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## **GIVING REFUGEE WOMEN IN THE HUNTER A FAIR GO – AND REDEFINING THE AUSSIE ‘TRADIE’ STEREOTYPE**

Leaving your whole life behind to find a fresh start in a new country is no small feat, let alone if you are a young refugee woman arriving in Australia trying to create a life for yourself.

The University of Newcastle is working to help women in this very situation into the construction industry, through their Social and Economic Resilience of Young Migrants and Refugee Women Program, assisted by a grant of \$88,600 from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

With 11,000 young migrant and refugee women residing in the Hunter and on the Central Coast, the University of Newcastle saw an opportunity to equip these women with the training and education required to enter the construction workforce.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair, Ross Griffiths, said this partnership provides the opportunity for change for generations to come – and help redefine the typical ‘tradie’ stereotype along the way.

“The construction industry is booming, but it continues to be male-dominated – according to the NSW Government, [fewer than 13 per cent of the construction industry’s workforce are women](#),” Mr Griffiths said.

“This program is aiming to help migrant and refugee women enter the industry with confidence, making them financially independent and able to support themselves and their families.

“Specifically, the program is working towards having 50 women aged between 18 and 45 years old obtain a Certificate II in Construction by April 2024. Program participants will then be able to use their new skills into real-world opportunities, gaining paid job and apprenticeships, and even obtaining further specialisation.

“And by bringing together these communities of refugee women and tradies, who may not have interacted before, the program is also helping to cultivate diversity.”

Professor Temitope Egbelakin, from the School of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Newcastle, said that by providing mentoring and networking opportunities, the participants in the program will be able to develop relationships with women in similar positions.

“Mentoring is critical for women entering the construction sector. It provides them with opportunities to become more competent in their roles and increase their ability to succeed in a male-dominated environment,” said Professor Egbelakin.

“These mentors are passionate and keen to provide support and nurturing relationships and connections for young women seeking to enter and succeed in trades-based careers.

“I would like to thank Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation for their help in making this important project possible.”

# Media release

Saeedeh, a participant in the program, is looking forward to the future possibilities the program can provide.

“I want to be able to set up my life here in Australia, this program is allowing me to do this,” she said.

“I am a person who enjoys physical work, so construction is a perfect chance to use these talents.

“This program is giving me my confidence back and will allow me to be financially independent which is a big step forward in life.

“I am looking forward to working hard and making a life that I deserve.”

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## **About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation**

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation provides more than \$1 million in grants each year to charitable projects aimed at improving the health and social wellbeing of vulnerable people in regional New South Wales. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$25 million to some 550 community initiatives.