



JOSH AND TESFAI

When Tesfai Tegail first arrived in Melbourne, he felt 'like a fish out of the sea.' He had been forced to leave his home in Eritrea, where he had been in his third year of studying Biology at university.

'I came from a society with the same language, with my friends and family,' he said. He found himself in 'a new country, new society, new area - everything was new here.'

Tesfai missed his friends and family, his language and culture. But through language lessons, he was introduced to the Foundation House Ucan2 program. 'We visited different places. We did a lot of things. It was a lot of fun. The Ucan2 people were like friends for me. They explained all the obstacles that new people can have here, they motivated me.'

The program has an ongoing relationship with Australia Post, which sponsors mentoring and employment opportunities for Ucan2 participants. As part of this program, Tesfai got casual work at Australia Post and was connected with a mentor, Josh McLean.

Josh had seen the Ucan2 mentorships advertised through internal publicity at his Australia Post workplace. 'I thought - what a great idea!' he said. He found out more about the program, attended preparatory workshops, and was introduced to Tesfai.

Josh was a point of contact at Australia Post, and helped Tesfai with other work skills such as preparing his CV and writing job applications. The two also met for social outings around Melbourne, or just for a coffee.

Tesfai enjoyed his placement at Australia Post. 'It is a very large work area, a lot of people with different cultures, with

different language. It is like the whole of Australia is there! They welcomed us, it was nice. I was sorting the parcels, it is not hard.'

Tesfai said having Josh as a mentor helped him tackle challenges. 'When he is beside me I feel confident, if something happened to me I just call him or send him a message and I ask him. Because he is beside me I feel confident and I do things confidently.'

For Josh, the benefits of the program go both ways. 'I think it is a great program for employees at Australia Post. I think it is good for our development. It's a good balance to have - to focus on something at work but also have something outside of work, because I apply my learnings from this program to work and my learnings from work into this. Being a mentor you have to be open minded, there is issue resolution, finding answers to problems that I have never had to deal with before.'

Josh also found the experience broadening for him beyond the work context. 'It was a good learning experience for me to get to know him, also his values, traditions, more about his country and where he came from, what he did day to day there, about his family, his two kids,' he says.

Tesfai has now gone on to full time work, and Josh is mentoring a new Ucan2 participant. Though they see each other a bit less, Tesfai and Josh have maintained the friendship.

'I think Tesfai and I will be like heart brothers moving forward,' says Josh. 'I look forward to growing some more together.'