

NCI Podcast – Shaona Imaru

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WOMAN	Welcome to the National Careers Institute podcast. In this series, we'll hear from some former VET graduates and learn about the pathway they took to get the careers they wanted. Vocational Education and Training is a great way to start, change or boost your career and there's no time like the present to explore your options. Visit yourcareer.gov.au to find out how to take the next step in your career. And now here's your host, Australia's National Careers Ambassador, Scott Cam.
SCOTT	Thanks for joining us, and on behalf of the National Careers Institute, welcome to our podcast series. If you haven't heard our chats with some of our other VET graduates, make sure you have a listen. Now, our guest today is Australian VET alumni Shaona Imaru. Shaona was born in a refugee camp in Tanzania and lived there until her family moved to Australia when she was 11. At that point, Shaona spoke no English. So she used to use children's television programs to practise. Shaona has big plans to become a midwife and volunteer around the world to help others in disadvantaged regions. Let's hear how she's progressing toward that dream. Welcome, Shaona. How are you?
SHAONA	I'm good, thank you. How are you?
SCOTT	I'm terrific. Thanks. Now, tell us what it was like for you coming to Australia at such a young age with no English. It would have been...would have been tough for you at the start.
SHAONA	Um, coming to Australia was a blessing and will always be a blessing. I remember growing back in the refugee camp, life was not like here in Australia. It was so different in terms of healthcare system, food, safety and all that. Like, I remember growing up not having a clear vision of the future. For example, here in Australia, a lot of young kids, you would hear them talk, "Oh, when I grow up, I want to be a doctor." "I want to be an engineer." "I want to be..." - all that. That's a conversation that I never had growing up 'cause the opportunities were never there. So, like, when we were told that we're coming into Australia, oh, my God, I was super excited. Like, I was jumping up and down. But, like, I never knew where Australia was. Like, if you gave me a map, I wouldn't show you where Australia was 'cause I had no idea where Australia was. I just knew that it was at the end of the world.
SCOTT	(LAUGHS) Yes.
SHAONA	(LAUGHS) Full of opportunities... It was a place full of opportunities and life was going to change. So, yeah, it was a blessing coming to Australia.
SCOTT	Well, that's such a fantastic answer, Shaona, like, and, you know, you make your own luck, you make your own opportunities, don't you? And you're certainly doing that. You knew you always wanted to work in health care. So, how did you go about making that happen?
SHAONA	So, as I said earlier, my experience in the refugee camp gave me this interest to work in the healthcare industry. I wanted to help because, growing up, I saw a lot of people suffering, not getting the right care that they needed. So, like, when I came to Australia, I was just, like, "I want to work in the healthcare industry. I want to work in the healthcare industry." But I had no idea how to start. So I remember back in high school, I heard my friends, you know, they'll say, "Oh, I'm doing VET. I have VET today." But I had no idea what VET was. So asked them, "What is VET?" But they didn't explain properly. But towards the end of Year 10, we had a conference and the teachers talked about VET and I heard there was a course - Healthcare Services Assistance. I was, like, "Oh, my God. This sounds so interesting. This is something that I would want to do this. Sounds like a starting point for my dreams and careers." So I decided to enrol into Healthcare Services Assistance and now we're here.
SCOTT	And so that's so great. You graduated with a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance, as you said. And before you even finished the course, you were offered a job.
SHAONA	Yes. I was offered a job at a nursing home just across the school and that's because throughout

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	the course we have the opportunity to visit the nursing home so, like, to apply our theory knowledge into practical, which is something that I like about VET. So, like, you don't just sit in a class and do the theory work. No, no, no. You're given the opportunity to apply this theory knowledge into practical at an early stage and that's what we did. So, like, before I even finished my course, as you can imagine, I was already offered a job.
SCOTT	Yeah, that's fantastic. That proves also that you must have been working hard and really passionate about what you were doing and you got that job. And of course, as you say, with the VET training, you can go out and participate in the future job that you're going to be doing while you're training and then you can work out whether you're doing the right course and it's what you do love and making sure that you, you know, you might want to change at some point. But, look, that is a terrific story. You're listening to the National Careers Institute podcast. Our guest today is Shaona Imaru, the 2019 Vocational Student of the Year. Now, I believe you are studying a Bachelor of Nursing at UniSA while working night shifts at a hospital. How do you fit all this in, Shaona?
SHAONA	(LAUGHS) Well, time management. So, yeah, I'm studying a Bachelor of Nursing. Hoping that I can do midwifery later on. And also working as an assistant nurse at the local hospital and I'm also still employed at the nursing home but not working...
SCOTT	(LAUGHS) Oh, yeah.
SHAONA	..not working there. Yeah.
SCOTT	You're amazing.
SHAONA	But it's just time management.
SCOTT	Yes, I know, but you're amazing. You say time management. I say incredible. So you still want to become a midwife?
SHAONA	Yes, I still want to become a midwife when I finish my nursing degree, and also maybe after that I can do graduate medicine and become a doctor. I don't know. Just big dreams.
SCOTT	Really?
SHAONA	Yes. (LAUGHS)
SCOTT	Well, you've got big dreams. You've always had them. And you fulfil them, though. That's the incredible thing about you. You've got the dreams, but you actually get out there and do it. Now, I believe that you're one of eight kids and you're still living at home because Mum's cooking is too good to leave. Is that right? That's what I heard.
SHAONA	(LAUGHS) Yes. So, I'm one of eight kids. And, honestly, I can't imagine leaving home because my mum's cooking is the best, I'm not going to lie. (LAUGHS) So I can't imagine living without her food.
SCOTT	Now, I hear one of your sisters also has dreams about being on a reality TV show. Could that possibly be something like 'The Block'? Could she go and do a VET training course and become a carpenter?
SHAONA	Yes. My little sister, Mangete, has an interest in renovating things. So she's hoping that in the future she can start her own show or maybe join one of the shows that is already existing and help renovate homes. So, yeah, you never know. She might be on 'The Block'.
SCOTT	She might be. I'll be keeping an eye out for her. How old is she?
SHAONA	She's 14 at the moment.
SCOTT	Oh, right. Four more years, she'll be 18 and she can apply.
SHAONA	That's interesting. I'll let her know. She'll be happy.
SCOTT	Please let her know. Now, Shaona, you in 2019, you won the Australian Training Awards Vocational Student of the Year award. Congratulations. See, this is what I'm talking about. You've got these dreams.
SHAONA	Thank you.
SCOTT	You pursue them, you work really hard and then you get...you get a training award, you get

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	Student of the Year, which is fantastic. What does that award mean to you and your family as well?
SHAONA	Oh, that award was life-changing. I remember when they announced, my parents were crying. It was just... Oh, it was a blessing. It was a blessing. The award means a lot to me. It has brought a lot of opportunities. So I've been able to go out there and speak about my experience, share my story to other people and also encourage other people to take on vocational training. So it's been life-changing.
SCOTT	Mmm. That's terrific. Like, as you said, what, you know, what's the main advice you'd give a young person who was thinking about a VET course? You'd tell them to go for it?
SHAONA	I would advise every single person out there to go for VET. It's just like going to university, you know. It gives you the opportunity to gain transferable skills, job opportunities, meet new people. And as I said earlier, one thing that I like about VET is the opportunity that you get earlier on to apply theory knowledge into practical. So you know if you really want to be in this industry at an early stage rather than being at uni for three years and not knowing whether it's something that you really want to do.
SCOTT	Shaona, let me just say that you, to me, are an inspiration. I think you're an amazing young person. You really, um... You know, you're going to inspire a lot of other people out there and I think you're incredible and I've just loved talking to you so much today. Keep up the great work. And if anyone else is interested in finding out how Vocational Education and Training can help you get the career you want, visit the National Careers Institute website at yourcareer.gov.au . Shaona, I love you. I think you're amazing and keep up the good work. You will be a doctor. I have no doubt whatsoever.
SHAONA	Thank you so much, Scott. It's been nice talking to you.
SCOTT	And me. See you later. Thanks a lot. 'Bye.
WOMAN	Thanks for listening to the National Careers Institute podcast. To explore how to start, change or boost your career, visit the National Careers Institute website at yourcareer.gov.au to view the online resources to help you make informed decisions about learning, training and work pathways.