

REFUGEE REFLECTIONS

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Canterbury Refugee Council Celebrates New Office Opening

Canterbury Refugee Council recently celebrated the new office opening with a community event, which was attended by the key representatives from the service provider sector and members from the refugee communities.

Inspector Hirone Waretini, the Canterbury District Manager: Maori, Pacific and Ethnic Services, New Zealand Police officially inaugurated the new office which is an important landmark in the Council's history. Ahmed Tani, the chairperson of the Council also announced the expansion of the CRC's activities and its plan to be the Refugee Resource Centre.

To mark the occasion, keynote speaker of the event, Dr Haji Hassan, the Refugee and Migrant Coordinator of South Island, shared the Council's past and its achievements over the years. The new office accommodation hopes to deliver high quality support and to facilitate a range of services for refugee background communities. The CRC is committed to promoting services for the better resettlement outcome for refugees. For more information please see www.canterburyrefugeecouncil.org.nz



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Elderly Trip to Hamner Springs

On 25th of February, Canterbury Refugee Council organised a trip for elderly people from refugee background to Hamner Spring Thermal Pools and Spas. The group consisted of elderly people from all the refugee communities of Christchurch including Somali, Bhutanese, Afghan, Sudanese etc. The trip was a part of Supporting Isolated Refugee Individuals and Communities programme, an initiative by the CRC to prevent social isolation and loneliness amongst the former refugee people in Christchurch.

A coach was hired which picked up the trip goes from the Council's office and departed at 9:00 in the morning along with the CRC staff. Separate private pools were booked for women who did not want to share the public pools. Afterwards, the group was taken to a park where they could share meals, socialise and have a picnic.

Picnics are symbolic of shared good times, and by the looks of everyone's faces and the feedback we can attest that everyone had the most enjoyable time and are already looking forward to the next outing.



Immigration Meeting

First Meeting of the year by Immigration New Zealand Refugee and Protection Unit held

Canterbury Refugee Council facilitated the six monthly Immigration meeting on 1st of March in Christchurch for the Immigration New Zealand Refugee and Protection Unit. The meeting is a part of the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy (NZRRS) and is divided into two parts and is held every six months between the representatives of the Immigration New Zealand and the stakeholders in refugee resettlement sector as well as the refugee communities.

The meeting with the communities is followed by an interactive session giving the community members an opportunity to share their concerns as well as ask any questions they might have to the INZ representatives.



7th Regional Refugee Forum Held on International Women's Day

The Canterbury Refugee Council's 7th Regional Refugee Forum was held at the Christchurch City Council on 8th of March which also marks the International Women's Day. To commemorate the event this year's Regional Forum theme was "Opportunities and Barriers for Refugee background Women to Achieve Self-Sufficiency". The focus on women was adopted because women form more than half of NZ's refugee quota. Of the quota 10% of women enter New Zealand through the Women at Risk category identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The keynote speaker for the forum was Ann Dysart, Manager, Ministry of Social Development who flew in from Wellington to be a part of the event. The major themes discussed were education and language, health, and employment and how these factors can aid women to achieve self-sufficiency.



The speakers included Nicola Sutton, Chief Executive, English Language Partners New Zealand; Dr. Ann Richardson, Professor of Cancer Epidemiology, University of Canterbury; Jude Ryan'O Dea, Migrant Employment.

The highlight of the forum was a panel discussion entitled "Personal stories of former refugees and migrant women". Four women from different walks of life but each having their own journey of gaining self-sufficiency enthralled the audience with the stories of their strength. Overall it was an extremely informative day which provided a great opportunity for the participants to meet people with key perspectives in the refugee sector



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