



# Media Release

Tuesday 5 August 2008

## SPECTRUM CALLS ON POTENTIAL CITIZENS TO SEEK ASSISTANCE WITH CITIZENSHIP TEST

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (SMRC) is encouraging citizenship applicants to come forward and seek assistance as they prepare for the Government's citizenship test. SMRC has been announced as a provider of the Federal Government's Citizenship Support Grants Program (CSGP), a 12 month pilot program, providing 1-1 support, as well as a course for people needing assistance to prepare for the test. The new program has been prompted by the Federal Government's review of the test and to reduce high failure rates amongst migrant groups.

In addition to the individual support, the course, funded by the Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC), will be held over either a 3 day period (Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays) or all day Saturdays and will cover:

- an explanation of some important parts of the Citizenship Test – for example
  - the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship
  - Australian values & traditions
  - history
  - national symbols
- a citizenship test tutorial
- basic computer skills training for the test
- as well as information and referrals to other services if required – for example, Spectrum's Certificate-level courses, Employment Service, Aged Care program or general housing, settlement or immigration advice.

“The assistance and new and free classes represent the first opportunity, since the Citizenship Test was introduced, for people to access the support, training and guidance they need to pass the test. Many refugees have been traumatised, may not have been to school and the fear of failure is a big issue, particularly given the impact on their potential to sponsor relatives as an Australian citizen. The diversity of local residents across the northern suburbs is high and many residents of non-English speaking backgrounds struggle to sit the test and pass without assistance, so we are pleased to offer this opportunity,” said **Malyun Ahmed, Citizenship Program Co-ordinator**.

“Courses will be offered over the next year, during school hours as well as on Saturdays to suit those with family or work commitments. However, people should contact us even if those times don't suit them and we'll do our best to accommodate them. These courses are for anyone who is eligible to become an Australian Citizen and need some help to prepare for the test. Assistance can also be provided to register for a test or citizenship ceremonies. Applicants can repeat the course until they pass the test,” said **Ms Ahmed**.

The SMRC sought to be a provider as it was concerned about the difficulty the test posed for migrants and refugees. **Denise Goldfinch, SMRC's Settlement Planning & Projects Manager** commented, “The test has potentially excluded migrants and refugees with low literacy levels and those from oral cultures. Statistics on the success rates of citizenship show there is a higher rate of passing for English-speaking migrants; groups experiencing the highest failure rates are from countries of civil unrest. Figures in the March 2008 Australian citizenship snapshot report indicate the highest failure rates to be people from Sudan (22.6 %), Afghanistan (17.4 %) and Iraq (17.4 %). Furthermore, there has also been anecdotal evidence about some refugees, who often had little or no education, who fear failing the test and hence not sitting and not seeking citizenship. Some often fear this has an impact on their own permanent residency”.

**WHAT'S ON COLUMN:** Citizenship Support Program – individual assistance or preparation course

**WHEN:** Courses will be offered on a rolling basis from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August on Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays every week OR Saturdays every week, until 30 June 2009.

**VENUE:** Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, 251 High St, Preston

**INQUIRIES OR ENROLMENTS:** Malyun Ahmed on 9496 0200 to enrol or make enquiries. Enrolment forms can be downloaded from [www.spectrumvic.org.au](http://www.spectrumvic.org.au)

**Media contact:** Hutch Hussein 0438 507 103

[www.spectrumvic.org.au](http://www.spectrumvic.org.au)

*“generations of migrants & refugees reaching their full potential...”*