



Spectrum MRC Media Release

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AFGHAN WOMEN 'MAKE IT HAPPEN' FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Spectrum MRC celebrates International Women's Day (IWD) recognising the achievements of the women of its Afghan Women Support Group who, through their improved confidence, are playing an important role in the support and empowerment of their communities.

"International Women's Day celebrates the courage of women around the world, so this is the perfect occasion to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of the women from the Afghan Support Group. For us, living a comfortable, sheltered life, is almost impossible to imagine what it means to come from a place where women still have to live in fear. These women have braved the circumstances and are now determined to make a difference in their families and in their communities. They truly embody this year's IWD's theme *make it happen*, as they are making it happen day after day in their families and their communities" said **Spectrum MRC's Settlement Support Worker Ms Meg Harbourd**.

Spectrum Afghan Support group is designed to support newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers women gaining confidence and skills to assist themselves and their families on a day-to-day basis. The women meet weekly and are engaged through a series of sessions in which they learn practical skills, such as navigating the public transport system to move independently, practicing conversational English, attending workshops on women's health issues and learning about mainstream services available to the community.

"It is amazing to witness the increase in confidence and self-esteem of the women. Learning how to use public transport, for example. Many of them had never ventured very far from their homes and were scared of doing so alone. Learning how to navigate the system has given them the mobility that they need to be independent, and the confidence to help their families and other members of the community," said Ms Harbourd.

Sunshine resident Ms Aziz Gul, who has been attending the group with her mother from the start of the program, explained how the group is helping her feeling strong and capable of reaching her goals: "I came to Australia in 2013 and this year I am studying my VCE. My dream is to graduate as a medical practitioner and to serve the community. I want to give back and make a difference, and I have the confidence of achieving this," said the 18 year old student.

The Afghan Women Support Group is funded by the Australian Government under the Settlement Grants Program.

International Women's Day is observed worldwide on the 8th March to celebrate women's achievements. The theme for this year celebration is 'make it happen', calling for a greater gender equality and encouraging effective action for advancing and recognising women around the world.

Photo opportunity	
EVENT	Spectrum MRC celebrates International Women's Day recognising the achievements of its Afghan Women Support Group.
MEDIA CONTACT	Please contact Cristina Marras - Mob. 0429 707 547 if you'd like to organise an interview with Ms Aziz Gul.