



Dear students and colleagues,

I arrived in Australia in 1990 as a refugee aged ten with the help of my uncle, Mr Vy Tuy Nguyen. Prior to this, I left Viet Nam in a boat in 1988 with fifty plus strangers hoping to search for a better life in Australia. After the first week at sea, we ran out of food and were barely surviving on rice soup. We had tried to wave our "white" flag to container ships at every opportunity, but none stopped. We were fortunate to be rescued by a Thai fisherman's vessel who agreed to transfer rice and dried fish to our boat. Due to an unfortunate event, our boat was damaged in the transferring process. At sunset, the Thai captain promised to help the women and children, because they felt threatened by our high number of males. They also agreed to tow our boat to shore. At this, the women and children were either being thrown or made a dash at the water and quickly attempted to grab the ropes being thrown to them and finally felt at peace when they were safe on board, but not for the men who had been left behind.

Everyone was exhausted, and the two boats were tied together. By the next morning, our boat was 'gone'...it disappeared.

Australia has given me another chance in life, which is freedom, a fresh start, education and opportunities to help my family and others.

My nursing experience began as an assistant in nursing while I was completing my Bachelor of Nursing in Australia in 2000. My adventurous career started with primary health care nursing and I gained experience in areas of orthopaedic, critical care and emergency departments. After completing my Registered Nurse Mental Health Nursing Program in 2003, I worked in acute admissions units at the Greater Western Sydney Area Health Services, catering for civilian patients with both physical and mental illness and consolidated further experiences in other areas such as psychiatric intensive care unit, dual-diagnosis and rehabilitation through other Area Health Services. In 2005, I became an employee for the Community Ambulatory Mental Health Service of Justice Health as a mental health nurse. This role primarily involves providing mental health assessments, working with the Risk Assessment Intervention Team providing risk assessment, interventions and management plans for male and female detainees charged with summary or indictable offence(s) at the receiving custodial settings.

In 2010, I was awarded a scholarship from Justice Health to take part in post-graduate study, the Masters of Forensic Mental Health (MFMH) program at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. The course has given me a wealth of knowledge from experts in the areas of Forensic Mental Health and has improved my understanding of existing services. I was fascinated by the historical development of mental health services in Administration, Institutions and Service, exploring the need to facilitate treatment, rehabilitation and restoration by providing an opportunity to manage prisoner's education, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Consequently, my clinical and assessment skills have also significantly improved and I have become even more confident as a clinician. I would recommend MFMH to anyone working in this field and especially for clinicians who have an interest in or are considering a career in Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network.

Kindest regards

John Nguyen