



MERCY WORKS INC.

# CLASSROOMCONNECT

A PROJECT OF MERCY WORKS INC.



## What is Classroom Connect?

Classroom Connect uses the extensive educational experience of trained volunteers to provide additional in-school support and mentoring to refugee students<sup>1</sup> at a critical time in their settlement in Australia.

## Why do refugee students need support?

Students from a refugee background can often feel isolated and anxious and subsequently withdraw from classroom participation. They have to quickly

adapt to academic learning as well as the expectations, rules and procedures of schools and classrooms. These challenges occur at the same time as students are learning a new language and adapting to different socio-cultural expectations and living environments.

<sup>1</sup> Students granted humanitarian entry status or whose circumstances would qualify for humanitarian entrance despite grant of other visa type (e.g. Family Stream). Priority is given to: 1. Students who have moved from an Intensive English Centre to the mainstream school within the last twelve months. 2. Students who exited an IEC more than twelve months ago and who still require intensive educational support.



## PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Refugee students receive targeted classroom assistance during periods of transition through the education system
- Refugee students form an effective relationship with an adult mentor to build self esteem and social skills
- Refugee students receive literacy and assignment support
- Refugee students become more confident learners
- Schools receive additional targeted educational support
- Volunteers receive training and ongoing assistance to build their understanding of the needs of refugee students.

## What is the role of volunteers?

Volunteers work with refugee students for approximately three hours per week for one school year, focusing on assisting the educational transitions of students. The key responsibilities of the volunteer are to assist newly arrived refugee students in their learning by providing support that nurtures student well being and self esteem. Volunteers provide literacy and numeracy support and assist students in understanding classroom instructions, assessment tasks and in organising their school work.

## What is required of volunteers?

All volunteers are required to have experience working in an educational setting. They lodge a formal application, are interviewed and are subject to referee checks. They sign a contract of employment and a code of practice/ethics. They attend an initial two day Mercy Works training program covering topics such as the refugee journey and settlement process and barriers to learning for refugee students. They

also receive follow-up training and are provided with additional information on external research and projects related to the educational needs of refugee students.

Currently, the project takes place in Catholic secondary schools in the Sydney Archdiocese and schools in the South Western and Sydney Regions of the NSW Department of Education and Training.

The schools include: Bethlehem College Ashfield, Patrician Brothers College Fairfield, Mary MacKillop College Wakeley, Trinity College Regents Park, Holy Spirit College Lakemba, the Catholic Intensive English Centre Lewisham, Bankstown Senior College, Canterbury Girls High School and Menai High School.



## WORDS FROM OUR STUDENTS

*"You feel good when they help you"*

*"She helps me with everything. I like her so much and she is very good and kind"*

*"She is like my sister and she is nice. We get along very well. She jokes and I joke. She talks and I talk"*

*"I want her to keep coming so she can help me more and I can understand more"*

*"You can ask any question you want. She can answer it. I like her, I feel comfortable around her. You don't have to be shy"*

*"They treat us with respect"*



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