



# Media Release



Tuesday 15 July 2008

## SPECTRUM'S IMMIGRATION SERVICE ASSISTING REFUGEES & EMPLOYERS

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre's (SMRC) non-profit social enterprise providing low-cost, high-quality migration advice, Spectrum Immigration Services (SIS), will be celebrating its official launch this **Thursday 17 July**. As the Victoria State Director of the Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC), **John Williams**, officiates at the launch, SIS will also proudly commemorate serving a community need, with nearly 600 clients, including an Ethiopian mother reunited with her daughter, as well as employers recruiting from overseas to alleviate skills shortages.

SIS was established in February 2007 after the former Federal Government changed the eligibility requirements for free migration advice from MRCs from 1 July 2006, to only humanitarian refugees, resident in Australia for less than 5 years. SMRC had concerns that many former migrant and refugee clients would be ineligible and wanted to provide an alternative for those unable to afford private migration agents, as they seek to bring over family relatives to assist in their own settlement. Whilst fee-charging, the service is run as a not-for-profit service, like the rest of the SMRC.

**Key statistics** emerging from its first year of operation have been

- A **majority (57%)** of the **600 clients** reside in the **northern suburbs**, however, as SIS is a statewide service, clients have come from across metropolitan Melbourne, as well as **regional Victoria** (Shepparton & Gippsland);
- With regard to **country of birth**, SIS' clients are **predominantly newly arrived refugees**, with the Top 3 communities being **Somalian (11%), Ethiopian (7%)** and equal third on **5%** have been **Australian** (often second-generation migrants), **Iraqi, Lebanese & Sudanese**. Collectively, they make up **35%** of clients;
- In terms of **visa types** assisted, **equal 1<sup>st</sup>** has been those seeking to **appeal** their visa decisions at the Refugee Review Tribunal or Migration Review Tribunal (**20%**) as well as those seeking to bring over a **spouse (20%)** – the latter predominantly being second generation Australians marrying citizens from their home country. Whilst those seeking to migrate or stay on as a **skilled migrants**, after being on a student visa, rate **2<sup>nd</sup> highest (18%)**.

**Carlton** resident, **Luula Gebreselassie**, who will be speaking at Thursday's launch, is a recent SIS success story and one of the many refugees SIS has been able to assist. She arrived in Australia in 2000. After giving birth at 15 to a daughter, Elsabet, her father, a single parent also, took her to Eritrea to stay with relatives who could help her. A year later, she returned to Ethiopia with her daughter. In 1998, with the start of the civil war there, her father, siblings and daughter were deported to Eritrea. Luula was not deported as she went into hiding. In 1999, she left Ethiopia and went to Italy. When she arrived at SIS, she had no knowledge of where Elsabet's biological father was, nor where her own father was. She found out that Elsabet was living with her father and was assisted to bring her to Australia with a child visa. They have recently been reunited. **Ms Gebreselassie** said, "I'm so happy to be reunited with my daughter. I wouldn't have been able to afford to go to a private migration agent, so I am really pleased that SIS exists for those of us who would otherwise live in despair or go into debt. SIS was very helpful and I am now so happy to be reunited with my daughter.

SIS has also been able to assist local employers seeking to bring out overseas workers to meet local skill shortages. **Glenroy** businessman, **Haydar Cakir**, was assisted to bring over his brother to assist him with his booming bricklaying business. "As a small businessman, I can't afford huge fees and nor do I have the time to do the paperwork myself, particularly as I was getting busy and just needed more help, so I was really grateful they could assist".

SMRC Business Development Manager, **Hutch Hussein**, sees SIS as a great fit for SMRC's vision. "SIS is helping Spectrum achieve its vision to assist generations of migrants and refugees integrate and reach their full potential - whether it's being able to assist refugees appealing their visa decisions, newly arrived migrants gaining residency to get a job or to have family members assist them in the settlement process as a partner or parent, we're serving a need in the community. We're pleased to be able to provide a low-cost, high-quality alternative to people across the state.

**DATE & TIME:** Thursday 17 July, 10am-11am

**VENUE:** Spectrum Immigration Services, Old Preston Courthouse, 59a Roseberry Ave, Preston

**CONTACT FOR MIGRATION ADVICE:** Phone 9470 2311, [sis@spectrumvic.org.au](mailto:sis@spectrumvic.org.au) or [www.spectrumvic.org.au](http://www.spectrumvic.org.au)

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