

Guidelines for Working Ethically & Responsibly with Refugees & Asylum Seekers

The following information is designed to be a guide for individuals and organisations planning an event, function or activity for Refugee Week.

Involving refugees in your event

It is important that individuals and organisations planning any event which has the active participation of refugees, take account of the good practice measures outlined below. The following information has been compiled with input from a number of organisations who have participated in the organizing committee for Refugee Week, including the Ecumenical Migration Centre, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, the Adult Multicultural Education Services and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

How will refugees be involved?



Organisations need to consider how they will involve refugees in their event. You should make very clear the purpose of the refugees involvement, the way in which they will be involved, what you or your organisation's role will be, practical details of the event such as dates, times, location, getting there and the contact person/s details.

If you are involving speakers or groups with limited English, ensure qualified interpreters or bilingual workers from your organisation are used to convey the information or have the discussion.

Refugee speakers

If you plan to have some refugee/asylum seeker speakers at your event, as well as the above, the following points need to be considered:

Full Preparation Consider and discuss with them what they will be speaking about – how long, what you want them to cover, who and how many people will be in the



audience. A run through beforehand can be very helpful as well as briefing notes to guide them. This will also help determine their confidence and ability to handle public speaking in English.

Reimbursement Wherever possible speakers should be paid for their participation, an appropriate amount would be between \$50- \$100. At the very least speakers should be reimbursed for any travel costs. It is important to make it clear whether or not this is the case from the beginning.

Providing Support If the person is required to “tell their story” you should consider the potential for re-traumatisation and discuss with them how happy they are to do this, what possible repercussions there are for them or extended family (particularly those still overseas), the possibility of press coverage, whether this person has been asked to do similar events previously and how often, or whether there is potential to negatively impact on their visa process.

Be sensitive to the fact that, as a worker or advocate for refugees, some refugees may be reluctant to say directly to you that they don’t want to participate. You may detect some reticence even though they say they are willing.

If a speaker becomes upset, be prepared to interrupt and give them the option of whether to continue or not.

Follow Up Following any event where refugees have spoken, make sure that the speaker receives some feedback at the end, spend some time with them and give them the opportunity to discuss any issues that may have arisen for them. If they are distressed make sure that they are aware of local support services and/or the state based torture and trauma service. The follow-up is important to ensure they have ongoing support if they have been re-traumatised by the event. Be sure to give them a call after the event and thank them for their participation.

For further information or advice on getting a speaker for your event please call either the Refugee Council of Australia in NSW or Victoria or check the list of organizing agencies in your state at the back of this kit.

Media Involvement

If you plan to have press coverage of the event and refugee speakers are presenting, make sure they are aware of this and have their consent (preferably in writing) to use photos, names or other details. It is possible to get anonymity agreements with press coverage and this



option should be fully discussed with them before obtaining consent. Advise and discuss any potential risks with press exposure beforehand. Speakers should be made aware of the editing process with most newspapers and the fact that the papers usually exercise editorial control on what goes to press. Some local press, however, are happy to show a copy before going to press. Wherever possible ensure that this option is explored.

If your event involves advocacy for refugees, be sure of any facts presented by speakers. Media enjoys sensational news and the editorial control process may result in a negative media report if any speakers present incorrect material. If your speaker/s are to be interviewed by media, ensure there are ground rules beforehand and stipulate the kinds of questions they will not answer. It is always best to have a support person there to intervene if necessary. Remember not all members of the public and media are sympathetic to refugee issues