

# NEWTOWN

## Neighbourhood Centre

### New(town) Beginnings #8

Dear Neighbour,

Picture this. As the victim of sexual assault and violence, you've spent the past six years living in a state of constant crisis. Instability and unpredictability dominate your life. You're estranged from your family and have virtually no support network. You're also battling chronic addictions, while dealing with the manifestation of complex trauma.

Your life is chaotic and securing employment doesn't rate highly in your daily list of priorities; not when you're having to meet case workers, counsellors, doctors, in between regular appointments at Centrelink and NSW Housing offices, in order to simply survive.

After a few years of regular upheaval, moving between temporary accommodation and transitional housing, you're offered a permanent unit in social housing. In that same week, Centrelink decide you must start looking for a job.

You're sent to a job agency, and the recruiter, without looking at your records, or delving into any of your history, sends you to a job interview in the city the very next day without any coaching, training or even interview tips. After six years of unemployment.

The position is full-time, starting at 7am every day in a corporate environment. You're offered the role, and because you're anxious about the repercussions if you reject the offer, you accept it even though you know it's beyond your current capabilities.

This is what happened to one of our counselling clients and it sent her into a state of panic and distress, frightened that if she declined she'd lose everything again. Not to mention her anxiety about having to cease all of her weekly appointments which support her recovery.

Thankfully, we were able to intervene and through our supremely helpful contact at Centrelink, the client was not penalised for rejecting the offer. I also provided the client with a support letter to explain that full-time work is presently beyond the client's capacity and a staggered approach supported by training and workshops would be more suitable and sustainable.

The radical contrast between her present world and the corporate world she was being forced to enter was too blindingly drastic for anyone to navigate and transition into smoothly. Let alone someone with her tumultuous past.

There's always more to any story if you delve a little deeper, and the common rhetoric of "why can't they just go and get a job" usually isn't an option for many people who are trying to get their life back on track.

Take care of yourself, and others

**Mel**  
**Community Strengthening Team**

**Newtown Neighbourhood Centre**

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