

ssi news

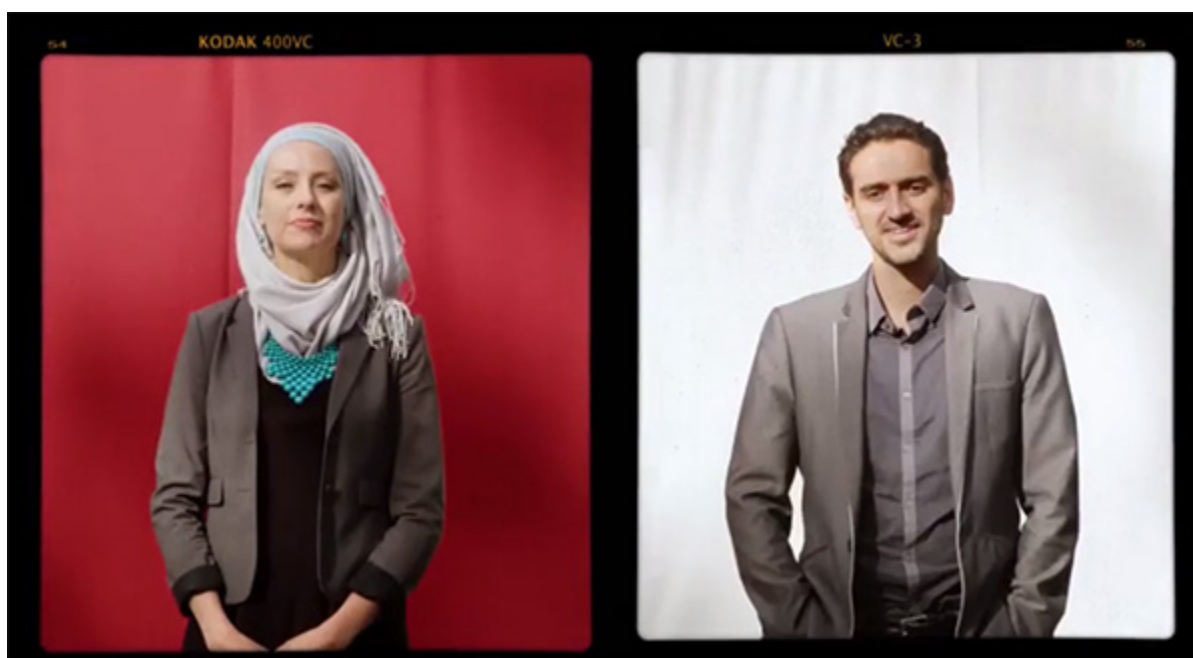
SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



October 2014 | e info@ssi.org.au | @settlmntservice | settlement services international | www.ssi.org.au | (02) 8799 6700

Walk Together: common people, common dreams

SSI is a proud partner of the 2014 Walk Together event on October 25. Walk Together events will take place around the country in major cities, and start with group walks aimed at promoting social harmony and equality among all of Australia's cultural, ethnic and religious groups.



Click on the image: Australians from all walks of life support Walk Together in this YouTube clip.

The Sydney walk will leave from Town Hall at 1pm, and will end in Tumbalong Park, near Darling Harbour. The theme of this year's event is "Common People, Common Dreams". After the short walk, attendees are invited to stay and picnic with family, friends, colleagues and clients. Bring some food, a picnic blanket and share and enjoy an afternoon of music, performances and basking in the welcome spirit. SSI clients in the eight-piece ensemble "Caravan of Love" will perform at the after-walk event.

To hear why Australian artist Gotye and political commentator Waleed Aly are supporters of Walk Together, watch the event video on SSI's [YouTube channel](#).

People can register for the event by following the link to the SSI [Facebook events page](#).

From the CEO Violet Roumeliotis



This past month we have witnessed an escalation in tension in our community that troubles the heart. It's at times like these that we should pay special attention to beautiful examples of Australia's multicultural success story.

Anxiety is heightened in an environment where media and politics are focused on terrorism, on the religion rather than the crime of suspected criminals, and on conflicts overseas.

These events should not be conflated to cast suspicion over any particular religious or ethnic community. However, disappointing as it is, negative stereotyping and racial profiling inevitably occur. This being the unfortunate case, our clients, colleagues and friends of Islamic faith may find themselves targets of unwanted comments and behaviour.

This is a time to rally around people who may feel threatened. SSI is a proud supporter of the Australian Human Rights Commission anti-racism campaign: *Racism. It Stops With Me*. I encourage people to visit this [website](#) to learn more about how they can respond to racism.

SSI employees are fortunate to work closely with people from Middle East nations and people of Islamic faith, as colleagues and clients. As a result, we have a greater understanding of the shared values and qualities between those communities and the many other diverse groups that make up Australia. This is why we have a responsibility to reject negative generalisations and to communicate our values of respect, equality and compassion for all people in a diverse society. SSI Case Managers have increased efforts to discuss with clients whether they have been harassed because of their race, culture or religion. We will be showing the same care to employees and volunteers to make sure they feel safe and respected.

Examples of Australia's harmonious multicultural society are many but there is one I am particularly proud of at the moment. At the beginning of 2014 a group of men — mostly refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also Iran, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Tajikistan — wanted to join a soccer club. With a little support from SSI, some media publicity and great sponsors like Synapse Medical Services, the group found their way to the Newington Gunners Soccer Club.

The relationship between the players and club blossomed and their season culminated a few weeks ago with a Grand Final win — the first in the club's short existence. It should not matter, but in times like these I want to point out the Newington club is a mix of cultural and religious backgrounds. The individuals who compose this multicultural club say they pay little attention to one another's religion or cultural heritage, other than to respect these characteristics as equal to their own. The respect between the players with Muslim backgrounds and the rest of the club was illustrated beautifully by *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Peter FitzSimons recently. In an [eloquent and enthusiastic article](#), FitzSimons quoted Gunners' club president, Shane McNeil:

"This group of men have shown themselves to be courageous, respectful, quality human beings. Despite the language barrier for many, they have been there every time they have been needed. Whether it be helping on canteen, field set-up or liaising with other teams and sponsors who have been overjoyed to support the club. And this whole thing shows how 'the beautiful game' brings people of all races and religions together."

Champion team bring community together

Most of the men and teenage boys had never played soccer on grass fields with marked lines and a referee before 2014, but in their first season in Australia they won a championship. The coach and players in this team are supported by Settlement Services International (SSI) and CEO Violet Roumeliotis said their accomplishments on the field were only part of their success this year.



Newington Gunners AAM6 team, 2014 Grand Final Champions

“Playing soccer has been a gateway into the wider community for this group, as it has been for many other new migrants in the past,” Ms Roumeliotis said. “After joining the Newington Gunners Soccer Club in February, players began to build new, friendly relationships with other club members. Through the club, this group has learnt more about Australian culture and their English has improved. This has been great for their self-esteem and they are now visibly more confident about their part in Australian society. Then, there are the physical and mental health benefits.” Read more at the [SSI website here](#).

Not only did this group of players, club members and sponsors make bonds between themselves, they helped the wider community to learn more about asylum seekers and refugees by sharing their stories.

Follow the links to some of the media coverage on this group.

From the Fitz Files: A timely reminder of [everything good in sport . . . and life](#)

The Daily Telegraph: Newington Gunners have the [perfect role model in Sydney FC's Ali Abbas](#)

Auburn Review: [Storybook ending for team of soccer players](#)

Parramatta Sun: Team of [refugees win football championship](#)

Parramatta Sun: Asylum Seeker [soccer team play grand final](#)

Parramatta Sun: The kindness of strangers: western Sydney [soccer team helps refugees feel right at home](#)

SMH: Newington Gunners help create team of a [asylum seekers and refugees](#)

SMH: [Auburn United in hope](#)

One person's food, could be another's future

Yoga Raja has a talent for "food carving" that is finding appreciative audiences at Sydney weddings and functions.

Yoga, 32, is an artist and food – watermelons, carrots and radish – is his medium. From a watermelon he can carve a life-like human portrait, and from carrots and radish he sculpts bouquets of flowers that people approach to smell as if real.



Food art carved from watermelons by Yoga Raja.

"I like very much," Yoga said, "I practice three or four days a week. I like doing faces, flowers, anything I look at I can do."

Yoga came to Australia to seek asylum from Sri Lanka, via India. It was while studying for a bachelor degree in hotel management that Yoga first learnt his skill. He also learnt to cook and was a professional chef before coming to Sydney. In Australia, he carves decorative sculptures for weddings and functions and he grows in demand as word spreads.

Yoga, however, lives in the Toongabbie community on a bridging visa and this visa status does not allow him to work for money. So he volunteers his art to those who ask him.

"People very much like (my food sculptures) and offer money sometimes, but I cannot (take)," Yoga said. "I would very much like to do this for my future one day."

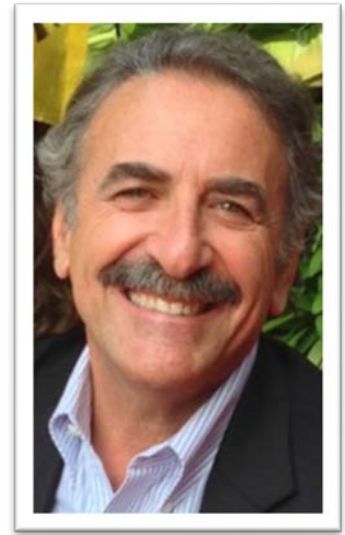
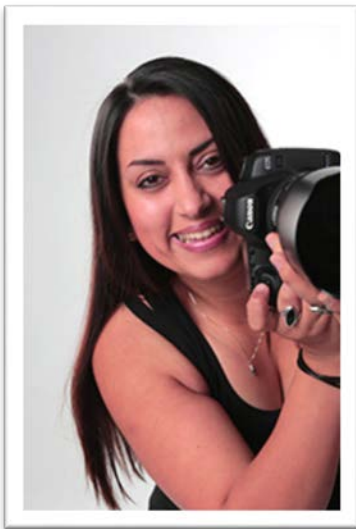
Yoga has also volunteered his kitchen skills to cook for SSI's Community Kitchen. The fortnightly Community Kitchen events are a gathering of people who are mostly on bridging visas and who are supported by SSI. Skilled cooks, such as Yoga, prepare food for groups of anywhere between 80 to 200 or more people.

Yoga said he enjoyed volunteering at Community Kitchen, because it helped the community and he could practice his English.

Ignite

small business
start-ups
AN SSI INITIATIVE

SSI Ignite Small Business Start-ups clients set up shop at the inaugural Bohemian Bazaar at Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville, recently. The Bazaar, held on the third Saturday of each month, is a blend of market stalls, arts workshops and performances, and it was a new and exciting venture for Ignite clients to get involved with. Addison Road Community Centre is expanding and will include a new Fair Trade shop in coming months. This shop will stock Ignite clients' products, as well as other locally produced and sourced Fair Trade items.



Ignite clients Maria Sorkhi and Sima Mahboobifard pictured here with Dr Ernesto Sirolli.

Ignite was named as a good example of an Enterprise Facilitation model during an interview with Dr Ernesto Sirolli on a nationally-syndicated radio program recently. Dr Sirolli of the Sirolli Institute developed the model of community-based enterprise facilitation used by the Ignite program. In an interview on Open House, a Christian radio program with more than 400,000 listeners a week, Dr Sirolli spoke about Ignite's progress.

"We have trained two enterprise facilitators for the organisation called SSI," he said, "And these two facilitators have already set up 12 small businesses in the first few months of (the program's) life. They have spoken to, at this stage, 70 clients, and what happens is newly arrived new Australians wanting to start a business now have someone who they can go to, to say 'I have an idea, can you help me'. It is absolutely inspiring to see the passion of newly arrived Australians who do not want to be on the dole; they want to create wealth for themselves, they want to embrace this new country."

Listen: [interview here](#).

For more about Ignite Small Business Start-ups visit the [SSI website](#).

News and events

Foster carers help maintain cultural connections

SSI promoted the importance of maintaining a child's connection to their cultural heritage, language and religion while in Out of Home care during NSW Foster Care Week last month.



Manager of SSI's Multicultural Foster Care Service (MFCS) Ghassan Noujaim said the organisation's foster carers led the way in helping maintain cultural connections.

"Our foster carers are incredible in their dedication to and support of keeping cultural links for their foster children," said Mr Noujaim.

"Being able to communicate in the child's first language, and maintaining their cultural traditions helps children understand where they have come from and helps them develop their sense of belonging and identity in their new foster care arrangement."

MFCS works closely with culturally specific and mainstream community organisations and community leaders, women's groups, religious organisations and other relevant sector services in the recruitment and support of its CALD foster carers.

For more information about SSI's Multicultural Foster Care Service visit [the website here](#).

Art Is Our Voice

Following the success of the SSI client art exhibition Art Is Our Voice earlier this year, a selection of works will again be shown to the public. The works produced by artists who are seeking asylum, or who are from refugee backgrounds will be exhibited at StirrUp Gallery at Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville, Tuesday, October 14, to Sunday 19.



One of the Art Is Our Voice photos: *That Old Man*, by Homa Nozari.

If you missed the show last time, this is a great opportunity to see the wealth of talent that these visual artists have brought to Australia. Most of the artists have professional experience and the original exhibition at Verge Gallery in May and June was a huge success. This exhibition will feature an artist talk on Sunday at 3pm.

SSI would like to thank the [Addison Road Community Centre](#) for all its support!

Details: October 14-19; Tuesday - Friday 4pm to 7pm, Saturday 12-6pm and Sunday 10am to 4:00pm.

StirrUp Gallery, Addison Road Centre, 142 Addison Road Marrickville NSW 2204

Caravan of Love

An eight-piece ensemble of musicians, all born in Iran, that includes four SSI clients will perform at the Walk Together event on October 25. The four SSI clients are all seeking asylum in Australia, while the remaining band members are Australian residents. The group met at SSI events, including Community Kitchen Jam Sessions and the Arts and Culture program's skills development workshops. Find more about Caravan of Love on the band's [Facebook page](#).

Arts and Culture

SSI's Arts and Culture program had a big month of events in September.

The Unity in Music ensemble, that formed when members met at an SSI music production skills workshop, performed at the Elements Community event as part of Sydney Sacred Music Festival 2014. The healing powers of music and storytelling are being harnessed through Music Therapy, Storytelling and Film-making workshops that began in September.



Healing through creativity: participants at Art Therapy workshop in Katoomba.

A second Art Therapy workshop run by volunteer artist Audrey Rhoda was held at her Katoomba studio. Participants finished the day by visiting the famous Three Sisters.

A group of children from SSI's Multicultural Foster Care Service enjoyed a school holiday adventure from Cabramatta to the city on September 23. They attended a creative writing workshop at the Sydney Story Factory in Redfern. The theme was "Bees" and the children delighted in learning about bees, tasting honey and exploring their imaginations through creative writing.

As well as enjoying the activities, the children also enjoyed meeting other foster children from a Vietnamese background to share experiences with. The parents enjoyed some respite through an organised activity for their foster children.

Another school holiday highlight for children was the Horizon Theatre's interactive puppet show at the SSI Children's Community Kitchen during September.

Broken Time shown internationally

The *Broken Time* film produced by SSI continues to find new audiences. Manager of Humanitarian Services David Keegan presented the film, which highlights the plight of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Youth who fall in to homelessness, at the National Homelessness Conference at the Gold Coast, Queensland, September 10-12. Mr Keegan said feedback was extremely positive, and added that orders for the DVD were coming in from across the country.

Broken Time has also been selected from more than 400 entrants to feature in this year's Social Justice Film Festival in Seattle, USA. The festival runs from October 18 to 30.

The film is available as an education resource on DVD. It is available by contacting SSI Senior Project Officer Honey Muir at hmuir@ssi.org.au. There is more information about the film on the [SSI website](#).

It's still cold at night for those without bedding

Most people might consider the cold months to be wrapping up. But if you're without a blanket at night, it feels like winter is still well and truly here.



Wrap With Love volunteers donating blankets to SSI clients.

So it was with gratitude that 200 SSI clients received blankets from Wrap With Love on October 1. Wrap With Love is a not-for-profit organisation made up of volunteers around Australia who have sent more than 323,000 hand-knitted blankets to people in more than 75 countries since 1992.

"It takes about 150 hours, from go to whoa, to complete each blanket," says Wrap With Love coordinator Jayne Goodes. "So, fortunately, there are groups and individuals everywhere just knitting away."

SSI gives a big, warm thank you to the people at Wrap With Love for helping our clients.