Waffa and Adnan are from Syria. In Syria Waffa studied economics for four years and worked in a bank for three years. Adnan was a director of an educational institute. Life became unsafe when the war began. There was danger travelling to and from work.

“It was unsafe to go to work and leave our child at home so Waffa stopped working and remained with our child.”

Adnan and Waffa kept moving from town to town to try and find a safer place to live for their family. They finally fled to Lebanon.

In Lebanon they were able to get help from the United Nations. The United Nations provided money and medical help for Adnan. They shared a three bedroom flat with two other families.

In Lebanon they contacted an Australian friend, who helped them apply for refugee status in Australia. In 2014, Waffa and Adnan’s refugee status was approved and they moved to Wollongong, Australia.

“We are very happy in Australia. We have found the people very friendly and have had a lot of help from organisations including TAFE Illawarra. We are very grateful that Australia has accepted us and not tried to change who we are.”

Both Adnan and Waffa have enrolled in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE Illawarra Wollongong. They have found the AMEP has provided a structured learning environment.

Adnan has a part time job with a legal firm and eventually wants to study at university. Waffa wants to improve her English to help her children through school and to eventually get a job.

Adnan and Waffa both feel very strongly about looking to the future and not focusing on the past.
DINA ALAWAG

Dina was born in Iraq.

“When the war broke out in 2003, our family was in danger and our house was burnt down.”

Dina’s family fled to Kuwait but her father could not find work, so they decided to move back to Iraq. In Iraq Dina’s father disappeared and they have never seen him again. The family stayed in Iraq for the next six months looking for him.

Dina’s family fled to Syria where they stayed for the next six years. Relatives were able to support them with money. Dina was able to go to school and university where she studied psychology with the help of the United Nations.

“We came to Wollongong in December 2012. I studied English with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE Illawarra Wollongong for nine months, starting at Level 1. I am now studying Advanced English for Further Studies.”

Dina would like to study English for Academic Purposes and then the Diploma of Community Studies. Eventually Dina would like to study Social Work at university.
“I fled the Democratic Republic of Congo on foot in 2003 when the war broke out.”

Byananire made his way to a refugee camp in Malawi, where he stayed for the next 10 years. In the refugee camp each person received 13 kilos of maize, one cup of beans and 75 millimetres of cooking oil each month. Refugees had to pump their own water from a water pump. At times the Red Cross would provide soap and clothing. Byananire said it was a very hard existence.

“I helped other refugees build their huts and then started to learn bricklaying through the Jesuit Refugee Service. I was then able to get a part time job and my life in the camp improved.”

In 2013 Byananire came to Australia as a refugee and started learning English with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE Illawarra Wollongong.

“I am very happy because when I came to Australia I didn’t know any English and now I am learning very fast. I have made lots of friends and am very happy because Australia is a good country and I feel safe here.”

Byananire would like to study bricklaying and then civil engineering.
Javad is from Afghanistan. When he was 18 years old he left Afghanistan and moved to Iran because of the war.

In Iran, Javad married an Iranian lady. After five years they started a family and had two children. The family moved to Indonesia and applied for refugee status.

“When we ran out of money, my wife and I started to make bread on a homemade oven and sell the bread.”

Even though life was hard, Javad and his family felt free, as they had identity documents from the United Nations and had respect as a family.

In 2013, Javad was told that he and his family would travel to Australia.

“It was very good news for me and my family. When I took my son to school at Liverpool Primary School that was a very beautiful day. I finally believed that anything is possible.”

Javad moved to Wollongong and he enrolled in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE Illawarra Wollongong.

“I am currently studying hospitality through the AMEP and enjoying this because I have qualifications as a chef. I would like to get a job, pay tax and make a contribution to Australia. I would like to say thank you so much to the Australian people and the Australian Government.”

AMEP is funded by the Australian Government
Sediqah’s family fled from Afghanistan to Iran, where she was born. Sediqah went to school in Tehran and finished her Higher School Certificate. She then studied agricultural engineering at university.

“We while we lived in Tehran, we had a difficult life because the laws for refugees were and still are very strict; refugees have limited rights. Most refugees did not have jobs and found it difficult to stay in the country.”

“I am so happy to be in Australia and I’m trying to be a good person for Australia. I try to do as much as I can for the Australian people and for the Government that has given me this opportunity to be here and have my freedom.”

Before Sediqah came to Wollongong she wondered how people would react to her family.

“We found the people of Wollongong very friendly and kind. I am very happy in Wollongong.”

Sediqah joined the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at TAFE Illawarra Wollongong, starting in Level 1 learning English. Within three months she moved to Level 3 and is now studying English for Academic Purposes. Sediqah hopes to study medicine.