



MEDIA RELEASE

27 August 2012

'No Sweat' on the starting blocks to helping refugee women thanks to \$10,000 donation

A \$10,000 donation from the Snow Foundation will kick start an innovative Canberra pilot program to help refugee and asylum seekers in Canberra gain work experience and jobs.

Chief Executive Officer of the Snow Foundation, Georgina Byron, said No Sweat Fashions was a fantastic initiative for the refugee community.

"No Sweat is focused on providing meaningful and long-term social change for newly emerging migrant communities in Canberra, especially those that come from the most vulnerable refugee backgrounds including Sri Lanka, Burma, and Afghanistan," Ms Byron said.

"When refugee women arrive in Australia it can be pretty daunting and there are often huge language and employment barriers, but they all have prior learnings and experience. No Sweat will enable these refugees to become accustomed to working in Australia, get recognition for their skills, give them a social network and of course employment opportunities.

"The pilot will provide work experience for 15-20 volunteer refugees to continue developing their sewing and design skills, and then take a team on for paid work. They will do sample and small-scale production runs for local designers who are supporting the project as well as develop their own brand.

"Demand from local designers has been strong, and there are many enquiries from local refugee settlement service providers asking how to get their clients involved."

Ms Byron said No Sweat Founder and CEO Cindy Reese Mitchell had been the driving force behind the idea and had inspired support and vision from University of Canberra High School Kaleen Principal, Denis Dickinson who has provided them with a dedicated space at Kaleen High School.

"Cindy has found a terrific design and production studio and a room for a playgroup, had most of the equipment (cutting tables, machines) donated and arranged for lawyers Minter Ellison to do pro bono work to achieve Deductible Gift Recipient status for No Sweat. She is tireless in her fundraising efforts and has an excellent Board behind her. She has proven how serious and passionate she is, making great progress with virtually no money.

"This \$10,000 donation from the Snow Foundation will get No Sweat Fashions kick started and make it really happen by paying for a year's rent and insurance costs of the studio.

"No Sweat's financial model will eventually be self-sustaining, but in the start-up phase, a contribution from the ACT Government would help the success of the venture and give more vulnerable women an opportunity to find work, to contribute to their new community and give real purpose to their new lives in Canberra," Ms Byron said.

More information on No Sweat can be found at www.nosweatfashions.com

Media are invited to tour the No Sweat Fashions Design and Production Studio with Cindy Reese Mitchell and Georgina Byron at 10.30am on Tuesday 28 August at University of Canberra High School Kaleen 104 Baldwin Drive Kaleen, ACT 2617

The Snow Foundation is the creation of brothers Terry and George Snow, who established it in 1991 to help the disadvantaged community in Canberra and the surrounding areas. The Foundation has distributed more than \$4.3million since it started, including more than \$1million to 36 charitable organisations and 25 individuals in 2011.

For more information contact Georgina Byron on 0417 227 506