

# Mercy Connect NSW MPower

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## *Are you considering mentoring a Sudanese-Australian school leaver in 2025?*

### What's MPower?

**MPower** provides mentoring to Sudanese school-leavers to support them in their education journey through university or TAFE so that growing numbers of Sudanese Australians can enter the work force, have rewarding careers and become leaders in their community.

### What's the role of a mentor?

A mentor will guide a student (usually a child of Sudanese refugees) transitioning to life after school, whatever that may be - typically study at TAFE or University.

A mentor will be a person from the community acting as a support person for a school leaver as they transition to university, TAFE or an apprenticeship. As the parents (guardians) of the students have no experience of tertiary education, and might not be able to read or write, the mentor will also assist the student's parents to understand the next steps after school. There will be a grant for the project and the mentor will assist the student to spend their allocation appropriately.

### What am I expected to do as a mentor?

As a MPower mentor you will help and guide the student with practical matters about life after school that will help keep them on track with their career goals— you are not an academic tutor or social worker, you are there to help them navigate the challenges of engaging with the adult world.

For example, the student and their parent might not understand simple administrative things that you take for granted such as understanding that universities require a student's tax file number whether they are working or not. You may be able to assist the student to work out how to apply for a tax file number. Perhaps if the student is uncertain about which TAFE course to pursue, you could help them access TAFE counsellors for guidance.

### How do I deliver this support?

Mentors meet with students as needed usually on campus or a public library. They provide further support via telephone or electronically (via text, Facebook messenger, WhatsApp etc).

They are occasionally meet over Zoom (or similar platform). You will be given money from the grant to pass on to your student as they identify needs such as books, equipment, IT and the like. There is a strict accountability protocol for the provision of funds to students.

### What do I have to do to get started?

Confirm your interest via completing the application form, including your Working with Children Check number and date of birth for verification along with a nominated referee and the referee's contact details.

Once you have been linked to your student, there will be an information training session for mentors to share more information in early November held in the Parramatta offices of Mercy Connect NSW.



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### When and where do I meet the student and their parent mother?

Mentors will be connected with their students before they sit for their final HSC examinations.

MPOWER will then arrange a meeting for each mentor and their mentee and their family after the HSC has finished. Usually, these introductions will take place at a group meeting in early December at the African Centre adjacent to St Patrick's Catholic Church in Blacktown. You'll be taken through an introduction program with the parent and individual student. Apart from meeting each other, and the mentor coming to understand the student's circumstances, an important outcome of this process is for the student's parent to feel comfortable with the person mentoring their child.

### Has this program been done before?

John Cinya (Community Leader and Chaplain to the Sudanese Community in Parramatta Diocese), Sr Maria Sullivan rsj, Tess Mulveney and other volunteers commenced the program as the JRSMP, Josephite Refugee Mentor Support Program, with seven Sudanese girls in 2018 and has expanded further ever since, working in close partnership with the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP), as the young people are usually at their schools.

From 2023 Mercy Connect NSW began the process to take responsibility for the program under the banner **MPOWER** and in 2024, Mercy Connect NSW under the auspices of Mercy Works assumed full responsibilities for **MPOWER**.

Since 2008, Mercy Connect NSW has provided mentoring and support to refugee and humanitarian students through trained volunteers, under the auspices of Mercy Works. Established in 2000, Mercy Works is the development arm of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

### Anything else needed?

You will need to have completed an application before the information session in November.

***If you would like to join us as a volunteer MPOWER mentor for 2025, please contact Paul Taylor on 0419 123 893 or [paul.taylor@mercyworks.org.au](mailto:paul.taylor@mercyworks.org.au) for an application form or you can download an MPOWER application form form [here](#)***