

MY BRIMBANK

St Albans resident and student Achol Kiir, 20, worked with Sudanese-born Australians to create a film exposing the way Sudanese youth are frequently portrayed in the media. She talks to Alexandra Laskie.

What's your connection to Brimbank?

I moved here with my family from Egypt in 2004. As part of the process of coming to Australia, you had to go through one of the neighbouring countries, so we had to go through Egypt from Sudan. I was about six, and we stayed there for a few months.

We moved to St Albans, we stayed at our relatives' house for a few months, and then afterwards we got a house in St Albans. We've been there since. I went to Holy Eucharist for primary school and then Catholic Regional College St Albans, and then Sydenham.

What do you like best about the area?

The diversity of people, so you feel more comfortable and there's a lot of different [ethnic] races around. I tend to like the libraries and Watergardens shopping centre.

What could make the area better?

It has improved a lot, but I think more activities for young people – there's all the normal things like libraries and sporting clubs, but I guess events, regular events to get the young people involved.

Has this area shaped who you are?

Yeah it has, because I guess it's made me naturally respectful of people from different backgrounds. The amount of diversity shapes you into respecting other people because you're also different, so you would want to be respected.

Tell me about your film *Breaking News*?

It was made by a group of Sudanese girls; there were a lot of people involved. I worked on producing it, but there were about 10 other girls or more.

Most of us are like friends from outside the area, because we're all Sudanese people. We've got a very strong community, very social. A lot of us know each other through family friends and events and functions. So pretty much a lot of us grew up together, around this area.

With the movie, we're members of New Change, it's a Sudanese young women's youth group. For one of our projects we were thinking of a theme.

We thought about the media misrepresentation of South Sudanese people and the impact it's having, like you know with Apex ... a lot of kids committing crimes, and the way that's being presented in the media. It's very biased.

We found it pretty upsetting because constantly the media was reporting car thefts, bad news – and it impacts us because it stigmatises us as criminals and bad people. Because of what's happening it affects us on the

outside, so when we go outside, we're looked down upon. One of the members [who made the film] was saying she was yelled at – when walking on the street with friends – that she's an Apex member and that she should go back to her country. They were driving and she was walking. So we thought we wanted to make a short film just to restore our identity.

So we had some Brimbank youth workers who helped us with it, and from there we worked with a few people from different professions, like spoken word poets, a choreographer, and a director.

It took us six months to put the film together. The film is about four to five minutes long ... it's a music, spoken word, poetry thing, and there's cultural dancing. It was aired at Sunshine Visy Cares Hubs on November 17 and we had the mayor come, we had people from Victoria Police and about 100 other people there to watch.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

Growing up, I used to like Cathy Freeman. I

used to do athletics when I was younger, and she was my inspiration. I was really good at athletics and I met Cathy Freeman at my primary school on excursion, so that was pretty cool.

What are your favourite eateries in Brimbank?

I like Café Greco in Watergardens.

