



## Darwich's Story



*We had a good life in Syria before war took everything. I had a good job as a tiler. We lived a normal life, surrounded by family and friends. It was a hard moment the day I woke up to find our beautiful street in Aleppo, Syria, full of soldiers.*

**I want to be a role model for other refugees. I am studying English at TAFE. When I get my English certificate I will work towards becoming a tiler so that I can continue the career that I had in Syria.**

The air force was overhead and bombs started raining down around us, destroying houses and killing people in our neighbourhood. I realised that day that my family was not going to find happiness again until we left Syria. Life as we knew it had been destroyed but it was very hard to make the decision to leave. Imagine leaving your parents behind in the middle of a war. We had to flee to Lebanon, there was nothing left, no future for my children.

Life was tough in Lebanon, but what choice did we have? My wife and I worked as much as we could just to feed our family. When we registered with the United Nations, we were willing to go anywhere so our family could be safe.

On the day that our Australian visa was granted, I felt as if I had been reborn. We arrived here in Newcastle in June 2016 and immediately felt that we had come to the right place. Australia is paradise; peaceful, lawful and generous.

**A welcoming community can make a real difference to Australia's newest arrivals and help them feel like they belong and are safe.**

**You can help newly arrived refugees like Darwich's family, by volunteering to teach English or participating in activities such as a welcome dinner.**

The moment we met our case worker — Maya — we formed an instant bond. She is originally from Lebanon so she understands where we have come from. Every day she teaches us something new about the Australian way of life. Through her we are making connections in our local community.

We have so many choices here in Australia. Our children are involved in sports that they love, they go swimming and play soccer. Through those activities the whole family is learning about the culture, making friends and improving our English.

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People in Newcastle have opened their hearts to us. We experience kindness every day. Strangers on the street will help with a smile or offer to help me when they see that I am struggling with something new.

I would encourage everyone to think about how they can help refugees to settle into their new home. So many people have helped us. We have had welcome dinners, volunteers have helped us practice our English and many have extended their friendship. If they help us now, one day we will help them.

I feel that my dreams have come true. My family is safe and my children can get a good education.

**Find out more at [www.dss.gov.au/helpingrefugees](http://www.dss.gov.au/helpingrefugees)**