

## Case studies on Green Connect youth employment program participants

### Case study 1 – Max\*

(\*name changed to protect privacy)

#### **Context and background to program involvement:**

Max has multiple and complex barriers to employment, including autism, and found school very difficult, experiencing severe bullying and constant negative feedback from teachers. He heard about Green Connect through word of mouth and his school, and his mother approached us about options for Max.

#### **Outcome of program participation:**


Max reported feeling like he was treated like “Max” and not “Max with Aspergers” for the first time in his life, and that “working at the farm showed me a lot of things you don’t usually see – the variety in people’s life experiences, different cultures. It gave me a different perspective, and a break from the things I was finding stressful.”

Within two months Max had completed five paid shifts at Green Connect and was proving himself to be a confident, competent young man. Through Green Connect, he was introduced to a local plant nursery who recognised his skills and offered him a job. Max has now been working there continuously for more than 18 months and couldn’t be happier.

Reflecting on Max’s experience, his mum says “Green Connect supports people on many different levels, not just employment. We’re so very grateful that we had this experience.”

#### **Notes:**

Green Connect provides welcoming workplaces where everyone can “come as you are”. For many young people and former refugees, it is one of the few places they feel safe. This, and not having a focus on disability, on mental health status, on skin colour or country of origin, or any other factor than will, skill and attitude means that young people like Max can build their confidence, skills and experience without some of the usual barriers to employment getting in the way, and then we can tackle those barriers together.



### **Case study 2 – Rosie\***

(\*name changed to protect privacy)

#### **Context and background to program involvement:**

Since finishing school in 2018, Rosie, a young Aboriginal woman just ‘floated’ in her own words. She had no idea what she wanted to do. She worked occasionally in hospitality and as a pet walker, then travelled a little but had no drive or real commitment and found new work situations stressful.

Then COVID-19 hit. Rosie used this as an excuse not to leave the house. She had no income and very little experience to help her to gain employment. She felt helpless and alone. When she contacted us it was because she knew that she had to do something with her life and wanted to focus on an area she really cared about but had no experience in – sustainability.

#### **Outcome of program participation:**

Rosie attended a Green Connect induction and was very excited by what Green Connect does. Her work experience consisted of working at our new op shop – painting, and sorting books for sale or recycling. She was keen to be involved in all aspects of what we do and offered to continue to do work experience or volunteer with us as she felt she was making a difference.


One morning we contacted her at 7am to check her availability to fill in for a sick worker at the farm. Rosie was on site to commence work by 8am and completed a first-time task in a timely and efficient manner learning new skills along the way. She has proven herself to be adaptable and hard working. She has subsequently filled in for a number of different shifts and also stepped into the Green Connect Staffing Solutions team at short notice.

Another day she was booked for a job and after arriving on site at 6am was told that their rules had changed and that she needed a White Card to work on the site. Rather than go home she offered to jump onto the site computer and did the first part of the certification (enough to allow her to work that day). She then worked a full shift. The feedback from the employer that day was glowing.

We have watched Rosie progress from a drifter to a focused worker. She goes above and beyond at every shift she attends and whilst she sometimes still finds it stressful when things don’t go smoothly she is becoming more able to deal with a range of different workplaces and requirements. Recently Rosie accepted a long-term contract with Green Connect and continues to go from strength to strength.

#### **Notes:**

Rosie is a great example of the power of focusing someone in the right direction. She could possibly have continued to ‘float’ for some time, happy to be on the dole and not focused. In joining the program she has had a range of opportunities and is discovering that she is a good worker and can make a difference if she chooses the right job. Her confidence and skills have grown significantly and we are confident that she will find mainstream work in the coming months.



### **Case study 3 – Sam\***

(\*name changed to protect privacy)

#### **Context and background to program involvement:**

Sam was referred to us by Juvenile Justice as part of a youth justice conference where he agreed to participate in the youth employment program at Green Connect two days per week for four weeks to make reparations for a crime he had committed.

He did not have any goals at that time, had been in trouble with the law, avoided eye contact and did not speak much.

#### **Outcome of program participation:**

Sam's father came with him on his first day. Sam was really nervous. Then other young people started arriving and several formed a great rapport with him.

That day, everyone was trained in how to use a brushcutter and Sam really enjoyed it. By the end of the second week, he was enjoying the program and started talking about plans for the future. He asked about going into training with Kiama Community College on the farm.

Our HR Manager had a conversation with Sam's father after the first two weeks, who reported that Sam was really enjoying it and when he picks Sam up from the farm each day, Sam is talking about what he's been doing without being prompted and is opening up more. His father expressed how happy he is that "he's not wasting his life on the lounge". Both parents have seen a significant change in Sam in just two weeks.

After the third week, Sam had shown himself to be hardworking, prompt, and able to follow instructions well, and he was offered a paid shift at the farm building a fence, which went well.

His mandated four weeks came to an end and Sam elected to continue at Green Connect. He started forming short-term goals and to articulate his interest in manual work and using tools.

Green Connect put him forward for a full-time job at a local butcher which Sam accepted but subsequently found overwhelming and resigned. He took this very hard, feeling that he had failed, and it was weeks before our support team could convince him to return to the program. Since then his confidence and skills have grown and he secured a fixed term contract to work at the farm.

#### **Notes:**

The turnaround in Sam has been wonderful to witness and shows what a program like this can achieve. We are seeing the same changes in many of the participants in a very short space of time. Sam was unusual in that he was obliged to attend for the first few weeks, but has taken the advice of our HR Manager and used this as an opportunity. His skills, experience and confidence are growing exponentially.

