

The Story of Tom  
Melbourne Australia

### **Background**

Tom had lived in a low-income family throughout his childhood. At 6, the family was stressed financially and because of the mother's ill health, but she said as a family, 'We've been fine'. He had repeated prep because he had not had a good start to the year. His mother died when he was 10. At 12 he was having attention and behaviour problems at school and some conflict at home. He wanted to be a fireman. After this he was in and out of the care of different relatives.

At 14 Tom left school, during Year 8, having been to a number of secondary schools. For a while after leaving school he attended a part-time youth education support program run by a welfare agency.

### **December 2005 (age 15)**

At 15 he had finished the education support program and he was talking of getting work in a bar.

Leaving school,

It's hard. You just settle into one school, then you've got to move again ... Well I'm not really a school person. Just waking up early and having to go to school. I just decided second term not to go. All the kids were just real terrors. They were big bullies. The Education Support program, they just encourage you to go to school and stuff like that. They just start later and finish earlier and it's not so long. Yeah, they're nice. It's just easier to get along because there's not so many of you. There's four of us.

### **May 2007 (age 16)**

At 16 he was living with his grandmother and working part-time at a fast food outlet with no specific plans for the future. I left school, oh god, about two years ago. I moved back to my dad's and school was far away so I just didn't feel like going back. I didn't want to go back. My dad was fine with it. I just didn't go back anywhere else. I just stayed at home. I didn't try to get work. I moved to my nan's. I just got too much for my dad. It's been all right ... I'm just trying to find somewhere on my own. Like anywhere, just a one-bedroom place of my own. I'm working at McDonald's. That's fine. About two months. It's my first job. I just went on the internet. I just cook hamburgers and stuff.

### **November 2007 (age nearly 17)**

Aged nearly 17, Tom was sharing a public housing flat with an older female friend. He was no longer working. Since leaving school I haven't done much since I left school. I've only like ... I worked at McDonalds for like nine months, and then I left there. I haven't done much. I've had two weeks of work for the Grand Prix, I was a cleaner there. Other than that, I've just been looking for work since I left McDonalds.

### **Moving out of home**

I didn't have an option to move from my dad's. He basically kicked me out, he didn't want me there so I came to live with my nan. And we had a fight and then she kicked me out and then I moved over here. I don't talk to my dad much anymore. It wasn't really like he asked me to leave, DHS [Department of Human Services] said I couldn't live there. Ever since my mum died I wasn't allowed to be there. Because of his health and that, I was too full on for him. DHS, they're out of my life now. They would be there nearly every second day, to see my dad. But I wasn't allowed to live there, his house wasn't the best. They rang Nan. Nan said I could go there. I like living over here because all my friends are over this side, so I knew everyone around here.

My friend lives here, so I can share with her. I've known her for like about six years. She's an adult. But she doesn't give me many rules, so I just go out and party when I want to and do what I want. It's fun, but in another way it's becoming boring because I'm going out all the time and it's boring. I'm getting sick of partying.

When I first moved in to Nan's it was like strict. I couldn't go anywhere. I felt trapped. She wouldn't let me go out with my mates ... she did to start with, but then once I started coming home at one and two in the morning she got stricter. Nan just had an argument with me for coming home late and then she sort of told me she wanted me out of there so I had to move over here. I just ran over to my mate and she just said, 'You can come here'.

### **Employment experience**

McDonalds. To start with I didn't want to work but when I got used to it so ... but then I just quit cos I was just doing the same thing every day. And I hated it. I wanted to do register and I was just stuck out the back cooking all day and I hated it. I guess in the end I just left because I didn't want to be cooking every day ... I gave them two weeks' notice that I was leaving. Cos they only put girls on registers, they don't put the males on there. I don't know, I don't understand it ... To start with it was hard, but I just got used to it. I was casual. It's down the road. It was pretty easy to get the job. I just applied and got it. You have to do two weeks' training. They pay you. The money was crap. I was like earning \$60 a week. So it was basically crap. I was on \$5.90 an hour. I hated it.

That was youth wages. [Cleaning work.]

That was boring. I was just cleaning every day. And I hate cleaning, so I just did it for the money. I just got on the internet and applied for it. I seen it was available so I applied for it and got an interview and got it. It was just two-week contract work. It was heaps better than McDonalds, because we had smoke breaks whenever we wanted and we just stopped working whenever we wanted and had breaks. Because the boss was in the office and we were wherever, we were like a 15-minute walk from the office so we stopped whenever we wanted.

### **Looking for work**

I've applied for a few jobs but I haven't heard back from them. I just go on the internet. I just go on JobSearch. Now there's like heaps of call centre jobs. I just apply for all of them. Yeah. It's what I'm good at. I don't know, I just like talking on the phone. I'm friendly, so ... employers, they're just looking for energetic people that have good customer service skills. I don't want to do training. Not at the moment.

Assistance

I just do what I want to do. They're just supportive with me, my nan and my friends. I don't really need any help with anything at the moment.

Job Network? I had to go to them, because I was on Centrelink I had to go. They don't really help you, they just give you the computer and let you search. They don't really do anything. They make you do it. I've had to do my résumé myself. I think [Job Network provider] was helpful because I always had the computer access when I needed it.

I don't have the internet at the moment. I go to my friend's place.

I've been on JPET but they cancelled it. Centrelink organised it and then JPET cancelled it. I think it's because I was too far from there. Because I'm there and they're in another area. I think I had meeting, that was it. It was like four months ago. I had no interest in it.

When I did need help I just went to the Salvation Army. When I needed them I just needed like food and stuff and they just gave me vouchers and that.

### **Money**

I get Youth Allowance [\$348.10 a fortnight independent rate of Youth Allowance with no rent assistance]. I get enough to survive. The only thing I have trouble with is clothes and stuff.

### **The future**

At 15 Tom said he wanted to work in a bar but he no longer wants this. Well I started drinking and I hate drinking now. I hate alcohol. For the future I don't know, I just want to work in customer service, so. In the next year or two? I don't know. Just do what I'm doing now. Get a job and hang out with mates.

### **Advice for services to help young people**

I don't know. I don't know how they work. Just like caseworkers that sit there and ask you what you want

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