Illawarra Refugee Challenge

Summary The Illawarra Refugee Challenge was successfully piloted in 2015 with Keira High and Wollongong High School of Performing Arts. Using a creative, peer-led approach to cultural awareness, the Challenge drew on similar projects led by Gymea Community Centre and Auburn Council.

“Talking to refugees and learning their stories in person and then showing students through the tours that we are lucky for what we have.” – Peer Facilitator

“Refugees go through a lot to get to another country.”- Student Participant

“I felt greater understanding of what it is like and a stronger personal connection. It’s one thing to read about it but very powerful to meet someone and hear their story.” – Community Night

Opportunity The city of Wollongong aimed to work with young people to raise awareness of refugee issues and experiences. This was through the build of intercultural understanding through a respectful process based on lived experiences.

Action The project provided students with the opportunity to learn about refugee journeys and experiences through a tour of a stimulated refugee camp setting. A range of activities followed including:

• Project development and design with Multicultural Communities Council Illawarra, Wollongong Youth Services and Woonona High School
• Development of the Illawarra Refugee Challenge Resource Kit
• Peer Facilitator Training
• Classroom activities
• Refugee conversations
• Challenge event: interactive activity in the classroom
• Community Night: displays and conversations with local refugees

Achievement Through the Challenge there has been an increase in awareness of refugee issues, expression of interest in forming a refugee group and gaining new skills and confidence in group presentation and collaboration.