

This is my story:

Hope and human flourishing in the workplace





St Frances Xavier Cabrini, 1850-1917

Founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and patron Saint of Immigrants

Introduction

Sr Sharon Casey MSC

Cabrini Board Member



Francesca Cabrini was born in 1850 northern Italy. She, like many of her siblings nearly died at birth. Frail health plagued her for the remainder of her life but it didn't deter her intense desire to dedicate her life to God, especially as a missionary. At that time in history there were no female missionaries in existence.

When she formed the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) Mother Cabrini had a particular desire to go to China to teach the people that God loved them, and it remained in her for many years. Nearly everything Francesca did throughout those years was directed toward this goal.

We can all imagine having an intense lifelong dream. However, when Mother Cabrini went to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, to get his permission to go to China with her sisters he asked her to do something very different.

At the time there were thousands of Italian migrants living in squalid conditions in New York with many children running in the streets without anyone caring for them. He asked her to seriously consider going to New York to address this situation that was growing worse each day rather than go to China.

Although this was a terrible suffering for Mother Cabrini she decided to respond to this great need in New York. In doing so, she used this opportunity to teach the other sisters how to embrace letting go of what one wants for what is really needed.

If Mother Cabrini walked through Cabrini hospital today I think she would watch, see and feel that people are loved, whatever their nationality and background, she would see that people are respected and given opportunities to grow using their God-given talents. She would also see that our Catholic faith and traditions were being upheld and respected. I imagine she would graciously greet people and converse with them in her poorly spoken English.*

In turn, each person would experience the grace which emanated from her and the respect she gave to them.

We can learn from Mother Cabrini that all people are created by God whether they believe in God or not. All people are worthy of our love. This is why we have been encouraged to live the values of Compassion, Integrity, Courage and Respect.

* Mother Cabrini never perfected the English language despite doing amazing work for the migrants throughout the United States.

About this project

A/Prof Natasha Michael

Director of Palliative Medicine, Cabrini Health



Stories are important, we all have them and they define us. To know someone well is to know their story – the experiences that have shaped them, the trials and turning points that have tested them. In health, patient stories provide person-revealing characteristics that enable holistic care. Likewise, the narratives of our staff provide us with a lens to view them as individuals; not simply colleagues but fellow humans.

For many at Cabrini, the opportunity for employment through the support and logistics services provided much needed hope after leaving their home countries. This opportunity to flourish, provide for their families and regain a sense of identity has enabled many to restore their dignity and feel part of a community once again. These stories of transition present a challenge, because telling them involves baring some emotion. But good stories reassure staff that their plans make sense – that in moving on, they are not discarding everything they have worked hard to accomplish but simply linking their past, present and future into a compelling whole.

This work was possible through the generosity of Cabrini Medical Staff who provided a Student Research Scholarship to a deserving student, Tara Finkelstein. In collaboration with her colleague Natalie Ling, Tara drew on her experience as a previous media student to draw out and

record these stories, with Natalie as her able technical assistant. Their reflections highlight the importance of exposing students who will later occupy position of great privilege to those who truly form the foundations of clinical services and hospitals.

The inspiration for this project was drawn from the work of Mother Cabrini, the Patroness of Immigrants. In response to Gods call for justice and love and recognising the Catholic Social Teachings on the dignity of all persons, Cabrini Health continues the legacy of St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, through its ongoing outreach to immigrants. Collaborative solidarity was demonstrated by many who assisted with this work: Jenny Nicholson, Julie Fleming, Justin Dowd, Rukshan Boudewyn, Tim Cordner, Pamela Wood and Josephine Iorlano and their respective teams. A special mention to the Cabrini volunteers: Sue Hardiman, Frances Clancy, Alison Monotti and Patricia Ryan who assisted with the transcripts. Finally to Sr. Sharon Casey who gave her time to the students to share the inspiring story of Mother Cabrini.

My sincere hope is that as we each walk the corridors of Cabrini, we make the time to stop, listen and get to know a little of each other's story.

Jenny Nicholson

Director Support Services



My name is Jenny Nicholson, I have been at Cabrini for three years and I manage support services. Support services is the non-clinical support team, which includes domestic, security, logistics, communications and food services, and, more recently, volunteer, car parking and engineering services.

I used to describe our department as the base of the pyramid; we are the base because there is a large support workforce, and it goes up until it hits the top with the CEO and Board. Without the base we can't feed our patients, clean our theatres, maintain the infrastructure or we won't have any patients if we can't deliver their supplies, take their calls or provide them with security. I think of it more now as if we are all in a beehive, with everyone busily working away as this analogy removes the layers and connects us as an integral working part of the organisation.

The diversity of the support services staff speaks to the candidates that we attract. A number of our staff speak to their communities and encourage people to apply and this broadens that community circle. The staff say they really want to get into the community environment, be it Catholic or health care. The work in support services requires quite a bit of training, and we encourage people to start with us and then if they want to go further we support them to look for opportunities to go on to other departments or on to nursing, finance or in areas of other skills they may have brought with them or gained through study whilst here. The support services management

team are very lucky to be able to bring in people whose first language is not English, we can help nurture them and provide meaningful work for people that may otherwise struggle to find employment.

My role in this project was to help gather our people to tell their stories. Although there has been a bit of work for everyone involved, I think that the benefits are ten-fold. I believe it is beneficial for staff across Cabrini to hear their stories. The staff start to talk about the country they came from and the journey that brought them to Cabrini and it starts to break down some of the barriers, invisible barriers. My hope is that this project helps more people to share their stories and it gives just a glimpse of the some of the people they work with everyday.

Rupika Hapu Arachchige

Sri Lanka



My name is Rupika Hapu Arachchige, in this country I go by Rupika. I am a food service assistant in kitchen services and have been working at Cabrini for nearly six years and two months.

I was born in Sri Lanka. I have one brother and I came to Australia five years after my marriage in 2012. In Sri Lanka I was a teacher. I have a degree from the University of Colombo in teaching. When I worked as a teacher, I taught the students my language and Buddhist culture.

In Australia, everything is different. I thought, 'I can't survive here'. I told my husband I needed to go to Sri Lanka. For two years I told him, I need to go to Sri Lanka, because for two years I didn't work anywhere. I think that's why I felt, all the time, 'I am alone'. Because in this country, when he went to work, no one talked with me. I am home alone. I think for two years I did cry.

After two years my husband understood that I've had a big change; I am different. I'm a different person now. After this I applied for a job, my English was not good. But my husband made a CV and he applied for a lot of jobs, but they didn't call me because my English knowledge was not good. He put on the CV my English is not good – that's why.

My husband is a chef, and his friend who is working in Malvern kitchen, told him that Cabrini Hopetoun had some vacancies. That's why I applied. On my CV I put – he put – I can speak English, that I have good knowledge. I think that's why they called me.

But at my interview, my interview with Justin Dowd, when I came for my interview, he was sitting in his chair for a proper interview. But my first thing I said was "Sir, I can't speak English", the first thing! He is a very friendly man. He listened to my story. I told him "I am like children in this country. I am like a baby. I can't speak English, but I need to survive this country. That's why I need a job. I can work hard, but please give me a chance". He listened, and I think that's why he gave me this chance.

Before, I didn't know what a gluten free patient is, what a lactose free patient is. I don't know a lot of things, because in Sri Lanka I did learn in my language. But now I know everything. Now I can work alone in a shift.

At Cabrini, I think they are more friendly. When I came here, my driving was not good. I came here but I didn't know how to park. I told Justin "I can't park". He came and teach me how to park. My friends, my workplace friends, they are also very friendly. They know I can't speak English first time but they teach me nicely, like "this is a soup cup, we serve like this. You make trays like this".

I think that's why I think this is my second family. This place I think helps me relax, I'm happy, and I love this place so much. I don't need any other workplace. I like it here, because everyone is family now. My boss, Justin, looks after me like his own daughter.

When I came here two people changed my life. One is my daughter, and one is Justin, because my daughter changed everything, and Justin, he gave me this job.

He also changed my life.

Lucy Bracken

Philippines



My name is Lucrecia Bracken and I started working at Cabrini in 1999. I think that I've been working here for around 21 years and it is my second home. I'm very thankful for and lucky to be at Cabrini.

I was born in the Philippines and I came here to Australia in 1992 because my husband is from here. He went to the Philippines and we married there. We had our first son and then we moved here. My husband is a good man, and he has helped me and my family.

Before I came to Australia I was working at an agency, such as if someone wanted to buy a house, and I showed them a photo. I had to study work on a typewriter, a very old typewriter. I finished high school and then went to a TAFE for two years to learn to type.

When I first came to Australia I looked after kids at childcare for eight months, and then I went to the Crown Casino and worked in the gold cinema for one year. Then, my sister-in-law suggested that I apply for Cabrini because she knew that they were looking for people. When I applied, the first manager here said that I would have to wait for three months' probation, but she came to me after two weeks of me working here and asked me to sign a document. I said "What happened? Did I fail?" and she said "No, you are going to be permanent staff now," and I have been here ever since.

Cabrini is like a family, for me they are all good people. There is a mix of nationalities – Chinese, Italians, every nationality and everyone gets on.

I love this job. It's nice to talk to the patients and see sadness and happiness.

I talk to the patients one day, and the next day I come back and they're gone, but I get used to it. That's life.

The patients sometimes make jokes and we laugh and the people are happy here.

Cabrini have been very helpful to me and to other people all over the world and even in the Philippines, where they have a mission to help people all over. Thank you Cabrini!

Patricia Campanella

Brazil



I am Patricia Campanella and I work in the food services department at Cabrini Malvern. For the past 20 years I have been working here in functions. Before that, I worked in the kitchen where I was a food service assistant.

I was born in Brazil and left there more than 45 years ago, I came to Australia more than 30 years ago. In Brazil I finished my primary school, my secondary school and I went to university. I studied fine arts very specifically for education and after that I started to work for ten years as a teacher for the government. I worked in classrooms when I started to do some research for training teachers.

When I first came to Australia, I went to TAFE to apply for an English course. At the time I arrived, there was just one course with a vacancy. I was offered a placement in this course, which covered half English and half hospitality. They said "Perhaps this is not the course for you." I replied, "No. I am here to learn and would be happy and grateful to attend".

My teacher at TAFE used to train migrant people for the workforce. I think he had a connection with Cabrini related to domestic service or food service. One day, he said "I'm going to send you for a job interview". I said "What? You are going to send me for an interview, and I cannot even speak the language". He said "No, you should go there; it is a great organisation, and you will have to mix with other people who are also learning the language". "I am going to take this challenge," I said. So, I arrived at Cabrini

and when I entered the entrance foyer, I felt terrified. I was going to an unknown place. What would they ask me? I had no idea at all what the job is or anything.

Of course, I survived because of the kindness of my colleagues. They helped me with my words and suggested I was very much part of them. Every day I realised the way they worked with passion for the service that everyone tried to do better and better. I felt challenged again as I saw people doing different jobs; every day became an opportunity to learn a lot of language. I was able to see how other people worked.

I started to love every corner of this hospital. I feel it was so much part of me; I think I belong; I feel like I am recognised here. I love to talk to the people in the corridors, also I learn about the patients. I realise I have become another person. With inpatients who stay here for some time, I get to know their stories and something about them. Some stay here for a long time; they are very brave.

I am Catholic and Brazil is a Catholic country.

I recognise there is something more than religion at Cabrini. There is a connection, which just goes much, much deeper.

In a sense of being spiritual. She (Mother Cabrini) was a religious woman, and in the time, she was there and she left a legacy for us. She was/is an inspiration. We can learn so much from her.

Jacquiline Hallal

Philippines



My name is Jacquiline Hallal, and I have been working at Cabrini for 12 and a half years. I was born in the Philippines.

I work in food services, but usually I mainly do room service. So, we just deliver the food, and because it's my duty I use the telephone and monitor all around. So, I do that duty.

In the Philippines, my mum had a business. She had a clothing business and so I helped and then studied at the same time. I have two more siblings – two sisters – and because my father passed away when I was five, so we were helping my mum to do the business. I am in the middle of my sisters.

I came here because I was helping my auntie, and I came here when I was 18. She was working in Sydney, so I looked after the children. At the same time she was working I looked after them every day – doing the duty of a nanny for my niece and nephew. After that, she introduced me to my husband. I was young. And that's the story, the time that I met my husband. He's an Australian, and I have one daughter. She's 25 years old.

I then got a factory job, and then a restaurant job, any job that I could do to earn money. But I'm very, very happy and at that time – because my daughter was little, I wanted to have a part-time job so I could take her to school and pick her up. One of my friends, she's working at Cabrini, and I asked her if it's okay if I can apply for a job and she said yes. So, she gave me the resume and I had an interview and I got the job.

The environment of Cabrini, I think I must like. They treat me really, really good, from our supervisor to manager or everyone here in Cabrini in the hospital like nurses. It's like a family, because I know all, most nurses, or domestic workers, like in the kitchen. There are so many people living and working here for so long, and I've asked them how they do it. You know some people working 30 years, 25 years, so I think I'm almost there. For 12 happy years I think I'm going to catch up with people who have worked for very long here.

There are so many opportunities if you'd like to change your job in Cabrini.

There are so many opportunities that you can apply for, but for me, I really like to work in the kitchen.

I've known people in the kitchen for a long time since I started. From the dietician, you know – I saw so many of the same faces that I knew and I think I can always say I am so happy here. There are so many opportunities that can change upstairs, but I love it in the kitchen.

Ebi Joseph

India



My name is Ebi Joseph, and I have been working in the logistics department for the past 10 years at Cabrini. My role is to clear out the products and daily items that come for theatre, tag those items, and send them back to the theatre.

I was born in India. I did my schooling, attended a university in India. After my graduation I worked in hotel management in India, but then I moved to the Middle East, and I worked there for nine years in the oil field, and during that period I got married. My wife was a nurse, and we decided that the routine in the oil business of working 42 days on and 42 days off, even after marriage and having a baby, made it difficult for us to stay away from family.

During that period, my wife moved to Europe and started working there. My child was with the in-laws in India, and I was in the Middle East and travelled to India in between. My wife and I decided to make our family life in Europe, so I quit my job in the Middle East and moved to be with my wife and child. Then, I realised that it was hard to get a job in my field, because most of the jobs required a certificate IV for European citizens. The climate was also quite bad there. During that time we had another child and I had no job. Financially, that didn't affect us because my wife brought in a good income. Unfortunately, the healthcare system and primary school education over there weren't as good as Australia, so we decided to move to Australia after six years of living in Europe.

When coming to Australia, the main difference between Europe and here, if I say frankly, is that the Europeans are much friendlier and politer on the roads. However, I didn't find that the culture here was too bad. In Australia, my children were very small, and someone had to look after them. So, I

stayed at home. However, I started looking for a part-time job when my children were old enough, and finally I contacted one of the managers in Cabrini. One day I got a call saying that there was a part-time vacancy in Cabrini. I came here, the manager liked my work, and so I joined the team.

My first job here was going to the wards and supplying the day-to-day items. I kept a very good rapport with the managers and I got a lot of support from them. In between I was nominated for an excellence award, and though I didn't win it, I still appreciated that my work was valued. When I started working here, I didn't look at my watch - even for lunch. Unlike other workplaces, the patients are always waiting for you. When we are on a sickbed, we are the ones that have to be looked after well. At the same time, when someone looks after us, we can feel strong emotions towards that person. So, although the nurses are mainly the ones doing this, we are behind them to support them in their work.

Cabrini has a strong hierarchy here, and people are always eager to rectify mistakes or issues; this is a good sign, as nobody gets affected by errors. At the same time, this leadership helps the work to move in the right direction with lots of improvement. Financially and psychologically, Cabrini is also supporting me very well.

I have a feeling that, in this life, we have to do something for others.

Of course we need a job, but money is not everything. So, behind the scenes, we can work for somebody else.

Mansour Lokey

South Sudan



My name is Mansour Lokey. I started working at Cabrini on the 19 March 2007. I work as a washer cleaning the dishes and putting in the food deliveries.

I was born in South Sudan. I worked in farming and food agriculture. I came to Australia on the 26 June 2006. I came here because of the insecurity in Sudan, where it was one country back then and the South and North were fighting for sovereignty. The country was then divided in 2011, and so there were issues there. Not only I am a Southerner, I am also a Muslim. So, I felt like nobody trusted me on either side, the Southerners said "Oh no he's a Muslim", but the Northerners would be like "Oh he's a Southerner". After leaving Sudan, I moved to Egypt and met a woman. She sponsored me to live in Australia and so I came here.

Since coming to Australia, it's more than perfect I think. It's welcoming, people are cooperative, helpful, open, take things simply. When I first came here, I started taking English lessons, I got out with a friend, and we started picking foods on a farm, like strawberries, asparagus, blueberries, and raspberries. Then, my neighbour who is Greek, suggested doing a certificate III in hospitality in Holmesglen. She told me about the course, and said "come and try!"

My French-English tutor said to me after I finished the course "there's work at Cabrini," because I told him that I was looking to work in a hospital. He showed me here, I sent an application, was interviewed by Peter, and then I got the work.

What's special about working here is that people work in a team.

There's respect regardless of what you do, and everything is done with respect and dignity.

That's what is important. If you make a mistake, they call you down and explain the situation to you instead of yelling.

I keep working here because of the environment of the work, and the stability of this income.

People here joke around. Even with the bosses in the kitchen, there's no exposing of hierarchy, and everything is just simple and friendly. People also help you when you're struggling and make things easy.

Working here has changed my life. I have two daughters that study in Uganda, and I have sponsored them until they graduate. One wants to be an accountant, the other wants to be a lawyer. I've also been able to help my brother who is studying engineering. This job has improved my standard of living, and I think that everyone in my life sees these changes in me and sees this as a blessing.

JiJi Mathews

India



My name is JiJi Mathews and I am patient food service ambassador. My job is to look after the food requirements of the patients, take orders, get their food out and make sure the food requirements are as near as possible to perfect.

I was born in India and after college I took a degree in hotel management. I worked in the hotel industries for 30 years. When I moved to Australia, I was given opportunities to work in hotels as well as this job in Cabrini. There was a logistical problem with working in hotels; you start work very early or work late at night and the travelling was not doing justice to my life. So, I thought: "Why not try it out in the hospital?" I liked the job, and they started rolling out a program in 2018 for food ambassadors, luckily I was selected and began this role.

This is the seventh country that I am working in. I've worked for the top five star hotels in India. I've worked in Kuwait, I've worked in Dubai, I've worked in Bahrain, I've worked in Saudi Arabia... I had some training in South Africa, and then I came to Australia in 2016. My kids were reaching college, and I was thinking about if I should let them live alone in India or have them live with me and my wife, so we all decided to move here. Initially there were some hiccups as you would expect when you are finding your footing, and because nobody knows of my experience because I have no experience in Australia... that's how it goes.

Working at Cabrini is quite different to working in hotels. When people go to hotels they go to enjoy, but in hospitals they are totally different. Nobody wants to be in hospital. People miss their families, they are in pain. Young people, old people ... food is something that keeps them happy. Other than the daily jabs and the medication, the chemotherapy and all the other stuff, this is something they look forward to.

During the coronavirus lockdown, none of the patients were allowed visitors, no food from outside could be brought in, and the patients missed their families. Unlike a nursing professional or other clinician, I got to meet all of the patients in the ward everyday up to eight times. We got to know each other, and showed me the many reasons why they looked forward to me coming in and bringing the food.

My previous experience was a big help for me. You have to be in that spot to understand what it is to have a good cup of coffee, a glass of cold water in the morning, to have something easily chewable when you have swallowing issues... I make sure that everyone gets a sip of water in the morning, first thing.

The patients would look at me and I could tell that they were so thirsty, so I'd fill up the glass, fill it up with ice and place a straw; they would drink the whole glass.

They could have food dripping everywhere and could not lift a tissue to wipe, so I would do that.

So sometimes, it's the small things.

Always behind me there were a team of people there in the kitchen who understood these requirements. Without their support nothing happens in the ward. Each day, we try our best to make sure that the patients are happy.

Life is a journey, don't stay in one place for long. The world is too big. Travelling makes you see that it's a beautiful place. Without traveling, we cannot understand our potential. Go everywhere, and people are nice everywhere. But, you have to be the one to walk up to them and say hello.

Karol Pacheco

Columbia



My name is Karol Pacheco. I've been here at Cabrini for almost two years and work in the communications department.

I was born and grew up in Columbia. I finished my bachelor degree in economics and when I finished it I decided I had to get out of my country in order to find better opportunities and a better quality of life. So I decided to come to Australia – I came as an international student; it was supposed to be for nine months, but during that time I met who I now call my husband, and got married here. He's from Columbia as well. We decided to stay in Australia in order to provide a better future for our kids.

It's been a long journey, but I think it was worth it. I cannot see myself living back in Columbia, even though I miss my country and I miss my family there every single day.

The journey was a big one...starting with me not knowing English; not at all, nothing, zero.

So it was very challenging for me the first month until I started getting some words and vocabulary.

I was also a long way from my family, I had to leave my mum and just leave her behind and go to the unknown... it was hard, I had a very tough time.

When I arrived in Australia, I started as a cleaner, in a cleaning company, and I did cleaning for two or three years. I used to have a different job in Columbia, and seeing myself cleaning buildings, offices,

toilets – oh, my gosh, yeah, it was. But, it has been rewarding, and it was worth it. At the beginning it wasn't easy, but now it's fine.

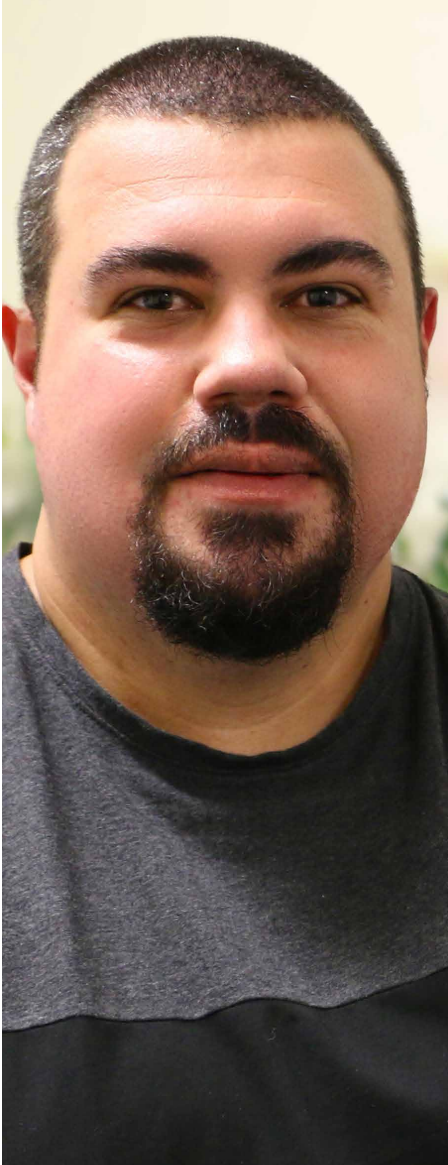
After that I got a better position in the same company, in the head office. I worked there for almost ten years, and then I decided that I wanted to change the industry that I was working in. In order to do that I decided to take a course in health administration. I did a small course in Victoria University. As soon as I finished it I started applying for jobs and that's how I landed here at Cabrini.

I was so excited because I knew that it was a Catholic hospital and my country is considered very Catholic influenced. I have noticed this is a very big influence in Cabrini. The staff are very kind, they are very respectful, and are very compassionate. They make you feel that they will care about you, they don't see you as a business, or as a patient being seen as income or money. They are taking care of the patients, the people around the hospital, even other staff.

I'm just so glad that I landed here at Cabrini. I cannot see myself working in other kinds of hospital; I hope that I become permanent. I think the environment, the people, the culture, the mission of Cabrini is so beautiful. I have the opportunity in my work to go to different hospitals as an internal courier and I can feel the difference of the environment, just completely different. So, I wouldn't change Cabrini for any other place or any other hospital.

Jean David Percy

Rodrigues Island



My full name is Jean David Percy. I come from a very small island found in the Indian Ocean called Rodrigues Island, it's a very small island with between 40,000-42,000 people. I have been in Australia for almost nine years now. I have been working here at Cabrini for almost two years in the domestic services department. It's been busy working during covid-times, but a challenge keeps the heart healthy.

Rodrigues Island is owned by Mauritius Island. It is very small. I don't even think you can even see it on the world map, it is that small. Over there, I love it, but there weren't many opportunities to see the world or different things.

Coming to Australia has felt like a big university for me because I have learned a lot while being here, such as how to do things by yourself without depending on others. Back home we stay with our family. We grow up, get married and get a house. There's not much detachment from the household. Here, you have to force yourself to grow, to do things that you probably never really did back home. So,

I know that I have grown a lot here. I am a very shy person, but here I have learned to fully interact with different people;

whether it's people from nurses or whomever.

I think that Cabrini has a lot of opportunities. But, it depends on the person to go and get

it. It's here, you just have to ask. Here, people are very friendly. My co-workers always smile, and ask me how I am; they treat me well. These interactions make you feel good and make you want to do your job as best you can. The staff are very compassionate towards others and I think that that is good because our values here are to have compassion towards others. There are a lot of people from different backgrounds working here. It is very enjoyable to learn about different cultures and to meet different people. You share things like that and you have a sense of belonging to a big family and it's amazing.

Berenice Silveira

Brazil



My name is Berenice Silveira, I was born in Brazil in São Paulo, but I moved to Parana. I have been working at Cabrini for one year, and this is a great job because I've had the opportunity to improve my English every day, and the people are so lovely.

I am employed as a domestic cleaner casually. I remember during my first interview that my English is not so good but I've had the opportunity every day to learn and the staff help me.

The opportunities here are great, because I talk to people as I'm cleaning their rooms and talking with the staff.

I came to Australia in 2019, and after ten months I started at Cabrini in the hospital. Before that I worked at another cleaning company that was Brazilian. When I was in Brazil I was a teacher at primary school and the kindergarten for nine years. I remember my first class mates, and they are now 13 years old, sometimes messaging me saying "I miss you teacher!" I miss my profession because it is the opposite from here, and I would like to teach here, but for me I need to improve my English and validate my diploma by being a student, and maybe in the future I can work in my profession.

I like working here because it's the same environment as in Brazil. When I was teaching it was a Catholic school with their mission, vision etc... This is very similar to Cabrini. In Parana, I lived in the city Curitiba,

and it is exactly like Melbourne. The weather is crazy, we have many trees, forests, and parks. We have the same public transport, and it's all very similar. When you go to a party here, it has Brazilians everywhere, and you have Brazilian friends here. I have a friend that works with me who lived in the same city as me in Brazil, and then we have the same friends from back there. But, I didn't know her before I came here.

It's a good family, a great family at Cabrini. The opportunity that I have in Cabrini, and the supervision and the boss are great people. Every time I work the staff helps me, and even the patients help me. We have Brazilian staff here, and they come and translate stuff for me in my language. This is a great place, and people are patient with me. Now, I don't need help.

I remember my first day in this place, and now that I've stayed here a long time I've improved a lot because of Cabrini and the staff.

Thushan Weerakkody

Sri Lanka



My name is Thushan, and currently I'm working as a chef in palliative care at Cabrini Prahlan. I was born in Sri Lanka, and I came to Australia in 2006. In Sri Lanka, I have done accounting for nearly 15 years. My cousins came to me in Sri Lanka and told me about Australia, and I asked them about the culture and country, which made me want to come here.

I was working for a long time as an accountant, and I wanted to change my profession in something involving hotels or something like that. So, I came here as a student in commercial cookery. I was looking for a part-time job, and got an agency job, which involved cleaning. This company is the one hired by Cabrini, so I started working at Cabrini Malvern. I had the opportunity to visit all of the other Cabrini sites. One day I came to Prahlan, and was offered a casual job there. When I graduated I started working as a chef, and now I am working full-time here.

When I started here, Cabrini was like a home to me, because I was married at the time with my first child. I didn't feel like I had any friends or relatives in Australia, and so every time I came to work the supervisors and bosses motivated me and taught me everything about this country. This period made me strong and helped me settle down. Cabrini, because it is a friendly environment, makes employees happy to work, and this was very helpful to me.

I used to work with many chefs and many other staff, like doctors and other

department people, which showed that you can make friends with all. They all helped me a lot, and this place is a very emotional hospital with patients dying. So, we have to face the reality of what life is, and how important it is to balance work. So, at least we can help as a hospital in helping as a service and follow Mother Cabrini's work and spread success and care.

In my life, I have worked at so many places both in Sri Lanka and Australia, and Cabrini is different to all of these other workplaces in that it is so helpful in growing people. For me, Cabrini has been a life changing place, and I have gotten so many things from it. I now have two kids and a wife, and the open-minded environment helped with family life. I have some family that are still in Sri Lanka, so I am still trying to help them, and I am doing some charity work.

Everyday I am trying to give something special to this place, because it has helped me so much.

I got the chance to work at Cabrini, and so I want to be an example to others.

I gave my trust in working here, and now I have to prove how I am giving my maximum effort in my work, so that someone else can get another opportunity through me. So, that's what I want to do; be a good citizen, and give my most to the country and Cabrini.

Project lead

Tara Finklestein

Medical student and recipient of Cabrini Medical Staff scholarship

This is my story: Hope and human flourishing in the workplace



A hospital can be a very confronting, cold and sterile place, but a hot meal, clean sheets, and friendly faces can transform it into a more welcoming space. It is easy to overlook the immense work that the domestic and logistic services provide for the hospital, and as a medical student aspiring to become a future doctor, this project has allowed me to further appreciate the importance of hospital staff members that work outside of the clinical setting.

There is a natural tendency to associate ones identity with an occupation. However, what happens when a job title does a disservice in portraying the vast array of heritages, cultures and stories of its workers? This was a concept that I had the privilege of exploring during this project.

Australia has oftentimes been described as a melting pot of cultures, and thus, the migrant experience in Australia is something that others can usually relate to, if not be accustomed towards. It is easy to acknowledge the diversity around us, but much harder at times to conceptualise the lives of migrants before they travelled to Australia. From fleeing war-torn countries to hopes of a better life for themselves or their children, I have grown to learn that the reasons in which people choose to leave their motherlands are not 'one size fits all'.

It is not often that one is given the opportunity to openly discuss the intimate details of a stranger's life. The warmth, kindness and candidness of the individuals

that I had the privilege of interviewing initially startled me. With time, I began to understand that such instant camaraderie and familiarity is pervasive in the social culture of Cabrini, if not encouraged. An overarching theme in all of the interviews that was conducted is that the staff at Cabrini treat each other with the respect and dignity of family members.

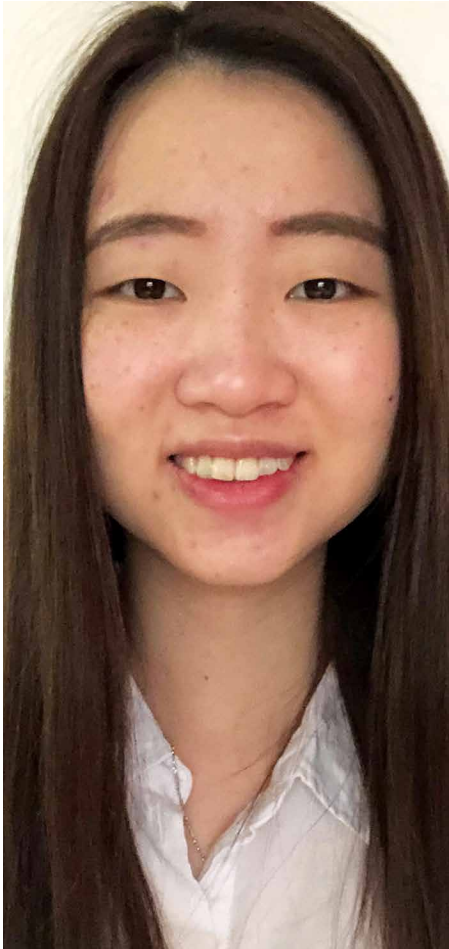
In summary, we are all equals that are merely trying to fulfill the human experience in a manner that is safe, fulfilling, and enriching.

Project collaborator

Natalie Ling

Medical student

This is my story: Reflection



‘Cabrini is like a family to me’, ‘This is my second home here’, ‘I stayed here because I like my job’, ‘We feel that we are valued in our work’.

These words deeply struck my heart when the staff members expressed them so sincerely during the interviews. I was moved after learning about all their life stories and how Cabrini has been such a blessing to them. Being an international student myself, I can empathise with the challenges that they first faced when coming to a completely foreign country like Australia, be it the culture shock, the completely different lifestyle, the language barrier or the hardship of being separated from all the friends and family back home. Fortunately, Cabrini has provided them with a chance to make ends meet and has given them a sense of home and belonging.

I could not forget the expression on their faces when they reminisce about their journey from applying a job in Cabrini to finally getting a job in Cabrini and ended up staying for years because they truly enjoy working here. Words could not express how content, joyous and grateful they were when given the chance to work in Cabrini and to be part of the big family.

As a medical student, I feel so fortunate to be able to work on this project and learn about the stories of the immigrants working in the domestic services, logistics department, cleaning services, and food services in Cabrini. After getting to know them better,

I learnt to appreciate them even more, because without them, the hospital would not be able to run as smoothly because they are the foundation to helping the hospital achieve excellent patient care.

I also had the chance to learn more about Cabrini’s values that are based on Mother Cabrini’s life and her heart for immigrants. I could see how the values of the hospital are portrayed and preserved, especially upon hearing the compassion, respect and love that they received in Cabrini. I think that it is really important to appreciate and value their works and a simple ‘thank you for your work’ could definitely make them feel much more appreciated.

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A/Professor Natasha Michael is Lead in Palliative Medicine at the University of Notre Dame, Australia and Clinical Associate Professor at Monash University.

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Cabrini

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