



On Track

STORIES FROM THE TRANSITION TO WORK PROGRAM





Introducing Transition to Work

Transition to Work is an Australian Government program providing intensive, pre-employment support to improve the work-readiness of young people, helping them into employment – including apprenticeships and traineeships – or education.

The program has a strong focus on developing work skills, and the personal attributes employers expect in their staff.



Introducing OCTEC Limited

OCTEC Limited is a not-for-profit community organisation providing high quality employment, training, advocacy and youth services from more than 250 service locations.

We provide services to all clients regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status or disability.

We actively seek to understand our clients, including the needs of job seekers, single parents, training participants, disadvantaged

or isolated community members, community organisations, government agencies and local businesses.

We are flexible in the delivery of our services, allowing us to meet the changing needs of all we serve.



On Track

OCTEC delivers Transition to Work in three regions of eastern Australia – the ACT, Central West NSW and on the NSW Central Coast. We have a participant caseload of over 1,100 young people and we work alongside them to develop their skills and build their work-readiness.

In this booklet you will read the stories of a number of these inspiring young people. You will read how, in partnership with their OCTEC TtW consultants, they were able to walk a track towards a brighter future.

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OCTEC Limited CEO

It is my pleasure to present to you, On Track – Stories from the Transition to Work Program.

From the earliest days of our organisation, OCTEC has been committed to building communities by assisting people on their journey to employment. And young people have always been at the heart of what we do. The Australian Government's youth pre-employment program, called Transition to Work (TtW), was therefore a natural fit for our organisation.

Today, OCTEC delivers TtW from locations across Central West NSW, the NSW Central Coast and in the ACT. We have more than 1,100 young people on our TtW caseload and it has been our pleasure to work alongside these participants, giving them a chance to build a career and achieve their goals ... giving them a chance to realise their dreams and to keep on track.

I would like to thank our TtW Program Manager, Charissa Mossop, and our wonderful team of consultants for their hard work and achievement – particularly their dedication to assisting young people during the difficult months of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Andrew McDougall OAM
CEO, OCTEC



OCTEC's Transition to Work Program Manager

Starting work is a daunting experience for most young people. For those who experience disadvantage, or have disconnected from education, the challenges can seem insurmountable. This is where OCTEC Limited and the Australian Government's Transition to Work (TtW) program come in.

Our TtW consultants work closely with each participant, assessing their unique strengths, skills, goals and dreams, as well as any barriers that may prevent those goals from being reached. Each participant receives assistance that is tailored specifically to their level of need. We equip young people to compete in their local labour market through the development of individual Job Plans and through coaching in the skills required to secure employment. We connect participants to accredited vocational training, including access to certificate and diploma-level courses and relevant licences or accreditations. And we connect young people to specialist support services – such as mental health support and cultural services.

Adding to their vocational challenges, the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns and subsequent economic recession had a profound impact on the employment prospects of many young Australians. The national youth unemployment rate rose significantly and OCTEC's TtW caseload more than doubled during this period. This was a challenge our OCTEC TtW team was ready and able to take on. And, as we continue to recover from the COVID recession,



OCTEC continues our work, assisting disadvantaged young people transition from education to employment.

The stories you will read in this booklet are just a sample of the amazing experiences our consultants and participants share every day. Through Transition to Work, we equip young people to move into the workforce and to develop careers that will set them up for the future. More than 40 years after we began, OCTEC continues to help young Australians develop career goals, and stay on track to achieve them.

Charissa Mossop
Transition to Work Program Manager



Turning my life
around.

- BRYANNA

Sometimes it's hard to turn your life around. And I was someone who had already suffered a lot in my life. I had various physical and mental health issues, and I'd been the victim of domestic violence. I'd also had some bad experiences at previous workplaces. My confidence was low. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life.

When I started with Transition to Work in Tuggeranong, I met with a consultant called Harsha. She sat down with me and we started talking about finding a career path. I wanted an apprenticeship as a roofer, but I wasn't sure if this was possible for someone like me. Harsha soon showed me it really was possible!

“As we worked together, I could feel my confidence and enthusiasm growing.”

Harsha arranged for me to complete information courses in work health and safety, asbestos awareness and working at heights. OCTEC helped pay for a laptop so I could complete my studies. Harsha then taught me about marketing myself to employers and even paid for my workwear!

“I couldn't believe it. I couldn't wait to get out there.”

With Harsha's help, I secured an apprenticeship as a roof tiler and water-proofer with a local employer, Roof & Balcony Solutions. My boss, James was really impressed that I had called him to ask for an apprenticeship. He told me he'd actually been looking for more female employees. I started in my new job and it was great to have Harsha providing support as I went. And I needed it, because not long after I started, in March 2020, COVID happened.

With lockdowns and restrictions, lots of people were being stood down from their jobs. But James didn't do that to me. He worked with Harsha and decided to offer me an additional role as an admin assistant, to keep me busy when the roofing work was slow, and also so I could learn more about the business. This was the first time James had ever offered a dual role in this way.

It's been almost a year since that time. I've come a long way. I feel confident and successful, both in my career and my personal life.

“I never thought I'd recover from my past, but now I feel blessed to be where I am today. It was all meant to be!”



Having OCTEC and Harsha by my side allowed me to get where I am today. I'd like to tell other young women to be courageous, patient and to stand up for yourself!



COVID-19 and youth unemployment.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been well-documented around the globe. More than 100 million people have been infected by the virus and, tragically, over 2 million have died. The economic impacts of the pandemic have also been devastating for many around the world, including Australia. And it is young people who have borne a significant brunt of the economic and social impact.

In December 2019, Australia's youth unemployment rate was already high at **11.5%**.¹ By October 2020, that figure had risen to an alarming **15.6%**.² Young people are more likely to be employed as part-time or casual staff. Many of these employees work in customer-facing roles, in sectors such as retail and hospitality. These roles were most susceptible to cuts by employers, as governments began to implement lockdowns and restrictions in response to the health emergency. Many young employees had their roles terminated, or their hours reduced to **zero**.³



For OCTEC, the impact of the pandemic was most keenly felt in our Transition to Work services. In December 2019, OCTEC's national TtW caseload was **593** participants – a figure that had been relatively stable for several years. By December 2020, that number had risen to **1,177**. Because of COVID, the number of disadvantaged young people seeking our pre-employment assistance has virtually doubled in a year.

Our Transition to Work team has risen to meet the challenges of the COVID recession. And we will continue to work closely with our participants, employers and specialist partners to create pathways that support disadvantaged young job seekers to stay on track and achieve their career goals, even in the toughest of times.

¹ COVID 19 and Youth Unemployment – Centre for Social Impact, May 2020.

² Labour Market Information Portal, Australian Government.

³ COVID 19 and Youth Unemployment – Centre for Social Impact, May 2020.

Being brave.

- MITCHELL

When I started with OCTEC Transition to Work on the Central Coast, I didn't think I had any proper work skills. I had been home schooled since I was ten and I hadn't had much contact with kids my own age when I was growing up.

On my first day in TtW, I met with my consultant, Katrina. She sat down with me and we talked and she asked me plenty of questions! I told Katrina I had some mental health issues and I thought these might be holding me back, and so she referred me to some specialist services. Katrina showed me how studying could help me build my confidence, while getting some qualifications at the same time.

With Katrina's help, I started a Certificate III in Retail and I finished the course. Now, I had some actual work skills and a certificate! To achieve something like that was great! Then Katrina started to contact some local employers, encouraging me to introduce myself.

“Introducing myself to employers was unbelievably hard for me.”

It was really confronting! I was so glad I had Katrina at my side. I guess I was pretty brave, because I was offered a work trial by the Forest Fruit Market in Toukley. And my employer was so happy with my work that they offered me a job once my work trial finished. None of this would have happened without Katrina and TtW!



Fitting straight in.

- SHAUN

Maybe I'm a little different to some other participants ... because when I came to Transition to Work, I knew what I wanted to do. I just needed help to get me there. At my first appointment, I met with Robert, my OCTEC Orange TtW consultant and I told him I wanted to work as a tyre fitter. He sure didn't waste any time.

Robert had a good working relationship with the local Bridgestone Tyre Centre in Orange and he made a few calls.

*“I went to an interview the very same day.
And I got the job!”*

Things just went so well. It was like I fitted straight into the team at Bridgestone. And my boss was really impressed with my work, my focus and my commitment to what I do.

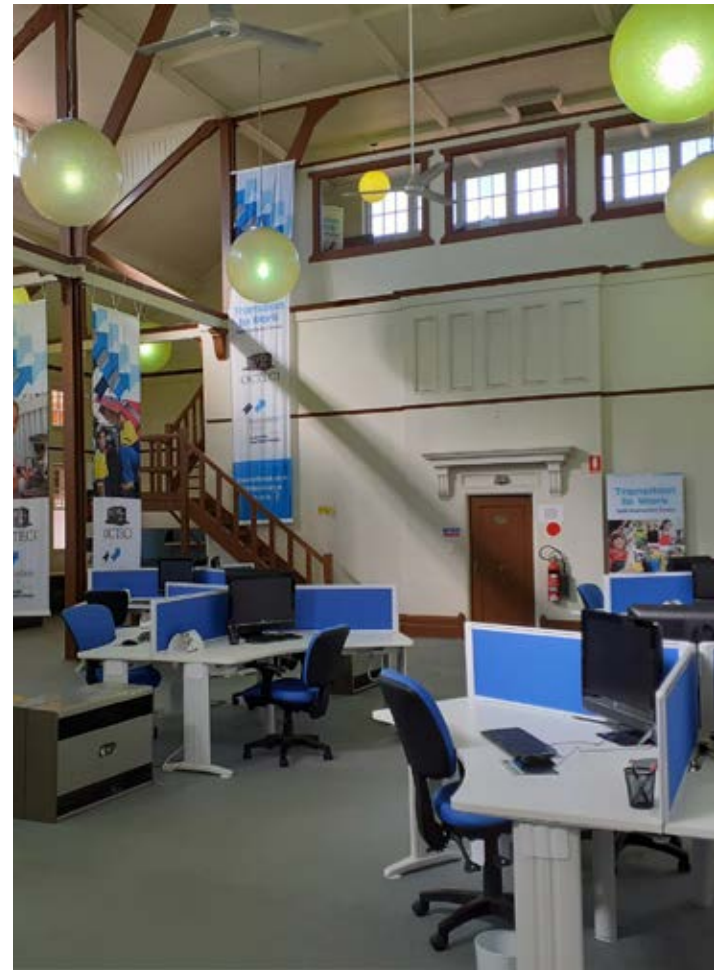
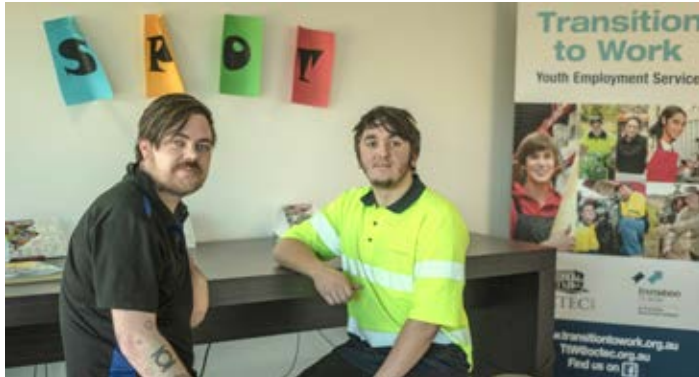
Sometimes, we just need a little bit of help to get us to where we want to be. Transition to Work and OCTEC gave that help to me.





Transition to Work facilities.

Environment nurtures engagement. Based on feedback from our participants, OCTEC's Transition to Work sites feature informal, open plan spaces, with vibrant colours and comfortable layouts. All sites have wifi connectivity and offer full access for young people with disability.



I'm off benefits!

- LEIGHANNA

When I came to OCTEC TtW, I was 18, I'd been out of school for a long time and I'd been on Centrelink for almost two years. Lots of people I know don't work, and haven't worked for years.

"I didn't really know how, but I wanted to get off Centrelink benefits and get myself a job."

OCTEC and TtW helped to make that happen.

I went to the Lake Haven OCTEC office and met Tara, the Transition to Work consultant. Tara and I talked about a lot of things, like the stuff that was in the way of me getting a job. And then she started to help me fix those things.

I didn't have a drivers' licence, so Tara arranged for me to do a Safer Drivers' Course through PCYC and arranged for travel assistance while I was getting my Ps. Since I left school early, I didn't have a lot of recognised skills and no qualifications, so Tara encouraged me to do a Certificate III in Retail, because the skills you develop in retail apply to lots of different careers.

After I finished my Certificate III, and when we both thought I was ready, Tara helped me get a job with McDonalds in Wyong. I have my Ps now and OCTEC also helped with buying my work clothing. The thing about working at Maccas is that you learn some amazing work skills, like how to work as a team, customer service, cash handling and heaps of other skills.



"It feels amazing to have broken the cycle of unemployment and be off benefits."

TtW made a huge difference in my life and I'm so grateful to Tara and OCTEC for giving me the chance.

Start of a great career.

- JAIDYN

When I first came to OCTEC Transition to Work in Tuggeranong, I really didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I had no long-term career goals. But then I met my consultant, Harsha.

“Harsha spent time with me, talking about what I liked and was interested in.”

The two of us spent some time researching different industries and I decided that I wanted to work in community services.

I discussed my goals with Harsha and she advised me that the best way to find work in community services would be to get an industry-specific qualification. With Harsha's help, I enrolled in a Certificate III in Community Services.

An important part of my course was the completion of a work placement. Harsha once again was there to help me. We did some research and Harsha helped me get a work placement with Livability Australia, which is a local NDIS provider of services for people with mental health and disability barriers.

So, I started a work experience placement with Livability as a support worker. Stefanie from Livability took the time to mentor me and, of course, I also had Harsha to support me when I needed it. It wasn't very long before Livability offered me a paid job as a Disability Support Worker.



If it weren't for TtW, OCTEC, Harsha and Livability, I would never have seen my life change in the way it did.

“Because of them, I had the chance to start a great career.”



A proud history of
youth services.

As a program which assists disadvantaged and disengaged young people, there is a natural fit between Transition to Work and the mission of OCTEC Ltd. In fact, youth services have been our focus since the beginning.



In 1976, and with the support of Orange City Council, the Orange Community Training and Education Centre (OCTEC) began as a two-person youth development service in the Central West of NSW. Over the past four decades, we have delivered youth services including Community Youth Support Scheme (CYSS), Skillshare, Disadvantaged Young People's Program, Job Skills Program, and supported employment for people with disability at our Huntley Berry Farm facility in Orange.

Today, we have grown to be one of the largest not-for-profit providers of employment, youth and vocational training services in the country. Services for disadvantaged youth remain at the heart of what we do. Along with Transition to Work, we currently deliver two NSW Department of Education Links to Learning projects: Aspire NSW – an outdoor recreation and education program in Central West NSW; and Shed Ed – providing high quality experiential learning for young people aged 12 to 15 and at risk of

disengaging from education. We also deliver the NSW Government Youth Frontiers program, under a subcontracting arrangement with MTC Australia. Youth Frontiers helps young people build skills and overcome barriers through tailored workshops and mentoring.

“It was mad! I need to do it again next year, because it made school bearable.”

- OCTEC Youth Frontiers Participant, Blue Mountains NSW.



As further evidence of our commitment to young people, in 2020 OCTEC implemented a series of 'Child Safety and Wellbeing' initiatives across all our programs and services. These initiatives are based on our commitment to the protection, safety and wellbeing of the young people who participate in Transition to Work, and in all our programs and services. Specific initiatives include enhanced policies and procedures, internal training through e-learning modules, and more accessible feedback and complaints mechanisms.

More information can be found at:
<https://octec.org.au/child-safety-and-well-being-at-octec>

Keeping on track.

- MATTHEW

Having ADHD and anxiety can make it hard to find and keep a job. I must admit I was worried about the future.

“I really wanted to turn my life around and make something of my future.”

I started with TtW in September 2019. From the start, my consultant Michelle helped me feel more confident. She listened to what I had to say. I told her I needed to find work that was hands-on and would allow me to be active, because this would help keep my ADHD symptoms at a manageable level. I liked doing things with my hands and did a bit of welding as a hobby.

Michelle told me I needed to get some certificates to help make me more employable. She encouraged me to complete my General Construction Induction Card (White Card) with a local training company. She then spent time with me, helping me to develop a new résumé.

Michelle had heaps of great contacts with employers in the area, and she began contacting some of them, to introduce them to me. The Chemstore Group is a local family business that designs and manufactures plastic and fibreglass products. After speaking with this employer, I was given a work trial. With Michelle's support, I was successful in this trial and Chemstore offered me a paid job as a labourer, building fibreglass tanks. Michelle paid for work clothing and fuel vouchers to help me get to work.



But then COVID happened. It started to impact my mental health. In the end, I left that job. But TtW was still there to help me. Michelle spent time with me, keeping me on track and confident. She helped me prepare for job interviews and now I've got a new job as a welder, helping to build grain silos. There's a shortage of welders out this way, and so my skills were in demand!

“It wasn't long until I was promoted to Factory Leading Hand.”

I'm now being trained in quality control. I'm also considering taking on a welding apprenticeship to enhance my skills even further!

If it weren't for Transition to Work, and all the practical help that Michelle has provided, I don't think any of this would have been possible. The support has been wonderful!

What was I going to do with my life?

- DARCIE

My partner and I moved to the Central Coast from Forbes NSW in 2018. We didn't have many friends or any support network. I'd lost my parents when I was only little. And I didn't have much education or work experience.

In February 2018, I started at OCTEC Transition to Work in Toukley. I met Katrina, my TtW consultant, and she started coaching me in the things you need to do to get a job ... like creating a résumé, interview skills and how to present yourself properly to employers. However, I wanted more.

I thought I needed to have a qualification if I was going to find a decent job. Katrina was there to help. We worked together until we found a course that I thought would give me some useful skills – a Certificate III in Retail. I enrolled in the course. It was great!

Meanwhile, Katrina arranged for me to do work experience at a local Bunnings Warehouse. I did really well, and my manager invited me back for a job interview. Unfortunately, there wasn't a position available at Bunnings for three months, so Katrina and I kept looking for other opportunities.

“Working with Katrina, I was offered two retail positions.”



I chose a role with a guaranteed 20 hours plus per week at Donut King in San Remo.

After I started work, Katrina kept in touch with me and my manager, Trudi, to make sure everything was going OK. Trudi told Katrina my work ethic was so good, she was going to offer me a fulltime role. And she did!

It's now been two years and I'm still working fulltime with Donut King. I'm grateful to OCTEC, TtW and Katrina, who still keeps in touch with me to see how I'm going!

A different man.

- JAMES

I didn't know much about Transition to Work, or how the program could help me. It was May 2020, right in the middle of all the COVID stuff, when I started TtW with OCTEC in Lakehaven on the Central Coast.

I spoke with my consultant, Kathleen, and she thought I should concentrate on getting myself a temporary job so I could earn some income while I continued to focus on what I wanted to do in the long-term.

OCTEC arranged for me to get RSA and RCG certificates and this helped me to secure a job at a local restaurant. The job was for only 20 hours per week and, while I could earn some money, my working hours were mostly on weekend nights.

“This really started messing with my social life and mental health.”

I spent time with Kathleen again, talking about the type of work I wanted to do, which involved working during weekdays. She found me a part-time job doing landscaping and yard maintenance for 30 to 40 hours per week. I went for an interview and I was offered a week work trial with the company.

The trial went really well. My manager told Kathleen I was a hard worker and a good fit for the business. That's when I was offered a fulltime job!



“Getting this job was awesome for me. People say I'm a different man.”

I feel happier and more motivated than ever before. And there's no way any of this would have happened without Kathleen and TtW. Because of them, I tried something different and found a job I loved.

Doing something about it.

- GILAD

In 2017, I went from Year 10 home schooling, to working in my family's cake shop at The Entrance. But, in 2019, my family sold their business. I was stuck at home without an income and without qualifications. I decided to do something about it.

I registered with Centrelink and then into the Transition to Work program with OCTEC at The Entrance. I met with the TtW consultant, Linden, and together we began creating a job plan that was based on my skills, experience and goals. Linden gave me training in creating a résumé and writing a cover letter.

When there was an opening in a Certificate III in Retail, delivered by Novaskill at OCTEC's Toukley office, I immediately signed up. I couldn't wait to get started. I met some great people and made some new friendships during the course.

I also did some face-to-face marketing training and, with Linden's encouragement, began visiting major shopping centres – like Westfield Tuggerah and Erina Fair – to speak with possible employers and dropping off copies of my résumé. It felt good to be out there, making contacts and using the skills I learned in TtW.


Then, in February 2020, I received an email from one of the major supermarkets, offering me an interview the next day. I was so excited I contacted Linden, and he asked me to come straight into the office so we could do some interview training. The interview went well and I felt confident. But I didn't hear anything for a few days. It was a nervous wait. But then, they contacted me to say I had the job and would be starting on the 2nd of March.



I couldn't believe it when, just as I started work, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Everything changed. But Linden contacted my new manager and spoke to him about the assistance OCTEC and the Australian government could offer – like Youth Wage Subsidies. My manager accepted OCTEC's offer of assistance and I've been working with that supermarket ever since.

“I'm so grateful to TtW and OCTEC for helping me stay in work when lots of other people lost their jobs.”

And, not long ago, Linden received an email from my manager, asking if Linden could send over “another Gilad”. That made me feel pretty great!

A young man with a gentle expression is shown in profile, wearing a blue jacket and a blue baseball cap. He is touching the face of a dark horse that is wearing a dark fly mask with the letters 'BKB' printed on it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

Doing what I love.

- MACK

I hated school. To me, school was something that we all have to go through ... you know ... until our real lives begin. So, I really struggled. School wasn't good for my mental health. And I didn't know what I was going to do in the future.

It was my aunt who first mentioned the Transition to Work program to my parents. TtW had helped one of her friends get a job and start a great career. We'd never heard of this program. Mum and I made an appointment with OCTEC TtW in Mudgee, and we had a meeting with Donna, the OCTEC TtW consultant.

Donna took me through information about the program and asked me about my interests and skills.

“I really didn't know that I could turn one of my passions into a career. Donna and TtW showed me that I could!”

Donna had been contacted by Brett Thompson, a horse trainer in the Gulgong area. I found out that Brett has won horse trainer premierships and has twice been NSW Country Trainer of the Year! Donna told me that Brett also has a passion for helping young people and that he works with OCTEC TtW to find suitable trainees for his stables.

Brett needed to find a young person with the right attitude and with a passion for horses, and Donna suggested me!

I had a meeting with Brett at his stables. He told me I had a natural ability with horses – that I could read and handle them naturally. He said I had the potential to be a first-class horse-breaker – which is a very unique trade!



Brett offered me employment at the stables. I recently gained my stablehand licence and I'm on my way to a brilliant career.

“I'm doing what I love.”

I felt defeated.

- HASSAN

Before I started with OCTEC Transition to Work, things weren't looking so good for me. I really didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I suffered with bad anxiety, I didn't have much confidence in myself and I didn't have much motivation. I also didn't have any qualifications. I had worked in another job, but I didn't get much support with my mental health and things didn't work out. I felt defeated.

“I just didn't think I would be able to find a workplace where I could fit in.”

My TtW consultant, Harsha, spent time talking to me and listening to what I had to say. We started discussing work and she assured me I had great job options.

Harsha told me there were jobs out there that would suit my circumstances and employers who offered supportive workplaces, where I would feel comfortable. We also spoke about jobs that would offer me a career path into the future.

After working with Harsha for a while, I decided that I would do an apprenticeship in baking and pastry cooking. Harsha told me she knew of a great employer in the Tuggeranong area – Michael at Bakers Delight. After she contacted Michael, he offered me a work trial. It worked out great! In February 2020, I was offered an apprenticeship and I've been working there ever since.



OCTEC paid for a pair of safety boots for my job. I start shift at midnight, so it's important to have a reliable car to get to work. And when my car needed repairs, OCTEC paid for those as well.

“I absolutely love working.”

The workplace is really supportive. I feel part of the team. And I've been able to manage my anxiety in ways I never believed I could.

Working with OCTEC and TtW really opened my eyes to what is possible. I can see myself in a great career for years to come.

I went for it!

- BRANDY

I was living in the western suburbs of Sydney, but life wasn't good, I had no goals. I didn't know where I belonged. I decided to move up to the Central Coast to live with my sister.

“When I started with OCTEC Transition to Work, I really didn't want to be there.”

I wanted to get an exemption from the program, because I thought it was affecting my mental health. The TtW consultant, Codie, spent about two hours with me. She listened to what I had to say. She spoke to me about my goals and dreams. She wanted to know what I wanted to do with my life. I told her my long-term dream was to have my own nightclub. Instead of telling me this wasn't possible, Codie got me thinking about how I could achieve my goal.

To start with, Codie helped me to get relevant certificates for the hospitality industry – RSA and RSG. There was an opportunity to do a Certificate III in Business at OCTEC's Toukley office and Codie suggested it would be good to help be achieve my long-term goal. I wasn't so sure. I wasn't good with studying and stuff, but Codie told me she would be there to help whenever I needed. So, I went for it!

“I did the course and I passed!”



Codie then started to help me look for jobs in hospitality. It was hard. COVID happened and there weren't many jobs. There was also a death in my family and I thought about moving back home. In the end I stayed on the Coast. I didn't want to take a step backwards.

With Codie's help, I got a job with a local restaurant group, working out of two areas. I've done well. I've been acting manager for both of these restaurants.

“This isn't my life goal, but it's a stepping stone to where I want to be.”

I'm so happy I stayed on the Coast, and Codie made the time to help me on my journey.

A family and a future.

- JOSHUA

Life wasn't easy in my family when I was growing up. That made it tough at school and I left in Year 11.

“I was 20 years old and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life.”

Then, I went to OCTEC TtW in Mudgee.

I met with Donna at OCTEC and she started training me in ways to look for jobs. Donna showed me how to put together a proper résumé and how to prepare for job interviews. Then she asked me to pinpoint an industry or type of job I would like to do. I told her I would like to work with horses and she took it from there!

Brett Thompson is a champion racehorse trainer in Gulgong. As well as his passion for horses, Brett believes in helping young people get a career and he had been working with Donna and OCTEC Transition to Work to find trainees for his stables.

Donna offered Brett OCTEC Biz Support, to offset his costs while I found my feet. Donna came to see Brett and I regularly, to make sure things were going OK. Brett told Donna I was a natural with horses and I had a future with his business if I wanted.

Not only did Brett offer me work, he was aware of the troubles I'd faced in my life and he opened up his home and his family to me. I would spend my days working with Thompson Horse Racing and



my free time with Brett and his family, going on outings and attending race meetings across NSW.

I've since moved on from Thompsons. I have a career now. I'm earning my own money.

“I have a family and a future.”

It was TtW that made this possible for me.

Breaking the cycle.

- LIAM

It was January 2018 when I first came to OCTEC Transition to Work on the Central Coast. I was kind of quiet and kept to myself most of the time. Like the last three generations of my family, I didn't finish school. I didn't do the HSC.

“I had no qualifications or work experience.”

I came to OCTEC at Toukley and met Katrina, my TtW consultant. She spoke about “breaking a generational cycle”, giving me the skills and confidence to be ready for work. She helped me to put together a résumé and I participated in training sessions on interviews and presentation skills. I felt my confidence growing. But I thought I needed more.

I spoke with Katrina about doing some training to help make me more employable. We discussed the kind of skills I might need to develop, and I enrolled in a Certificate III in Retail, which was running at the site in Toukley. And, when I finished the course, I had my first qualification!

Katrina then arranged for me to do work experience at a Coles shopping centre in Toukley. I did really well and the department manager told Katrina I would be offered an interview next time a paid position came up. Meanwhile, Katrina kept working with me, putting together applications for other employment opportunities.

Four weeks went by and I was contacted by Coles. They wanted me to come in for an interview. Within two days, I was offered a job



working in the grocery department. I'd never worked before. It was going to be a big change. But, with the support of my department manager, and Katrina, things went really smoothly.

It's been two years, and I'm still employed at Coles.

“I've broken the cycle!”

The confidence to
start again.

- STEPHANIE



I first came to OCTEC TtW in the ACT in 2019. I met with the TtW consultant, Harsha, and she spent time with me, understanding where I wanted to go in my life.

Harsha provided job search training and coaching in job interviews. She arranged for me to have an interview with Connexions VTEC, an organisation that helps First Australians match their career goals to suitable work. I was referred to a job with Accor hotels. I nailed the interview and was offered a two-day work trial. This led to the offer of a paid job as a Food and Beverage Manager.

“Then COVID-19 came along and the hospitality industry was hit extremely hard. I lost my job at the hotel.”

Harsha was there for me; she gave me the confidence to start again. She gave me the chance to connect with a new opportunity to train for employment with Woolworths. I was partnered with both a mentor from Diversity Dimensions - a specialist provider of support programs - and a Woolworths manager. I completed work experience in four different departments of the local supermarket and, when I was finished, they offered me a job!

Throughout this process, OCTEC and Harsha have been so good. She is one of three awesome people I can always count on when I need help or advice. I know people have lots of different opinions about programs like Transition to Work, but

“I would say, go for it!”

It's an amazing opportunity and only good can come from being involved with the program.



In the top ten.

- REUBEN

I went to an alternative school run by Father Chris Riley's Youth off the Streets. When I finished Year 10 and got my Record of School Achievement certificate, a lady called Katrina from OCTEC Toukley came to school and spoke to us about their services.

In January 2020, I signed up for TtW at OCTEC. When I spoke to Katrina, she asked me what I wanted to do and we decided that I should get some qualifications to help me be more employable. The training company, Novaskill were delivering a Certificate III in Warehousing at OCTEC Toukley site, and I thought this was a good opportunity for me. The course started in February 2020 and ran for three days each week.

Unfortunately, the course didn't run for long, because that was the time when the COVID-19 pandemic happened and everything started to shut down. I thought that was it for me. With so many businesses shutting down, and so many people losing work,

“how was I ever going to get a job?”

Katrina found out that Coles supermarkets were planning to recruit over 5,000 staff to deal with the pressure on grocery stocks as a result of the pandemic. So, she contacted the local Coles stores on the Central Coast and told them she had work-ready participants to fill any vacancies. The next day, Katrina received a message from Coles in Toukley asking for applications from ten work-ready participants to fill casual positions.



“I was one of those ten she selected.”

Within ten days, I was employed. Meanwhile, I asked Katrina if I could continue my Warehousing Certificate III, by doing it at my own pace. OCTEC are helping me to do this. And, in December 2020, I was offered a permanent part-time job with Coles. I got my drivers' licence and I'm doing really well.

I left school in Year 9.

- ALICIA

Sometimes, what we need in life is some support. And through OCTEC TtW, the support I've received has been amazing!

I left school in Year 9. I was pregnant. I was legally blind in one eye. I started Transition to Work with OCTEC on the Central Coast and met Tara, my consultant. Tara was amazing! We spoke about heaps of things. I told her I really wanted to get some more education, skills and some kind of qualification, so Tara recommended I do a Certificate III in Retail, as this was a recognised qualification and the skills from the course were transferrable to other jobs.

Throughout the course, OCTEC supported me. I wasn't with Centrelink, so Tara arranged for an Opal card to cover my travel costs. I needed to get my drivers' licence, so Tara arranged for lessons with a local driving school.

As I made progress with my Cert III in Retail, Tara offered me the chance to also complete a part qualification in hospitality, enhancing my skills even further. Unfortunately, the hospitality training clashed with appointments I had with my midwife. Tara arranged for me to complete the hospitality training in a way that didn't clash with them.

“Just prior to the birth of my baby, Tara and the OCTEC staff held a baby shower for me.”

They gave me some lovely gifts and we had a great time. I was blown away by their kindness. Such amazing support!



And my time with OCTEC hasn't finished.

“Now I've had my baby, I am eligible for assistance under the ParentsNext program.”

With OCTEC by my side, my journey to independence continues!

Great contacts ... great job.

- TRISTAN

When I started Transition to Work with OCTEC in Canberra I was feeling pretty low. I couldn't find a decent job and I had no previous training or work experience. I left school at the end of Year 10 and I hadn't worked for more than two years.

“The thing about a program like Transition to Work is that they have great contacts.”

My consultant, Illecia started working with me to contact different employers around the ACT. She found me a labouring position at a local golf and country club fairly quickly.

The club could only afford to offer me 15 to 20 hours per week, but Illecia offered them a wage subsidy to help cover the costs of my salary and on-the-job training. OCTEC also paid for work clothing, safety boots and a Construction White Card.

“Because OCTEC was prepared to help out to this extent, the club could afford to offer me a full-time position.”

And OCTEC's support didn't end once I had a job. Illecia came out to the club each week to see how I was going and offer any support. I'm so thankful to OCTEC, Illecia and Transition to Work. With their support, I scored a great job.



Building a career.

- KURT

After I left school, I wanted to get an apprenticeship, but it didn't happen. I started to get depressed, and that only made things worse. This was before I started with OCTEC TtW in Lithgow. My consultant was Shaylee and she told me about the type of things that TtW could help me with. I told her I really wanted an apprenticeship, but it was hard to find one in town and,

“I was getting pretty depressed.”

Shaylee had heaps of contacts with employers around Lithgow. One of her contacts was Corey, the owner of a local plastering business. Corey told Shaylee he was interested in taking on an apprentice, but he was worried about the cost and impact on his business. Shaylee explained how OCTEC could help with these things and Corey agreed to give me an interview.

I had an interview with Corey and he was amazed at how keen I was to get started. I was offered a three month trial. OCTEC offered support with the cost of tools and work clothes.

“The boss was so pleased with my attitude and work ethic, he offered me an apprenticeship.”

A few years have passed since then. I've finished my apprenticeship and I'm building my career. I'm a fully qualified plasterer, still working with Corey's business. We work on big jobs and small,



right across the Blue Mountains. And, no matter the size of the job, I'm always motivated to do my best and produce a quality result for our clients. None of this would have been possible without Shaylee, TtW and OCTEC.

Never give up.

- KANE



For a long time, I wanted to work in security. It was my dream job. But I didn't know how to make it happen. I had no real work history or experience. I didn't have many skills. I didn't really know how to take the first step towards my dream job.

When I started with OCTEC Transition to Work in Tuggeranong, my consultant, Harsha, took the time to work with me, helping me take those first steps. She helped me create a résumé, and helped me to prepare for future job interviews. OCTEC helped me to complete a Certificate II in Security Services and paid for my security checks, a 'Working with Vulnerable People' check, and a security licence. They even paid for a pair of work boots!

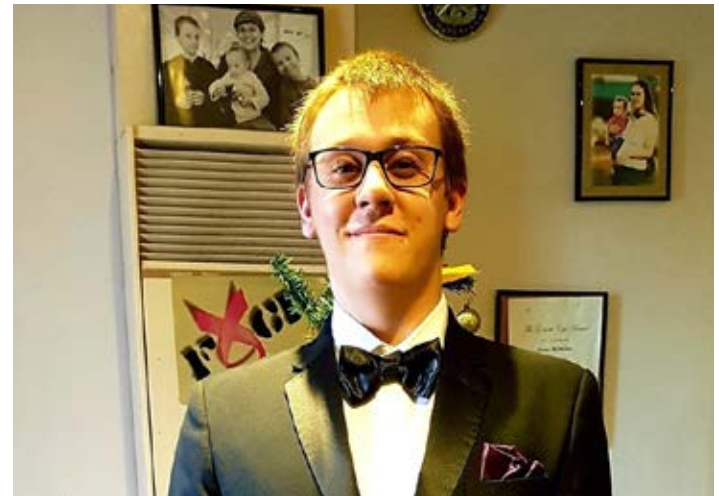
Harsha referred me to a position for an Indigenous-identified security officer with MSS security through Ngare Employment Services. I had an interview and I was successful! I felt so proud of my achievement, which wouldn't have been possible without TtW and OCTEC.

Then, four months later, my world came crashing down. I had a really bad accident. I suffered a broken pelvis, seven broken ribs, my left lung was punctured and I had severe internal bleeding.

“The doctors said it was a miracle I survived. I was in hospital for months.”

It took four months, but I did recover. It felt so unreal ... like I never imagined this could happen to me. What would be the impact on my future? How would I go forward?

I didn't let these things bring me down. With the love and support of my family and friends, and with the support of my employer and Harsha from OCTEC, I went back to work.



“I've been working with MSS for over a year. I have also recently become engaged and I've moved out of home into my own rental place.”

OCTEC Transition to Work taught me and led me to a successful career, a great employer and a great life.

Harsha checked on me all the time to make sure I was doing well. I would like to say to others thinking about the program, OCTEC TtW will assist you to be your best. They don't rush you. They let you go at your own pace and provide services to meet your needs. And to other people in similar situations to me, I would say, don't let things overtake who you truly are. Don't let the people who love you down. Keep trying. Never give up!

Skills for careers.

One of the most important elements of the Transition to Work program is the development of work ready skills - the type of skills employers look for in potential staff. As a Registered Training Organisation, OCTEC understands how valuable quality vocational training can be to assist young people to get on track to a great career path. Across our TtW sites, OCTEC consultants work with our own Registered Training Organisation as well as other training providers to give our participants the skills they need to compete for, and retain great jobs.



On the NSW Central Coast, our TtW consultants work with training partners to deliver certificate-level courses in skills-in-demand areas for our participants, including retail and hospitality. One example of our approach is our Certificate III in Business, hosted by OCTEC, in



partnership with training provider Novaskill. The course offers our participants the kinds of skills employers require, such as customer service, time management, personal organisation, and the use of technology in a business environment.

Not only do these courses provide skills and accreditation for our participants, they also build character, supportive partnerships and resilience. The Certificate III Business course that commenced in Toukley during February-March 2020 is a great example.

Despite the threat from bushfires and illness, the group remained positive, determined to go ahead with the course as individuals, but also as a group. It was very inspiring to see such a capable group of young people so determined to succeed, to achieve personal goals, and to set themselves on track to great careers.

Bathurst study group.

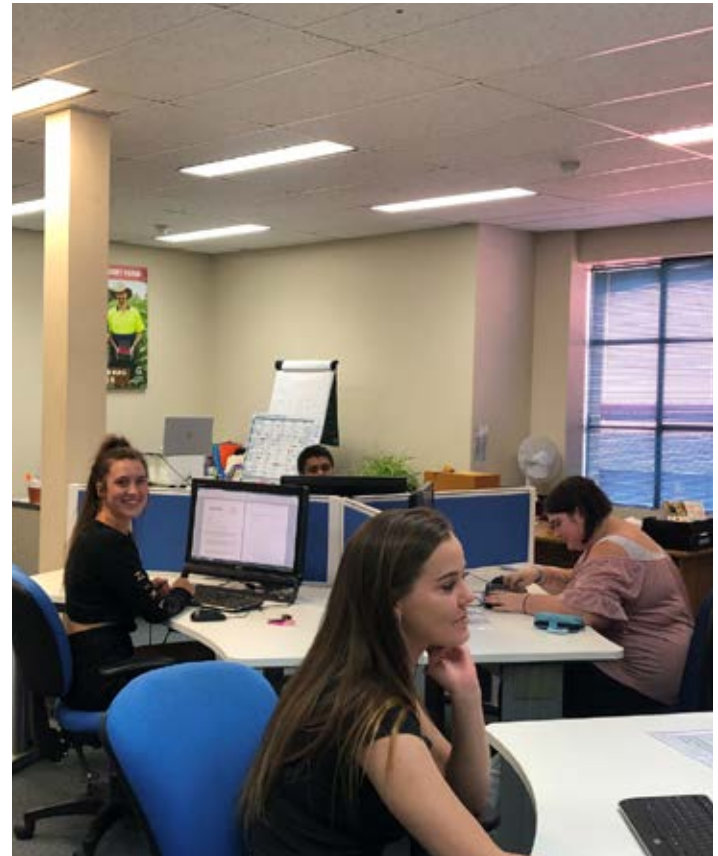
Studying for a qualification is a great way to improve a person's job-related skills and therefore their employability. However, studying isn't everyone's favourite activity. It can be hard to keep motivated, especially during times between classroom lessons. For those living in rural areas, there might not be a classroom course that is close to where you live. And what do you do when there's a global pandemic and lockdowns, and you can't get to a classroom at all?

OCTEC TtW consultants have been working hard to ensure all participants studying for certificates or qualifications have the best chance possible to complete their course, no matter where they live and what the circumstances.


Through our TtW study groups, participants can complete online training and receive the same course quality as those who attend classroom study. Our consultants take the time to speak with each individual participant, seeking to understand their interests and career goals and then exploring how studying might increase their chances of pursuing those goals. OCTEC TtW participants have completed certificate-level courses in retail, health and community services, warehousing, and other in-demand skills.

To assist them maintain motivation and engagement, participants have been encouraged to join group study sessions, where they come together, complete their coursework online and provide each other with support. A consultant is also on-hand during these sessions to provide assistance as required.

To maintain this successful approach during the COVID-19 lockdowns, our teams encouraged participants to engage in virtual



study groups, meeting online using Zoom meeting technology. These online sessions allowed participants to remain connected and supported and to participate in peer learning.



Helping others not
feel this way.

- NATE

didn't start Transition to Work under the best circumstances.

It was July 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 lockdowns. Life hadn't been too good. And I had responsibilities. I was primary caregiver to my little girl, and I'd just started a new relationship. I needed to get my life sorted. I was sick of feeling the way I did. I wanted a sense of satisfaction. I wanted to start helping people and my community.

I started Transition to Work with OCTEC in Orange and met with my consultant, Amber.

“I told her I wanted to do something that could help other people to not feel the way I had felt.”

I had enrolled into TAFE, studying a Cert IV in Mental Health. I also told Amber I was nervous about the future, due to my tough background. We kept meeting. Amber would help me upload my latest TAFE assessments. I was passing with flying colours and getting great feedback from my teachers. I really loved what I was learning. In November, Amber felt I was ready to start looking for work; I wasn't so sure. To me, it felt too soon. So, Amber gave me more time. A month later, when Amber asked again about looking for work, I was ready.

I started sorting out ID for things like my driver's licence and Working with Children Check. Amber started calling different community services organisations to share my story. She spoke with the CEO of Birrang Enterprise Development, a local training and employment provider that also delivers NDIS support services. The CEO agreed to create a buddy program, where I would be paid to learn the job, while partnered with an experienced co-worker.

If I wasn't happy after 12 weeks of this arrangement, I would remain hired until OCTEC helped find me another employer.

In January 2021, I was hired by Birrang as an NDIS Support Worker. I'm working five days per week, and I have my own little caseload of NDIS clients, including people with varying mental health issues. Amber and OCTEC are helping out and paying some wage support. I'm still doing my TAFE work and smashing the results!



Finding confidence.

- STEPHANIE

I went to OCTEC Transition to Work in Toukley because I wanted to develop some work skills and maybe get some qualifications. But it wasn't easy. I was pretty shy and reserved.

My TiW consultant, Katrina spent time with me, talking about employment, helping me develop a résumé and giving me experience with things like job interviews.

“I started to feel more comfortable and confident within myself.”

At this point, I felt it was time for me to acquire some skills and qualifications. Katrina agreed. She organised for me to enrol in a Certificate III in Retail. I knew this was a good course for me, because it would give me some industry-specific qualifications, but also some skills that would help me with any job I went for.

“I worked through the course and felt my confidence continue to grow.”

Katrina felt the time was right for me to do some work experience and put into practice all I had learnt. The manager at Coles Toukley agreed to give me some work experience. Four weeks later, I was invited in for an interview!

To make sure I looked great for the interview, Katrina arranged for



some business clothes from Fitted for Work and I went really well in the interview and was offered a job!

Then, even after I started working, Katrina was there, providing support and making sure I had all I needed to stay employed and build a career.



“We cannot always build a future for our youth, but we can always build our youth for the future.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

For more information regarding OCTEC Limited's

Transition to Work Program

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