

# press kit

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# what is SSI

SSI is a community organisation and social business that supports newcomers and other Australians to achieve their full potential. We work with all people who have experienced vulnerability, including refugees, people seeking asylum and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, to build capacity and enable them to overcome inequality.

SSI draws on its expertise and experience to advocate for the people and communities it serves. Through the work we do, we empower people to change their lives. Through our advocacy and representation, we influence ideas and policy.





The image features a panel discussion with three men seated on a stage. The background is a yellow wall with the 'SSI speakers series' logo. The logo consists of the letters 'SSI' in a large, bold, dark font, followed by a large white quotation mark and the words 'speakers series' in a smaller, dark font. The men are engaged in conversation, with one man on the left wearing a dark jacket and a patterned scarf, the man in the middle wearing a dark sweater and a patterned scarf, and the man on the right wearing a dark jacket. A small red table in front of them holds a water bottle and a glass. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

**SSI** speakers series

## our vision

To achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families reach their potential

## our mission

We support newcomers and other vulnerable Australians to prosper and we build our sector's capacity and create positive social outcomes with government, corporations and communities.

# Violet Roumeliotis CEO



2017 Telstra Australian  
Business Woman of the Year

The 2017 overall winner of Telstra Business Woman, Violet Roumeliotis applies an astute strategic vision and active leadership at Settlement Services International (SSI) and broadly to organisations representing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.

She has overseen the growth and diversification of SSI that has **led to more than 1,100 per cent revenue growth to \$113 million** over the past five years.

Violet has steered SSI through a dramatic growth period, from a staff of less than 70 to over 600 in just four years. Violet has twice been named on *Pro Bono Australia's* list of the 25 most influential people in the not-for-profit sector and she was recently recognised as the **2017 Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year** after winning the NSW and national For Purpose and Social Enterprise category. In 2017, she was awarded the title of **Community Fellow** from Western Sydney University for outstanding service to the community.

Violet holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree with majors in Sociology and History from UNSW, a Masters in Management from UTS and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Violet has an extensive background in the leadership of large not-for-profit organisations providing services to vulnerable communities, while applying a strengths-based approach. She sits on numerous boards and committees and has over 30 years' experience in governance, human resources and financial management.

Violet sits on the NSW Government's Justice Multicultural Advisory Committee, the Federal Government's Settlement Services Advisory Council, and Co-Chairs the NSW Joint Partnership Working Group coordinating the NSW component of the additional intake of 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq.

#### For media inquiries

please email [press@ssi.org.au](mailto:press@ssi.org.au)

#### For Violet to speak at events or conferences

please email [ceo-invitations@ssi.org.au](mailto:ceo-invitations@ssi.org.au)






**10,000+**  
**refugees**

supported by SSI  
to settle in Australia

SSI supported  
**1,083**  
refugees and people  
seeking asylum and

**135**  
people with disability  
to find a job




**2,064**  
households secured  
long-term accommodation  
through SSI Housing



**19,520**  
clients came through  
the doors of SSI offices



**10,820+**  
families connected  
with their community  
during Community Hubs  
activities



# SSI fast facts

**27**  
people supported  
by SSI to start their own  
small business



**1,500+**  
people gained work  
experience through SSI's  
social enterprises

  
**20,000**  
nights of emergency  
accommodation  
provided by SSI

**\$90,000+**  
in educational  
scholarships awarded  
to refugees by SSI  
and Allianz Australia



**50+**  
artists developed their  
craft through SSI  
Arts & Culture activities



# SSI recent awards



**Violet Roumeliotis**  
2017 Telstra Australian  
Business Woman  
of the Year



**Carolina Triana**  
2017 Premier's Multicultural  
Community Medal  
– Arts & Culture

**Adam Bujairami**  
2017 Australian Migration and  
Settlement Awards

**Allianz  
for partnership with SSI**  
2017 Australian  
Human Rights Award  
– Business



**Ability Links NSW  
& FutureAbility**  
Employability National Finalist:  
Disability Industry Innovation  
Awards – Excellence in promoting  
cultural competency



**Allianz  
for partnership with SSI**  
2017 AHRI Cross Cultural  
Management Award



**EmployAbility**  
National Finalist in the  
2017 NESAs Awards



**The Staples Bag**  
Zest Award for  
Exceptional Project  
within a Not-For-Profit  
Organisation



**SSI**  
2017 Australian Migration and  
Settlement Awards

**Violet Roumeliotis**  
UWS Fellowship



# newcomers, refugees & migrants

## what we do

Through a mix of government and self-funded activity, and support from corporate partners, SSI supports individuals and families through a range of programs, services, and community engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

### Humanitarian Settlement Program

The Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) supports refugees from the moment they arrive at the airport, where SSI's culturally and linguistically diverse workforce ensures the first words new arrivals hear are 'welcome to Australia' in their preferred language.

SSI's HSP services enhance self-reliance with a focus on English language skills, education and job readiness. These services don't just respond to one particular need – they provide a whole spectrum of quality support to help new arrivals settle successfully in Australia.

Upon arrival to Australia, refugees are supported with airport pickup, short-term accommodation, community orientation and health assessments. They are also assisted with making links to their community, a basic household goods package and finding affordable long-term accommodation.

For six to 18 months, individuals receive tailored case management support that improves refugees' social and economic participation and, ultimately, sets them up to live independent lives in Australia.

### NSW Settlement Partnership

The NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) is a consortium of community organisations, led by SSI, delivering settlement services in agreed areas of NSW under the Department of Social Services' Settlement Services Programme (SSP).

The SSP provides for the delivery of core settlement support for humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants in their first five years of life in Australia. Its objective is to provide support that promotes economic and personal wellbeing, independence and community connectedness. These services can also facilitate pathways to learning English, education and employment readiness and help refugee and humanitarian entrants become fully-functioning members of society.

The NSP consortium comprises 23 organisations, including SSI and its 11 member Migrant Resource Centres and multicultural services, as well as 11 community organisations located around the state.

# newcomers, refugees & migrants continued

## **Refugee Employment Support Program**

The Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) addresses the challenges that are experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum in finding sustainable and skilled employment opportunities.

The program is focused on community-based solutions to employment through the involvement of local employers, organisations and other non-government organisations (NGOs) to connect eligible refugees and people seeking asylum with training, support and jobs.

The RESP program is available to people in western Sydney and the Illawarra who are underemployed or who are unemployed and require extra support – in addition to other government-funded employment services – to enable them to contribute productively to the Australian community and workforce.

## **Career Pathways Pilot**

SSI delivers the Career Pathways Pilot – a government-funded initiative to help newly arrived humanitarian entrants to use their professional or trade skills and qualifications in Australia.

CPP is open to humanitarian entrants who arrived in Australia under the Humanitarian Settlement Program, and who have lived here for five years or less and speak English well. Participants can see a Career Pathway Advisor to plan a career pathway in Australia, find out how to use existing skills in the Australian workforce and how to obtain recognition of existing qualifications, and achieve career goals.

## **Ignite Small Business Startups**

Funded by SSI and through corporate support, the Ignite Small Business Startups initiative facilitates business creation for people from refugee backgrounds who are keen to establish a small business or expand an existing one.

Fledgling entrepreneurs are supported by Ignite facilitators, industry experts and a resource team made up of volunteers from local businesses, councils, chambers of commerce and other individuals who can share their business knowledge and skills.

Many recently arrived refugees face significant barriers to employment in Australia, in particular during the early stages of their settlement. An evaluation report of the Ignite initiative shows there is significant entrepreneurial potential among refugees and many who have prior business experience. With support to overcome settlement challenges, these entrepreneurs will go on to contribute to the Australian economy.



# newcomers, refugees & migrants continued

## **Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS)**

The Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program provides support to people seeking asylum who are living in the community on temporary visas while their immigration status is assessed.

SRSS include temporary accommodation, income support and case management. People seeking asylum are assisted to connect with essential services in the community and are supported to secure their own long-term accommodation in the private rental market. Case managers support individuals and families until their visa status is resolved.

Through information workshops and community engagement activities, SSI aims to equip people seeking asylum with the life skills needed to adjust to their new community. People are connected with local community groups and volunteers and are supported to establish themselves independently within the Australian community while they await the outcome of their visa application. This program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

## **Community Hubs**

Community Hubs is a national program that primarily supports migrant and refugee parents and children as they navigate the education system. It builds parenting and family skills and resources, and promotes links between families and local services and networks.

SSI is the designated Support Agency for Community Hubs in Sydney, where Hubs are located across five local government areas.

Located within easy reach of their communities, the Hubs use a place-based community engagement approach to address the needs of families and children at a local level. They provide a safe, welcoming, family friendly place, where people can meet, learn, and build trusting, supportive relationships.

Hubs provide a holistic approach that supports the whole family, offering early learning programs, building social networks, providing access to services, and creating pathways to education, training and employment.

They welcome people by offering easily accessible programs, such as gardening groups, playgroups, exercise classes and morning teas.

## **Arts and Culture**

Underpinned by SSI's vision that everyone should have opportunities for creative development and cultural expression and participation, SSI self-funds an arts and culture program that runs activities ranging from community-based arts projects to the flagship New Beginnings: Refugee Arts & Culture Festival.

This self-funded program aims to harness the positive roles that arts and cultural activities can play during settlement. It also supports newly arrived artists by identifying relevant networks and providing professional development and performance opportunities while they are seeking asylum or during their early stages of settlement.

# newcomers, refugees & migrants continued

## **Youth@Work**

SSI Youth@Work is an innovative program that connects people aged 15–24 from migrant and refugee backgrounds with mentors to support them on their employment and education journey in Australia.

The program aims to enhance the career outcomes of multicultural youth who often find it difficult to maintain employment in Australia because of language and cultural barriers, and limited support and knowledge about the local jobs market.

Tailored for young people who live in Sydney, the program provides one-on-one support for up to six months to help youth adjust to the Australian jobs market, stay in work, and set the foundations for their career goals. Young people communicate with mentors via phone, email or in person and are connected with professionals with similar career interests to enhance their employment outcomes.

## **Youth Collective**

The Youth Collective is a collaborative initiative that aims to improve service delivery outcomes for multicultural young people in NSW through the delivery of activities that build confidence, resilience and leadership skills in migrant and refugee youth.

Led by youth, for youth, the Youth Collective fosters innovation and information sharing among service providers, and provides a voice for young people from multicultural backgrounds.

Drawing on the collective expertise of young people and multicultural organisations in NSW, the Youth Collective provides a platform for young people to participate in activities at the local level and play an active role in informing service delivery planning, implementation and outcomes. It also provides an avenue for youth workers and multicultural organisations across NSW to share ideas and work collaboratively to develop innovative solutions to minimise gaps in service delivery.

## **Multicultural Foster Care**

SSI Multicultural Foster Care is a specialist out-of-home care service for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds aged 0-18 years. The service operates in parts of metropolitan Sydney and the Hunter-Central Coast area.

At SSI, we believe children in care who are supported to learn about and maintain a connection to their culture, religion and language have better outcomes as they grow up than those who are not supported in this way. These connections help children to understand where they have come from and to develop their sense of belonging and identity.

Helping children stay connected with their culture, language and religion also helps children settle if and when they are returned to their birth parents.

# people with disability

## **Ability Links NSW**

Ability Links NSW (ALNSW) is a free program that supports people with disability aged nine to 64, their families and carers. The program is designed to help people plan for their future by building on their strengths and skills to lead the life they want as valued members of their community.

SSI works in partnership with St Vincent de Paul and Uniting to deliver ALNSW through its Linkers, who have extensive knowledge of their local communities. Linkers provide a locally based, first point of contact for people who want to access support and services in their community.

Many SSI Linkers are also bilingual and bicultural, making it easier for people of all backgrounds to feel supported to achieve their goals.

Linkers work closely with participants to discuss what their goals are and map out the best strategy to achieve them. Whether the goal is to participate in sport, education, volunteering, or expand their networks, with ALNSW people remain at the centre of decision making.

## **IgniteAbility Small Business Startups**

IgniteAbility Small Business Startups is a pilot program established by SSI to facilitate business creation for people with disability who are passionate about establishing a small business or expanding an existing one.

SSI is a leader in disability reform by creating opportunities for people with disability to contribute in all aspects of life: economic, social and civic. ABS data highlights that people with disability have a higher rate of entrepreneurship than people without disability. As a result, SSI has developed a ground-breaking program that taps into an individual's ambitions and motivations for a future of sustainable self-employment.

IgniteAbility has been inspired by the success of the Ignite Small Business Startups model which assists people of refugee background. IgniteAbility is tailored to address barriers and meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs with disability, providing an ecosystem of support for aspiring entrepreneurs. The IgniteAbility program is also accessible to families and carers of people with disability.

## **FutureAbility**

FutureAbility aims to increase CALD communities' knowledge and participation in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

SSI was funded in 2015 by the Department of Family and Community Services to develop and implement the FutureAbility project across NSW. FutureAbility phase 1 assisted ethno-specific and multicultural organisations and community groups to work with and access the new disability service system.

Building on this work, phase 2 of the project has involved the roll out of innovative activities designed to meet existing needs and gaps in CALD communities themselves. This includes coordinating a state-wide conference on CALD disability and NDIS, and producing multilingual audio segments for broadcast on ethnic radio channels to capture audiences who are immobile, isolated, vision impaired, elderly or unable to read in their own language.

# other vulnerable groups

## Employment

SSI Employment and Enterprises provides recruitment services, pre-employment planning and training, and work experience opportunities to help people establish suitable career pathways.

Meaningful employment is an important component to a stable, secure and independent future. SSI works with long-term unemployed people, newly arrived refugees, people seeking asylum, migrants, young people and people with disability to achieve this.

As a jobactive provider, SSI utilises partnerships with employers and job-ready programs to support job seekers to acquire new skills and to find and maintain a job.

SSI's five social enterprises – **The Staples Bag**, **Humble Creatives**, **Cater Connect**, **Food For Thought**, and **The Experience Centre** – offer job seekers the opportunity to get hands-on work experience in a retail and commercial environment, and to learn and develop vocational and personal skills that increase their employment opportunities.

A tailored recruitment service for people with disability is provided through **EmployAbility**, with dedicated consultants to assess the experience and goals of a candidate and map out a career pathway to achieve their professional goals.

SSI supports young people aged 15 to 24 to overcome barriers to employment through the government-funded **Youth Placement and Pathways Program (YPPP)** and **Smart, Skilled and Hired – Youth Employment Program (YEP)**, which began in June and August 2017 respectively. Through an in-house work experience centre, participants receive relevant, hands-on experience in administration, and retail and customer services within SSI and its social enterprises.

Together with Metro Assist, SSI also delivers **ParentsNext** in the Bankstown local government area. ParentsNext is an Australian Government initiative to help parents prepare for employment by the time their youngest child reaches school age.

## Housing

SSI Housing is committed to both supporting people experiencing homelessness and using innovation to contribute to the supply of affordable housing. During 2016-17, it provided more than 20,000 nights of emergency housing assistance to vulnerable community members — many of whom are supported by SSI's other services.

SSI also facilitated 73 long-term tenancies as part of its strategy to improve access to the private rental market for vulnerable individuals and families, and provided property management services to ethical landlords who were interested in achieving social, as well as financial, returns.

More recently, SSI Housing launched its Modular Housing initiative. This unique project aims to increase the number of affordable private rental dwellings on the market by working with a developer that provides quick-built, affordable and durable modular housing. SSI's role is to identify willing landlords for investment, provide ongoing property management services and source tenants.



# community engagement

Overarching all SSI programs is the fundamental objective to support and build capacity of individuals and families to find ways to participate, contribute and connect to one another in Australian society. The Community Engagement team works on a number of initiatives that facilitates this connection and creates meaningful engagement that is inclusive of everyone in the Australian community.

SSI's community-based initiatives embrace innovative strategies that promote cultural heritage, expression and interculturalism. Examples of this work includes:

- **Community Kitchen**
- **Playtime** multicultural playgroups
- **Surfing Without Borders** / Oceans Without Borders
- **The Friendship Garden**

SSI's work with community leaders and civic groups includes:

- Community leaders' skills and advocacy training
- Community leaders' forums
- Roundtables bringing together civil society and the settlement / disability sector

- Mobilising community groups to actively welcome new arrivals
- Supporting new arrivals to share with community groups stories of finding a home in Australia

The **Community Innovation Fund** is a new program established to enrich the capacity of community leaders and groups to build a stronger, more vibrant and resilient life together in southwest and western Sydney. SSI offers unfunded and underfunded groups, organisations or individuals a connection to southwest and western Sydney to implement a project that will enhance a newcomer's experience in the community. The program aims to move away from prescriptive interventions and use strength based models and an intensive consultation process to define aspirations and challenges of the community itself to shape their own priorities and aspirations.

Multicultural disability inclusion initiatives have been undertaken comprehensively across SSI's reach within the sector as well as within the organisation itself. The Community Engagement team has supported local

government disability inclusion strategies and made connections with the CALD community, as well as facilitating employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Each year, SSI draws on the contributions of volunteers, students, interns and corporate partners to deliver services to some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in Australia. In 2016-2017, SSI's **Volunteer Program** on-boarded more than 400 community members to contribute their time and skill in a voluntary role, with approximately 250 volunteers active at any one time. In addition, approximately 100 corporate volunteers were active in a number of one-off community-based events. Volunteers are currently working in varied roles including: mentoring, coaching entrepreneurs, giving housing assistance, teaching English, gardening, playgroups and assisting in social enterprises. The Volunteer Program provides training to build knowledge and skills so that our volunteers have access to learning opportunities and can provide professional, effective services.

## SSI Advocacy

As a leader, Settlement Services International is an advocate for the individuals and communities that it works alongside.

With a long history of unmatched expertise and experience working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, newcomers, refugees and people from vulnerable communities, SSI is an effective voice and strong advocate for policy approaches that allow individuals to overcome inequality and that focus on inclusivity.

**For a comment or to understand SSI's position on a particular public policy issue, contact:**

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