

# Double trouble frontline at the Auckland City Mission

## An employee's story: Peresia and Arteria



The Auckland City Mission would not be described as a glamorous workplace, but it is a welcoming and friendly place thanks to the small team of people who greet you from behind the front desk.

The stylish young man in the tailored pink shirt is moving on to further his career in a marketing role making way for Peresia who will take over his post at the front desk. Peresia, or Sia as she is known, is the second CadetMax graduate to join the frontline reception team at the Auckland City Mission. Sia joins fellow CadetMax graduate Arteria who has been with the Auckland City Mission team for 8 months.

Between them they will cover the busy reception desk and deal directly with the 'clients' and the needs of the various social workers who buzz in and out throughout the day. Arteria is not afraid to admit that it can be a scary place to work sometimes.

"It takes a lot of courage to work here" she explains "when you think about what the clients have been through, their lives, their journey, it has been so hard and they can take it out on us. But we have to learn to not make it about us and realise that these people have been sleeping rough or they haven't eaten for days or haven't had a shower, that is what they are having to deal with."

Despite these challenges it seems that these two young women are thriving in this unique work environment and they are filled with gratitude for the opportunity they now have to help support their families and the passion they now feel for helping people in need.

Getting to this point however was not an easy ride for either of these CadetMax graduates.

Arteria is particularly up front about her attitude towards finding work and the offer of support from the CadetMax team.

"I told myself it was a waste of my time and so I had a real 'whatever' attitude and I only went along so I could get paid (her unemployment benefit), I took it all out on the tutors running the course and now I feel so sorry for what I put them through! I was convinced there was no way they were going to be able to help me get a job and so my 'whatever' attitude pretty much sums up my input to the CadetMax programme!"

Arteria's honesty reflects a common feeling amongst a lot of young people who are frustrated about their inability to access employment opportunities. This frustration can be aggravated by tough circumstances within their home life and a lack of positive role models and guidance to help keep them motivated during the job search.

"I'd moved from OZ with my husband at such a young age, and I was living with my in-laws, and with no one else working in our home I was feeling a huge amount of responsibility to help out and a huge amount of pressure was building up. My marriage was being affected and I was even contemplating whether or not I should go back home to Australia.

I'd had all these interviews set up that matched up with my skills and all that, but I'd go along and my heart just wasn't really in it. Then Marcus mentioned the Auckland City Mission ➡

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CadetMax is a youth employment programme for 18-24 year olds, in receipt of a benefit and living in South Auckland. For more information contact: **0800 709 907** or [cadetmax@chamber.co.nz](mailto:cadetmax@chamber.co.nz)

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» and when I looked them up online something clicked and I thought this is something I really want to do and I knew it would be something I would be really good at.

I actually came to this interview saying to myself - I've got this, this is me, I am going to be sitting behind that desk there."

Arteria has been in the role for 8 months now and her confidence is blossoming "she gets more beautiful and her smile is brighter every time I visit" reports Ines, Arteria's CadetMax mentor.

It seems that a critical factor in the success of these two CadetMax employment successes is the fact that this job means a lot more than just a paycheck. They are passionate about the work they do and feel a great sense of fulfilment every time they come to work.

"I keep saying to Peresia while I'm training her, now that I'm in this job I don't ever wake up and not want to come to work. When I think about my job and what I do then I wake up and I am thankful and I go home and I am thankful for everything I have.

And she knows what I mean because Peresia is always the earliest to work!"

Loving your job is a lot to ask of an employer alone, but it is an important part of motivating and retaining loyal staff.

Peresia sites the work experience component of CadetMax as being instrumental in helping her re-discover her passion for

working with people and credits it for giving her the confidence to put herself forward for a job that she truly loves, even if her skills and experience did not appear to be a perfect match.

Sia had completed a year and a half of her social services degree when she had to withdraw due to family circumstances. She took up warehouse picking and packing jobs during this time but a serious accident left her suffering permanent damage to her arm prevented her from working in the warehouse as she had been. One year of unemployment stretched into two years and combined with the permanent repercussions of her injury, this took its toll on her confidence and her motivation.

"After the CadetMax course ended I was one of ten who got chosen to do some work experience and I was sent to Mangere Community house for two weeks. I've always wanted to work with people, especially youth who need extra help so I spoke with the CadetMax team about how I wanted to work in a similar type of place and they put me onto this interview at the City Mission.

So even though this is a different kind of role being on reception here I still get to see how all the social workers engage with the clients and you pick up experience and skills through them and the others here.

I found it really hard looking for a job by myself, everything seemed to need heaps of experience but once I'd joined CadetMax it was heaps easier because I felt like they had my back." ■



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