

commUnity

our stories

Stories from students in our Kedron commUnity

Sarah

Vlad

Mikayla

Cassie

Isaac

Pepito

Charles

Vlad

Jemimah

Kwee

Adiyo

Robbie

Rasul

Lettie

Kelly

Sha lo

How we help

Inspirational interviews from members
of the Kedron commUnity

My view, our view

We take it to the streets of Kedron



A WORD FROM COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Community Connections is a non government organisation that works with young people, their families and communities, to address issues affecting early home and school leaving. This project was initiated in 2008 by a group of year 12 students in 2008 who wanted to find a way of increasing others understanding of their cultures and experiences in order to reduce racism in the wider community. Sarah, a student from this group stated:

"We would like to thank people for listening to our stories and would like them to know that we are not doing this for ourselves, we are doing this for other ESL students who are going to come after us. Some of us have been here for 3 or 4 years and some people haven't been able to understand because we haven't been able to let them know how hard it is to come to Australia. We don't want people to feel sorry for us. We would like to explain what it is like for us because sometimes teachers think we are like Australian kids, but we are not because some of us came here without all our family and this makes it very hard because being together is very important for us. So, missing them has put pressure on us. We really appreciate that people are trying to understand our cultures."

Community Connections thank these students; the humble idea of sharing stories to create understanding has grown into an amazing project, bringing a wide and diverse group of young people and communities together across the whole school community. We have many people to thank for making this idea become a reality.

Acknowledgements

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The hard work and dedication of Mrs Chrissie Coogan and her Year 9 Extension English class (2009) with editing, layout and content has been invaluable in transforming this collection of stories into a vibrant resource to be used and enjoyed by many. Thank you also to Human Ventures for adding the extra pizzazz!

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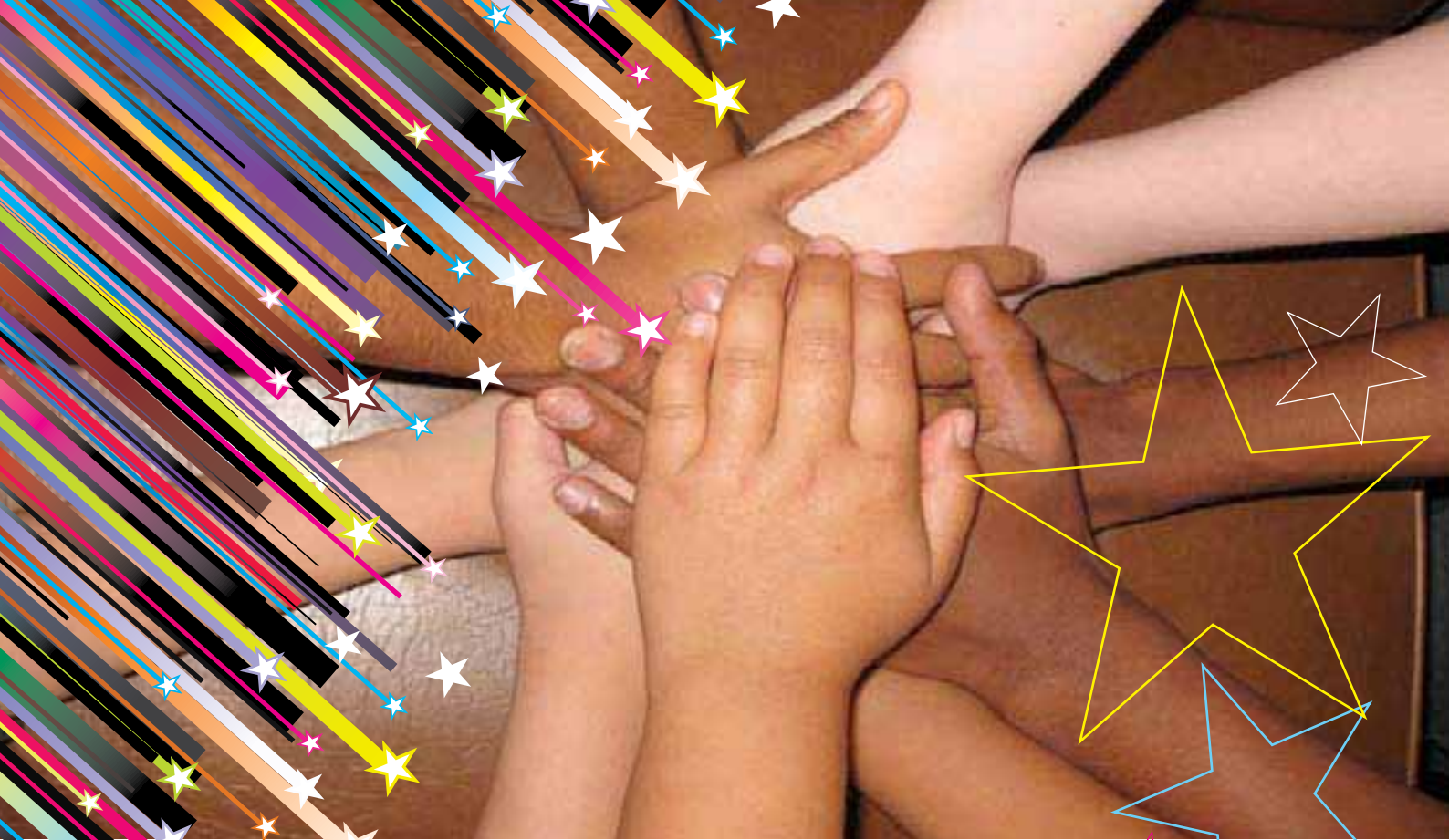
Finally, thank you to all the staff and students who contributed to this book through interviews and 'vox pop' comments. In particular, a very big thank you goes out to all the amazing young people who had the courage to share their stories and the desire to create a more understanding and inclusive community!

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Community Connections is a service of Community Living Association Inc



FOREWORD

“From little things, big things grow” KEY CARMODY

Just like in the song, a few words grew into a conversation and this conversation grew into an idea and soon after actions spoke louder than words. As a part of our program to assist students to feel at home in our community, students from the ESL unit were able to participate in workshops provided by Community Connections. Out of these workshops an idea, this magazine, has been born.

With more than 48 countries represented in our classrooms at Kedron State High School and hectic schedules we can go about our business without much thought about who we are passing on the veranda or sitting beside in class. Through this booklet, the aim is to share these stories with the hope of increasing tolerance and promoting cultural awareness. Stories about student’s homelands and their journeys that brought them to Kedron have been shared in the spirit of building bridges and breaking down walls.

One of our Year 9 English classes took on the responsibility of compiling this collection of stories and they have learnt much more than how to write and edit. From their work, projects for the future have emerged so that the opportunities to raise cultural awareness continue to grow. Students teaching students is not a new idea, but it is an effective one.

commUnity, our stories, has grown from an idea to words and now into action, your action. By reading this collection you will have the opportunity to grow in understanding of the people who are a part of our Kedron community.

Myron McCormick

The Principal
Kedron State High School

Mikayla's Story

My name is Mikayla and I live in Kedron. My dad is from the Gangulu tribe in Central Queensland. Mum is Australian with English descent. I am an Aboriginal Australian!



The stories in my culture are really special. When I was younger I liked to hear dad tell traditional stories, like the Rainbow Serpent. I like my culture; in my family there is understanding and difference because my dad is Aboriginal and mum is English Australian. My family is really big and in my culture that is very important! We are really close, and even though we live thousands of kilometres away when come together it feels like we were never apart and we have lots of fun.

I enjoy celebrating culture. My sister goes to an Indigenous Preschool, Yelanggi, and they often have cultural days. I feel proud to be able to stand up at school, like during Kedron Week, and say I am Aboriginal.

I don't look Aboriginal because I am a descendant, so sometimes it is hard to find a balance because people say "You're not Aboriginal! You don't look it!" But at my age, and in this community, it can be hard to find people who 'look Aboriginal'.

I've had experiences where people around me have been bad mouthing Aboriginals and not realised, and I have had to say "I'm Aboriginal" and they won't say anything after that. People say things like 'I really hate Aboriginals'.

A work friend said this to me so I said "What's wrong with them? I'm Aboriginal!" and he said "Oh but you're not bad" and tried to cover up what he said. I told him you can't make a statement about a whole race when you've only experienced it from one person. People do that all the time; they make assumptions and don't understand the culture.

People should put themselves in other people's shoes to stop themselves from making generalisations. For example if an Australian stole something people don't say 'All Australians are thieves!' Whereas with Aboriginal people they will say they all steal, they don't wear shoes, they smoke and they're always drunk. I challenge that by stating I am Aboriginal and I say 'I don't smoke, I rarely drink and I don't swear. I am Aboriginal and I don't fit into your definition, so what does that mean to you?'

I think there should be more talk about cultural diversity. Racism should be acknowledged and confronted head on, as I feel like it is there, but it is hidden. In our little community at Kedron there are so many cultures and so much diversity, so we need to keep talking about it and understanding each other. Maybe even have regular conferences where people share stories; people love stories, stories of tradition and experiences. This conversation and understanding needs to be ongoing, because otherwise racism is inevitable. I have done circus stuff with Indigenous kids and I'm also part of an Indigenous Circus network across Australia. I would really like to teach in an Aboriginal community and to say I am Aboriginal and I am a teacher. I could use teaching to bring circus to kids in communities, to give them more opportunities.

"I told him you can't make a statement about a whole race when you've only experienced it from one person"



ADIYO'S STORY

I came from Kenya but I was born in Sudan. I left Sudan when I was very young. I can't remember what Sudan was like as I grew up in Kenya, in the Kakuma refugee camp. My parents made the right decision to leave Sudan as people were fighting and killing each other. They left because they cared and wanted us to be safe.

I arrived at Australia when I was thirteen. We are a big family; I have five brothers and three sisters. I really miss my friends and grandparents. I have recently started speaking to my Grandmother. She always asks, "I miss you...did you grow tall?" And I say, "Grandma, I can't describe it...I am a big girl now. If you saw me you would be surprised. You wouldn't believe it is me, Adiyu. But it is me"

It was really hard when we first came to Australia. I spoke Acholi, Arabic, Dinka and Swahili but not English. Every day I went to school my and friends would try and talk to me but I didn't understand them and they didn't understand my language either. I felt very lonely, learning English made life easier.

Schools in Africa, you don't get into trouble the same way you do here. In Africa, if someone slaps you, you slap back. But here if you slap back you get into trouble or suspended. And I didn't get that, I didn't see the point. That's why I think it's very hard for African kids because they don't understand the rules in Australia. Sometimes the teachers do not understand us either, and that's the way we feel. I have learnt now that there are different ways of dealing with things, rather than fighting!

What I remember most about home, is the houses and the trees. In our village there was a big tree, where everyone would meet at the end of the day. We would share our stories and laugh and be happy. I really miss this. It is especially hard for our parents, because for us, we can go to school and meet our own friends, but


our parents sit in their house and our neighbours in their house, and it is not easy to talk to each other, it can be very lonely.

In Australian families, kids can do things that are not allowed in our culture. For example we are not allowed to have boyfriends and if you do, you get in big trouble. Your parents have to tell you who the right person is for you. In Australia if you have a boyfriend, nobody cares. You can bring him home and no-one says anything. It's a little bit tricky!!

There is some racism here. One day I was just walking down the road and these girls in a car called me the 'N' word. I thought 'how could they say something like that?' In Africa, we would treat everyone just like us. It makes you feel like you are not welcome anymore, which is really hard. I would like people to get along together. It doesn't matter about your skin... your skin means nothing. What is in your heart means everything. People should work together, saying you're black or white, is not nice.

I am dreaming of getting a job and a career to have a brighter future. I want to get married, have kids and to make my family happy and proud of me and them. My parents made my grandmother and grandfather happy and I want to do the same for them.

I really want to say thank you to the government and the people for letting us be safe here and giving us a chance for a better future. My family and I are very grateful and are glad to have a chance to be happy here.



"I was just walking down the road and these girls in a car called me the 'N' word."



CHARLES'S STORY

I had a really good life before coming to Australia because I had all my friends and loved ones around. I really miss my friends, my family and my farm. My dad has two wives, so while I have some family here; my brothers and sisters did not come here. It's OK living here because I have family with me but I'm not as happy as I could be because I still have family suffering with war and stuff which makes life pretty hard.

Coming to Australia was really good. When I first heard that we were approved for a visa I was so excited. It was like my dream had come true. But then it was really tough, I was lonely and confused being here. It's like it's just you. Nobody here comes to say, "Hey, how are you?" but now it's not that bad. I come to school. I have friends. That makes my life a lot better because it helps me to not think about family back there; it reduces the stress.

One thing that has been difficult is race. Sometimes it makes me feel like I want to go back to my country because I feel like I don't fit in here. Sometimes, outside of school people say things to me that aren't very nice.

"Some people don't give you a chance."

Some try to pick a fight with me, they think that all black people just want to fight. People assuming that I am violent when I am not makes me feel really awkward. It just doesn't feel right. It's like assuming you are a terrorist when you're not a terrorist. So it feels really bad. Some people don't give you a chance.

"Coming to Australia was hard because I couldn't speak English"

School has been really helpful because when I first came here I didn't speak English. The only thing I knew how to say was, "Hi, how you doing?" Coming to school made it a lot easier. When you know how to speak English, it is easier to communicate.

Coming to Australia was hard because I couldn't speak English and if you don't know how to use the words, you can't speak the language. It makes it a lot easier for me because when I talk to people, when my English is grammatically correct, I don't think they will make fun of me. When you don't speak English there's always a thought that they could be making fun of you.

After year 12 I want to go to Hawaii and Fiji. My dream is to become a carpenter and have my own business so then I can be my own boss. If you are working for yourself; how can you not be happy? You can choose when to work and when to have a holiday.

"I also dream of everyone being equal"

I also dream of everyone being equal, understanding that there's not really any difference between humans. Outside we may be different, but inside we are all alike. That's what I want everyone to understand.

All I'm wishing for is that it is easier for us to fit in. I hope that teachers can understand that fitting in can be very hard for us. Even if you went to America, it wouldn't be easy to join in there and do what they do, it's very hard. You have to take it step by step and you'll enjoy being there. You can't expect someone to do this in no time at all. For example, I play basketball; you can't expect someone to play basketball if they haven't had any practice.

"Australia is my home but Africa is a part of my life that I can't forget"

I want to make Australia my home and then travel around the world and visit my family. I say I'm African Australian now, because Africa's my home country but now I'm living in Australia. Yeah African Australian....it sounds good and it makes sense. Australia is my home but Africa is a part of my life that I can't forget.



CHATTIN' IT UP

We were fortunate enough to be able to sit down with Mrs Thompson the Head of English as a Second Language (ESL) Kedron State High School and chat about her views on all things cultural.

Q. What is your role within the school?

I am the head of Special Education services, ESL. In the school, there are two units attached to Kedron – the student support unit and the ESL unit. Kedron's ESL unit is the only one on Brisbane's Northside, and there are only 6 or 7 on the Southside.

Q. Why did you decide to visit Burma in 2008?

Because Burma is where the largest group of migrants at our school come from, I wanted to see what their lives were like before they came to Australia. Usually, the Refugee Camps are inaccessible to the public, but through contacts I had, I was granted permission for access. Something which is a major problem is the fact that people going through hardships who are not in refugee camps are unable to migrate to Australia.

A large portion of people unable to migrate are Buddhist Koreans. However I did raise \$5000 for Maetat Clinic. Each person can make a difference and education, to a certain extent, should be about making a difference.

Q. How do you feel about the thoughtless comments school kids make?

Young people, well all people really, say silly things they sometimes don't need to. Putting ESL kids down is thoughtless. Most kids don't realise what they are doing when they put ESL kids down. They don't realise how difficult it is learning a new language, a new culture, a new way of living. Most of them were born into a refugee camp, and have never spent time sitting in class or doing what we think of as average day things. It's just ignorance. People are unaware. We want to make people aware of the situation. Most of the ESL kids move here because of war or money. All children, including migrants, need to be educated. We need to develop more sensitivity

☆ **"EACH PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND EDUCATION, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, SHOULD BE ABOUT MAKING A DIFFERENCE."** ☆





RASUL'S STORY

I am from Kabul, Afghanistan and I am 14 years old. I fled Afghanistan, and flew to Australia to save my life. My dad sent me because my dad's enemies, the Taliban, killed my older brothers.



KABUL

I came to Australia alone and I am not sure where my family is. The last time I spoke to them they were on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was hard to leave my family. When I arrived I was really homesick and missed my family, especially my mum. I missed everything; food, friends, the way of life, but the most important thing was my family.

In Afghanistan, everyone is Muslim, but here both the culture and religion are different, so it was a very big change for me. At home I went to the Mosque every day, but in Brisbane this is not possible as I go to school during the week and there is no mosque nearby. I do go sometimes though.

The Taliban give Muslims a bad name. In the Koran it says that it is a very big sin to kill someone, but the Taliban kills people throughout Afghanistan and the world.

Australia has a good culture. You have your own choices. In Afghanistan if you want to be a doctor or an engineer you need to have people in power supporting you, but in Australia, if you want something, you work hard and you can do it. Everyone can make their own choices in life, whereas in Afghanistan only boys can go to school and do as they like and girls can't. There is no equality between men and women.

I really like that there is equality in Australia and human rights where everyone has the right to make their own choices.

Interview with Isaac

What was it like before you came to Australia?

It was really good because you were in your own country. I was born in Sudan but we moved to Uganda. The people there are really friendly. We stayed there for about 11 years. I lived with my family. I have a really big family which made it fun.

What was special about your home?

What made my home special was feeling free. You could go out with your friends and people don't stare at you in the streets. I felt safe.

How do you feel about living in Australia now?

I've been here for four years and I feel normal now because I speak English and I have more friends at school. On the holidays I get to hang out with my mates. Coming to school has made it easier, because the days go faster. When I stayed at home, a week felt like a year!

What are your dreams?

My dream is to be the best mechanic. I would also like to buy a car and a house soon. When you have your own house you feel safe. In Uganda this is important because if you keep moving houses, soon you will not find one, and you could be on the streets.

How do you see yourself? What do you say to people about where you are from?

I explain to people, I am from Africa but I am an Australian citizen. So I don't really belong to any one place, as long as I feel at home. I feel at home in Australia. Australia is my home.

What do you miss about your home?

I miss my friends, school and my family.

What was it like when you first arrived?

I felt lonely. I had to stay at home because I didn't know how to get around, so it felt boring, but a bit exciting too. I felt confused and a bit scared because I missed home a lot and my family. The houses in the street didn't look the same in my eyes and because I wasn't used to it, I didn't go far. I would just walk around and come back home so I wouldn't get lost. I couldn't speak English then so I couldn't talk to people in the street. In Uganda there were no streets and houses, people live in villages.

What was it like coming to Australia?

I came to Australia with my mother & sisters. When I first heard that we were approved to come, I was excited and thought it would be fun.

What has helped you?

Learning to speak English and learning to get along and talk with the people around me.

"I feel at home in Australia now. Australia is my home."



KELLY'S STORY

My name is Kelly Rose Sibanda. I was born on the 5th of June 1994 at Chinotimba Hospital in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. I grew up in the villages with my grandmother. My mum had to work in the city because life at the time was very tough. I attended school at Comny St Joseph's Primary School. There were very few teachers and even less to learn. When I went to school I had no uniform, no shoes and no books.

When I was at the village I did a lot of work that was not possible for a young girl. I woke up early in the morning and started a fire to boil water for bathing, although I didn't do this every day because the boreholes were far from our huts. I swept the yard every morning before I left for school, made sure there was enough water for the whole afternoon, cooked for my Granny and then I would quickly get my breakfast and run to school.

On my way from school I would fetch fur wood and brooms in the forest. I would make sure dinner was ready before 6.30pm or else my uncle would be angry at me. After cooking dinner I would serve everyone and sometimes I would have to make more food for everyone. In our houses we had to mop the floor with cow dung or green leaves.

Everyone loved having fun, most of the time we sang, danced and played drums. In our culture we celebrated our ancestors who died long ago. We built a large fire with large flames in the middle of the yard. For clothing we wore animal skins and large tyres from old cars and scotch carts as our shoes. Boys and girls would dance together and sometimes people started to talk in different languages, which the Elders said meant our ancestors were trying to say something through that person. Many believe it was true and I also believed it was true.

One day my mum came from the city and took me with her. The language was different so I had to start learning that language. In the city there were few teachers. Most of the teachers went to South Africa so they could earn more money.

Everything was very expensive. For example a loaf of bread cost \$1.5 (USD).

My mum worked very hard to get me to school. My dad was in Victoria Falls and one day he arrived with my sisters and told me he was coming to Australia.

I was never expecting to go to another country. I was so shocked, scared and happy. Then I heard that I had to stay behind. I felt my heart simply falling deep down into my tummy. After everything, I was forgotten about; but I kept on going to school.

In the city, life was becoming tougher and worse each and every day. My life became a misery; there was no food, no water, no electricity and no going to school. I stayed home and starved. I became very skinny and dark in complexion. My dad kept trying to take me to Australia but it cost him lots of money. I stayed for two years in Africa after my dad came to Australia.

In November 2008, that's when my dad started to tell me the process was nearly over. On November 14th 2008 my ticket arrived and my mum and relatives took me to the airport. I arrived in Australia the following day at 5.45pm.

Everything looked so beautiful! I felt like I was in another world. The first light that I saw made me believe that my life would never be the same. As for now, my life is like I had already planned it and how I wanted it to be. On my first day at Kedron State High School I was afraid to share the same school with Australians. I never thought I could do something better at school or understand the subjects that they learn. But when I was used to it, I didn't find it different anymore and I keep learning more every day!



LETTIE'S STORY

My name is Lettie Maiketswane. I migrated here from Botswana, a country in Africa landlocked by Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

I lived in the capital, Gaborone, but my home village is Shoshong. It is easy for people to get lost in these places because they are very large.

There are many different languages, clothes and dances within my culture. The most popular type of dance is Kwaito. It involves fast leg work and is an extremely hard dance to learn for an outsider.

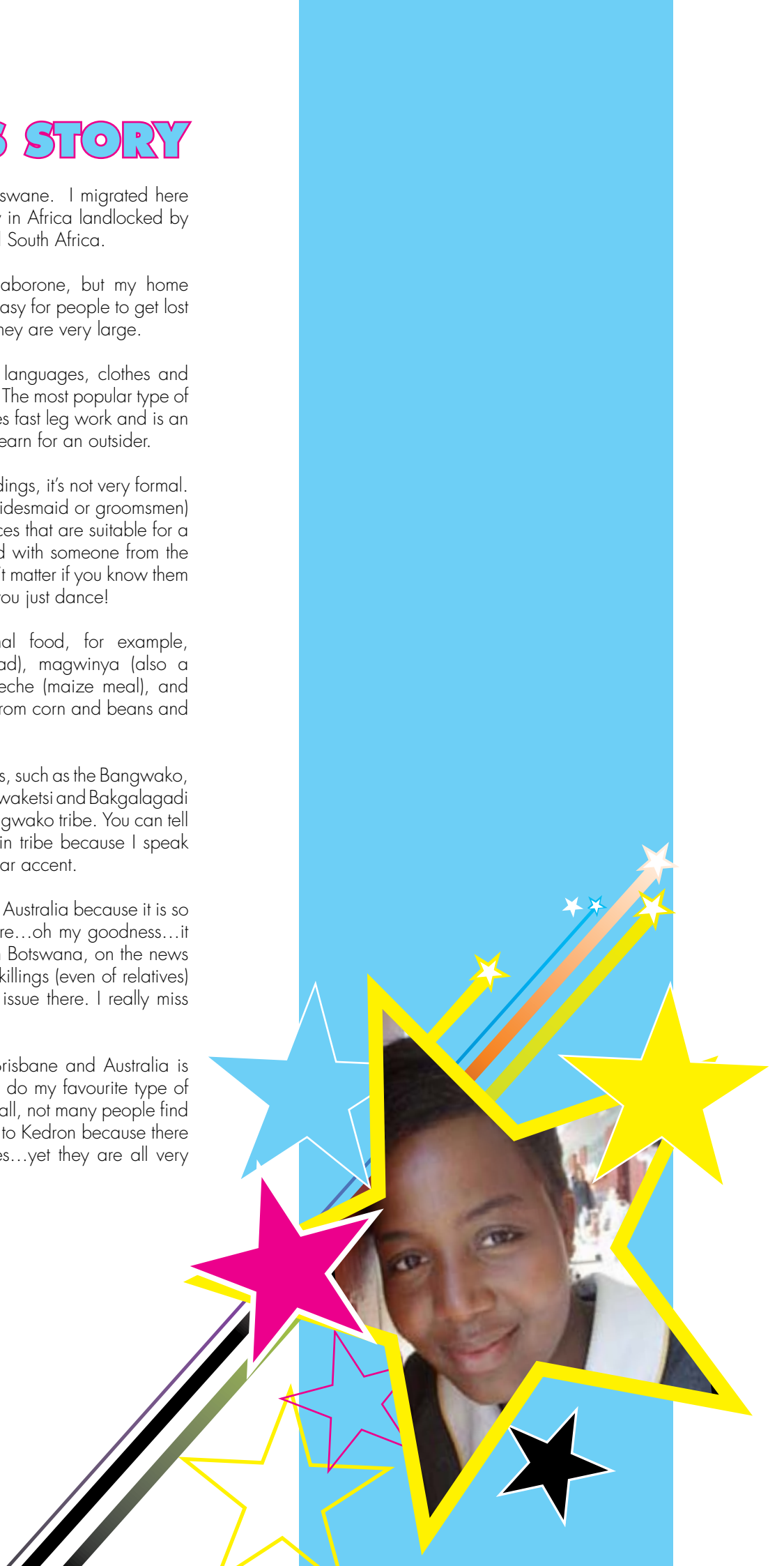
When we celebrate weddings, it's not very formal. If you are a moemisi (a bridesmaid or groomsmen) you have to practice dances that are suitable for a wedding. You are paired with someone from the other gender and it doesn't matter if you know them or don't speak to them...you just dance!

We also have traditional food, for example, ledombi (a type of bread), magwinya (also a type of bread) and phaleche (maize meal), and sekampa which is made from corn and beans and is quite difficult to make.

In Botswana we have tribes, such as the Bangwako, Bakgatla, Baherero, Bangwaketsi and Bakgalagadi tribes. I belong to the Mongwako tribe. You can tell that I belong in this certain tribe because I speak my language in a particular accent.

It is very different for me in Australia because it is so quiet and the weather here...oh my goodness...it gets too hot! Whereas in Botswana, on the news I see lots of stories about killings (even of relatives) which is not really a big issue there. I really miss Botswana!

The things I love about Brisbane and Australia is that there are people that do my favourite type of dancing...hip hop! After all, not many people find hip hop easy. I like going to Kedron because there are many different cultures...yet they are all very different!





My family wearing traditional dress. This photo was taken in the Thai Burmese Border Refugee camp, where we lived for ten years.

THE KAREN PEOPLE AND BURMA

Burma is the home of many cultures. After the Burmese, The Karen are the second largest ethnic group.

The life of the Karen is simple. They mostly live in the hillsides; they have optimism, love, peace and equality. Some parts of the lovely Karen culture are respecting Elders, leaders, teachers, parents and grandparents. We don't call our Elders by name, and if we cross their path we bend as we walk. We don't look straight at an Elders' face when we speak with them. Karen people eat mainly rice and visit each other and help each other whenever needed. Shaking hands has become more popular and was adopted by Karen culture after the colonisation of Burma by the British about 200 years ago.

Due to the rise of the Burmese dictatorship, the Karen people now face a genocide offensive by the military junta. However, they survive and they live. The struggle for recognition of their own state, self determination, democracy and freedom bring nightmares to them but they will never surrender their struggle, never, never. The word surrender doesn't appear in the Karen people's dictionary.

Finally, there are about 40,000 Karen people spread all around the world through the refugee resettlement process. However, the majority still remain inside Burma as Internally Displaced People. Some are residing in the Thai-Burma border line refugee camps as refugees. Their lives are horrible as they don't have enough food, shelter, medicine, security, education for children, church or freedom. They are all living under oppression.>

A LITTLE ABOUT MY STORY

My name is Sha Lo Paw Dwel. I have two brothers and three sisters.

Unfortunately the Burmese soldiers came to our village, shot the people and then burnt the village. Many people died during that time.

My family had to leave our currently very suddenly when I was three years old, and fled to the jungle. We went without food, fresh water and shelter for about four months. We had to hide and stay quiet, because if the Burmese soldiers saw us they would kill us. Finally, we entered a refugee camp in Thailand and stayed there for around ten years.

In the refugee camp we didn't have much food or education as there were many people living there. However, my family decided to come to Australia and now I have been in Australia for around three years. I'm so happy to be here because I have never had freedom like this before. Everybody wants freedom in their life.

I love Australia so much but it is hard to understand the language as this is my first time to learn and speak English. I'm now at Kedron state High School and I love my school so much. I love my teachers because they help me a lot and they understand my problems. I always try my best and I hope that one day I will be the person I want to be and I can help my people in many ways.





SARAH'S STORY

I was born in Sudan but I grew up in Kenya, in Kakuma Refugee camp. We went there because my dad worked in Nairobi. He didn't want us to live in the city because it was too dangerous. I went to Nairobi to live with my aunty when my dad died in 2000. He died fighting in the war in Sudan. We all felt very sad and our aunts and cousins in America sent money to help us.

We came to Australia in 2003 because we didn't have things we needed. I came here with my mum and my brothers and sisters. It's a bit confusing though as I have step brothers and sisters. We used to live together and eat the same food as in Africa, but we can't do that here. I find it hard because when we came to Australia the government said we couldn't all live together because there were too many people and the houses are too small. In my family, there are twelve kids and my mum and step mum. In Sudan we don't have a word called step, we're just one family.

In Africa my house was big ...it was an African house. Everyone that came from Sudan would come to our house...people knew my dad worked so they would come to get help with food and money.

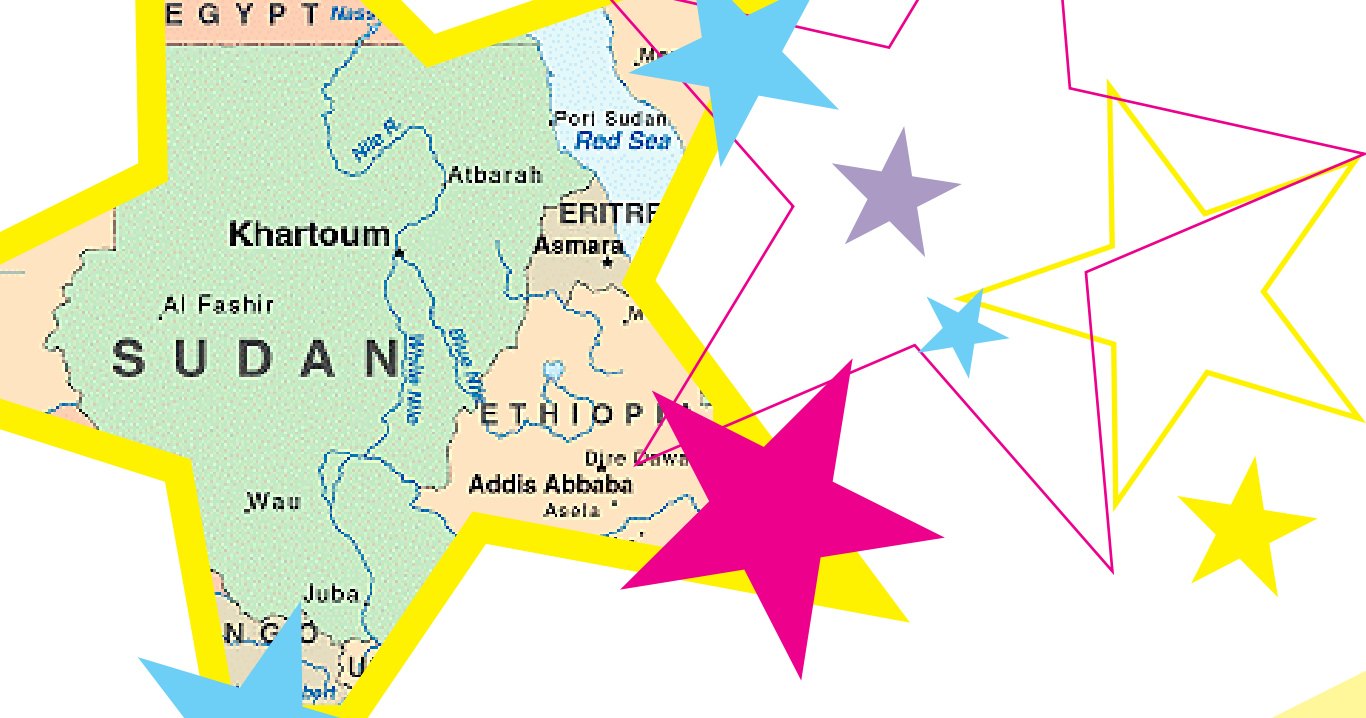
Anyone could come and stay at our house even if they weren't related.

"IN SUDAN WE DON'T HAVE A WORD CALLED STEP, WE'RE JUST ONE FAMILY."

I miss a lot of things about Africa; the food, African dance, walking down the street, Christmas time and everybody eating together. Not like Aussies who eat by themselves! In Africa we always share food together, not just family but lots of friends. African food is yum. Seriously, there is nothing like African food!

Sometimes it can be a bit tricky in Australia! Some people have never seen a black person before and when you walk you feel like everyone is watching and they are scared of you. They give you a look and it feels really weird.

Sometimes if one black person does something wrong, teachers will say 'all the Sudanese', which is a thing I hate. They won't say the student's name, but will include all the Sudanese students into it. This makes me feel bad, like we are all bad, but it's only one person. If this happens with a white kid they use their name and they don't say 'those white kids.' The students are white and the teachers are white....that feels racist to us.



School has been good though as you learn and get more experience. You understand how white Australian people live and do things. You get to learn school rules and Aussie rules.

There are some really big differences between Australia and Africa. Firstly, I find eye contact really difficult! In Sudan you can't make eye contact with someone who is angry at you. It means you are not sharing respect. But in Australia eye contact means respect.

In Australia, it is OK for people to live with their boyfriends in front of their parents face. We do it with no one around. People here talk and kiss in the street. It's like marriage, you have to tell your parents and they must come home and meet your parents to talk about marriage. You can't just meet who you like and date.

African dance is really special. We have lots of parties and food. Everyone plays together and loves each other. There is no racism or people telling you to go back to your country, like in Australia now.

When we were little at school, or on the street in Africa and people did something bad we'd fight and no-one would care. People would sit down and watch the fight. Fighting is normal. At school, if someone tells me to shut up or says something

I don't like my anger goes up because I'm used to fighting. Australians say it's not right so we try our best but it is still very hard. I am trying to learn other ways to deal with this. To learn that at school, school has different rules than at home. We live by sets of rules and sometimes this gets confusing. You do African rules at home and at school you have to do Aussie rules.

The good thing about Australia is there is no war. Africa has too much war...too many people fighting and this is how my father died. That is why we got away from Africa.

There is peace and it is safe for us here. This is a good thing.

Even though there is racism, there is peace in Australia; you are not going to find it hard with people killing each other and all this type of thing.

In 5 years everybody will get used to it and it will become easier. When we first came people were racist but it is becoming more normal now and we are getting along together.

I dream of getting a job, finding a nice husband and having kids.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Kedron's view on all things cultural

Q. AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY SAYS WE ARE A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY, DO YOU AGREE?



LIAM WIDDICOMBE, YEAR 8

Yes, because there are a lot of different cultures in Kedron.



AALIYAH TALUKDAR, YEAR 9

Yes, but unfortunately there are still many racist people in our country.



OBANG OMOT, YEAR 10

Yes, because there are different races we accept.



RACHELLE MCDONALD, YEAR 12

Yes, because we incorporate different cultural aspects of food into our own.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT DIFFERENT CULTURES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR COMMUNITY?



Larissa Murray,
Year 11

Yes, because they add to the cultural diversity of the community.



Sam Leslie,
Year 9

Yes. Different cultures bring a lot of good things to our community, such as nice food.



Geoff Greensill,
Teacher, Maths HOD.

Yes. New cultures bring new ideas and generate jobs and boost the economy. Some successful immigrants now own Visa and Westfield for example.



Nick Stout, Year 9

Well, it gives people the opportunity to mix with other cultures and learn about them. They might have different knowledge to what you have and you can hear different stories and accents.

VLAD'S STORY

"WE HAVE OUR OWN CULTURE AND OUR OWN DEFINITION OF FREEDOM."

O.K....I'm Vlad, I'm from Kaliningrad, Russia, lived there my whole life. That's almost 16 years, so I have some things to say!

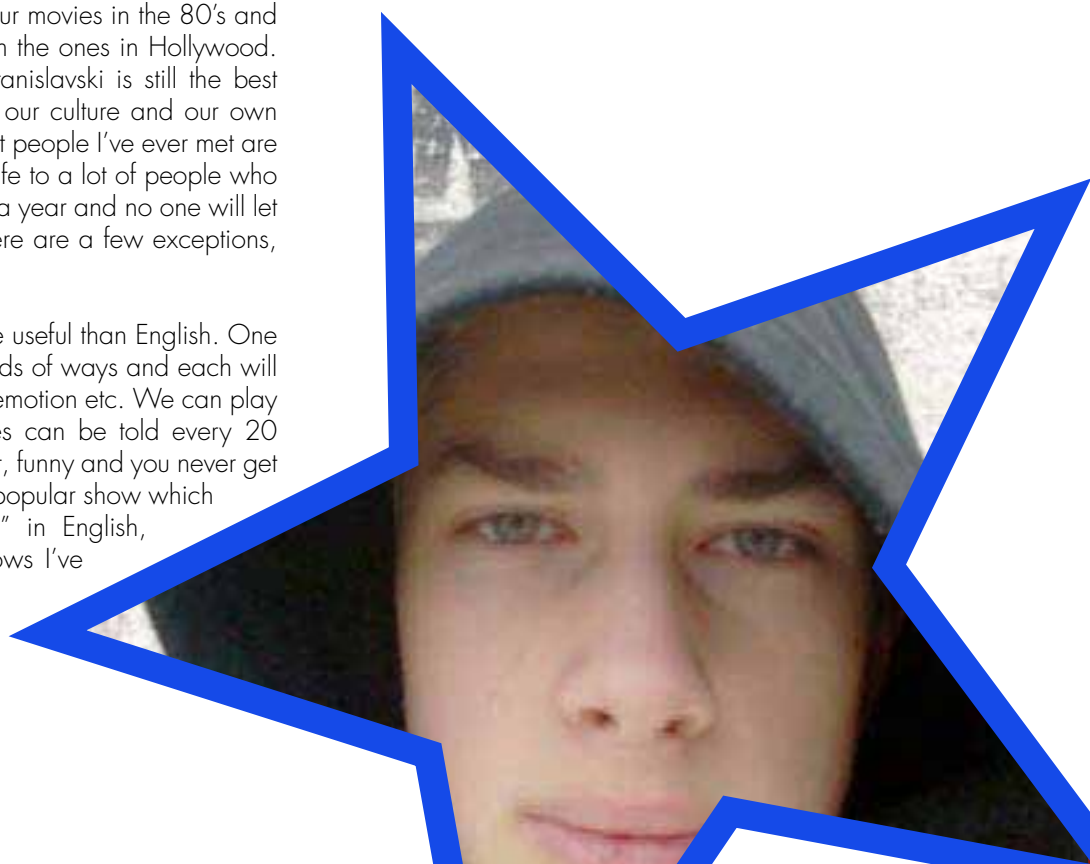
To begin with – it is NOT always snowing (only in winter) and nowhere near as much as in the movies! Not all of us are tough, disciplined and non modern either! We are as different as other people – there are just a lot of clichés which aren't correct.

We have our own music, hundreds of singers, some well known some not as much. Our movies in the 80's and 90's were really different from the ones in Hollywood. The well known system of Stanislavski is still the best system for actors. We have our culture and our own definition of freedom. The best people I've ever met are Russians. You can trust your life to a lot of people who you have only known for half a year and no one will let you down. Unfortunately, there are a few exceptions, but it happens you know.

Our language Russian is more useful than English. One phrase can be said in hundreds of ways and each will express a different meaning, emotion etc. We can play with words so well that jokes can be told every 20 seconds. Each joke is different, funny and you never get tired of it! We have a really popular show which translates to "Comedy Club" in English, and it is one of the best shows I've ever seen.

Some things I can't put into words....like old people (they are special) and some streets, it is all a definition of homeland!

Yeah, you might think all Russians drink alcohol and mostly vodka. If you do you are actually right! This is a really common thing in Russia. My cousin is 13 and he has been drunk more than once. I am a seldom exception – I don't drink. But most Russians are drinkers from age 13 to death. Well, we are not ideal but we are special! That's it!





A CONVERSATION WITH MIA

Where are you from?

I'm from Guangdong, in the south of China. My city is not really big but it is crowded. There are 24 districts. There are many trees behind the streets but not as many as in Brisbane. We have many different languages. The main language is Mandarin, but we also speak Cantonese and there are a lot of dialects.

What was it like moving to Australia?

I came here with my mum and dad just over two years ago. It felt really new and strange as I didn't know anyone else here. My aunty is here but she lives far away. I miss my friends and cousins but I talk to them on the phone and internet. When I came to Kedron, there were lots of people and I didn't know anyone. Luckily I started with a friend and we stuck together because everyone else spoke English and I didn't understand. People were really nice though and helped me by teaching me English.

How is school in China different from Australia?

The school rules in China are really different from Australia. We have to study all the time and when you are in year 11 and 12 you live at school, and only go home for the weekend. In high school, you can't have long hair. If you do the teacher will talk with your

parents and they might cut your hair. In Australia the school doesn't control this as much. In China, you have to take turns to clean one small area of the school, so some students go to school earlier to do this. Sometimes when you do something wrong, you have to clean the toilet as punishment. This doesn't happen in Australia.

Do you mind if I ask you to explain the symbols on your flag?

Our flag uses red as its background and yellow for its stars. The red symbolises the blood of heroes who died during the revolution. The yellow colour symbolises the glorious history and culture of the Chinese people. The larger star symbolises the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the four smaller stars that surround the big star symbolise the four classes: Workers, Peasants, Petty Bourgeoisie, and the National Bourgeoisie.



Do you celebrate any special festivals in China?

There are many special festivals in China like the Spring Festival, April Fools' Day and the Dragon Boast Festival. My favourite celebration is Chinese New Years. It means everything from the previous year is in past and you can start again. I love it because it's a time for family to be together, I get pocket money and we eat special food.

Is there anything you would like to share about Chinese culture that you think people misunderstand? Yes! In China, people work hard and lunch time is a time to talk about things and share funny stories. People in Chinese restaurants speak really loudly but in Western restaurants if you make noise, it is not good. Sometimes this is hard because people might think we are rude, but it is just different. Also, we eat many animals, but some we can't eat. I remember some people eat things like dog, but not everyone does. I don't eat this because I think it is disgusting! In the old days, people were poor so they needed to eat this, but things in China are changing now and only some people eat this type of food. We need to protect animals, so you can't just kill any animal you want to.

Is there anything you find difficult?

Some people don't want to talk to people from other countries, people who look different. Only some people though, not everyone! Because I find it difficult to understand sometimes, they will say they don't want

to bother talking to me anymore. I feel a little upset when this happens. I would like people to be patient and give me a chance! If I don't understand at first, I would like people to be patient and explain.

How do you find living in Australia now?

I have learnt a lot of things living in Australia. My parents teach me that I can do a lot of things here and be more independent. In China, people my age don't have independence. They must go to school and study and only come home once a week. Here I live at home and I am able to do things by myself.

What could help to create more understanding?

I think people from different countries, like Japan, China and Korea should come together more with people from Australia. We should have more activities and share stories about our countries and cultures!

What are your dreams?

I want to study hard and do well in Year 11 and 12. I would love to have more contact with my friends in China. This is hard because they have to study so hard. I need to write more letters.

DOWN THE KEDRON WAY

Kedron State High School, Brisbane
Monday 24th August, 1:30pm

TODAY'S QUESTION >> WHAT ARE DIFFERENT CELEBRATIONS WITHIN YOUR CULTURE?



THOMAS MCDONALD 13, AUSTRALIAN

I celebrate Christmas, Easter and good old Australia Day by playing cricket and having a barbeque.



SUSANNA NIUPULUSU 14, SAMOAN

I celebrate the Samoan Independence Day (11th June) we do traditional Samoan things like dancing and singing. I also celebrate White Sunday, where everyone wears white.



ALLIR ALLIR 15, KENYAN

There is a Kenyan Celebration where all the Kenyans get together and celebrate. There is also a Dinka Celebration where all the people who speak Dinka celebrate their language.



MIKE SHUN 16, FILIPINO

I celebrate Barrio Fiesta where everyone celebrates being Filipino by dancing and eating food. There is also the Waka Waka where everyone wears costumes and does cultural dances.




PEPITO'S STORY

I like to be alone sometimes, to think things over. I think about my family, my friends and how I miss my country. I especially miss my Nana because she is really special to me. Whenever I have a problem she's always there for me and she makes me feel special. I miss her all the time. When I'm with her she always makes me feel safe. I love being with my Nana. I remember her telling me that I should be proud; proud of myself, my family and my culture.

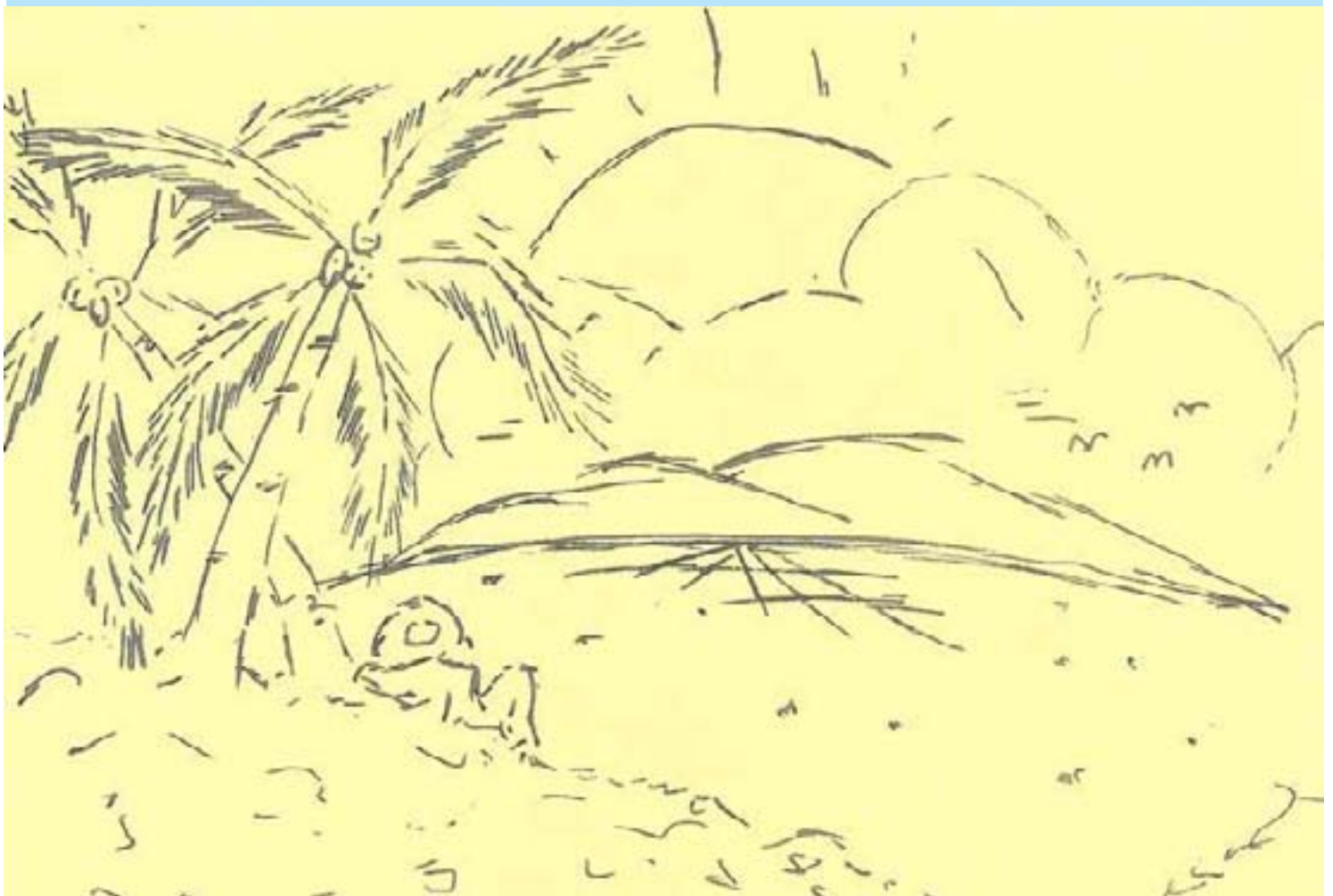
Things in the Philippines are very different to Australia. When I was there I could do things and it would be OK, whereas here there lots of rules you have to follow! In the Philippines, you work within your family, but here you usually have to work for someone else to get paid.

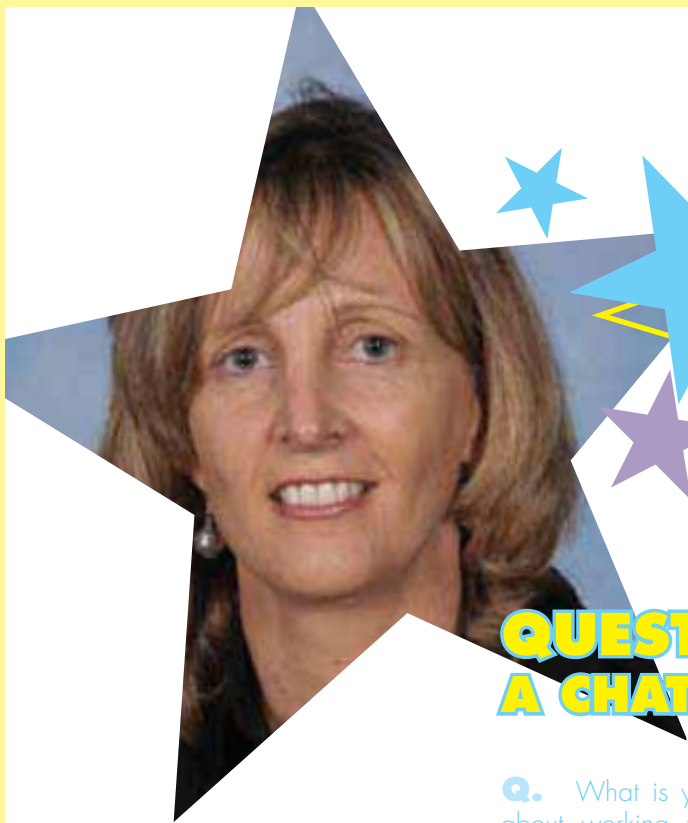
Whenever I want to be alone, I like to sit in the shade of a tree. In the picture I am sitting beneath a tree in the Philippines, looking out over a rice paddy to the mountains. I often think about people being different, and



how I am different, because I know I am. Everyone is unique. We all have different personalities, cultures and everyone has their own story in life. It is good to know peoples' stories so we can understand each other. There are so many different people in the world and I am really curious to know their stories!

I like being by myself to think and to watch other people and to imagine what they're thinking. I often wonder what people are thinking as it is just like reading a love letter...a big secret! I like Sitting, relaxing and thinking can take you to another place! Being different is a great gift. I'll always have this gift and that's all I ever want for myself.





QUESTION AND ANSWERS A CHAT WITH MRS SIMMONDS

Q. What is your favourite thing about working with students from other cultures?

A. They are really kind people with amazing, yet often tragic, life stories of hardship.

Q. What is the most important thing you have learnt while working with these students?

A. Compassion. Some of the students have really traumatic life-stories and they taught me to appreciate everything we have in Australia.

Q. Have your views about other cultures changed since you have met these students?

A. My views have not changed about other cultures but through working in the ESL department; I have a better understanding about different cultures.

Q. Have you had any negative experiences working with ESL students?

A. No, nothing has been negative because every new situation you learn from and that helps me to become a better teacher aid.

Q. Do you think Australia is multicultural or is the country racist to some cultures?

A. I think it is a changing world. The younger generations are more accepting, the older generations are gradually becoming more accepting.

Q. How long have you worked with ESL students?

A. I have worked with ESL students for about 2 ½ years.

Q. Have you ever been to a country where you don't speak the language?

A. Yes, I've been to Italy.

Q. Can you speak any languages other than English?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever been to a developing country (i.e. 2nd world or 3rd world)?

A. I have been to Vanuatu and Fiji which are some of the poorer islands in the Pacific region.



ROBBIE'S STORY

My name is Robert Burrows and I attend Kedron State High School. I'm in grade nine.

I'm deaf for life and I'm proud to be deaf. I use Auslan to communicate; it's my first language. My family uses Auslan to communicate and they interpret for me when I am talking to hearing people. I won't wear a hearing aid or learn to speak because I chose to live this way and; to use only one language to communicate. I am fed up with hearing aids! I am deaf and hearing people can't change that. Lots of deaf people are very, very proud to be deaf. I say, "Thank God that I am deaf!"

Currently, I am learning French at school and I am pleased I am doing it as I have wanted to learn French since I was four! I've also learnt some Swedish words; I love to learn different languages!

I have been entering my stories into national deaf writing competitions and I have won 3rd place twice. I've also swam for Queensland at the Australian Deaf

Games and I won five silver medals and one bronze medal. I will swim again for Queensland in Geelong in 2012. I am the only deaf person in my swimming club but my coach is very 'deaf aware'.

I would really like hearing people to be more aware of the deaf community, as the deaf community is very small. We have been lobbying the government for equal education and anti - discrimination rights. We are not there yet, but it is slowly evolving to be deaf friendly.

From a deaf perspective, there is nothing wrong with being deaf, however from a hearing perspective most people think deafness is a disability. Deaf people are discriminated against just because they can't hear.

Hearing people know deaf people and have cultural awareness but hearing people just don't understand.

We went around the Kedron commUnity and asked a question to individuals that are part of our school.

Our Question:

HAVE YOU EVER WITNESSED RACIAL ABUSE IN THE SCHOOL, AND IF SO, WHAT?



PO-YA

No, I have never seen any racial abuse.



LEHI

No, I haven't seen any racial abuse in Kedron, I think it's a very friendly community.



DYLAN

Yes, I have witnessed a bit of racism where a person was verbally abusing someone about their last name.



EEBAH

Yes, but I see most of it usually in the form of jokes.



BRENDAN

No, I have not seen any racial conflict in the school grounds.

WOLX POOP

Q. DO YOU VIEW AUSTRALIA AS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY?

Natalie yr 8
Yes, because there are many different people who come to Australia.



Nikita yr 9
Yes, because there are lots of different nationalities



Darcy yr 10
Yes, our culture was built on settlers coming from other countries.

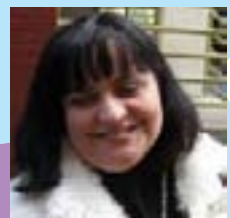


TEENAGERS ARE STEREOTYPED BY GROUPS SUCH AS EMOS, MUSOS, ARTY, POPULAR AND SPORTY. WE ASKED YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THESE GROUPS.

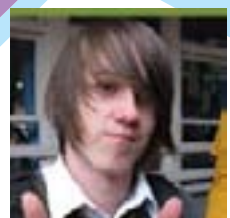
Caitlin, Year 8,
They can make conflict between people.



Miss Ganis
People naturally join friendship groups which can be good but they can become territorial and unaccepting



Mike, Year 9
Social groups should be abolished. Let's all be friends.



JEMIMAH'S STORY

Kanjani! That means Hi there in Shona. My name is Jemimah Mafura. I am 16 years old and I come from Zimbabwe, where we speak Shona (a native Zimbabwe language) and English. I came to Australia, because the political situation in Zimbabwe is very unstable.



In Brisbane, there are many things that are unavailable in Zimbabwe, like good transport and constant electricity. But there are things in Zimbabwe that aren't in Brisbane. Zimbabwe has many beautiful places like waterfalls and animal reserves. We also have wild animals like lions, zebras, hippos and leopards.

My culture is quite different to that in Australia. We wear traditional dress, with prints of African trees, fruit and animals.



We eat traditional food like sadza (like a thick porridge), special pumpkin dishes and pumpkin leaf. We still eat traditional food at home in Australia but it tastes different. I miss food from home!

Photo: Sadza

School is much better here and there are lots of opportunities, like playing sport and going on camps. It is very different to school in Zimbabwe! I really miss my friends from home, but I have made new friends here and I really enjoy school. I think it is important to be friendly to everyone as it makes people feel welcome.





KWEE'S STORY

'About Myself'

Hello. My name is Kwee Pray and I am 17 years old. I come from Burma but I'm from the Karen Community (a race of people from Burma and Thailand).



My first memory is when I was five years old and I lived in the jungles of Burma. Every morning I heard birds, and other animals, sing their songs. I was very happy when I lived in my country because there aren't many people living there and it is a very quiet place.

One day the Burmese military government didn't want us to live in Burma anymore. We had to move to Thailand where we had to live in a Thai Refugee camp.

In 2006 the Australian government supported us to come to Brisbane. During my first time in Australia I was very nervous and scared because we could not speak any English and we didn't know anything about Australia. When I first went to school, I didn't know how to catch the train or bus. I didn't know how to get home on the train and I got lost. It was night time and I felt very afraid and sad. A Policewoman asked me if I was OK but I didn't understand. I showed her my address and she drove me home, which made me feel very happy!!!

In the future I want to become a nurse. I want to go back to my country and help people, because there are not enough doctors or nurses in Burma. That is why I would like to go back there and help!

I am very happy to live in Australia now. I know how get to the places I want to go to! We have a great Australian Government! More over, I have many friends from my country as well as Australian friends. I go to Kedron High School and I have a nice teacher. This is why I am very happy to live in Australia....but sometimes I miss my country.

MR STEVEN LANG, HEAD OF ICT AND SKILLED MUSICIAN, SAT DOWN WITH DYLAN EVANS AND IMOGEN INGLIS TO HAVE A TALK ABOUT RACISM, HOW IT SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AND THOUGHTS ABOUT INTOLERANCE.



HOW DO YOU COPE WITH STUDENTS COMING TO YOU FOR HELP IF THEY'RE DEALING WITH RACISM?

The same way I deal with anybody to me for help with anything really. Hear about their side of the story try and understand their side, try and understand the other side. Try and work out a way where we can go towards making everybody feel as though they have got positive outcomes from the situation.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE RACIST?

Try and understand what their perception is of racism and why. Often racism isn't just an individual's problem it could be a problem with the way they have been taught at school or maybe racism at home. Try and get them to understand everyone is actually the same no matter what colour their skin. If you peel everybody or turn them inside out we'll all look the same.

DO YOU THINK IT IS HARD FOR KIDS TO NOT BE RACIST WHEN RACISM IS AT HOME?

It would certainly be harder but as a school we're pretty tolerant. We've got over 45 different languages spoken here by our kids. I think generally speaking the sense of harmony we have as a school is pretty

good. Different is normal as opposed society to where different is really zapped out. I think there's a really accepting culture as a school so it doesn't really matter where people are from, what colour their skin, what language they speak.

The thing about Australia is, Australia is a country that has been built on different cultures, a country of immigrants. It was taken over from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that have been here for what seventy-thousand years, not very long at all [haha]. With those Indigenous cultures there were about five hundred different languages spoken by them, which means five hundred different tribes at least, so everyone has been different from the day dot in Australia. So I just get people to try people to best cope with it and realise everybody has something to offer.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT RACISM?

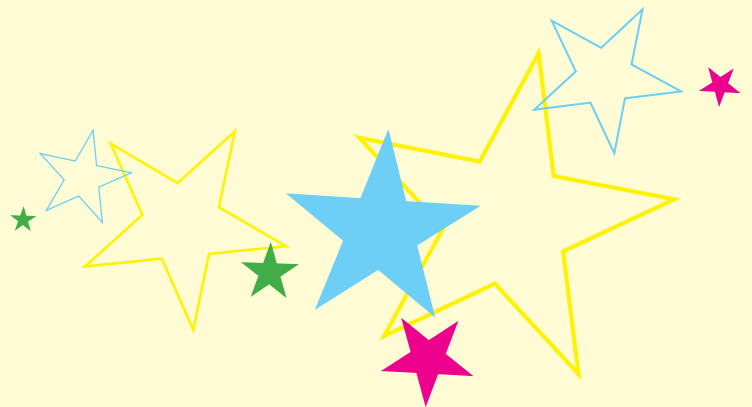
Something I cannot stand and I detest is racism and it reflects on people's attitudes towards everything, like intolerance, misunderstanding, prejudice and usually racism is born out of ignorance.

>>>

DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE A CLASS WHERE WE SHOULD BE TAUGHT HOW TO TOLERATE RACISM?

Tolerance will stop not just racism but if you think about it, going back to my earlier point about ignorance, it's like an inbuilt human thing. If you see two people walking down the street, one dressed in a suit and the other has ripped jeans on, piercings, scruffy hair and emo sort of make up on, you'd think that guy is dressed in a suit is going to be really intelligent, thoughtful and considerate, and really a nice person. The guy with the piercings and the ripped clothes you'd think, he's going to be really aggressive and nasty. But it could be when you actually speak to them and spend some time getting to know them it might actually be the opposite way round. Human nature says we take a lot of things on face value, so racism is often to do with people's instant perception rather than them taking time to get to know the other cultures and the people. So for me, I was called four eyes at school, because that's the

most obvious thing about me you know. People say, 'Aww! FOUR- EYES' or bean poll or shortie or people would say something about people's characteristics. A lot of that is what racism is based on. I think it would be really good to have a class at school where tolerance, acceptance and understanding are taught. Maybe people could give a little bit more insight into their culture and country so people could better understand; just teaching people to see the big picture not the small little issues. Teaching people how to cope if something is said towards them and teaching people that if you don't have something positive to say don't say anything. Understanding that some of the greatest explorers in the world were Chinese but that's not a characteristic of the Chinese people. Chinese are just perceived a particular way. Japanese people are perceived a particular way. Anglo-Saxon people are perceived a particular way. If you do a lot more reading into it there's a lot more culture behind all of that.



“RACISM IS BORN OUT OF IGNORANCE.”





CASSIE'S STORY

My name is Cassandra Parker and I am 17 years old. I was born in Port Moresby, which is the capital of Papua New Guinea.

Both my parents were born in Papua New Guinea as well. My mother is the daughter of a highly respected man, and my father a young man who lived with his entire family in one house.

In PNG, I lived with my mother, two sisters, father and his entire family under one roof. At my dad's house, we always did things as a family. Now that we live here in Australia, we still do things as a family but with the exception of my father who is still living back in PNG with his family.

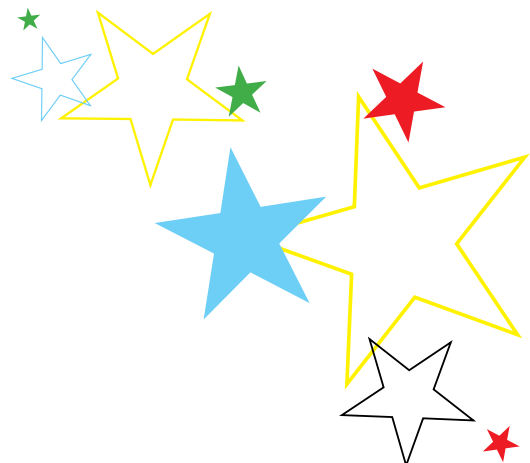
When I was three years old we moved to Sydney, Australia without my father. We were living with my aunty in her apartment in a new and upcoming suburb. Living with my aunty felt like back home, where my family and my dad's family were living under one roof. For a while we were living with my aunty until the apartment next door was for rent, so, we moved next door to my aunty just to be close.

By this point, all of my mum's sisters had moved to Sydney and had dispersed around the same area. Every weekend we would all do things as a family. Some weekends, we would go to the beach, other weekends, the local pools, but all in all we would do things as a family. We all celebrated our birthdays together as a family and other special events like Christmas, and other holidays like that. It was nice doing things as a family.

All through my childhood, we had babysitters from back home. Some were mean but they always told us only two things. Number one being that everyone back home missed us; and number two was stories about PNG. It was always exciting hearing about back home.

When I was ten years old, mum decided that it was time to move to Brisbane. It was hard for the first year, mainly because that entire year we didn't get to see our family. Eventually we got used to not seeing our family every day. The best that we could do was go down every holiday. But as the years went on the amount of times we travelled to Sydney decreased.

Now that we live in Brisbane, we have a lot of people coming to our house from PNG. They tell us stories, sometimes funny ones, or sad ones. They tell us how society has changed over the years, but I look back on the things they tell us, and I am glad that my mother brought me to Australia. If she didn't, I wouldn't be where I am today, a Senior Leader at Kedron SHS.



INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF...



MR ROSS CLAYFIELD is a great guy full of support and understanding. He is fair and trustworthy. You can always be sure that there is a problem or concern Mr Clayfield will always be there for support.

HAVE YOU DEALT WITH ANY HARDSHIP THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE?

I try not to think about hardship but I transform all of my hardship into stepping stones towards becoming a better person. I don't let problems get to me. The only hardship that I could bring to mind was self hardship of being vertically challenged.

HAVE YOU HELPED SOMEONE GOING THROUGH HARDSHIP?

Yes. I have helped a multitude of people going through hardship. I have to deal with behavioural issues, day to day timetable changes and classroom care. Not only do I help with that, I also make sure that students are happy, safe and bully free.



CHAPLAIN IAN
HOW DO YOU HELP PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS?

To understand someone's cultures you also need to understand their religion because they go hand in hand. For example, people from Afghanistan are generally Muslim, and it's important to learn about their beliefs.

DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO WORK WITH PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS?

Yes. Here at Kedron we have recently welcomed a new chaplain who works specifically with overseas students and refugee students which need help that I am unable to give. It is hard for anybody to adapt to a new country and a new way of life.

"YOU REALLY START TO REALIZE THAT ALTHOUGH WE MAY BE VERY DIFFERENT IN THE END WE ARE ALL VERY SIMILAR"

MR SIMMONDS, ESL TEACHER AIDE.
WHAT'S THE FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

Well, seeing newly migrated kids coming to their new school. Having to learn a new language can be hard and depressing. My favourite part is helping them out and seeing the final result when they begin to enjoy their new lives.

DO YOU ENJOY THIS JOB?

Yeh, I enjoy doing what I do and I hope in 5 to 10 years I am still an ESL teacher.



MISS CHAPMAN, YEAR 8 COORDINATOR

WHAT ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO HELP PREVENT RACISM?

What actions could be taken to help prevent racism? I think that education about other cultures is important so that people understand them rather than assuming things and getting the wrong idea about people.

RENEE MILLS, YOUTH AND FAMILY WORKER, COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.

WHAT'S THE FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?



I am really lucky in that I get to work with lots of amazing young people, and their families, from very diverse backgrounds. I love that I learn something new from them every single day!

WHAT ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO HELP PREVENT RACISM?

Continuing to celebrate culture in the many ways Kedron already does, always having an open mind to learn about and understand others and finding time to share stories, talk and listen to each other.



