

Thursday 8 June 2017

## **FREEDOM STORIES CELEBRATE REFUGEE WEEK**

Former and new refugees will share their experiences and cultures with the community in an evening of short films, spoken words, music and food as the City of Ryde celebrates Refugee Week 2017 (Wednesday June 21, Ryde Library, 6.30pm).

*Freedom Stories* features the words of women from Afghanistan and Zambia about the challenges, hopes and renewal they have experienced before coming to Australia and their lives since then.

Presenters include Mahboba Rawi who fled war in Afghanistan at the age of 15 and who has been active in Australia, supporting the Afghan community in Australia. In 2001 Mahboba established Mahboba's Promise Inc., a non-profit, non-Government organisation dedicated to directly improving the lives of vulnerable women and children of Afghanistan.

City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Bill Pickering said Refugee Week is an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that refugees make to our City and to our nation. "Through *Freedom Stories* we witness the resilience and courage that so many refugees have, and the incredible internal resources that people draw on to not only survive, but to thrive in their new home of Australia."

The City of Ryde became a Refugee Welcome Zone in 2013. Ryde has the highest number of humanitarian arrivals amongst the Northern Sydney Region of Council with 143 arrivals between January 2016 and May 2017, including many Armenian families from Syria.

**Refugee Week 2017 Events** Bookings essential [www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/whatson](http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/whatson)

- **Freedom Stories:** An evening of short films, spoken word, music and food. Wednesday 21 June 6:30pm, Ryde Library. Gold coin donation for refreshments.
- **Refugee Week Free Training Workshop:** for workers and services on engaging with diverse and refugee communities. Thursday 22 June, 10.00am – 2.00pm, Ryde Library, Wallumetta Room

The theme for Refugee Week 2017, "*with courage let us all combine*", is a lyric from Australia's national anthem. It demonstrates the power of what happens when Australian society comes together and 'combine'.

City of Ryde Council partnered with Intercultural Network Ryde Area to produce a multi-lingual Welcome Guide for Asylum Seekers & Refugees [www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/refugeeguide](http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/refugeeguide)

City of Ryde community partners include Settlement Services International, the Community Migrant Resource Centre and Ryde Intercultural Network. Projects arising from those partnerships include: Workshops for Afghan women on domestic violence with support services and Police at Burwood Court; Supporting Afghan Women - wellbeing information sessions; Free training for services working with refugees.