

# **(Re)claiming Social Capital**

## Improving Pathways for Refugee Students into Australian Higher Education

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Widening Participation Unit



# Overview

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- Refugee Context in Australia
- Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) Project in Australia
- LEAP-Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program
- Lessons Learned and Discussion



# Refugee Context in Australia

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25,750 places in 2015 with 23%  
arriving as unaccompanied minors



Federal Government  
Higher Education Participation Program  
(HEPP)



Importance of education in  
supporting refugee settlement

# OLT Project: Refugee Student Pathways



University of  
Newcastle



Macquarie  
University



Curtin  
University



# LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring

(Refugee Mentoring)

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- Partnership with NSW Department of Education and 10 partner schools
- Supports the successful transition of high school students from refugee backgrounds into higher education
- Macquarie University (MQ) students volunteer as mentors
- 987 high school students connected with 481 MQ student mentors (2011-2015)





# Program Structure

WEEK 1	<b>DEVELOPING RAPPORT</b>
WEEK 2	• Establishing ground rules
WEEK 3	• Mentors/mentee stories • Personal goal setting
WEEK 4	<b>SKILL BUILDING</b>
WEEK 5	• Study skills
WEEK 6	• Time management • Research skills
WEEK 7	<b>INFORMED DECISION MAKING</b>
WEEK 8	• Career research strategies
UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE DAY	• Explore pathways to university • University Experience Day
WEEK 10	• Review goals and reflection
WEEK 11	• Wrap up and evaluation

## Getting to know your mentee

Establishing ground rules  
Ice breaker activities  
Goal setting

## Building skills

Study skills                      Time management  
Research skills                  Support networks

## Informed decision making

Review goals  
Develop action plan  
Career research skills  
Explore pathways to university  
University Experience Day

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

University  
Experience Day  
Friday 16 October

Week 10

Week 11

# Research Methodology

- Five focus groups conducted with 42 participants
- Semi structured interviews completed with 12 mentees
- A case study on a previous mentee

## Demographic Profile of participants



**55**

PARTICIPANTS



**53%**

MALE



**47%**

FEMALE

YEAR 11

**44%**

YEAR 10

**56%**



# Key Findings

I want to be a civil engineer when I grow up and I know I can do this in future.

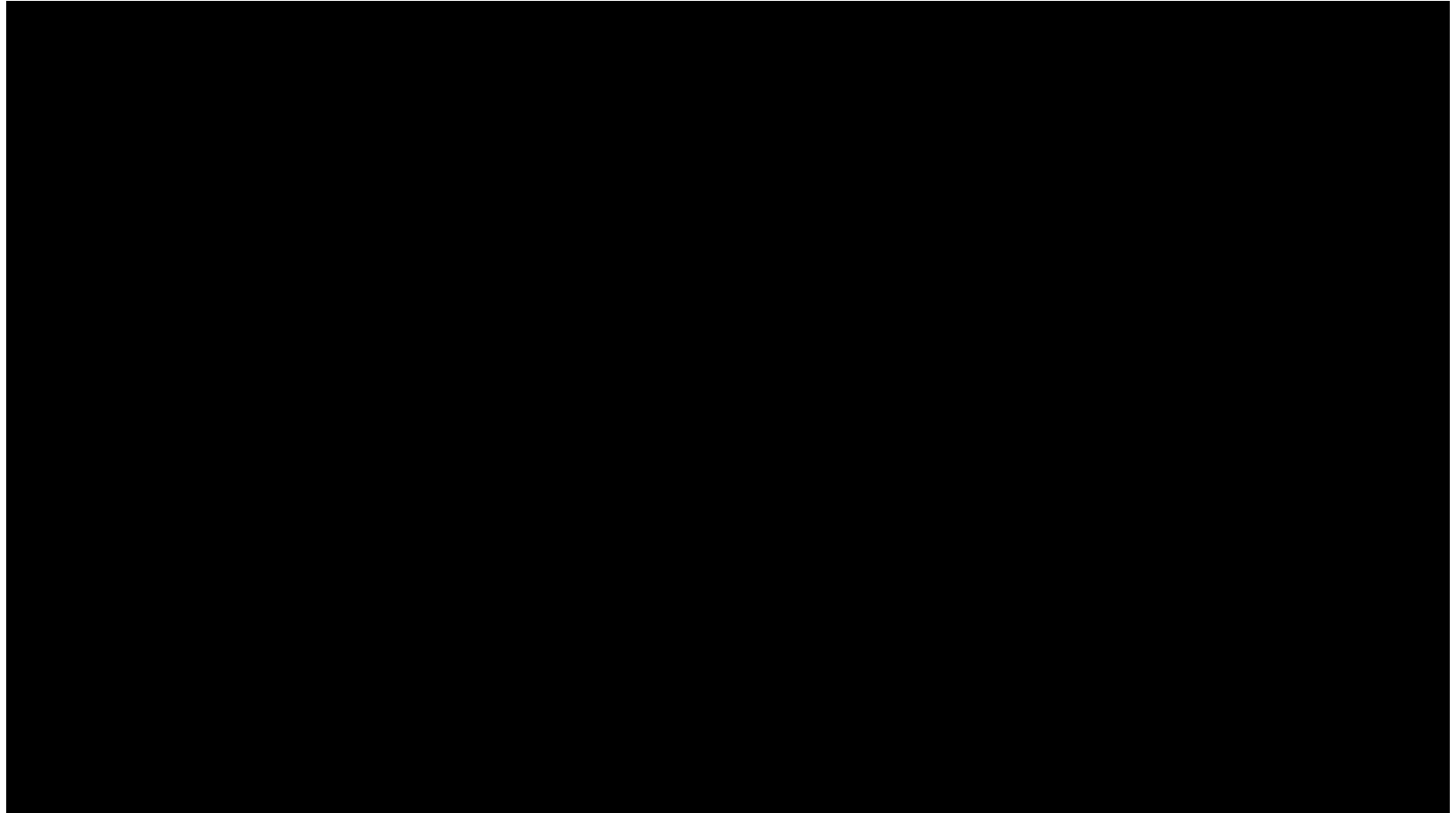
When I was young I was kind of scared to go to university. But when I learnt more about the university I feel excited about going to university and I think its really fun.

I feel positive about higher education now. I am no longer scared. It's a great feeling.

The program has really helped me a lot in my time management, I have learnt that managing time and studying more is really important to achieve my goals.







# A former mentee

[bridges.nsw.edu/resources/bridges\\_case\\_studies](https://bridges.nsw.edu/resources/bridges_case_studies)

# Program Outcomes

- Teachers reported that self-confidence was manifesting itself in students being more willing to ask for help, answering questions with confidence in class, and believing more in their capacity to succeed.
- Principals reported students were speaking openly about their desire to pursue a career in a particular field and seeking advice with respect to entry requirements (e.g. required subjects and the ATAR).

32 students are  
studying at universities  
across NSW

**Offers**



“Student assessment  
marks have  
increased post the  
program”

**Teacher**



“We have seen a  
increase in attendance  
rates for students  
involved in the program”

**Principal**



# Future Collaborations

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Research on enabling programs for students from refugee backgrounds



Special Interest Group at Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) Conference 2015 (Geelong, VIC)



Opportunities for research and partnerships with practitioners and academics

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