

WE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS VE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Celebrating the Positive Contribution Refugees & Asylum Seekers make to Australian Society

Life Without Barriers delivers multiple programs providing support to refugees and asylum seekers consisting of over 70 nationalities and 40 language groups and cultures across the country. It is a unique opportunity to work together with such a diverse range of cultures with their individual and often inspiring stories of bravery and resilience.

This week from 18 – 24 June Australia celebrates National Refugee Week and Life Without Barriers will be taking part in and hosting a variety of events which have been listed below. We would also like to take this opportunity to recognise and share a few of the many stories that highlight the positive contribution asylum seekers and refugees make to Australian Society.

As part of Refugee Week, Life without Barriers are holding the following events:

In **VICTORIA** - NISS is partnering with “**Joining the Dots**” to host a ‘*Welcome Dinner*’ event at the Dandenong Centre on **7th July** –we have invited people to bring a dish from their cultural heritage and share stories on the night. This is a great opportunity for people with different cultural backgrounds to come together to share stories and extend the hand of friendship over a meal.

Life without Barriers will also be running activities at the **Epping Centre** on **Wed 5th July** under the Refugee Week theme ‘**let us all combine**’. This special event will feature entertainment, catering, guest speakers from refugee’s backgrounds and children’s activities.

In **NEW SOUTH WALES**, Life Without Barriers are supporting the **World Refugee Day Poetry Slam** with light refreshments at the Parramatta Centre. One of the published poets that will be performing is LWB client Hani Abdile.

And on the 1st June in **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**, the Life Without Barriers Salisbury team partnered with a number of organisations to host a community dinner that celebrated Ramadan and showcased dancing and musical performances from various cultural groups.

“At Life Without Barriers we believe that our society is enriched by its diversity. We work to ensure people from diverse cultures feel safe and secure and can access the supports they need to thrive and fully participate in community life,” explains NISS Operations Manager Peter Singh.

Life Without Barriers works with over 200 community organisations and partners to support refugees and asylum seekers across five States and Territories.

“Since its inception in 2009 LWB has worked with thousands of refugees and asylum seekers and we continue to be inspired and humbled by the individual stories of resilience and accomplishment on a daily basis. We understand the unique skills and resilience that refugees, asylum seekers and other new Australians possess, and we see first-hand the significant contribution they make to Australian society.

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In the spirit of Reconciliation, Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country, and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs, and to Elders both past and present.

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“We also understand that people from diverse cultures can face a range of barriers. At LWB we work in partnership with people to overcome those barriers, to ensure vulnerable migrant groups feel safe and secure and are able to access the supports they need to thrive and fully participate in community life. When we speak to our client’s they clearly tell us the things that are most important to them, and we have shaped our programs services accordingly,” explains LWB Manager for Refugee & Asylum Seeker Programs, David Benau.

As part of a celebration this Refugee Week we take this opportunity to shine the light on a few of the wonderful achievements of the individuals we support:

- Ranak*, originally from Sri Lanka has been a model student and, in spite of his language barriers, has been offered a full Scholarship with Macquarie University to study Medicine. In addition, community organisations such as Macquarie University and the Zainab Foundation have been touched by Ranak’s story and shown their support by providing financial assistance to help him advance his studies.
- Dilshan*, also from Sri Lanka has become a successful member of the local business community, having received a Local Business Award for a cleaning company he has built himself from the ground-up! Dilshan often works 7 days a week, trying to make a successful business. His attitude and strong work ethic is truly inspiring.
- Azam* is a single mother from Iran who has recently survived a mastectomy due to breast cancer. At a time when many would decide to slow down Azam decided to start her own business to support her three children through school. Her eldest son is now on a five year scholarship for his Engineering degree at Swinburne University.
- After arriving in Australia as an asylum seeker, Majid* was keen to develop a sense of independence while also contributing back to his local community. His determination eventually culminated in him completing studies at Monash University and obtaining employment as a Multicultural Aid at a local high school. Through his employment, he is able to help students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds similar to his own while fostering his own sense of self.

* Alternative name used.

For more information about Life Without Barriers National Immigration Support Service visit:

<http://www.lwb.org.au/find-a-service/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>

For more information about Refugee Week visit: www.refugeeweek.org.au

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About Life Without Barriers: Life Without Barriers (LWB) is one of Australia’s largest leading social purpose, not-for-profit organisations, working in more than 300 communities across all states and territories. Its main areas of operation includes support to children, young people and families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees and asylum seekers, people with disability, older people, and people who are vulnerable to social exclusion.

Available for Interview

David Benau - LWB Manager for Refugee & Asylum Seeker Programs.

Peter Singh - LWB National Immigration Support Service Operations Manager.

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