




Regional
Development
Australia
RIVERINA NSW



**Skilled
Migration
Success
Stories**

Skilled Migration



At RDA Riverina we recognise the importance of skilled migration in addressing business needs and filling skills gaps in our region. We have a long history of building relationships and assisting connections between skilled migrants and local industry.

Here, we showcase some of the success stories in the Riverina. Please enjoy their stories and join us in welcoming them, and future migrants to the Riverina. We also hope that these stories will help to start conversations about how we can make our communities more welcoming and embracing of new residents.

Chipo Mumbure

Caring for her ill mother inspired Chipo Mumbure to become a nurse.

“My mum was diabetic, and I was her primary carer.”



“Unfortunately, she passed away in 2007 just before I moved to Australia but my passion for nursing definitely came from looking after my mother. Knowing that the elderly and vulnerable don’t only need medications. They need extra love and reassurance that everything will be fine.”

Originally from Harare, Zimbabwe, Chipo moved to Australia and studied nursing in Perth before completing her graduate nursing program in Echuca.

“After I finished my Bachelor of Nursing, I thought I should give back to the Australian community. While I was studying, it was difficult for me to pay fees, but I managed to be sponsored by my university. So, I felt I wanted to give back to the Australian community for giving me that opportunity.”

“I moved to Echuca for my graduate program and then had to move to Melbourne to study English so I could pass my language competency. It was while in Melbourne that I realised my visa was about to expire. That’s when I started to look into regional areas.”

“RDA Riverina was so helpful. I told them my situation, where I was coming from and where I was heading. Faye Anderson from RDA Riverina asked me to scan my documents and send them through so they could assess my case. In a timely manner they came back to me to say, ‘congratulations, you are eligible for 489’, which is a regional visa for four years. I was so, so grateful for their help and assistance.”

Chipo moved to Leeton in 2016 when her visa was granted. She says that she, her husband and their young son have been made to feel welcome.

“I have experienced both city life and country life in Australia, and regional people have more love. I have found the people here in Leeton very friendly. Here when you meet people, they smile, they know each other. It’s a small community and it’s full of life – there’s a lot going on.”

“I was made to feel very welcomed. I feel like I’m part of the Leeton community. They show us a lot of love.”

Chipo says she’s noticed a big difference in Australian health care services compared to Zimbabwe.

“In Leeton we have Leeton District Hospital, three nursing homes and have many medical centres. In Zimbabwe it was different. We only had one local clinic and a major hospital which was a long distance from where I lived.”

“We really have easy access to health facilities compared to in Harare. There, access to health services is difficult and very expensive.”

Chipo encourages other migrants to consider living and working in regional areas.

“I have experienced both city life and regional life, and regional is the best, especially to raise a family.”

“I would refer people looking to move here to Faye. Faye gave us an easy process to follow. She was very professional and told us what to submit, in what timeframes. And it’s the little things. Even before I came to the Riverina, she told me there was an Indian restaurant here which I have enjoyed so much. I love food! I was so glad to find that restaurant that Faye recommended to me. She gave us the heads up on that and how to look for jobs. It was very helpful, and I extend my gratitude to her and the whole team.”

Forough Ataollahi

Each year, RDA Riverina assists skilled migrants like Forough Ataollahi and her husband Azim to relocate to the region.

Forough studied Veterinary Medicine in Iran and Biomedical Science in Malaysia where she lived for 30 years before moving to Wagga Wagga in August 2015 to complete a PhD at Charles Sturt University.

In September 2018, Forough was named NSW International Student of the Year in the state government's StudyNSW International Student Awards for her work advocating for the rights of female students.

It was while completing her PhD that Forough realised she wanted to remain in regional Australia.

"My husband is a mechanical engineer and we both enjoy living and working here."

"I came to Australia through a student visa and one of our friends explained there was another option called regional skilled migration. He suggested we contact Faye Anderson at RDA Riverina to discuss the Skilled Regional Visa (Subclass 489)."

"Faye told us how the system works, and what the procedure is. This information really helped us to have a clear picture of what was needed to be eligible for this visa subclass."

Forough is now a research officer in the Department of Primary Industries where she works to improve the health and welfare of farm animals.

To anyone in a similar position looking to relocate to the regions, Forough recommends people reach out to RDA Riverina.

"They are friendly, approachable and are happy to discuss things like how to apply. Talking to Faye will give you a clear picture of what you need to do."

"And the Riverina is the perfect place to live. It's more affordable in the regions and the infrastructure, here in Wagga especially, is very good. The community is very inclusive, too,

so you don't need to be worried whether you will be accepted. The people are welcoming and will make you feel comfortable and at home."



Nirupa Widyaratne

For Nirupa Widyaratne and her family, moving to the Riverina has meant a more comfortable life full of opportunities.

A civil engineer, Nirupa was sponsored by RDA Riverina to make the move from Sri Lanka in 2011.



"I've been living in Australia for eight years now and working for six years full-time."

"Initially we went to a private migration consultant and he said if we would like to go a regional area, there are opportunities in regional NSW. Our consultant put us in touch with Faye Anderson at RDA Riverina. She gave me a sponsorship letter, and we were able to come here because of that. It was great. Without it we wouldn't be here."

Nirupa and her family lived in Wagga for two years before her family moved to Melbourne for her husband's education while Nirupa moved to Parkes to take a job as a Project Engineer with Parkes Shire Council. The family then lived in Dubbo until 2017 when they moved back to Wagga where Nirupa now works for Transport for NSW.

"The first two years were hard. A lot of things affected me and my husband but immediately after we got permanent residency, I straight away got a very good job and now I'm a Project Manager at Transport for NSW. After that initial struggle, we are now well settled and really, really happy."

Nirupa said regional living has provided a calm and quiet environment for her family.

"Even though it is regional, we have many of the same facilities as Sydney and Melbourne. It's really comfortable and there's no traffic or congestion with room available around houses. It is better for our

children. That's why we prefer to be in a regional area. Even though we could move to a big city, I never even think about it now. I love this freedom."

To people thinking about moving to the Riverina, Nirupa's advice is clear.

"I think this is the best decision people can make. There is a little bit of risk initially. Not everything will come to you immediately. But if you have patience and sheer determination to go forward, you will find a job and settle in. About 50 families came to Wagga Wagga when I came here and initially everyone struggled but now everyone is settled in different areas. We are doing very well, me and my family."

"My advice to other migrants is to come and settle in regional areas and definitely reach out to Faye at RDA Riverina. Her sponsorship letter, information about Wagga and contacts helped us very much."

Nirupa said regional living has provided a calm and quiet environment for her family.

David Bardos

“I was working in international trade and had been to Australia on business, so we decided to explore it further.”

As an executive in one of the biggest food manufacturing companies in the Philippines, David Bardos was working upwards of 15 hours a day.

“My wife was also working 12-14 hours a day, which is the way things are as a young family in the Philippines. Then we had the realisation that if we wanted to spend more time with our daughter, we probably wouldn’t be able to do that in Manila.”

The young couple were looking at overseas options when Australia presented as a viable option.

“I was working in international trade and had been to Australia on business, so we decided to explore it further.”

Consulting with an Australian migration agent, David learned of a migration scheme allowing skilled migrants to live and work in regional areas.

“My background in supply chain and logistics was on the list of in-demand workers and it fit my criteria and our family dynamics.”

While David was given the option to live in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane, he felt getting outside the metro cities was important.

“We saw regional Australia as more of a laid-back option where we could really have the time for ourselves and for our kids because our son had arrived by this time.”

And with life balance the drawcard, David applied for a migration scheme that saw him sponsored by the Riverina Regional Development Board (RRDB), a predecessor of RDA Riverina.

Choosing to move to Wagga, David said it took a little time to adjust.

“When I arrived here it was the tail end of the drought. I’d never experienced drought, let alone having to live and breathe it.”

“Wagga was exactly what I had wanted in terms of moving from Manila. There was no traffic. Everything was decongested. From a layout and landscape point of view, it was exactly what we wanted.”

“However, because of the drought, things were quite slow economically – no one was hiring. But I had a strategy, I had a mission for my career, so I had to network and get to know people as much as I could.”

“The RRDB was very helpful in getting me information on who to talk to and where to network. They gave me access to relationship building around the city.”

“The information provided to me at that time was top notch, convenient and it really helped me understand the lay of the land and what I needed to do at what time so I could execute my plans.”

“I had great aspirations for what I wanted to do with my life and looking back, if I couldn’t get that from the regions, I would have been compelled to look to the city. But the opportunities were available in the regions. They are there. You just have to make sure you know how you’re going to find them.”

“And in terms of information, the help given by the RDA along the way is priceless. They are very well equipped and well placed to help. I’d say they are the eyes and ears of the Riverina and are irreplaceable because they are on the ground. They see what’s happening in the regions. They are local and they understand the local scene. You just can’t replace that.”

David now works for Port of Melbourne and is responsible for stakeholder engagement, international trade and supply chain but said it’s the experience of his children and his community contributions that spell real success.

“For me, the definition of success is not what I have achieved here. I look at my now 21 and 17-year-old and the contributions they have made for themselves and their community and I’m proud of what they have done with their lives.”

“I’m also proud of my involvement with PCYC Wagga, including eight years as president and being part of the team to secure \$23million for that facility; the good, charitable work I contributed to as a Past President of Murrumbidgee Rotary Club; sitting on the Charles Sturt University Regional Consultative Committee and being appointed a board member with Committee4Wagga; and my initiative to offer personal protection and self-defence programs for women since 2009, reaching 1600 women and raising nearly \$27,000 for community groups.”

“I’m happy to mention some of my contributions that helped the wider community because that’s an important part of the migrant story. We don’t just work and pay taxes. I’m very proud to give back to this community.”



Iyaz Khan

When Iyaz Khan first moved to Australia in 2011, the support he received from RDA Riverina was pivotal.

“Australia has given me the opportunity to become a citizen and I’m very proud of that. I’m proud of everything I have here.”

“I scored a little bit less on my IELTS (an international standardised test of English language proficiency) so couldn’t get my direct permanent residency. I had to come to a regional place and stay for two years. This caused me to come to the Riverina.”

“At first it was hard. For the first six months, I was jobless. But I had help. On the second week I was in Australia, I met with Miss Faye Anderson and she helped me a lot in finding jobs. She gave me good job agency recommendations and was trying to find jobs for me as well.”

“In those first few months she helped me a lot and when I was not able to get a job here, she gave me permission to try some other regional places. I went to South Australia and I couldn’t find anything. I called her and then came back to Wagga.”

“Then one of my friends in Wagga recommended me for a casual job, and from then on I started working and am still working. I now work at Australian Transmission Components in Wagga building car gearboxes. Being a qualified fitter, I like manual jobs.”

While Iyaz only had to stay two years in regional Australia, he has been in Wagga nearly 10.

“Everyone said to me to go to Sydney or Melbourne because there’s good opportunities to work.”

“I could have moved to a city, but I like regional living.



It’s very quiet and better than Sydney and Melbourne, which are very crowded. And it’s a good place. The people are very helpful and cheerful. It’s affordable here.”

“Coming from Bangalore in India, I really cannot explain how very, very different it is. Here is the best place I reckon. Wagga is one of the best places in Australia. We are settled here.”

Iyaz and his wife Saniya have bought a house in Wagga Wagga and are raising a young family.

“My wife is also from India and she is happy here in Wagga. When she first came, she was very surprised, ‘Is this Australia? It’s very beautiful!’”

“It’s a very hard life back home in India. I would recommend Wagga or other regional areas because there are heaps of opportunities here. And definitely reach out to Faye Anderson – she’s helpful to everyone and she remembers everyone!”

When asked what he’s most proud of about his life in Australia, Iyaz is quick to point to becoming a citizen on Australia Day in 2017.

“Australia has given me the opportunity to become a citizen and I’m very proud of that. I’m proud of everything I have here.”

Sajjad Sayesteh

It took Sajjad Sayesteh two weeks to find a job in Wagga Wagga after moving here from Iran.

An electrician by trade, Sajjad moved to Wagga in 2011 and soon after got a job at Total Electrical Control Solutions.

"At the start it was hard because when you arrive here, no one will rent you a place to live. You have no references from a landlord. You don't have a job yet. I found that the hardest because I ended up staying in a hotel, I was paying 100 bucks per night and I didn't know when I was going to get a job."

"I consider myself one of the lucky ones. I got a job two weeks after I arrived. I managed to find work in my own field – what I'd always dreamed of doing – and it happened pretty easily."

"I still work at the same place as when I arrived but now I'm a workshop foreman."

Apart from finding a place to live, Sajjad found settling into Australia relatively easy.

"The people are nice and I reckon I fit in pretty well."

"As soon as I arrived, I realised you have everything that you need to live here in Wagga, without all the traffic and the hassle of the city."

"After two years, I could have moved anywhere but I didn't want to. I had a house and a job and everything I need in Wagga. From day one, I was going to the Aussie parties. I really felt like I belonged to Australia. Now it feels like I'm at home here."

Becoming a citizen in 2017, Sajjad encourages other skilled migrants to consider moving to the Riverina, and to make connections beforehand.

"Before I even arrived in Australia, I received an email from RDA Riverina telling me to come into the office when I arrived. Their assistance was mainly mentoring. Someone to go to and discuss your problems. Not directly finding me a job but giving me information about which websites to go to and things like that."

"It was always easy to talk to Faye Anderson at RDA. She was always available and very open. It's a good starting point when you arrive here."





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