

I'm from the west part of Turkey, from Izmir. They used to call it Smyrna.

I came to Australia in 1969, with my husband and our four children. The oldest was nine and the youngest was almost three. We thought there would be more opportunities for our children here, that's why we came. I've been living in the building for almost forty years now. I've had the community garden for about ten. First my uncle had it and then I took it over from him.

We arrived at the Broadmeadows Hostel. At first, I was confused. We didn't know any English and there weren't any Turkish people. I think we were the third group in Melbourne from Turkey. I missed my family. I still feel emotional when I think about it.

That was the worst part, not knowing any English. To learn, I brought language recordings from home. There was a book and a record for the record player. They were in English-English, not American-English. I studied at home whenever I had time but after a while it got harder to do it alone. Then the government sent us on a three month course. It was free and they paid us, not as much as working but it was enough. My husband and I both went. That really helped me to understand the grammar and after that I went to all different courses. I worked in the daytime and went to the courses at night while my husband looked after the kids. I did that for a long time. I become an interpreter in the end. That's how I helped people, they really needed interpreters back then.

Even though it was hard, my husband and I are glad we came here. Our children are grown up now, they have their own lives, they are married and have children. The future for them is very good.

The thing I'd share with others is if they come to a different country, first thing they need to do is learn the language of that country, that's the most important thing. On top of that, they should send their children to school without any interruptions.



*Ayper 2014*



*Ayper standing with pride in front of her garden plot at the Alfred Street Community Garden 2014*