



Refugee Council of Australia

June 11, 2009

Refugees to share stories of fear and freedom at Refugee Week launches

Refugees will share stories of struggle and triumph as Refugee Week kicks off with launches next Monday in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Paul Power, Refugee Council of Australia chief executive officer, said the launches would mark the formal beginning of Refugee Week, which this year includes more than 100 events and focuses on the theme 'Freedom from Fear'.

In **Sydney**, more than 100 people will gather at Customs House to hear from Refugee Council president John Gibson and guest speaker Yasmeen Fatimah, a member of Australia's Burmese Rohingya community. Guests will also enjoy an exhibition of refugee photography and a lively musical performance by Iraqi Assyrian group Azadoota.

"Yasmeen's touching story will shed light on many of the issues that affect refugees", Mr Power said. "After fleeing persecution in Burma, she spent years as a refugee without status in Bangladesh and Malaysia, she's had to deal with people smugglers and corrupt officials, and she's had to rebuild her life here in Australia."

In **Melbourne**, a similar number of people will be at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image to listen to speakers reflecting on regional and global refugee issues, including Refugee Council president John Gibson, who will launch Refugee Week in Victoria. The audience will be treated to a screening of local and international short-films and the West African sounds of percussion and dance ensemble Muhanamwe.

In **Adelaide**, Refugee Week begins with a book launch at the University of South Australia. Its subject, Ben Yengi OAM, was one of the first Sudanese refugees to come to Australia and is one of the many refugees who have made a significant contribution to South Australian life. Another is Hieu Van Le, Lieutenant Governor of South Australia, who will officially launch Refugee Week in the state.

Mr Power said these launches kick off a week of festivities that concludes with World Refugee Day on June 20.

"They give us all a chance to hear real stories from real people and, with the renewed interest in refugees and asylum seekers sparked by this year's boat arrivals, it's important that these voices are heard."

Launch details

Sydney: Monday 15 June, 10.30am for 11am start, Barnet Long Room, Customs House, Level 1, 31 Alfred St, Circular Quay. RSVP by 11 June 2009 to Natalie Gooch on info@refugeecouncil.org.au or on (02) 9211 9333.

Melbourne: Monday 15 June, 5:30pm for 6pm start at Cinema 2, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Federation Square. RSVP by 11 June 2009 to Rebecca Eckard on melbourne@refugeecouncil.org.au or on (03) 9348 2245.

Adelaide: Monday 15 June, 10.30am, Civic Gallery, The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, University of South Australia, Hawke Building, Level 5, 50-60 North Terrace, Adelaide. Contact Louise Carnell on (08) 8302 0371 or email louise.carnell@unisa.edu.au

Please find attached a list of events taking place around Australia and a list of participating organisations that can also be contacted by the media.

More information is available at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rw_index.html