

“THEY ARE SO GOOD AT HELPING PEOPLE, SERVING WITH A BIG HEART. THEY KEEP OUR DIGNITY”

STARTTS

SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS

The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) is a non-profit organisation providing culturally appropriate psychological treatment, support and community interventions. WentWest has commissioned STARTTS since 2015 to implement culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) mental health literacy and suicide prevention programs for refugees, asylum seekers and other diverse communities in Western Sydney.

Aidah* is a STARTTS community member who came to Australia as a refugee. The following story is in her own words.

I'm from Syria. I left because of the war.

When I first came to Australia, I was by myself, and it was hard at first. I knew nothing, as if I was born anew like a baby, eyes just open, looking for where I could try to know more about this country. I passed through a very, very hard time, and I was always crying because I'm far away from my children. I didn't know where to go. Everything was difficult when I first came, but when I came to STARTTS, they started to talk to me, to calm me down, *"Everything will be okay. You're going to be okay, you just need time."* And they helped me.

In the STARTTS community, I started to realise more and more that I am in a beautiful country. That they will help me. They will keep me going and help me be involved in the community and meet more people. To find a job, to study. There are a lot of opportunities in this country, and I am so glad to be here.

STARTTS has helped with a lot of things. To study, first of all. To guide us where to study, so that we can find jobs for ourselves, and

show us that we have many opportunities, and it's up to you what you are going to choose. I chose community services, and I'm continually studying. I'm now a certificate four in community services, and I also studied Barista coffee.

I also attend yoga courses run by STARTTS, and it has been so good for me. It helped me calm down my mind and body and to know people. We have some jokes. And it has physical benefits and mental also. It has really helped me a lot because I'm a person who is very active. Yoga has calmed me down because I normally think of 10 things at the same time, but yoga helped me calm down.

STARTTS has really helped me a lot. They are so good at helping people, serving with a big heart. They keep our dignity. We don't feel that we are strangers in this country. We feel that we are part of this country and with this organisation.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.