

Student 4: High Achieved

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

NEWCOMERS TOLERANT OF A REBUILD....

When you move to a new city it's hard enough to fit it, but H___ C___ finds out

3 that when you move to Christchurch, it's not just hard to fit in and find somewhere to live, it's finding the nearest supermarket, the cheapest petrol station, the local church, the closest gym and the nearest bus stop.

3 And that's not to mention the troublesome journey of navigating unfamiliar streets and seemingly endless roadwork's. For Christchurch's new arrivals they have to do all of that...and more. Joao Barbosa is one of those newcomers. He boarded his plane in Brazil four years ago, carefully walking up the stairwell for his flight destined for Aotearoa. It was to be his summertime vacation but Barbosa ended up falling in love with New Zealand and he ended up staying. 1

The Christchurch earthquakes were a turning point for Barbosa who was living and working in Queenstown at the time the devastating February quake struck. Without a second thought he packed up his bags and moved to Christchurch a few months later to try his hand at something new – setting up his own painting business in a new city, as a foreigner.

The smell of paint pervades the room. Barbosa is working in a suburban home in the eastern part of Christchurch – one of the few houses that remain in this area. He said it has taken a week and a half to paint this house and he is just making the finishing touches. But it has not been all easy-going as a newcomer. Barbosa said he initially had difficulty finding accommodation but it is working with all the red tape that proved almost insurmountable for him. And then there were language problems, under payment, unfair treatment by employers, inconsistent hours of work available and money problems. 4

"There was not enough money and I just lost money. The bigger companies have a monopoly on the rebuild."

As the days become colder and winterfalls, Barbosa said the congested traffic and added road repairs were affecting his commuting times which could be frustrating. But he's sticking it out and working harder and harder to make ends meet. It's not all bad for Barbosa. He can slowly see the city "becoming beautiful".

2 The work day passes and another dollar is earned, Barbosa enjoys living and working in Christchurch, even if the city is in reconstruction mode. "Sure, there is a lack of infrastructure and the roads are a bit bumpy. For me it's a normal city, because I'm working and I don't really get socially out so don't notice the lack of places to go. The city does work still."

4 One leading website focusing on the rebuild is attracting more than 95,000 hits every month. Rebuild Christchurch.co.nz sets out to bring all information about the Christchurch rebuild on to one online platform.

1 Rebuild Christchurch founder Deon Swiggs said the website was a great way for newcomers to find out what was happening in Christchurch during the rebuild. "In terms of helping newcomers the site tells people what is actually happening in the city, and raises the issues that newcomers may have concerns about — accommodation being the big one. "We connect people with information and are sort of the 'middle person' actually supporting the organisations that are working on the rebuild and supporting the talent wanting to come and help with the rebuild. "We have every bit of information about the rebuild in one place." 2

Swiggs created Rebuild Christchurch in late 2010 after the September earthquake; the site was only in its early stages when university student Abel Ange arrived in Christchurch, a week before the February earthquake - on a scholarship to further his education. He did not know what to expect, but it's ended up that his move to Christchurch has been a positive one. Thousands of kilometres from his home in Malaysia his outlook on life has changed. 1

"The earthquake was a life experience, it was tragic and traumatising, but we have to take it in our stride and accept it. "It's made me stronger." As a newcomer, and a student fitting into the city Ange felt welcomed into the city when he arrived and this continued when the unexpected occurred.

3 "It was strange, post-quake, as there was a heightened cohesiveness of the entire city that came together, Regardless of your background or what language you spoke it seemed as everyone became much closer. "It felt like you were not foreign anymore, as everyone had experienced some very traumatising events and loss."

3 The Christchurch Migrant Centre is one of the organisations bringing international newcomers like Abel Ange together. Case manager Jane Song is originally from China, but has been in New Zealand for 12 years and knows exactly what it is like to be a newcomer. "I started here, (at the migrant centre), after the earthquakes; I lost my job, but know what it's like coming to a new place." 1

Song said she had dealt with about 70 different ethnic groups within the last year, not just people who had come to Christchurch for the rebuild but refugees, migrants, workers, students' families and "anyone from off-shore", who was settling into the Christchurch while it rebuilt.

4 An earlier report in The Press showed in the 12 months till May the net migration gain to Christchurch was more than 5400 migrants. The Christchurch Migrant Centre connects these newcomers with the services and agencies and support they require. However, Song said, she mostly worked with people of Asian descent. — the Asian population in Christchurch had increased from five to nine percent between 2001-2013. "Asian and European cultures are very different too." Europeans coming to New Zealand do not tend to experience the same cultural shock that most Asian people do. Song said some Asians experienced mental health problems which they often kept to themselves - the language barrier made it harder for them to seek help and being in a rebuilding city could add to this problem.

2 "They sell their home, give up their job and livelihood and when they move here they are quite shocked because it's different, they have very high expectations, then they get here they find it quite hard." The centre would operate and help people fit into the city – "whether the city was rebuilding or not".

"Newcomers need support regardless if the city is rebuilding. They (migrants) are in a foreign place. The fact that Christchurch is rebuilding makes the process a little bit different."

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Christchurch is still a construction site. Hannah Cunningham sits in traffic on a bus, stop-starting, navigating 1 congested Lincoln Road – one of several traffic hot-spots' in Christchurch. She questions if it would have been better had she walked this morning. Perhaps tomorrow? Cunningham moved to Christchurch earlier this year to study journalism. She had moved from small-town Geraldine, but knows what it is like living in a new place — having spent 2013 in Hamilton studying radio. As she sips her morning coffee and reads the morning news she nods her head. — agreeing with yet another traffic congestion headline. "It's really quite annoying."

3 One of the woes of living in a rebuilding city is the traffic, which is intensified with the growing population and changed geography of the city. Cunningham knew she was coming to a reconstructing city to study and thought she was ready to live in the detached environment. But her perceptions of a city in rebuild mode could not have prepared her for the reality she was faced with.

"It's definitely different to a normal functioning city as everything is disjointed, broken or deserted."

Although the city is not fully operational Cunningham said the essential things were available. "Christchurch is certainly still liveable. "

The number of students in Christchurch is slowly on the rise again -however, the lack of social amenities and venues makes socialising for students harder. Cunningham said it had been difficult to catch up with old friends and make new ones as there was not a major social hub as in most towns and cities.

"In Hamilton it was easier. But it's like moving to any other city; it just takes time adjusting to new routines and making new friends. Though, I don't feel like a newcomer here."

Cunningham recalls the old Christchurch from her childhood and was saddened to now be re-living the stories of what had happened. The studying journalist said the atmosphere of Christchurch is warming and very welcoming. She has had a positive experience integrating into Christchurch's "quite tight and close-knit" community. As modern structures emerge, Cunningham can see a lot is happening and the future of Christchurch will be fun and innovative — her move up the road has been mostly straight forward, despite the minor disruptions,

1 One of the groups working on the ground in Christchurch is the Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce. Settlement support coordinator Lisa Burdes said their organisation was like an information referral system that 2 helped international workers and employers with practical information for settling into Christchurch. The demand for their services and assistance has definitely sped up because so many people are moving to help with the rebuild. The reconstructing city is disjointed - a mixture of business people and construction workers, and amongst it all are tourists and shops. Burdes said the reality of Christchurch was often quite different to what newcomers actually expected. Health-care, transport, education, finances and accommodation were among the things on the priority list that people needed information about. As a support agency, Burdes confirmed that accommodation and communication or language barriers were the main difficulties people faced. Kiwis tend to have a "less direct way of communicating", and those not of European descent often found understanding and discussion difficult – especially those from Asian descent. Despite the language barrier Burdes said employers had been proactive working around those issues. Social events and integration forums and discussions allowed newcomers to share stories and help each other outside the work place.

"These people have left their home, in some cases their family - to help rebuild our city, so we should ensure they settle into our city well... It's in our best interest to help workers and look after them while they are here."