

ssi news

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



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From the CEO Violet Roumeliotis



The Cultural Shift symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement was an insightful day, and it was great to see old friends, familiar faces, and meet some of the newer community workers in the field. I felt a real sense of pride in our sector and was reminded of how many committed and experienced people there are to share with and learn from.

It seems many others felt the same way and the feedback I have received has been incredibly positive, so watch this space. What do you think should be the theme of the next SSI symposium?

Refugee Week is a key event in the SSI calendar, and this year SSI was a proud sponsor of the launch of Refugee Week 2014 in Granville. After many years of being a city-based event, a launch in the western suburbs, which is the heartland for many new refugee arrivals to this state, was an important acknowledgement to the thousands of refugees who have settled in NSW and the communities in which they settle. The event was an opportunity for western Sydney to celebrate the

achievements of refugees in their local communities and to remind people of the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees throughout the world.

I thank the three panel participants and facilitator of the second SSI Speakers' Series event - The Power of Storytelling, held to coincide with Refugee Week. I particularly acknowledge and thank SSI client Saleh Khani for sharing his story with us, and recognise his fortitude as he awaits the outcome of his visa application.

The Addison Road Community Centre, in Sydney's inner west, took a lead role as a member of the Marrickville Multicultural Interagency (MMIA) to host, with Marrickville Council, the Marrickville Refugee Week Forum. As a guest speaker on the panel, it was heartening to hear of the support of and commitment to human rights from the local community, and Mayor Jo Haylen who reaffirmed the council's commitment to the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative.

The SSI Community Kitchen recently hosted staff from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. They thanked SSI staff for providing them with the opportunity to witness firsthand the efforts and resources that go into the community kitchen and the benefits to our clients.

Holistic support services best practice

Access to timely and collaborative support services during their first years in Australia is critical to migrant and refugee families, ensuring a smoother transition to a new life here.

This was highlighted at the Cultural Shift symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement, held in Parramatta on June 5.

Feedback from symposium participants and presenters has been overwhelmingly positive. The day was expertly facilitated by broadcaster and presenter Julie McCrossin.

SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis said the symposium provided the opportunity to focus on the specific and unique needs of migrant and refugee families, needs that can sometimes be lost in general discourse about families.

Ms Roumeliotis said that the diversity and calibre of the symposium presentations and case studies showcased the effective services and delivery models in place to support migrants and refugee families through settlement.

Designed as a day of learning, the symposium was aimed at professionals who work with migrants and refugees to shed light on key challenges and increasing awareness of appropriate responses to these challenges.

Presentations focused on best practice strategies and cross-cultural issues in the areas of health, education, law, early childhood initiatives, parenting, early intervention, and mental health.

Symposium participants heard that was during the first few years of settlement that families face some of their greatest challenges, making it vital for NGOs and governments alike to provide innovative and holistic responses to these challenges.

Presenters detailed the fact that services that build capacity in the process of settlement and the associated adjustments to a new country's social, cultural, legal and other systems, allow migrants and refugees to achieve a 'cultural shift' in their settlement journey.

SSI's Charles Rich took some wonderful photos-see below and also page four for a selection.



Refugee Week 2014

Refugee Week, Australia's peak annual activity to inform the public about refugees and asylum seekers and celebrate the positive contributions made by refugees was launched at the Granville Town on Saturday June 14.

The launch was coordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) and Settlement Services International (SSI).

The keynote speech was delivered by Merrylands local Ali Ali, a former refugee who fled the Taliban in Afghanistan and arrived in Australia in 2001 as a 17-year-old asylum seeker with no English.

Ali's speech expanded on the Refugee Week theme "Restoring Hope", recounting how his journey to safety began with danger as well as hope for a better future.

The Refugee Week launch also featured speeches by RCOA President Phil Glendenning, and SSI Chair Kamalle Dabboussy as well as the presentation of the annual NSW Humanitarian Awards by STARTTS CEO Jorge Aroche.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the launch was an important opportunity for the Western Sydney community to celebrate the achievements of refugees in local communities and remind people of the challenges faced by asylum seekers living in the community and refugees throughout the world.

"Since Federation, Australia has welcomed more than 800,000 humanitarian arrivals, who have played a vital role in building vibrant, diverse and supportive communities.

"The decision to launch Refugee Week in Granville reflects the positive impact refugee settlement is playing in the social, economic and community life of Australia's third-largest economy."

The Power of Storytelling was the second event of SSI's Speaker's Series, held during Refugee Week.

The event discussed the role of storytelling in creating awareness about the refugee and asylum seeker experience and giving voice to people who want to share their stories so that they feel, understood and respected.

Speakers included award-winning writer Rosie Scott, Sri Lankan-born playwright and theatre director Dhananjaya Karunaratne and SSI client Saleh Khani.

Following the success of the SSI client art exhibition at Verge Gallery, artists from "Art is Our Voice" were invited to feature in Holroyd City Council's event program as well as at Sydney TAFE's Limelight Gallery.

In Hurstville on June 19, SSI's Haitham Subhi was a guest speaker at Refugee Week celebrations presented by Hurstville City Council and St George Local Area Command. An SSI client was also invited to share his experiences since arriving in Australia and how settlement services have assisted him.

SSI case managers and clients participated in the Auburn Diversity Services Inc. event on June 18 and also in various Fairfield Refugee Week events.



Artist Bassam Jabar exhibited his paintings at the Dario Palermo exhibition for Refugee Week.



NEWS AND EVENTS



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) introduced a group of SSI clients to the beauty of Sydney Harbour on June 18, during an outing to Headland Park in Mosman.

The tour was the idea of NPWS employee, Margaret Bailey, who approached SSI about volunteering to support clients waiting for visa applications.

NPWS organised transport for 15 SSI clients, staff and volunteers to be taken to Headland Park, where they spent a half day learning about the colonial and Indigenous history of the surrounding area, helping to establish the community garden, and enjoying a delicious lunch prepared by NPWS volunteers.

The clients thoroughly enjoyed experiencing an area of Sydney they had not visited before, and also the chance to meet locals and get their hands dirty.

Future events being planned include painting, bush regeneration and other activities that all serve to keep SSI clients active and motivated and connected to the mainstream Australian community.

SSI hopes to make this a bi-monthly outing and thanks NPWS for their support and enthusiasm.



[SBS Feast](#) magazine will be featuring some of the many talented cooks among our staff and clients along with their recipes in upcoming issues of the publication. Look out for these delicious recipes and stories over the coming months.



An 'Art Therapy' workshop for women clients was held on June 5 in the Katoomba studios of [Audrey Rhoda](#). Audrey generously volunteered her studio and time to run the one-day workshop for a group of SSI clients who enjoyed the opportunity to explore and express their creativity in a friendly and relaxing environment. Audrey is a Master of Arts graduate from the College of Fine Arts in Sydney, and has exhibited her art in Sydney, Melbourne and internationally. SSI thanks Audrey for her generosity and enthusiasm in making the day so enjoyable.



SSI Community Kitchen recently featured Tamil clients in the kitchen cooking up a feast. There was music, portrait artists and several clients also made a beautiful sand mandala. Department of Immigration and Border Protection officers attended the event and broke bread with SSI clients as well as CEO Violet Roumeliotis; General Manager Peter Zographakis; Business & Community Development Manager Joseph Ferrer and Housing Services Manager Patrick Yeung. Hillsong volunteers generously provided 130 "kilo of kindness" food hampers for clients and food for the event was bought with funds donated by Opal Dental, which is a local business that works with Community Support Program clients.

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



Congratulations to SSI case manager Jebin Shahi who received recognition at the inaugural Metro MRC Metro Assist Refugee Week Awards on June 25. Jebin received an award for his contribution to Youth Leadership and Mentoring.



Lauren Foley, left, with Be Well Committee Chair, Charles Rich



Congratulations Lauren Foley –winner of the June CEO Wellness Award.

Lauren is the administration assistant in the Ashfield office.

Lauren has changed her eating habits to include smaller portions and healthier drink options such as smoothies and juice instead of soft drinks. Lauren's goal is "to be a better version of myself".

On average, Lauren walks eight kilometres a day! Her busy job as well as walking between public transport and home keeps her fit and active.

Lauren always has a smile and is a valued member of the SSI team. We wish Lauren all the best on her wellness journey.

Getting Out of Your Inbox

One of the most common work habits that ramps up stress levels and decreases productivity is checking emails too often. Here are a couple of tips from Be Well's Communicating Clearly workshop to help you manage email more mindfully:

- Allocate specific times to check emails

If you are distracted by each new message alert, then you are sabotaging your ability to sustain focus on the chosen task. Scott Scheper, author of 'How to Get Focused', suggests you check emails no more than five times a day, and when possible turn off incoming mail notifications to reduce distraction.

- Get clear on your audience

When writing an email, consider who really needs to receive the information you are sending. Write to those people who can take action or need to be kept informed, rather than copying several others and filling up their inboxes. Also, try to anticipate the questions your reader may ask. Remember being courteous always counts.