



MEDIA INFORMER

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Insightful Refugee Week 2009

A group of Roseville College Year 10 students coordinated a five-day program of activities at the school to recognise the plight of refugees and celebrate their achievements in the Australian community, last week.

At least 7 percent of Australians have been a refugee or have a parent or grandparent who has been a refugee*. To mark Refugee Week 2009, 14 - 20 June, students from Roseville College celebrated the achievements of refugees in Australia and learnt about the plight of refugees around the world.

Students researched and re-constructed a full-scale refugee dwelling visited by students from Years 7 –12 throughout the week, which was coordinated by Social Science teacher, Mrs Rowena Dudgeon. One of her Year 10 Geography students, Kate Farquharson of Bayview, built a model of a refugee camp including its waterpoints. "Learning about the camp's poor sanitation and stagnant or polluted water shocked me; refugees in camps live in awful conditions and have very limited access to clean water," Kate says.

"So many refugees are skilled; they had good jobs and lived comparatively privileged lives before they fled their homes. Even though they may struggle with the language barrier, many have so much to offer their new country," adds Rachel Murray of Forestville. "I learnt that not everyone in a strange land is a tourist; some are trying very hard to make it their new home."

Guest speakers also enhanced the students' ability to understand the lives of refugees including the Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service, Father Sacha, and a representative of World Vision. The students heard how their attitude towards refugees can help bring "Freedom from Fear" but felt Australia could do more, despite accepting 13,500 refugees in 2008-2009**.

Refugee Week, running since 1986, aims to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration, enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia. Roseville College hosted educational activities corresponding with Refugee Week to promote the importance of caring for and respecting those who arrive in Australia with Refugee or Humanitarian Status.

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Photograph: Roseville College Year 10 students Kate Farquharson (front left), of Bayview, and Rachel Murray, of Forestville (front right), with fellow students in their cramped, to-scale, refugee dwelling.

More information: *ANGLICARE, www.anglicare.org.au.
**Refugee Council of Australia, www.refugeecouncil.org.au



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