LOCAL artist Rosina Byrne collaborated with members of Mildura’s Afghan and Pakistani community at the weekend to tattoo a model in traditional henna.

Twelve women showcased their henna tattooing skills on a nude model as part of the Mildura Palimpsest Biennale festival to be held in October.

Ms Byrne, who documented the process through photography, said the exhibition came about through her work on the oppression of migrant women in the Western world.

“I had the opportunity to work with these women regarding a love for their culture and trying to find a way of expressing their individuality and work collectively,” she said.

“We had a nude model who they henna-tattooed ... as part of their cultural celebration but taking it further – actually doing it all over the body.

“It was about working together as I documented that process.”

She said she hoped the community embraced the exhibition and hopes it increases awareness.

“It’s basically about breaking down boundaries and understanding even though there are different cultures they can push beyond and let the wider community see they are really just women facing the same struggles as the rest of us.

“At the same time it’s about embracing the culture and the world that we live in.”

She said the women revelled in the opportunity to showcase their culture.

“They loved it, it was great, they enjoyed the process of showing what they can do,” Ms Byrne said. “At first I think they were a bit intimidated but they embraced it.”

SMECC community engagement officer Farjana Alam Rankin said the process allowed the women to express their culture and traditions.

“I think it was really a very new experience for them because usually it’s every traditional, they only use it for things like a traditional marriage ceremony and only on the hands,” she said.

“They’ve never used it before as an artwork but Rosina helped them to understand about it.”

The Henna Project can be seen at the Intercultural Installations at SMECC on October 4 during the Mildura Palimpsest Biennale festival.

The participants will also be running a henna stall on the day and traditional food will be served.