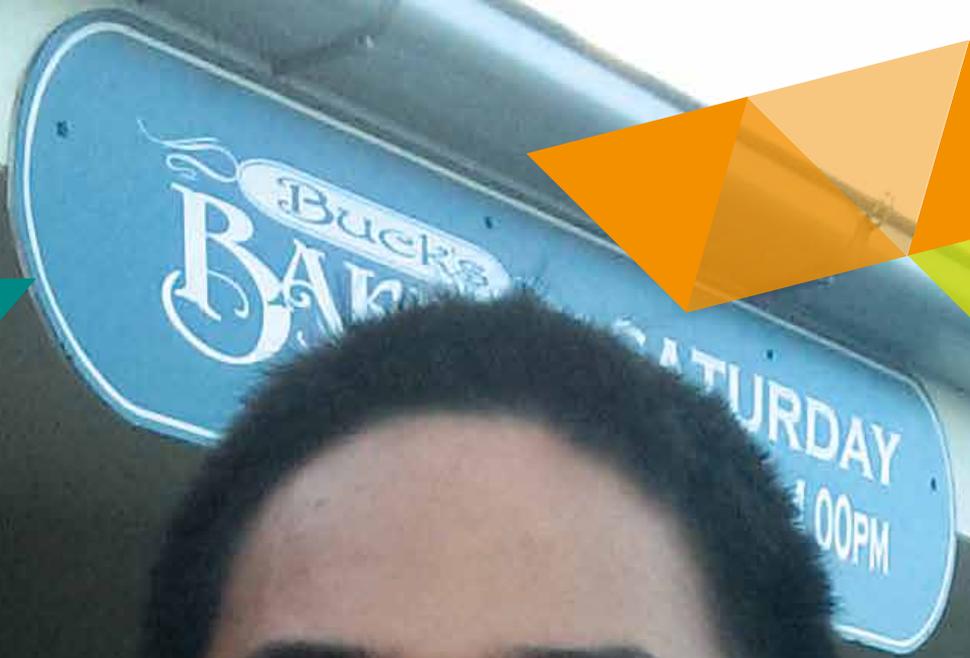
water'. He recalls how the whole pub stood still as he realized that was obviously not the right drink to ask for. A stranger walked up to Boogie, placed a schooner of beer in front of him said "Get that into ya son!" This was the first introduction to Australian culture and generosity for Boogie.

Eventually Boogie moved to the Sunshine Coast where he studied hospitality and opened two Caribbean restaurants. Kate studied at TAFE, doing courses in Photography and Community Welfare. This was also when this dynamic duo met.

Kate admits she misses the culture and community of Ireland. There is an idea that the Irish call The Craic. It basically means the exchange of conversation and ideas, a term used commonly in Irish slang meaning fun, music, coolness and friendship. Kate felt the Sunshine Coast needed an artistic venue, a sanctuary for creatives where everyone feels welcome. This propelled her to create The Shared at Yandina.

The Shared has been Kate and Boogie's life since 2012. What started as a Photography School soon took a life of its own. Today The Shared has a kitchen making breakfasts and Caribbean Boogie Food, and the music events are getting bigger every season. Kate and Boogie are honoured to be given such a warm spot in the hearts of the local and not so local people. It feels like the people around them have all contributed to making The Shared a place that makes them happy, and making people happy makes them happy too!

Tuan Le Son
Vietnam





Tuan is currently doing a PhD at the University of the Sunshine Coast on a four year government sponsorship to improve his knowledge and position.

Tuan Le Son is from the city centre of a smaller city Haiphong in Vietnam about 100km from the capital Hanoi, just like the Sunshine Coast from Brisbane. His mother, father and younger brother still live in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, Tuan is an Official of Environment for the Vietnamese government. His job involves going around the coastal areas annually and collecting water samples to find out the quality of the water for swimming.

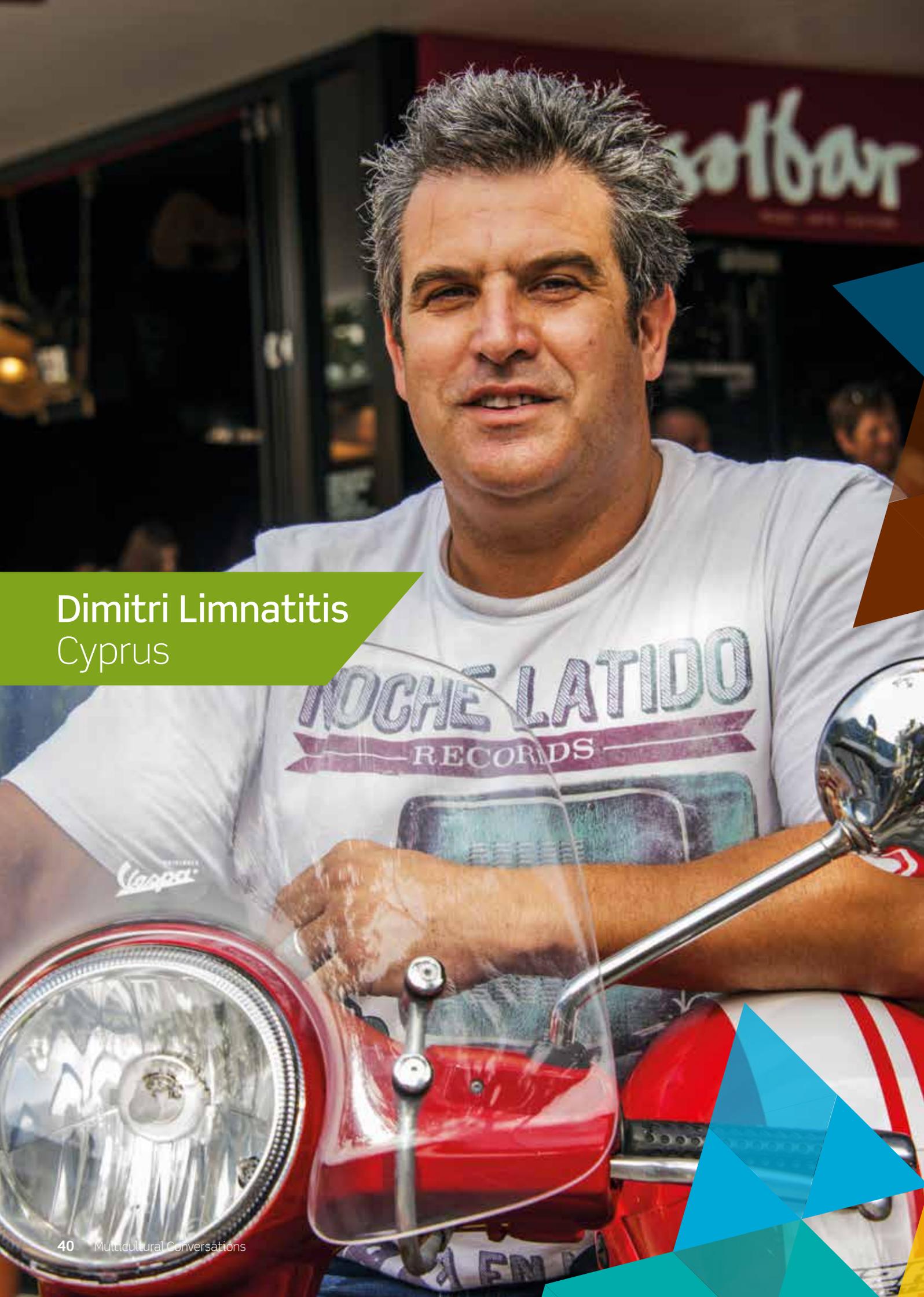
Tuan is currently doing a PhD at the University of the Sunshine Coast on a four year government sponsorship to improve his knowledge and position. He chose the University of the Sunshine Coast because of the high quality of research supervisors here, who are known worldwide in their field. He feels that a smaller university will give him a better chance at developing lasting professional relationships and have more one on one time with his tutors and supervisors.

Tuan spent some time in Seoul Korea before he moved to the Sunshine Coast, while he feels that public transport is better in a big city, he is enjoying the fresh air and the bird life here. When he first arrived Tuan couldn't believe there were kangaroos on campus and took lots of photos to share with his family and friends.

Tuan arrived in late November and was surprised to see the festive lights and decorations people were putting up in preparation for Christmas. This was a new experience for him as Vietnam is dominantly a Buddhist country. He was also surprised by the lack of people on the streets especially after dark compared to Asian towns that usually have a larger population.

To help improve his English Tuan has two tutors from a local church that are helping him with pronunciation and grammar. He also attends council's Library Conversation classes and finds them very helpful. Tuan is very committed to improving his English while he is here as this will be crucial in the success of his research.

There are a lot of things Tuan misses from Vietnam – the culture, the food, the language but mostly he misses his family. To help with his home sickness Tuan regularly meets with a small group from the Vietnamese community on the Sunshine Coast to eat Vietnamese food and socialise. Tuan really appreciates the support he has received from the Australian people who have made him feel welcome.



Dimitri Limnatis
Cyprus



Dimi has five successful entertainment venues and is a driving force behind the Ocean Street precinct.

Dimitris Limnatis was born in Limassol, a port town in southern Cyprus. However his international lifestyle started early, and when he was just one year old his parents moved to Central Africa for five years.

Dimitris has always been a 'hands on' guy and started working part-time when he was just 11. Aged 13 he found himself as an apprentice working full-time for a cabinet maker. While he loved his life in Cyprus in search of better opportunities, Dimitris aged 20, moved to Sydney. Not being able to speak proficient English Dimitris felt isolated and miserable, missing all his friends back home. Dimitris was unable to continue his cabinet making trade as he didn't hold Australian qualifications, even though he had been taught from the best of the best with skills handed down from generation to generation.

This did not discourage him and eventually he found a career that he loved – photography. Dimitris always had a passion for photography and within three months of completing a Certificate in Photography, Dimitris became the publisher of a wake boarding and kiteboarding magazine. These national magazines were also distributed in the United States. He is still regarded as one of the best photographers in the industry, and has travelled for 12 years around the world doing what he loves.

Wake boarding introduced Dimitris to the Sunny Coast and following what makes him happy he moved here permanently. After a change in personal circumstances, Dimitris had to reinvent himself and that is when he started in hospitality. His love for live music propelled him to take over a club in Ocean Street and brand it into the iconic Solbar. Within a year he purchased the business. His success just went from there. Five years later he has five successful entertainment venues and is a driving force behind the Ocean Street precinct.

Cyprus is still a big part of Dimi's life and he visits as often as he can. In Cyprus it is part of life to get the family together and socialise over long lunches or dinners. There is no such thing as a quick lunch. You always have a full feast – it is part of the culture. Food and drink is a big social event. The Cypriots definitely know how to build community and celebrate life, luckily for the Sunny Coast these values are reflected in Dimi's businesses for all to enjoy.



Kati Hidegh Hungary

Kati pictured first on the left in 1957.



From war torn surroundings to living on the beautiful Sunshine Coast sharing her creativity.

Kati Hidegh was born in a small country town in Hungary. Her father was a country lawyer and the Mayor of the town, which meant that for the first few years Kati lived a peaceful, secure childhood.

All that changed when WWII broke out in 1939. By 1943 war was raging in Europe and Hungary was badly affected. By 1944 the family, moved into bunkers to escape the heavy bombing. Kati's earliest memories are receiving a teddy bear which belonged to a neighbour that was killed by a chain bomb hitting the corner of the building. Other bad memories were watching Russian soldiers rounding up women and demanding watches from people in the bunker.

On April 4, 1945 the mighty Russian army 'liberated' Hungary and an unrelenting terror begun in earnest.

Because Kati's family belonged to the undesirable educated elite, they suffered terribly at the hands of the Russian trained Hungarian Communist regime. The living conditions became unbearable and a very bloody short lived revolution broke out in 1956 October. Sadly Kati's stepbrother, a freedom fighter was killed aged only 18. This prompted Kati and her sister to defect to Austria.

A small corridor was cleared of landmines and the mass exodus begun to pour into Austria including the sisters and Kati's future husband. They travelled to the border in a hay wagon, huddled silently together with a few other dissidents hoping to make a successful journey into Austria without being shot from the Hungarian watchtowers. Very scared and cold they trudged through deep snow. They had to wait all night to find out if the indistinguishable

snow and fern trees were Austria or Hungary. Early morning brought the arrival of an Austrian ranger who with great relief took the group to a refugee camp.

Refugees wishing to come to Australia had to wait the longest which gave Kati time to start learning English. While in the camp, there was a ruling to return unaccompanied minors to Hungary, since Kati was only 17 at this point she quickly married her friend Julius to secure a husband and guardian.

A long and pleasant voyage on a ship brought Kati and her husband to Australia on the 5 of May, 1957. Welcomed by an aunt settling in Adelaide, life begun in the new country where everything seemed shabby, smelly and old fashioned. That feeling soon changed as security and a good future became reality.

Within three weeks both husband and wife were given jobs, Kati as a colouring artist at a photo studio and Julius in a factory. They were greatly helped by an Australian family (pictured), with adapting to the weather, food, culture and language.

Many years later Kati moved to the Sunshine Coast to be nearer to her daughter and grandchildren.

Kati is an esteemed member of the Maleny community of artists at Forest Art Collective and the Maleny Arts and Crafts Group.



Maatakiri Te Ruki
New Zealand



“For Maori people language and culture is our identity and defines who we are, and where we come from. It is our connection to each other, to our ancestors and to the natural world.”

Maatakiri Te Ruki is one of 10 siblings and was born at Kenepuru Hospital, Porirua, on the outskirts of Wellington, the capital city of Aotearoa/New Zealand. She lived with her whānau (family) in a place called Tawa until she was 10. The name she carries are the names of her two Kūia (grandmothers), Maata and Kiri, which gives her a strong connection to her whenua (land) and whakapapa (ancestry).

As a Māori (the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand), Maatakiri lives and breathes her language and culture and knows how important ones identity and heritage is. For Maori people, te reo me ona tikanga (language and culture) defines who they are and where they come from. It's their connection to each other, to our tīpuna (ancestors) and to te ao turoa (natural world).

At the age of 12, Maatakiri and her whānau (family) moved to New Plymouth, a west coast settlement on the North Island that sits in the province of Taranaki, (where her Mum's iwi (tribe) are from) with its snow-capped maunga (mountain), Mt Taranaki and the Tasman Sea as the landscape.

It wasn't until Maatakiri turned 42, that she made the decision to travel further afield and with uncertainty and lots of tears she boarded a plane and headed to Australia, as she had heard so much about the place, she thought she would come and take a look.

With her newfound adventurous spirit, Maatakiri started to do things she hadn't done before, like following the All Blacks, Kiwis, Silver Ferns, Black Caps, hungry for all things associated with her papa kainga (home). Funnily enough, being away from her home gave her a whole new appreciation for her homeland. On the other hand, she also decided to embrace anything that came her way when she arrived in Australia.

In 2006 at an Australia Day at Southbank, presented by Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Maatakiri was moved to tears when she heard a waiata Māori (Māori song) played that demonstrated the strong ties between New Zealand and Australia. Māori culture was often unappreciated by mainstream New Zealand and Maatakiri felt a sense of pride that at least Maori culture was revered elsewhere. That same year, Maatakiri began broadcasting from a local community radio, 98.1FM, Radio 4EB, Brisbane's only ethnic community radio with about 50+ ethnic groups, including Māori.

In 2007, while living and working in Brisbane, Maatakiri fell in love with salsa, specifically Colombian style salsa, which led her to meeting Colombian people, travelling to Colombia (in 2014) and finding a new Colombian whanau family.

Because of her interest in Indigenous cultures and languages, Maatakiri become involved with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as she wanted to learn more about song lines, yarns, bush tucker, kinship, storytelling, which opened the doorway for Maatakiri to work with, and alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in community and in education by providing tutoring, mentoring, cadetships and student support. It enabled Maatakiri to maintain her own culture, by helping others in the search for identity, language and culture.

Through her World Conversations multicultural radio program on 104.9 Sunshine FM, Maatakiri has discovered and made connections with some incredible communities and local musicians from across the world, AND, living in and around the Sunshine Coast, where she hopes that through music, our languages and cultures can be shared.

Thupten Phuntsok

Tibet





Thupten obtained a Master's Degree in Buddhist Philosophy and on completion obtained a job in a Tibetan library in Dharamasala.

Thupten Phunsok was born in a remote area of Tibet. Sadly his mother passed away when he was just nine years old and with other siblings to take care of his father had to make a tough decision. At the age of 11, Thupten and his sixteen year old sister were sent to the Tibetan government in exile in the northern part of India in Dharamasala to obtain an education in Tibetan culture, identity and language.

Thupten and his sister led by a people smuggler, travelled from Tibet to Nepal across the Himalayans on foot. Thupten recalls being very fortunate, some people on the track lost fingers and toes to frost bite. They were fine because they had good shoes.

Thupten was admitted to a Tibetan school and then went to a University in India. He obtained a Master's Degree in Buddhist Philosophy and on completion obtained a job in a Tibetan library in Dharamasala. The library has an impressive collection of old manuscripts which were brought from Tibet during the 1960s and 70s, when the Dalai Lama and some 10,000 Tibetans fled Tibet.

It was in Dharmasla that Thupten met his Queenslander wife. The couple lived in India for a number of years before they found out they were expecting a bundle of joy. A baby on the way changed their plans and they decided to return to Australia.

Enroute Thupten took the opportunity to visit Tibet. He had not been home or seen his family in 27 years, but unfortunately things did not get better in Tibet. He was basically kept under house arrest his whole stay and found that the Tibetan people were as oppressed as ever.

In 2013 Thupten travelled to Australia to join his wife in Bribie Island where she was staying with her parents. They stayed there for four months while their son was born. Eventually the couple moved to Maleny, where the beautiful mountain like surrounding and lots of beautiful people help Thupten feel at home. Thupten really loves Maleny and the people are very supportive, even helping him to find a cleaning job.

Thupten's education is in Buddhist philosophy, so he could easily lead Buddhist and Tibetan meditation or philosophy courses. A sincere Buddhist humility shines in him and he feels he would need a lot more teaching experience from the high Lamas, before he can do this.

In Australia everything is different for Thupten. He enjoys his cleaning job but would eventually like to pursue his original career in Libraries. He is now completing a Certificate III in Library Studies.



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