



annual report 2014-15

settlement • support • independence

about SSI

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a leading **not-for-profit organisation** providing a range of services in the areas of humanitarian settlement, accommodation, asylum seeker assistance, foster care and disability support in NSW. SSI is the largest not-for-profit **humanitarian settlement** organisation in Australia.

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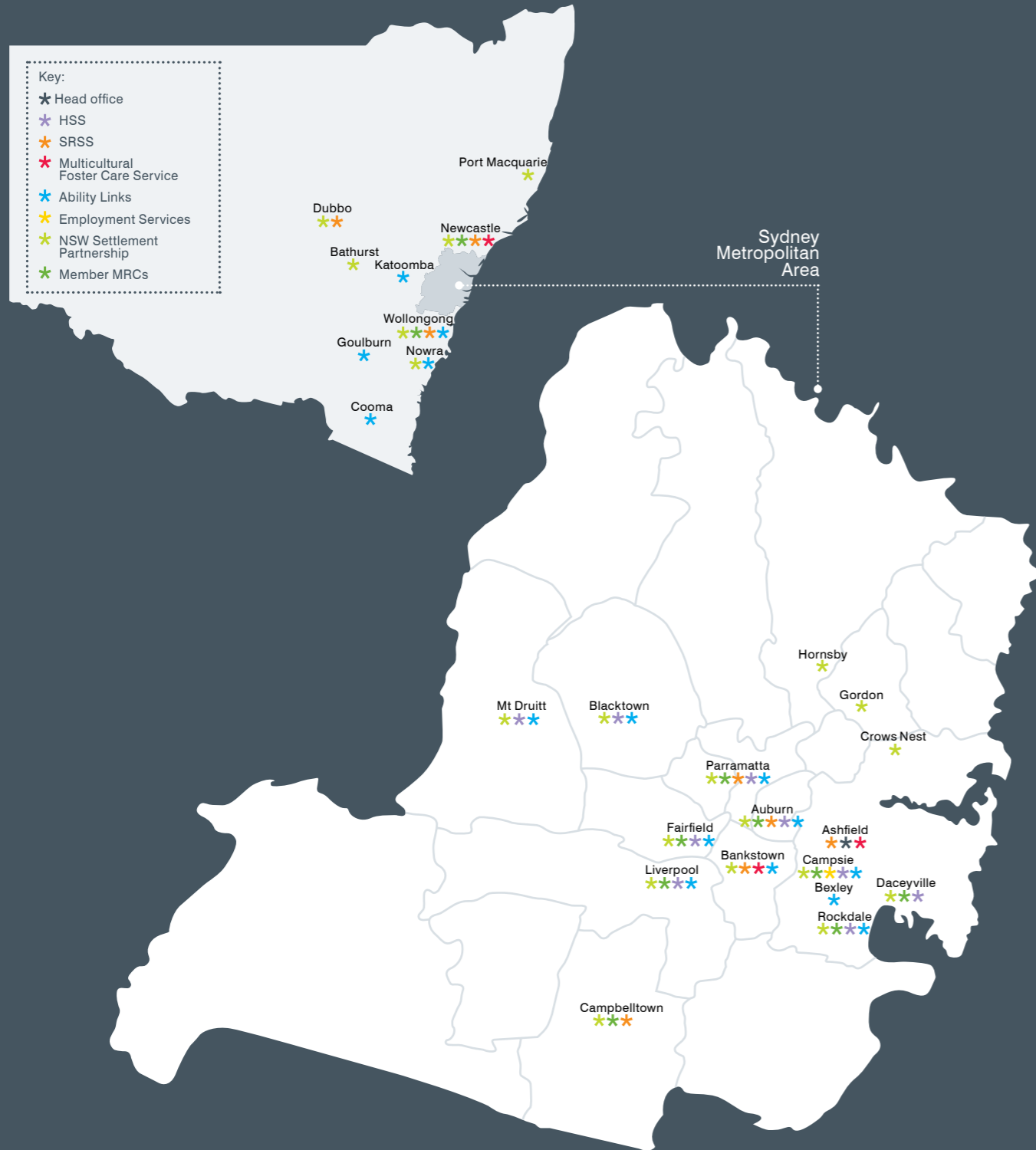
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where we are



8 services

THE NUMBER OF SERVICES SSI CURRENTLY PROVIDES TO A RANGE OF CLIENTS. THESE SERVICES ARE:

Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)
for refugees and humanitarian entrants

Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS)
for asylum seekers living in the community

Housing Services for HSS and SRSS clients

Settlement Services Program (SSP) NSW Settlement Partnership delivers SSP for migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants

Multicultural Foster Care Service for children from CALD backgrounds who require out-of-home care

Ability Links NSW to foster full and active participation of people with disabilities in their communities

Ignite Small Business Start-ups a self-funded enterprise facilitation initiative for refugees

Jobactive employment services for job seekers in the Sydney East Metro area

vision

To achieve a society that values diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families to reach their potential. Our vision is also captured in our brand:

settlement • support • independence

In delivering SSI services, we value:

Quality

Dynamic, flexible and responsive service

Ethics

Professional practices and accountability

Innovation

Commitment to partnerships and excellence

At SSI, we value:

Social Justice

Equity and access for all

Tolerance

Diversity and being non-discriminatory

Compassion

Caring, empathy and respect for the dignity of others

Respect

Co-operation and mutual respect

2014-2015 highlights in pictures



1 July 2014 – Women at Risk Forum

The plight of vulnerable women was in the spotlight at the SSI Refugee Women at Risk forum, attended by more than 120 specialists in the field. Designed to raise awareness of the barriers these women face, speakers discussed how to support women and give them a public voice.



4 November 2014 – The Strength of Youth

A total of 16 informed speakers were invited to take part in SSI Speakers' Series events in 2014-2015, covering a range of topics. The youth-themed event, titled Strength of Youth, brought together three young individuals who shared their personal experiences of seeking asylum in Australia.



7 January 2015 – Toy Drive

Mount Druitt Multicultural Services joined with SSI to deliver hundreds of generous toy donations from Centrelink staff. Several loads of toys were collected from local Centrelink offices and delivered to refugee families in Sydney.



10 June 2015 – Caring for Children Launch

SSI joined with the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies to launch the *Caring for Children* booklet to help families with the challenges of parenting in a new country. Australia's first National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell was the guest speaker.



2 August 2014 – Broken Time

SSI produced and premiered a short film that explored the experiences of homelessness faced by refugee youth living without their families. Titled *Broken Time*, the film followed the story of Ali, an Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor from Afghanistan.



5 November 2014 – Ignite launch

SSI celebrated the launch of the Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative in Sydney with a special event attended by more than 100 people. The Hon. John Barilaro MP was in attendance, along with a number of entrepreneurs supported by the initiative.



8 February 2015 – Standing Together

Migrant Resource Centres across NSW rallied together to host a series of Standing Together events to acknowledge the value and diversity of multicultural groups in Australia. Activities included a breakfast discussion at Liverpool MRC, a soccer match at Fairfield MRC, and various community walks and barbecues.



11 June 2015 – New Beginnings Refugee Arts & Culture Festival

The inaugural New Beginnings Refugee Arts & Culture Festival saw approximately 1000 people come together to celebrate World Refugee Day with music, dance, food stalls and activities. Almost 50 individuals from refugee backgrounds took part as performers and stall holders.



3 September 2014 – Newington Gunners win

A team of men seeking asylum who play soccer with the Newington Gunners Soccer Club marked their first season with a 2-1 Grand Final Victory. The talented players continued their winning streak into the 2015 season, and their skills, comradery and commitment to the local Sydney club continues to grow.



6 December 2014 – Legal Aid partnership

The Law and Justice Foundation of NSW released a report which found the partnership between Legal Aid NSW and SSI was effective because of its client-centric approach. The report was launched at SSI's Ashfield head office by Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services, Senator Fierravanti-Wells.



9 March 2015 – Harmony Day

Around 300 staff, volunteers and clients joined together to celebrate Harmony Day with a halal barbecue, music, dancing and soccer. With a strong focus on celebrating belonging, the event also acknowledged the diversity of Australia's migrant population.



12 June 2015 – SRSS Surfing excursion

SSI was proud to introduce the iconic Australian sport of surfing to a number of SRSS clients at a surfing excursion at Bondi beach. Clients learned the basics of water safety and surfing before testing their skills in the water.

The 2014-2015 year in numbers

Humanitarian Services

The total number of SSI **refugee** clients who received assistance

3,717

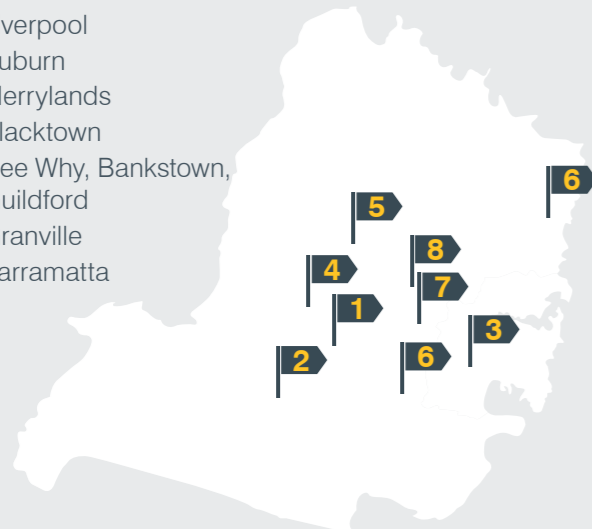
The number of SSI **asylum seekers**

6,387

- **1,944** – The number of refugees and asylum seekers who were assisted to transfer to states other than NSW.
- **99%** – The satisfaction rate of SSI clients for the delivery of services and support in the reporting period.
- **60%** – The number of asylum seekers on bridging visas that SSI supports in NSW. SSI supports 20% of the national cohort.
- **189** – Number of families in the HSS program who successfully secured work within six months of arrival.
- **262** – Number of asylum seeker clients who exited the SRSS program in 2014-2015 after securing work.

Top settlement locations:

1. Fairfield
2. Liverpool
3. Auburn
4. Merrylands
5. Blacktown
6. Dee Why, Bankstown, Guildford
7. Granville
8. Parramatta



Ability Links NSW

- **261%** – Increase in the number of Linkers who were employed by SSI in 2014-2015.
- **3,235** people have received support from the ALNSW program since July 2014.
- **15,486** – Number of community connections Linkers made in 2014-2015.

Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative

60!

Number of entrepreneurs who received support from the Ignite initiative. Eleven began their own small business start-ups.



The number of children SSI has in care in its **Multicultural Foster Care Service (MFCS)**. The majority of these children are from Lebanese and Vietnamese backgrounds, followed by children from African backgrounds.

Arts & Culture Program...

- 16** Guest speakers donated their time to SSI Speakers' Series events in 2014-15, and over 300 people including SSI staff, volunteers, and members of the public attended.
- 1k** The approximate number of people who attended the inaugural New Beginnings Refugee Arts & Culture Festival. A total of 48 artists and entrepreneurs participated in the festival.
- 8** The number of women supported by SSI who joined art therapy workshops run by volunteer artist, Audrey Rhoda.

Volunteer Program

- 73** The number of former volunteers who have taken up a job at SSI, some of whom were SSI clients or came to Australia as humanitarian entrants.
- 41** Number of languages spoken by SSI volunteers.

SSI's diverse workforce...

TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY YEAR:



↑ **577%**
INCREASE IN 3 YEARS

98 The number of different languages spoken by SSI employees.



Community Engagement



The number of different cuisines celebrated at Community Kitchen.

Housing Services

- 2014-2015 was the first full year SSI delivered **100%** of all HSS Housing Services in the Greater Sydney region.
- SSI assisted **392** clients with short term accommodation, **422** for long term accommodation, and **1180** clients with a Basic Household Goods package.

A message from the ...

Chair

SSI continued its strong growth trajectory in 2014-2015 as the organisation pursued new opportunities in the field of humanitarian services and settlement support. The year was not without its challenges, but SSI continues to gain momentum on the world stage as a leading humanitarian settlement organisation that is committed to driving social change.

“Strengthening relationships enables us to present a united voice at State and Federal government level.”



On the back of solid growth in 2013-2014, SSI again experienced a remarkable year in 2014-2015, including the evolution of a new governance model in which SSI's legal entity changed to a Company Limited by Guarantee. The change, which came into effect in July 2015, saw the introduction of a new Board including four member directors and three independent directors from across NSW. Importantly, the changes allowed SSI to diversify and introduce more diverse and independent expertise into the organisation without compromising SSI's core values.

While the change marks an evolution in the structure of SSI, fusing a broader skills set, independence, and industry knowledge to the organisation will help to drive its future development. It will also increase confidence in the professional management and governance structure of SSI, which will lay the foundations for consolidation and further growth. I trust that these changes will deliver many rewards for SSI and, most importantly, our community members. It will also better position the Board to approach new challenges and opportunities with its specialised skills and experience that align with SSI's main objectives.

The year saw continued growth in all programs and the development of new initiatives that complement SSI's existing suite of support services that are driven by our strategic goals. For example, this year marked the first full year of the Ability Links NSW program that supports people with disability, and SSI's Housing Services program was this year extended to support Unaccompanied Minors. SSI's Community Engagement program also rolled out a number of new initiatives to promote engagement and participation among refugees and people seeking asylum. These programs have been made possible by building on the relationships we have with our members, and importantly, they form part of a comprehensive network of quality community-based services for our clients. There are more new initiatives outlined in this Annual Report, and our staff is committed to further developing and nurturing these strong foundations in the future.

The current humanitarian and settlement landscape remains a challenging environment, with the narrative of migration dominated by stories of maritime arrival and unconscionable accounts of offshore processing. The

media has also been strongly divided on humanitarian matters, which presents obstacles in our ability to share the positive work that is being achieved by organisations such as SSI, along with our partners. But the humanitarian sector is no stranger to these challenges, and with them come a number of opportunities that allow us to prosper as we continue building relationships with organisations such as the Refugee Council of Australia, Multicultural NSW, the Settlement Council of Australia, and of course our community leaders and organisations who play a critical role in social cohesion.

Strengthening these relationships enables us to present a united voice at State and Federal government level, allowing us to advocate for change for the benefit of our clients. The arrival of Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) is one such example which is a significant step in the right direction for our clients and is very much welcomed. Our visibility and strategic engagement has also been an important investment, with international representations at the UNHCR Consultations in Geneva and the Metropolis Conference in Mexico City boosting SSI's profile and reach on a global level.

It is a privilege to again report as SSI Chair, and I am humbled by the accomplishments that have been sustained and achieved in collaboration with our valued member organisations, the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs). I would like to acknowledge all of our heroes: the staff of SSI, ably led by CEO, Violet Roumeliotis and the fantastic support of the SSI senior executive team. We also welcome Dr Astrid Perry as Chief Operating Officer to the team, who is both well-known and respected in our sector, and will no doubt continue to take SSI to new heights in the year ahead. I would also like to thank all of the SSI volunteers and the Board for supporting me as Chair, and to all of the members for their tireless support of SSI.

SSI Chair, Kamalle Dabboussy

An update from the ...

CEO

Looking back over the year that was, many moments encapsulated SSI's vision and the work we do. It was another productive year for SSI, and everyone in the organisation can be proud of what we have achieved for our clients and the broader community.

In the past financial year, SSI expanded in to new program areas, and grew in staff and client numbers. We delivered new and innovative initiatives to support clients and engage with the community. We transformed our organisational structure and legal entity so we are better placed to diversify and grow our services in line with our strategic plan. All of this was achieved in the year of SSI's 15th anniversary which signifies how far we have come, and how we continue to grow as an organisation.

A highlight that comes to mind was the inaugural New Beginnings Refugee Arts & Culture Festival held on World Refugee Day, June 20, 2015. The festival was nothing short of inspiring, with people from all ages and walks of life coming together to share their cultural heritage with singing, dancing and music.

At the time of the festival, I was with an Australian delegation at the UNHCR NGO Consultations in Geneva, but I was regularly checking SSI's social media and blog posts to see how the festival was going, and I was thrilled to hear of its success.

While in Geneva representing refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia, SSI was focused on sharing its stories and concerns in an effort to work towards improving settlement. These discussions were all taking place while staff, volunteers and clients were celebrating New Beginnings and the cultural diversity that Australia enjoys. And for me, these overlapping events were a perfect synergy between the work we do and the benefits to our communities.

SSI's almost 500 staff members take pride in their work, and their expertise and enthusiasm has contributed to SSI's international recognition as a provider of quality services. Our work is purposeful and targeted, and the commitment of our staff has allowed us to secure new contracts that expand our reach and provide support to more people who have much to offer Australian society.

In 2014-2015, SSI began delivering services to people with disability through the Ability Links NSW program, which supports individuals and their families and carers by connecting them with community services. This was a big step for SSI that allowed us to reinforce our mission of helping vulnerable people and communities. Another service being delivered by SSI in the disability sector is the new FutureAbility project that is focused on working with ethno-specific and multicultural organisations and community groups to prepare them for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and we look forward to seeing this program develop further in the coming year.

Over the year, a great deal of planning and relationship building went into establishing the new NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) consortium, which is led by SSI and comprises 22 organisations based around the state. SSI was invited to lead this partnership, and we are proud to contribute to the principles of local service delivery and self-determination of communities, even if government policy may be moving away from this approach. The partnership now delivers the new Settlement Services Program to new migrants, humanitarian entrants and refugees, providing greater access and support to those who are experiencing the daunting and challenging experience of settling in a new country.

Another new and exciting program area for SSI, and an important part of our strategic plan, is in employment services through the CoAct/SSI Jobactive program. Moving into employment services was something our organisation had set out to achieve as another way of integrating the services we provide, and we have big hopes for this new service area which will allow us to innovate to help people find work.



We also launched the SSI Foundation which aims to lessen the financial burdens experienced by refugees and asylum seekers as they seek to gain an education in NSW. Our member MRCs and SSI have been overwhelmed with the response, and we look forward to awarding the education scholarships and grants in the next financial year. We really believe this new initiative will enrich communities and significantly change lives for the better.

My gratitude and appreciation goes to our funders and supporters, SSI Chair Kamalle Dabboussy and the Board, my Executive colleagues and SSI's leaders and staff, volunteers and our partners. I am exceptionally proud of what SSI has achieved and I look forward to embracing future opportunities that will allow us to help our clients further in the next reporting period.

SSI CEO, Violet Roumeliotis

“SSI's almost 500 staff members take pride in their work, and their expertise and enthusiasm has contributed to SSI's international recognition as a provider of quality services.”

humanitarian services

With the international refugee crisis continuing to affect many nations, Australia remains a key resettlement location, and SSI prides itself on playing a significant role in welcoming asylum seekers and integrating refugees who come to Australia.



In 2014-2015, the Humanitarian Services division provided support to 3,717 refugees and 6,387 asylum seekers through case management services aimed at assisting clients to achieve social and economic integration in the Australian community. In addition to this, 1,944 clients received assistance to transit from Sydney airport to other destinations within Australia, bringing the number of people who were supported in 2014-2015 to approximately 12,000.

In the last financial year, SSI's Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) case load for refugee and humanitarian entrants represented 86 per cent of all cases in NSW, and 30 per cent of offshore visa grants nationally. Eighty-four per cent of these clients were born in Syria or Iraq and were directly affected by the Syrian conflict.

While the Australian Government ceased onshore processing of asylum seekers who arrived by boat in 2012, many arrived before this change was implemented and are currently living in the community. As a key provider of community based support services for asylum seekers who are waiting for their claim to be assessed, SSI is committed to supporting these individuals and provides a

“ SSI's clients reported a 99 per cent satisfaction rating for the support we provided throughout the year ...

number of services to enable them to temporarily integrate into the broader community.

A key part of SSI's role, in both the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) for asylum seekers and HSS programs, is to meet clients at their point of entry into the community and to provide support as they adapt to Australian life and learn to live independently. For some clients, this involves meeting them at the airport and for others it involves meeting them when released from detention. Either way, SSI plays a key role in informing clients, and the Humanitarian Services division conducted over 500 community orientation sessions during 2014-2015 on topics including Australian law and culture, health, money management, education and employment.

SSI also endeavours to prepare clients for social and economic independence by linking them to volunteers, social and recreational activities, work readiness programs, affordable private housing, basic healthcare, and by supporting them through case management to develop skills and knowledge that will allow them to live independently.

While SSI is not contracted to provide employment services, we still encourage clients to prepare themselves for work and seek employment as soon as possible after arrival. This approach delivered promising outcomes in 2014-2015, with 189 families in the HSS program (17 per cent) securing work within six months of arrival. There were also 262 SRSS clients who exited the program during this period after successfully gaining employment.

We were pleased to see work rights reinstated for asylum seekers in December 2014, and since then the number of clients who have secured employment has steadily increased, largely because the majority of these individuals are highly motivated to work.

It is widely acknowledged that English is a key requirement for clients to develop social and economic independence,

and SSI works hard to ensure that clients have access to English language education and practice. With support from the NSW Department of Education, SSI was able to place 879 school-age children into full time education during the period, with many children starting in an Intensive English Centre before being integrated into mainstream classes. Language support is also provided to all adult clients via the Adult Migrant English Program, while asylum seeker clients can also access limited English classes. In addition to this, SSI works with volunteers and partner organisations to provide regular English practice groups.

SSI acknowledges that the emotional and physical wellbeing of clients forms an important part of their journey towards social and economic independence. Therefore, SSI partnered with NSW Refugee Health Service in 2014-2015 to ensure individualised health assessments were provided to all families. SSI also took steps to improve its screening processes which assess the mental health needs of clients. New assessment tools were introduced, along with streamlined referral systems which connect clients with torture and trauma services provided by STARTTS. Over the reporting period, 5,615 client assessments were completed by case managers to evaluate their mental wellbeing and determine whether a referral for psychological services was required.

Overall, SSI's clients reported a 99 per cent satisfaction rating for the support that we provided throughout the year, which is a testament to the expertise, support and values of the organisation. A special mention goes to HSS Service Delivery Manager Yamamah Agha, SRSS Service Delivery Manager Mamtimin Ala, Housing Services Manager Patrick Yeung, and acting Regional and Community Engagement Coordinator Melita Smilovic, whose continued support has contributed to our every success.

**SSI Humanitarian Services Manager,
David Keegan**



humanitarian services stats

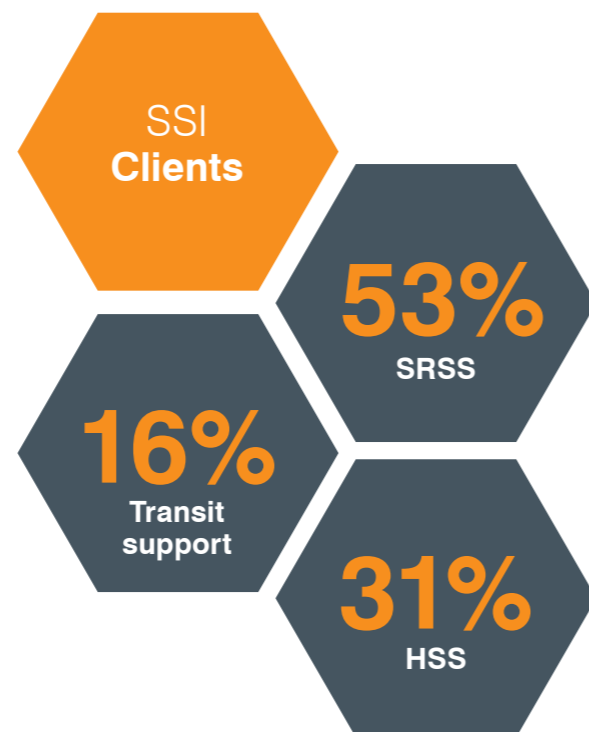


SRSS Top five countries of origin

- 36% Iran
- 19% Sri Lanka
- 12% Iraq
- 12% Afghanistan
- 9% Myanmar

HSS Top five countries of origin

- 47% Iraq
- 37% Syria
- 4% Afghanistan
- 1% Myanmar
- 8% Other



Continuum of SSI client support



Meet Hamid ...

Hamid came to Australia in 2013 as an asylum seeker from Afghanistan, but the transition to life in Sydney was difficult at first. With memories of life in Afghanistan still fresh in his mind, Hamid had trouble sleeping and found it difficult to perform daily tasks.

With the help of his SSI case manager, Jessica, Hamid was referred to a mental health physician who was able to help him to transition to life in Australia. Hamid received support with doctor's appointments, medications, and counselling services, and his confidence quickly improved. SSI staff also helped him to create a resume and prepare for job interviews, and Jessica encouraged Hamid - whose main goal was to build genuine friendships with Australians - to consider new ways of meeting people to build social connections.

Several months later, Hamid started going to the theatre with his roommate, Mahdi, and he soon developed a large network of friends. Hamid's roommate also developed Hamid's story into a play which was performed at the Sydney Fringe Festival in Newtown.

With the help of SSI English classes, Hamid's English skills quickly improved and he soon secured a job in the construction industry, which prompted his confidence and language skills to improve further.

"I couldn't speak English in the beginning, and I now use it every day," Hamid said. "I feel very happy. I think about the future now, and I couldn't do that before."

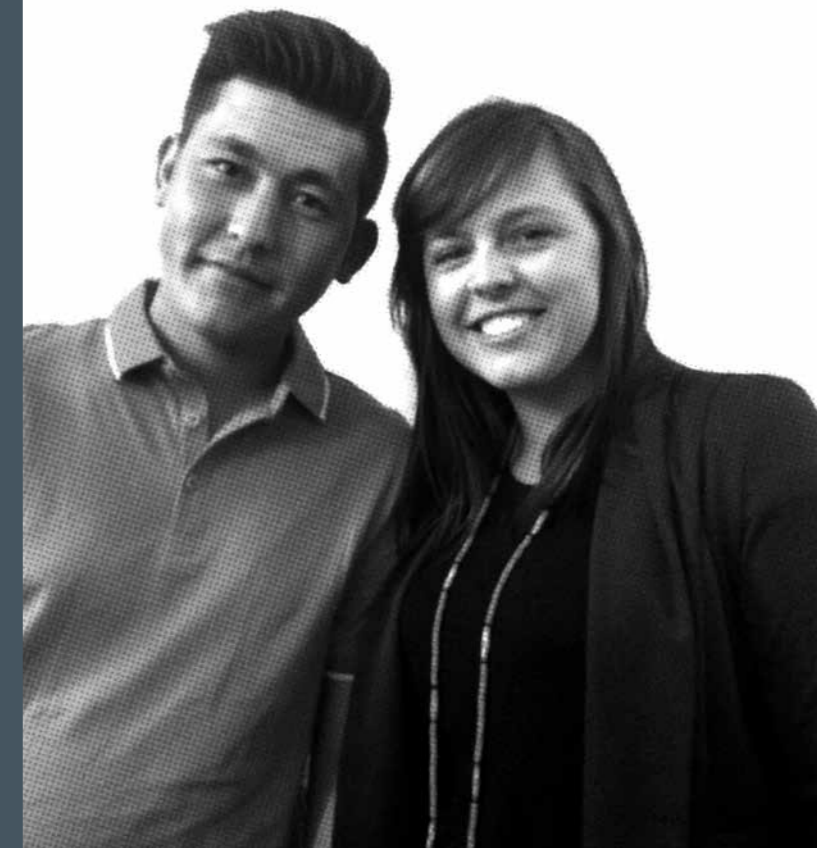
Hamid has big plans for the future and is hoping to study at university or TAFE. "I don't know what I want to study just yet, but I love to learn and I love to work," he said.

Hamid no longer receives Centrelink support and can now confidently speak English with his work colleagues.

"It makes me very happy, and life is good," Hamid said.

SSI case manager, Jessica Andrews

"I met Hamid in April 2014, and while he was always kind and thoughtful, it was clear he was struggling with his situation. I referred him to STARTTS for further support, helped prepare him for job seeking, and I encouraged Hamid to find new ways of building his social networks such as taking part in SSI's Community Engagement program. I also worked with him to develop his goals and I encouraged him to write his story down to help with the healing process. He contacted me out of the blue to tell me his written story was being used in a play as part of Sydney's Fringe Festival. Hamid invited me to come along to the premiere, and it was that good that I saw it twice. When I caught up with him at the play, it was clear that he had grown as a person, and the change was noticeable; his English was so much better, and he was much more confident after finding work in Australia. I am proud to have worked alongside Hamid, and seeing him grow so much has been unbelievably rewarding."



housing services

The SSI Housing Services program experienced a period of rapid growth in 2014-2015 as the division pursued a number of opportunities within and beyond the short and long term accommodation sector.

Marking the success of SSI's sustainable growth strategy in housing, three major milestones included the delivery of housing services under the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program, the expansion of the Emergency Housing Assistance program, and the launch of residential care for Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs).

The development and implementation of the Housing Services Business Plan also firmed up SSI's commitment to deliver quality services in the Housing division to improve outcomes for our clients and their families.

Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) Housing

Marking the first full year in which SSI delivered 100% of all HSS Housing Services in the Sydney region, SSI is committed to supporting the provision of Short Term Accommodation (STA) and Long Term Accommodation (LTA) for refugee clients. We also continue to provide Basic Household Goods (BHG) packages to eligible clients to make the transition to life in Australia as seamless as possible. But there is always room to grow, and our focus is on consolidation and continuous improvement of services for our clients.

For example, we continued to strengthen our relationships with local real estate agents and landlords over the reporting period, in addition to our partnerships

with community housing providers. Fostering goodwill among key stakeholders is crucial to source and secure STA and LTA in the private market, which prompted the division to host the inaugural Real Estate Appreciation Dinner in November 2014.

Excursions were also introduced to familiarise clients with areas of Sydney that may be unfamiliar to them, but present better opportunities in terms of housing quality and affordability. Held in partnership with Nepean Migrant Access and Macarthur Diversity Services, these excursions were a valuable experience for clients considering relocating to the Penrith and Campbelltown areas.

Notably, SSI assisted 392 refugee clients – including singles and families – with STA; sourced and secured LTA for 422 clients; and provided 1180 clients with a BHG package, doubling our service provision compared to the previous financial year.

“Fostering goodwill among key stakeholders is crucial to source and secure STA and LTA in the private market.”



Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Housing

The 2014-2015 reporting period was one of transition for SSI, as we successfully secured and delivered SRSS for asylum seekers as a replacement of the Community Support Program (CSP). Under the SRSS Housing program, SSI supports eligible asylum seeker clients with emergency and transitional accommodation, and helps those recipients to source and secure independent accommodation. In the six months after SSI secured the tender to deliver SRSS in December 2014, we supported more than 400 asylum seeker clients (singles and families), including 174 who stayed in emergency or transitional accommodation.

SSI also provides a high level of support and 24-hour quality care for UAMs who have come to Australia on their own to seek asylum. The combined efforts of SSI residential youth workers, case managers and housing officers ensure that the specific needs of clients are addressed under the SRSS program.

Emergency Housing Assistance

Emergency Housing Assistance is one of the latest additions to the SSI Housing portfolio, with the self-funded initiative providing short term crisis accommodation for clients of SSI and other service providers. Drawing on the expertise of SSI staff and specialist homelessness service providers, the initiative aims to improve and facilitate access to emergency accommodation to minimise risks of homelessness and vulnerability.

During the financial year, crisis accommodation was provided to 240 clients, representing an average of 20 clients per month. Almost 15 per cent of these clients were young people.

SSI Housing Services is now in a strong position to further develop and implement self-financed services that provide additional resources to our refugee and asylum seeker clients. We are committed to expanding our capacity to deliver crisis accommodation in the western and south-western Sydney regions, and we look forward to developing more long-term housing assistance projects such as the Woman At Risk Housing Pilot.

SSI Manager Housing Services, Patrick Yeung

HSS Housing Officer, George Yousif

George Yousif is well acquainted with the SSI Housing Services division, having first come into contact with the program in 2013 as a refugee, and later as a valued staff member.

As a client of the HSS program, George quickly found his feet in Australia and began volunteering with SSI shortly after arriving in the country. He then went on to study at TAFE to expand on his background as a journalist and accountant in Iraq, but George says he was destined to return to SSI. “I wanted to be a part of the SSI team which I remembered as being a non-judgemental, multicultural team that was really committed to helping others. I had a very positive experience with my case manager and it was my dream to be a part of it,” he says.

George says his background as a refugee has helped him to empathise with his clients and understand the challenges they face. Providing inspiration for his clients has also allowed him to realise his own full potential in life, George says. “My goal is to deliver the best outcome to my clients, encourage them to set goals, and help them to aspire towards positive outcomes. There are few things more rewarding than helping people to progress through the first few months of settlement and to maintain strong relationships with them,” he says.



A milestone year for ... volunteers

Volunteers are central to SSI's success, and their continued support helps to empower clients across all program areas through the delivery of valuable life skills and knowledge. Approximately 250 volunteers delivered social assistance and support in 2014-2015, and their commitment to helping others has translated into meaningful outcomes for clients, such as new skills and renewed confidence.

The SSI Volunteer Program connects clients with people in the community who can offer informed support and advice to recently arrived refugees, asylum seekers, foster carers and children in out-of-home care. Comprised of individuals from a diversity of cultures, languages, ages and backgrounds, the program is specifically designed to support a broad base of clients. The benefits of the SSI Volunteer Program are two-fold: providing volunteers with valuable skills to enhance their employment prospects, while also delivering high quality services to SSI clients.

Keeping in line with professional standards, all volunteers attend compulsory induction sessions and receive ample training to perform a variety of tasks such as showing clients around Sydney, helping them to learn English, and serving food at regular Community Kitchen events. With around 75 per cent of all volunteers coming from a migrant background, and many from refugee backgrounds, SSI volunteers understand the challenges facing clients during the early stages of settlement. They are also passionate about helping others to develop meaningful connections in Australia, and to support their long-term goals.

Volunteers provided assistance across a number of programs in 2014-2015, with activities including:

- Assisting newly arrived refugees with local orientation services and support with using public transport;
- Attending Community Kitchen events to help prepare food and engage clients in recreational activities such as sports, arts and craft;
- Helping to deliver activities for mothers and children at Playtime multicultural playgroup sessions;
- Teaching conversational English to asylum seekers at Auburn and Granville;
- Accompanying clients on excursions, such as the monthly Luna Park event, attended by refugee and asylum seeker families.

The 2014-2015 reporting period was busy for the SSI Volunteer Program, with strengthened partnerships with TAFE and universities seeing 36 students enter the program on higher education placements. Volunteers also participated at the 'Refugee in my Neighbourhood' event in Auburn where they shared their real life stories of being a refugee to help the community to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face. And in a bid to give back to the generous volunteers who support our clients, SSI hosted a lunch as part of National Volunteer Week following the theme, 'Give Happy, Live Happy'.

Approximately 75 former volunteers have taken up positions at SSI, some of whom were SSI clients or came to Australia as humanitarian entrants.

If you are interested in volunteering,
email volunteer@ssi.org.au

“The benefits of the SSI Volunteer Program are two-fold, providing volunteers with valuable skills while also delivering high quality services to clients.



SRSS case manager, Muhammad Sadiq

When did you start volunteering for SSI?

I came to Australia as a refugee from Pakistan in 2009 and started volunteering for SSI in early 2012 after completing the student placement for my Diploma of Community Services with SSI in Parramatta.

What kind of volunteering did you do?

I took clients to appointments with Centrelink and other departments, such as housing. I also organised catering for workshops, and I helped to interpret in different languages as I speak seven languages fluently.

What was your experience of volunteering with SSI?

Life in Australia was hard at first, but working alongside newly arrived migrants was soothing for me. I also learned so much from SSI staff which has proven to be the best period in my life.

How did the program help you?

Volunteering with SSI taught me a number of professional techniques to handle problems with care. It also opened up number of opportunities and gave me new confidence to succeed in life. My working skills improved and I was offered a position as a Persian teacher in 2012, which I happily accepted. Working as an SSI volunteer gave me the drive to invest in my English skills and educate others who are in need which is extremely rewarding.

What was the highlight of volunteering with SSI?

Securing a job with SSI as a HSS case manager in August 2012. I help my clients to achieve their aspirations, overcome obstacles, and to start a new life in Australia. It's been the most rewarding role of my professional life.

community engagement

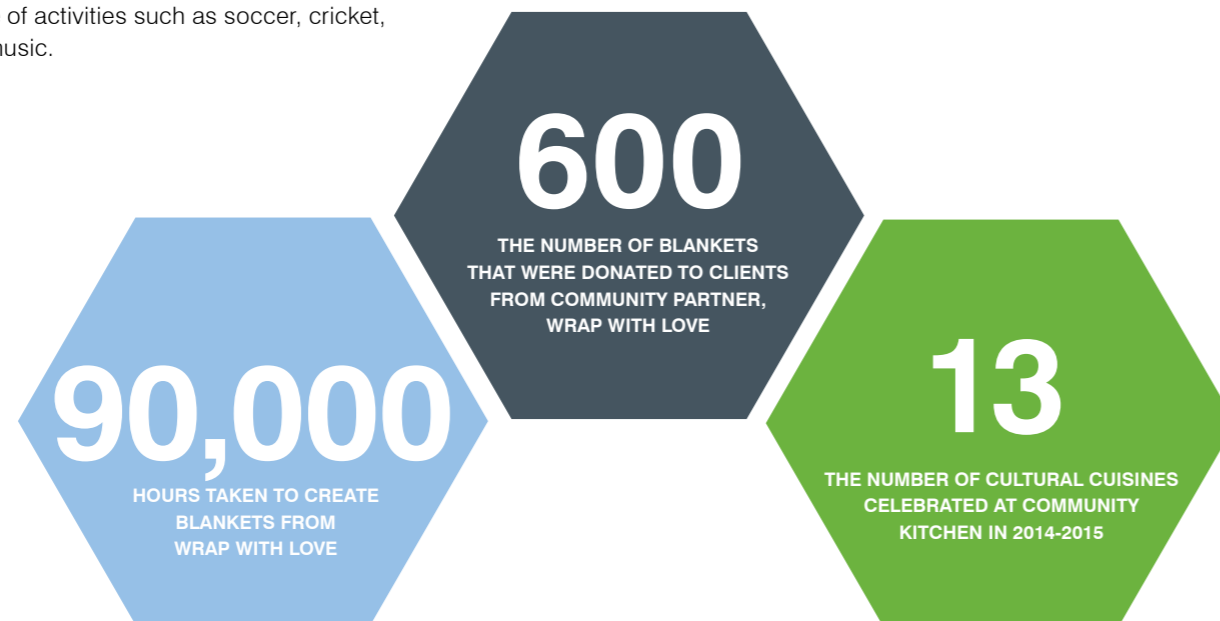
The benefits of community engagement programs are multi-faceted, including better health outcomes, improved confidence, and the ability to form more meaningful relationships. SSI is committed to enhancing community involvement for refugee and asylum seeker clients to help them develop a sense of belonging.

SSI's Community Engagement program has been instrumental in bringing clients together to take part in an array of activities and events that promote social interaction and support. Designed to encourage clients to enjoy meals, activities, sport and music with people in similar situations, the program achieved great success in 2014-2015 by helping clients to overcome feelings of separation and develop a positive sense of community in their new home. Here are some SSI Community Engagement initiatives that took place in 2014-2015:

Community Kitchen

The SSI Community Kitchen is a fortnightly event for people seeking asylum who are living in the community. What started as a simple community lunch has turned into a space for individuals to build social networks, develop a sense of belonging in the community, and to share their skills - such as hairdressing, performing music and dance, and participating in workshops or sports. It has become a highly anticipated event that invites clients to share their cuisine with others, and get involved in a range of activities such as soccer, cricket, table tennis, and music.

Community Kitchen also hosted a series of workshops focusing on employment in response to the growing need for practical training and support in this area. Participants received information on vocational training, resume development, and advice on interview techniques with the assistance of bilingual volunteers. Community Kitchen has also become a site to distribute donations such as food hampers and blankets, and we are grateful to all of the volunteers who contributed their support throughout the year. Their donations have been both generous and timely, and helped to ensure that our clients receive comprehensive support in good company.



Playtime

Playtime is a weekly multicultural playgroup and women's support group for community-based asylum seekers and refugees. Social interaction and recreational engagement is at the core of the initiative, with the key aim of empowering young families to develop community networks and reduce the effects of social isolation. Regular attendees of Playtime sessions have reported significant improvements in their motivation to engage with the local community, and to access services and build networks.

SSI has forged strong partnerships with community groups and organisations, which has enabled a number of new initiatives and opportunities to feed into the Playtime support group. For example, Navitas – in partnership with Parramatta College – offered outreach English classes at Playtime sessions to empower women who are often unable to attend regular community classes due to affordability and childcare restrictions. Volunteers also regularly offered their time to facilitate activities and interact with participants.

Bush Regeneration Project

Following months of development, SSI launched the Bush Regeneration Project in May 2015 in partnership with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). Designed to introduce asylum seekers to the Australian landscape, a group of clients from the SRSS program volunteered to help regenerate bushland and restore a WWII fort in Middle Head over the course of a 12 week program. With the generous support of staff from NPWS, the volunteers helped to clear the area, dispose of weeds, plant native plants, and paint over graffiti. NPWS staff also provided lunch every week which was often followed by activities such as a friendly game of soccer. The pilot program was a tremendous success that brought together a group of enthusiastic individuals to learn new skills and take their minds off the challenges of living in a new country. The pilot program was also extended on the recommendation of NPWS staff who said they were "overwhelmed" with the talents of the SRSS clients.

Sporting Activities

Sport is close to the hearts of many SSI clients, and the Community Engagement team has pursued many opportunities to unite clients through sporting activities. In 2014-2015, SSI continued to help clients join sporting clubs, such as the Newington Gunners soccer team which received support with equipment and registration fees as a result of SSI media publicity. SSI also helped to facilitate weekly pre-season cricket clinics in the lead up to the 2015 season, and took 200 clients and staff to enjoy Asian Cup matches in 2014 thanks to generous ticket donations from Multicultural NSW.



Community engagement at its finest

The Bush Regeneration Project was one of the major highlights of the Community Engagement program in 2014-2015 that made a strong impact on clients seeking asylum.

But some of the greatest moments of the project were when the gardening tools were packed away and clients relaxed with NPWS park rangers and volunteers over lunch or a game of soccer.

Ibrahim, a professional soccer player from Sudan (pictured bottom right) supported by SSI's SRSS program, is one such example.

Here he is pictured with the park ranger's six-year-old son, Rex, after a game of soccer during the school holidays. Field officers, volunteers, clients and even the park ranger got involved in an adults vs kids match, which saw the children come out on top in a 21-10 battle.

Clients were given the chance to relax and interact together on a level playing field, and the kids had so much fun that they still plead with their parents to miss school and play soccer with the men involved with the project.

Ibrahim is one of many SSI clients who has developed lasting friendships with NWPS staff and volunteers, and like Rex, he still speaks fondly of the notorious soccer match.



youth collective

The Youth Collective is a multicultural youth initiative established by SSI and 11 Resource Centres (MRCs) to bridge gaps in service delivery and improve engagement and participation in programs for multicultural young people living in NSW.

Designed for youth, by youth, the initiative aims to engage young people in activities and community events, and provide guidance and leadership to shape them into tomorrow's leaders.

Led by a steering committee of members, young people, and independent youth organisation representatives, the core focus of the initiative is to develop projects and programs aimed at building confidence, resilience and self-empowerment for young people from multicultural backgrounds. It also seeks to enhance the skills and efforts of SSI, MRCs, and youth organisations to support the youth sector's efforts to provide a voice for young people.

Since its inception in March 2014, the Youth Collective has engaged with a number of member organisations and peak bodies to address matters affecting young people from CALD backgrounds.

Topics including education, employment, accommodation and homelessness were brought to the fore during an extensive youth consultation process from September to December 2014, and strategies were developed to break down barriers relating to the uptake of youth services.

A number of activities were held throughout the year, including a gala day during Youth Week in April 2015 which brought people together for sports, skills workshops and consultation activities. Committee members also presented at the NSW Ombudsman Youth Week event in the same month to advocate for more targeted youth services. The 20 Voices project emerged soon afterwards

to invite members of the public to share their views on issues facing young people at interactive forums and discussions. The Youth Collective also initiated the MRC Youth Workers Network as a platform to showcase best practice models of service delivery, and to facilitate information sharing and service collaboration.

In the Youth Collective's first full year of operation, it also forged a strong relationship with the Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies Advocacy Group (YAE), which is working alongside the UNHCR and Women Refugee Commission to implement regional youth consultations for presentation at the UNHCR NGO consultation in Geneva in 2016.

The Youth Collective now has a solid foundation and ambitious plans for the future, including the development of practical projects that focus on youth employment, education and language skills with our partners in the NSW Settlement Partnership.

A special mention goes to all steering committee members who continue to advocate for change and commit their immense passion to the long term goals of the Youth Collective.

**SSI Youth Collective Coordinator,
Dor Akech Achiek**



multicultural foster care service

The 2014-2015 reporting period was one of rapid growth for the SSI Multicultural Foster Care Service (MFCS), with the number of children entering the program almost doubling within the 12 month period. As the program entered its second full year of operation, anecdotal evidence showed that children in SSI's care were experiencing improved developmental outcomes and maintaining connections to their culture, religion and language of origin.

Launched in 2013 as a specialist out-of-home care (OOHC) service for children from CALD backgrounds, the MFCS aims to support the development of children by placing them with foster carers from the same cultural and linguistic background where possible. Based on the premise that children who are encouraged to maintain a connection to their culture, religion and language have better outcomes in later life, this approach also helps children to settle if and when they return to their birth parents, which is the ultimate goal of any foster care service.

SSI assumed case management responsibility for 61 children at the beginning of the reporting period, with this number increasing to a total of 120 children by the end of June, 2015. The number of children from CALD backgrounds who were referred to the MFCS program was significantly above the average in some months, reaching 85 children in September. The number of children who were successfully placed with carers was also encouraging, with many children and carers being fully transitioned from the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to SSI during the reporting period.

The MFCS has achieved great outcomes since 2013, and our care arrangements continue to stabilise as our capacity to match carers with children improves. A total of five restorations occurred in 2014-2015, whereby children in OOHC are returned to their birth families, which is a pleasing result and a testament to the quality of the program and the staff behind it. Additionally, a number of restorations were in progress at the end of the financial year, due for completion in December 2015.

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THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PROGRAM IN 2014-2015

21%

OF CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM WERE ARABIC SPEAKING

19%

OF CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM WERE FROM A VIETNAMESE BACKGROUND



Meet Iqbal...

As a mother of six children and grandmother of 20, Iqbal is no stranger to the challenges of parenthood. But as her children gradually grew up and left home, the joy of parenting stayed with Iqbal, prompting her to register as a foster carer.

Foster caring came naturally to Iqbal and she did not hesitate to take in a family of three children who were estranged from their parents. She admits it has come with its share of challenges, like any parent would expect, but she's also certain it has all been worthwhile.

"With the challenges come the highlights of knowing that I have helped these children to stay connected with their religion and their culture, and this has helped them become strong and happy people," Iqbal said.

In a great outcome for the children, the three siblings were returned to their mother after nine years under Iqbal's care. Saying goodbye was understandably difficult for Iqbal at first, but she has not wavered in her advice to others considering becoming a foster carer: "It's a very special feeling... Do it!"

Foster carers and bilingual case workers are vital to the overall effectiveness of the program, and in 2014-2015, two teams of case workers from diverse cultural backgrounds covered the Sydney and Hunter New England area. With most carers referred by the Department of Community Services (DoCS), we also recruited our own foster carers throughout the year which allowed us to expand the breadth and diversity of our network to a total of 70 carers in 2014-2015.

All SSI foster carers have access to a range of support services including initial and ongoing training; access to a professional bilingual and bicultural caseworker; 24-hour phone support; financial assistance to meet the cost of care; and referrals to a range of support services for both the carer and the child. SSI also received support to manage the recruitment, training and support of carers in 2014-2015 which helped to prepare them for the demands of caring for children from diverse backgrounds.

Throughout the year, SSI was actively involved with FACS in all the regions it operates. SSI also attended working groups and the NSW Carer Reference Group to continually improve the program and deliver better outcomes for children from CALD backgrounds in Australia. SSI was also selected by the Australian Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) to

provide training on the Cultural Care Planning Program for the whole sector, which is a promising indication of how the program is perceived beyond NSW.

SSI Manager OOHC-Multicultural Foster Care Service, Ghassan Noujaim

For more information on this program, contact Ghassan Noujaim on gnoujaim@ssi.org.au or 02 8713 9200.

“Our care arrangements continue to stabilise as our capacity to match carers with children improves.”

Strengthening recently arrived families

Settling in Australia presents new opportunities for recently arrived migrant and refugee families, but the process of adjusting to new social, cultural, legal and service systems can be challenging. In line with previous years, SSI implemented a range of initiatives for migrant and refugee families in 2014-2015.

With a strong focus on empowering families who are experiencing settlement, SSI's family-focused capacity building initiatives aim to connect families with services and support that allow children to achieve their developmental potential. These initiatives also aim to improve the capacity of service providers in delivering services that improve outcomes for our clients.

One of the highlights in 2014-2015 was the launch of the SSI *Caring for Children* booklet for recently arrived refugee and migrant families. Including basic information on parenting and how to raise children in Australia, the booklet addressed a range of topics for families adjusting to life in Australia. Available in 10 languages, the booklet was launched at an SSI event which was attended by a number of high profile guests including Australian National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell, and the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies CEO, Andrew McCullum.

Throughout the year, SSI delivered almost 100 information sessions covering parental rights and responsibilities for recently arrived refugee parents as part of their orientation. Delivered as part of a Culture and the Law module to give newly arrived parents a deeper understanding of regulations in Australia, topics included laws on child abuse in Australia, rights of children and parents, acceptable forms of discipline, and information on support services. The sessions were an ideal example of how settlement support and information on child protection matters is being effectively delivered to SSI clients to improve outcomes for parents and families.

In addition to building client awareness, SSI delivered a series of workshops to staff and volunteers on Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting to educate and inform staff on how to effectively respond to child protection matters. A variety of topics were covered including responsibilities of mandatory reporters, how to make referrals, types of harm, and family referral services.

As part of our commitment to strengthening families and sector capacity building, SSI partnered with LifeLine to deliver four accredited workshops on domestic and family violence for frontline workers working with multicultural communities. Conducted under the DV-Alert initiative – which aims to empower health and community workers to address domestic violence – the workshops were well received by staff as a valuable training tool to support them in their daily work.

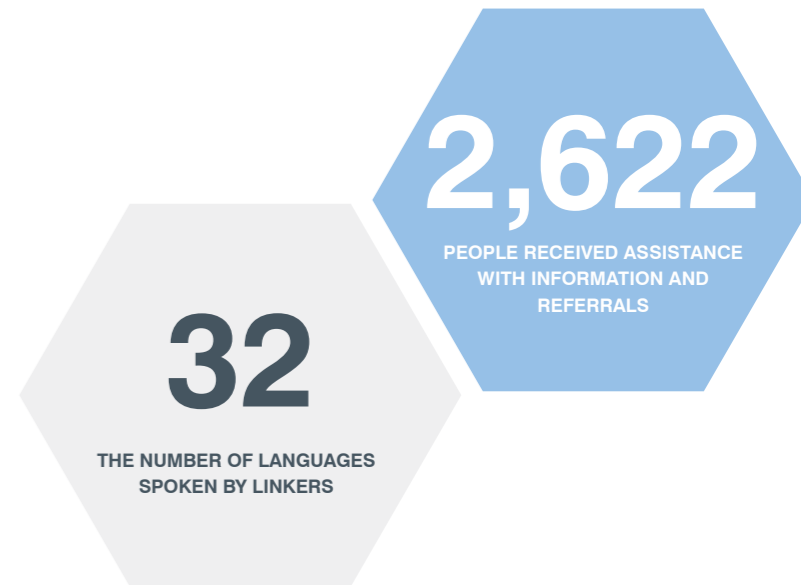
SSI also provided training to external workers on how to support children from multicultural backgrounds in out-of-home care. Delivered as part of the Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT) calendar, the training addressed the needs of multicultural children in care, cultural care planning, and casework strategies for assisting foster carers with cultural work.

SSI is looking forward to expanding its training service offerings in the coming year, and continuing to improve outcomes for parents and families settling in Australia.

SSI Manager Early Intervention & Capacity Building, Thanh Nguyen



SSI supports people living with ... disability



SSI commenced delivering the Ability Links NSW (ALNSW) program in July 2014 as a community-based support network for people with disability, and their families and carers. Designed to minimise barriers facing people with disability, the program seeks to enhance the quality of life of individuals and their families by improving access and support within local communities.

ALNSW adopts an innovative approach by helping people to build supportive relationships and informal networks that empower them to participate in community life. In turn, this helps individuals to achieve their goals while also creating inclusive communities, which is at the core of the ALNSW program.

At its broadest point, ALNSW strives to support people with disability to achieve their goals and ensure they are valued as equal members of the community. Individuals known as Linkers are employed at the grass roots level to fulfil three main roles:

- Consider the immediate and future goals of people with disability, and develop plans to achieve these goals;
- Help to promote confidence by building new community-based networks with service providers;
- Support communities and service providers to be more welcoming and inclusive of people with disability.

The program has rapidly expanded from 22 staff at the beginning of the 2014-2015 reporting period to almost 60 team members, which is a testament to its success. This is best reflected in the performance statistics for the first 12 months which show the program supported 3,235 people; 63 per cent of whom identified as being from CALD backgrounds.

In line with SSI's strengths-based approach, ALNSW has developed strong relationships with key

partners including Uniting Care and St Vincent De Paul Society NSW to roll out the program in over 40 Local Government Areas (LGAs) throughout Sydney, Wollongong and southern NSW. But like SSI's programs and initiatives, staff is at the heart of its success, and the skills, energy and vitality that Linkers bring to helping others day after day is truly inspiring.

FutureAbility: Multicultural Communities Getting NDIS Ready project

The *FutureAbility: Multicultural Communities Getting NDIS Ready* project commenced in May 2015 to help CALD organisations and community groups to prepare for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The four-phase project aims to enhance engagement among CALD organisations and groups in the disability services system, and improve outcomes for people with disability from a CALD background.

Phases of the project include scoping studies that examine the prevalence of disability in CALD communities and assess the CALD sector's readiness in transitioning to the NDIS. The project also involves the development and implementation of education programs to inform the CALD community of issues affecting people with disability, and to help people enter the disability system.

SSI Families and Inclusion Manager, Stephen O'Neill

arts & culture

SSI's Arts & Culture program has gone from strength to strength in its first full year of operation, with a growing number of refugee and asylum seeker clients taking part in the program as it expands to other forms of artistic expression.

The healing benefits of arts and culture are well documented, leading to improvements in health, social and psychological wellbeing. As such, refugees and people seeking asylum are uniquely placed to benefit from SSI's Arts & Culture program, which provides an outlet for artistic expression and creative development. The positive effects also extend to improvements in language skills, social networks, and overall confidence.

With all activities provided free of charge to promote involvement and encourage participation, there were a number of highlights throughout 2014-2015, including:

Performing Arts Workshops

Between July and August 2014, SSI collaborated with the Cultural Performing Arts Network to run a professional development workshop series for performing artists. Run by Sydney Sacred Music Festival artistic director Richard Petkovic the workshops targeted recently arrived refugees or people seeking asylum in Australia who are also musicians. The final workshop was followed by a special performance where participants took to the stage at Parramatta's Riverside Theatres as part of the Sydney Sacred Music Festival. The performance was called *Unity in Music: a showcase of talent in exile*.

Filmmaking and Storytelling Workshops

A group of 15 asylum seekers of varying skill levels joined a series of filmmaking and storytelling workshops facilitated by community arts organisation, CuriousWorks, between September and November 2014. The project-based initiative brought together a group of young men from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to create a short film to share with their peers, friends, and members of the public. The project helped this group to find a creative voice to express their feelings and explore their own story through filmmaking.

Community Music Program

SSI partnered with Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Australia to facilitate a series of weekly music therapy sessions between September 2014 and May 2015. Adopting a creative music therapy framework to address issues surrounding mistrust, social isolation, cultural loss and shaken identity, a group of people seeking asylum came together each week to express themselves through collaborative music making. The program was expanded to SSI's Playtime initiative during the second school term in 2015, providing a structured music therapy activity for preschool-age children.

Art Therapy Workshop for Women

The Arts & Culture Program continued to deliver art therapy workshops for women following the strong success of the inaugural project. Run by volunteer artist Audrey Rhoda, whose studio is based in Katoomba, workshops were held in September 2014 and June 2015 and saw women from five nationalities attend all-day art sessions. The sessions also included short visits to iconic locations such as The Three Sisters.

Arts Activities for Children

A number of activities in the Arts & Culture program have been targeted towards children and young people supported by SSI's Humanitarian Services and Multicultural Foster Care Service. Activities included a creative writing workshop at the Sydney Story Factory in Redfern, a special excursion to Auburn's Botanical Gardens and Peacock Gallery, and visual storytelling workshops in Cabramatta and Newcastle.



Meet Sadigheh...

Sadigheh first came to Australia in 2013 from Iran and has been a regular attendee of art therapy workshops while receiving support from SSI's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program. Here, she shares her experiences:

What has been the highlight of the workshops?

I have learned many new skills from Audrey, and I have met new friends which is good. I never did art in Iran, but I have really enjoyed the Blue Mountains workshops and I look forward to going to more in the future.

What kind of skills have you developed?

I have learned about painting, how to mix colours, and I learned English with Audrey and the friends who also attended the workshop. Audrey spoke in very clear English, and I understood every word she spoke. She understood me as well.

What was the highlight of the workshops for you?

I have attended a number of workshops because they made me feel really truly happy. I was away from everything, my problems, and I did not have to worry about anything. I was truly myself and very happy. I did not think of anything, but enjoyed the moment. I also enjoyed spending time with the other ladies.

And finally, would you recommend the Arts & Culture Program to other people seeking asylum?

Yes, of course. SSI helped me and my daughters go to doctors, get medicines, and even go along to community garden. But the Blue Mountains painting workshop has been a highlight. I am very happy.

Sadigheh is pictured third from left.

“ I was away from everything, my problems, and I did not have to worry about anything. I was truly myself and very happy. I did not think of anything, but enjoyed the moment... ”



Workshops for Visual Artists

The Arts & Culture program, with the support of Bankstown Arts Centre, organised a 10-week skills development program for visual artists as part of a broader initiative including a travelling art exhibition. The workshops, delivered between April and June 2015, provided an opportunity for sustained interaction and mentorship of the artists - who are seeking asylum in Australia - as they explored the notion of 'home'. Workshops included mentoring sessions from artist Abbas Makrab, a gallery tour in the Chippendale Creative Precinct, and talks with established artists and curators.

New Beginnings: Refugee Arts & Culture Festival 2015

The inaugural New Beginnings: Refugee Arts & Culture Festival 2015 was held on World Refugee Day in June 2015 at the Addison Road Community Centre in Marrickville. The one-day celebration showcased the cultural expressions and heritage of people from refugee backgrounds and those seeking asylum. Including folk dance and live music performances, an art showcase, cultural workshops, short film screenings and food and market stalls, nearly 1,000 people attended the festival. Feedback from the audience was overwhelmingly positive, with planning for the 2016 festival currently underway. Presented and produced by SSI, New Beginnings was included in the Open Marrickville program; a celebration of culture and diversity in the local area.

SSI Speakers' Series

The SSI Speakers' Series events have been introduced as a permanent feature on the SSI event calendar following their continued success. Topics featured in the financial year have attracted a number of informed speakers to discuss issues relevant to the communities SSI works with. Our heartfelt thanks goes to all of the speakers who have donated their time and expertise to the series.

SSI Speakers' Series events:

- August 2014: Perception is reality: How do we form our perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers?
- November 2014: The strength of youth: Young people and their refugee experiences
- March 2015: Radical Appeal: Young people and religious extremism
- May 2015: Achieving justice for victims of mass atrocities

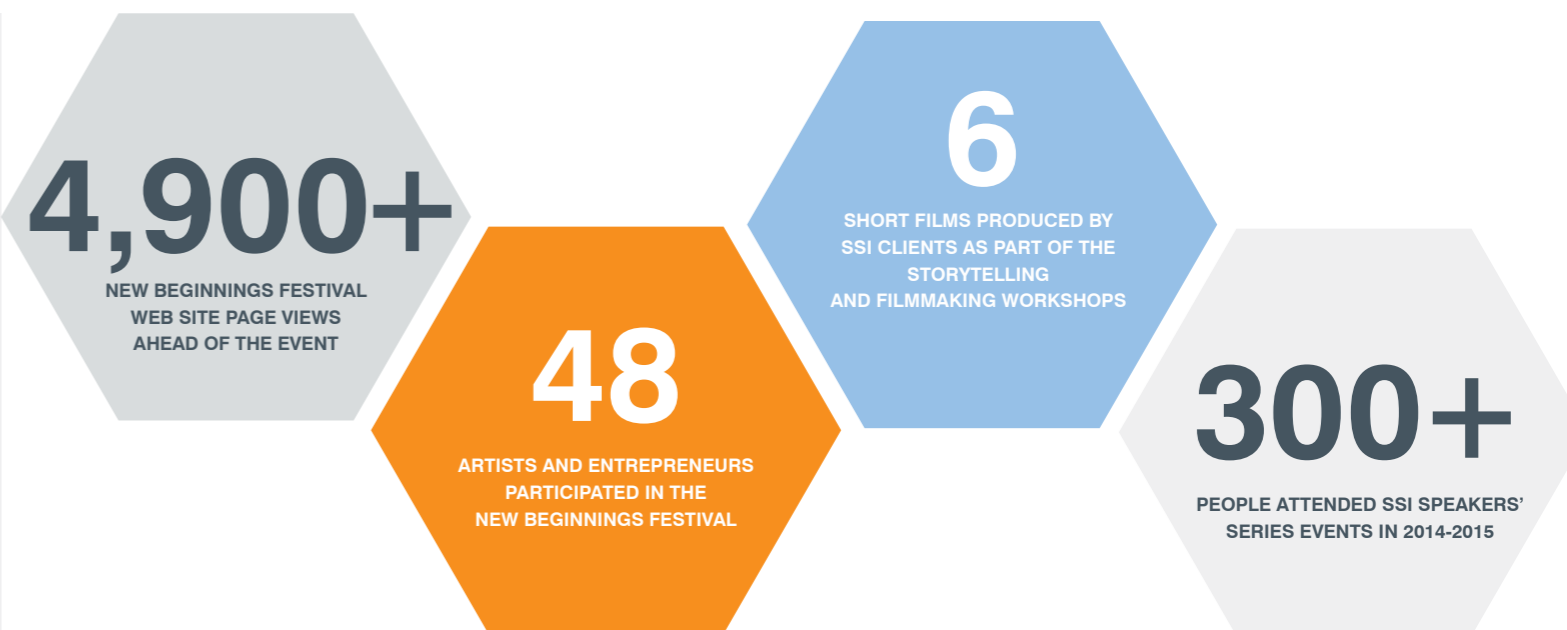
Special thanks goes to all the volunteers, artists and organisations that have contributed to the development and growth of the SSI Arts & Culture program. Thanks are also due to SSI's Corporate Communications team for their support in promoting the program's activities and outcomes to the wider community.

**SSI Arts & Culture Coordinator,
Carolina Triana**



Meet Hayder...

Hayder has a long and colourful background as a visual artist, having completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Baghdad in Iraq in 2008. He also worked as an art teacher with the Ministry of Education of Iraq from 2009-2011 and showcased his first solo exhibition at the University of Baghdad's College of Fine Arts in 2008. After arriving in Australia in 2012, Hayder - who is supported by SSI's Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) program - exhibited at Christmas Island North West Point IDC, SSI's inaugural Art is Our Voice exhibition in 2014, and he started volunteering as a teacher. Hayder has been an active participant of the SSI Arts & Culture Program, taking part in the filmmaking and storytelling workshop, the community music program, skills development workshops for visual artists, and the inaugural New Beginnings festival in June 2015 where his short film titled *The Suffering of the Asylum Seeker* was screened.



Ignite small business start-ups

The Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative is continuing to support the entrepreneurial talent of many refugees by helping them to develop networks that support their goal of establishing a small business in Australia. With research consistently showing that refugees are among the most successful small business owners, Ignite is helping them to overcome the challenges of the highly regulated business environment and harness their full potential as Australian business owners.

Refugees and humanitarian entrants face a series of challenges in entering the Australian workforce, making them among the most vulnerable groups of new arrivals in Australia. Language barriers and issues surrounding qualifications recognition remain the greatest challenges for refugees, and yet, these individuals offer a valuable range of skills which represent a unique asset to the Australian economic landscape.

SSI's Ignite initiative provided dedicated support to these entrepreneurs in 2014-2015, with the aim of increasing self-employment, reducing socio-economic disadvantage, and supporting successful settlement. This was achieved in a variety of ways, with the SSI Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative providing the following:

- Free and confidential business facilitation;
- Interpreters for language support;
- Links to experts with extensive Australian business knowledge;
- Access to micro finance;
- Partnerships with organisations including universities which provided support with product development, marketing plans, and financial management plans;
- Access to a Resource Team with members from established businesses, chambers of commerce and local councils.

Following strong success in 2013-2014 in which SSI supported 12 entrepreneurs to start small businesses, Ignite provided support for a further 60 entrepreneurs in the 2014-2015 financial period. Eleven of these successfully launched small business start-ups. Furthermore, of the 21 businesses that SSI has supported since the initiative launched in 2013, 19 are sole traders and six have formed small companies. Three businesses are also tendering for SSI contracts to further develop their business prospects.



The demographic of entrepreneurs involved with the Ignite initiative is diverse, but SRSS clients with work rights comprised the bulk of referrals in 2014-2015 at around 80 per cent of the total. Further data shows that most SSI entrepreneurs are from Iran, Iraq and Syria; aged between 29 to 45; and around 70 per cent are male. Most entrepreneurs are interested in establishing businesses in the retail and arts sectors.

The Ignite initiative clearly demonstrates the great entrepreneurial potential of Australia's humanitarian entrants who are skilled, experienced, and passionate about starting a business in their new home. The number of individuals who have expressed an interest in the initiative, reaching over 140 newly arrived humanitarian entrants since August 2013, also indicates there is a strong demand for such a program in Australia.

We are very proud of the success that Ignite has achieved so far, and we look forward to further developing the initiative in the year ahead.

**SSI Senior Enterprise Facilitator,
Dina Petrakis**

If you are interested in joining SSI's Ignite Resource Team, please contact Dina Petrakis on dpetrakis@ssi.org.au or (02) 8799 6700.

“Ignite clearly demonstrates the great entrepreneurial potential of Australia's humanitarian entrants.”

Meet the Dendo Brothers...

The Dendo brothers, Rony, Luay and Duraed, arrived in Australia in 2014 from Iraq where they operated a successful photography and videography business specialising in weddings and religious events. The brothers, who together are continuing their father's legacy as a photographer, were eager to apply their skills and expertise in Australia, and joined Ignite just one month after their arrival. After registering with the initiative, their confidence and English language skills dramatically improved to the point where they no longer required an interpreter. The brothers registered their business, Duraed Productions, with the help of SSI in October 2014 and now promote their business online. They continue to receive Ignite facilitation support to find their niche in the Australian market.



be well, stay well

SSI takes a proactive role when it comes to the wellbeing of staff, with the Be Well program designed to promote self-care, resilience and productivity at SSI. Spearheaded by SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis to promote the importance of wellbeing and work life balance, SSI's Be Well program continued to encourage staff members to make positive lifestyle changes in 2014-2015.

With research showing that a positive workplace culture is directly linked to productivity, the Be Well program is dedicated to supporting happy, healthy and focused employees. Benefits include improved concentration and productivity, better staff morale and workplace relations, reduced staff turnover, and overall improvements to SSI's bottom line.

The Be Well program has experienced continued gains since its launch in April 2013, with highlights for the reporting period including:

- The inaugural Be Well Challenge which invited all SSI staff to work towards a meaningful wellness goal for the chance to win a \$500 reward. The campaign successfully saw many SSI staff make positive lifestyle changes, with a number of individuals and teams taking home awards for their perseverance and self-discipline.
- The Move More. Sit Less. Build Health campaign was launched in April 2015 to encourage staff to increase their daily incidental exercise. The collaborative initiative, developed alongside SSI's Work Health and Safety program, encouraged staff to move for six minutes, three times daily.
- The CEO's Wellness Awards have continued to reward employees for making outstanding positive lifestyle choices. In the 2014-2015 reporting period, the Be Well committee selected 12 recipients who received certificates and a \$60 shopping voucher.
- A 'deskercise' video was launched in 2014-2015 to encourage all staff members to move more throughout the day.
- A series of seminars were delivered to staff, including the Vitality at Work workshop which explored key themes including eating well, exercise, and sleep. The seminars were complemented by free phone coaching sessions, provided via the Get Healthy NSW initiative.

The Be Well program has continued to evolve in line with workplace surveys completed by staff members. Online training evaluations have been collected from the majority of training participants, delivering pleasing results.



HSS Housing Support Team Leader, Haylee Eastop

Haylee is an active Be Well participant who encouraged her colleagues to step towards a healthier lifestyle in early 2015. Inspired by the Be Well Challenge, Haylee started a walking group with four colleagues to boost productivity at work through exercise. With their sights firmly set on winning the Be Well Challenge, the Solemates team laced up their shoes as part of a New Year's resolution in early 2015, and encouraged each other to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

The plan went like this: take a break from work at least three times per week with a 15-20 minute walk, and focus on motivating each other to eat better, stay positive, and be active at work. The Solemates team was a stand out success, with all participants reporting reduced stress levels, improved health and higher motivation levels. It also secured the team one of six Be Well Challenge awards for \$500.

The Solemates are still on track, and Haylee encourages others to follow their lead to improve work productivity and boost morale: "The start to 2015 has begun very well for our team, with a high level of motivation. When one member is feeling unmotivated, other members are there encouraging and motivating them to get out and about. Lunches have been more nutritious and based around health, and taking a break from work has allowed us to come back motivated and refreshed."



HSS Housing Services Program Manager, Charles Rich

Charles is one of the Be Well program's strongest advocates, having served as the Chair and a committee member for almost two years. Here, he shares his views on how the program is helping SSI staff to manage stress and improve productivity at work:

"The Be Well program is one of the many perks of working for SSI, and it is great to be a part of something as cutting edge and unique as this initiative. Participants learn about topics such as the relationship between diet, exercise and mental clarity, and the role that meditation and other mindfulness techniques play in overall wellbeing. The strategies are practical but often neglected or unknown by staff prior to attending Work Well sessions, such as debunking the myths of multitasking, creating effective to-do lists, and weeding out unhelpful thoughts. We have seen a significant improvement across the organisation in relation to the ability of staff to focus, be more organised, and to manage stress. Overall, we have seen an increase in staff confidence, perseverance, and feelings of accomplishment and value in relation to SSI."



A message from the...

Treasurer

In yet another challenging year for the humanitarian sector, it is encouraging to report that SSI continued to experience growth with the addition of new services and the expansion of current programs in the 2014-2015 financial year. SSI also consolidated its financial position, setting strong foundations for the year ahead.

The audited financial statements for the financial year highlight the sound revenue base of \$71.3 million that is less than the \$91.5 million recorded for 2013-2014. This decrease is largely due to the transition from the Community Assistance Support (CAS) and Asylum Seeker Assistance Schemes (ASAS) to the new asylum seeker program known as the Settlement Resolution Support Service (SRSS). With the exception of Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) program, each program recorded increases in revenue over the previous year.

The loss of revenue in the HSS program is directly related to the shift in the types of humanitarian visas being processed, with little likelihood of change in the immediate future. However, the revenue base benefited from growth in existing services and the addition of new programs in the areas of employment and settlement services.

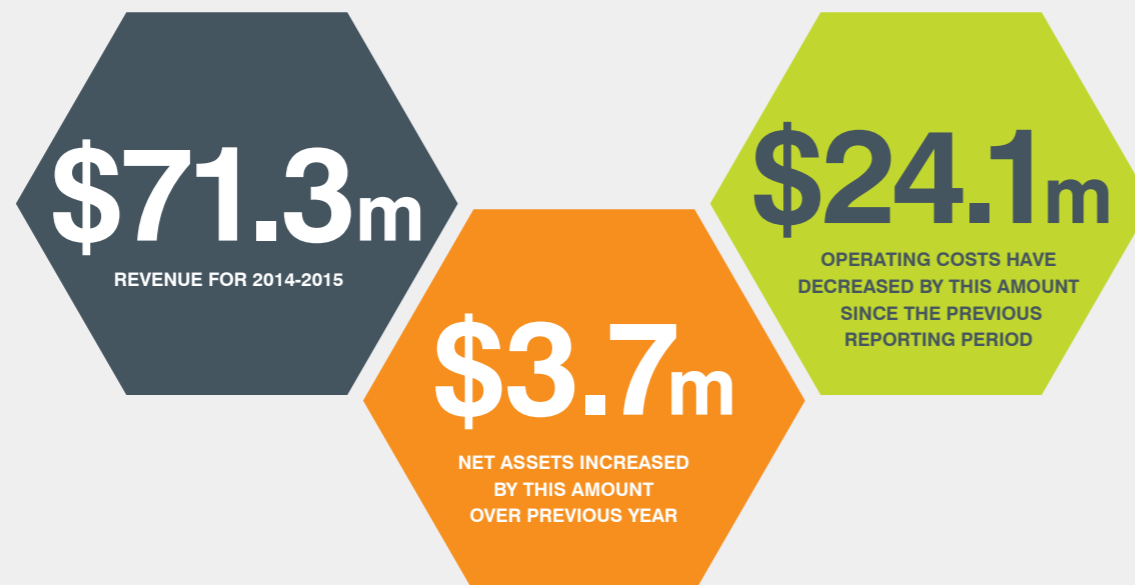
As in previous years, SSI's income includes a component of direct cost recovery of support payments made to clients in the CAS, ASAS and SRSS programs. After adjusting for these direct payments, the net revenue for 2014-2015 is \$53.9 million compared to \$34.7 million for the 2013-2014 financial year. Also

included in income is a component of both federal and state capital funding amounting to \$1.6 million and \$400,000 respectively. Federal funding currently accounts for 86% of total revenue.

Despite the ongoing growth experienced by SSI, operating costs have also decreased from \$91.7 million to \$67.7 million as a result of the transition to the SRSS program. Included in these figures are the recoverable payments for client support costs of \$56.8 million for 2013-2014 and \$17.4 million for 2014-2015 received as income from the CAS, ASAS and SRSS programs.

Staffing levels have continued to increase throughout the financial year due to new and expanding programs, increasing from 336 to 515 staff members, in addition to a network of casual bilingual guides. Apart from an obvious increase in employee-related costs, this growth has also driven increased expenditure for technology and property infrastructure.

As a service delivery organisation, labour represents a significant portion of overall costs, and the current combination of employee-related and direct client support costs accounts for 87% of total expenditure and 82% of total revenue.



Current assets have decreased by \$8.4 million compared to the previous year due to the reduction in cash held in advance for funded services. The trade debtor balance consists almost entirely of amounts owed by federal funding bodies for the provision of services. After allowing for the increase in capital infrastructure, the net decrease in total assets was \$6.6 million. At the same time, total liabilities decreased by \$10.1 million resulting in net assets of \$9.5 million. This represents a \$3.7 million increase over the previous year.

Overall, the cash position remains strong with uncommitted funds of \$1.8 million after allowing for the deferred income of \$6.6 million. The current ratio of 1:33, which represents the proportion of assets in relation to liabilities, further emphasises the strength of the current balance sheet.

Despite remaining areas of uncertainty in the sector, the future outlook remains bright, with further service growth and consolidation underpinned by fully integrated systems for financial reporting, human resources and payroll management, business intelligence and client data.

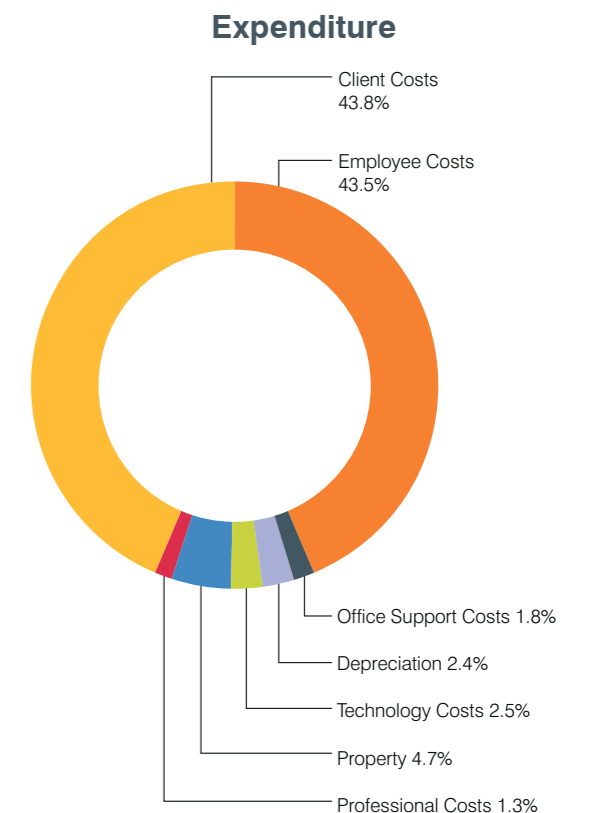
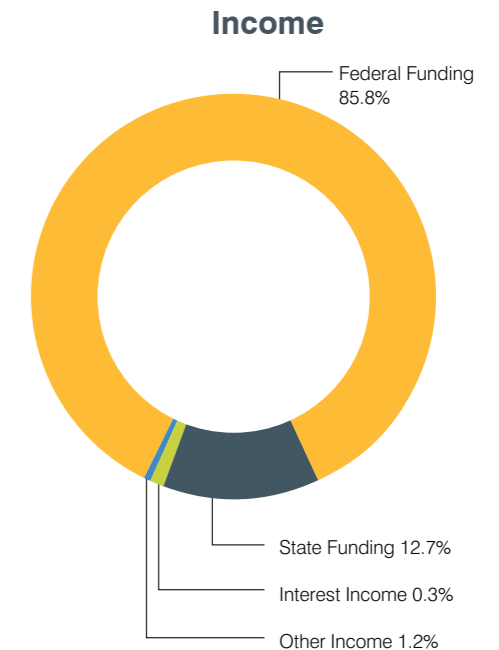
New initiatives

SSI is actively seeking accreditation as a provider of community housing to complement its existing accommodation activities. It should also be noted that the growth of the organisation has necessitated a move from being an Incorporated Association to a Public Company Limited by Guarantee (see Chair's report on page 10 for more details).

Connect Australia Foundation

The Connect Australia Foundation did not receive any funding for the 2014-2015 financial year, and no grant submissions were lodged. More recently, the foundation underwent a name change and is now known as the SSI Foundation with the purpose of raising funds to provide scholarships in support of refugee and asylum seeker education opportunities.

SSI Treasurer, Rosa Loria



June 2015 Annual Report Data

INCOME	2015
Federal Funding	61,211,711
State Funding	9,024,575
Interest Income	236,125
Other Income	849,003
	71,321,414
EXPENDITURE BY SOURCE	
Client Costs	29,631,322
Employee Costs	29,406,757
Office Support Costs	1,238,985
Depreciation	1,590,585
Technology Costs	1,699,794
Property Costs	3,206,717
Professional Costs	877,745
	67,651,905

Cash Flow Statement for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2015

	\$
Cash at the beginning of the year	19,012,111
OPERATIONS	
Net Cash Flow from Operations	7,256,522
INVESTING ACTIVITIES	
Net Cash Flow from Investing Activities	(3,299,776)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES	
Net Cash Flow from Financing Activities	-
Net Increase/(Decrease in Cash)	10,556,298
Cash at Bank 30 June 2015	8,455,813

SSI Board



1. Lou Bacchiella
2. Antoinette Chow
3. Kamalle Dabboussy (Chair)
4. Om Dhungel
5. Louise Petschler
6. Elisabeth Shaw
7. Lucy Taksa

SSI welcomed a new Board on June 1, 2015 (pictured above). Prior to this date, Board members included: Lou Bacchiella, Kamalle Dabboussy, Om Dhungel, Rosa Loria, Litsa Nossar, Tia Roko, Karin Vasquez.

acknowledgements

SSI would like to thank the following organisations, businesses and individuals for their support during the 2014-2015 financial year:

Humanitarian Services & Community Engagement

Afghan Australian Noor Association Inc
Afghan Youth (AYANA)
Amnesty International
Anglicare
Asylum Seekers Centre
Auburn Centre for Community
Auburn City Council
Auburn District Cricket Club
Australia 21
Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association (AAHYA)
Australian Iranian Community Organisation
Australian Relief Organisation
Australian Red Cross
Breast Cancer Institute Westmead
Commonwealth Bank
Concord Baptist Church
Centre for Refugee Research at UNSW
Dandelion Support Network
Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre Inc
Fairfield City Council
Fitted for Work
Granville Men's Shed
Granville Youth Centre
Greening Australia
Hillsong Church
Holroyd Rangers Soccer Club Inc
House of Welcome
Hunter New England Health Refugee Health Program
Immigrant Women's Health Service
Jesuit Refugee Services
Jews for Social Justice
Maitland Neighbourhood Centre
Mazi Mas
Merewether Uniting Church Community Kitchen
Mission of Hope

MRCs:
Auburn Diversity Services Inc
Community Migrant Resource Centre
Illawarra Multicultural Services
Fairfield MRC
Liverpool MRC
Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative
Metro Assist
Northern Settlement Services
St George Migrant Resource Centre
Sydney Multicultural Community Services
SydWest Multicultural Services

Multicultural NSW
Mums 4 Refugees
Nabi Akram Islamic Centre
Newington Gunners Soccer Club
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
NSW Refugee Health Service
NSW Police Force
Old Knox Grammarians Association
Opal Dental
OzHarvest
Parliament On King
Parramatta City Council
Parramatta Salvation Army Hall
Catholic Care Refugee Service
Playfair Visa and Migration Services
Refugee Advice & Casework Service
Refugee Council of Australia
Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Rosy Painting
Rotary Club of Morisset
SAHELI
The Samaritans Foundation
SecondBite
Soroptimist International
STARTTS
St Vincent de Paul Society
Sydney Shuttle

Synapse Medical Services
TAFE NSW
Tamil Meet and Greet Committee
The Ansaar Project Halal Food Bank
The Embroiderers' Guild NSW Inc
The Salvation Army
University of Sydney
Welcome to Australia
Western Sydney Tenancy Service
Western Sydney University
WESTIR LTD
Women Empowering Refugee Women
Wrap with Love
Zam Zam Supermarket

Housing Services

APX Apartments
Breakfree Bankstown International
Church Resources
Comfort Inn Hunts Liverpool
Community Housing Ltd
G Group Investments
Hume Community Housing Association
Little & Rabie Betta Electrical
Marist Youth Care
Meli's Cleaning
Nepean Migrant Access
NSW Health
Wesley Mission

Arts & Culture Program

Abbas Makrab
Addison Road Community Centre
Art-In-Sight Workshops, Audrey Rhoda
Ashfield Council
Bankstown Arts Centre

Cultural Performing Arts Network
CuriousWorks
Drum Therapy
Granville Youth and Community Recreation Centre
Horizon Theatre
Marrickville Council
Music for Refugees, Philip Feinstein
Nordoff-Robbins
Sydney Sacred Music Festival 2014
Sydney Story Factory
World Lens Foundation

Ignite Small Business Start-ups

AMB, Marina Briza and Adriana Mercado
Cremeria de Luca, Luigi de Luca
Forbes Accounting and Business Services, Yateender Gupta
Many Rivers, Garry Harris
TAFE NSW Outreach, Patricia Kenny
The Social Outfit, Jackie Ruddock
Unison Finance Group, Ian Watson
University of Technology, Sydney (School of Business)
University of Wollongong (School of Business)
Volunteer mentors, Vito Carozzo and Brian Findlay

Multicultural Foster Care Service

Association of Children's Welfare Agencies
Child and Family District Units
Community Services Centres
Connecting Carers NSW
Ethnic Community Services Co-operative
Hunter African Communities Council
NSW Council for Pacific Communities
NSW Office of the Children's Guardian

glossary of acronyms

TERM	DEFINITION	TERM	DEFINITION
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service	HSS	Humanitarian Settlement Services
ACWA	Association of Children's Welfare Agencies	LHD	Local Health Districts
ADHC	NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care	LTA	Long Term Accommodation
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission	MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
ALNSW	Ability Links NSW	NCOSS	NSW Council of Social Services
ASAS	Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme	NMoH	NSW Ministry of Health
BCD	Business and Community Development	NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
BG	Bilingual Guide	NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
BHG	Basic Household Goods	NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
BNP	Basic Needs Package	NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	NMoH	NSW Ministry of Health
CAS	Community Assistance Support	OOHC	Out-of-Home Care
CCD	Community Cultural Development	PAC	People and Culture
CHP	Community Housing Provider	QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
CIP	Community Integration Program	QMS	Quality Management System
CRC	Community Relations Commission	RACS	Refugee Advice and Casework Service
CRR	Centre for Refugee Research, UNSW	RCOA	Refugee Council of Australia
CSP	Community Support Program	RHS	NSW Refugee Health Service
DEC	NSW Department of Education and Communities	RSN	Refugee Support Network
DHS	Department of Human Services	SCOA	Settlement Council of Australia
DIPB	Department of Immigration and Border Protection	SGP	Settlement Grants Program
DSS	Department of Social Services	SHS	Specialist Homelessness Service
EICB	Early Intervention and Capacity Building	SRSS	Status Resolution Support Services
EPAC	Salary Packaging Solutions	SSI	Settlement Services International
FACS	NSW Department of Family and Community Services	STA	Short Term Accommodation
HNSW	Housing New South Wales	STARTTS	Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
HS	Housing Services	SVDP	St Vincent De Paul

how can you help?

Donate to the SSI Foundation:
ssi.org.au/foundation

Become an SSI Volunteer:
email volunteer@ssi.org.au
or call (02) 9685 0100

Become a foster carer:
contact Ghassan Noujaim,
SSI Manager
Out-of-Home Care
on gnoujaim@ssi.org.au
or (02) 8713 9200

Support the Arts & Culture Program:
contact Carolina Triana,
SSI Arts & Culture Coordinator
on ctriana@ssi.org.au
or (02) 8799 6700

Join the Ignite Small Business Start-Ups resource team:
contact Dina Petrakis,
SSI Enterprise Facilitator
on dpetrakis@ssi.org.au
or (02) 8799 6700

To find out more,
go to www.ssi.org.au,
call (02) 8799 6700
email info@ssi.org.au
 find us on Facebook

