

ssinews

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



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From the CEO Violet Roumeliotis



March has been a celebratory month with our Harmony Day event in Parramatta Park, the Australian Migration and Settlement Awards in Canberra, as well as the launch of the Parliamentary Friends for Productive Diversity and Settlement. All these events were a great show of our rich cultural heritage and the wonderful and innovative work being done in government and community sectors.

The launch of the second report from the 2013 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesions Surveys revealed mixed feelings on settlement issues in Australia.

Monash University Professor Andrew Markus highlighted that the Recent Arrivals Report found a key and consistent finding of high levels of satisfaction broadly experienced by recent arrivals with regard to their views on life and settlement in Australia, with 81 per cent of respondents indicating that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with life in Australia.

This is contrasted, however, with a marked increase from 2012 in reported experience of discrimination, and "the perception of immigrants that the Australians they encounter are not friendly and caring". The report goes on to identify that "recent arrivals report relatively high levels of discrimination on the basis of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion".

These of course are things that we approach and witness daily in our work and a number of our programs and events attempt to address the fears that are building in our local neighbourhoods and communities.

We hope that through our work and community engagement we encourage Australians to be more curious about their newest arrivals and citizens rather than fearful of them.

The SSI Employee Roadshows continue, and they have been a wonderful opportunity for senior management to engage with staff on a more personal level, and answer questions about SSI's vision and direction and how we can provide the best possible services for our clients.

There will be more opportunities for SSI staff to engage with each other on an ongoing basis through the SSI Speakers Series which begins in April.

I am very excited about the opportunities for all of us in the sector to work together and to be inspired and challenged.

Inspiring change: a just reward for hard work



L-R: SSI CSP Service Delivery Manager Mamtimin Ala; Soroptimist International, Jacqueline Hawkins; Zahraa Habeeb, Soroptimist International, Julie Griffin, SSI Quality Exit/Coordinator, Nasiba Akram

The Hornsby branch of women's organisation Soroptimist International acted on this year's 'inspiring change' theme for International Women's Day by presenting its inaugural education scholarship to 15-year-old student Zahraa Habeeb.

Supported by SSI through the Community Support Program, Zahraa and her family are living in Sydney while they await the outcome of their application for refugee status.

SSI gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Hornsby club of Soroptimist International, and the support these women have given Zahraa, a young lady who has come to Australia from difficult circumstances.

Originally from Iraq, Zahraa and her family have been in Sydney on bridging visas since July, and are unable to work.

Part of the scholarship has provided computer equipment that will help immeasurably with Zahraa's studies, but it's also a resource that the whole family will benefit from.

President of the Soroptimist International Hornsby club, Rosemary Fitzgerald said that the values of Soroptimist International and SSI were aligned in that both organisations strongly support human rights, and with an interest in supporting women and children.

"We are thrilled to be able to support Zahraa in her school education and willingness to learn," said Ms Fitzgerald.

"Zahraa is an inspiration and we will assist in other ways when we can throughout the year."

Zahraa is enrolled in the Intensive English Centre (IEC) at Evans High School, Blacktown.

"Before the end of this year Zahraa will be able to transition from IEC to mainstream Year 10, a great achievement considering she knew little English less than 12 months ago," said Deputy Principal Bridget Sarris.

SSI celebrates Harmony Day 2014



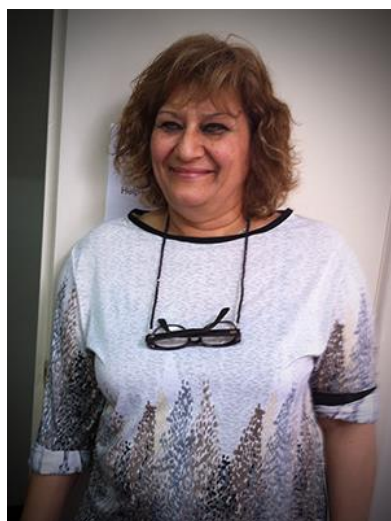
SSI celebrated its cultural diversity on Harmony Day last month with about 300 staff, volunteers and clients coming together to enjoy a halal sausage barbecue, music, dancing and a game of soccer in Parramatta Park.

At the event on March 21, SSI Humanitarian Services Delivery Manager Yamamah Agha said the message for people to contemplate was that “everyone belongs”.

She told the gathering that “at SSI, we have over 400 staff members of whom the majority are from diverse cultural backgrounds, and we have over 75 languages representing the diversity of its people. It is amazing to realise how harmonious our society is here in Australia and it is definitely something we need to celebrate.”

“It is very important for all of us that we continually strive to use the talents of everyone in our community and give people equal opportunity to contribute their talents. Diversity is our strength. It makes us a stronger, more resilient nation,” she said.

Earlier in the week, to mark the occasion, SSI Case Manager Nedhal Amir shared her story of arrival in Australia.



Nedhal Amir, pictured left, came to Australia from Iraq with her husband and four children in 2005, after applying for a humanitarian entrance visa.

They fled Iraq “because of the religious discrimination,” she said. “My children, they were suffering persecution in school because of religion, because I am from the Mandaean community.”

Although Nedhal already spoke English before arriving, she said adjusting to Australian life was still difficult. “The lifestyle, the rules – all of it – it was a big challenge for us,” she said.

Nedhal and her family were lucky to have extended family in Australia, who helped them adjust and find accommodation and education, and it was education that played the crucial role in helping her, and her family, integrate.

“First, when we arrived we took English classes, and later other different courses in TAFE,” she said. “My children also went to TAFE to study courses suitable for them. I did a diploma in community service and then volunteer work for one year. I did casual work for a Migrant Resource Centre and now I am a case manager with SSI, for people who, like us, like to change their lives too.

“All my experience, all my suffering in (refugee) camps, all my skills go to my clients, to helping people.”

NEWS AND EVENTS

Cultural Shift: symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement.

Registration is now open for the one-day symposium that will showcase effective services and delivery models that support recently arrived migrant and refugee families through their settlement journey.

Settling in Australia presents recently arrived migrant and refugee families with many new opportunities. However, the process of settlement and the associated adjustments to a new country and its social, cultural, legal, and other systems can also be challenging.

Settlement Services International has brought together leaders and experts from myriad organisations including health, legal, and community sectors to provide an insightful and engaging interactive program.

Funded by NSW Family and Community Services 'Keep Them Safe' initiative, the Cultural Shift symposium will highlight the important role of services from various sectors in meeting the needs of recently arrived migrant and refugee families.

Date: Thursday June 5, 2014

Time: 9:00am-4:30pm

Venue: Novotel Parramatta NSW

Cost: \$65.00

Registration and information: www.regodirect.com.au/culturalshift



culturalshift:

symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



SSI Community Kitchen celebrated 'Nowruz' on March 26, with almost 400 guests in attendance.

Nowruz originated in Persia, and is also known as Persian New Year, but is also celebrated by the regions that came under Iranian influence or were settled by Persians. Nowruz also marks the first day of spring or Equinox.

The joint Nowruz event included participation from Auburn City Council, Salvation Army, House of Welcome and the Australian Afghan Hussanian Youth Association, and was marked with much music and dancing, poetry-reading, face painting and a delicious banquet prepared of Persian inspired food.



*Members of Holroyd Rangers Asylum Seeker soccer team Mastafa and Abolfazl Baghery with club president John Nash
Photo: Geoff Jones, Fairfax*

In previous editions of SSINews, the enthusiasm of SSI clients for soccer has been reported, as well as the strong support they have received from the wider community.

The ad hoc team of asylum seekers and refugees named Auburn United FC are now members of the Granville and Districts Soccer Football Association, playing in the Newington Gunners and Holroyd Rangers soccer clubs.

It will be an overwhelmingly proud moment for SSI when these men run onto the field to play their first games of soccer in an Australian competition.

“The support they have received from so many different sectors of the community has been incredible,” said SSI CEO Violet Roumelotis, “from generous anonymous benefactors donating enough money to register a whole team, through to the soccer clubs reducing registration fees and local businesses supplying uniforms.”

SSI is also providing support to the players through funds for public transport tickets for game day travel.

Please email clawrence@ssi.org.au if you would like to know when and where the Gunners and Rangers will play over coming weekends.

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



The NSW Minister for Citizenship and Communities and Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello is seen here presenting the indefatigable SSI Quality and Exit Coordinator, Nasiba Akram, with a Sustaining Women's Empowerment in Communities and Organisations (SWECO) Award, awarded by the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW.)

The awards ceremony was part of the ACLW Women's Day event, held at Parliament House Sydney on March 5. The awards recognise and reward women and men "who catalyse their sensemaking of the barriers women face, into concrete action to address these barriers or change the contexts which give rise to them".



SSI Volunteer Zainab Karimi recently participated in a 'human library' event at Rose Bay girl's school, Kambala. The morning was modelled on 'speed dating', whereby pairs of students spent 15 minutes with one of five guests, who spoke of their personal experiences and backgrounds, all vastly different to the lives of the students.

Zainab spoke about her refugee experience, coming from Afghanistan in 1998. Other guests included a foster carer, a woman with cystic fibrosis who had undergone a lung transplant, and a vision impaired man accompanied by his guide dog.



SSI was pleased to host four youth workers on March 20 as part of the Journey Fellowship 2014 International Youth Worker Exchange.

Melinda Bowman, Michelle Sanchez, Natasha Triplett and Juana Watson, from Indiana, USA, spent the morning with case manager Amna Khurram (pictured far right) at the SSI Campsie office and visiting a local youth centre.

Amna explained the relationship SSI has with Migrant Resource Centres and how clients continue to be supported through this relationship once they have exited SSI programs, being referred on to youth workers at the centres.

The youth workers spent the afternoon with case manager Abdoulaye Sangare (pictured far left) in the Parramatta office. Abdoulaye, a member of the SSI Youth sub-committee, explained the aims and goals of the committee and the services and programs that SSI offers its young clients, including Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors, beyond its contractual requirements.

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



The IQ2 debate series is a project of St James Ethics Centre.

The debates provide a civilised space in which to disagree on issues of public importance. The next debate, titled "Will history's judgement vindicate our treatment of boat people?" will be held on May 6 in Sydney.

For more information about the debate series, click [here](#).

SSI has six tickets to give away to this event, which will be filmed by the BBC and broadcast to an estimated 70 million viewers. To win a ticket, you can either email your answer to info@ssi.org.au or [like](#) our facebook page and post your answer to the following question: Name three key programs delivered by SSI?

The first six people to correctly answer will win a ticket to the debate.



Congratulations Bih Yuh Jin – the March winner of the CEO Wellness Award.

Bih Yuh is a case manager with the CSP program, based in Parramatta, and was nominated by a colleague who could see the effort that Bih Yuh was making to 'be well'.

"Catching the train instead of driving has been one of the best changes I have made," said Bih Yuh. "It is a lot less stressful and gives me some down time."

Bih Yuh has been a great supporter of SSI lunchtime yoga and has also been regularly going to a range of classes at the gym.

"I realised I wasn't getting any younger and wanted to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle for the future," said Bih Yuh.

Bih Yuh has also changed her eating habits - eating healthy lunches and having more fresh food, and joining the SSI breakfast club.

We wish Bih Yuh the best on her wellness journey.

Bih Yuh Jin, right, with Be Well committee member, Sharon Longridge

