

**Cultural quilts:** Women from different cultures formed a bond while learning about domestic violence and how to stop it.

Picture:  
Luke Fuda



# Beating the barriers

By Jessica Mahar

MOVING to a new country is made more difficult by language barriers, discrimination and racism when trying to access information, safety and support.

A Macarthur Diversity Services spokeswoman said women, especially, may not know of services if information was not provided in their language.

Family settlement worker Sana Al Ahmar co-ordinates a group of 16 women who meet to learn about domestic violence and how to overcome it in the community.

"Culturally and linguistically diverse communities need to understand the Australian legal system and the repercussions for violence against women and children," Ms Al Ahmar said.

"Throughout the information sessions participants increase their own self-esteem and become more confident in socialising within a group.

"The group was also taught techniques of applique, embroidery, designing, painting on fabric and crazy patchwork that they will be able to use as a means of alleviating the symptoms of depression, isolation, anxiety and any other negative feelings."

Women from Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Afghanistan, India, Nicaragua and Chile, with facilitator Cecilia Zonino, have made three quilts.

The first quilt represents the problems, including family safety and violence against women, while the second represents hope.

"The third quilt represents the solution:

elimination of violence, what to do and where to go for help," Ms Al Ahmar said.

"A women's card produced by Campbelltown Domestic Violence Committee, containing information about services available for them is placed inside the pockets on the quilt."

During the quilt-making, women discussed information about domestic violence.

One of the women who attended said: "I do not feel alone anymore, by coming to this group I have made new friends and learnt things that I did not know about domestic violence."

**The project will be launched on December 7 as part of the 16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women.**

**Details: Sana or Maria on 4627 1188.**