

News release



REFUGEE LEARNER DRIVERS TAKE THE WHEEL IN THE ILLAWARRA

Wednesday 27 September 2017: The NRMA today honoured learner-drivers from refugee backgrounds at a DriveTime graduation ceremony in Wollongong, helping them gain the skills and confidence they need to drive safely on Australian roads.

Last November the NRMA entered into a partnership with Gymea Community Aid and Information Service to launch DriveTime, a driver licensing program for refugees settling in Australia from Syria, Iran and Iraq.

To date 20 participants have obtained P1 licences - five of whom have since gained employment - and 36 participants have obtained learner licences across both the Wollongong and Fairfield sites.

A driver's licence is an important part of the settlement journey for newly arrived refugees and migrants to enable them to participate in their community, providing them with access to opportunities and essential services across education, employment, health, social activities.

NRMA Director Marisa Mastroianni said moving to a new country could be tough for anybody, let alone those on humanitarian visas who had experienced major trauma.

"The NRMA is playing a part in helping refugees and migrants settle into their new lives by helping them obtain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to drive safely on Australian roads, and consequently gain meaningful employment," Ms Mastroianni said.

"The ability to drive is essential to enjoying life and gaining financial and personal freedom. As a mobility-driven organisation the NRMA can work with refugees and migrants to increase their access to mobility by breaking down the barriers to getting a licence.

"The NRMA is committed to mobilising our business to create social value for the community.

"Working with Gymea Community Aid and Information Service is a tangible example of how we are delivering support to community members who may otherwise be left behind, ensuring everyone has a chance to access the opportunities mobility brings.

"The NRMA has just completed a six month pilot and we are pleased to have signed up for another two years, and encourage other local organisations to join us as funding partners."

Councillor Leigh Colacino presented participants with their certificates at the ceremony and congratulated the NRMA and Gymea Community Aid and Information Service for providing such a life-changing initiative.

Joanne Cracknell, Gymea Community Aid and Information Service General Manager, said the community organisation felt fortunate to have the backing of the NRMA in their mission to support newly arrived refugees and migrants in gaining their NSW driving licences.

"This program empowers people to become integrated and independent members of their community," Ms Cracknell said.

Volunteers are still required in the Illawarra area to help participants prepare for their learner licence test, or supervise their driving in preparation for their provisional test. Members of the community who would like to volunteer their time as a Driver Knowledge Test Mentor or Driving Supervision Mentor are encouraged to visit www.mynrma.com.au/drivetime

Contact: Helen Machalias 0439 133 114