Leyla is 15 years old.

Leyla moved to Australia from Iraq when she was 12 years old. Leyla lives with her parents, siblings and uncle.

Leyla’s mother told Leyla that arrangements had been made for her to marry an older cousin in Iraq. In preparation for the marriage, Leyla’s family travelled to Iraq and paid a dowry. Leyla’s parents told Leyla that after the end of the next school term, she would no longer be going to school. Leyla’s older brother told Leyla she didn’t need to go to school now because soon she would be married. Her new role would be to look after her husband and their home.

Leyla did not want to get married. Leyla wanted to keep going to school. She likes school. For Leyla, it feels very important to her that she finishes her education.

Leyla told her mother that she did not want to get married. In response, Leyla’s mother told Leyla that she was bringing shame on her family. Leyla’s mother slapped Leyla in the face and pushed her, causing her to hit her head against the wall. Leyla’s mother took away her mobile.

Leyla told her teacher about her family’s plans to force her into marriage. Her teacher made a report to the child protection agency, who contacted the Australian Federal Police.

Leyla left home with the assistance of the Australian Federal Police. Leyla now lives in youth supported accommodation.

Once Leyla left home, she also disclosed that her uncle had been sexually inappropriate towards her, including exposing himself to her. This allegation was investigated by police and child protection.

The Australian Federal Police referred Leyla to Legal Aid. With the representation of Legal Aid, Leyla made an application to the Family Law Court for orders placing Leyla’s name on the Family Law Watch List and restraining her family from removing her from Australia or from forcing her into marriage.

Leyla’s family have made ongoing threats to Leyla. Leyla’s brother sent Leyla a message over Facebook saying “If you don’t come home soon, then Dad will have you killed”. With the assistance of Legal Aid, Leyla reported this behaviour to the police. Police applied for a protection order to protect Leyla.

Living in supported accommodation, Leyla feels very isolated from her religion, culture, family and friends. Leyla has struggled with her mental health; and at times, has felt suicidal.