

ssi news

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



June 2014 e info@ssi.org.au | [@settlmntservice](https://twitter.com/settlmntservice) | [f](https://www.facebook.com/settlementservicesinternational) settlement services international | www.ssi.org.au | t (02) 8799 6700

From the CEO Violet Roumeliotis



SSI is proud to have been awarded the contracts to work in partnership with St Vincent de Paul Society and Uniting Care to deliver Ability Links NSW.

Ability Links NSW will contribute to the objectives of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and will support people with a disability, their families and carers to lead inclusive lives as valued members of their community.

SSI will deliver the service across 23 local government areas through 64 Linkers who will be employed to connect people with a disability to their personal interests locally including sporting groups, education and employment. The Linkers will be based throughout the SSI membership of Migrant Resource Centres.

The SSI Board and I acknowledge the support given to settlement programs and services and equally important a commitment to multiculturalism demonstrated in the Budget with a total amount of \$545 million over four years.

SSI holds firmly the view that well-funded settlement programs are an invaluable investment for all Australians. It allows government, settlement service providers, and community, to work collaboratively to ensure that the newly arrived are provided opportunities to meet their full economic and social potential.

Placing settlement into a broader policy portfolio that promotes the support of individuals and families allows an equitable and strengths based approach. We thank the Senator Fierravanti- Wells for her demonstrated commitment to the specialist nature of settlement services that ensure that the great benefits of migration are realised.

I'm pleased to announce the naming of our refugee enterprise facilitation initiative - !gnite Small Business Start-ups.

SSI has allocated its own resources to fund this project and it is managed by a dedicated team including two remarkable enterprise facilitators, Rita Wilson and Dina Petrakis who, between them, have interviewed more than 70 referred would-be entrepreneurs over the past 10 months to offer support and encouragement for their initiatives and ideas.

One of the 70 referrals is Victor Youssef, who recently exhibited his copper etchings in the *Art is our Voice* exhibition to rave reviews.

SSI's first art exhibition, in partnership with ARTillery, was a great success, with hundreds of people visiting The Verge Gallery at Sydney University to view the art works created by some of SSI's many talented clients.

I would like to invite you to participate in the Refugee Week launch event on Saturday June 14 in Granville. SSI is proud to sponsor Refugee Week activities and understands acutely that *restoring hope* is essential for those who seek protection and a new life in Australia.

SSI to deliver disability inclusion program

SSI, in partnership with St Vincent de Paul Society NSW and UnitingCare, has been awarded the tender to deliver Ability Links NSW across 23 local government areas.

Ability Links NSW is contributing to the objectives of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and is a new approach by the NSW Government to foster full and active participation of people with disability in their community.

Sixty-four Ability Links coordinators, known as Linkers, will be hired to provide information and support to people with disability, their families and carers, and their local communities. Linkers will work in connecting local communities in order to shape a more inclusive society for people with disability and their families.

SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis said the missions of the organisations regarding social inclusion made for a highly compatible partnership and that people with a disability will benefit from this combined approach and the new model for full participation offered by Ability Links NSW.

Matthew Cleary, Executive Officer St Vincent de Paul Society Support Services said the society was very pleased to be partnering with SSI to deliver Ability Links NSW and to allow people with disability to live their life the way they wish.

“Ability Links is placing people with disability at the centre of decision making about their lives and welcoming communities to encourage inclusion of people with disability, their families and carers,” said Mr Cleary.

Claerwen Little, Director UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families was pleased the organisation had been chosen as a partner with SSI for the new initiative.

“UnitingCare is proud to partner with SSI and be involved in Ability Links NSW. It’s a ground breaking program promoting community inclusion and participation for people with a disability. It is work we know needs to be done well, and we are committed to that.”

Linkers work with people with disability, their families and carers to help them plan for their future, build on their strengths and skills, and develop networks in their own communities so they can do what they want with their lives - outside of the traditional disability service system.

It provides people with a locally based, first point of contact to support people to access support and services in their local communities.

Linkers also work with local communities to help them become more welcoming and inclusive of people with disability.

!gnite small business start-ups

With a new name, eight successful start ups on its books, and a Resource Team of 120 knowledgeable and generous members, the !gnite Small Business Start-ups initiative is booming.

Previously known as the Enterprise Facilitation Project, !gnite is a small business start-up initiative funded by SSI.

The project aims to draw out entrepreneurs from the refugee community living in Sydney and provide free, confidential and ongoing support.

Utilising an evidence-based model created by Dr Ernesto Sirolli of the US-based Sirolli Institute, the model has been put into practice in five continents and has been refined over 30 years. This is the first time the model has been trialled with a refugee population.

Since the project began in August 2013, it has received a lot of interest and support from the community evident in the growth of the Resource Team and the number of people accessing the services for advice and support.

To date there have been eight successful start-ups, including a photographer, caterer, beautician, and hand-made leather bags and wallets.

As a community-based initiative, clients are supported by a Resource Team comprising 120 members from the community, local business owners, members of councils and chambers of commerce. Members of the Resource Team volunteer their expertise, business knowledge and skills to the fledgling entrepreneurs with the aim of broadening their knowledge about local laws and networks.

Many recently arrived refugees face significant barriers to employment in Australia, in particular during the early stages of their settlement. Research shows that humanitarian entrants are the most disadvantaged cohort of immigrant arrivals and face the greatest settlement difficulties in Australia, particularly in the labour market.

Studies show that although refugees display strong entrepreneurial qualities compared with other migrant groups, with a higher than average proportion engaging in small and medium business, even after three years in Australia, one third of refugee-humanitarian entrants will remain unemployed.

If you are interested in joining the Resource Team or learning more about the !gnite initiative, please contact Senior Project Officer, Honey Muir, hmuir@ssi.org.au



NEWS AND EVENTS

The Power of Storytelling

The SSI Speakers' Series Refugee Week special event will discuss the role that storytelling plays in giving voice to refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

Many refugees and asylum seekers have compelling stories to tell and wish to tell those stories. However, many have reasons for wanting to remain silent; sometimes their stories are misappropriated or simply ignored. How can refugees and asylum seekers share their stories so that they feel safe, understood and respected? How can we reach audiences who should be listening to these stories? How does storytelling help create greater understanding on issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers?

Date: Tuesday June 17

Time: 6:00-7:30pm

Location: SSI Head Office
Level 2, 158 Liverpool Rd, Ashfield NSW
Admission by gold coin donation

(monies collected will support SSI's Arts & Culture program)

Bookings: <http://speakerseriesstorytelling.eventbrite.com.au>

The Power of Storytelling

Join us for a timely discussion about the role that storytelling plays in giving voice to refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

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Alissar Chidiac
FACILITATOR

Alissar Chidiac has been working in community arts for over 30 years. She initiated the 'wattan project' with Arab communities at the Powerhouse Museum. With Auburn Community Development Network she developed 'Auburn Poets and Writers Group', 'Moving Calligraphy_Visual Storytelling', among other projects. Alissar was Creative Producer of Casula Powerhouse Art Centre's national initiative No Added Sugar: Engagement and Self-Determination: Australian Muslim Women Artists. She is currently working with Community Partnerships at the Australia Council for the Arts. Alissar received a Fellowship (2005) from the Australia Council for the Arts, as well as the annual 'Ros Bower Award' (2010) honouring a lifetime contribution to community arts and cultural development.



Dhananjaya Karunarathne
SPEAKER

Dhananjaya Karunarathne is a published playwright, director and designer working in both Sri Lanka and Australia as an independent artist. After moving to Australia, Dhananjaya completed his Master of Creative Arts, Theatre, at the University of Wollongong in 2004. He is currently undertaking a Master of Creative Arts - Research, at the university to further explore his concept of 'Theatre against the audience'.

In the past few years Dhananjaya has also been involved with the Merrigong Theatre Company, Wollongong. As part of his studies, he is currently developing a new play called *A Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seeker's story as performed by Australian actors under the guidance of a Sinhalese director*.



Saleh Khani
SPEAKER

Iranian-born Saleh Khani is an IT engineer and emerging writer. His father worked on ships and Saleh grew up absorbing experiences which fostered understanding of other cultures and traditions due to the nature of his father's work.

Saleh applied to study an Advanced Diploma of Applied Science (Nautical Science) at the University of Tasmania and was accepted. While working on board a vessel in Iran he paid for his studies and waited on news regarding his visa application to Australia, which was later denied. Around this time Saleh had to leave his country and his journey as an asylum seeker began. He arrived on Christmas Island in April 2013 and is writing a book in Farsi called *I Am An Asylum Seeker*.



Rosie Scott
SPEAKER

Rosie Scott is an internationally published award-winning writer who has published six novels, and a collection each of short stories, poems and essays.

She and Tom Keneally co-edited a PEN anthology of writers in detention, which earned them a nomination for the Human Rights Medal and helped to gain PEN the Community Human Rights Award. Rosie is a permanent member of the Council of Australian Society of Authors, recipient of the Sydney PEN Award and a Lifetime Member of PEN. In 2012 she was nominated as one of the 100 most influential people in Sydney in Education - for the work she has done in public education about asylum seekers. She is the co-editor, with Thomas Keneally, of the new anthology *A Country Too Far*.



Invitation to Launch Refugee Week 2014 15-21 June

The Refugee Council of Australia, STARTTS and Settlement Services International warmly invite you to the official NSW launch of Refugee Week 2014 on Saturday June 14.

Join us in celebrating the valued contributions refugees make to Australian society.

Saturday 14 June 2014, 10.30am to 12.30pm, Granville Town Hall, 10 Carlton Street, Granville, NSW

- Keynote speaker Ali Ali • Presentation of the 2014 NSW Humanitarian Awards
- Dario Palermo Refugee Art Exhibition • Live music and entertainment

RSVP Contact (02) 9211 9333 • **Email:** media@refugeecouncil.org.au



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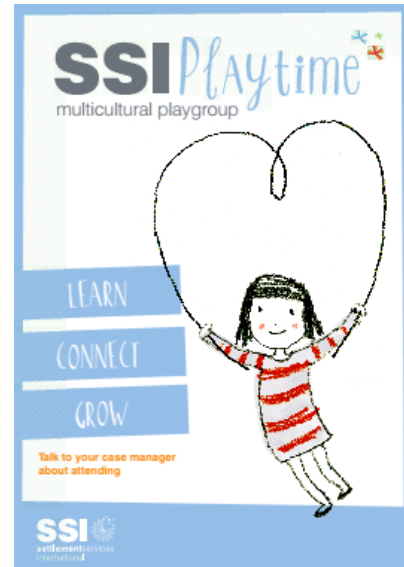
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NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



SSi Playtime, a multicultural playgroup, has been created in response to the need of refugee and asylum seeker mothers with non-school age children to make friends and build support networks.

Playtime is held weekly in Parramatta and aims to provide a range of benefits including social and emotional support for mothers, an opportunity for children to interact with other children and adults, and to engage specialist services and provide information on parenting, building strong relationships in the family, and infant and maternal health, among other things.

Children enjoy craft and musical activities, while mothers enjoy a cup of tea, and the opportunity to spend time with other women in a safe and supported environment. Up to 20 women attend each week.

SSi case managers have been instrumental in helping deliver structured activities and providing assistance getting Playtime off the ground. If you would like to support Playtime, please contact Regional & Community Engagement Coordinator Trina Soulos on 8977 6700.



SSi acknowledged and celebrated the courageous steps taken by many women to seek protection and safety for their families with a Mother's Day lunch event at Auburn Centre for Community on May 14.

The gathering provided an opportunity for the women to socialise and relax and enjoy a day of pampering, food, music and dance.

Lunch was generously catered for by Tony Sharpe of Educating Palates and Hillsong Church provided gift bags. An anonymous donation of jewellery and lotions were gifted to the women. Transport and childcare was provided so that the women could have a truly relaxing and special Mother's day.

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



Musician and SSI client Babak Jahangirzadeh delighted audiences with a lively performance of Persian music on Friday May 23 at Ashfield Civic Centre as part of Ashfield Council's 'Merry Month of May' series.

The series celebrated music and dance from around the world with special lunchtime performances held in the forecourt of the Ashfield Civic Centre.

The event was supported by the Metro Migrant Resource Centre, and Babak's participation was facilitated by SSI's Arts & Culture program.



SSI clients enjoyed 'The Wonders of Waddangalli' on May 12, a bush care project organised by Parramatta Council.

Transport was provided by Council and Council staff helped inform and explain to 15 clients about bush care, regeneration, and its effect on native plants and wildlife.

A representative from Greening Australia and a bird-watching expert were also present.

A day outdoors exploring the natural beauty of the Parramatta area was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



SSI participated in the Auburn Careers Pathways Expo on May 15.

The event included information and workshops about resume writing, preparing for an interview, overseas skills recognition and understanding your work rights.

The 'Benefits of volunteering' and 'Find your inner motivation', were particularly popular. Over 200 people received on-on-one advice from the advisory desks.

SSI Auburn staff attended, pictured here with Auburn City Mayor, Councillor Hicham Zraika.



Congratulations Zoe Bell –winner of the May CEO Wellness Award.

Zoe is a case manager with the Community Support Program, based in the Ashfield office.

Nominated by her colleagues for her incredible self-control to resist office birthday cakes and making other healthy food choices, Zoe has also taken up a regular physical activity routine of walking to work, rain, hail or shine.

Zoe also participates in the yoga and zumba program offered in the workplace.

We wish Zoe all the best on her wellness journey.

Zoe Bell, left, with Be Well Committee Chair, Charles Rich

SSI staff blood donations help save lives

According to the Red Cross one in three Australians will need blood. Blood donated so far by SSI has saved the lives of 24 people.

Team Leader, Nils Bethke co-ordinates the SSI Blood donation program. Nils is delighted by how responsive staff has been to this Be Well initiative. "Our aim is to make blood donation as convenient as possible. Red Cross courtesy buses pick up staff from our main offices and return them after giving blood."

In June there are three more opportunities to participate in SSI's Give Blood, Save Lives program. If you plan to take part (and you are eligible to give blood), here is how to prepare on the day of the appointment.

- drink at least 3 glasses of water/juice in the 3 hours before donating
- eat a healthy meal and snack
- bring along photo ID (such as driver's licence) or blood donor card
- smile - you're making a huge difference to your community

For more on donating blood visit: www.donateblood.com.au. Visit the Be Well blog for more on SSI's blood donation program.