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New job service to tackle employment issues for Shepparton’s African community



By **Youssef Saudie**
Feb 27, 2022



Working together: Furaha Baguma will be an employment facilitator to assist fellow members of the African community in finding work. Photo by Youssef Saudie

Kazi Connect is a new employment service at St Paul’s African House designed to break down barriers African-Australians face in gaining and maintaining employment.

Employment facilitator Furaha Baguma said the initiative, which starts in March, would help the community get “employment easily”.

“There are so many, many things we need to work out, like understanding their qualifications, resume writing, knowledge on superannuations and what is their dream,” she said.

“The big concern is some people don't have knowledge on how to get a job in Australia; my concern is some people can't help themselves, they need our help.”

Ms Baguma is passionate about helping.

When she moved from Congo to Australia in 2018, she could only find work on a farm, even though she was a qualified teacher.

She said that when trying to access job agencies, they “didn't help” her, particularly as a new migrant.

“They asked me to go home and look for 19 jobs and apply for them; I didn't know English, I didn't even know where to start and I found that really hard,” Ms Baguma said.

“I didn't have any resume, they didn't help me to write my resume, I had no interpreter or anything, but if I didn't continue applying for work, I wouldn't be paid by Centrelink.”

She eventually attained Australian qualifications and found a job herself, but this experience lit a fire in her to want to help other new African migrants looking for work.

“I know many people in my community who are struggling with other job providers, but they don't do anything for you; I'm sorry to say this, we are struggling,” Ms Baguma said.

“The way you are talking to them, the way you are treating them, the way you are approaching them, it makes some people feel less.”

According to the African Focus Community Survey 2021 report, finding paid employment was shown to be a significant issue for people of African heritage in City of Greater Shepparton.

It was rated as “the most important area of need” — the survey of 255 African community members found 66 per cent were employed and 64 per cent were looking for more work.

Ms Baguma said language was a “big barrier” to people finding work and she would be able to use some of her language skills to help community members.



Pursuing a dream: Tulinabintu Mushonda (left) and Rebecca Awan are hoping to find rewarding jobs in Shepparton. Photo by Youssef Saudie

Jobseeker Rebecca Awan came to Australia from South Sudan in 2016 and worked on a farm throughout high school.

She said she experienced racism and wanted to be a community worker to help vulnerable people.

“What I see is there’s a lot of racism there, someone can hate you because of your colour or the way you are,” Ms Awan said.

“My dream is to help my community, I don’t want to see racism or anything because here in Australia we are equals.”

Ms Awan hopes Kazi Connect will help her find work as a community worker, and encourages others to pursue their career aspirations.

“Keep your head up and follow your dreams, I hope this is going to help our community no matter what,” she said.

The initiative is funded by the Scanlon Foundation with the support of the Greater Shepparton Foundation.



By **Youssef Saudie**



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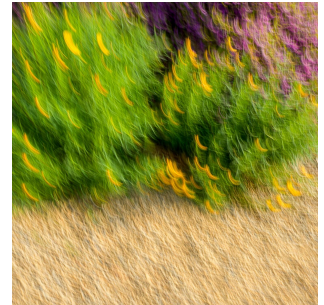
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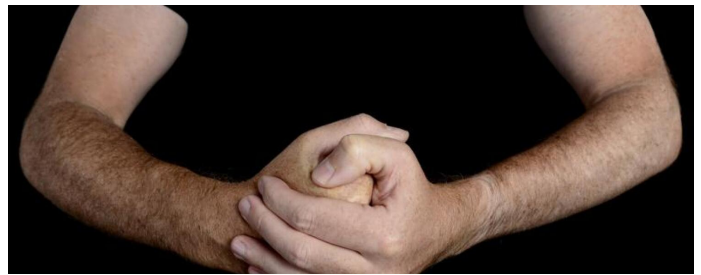
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