

ssinews

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



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From the CEO Violet Roumeliotis



SSI is proud to present the Cultural Shift symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement, to be held in Parramatta on June 5.

It will be a valuable opportunity for providers working in this area to hear from their peers and leaders about new strategies and innovative programs being delivered to some of our more vulnerable new members of the community.

Presentations and workshops will be given on a range of subjects including health, early intervention and collaboration, so there is sure to be something of interest. Registrations close May 23.

SSI was pleased to host a visit from Assistant Minister for Employment, the Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP and Member for Reid, Craig Laundry MP on April 9.

SSI is encouraged that the Federal Government continues to show a strong interest in the work of SSI with refugees and asylum seekers settling into NSW.

Following on from this visit, SSI was invited as a guest of Craig Laundry to the *Generation Success* breakfast held on April 16 and addressed by Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

Generation Success is a joint initiative by Woolworths and News Corp to help curb growing youth unemployment. Employment opportunities for our clients are a key concern for SSI and we are currently working on a strategy that will help identify long term and sustainable measures to our assist our clients to become economically independent.

The work that SSI is doing through the Refugee Enterprise Facilitation Program is also providing avenues to help facilitate our clients to become self-employed and perhaps become employers themselves one day.

The benefits of economic independence are far reaching and help ease the settlement journey.

The inaugural event in the SSI Speakers' Series was held on April 3 and I would like to thank our guest speakers [Refugee Council of Australia](#), Information and Policy Coordinator Lucy Morgan, and [UNSW Centre for Refugee Research](#), Senior Research Associate Dr Rebecca Eckert, for sharing their expertise and providing compelling insight into the topic of the event "Refugee Women: Double Jeopardy".

Our female clients, particularly those on Women at Risk visas, are a focus of SSI planning and program delivery and we endeavour to continue our learning and support work in this area.

Highlighting innovative migrant family services

Access to timely and innovative services during their first years in Australia is critical to migrant and refugee families, ensuring a smoother transition to a new life here, a concept that will be explored at the upcoming [Cultural Shift](#) symposium.

SSI has brought together leaders and experts from the NGO and government sectors to provide an insightful and engaging interactive program. The June 5 'Cultural Shift: symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement' will be held in Parramatta. Registrations close on May 23.

It's during the first few years of settlement that families face some of their greatest challenges, so it's vital that NGOs and Governments alike provide innovative responses to these challenges.

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.

New and different customs, laws, family dynamics, and for some, language, can contribute to difficulties experienced by families settling into new lives in Australia.

The symposium presentations and workshops will showcase the effective services and delivery models in place to support migrants and refugee families through settlement.

Program highlights include an early childhood program for trauma recovery and development presented by STARTTS, promoting health and wellbeing in newly arrived students presented by St George Mental Health Community and St George Youth Services, the efforts of NSW Police working with CALD youth, presented by Detective Superintendent Peter Lennon, Commander of Fairfield Local Area Command, and supporting children of CALD families facing forced marriage, presented by Legal Aid NSW.

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

Cross cultural issues in the areas of health, education, law, early childhood initiatives, parenting, early intervention, and mental health will be addressed, and best practice strategies presented.

To register and for further information visit

www.regodirect.com.au/culturalshift

culturalshift:
symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement



From Sydney to Tehran: AUSCO exchange benefits



and effort put into delivering an AUSCO class.

Ms Agha said the group she worked with was full of questions about life in Australia.

They had more than 150 questions on the first day about Australia's freedom, about services in Australia, about religion and whether they could practice their own religions. She said they wanted to know about how they would communicate in Australian society, could they work, how Australia treats its sick and old people, and would they have the same rights as Australian citizens. The group felt quite reassured that there was someone from Australia to answer their questions directly.

Among her recommendations were:

- a greater emphasis on information about youth services and rights
- an introduction to Humanitarian Settlement Service providers in each state
- for biographical summaries of clients to be provided to service providers such as SSI by the departments of Social services and Immigration and Border Protection, and
- for ongoing communication between on-shore and off-shore trainers.

Refugees resettling in Australia should benefit from greater cohesion between on- and off-shore programs.

This was one of the recommendations from SSI Humanitarian Settlement Services Service Delivery Manager Ms Yamamah Agha after taking part in the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) five-day exchange program to Iran.

Ms Agha experienced firsthand the work done to help prepare refugees and humanitarian visa holders for arrival in Australia.

The AUSCO program is provided to refugee and humanitarian visa holders who are preparing to settle in Australia while still overseas in transit countries and refugee camps.

The program provides practical advice and the opportunity to ask questions about travel to and life in Australia. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is contracted to deliver AUSCO on behalf of the Department of Social Services, which funds the program.

Ms Agha described the trip as a magnificent experience which provided her with great insight into the tremendous amount of work

Olympic and academic dreams on hold

Hamed Ghorbani is a high achiever in his chosen sport and academia, and a prime example of the talent and dedication found in many new migrants and people seeking asylum in Australia.

Hamed, 27, from Iran, is living in the community on a bridging visa and is being supported by SSI while he awaits a response to his application for refugee status.

Mr Ghorbani is an elite athlete in the Olympic sport of handball, who has won a national club title with the University of Sydney and a silver medal for the NSW team at the national championships.



He is also a skilled researcher with a Master's Degree in Sports Science and Physical Education. In 2012, he was awarded a silver medal for best invention at the Taipei International Invention Show and Technomart for an ergonomic running machine that he designed.

SSI CEO, Violet Roumeliotis, said Mr Ghorbani's achievements were impressive.

Had Mr Ghorbani been born in Australia he could have strived to be an Olympic representative with a career in sports medicine research and development, she said. Unable to work, due to his asylum seeker status, since settling in Sydney in May last year, Mr Ghorbani approached the Sydney University handball club to ask if he could play.

"It is very good there," he said, "I met new people. I feel very welcome there with the good relationships I have with my team mates and coach. They are very good to me; they help me and support me."

Mr Ghorbani represented Iran at youth levels and played in the country's professional league for five years.

Mr Ghorbani's Sydney Uni team qualified for the Oceania Club Championships in New Caledonia in June, after winning the national championship. Mr Ghorbani is unlikely to join them, however. Living in Australia on a bridging visa means he is unable to travel overseas. But he still holds hope after lodging a ministerial intervention request to be granted an exception.

If granted refugee status and eventually citizenship, Mr Ghorbani hopes to represent Australia at an Olympic Games and develop a career in sports science research.

"I would like to study more," he said, "and make lots of research in the field of sports medicine, especially in knee surgery and ankle surgery in Australia."

NEWS AND EVENTS



Art is Our Voice

See the voices of refugee
and asylum seeker artists

Exhibition at Verge Gallery, University of Sydney,
Jane Foss Russell Plaza, City Rd, Darlington

May 14-22, 2014

Opening Hours: 10am-5pm

Opening night Wednesday May 14 at 6pm

For more information, please go to www.ssi.org.au
www.artisourartillery.com or call (02) 8799 6700

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NEWS AND EVENTS cont...

Art Is Our Voice is an exhibition showcasing the creative work of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. The exhibition, showing May 14-22 at Verge Gallery, has been organised by SSI in conjunction with Amnesty International's ARTillery project.

SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis said the exhibition would give voice to people who are too often spoken for and about by others.

By presenting their work to the community, these 15 visual artists from Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Sri Lanka can show their skills and express their creativity.

Most of the artists have worked professionally in their countries of origin in a range of media that include painting, sculpting, photography, and as jewellers and engravers.

Ms Roumeliotis said she hoped this exhibition would not only showcase their talents but help the artists make new connections in the community that would help them pursue their art here in Australia.

Of special interest at the exhibition will be the work of 'coffee artist' Masoud Akhava Ghassabzadeh. Coffee art is practiced by artists who have spent time in detention centres. With no access to paints or other materials, asylum seekers in detention began using instant coffee mixed with water to paint with.

Masoud taught himself to paint with coffee while in detention and said he still prefers the look of the medium over other materials now that he lives in the community.

"My inspirations for painting were all those dark days that I experienced while staying at different detention centres for over 12 months," he said. "I used to imagine the sun was crying for people who were locked up, with no freedom, inside the detention centre."

The exhibition will be held at [Verge Gallery](#), University of Sydney; May 14-22. Opening night is by invitation only.

For more information visit www.ssi.org.au



SSI hosted the Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP, pictured second from the left, and Craig Laundry MP, pictured far right, on April 9 in the Ashfield head office.

The Minister and MP met with senior members of SSI as well as SSI Chair, Kamalle Dabboussy, pictured far left, who shared information on the diverse services delivered by SSI, particularly with regards to the programs for asylum seeker and refugee clients.

Mr Laundry is the Member for Reid, an area in which many SSI clients reside. Mr Hartsuyker is Assistant Minister for Employment, an issue of concern for many refugees and new migrants.

NEWS AND EVENTS cont...



SSI's Arts & Culture program partnered with Redfern-based [The Sydney Story Factory](#) to organise a creative writing workshop for clients aged 7-17 years.

The workshop on April 16 was held in the 'Martian Embassy'. Eight SSI clients from different program areas took part in the workshop.

With the assistance of trained volunteer tutors, the children developed a piece of writing about the idea of flying, and decorated a kite with the stories they wrote.



Representatives from SSI attended the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) networking event for stakeholders affected by the second phase in of the Working With Children Check (WWCC).

People & Culture Manager, Judy Vergison, pictured far right, and Manager OOHC - Multicultural Foster Care Service, Ghassan Noujaim, pictured far left, learnt about the new WWCC system and how SSI will be expected to meet its legal obligations in relation to the new WWCC by 31 March 2015.



Jam sessions at the SSI Community Kitchen continue to grow both in number of donated instruments as well as interest from and popularity with clients.

Volunteer music teacher, Philip Feinstein has provided immeasurable support and enthusiasm through his donation of time and sourcing instruments for the clients who attend the Community Kitchen.

Community Kitchen was delighted to have Craig Laundy MP participate on April 23, helping to serve Rohingya cuisine to about 100 clients who attended on that day.



Congratulations Alireza Komjani and Arash Hasanzadeh – joint winners of the April CEO Wellness Award.

Arash and Alireza are case managers based in the Parramatta office.



Together, Arash and Alireza have made the decision to change their eating and exercise habits and to focus on positive outcomes.

Arash has lost seven kilos so far on his Be Well journey, and the men have been going to the gym almost every day.

They have been choosing healthier lunch options and have been an inspiration to their colleagues.

Arash and Alireza are looking and feeling better and are proud and deserving recipients of the CEO Wellness Award.

Best wishes to them on their wellness journey.

Arash Hasanzadeh, left, with Ali Reza Komjani

How is your work-life balance?

Work-life balance is a theme at the heart of SSI's Be Well program. The Work Well workshop supports staff to better navigate the competing demands of work, family and community. This half-day training - which is compulsory for all staff - explores how to: better manage stress, improve your focus and reduce unhelpful distractions using tools including mindfulness. With satisfaction levels at 98%, we know that SSI staff really value this training. With two Work Well workshops scheduled in May/June, new staff is encouraged to register now.

More lunchtime mindfulness meditation courses at SSI

Back by popular demand, there will be more free lunchtime [Mindfulness Meditation courses](#) running at SSI Auburn, Ashfield and Parramatta during May. The course is four weeks' long and each weekly class is only 45 minutes. Beginners are most welcome.

Why Mindfulness? Mindfulness is a simple and proven antidote to feeling frantic, stressed and distracted. Studies show that practising mindful awareness has many benefits including improved empathy, reduced stress and better concentration and focus.