

Refugees *making a* difference

Each year refugees who have made an outstanding contribution to society are rewarded for their hard work by being formally recognised in the Victorian Refugee Recognition Record (VRRR).

Working quietly in the background to better the lives of others in the community often goes unacknowledged, and those who do it do not expect applause and accolades. However, the Victorian Government recognises the hard work many people do and each year seeks to formally recognise their contribution and say thank you.

Helping others resettle in a new country, opening doors to learning English, developing social groups to minimise social isolation and helping others access services most people take for granted are just some of the ways outstanding members of our diverse society make life easier for refugees.

Each year, the Victorian Government seeks nominations from across Victoria to formally recognise the invaluable contribution refugees voluntarily make to the community. The VRRR is an important event on the state's calendar and this year was no exception.

This year, the recipients totalled 28 and were added to the VRRR on 19 June in a ceremony at the Immigration Museum. Each recipient was presented with a certificate by the Deputy Premier, Rob Hulls and the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, James Merlino.

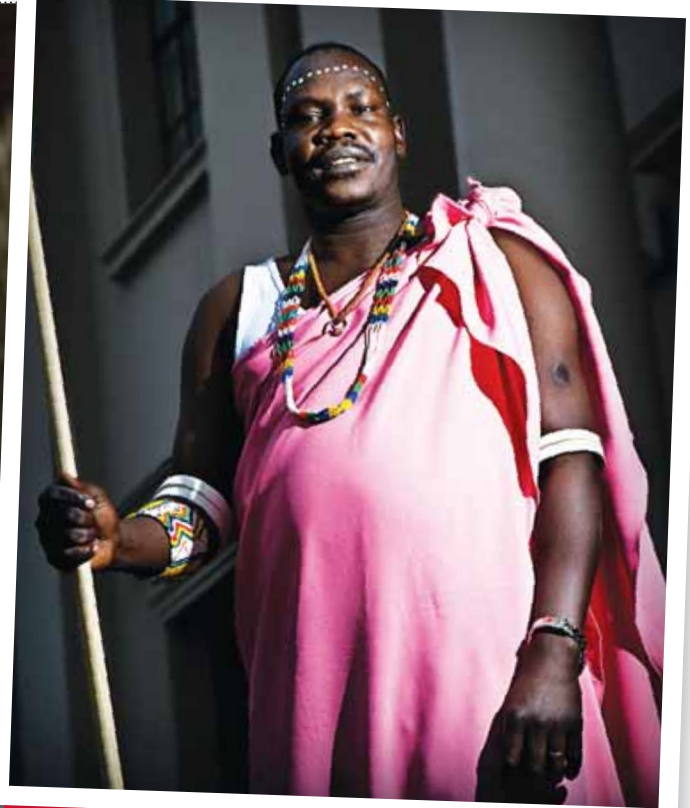
"The VRRR recognises the dedication of refugees supporting their own ethnic communities as well as strengthening relationships for the wider Victorian community," said Mr Hulls.

"By acknowledging the achievements made by refugees to our community, we hope to encourage greater awareness and respect for our cultural diversity, which is enriched by the presence of a significant refugee population," he said.





in focus



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Kim Thien Truong, photographed by Natasha Ward; Paulino Joth, photographed by Rebecca Rocks; Victoria Franco, photographed by Geoff Morrissey; Abraham Hadgu, photographed by Lauren Marshall.

OPPOSITE PAGE David Lam, photographed by Rod Donald; Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe Apollo, photographed by Julie Mercer (courtesy of Shepparton News).





THE VMC WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE 28 RECIPIENTS ON THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

- Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe Apollo:** Goulburn African Community
- Kwami Assimadi:** Ballarat African Association
- Sonam Dolkar Shatsan:** Tibetan Women's Association
- Victoria Franco:** Refugee Basketball Program, Spectrum MRC
- Abraham Hadgu:** Eritrean Communities Council Chairperson
- Caleb Haunung:** Melbourne Chin community
- Jacob Haweil:** Australian Assyrian Arts and Literature Foundation
- Salam Ali Hussein:** Oromo Community Association in Vic
- Paulino Jouth:** Community Development/Problem Gambling Officer – Diversitat
- Samuel Kuot:** Sudanese Community Association Of Australia
- David Lam:** Buddhist community
- Peng Ling:** Burmese community
- Thomas Lual:** Sudanese Community in Warrnambool
- Danute Lynikas:** Lithuanian community
- Akoc Akei Manheim:** Lost Boys of Sudan Association of Australia
- Su Su May:** AMES Settlement – Community Guide/Information Officer
- Zabihulla Mazoori:** Afghan Refugee Youth Worker
- Zeinab Mohamud:** United Somali Womens Organisation
- Halima Mohomud:** Somali Community
- Asha Saaed:** The Eritrean Community
- Sainab Sheikh:** African Women's Network
- Jeremiah Temple:** Sierra Leone Australia Community of Victoria
- Alice Tiomkin:** National Council of Jewish Women (Vic)
- Van Tu Tran:** Vietnamese community
- Kim Truong:** Vietnamese community
- Gene Valaitis:** Geelong Lithuanian community
- Gulgothai Wahidi:** Afghan community
- Margaret Walerian:** Polish community

The recipients are involved in a range of initiatives, including programs to address problem gambling among refugees; assisting refugees settle into jobs and homes; encouraging the preservation of linguistic and cultural traditions; developing educational programs; and actively defending human rights issues.

For the second year running, the Victorian Government invited photography students from Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE to create a photo exhibition featuring portraits of this year's recipients. Mr Merlino launched the exhibition at the ceremony and praised the students and recipients for their participation in the project.

"The students' involvement in the VRRR is inspiring and encouraging to see," Mr Merlino said, "the recipients have been portrayed in an artistic and compelling way that puts faces to some of the hardworking individuals in our many different community groups."

Guest speaker Wilbert Mapombere, a significant figure in the Ballarat African community and VRRR recipient from last year, acknowledged the ordinary men and women who were recognised for the extraordinary deeds they performed which go a long way in alleviating the suffering of their fellow human beings.

"If we put our heads together, our future is bright; our needs for peace, employment, education and all other services being the same," said Mr Mapombere.

"Let us all continue to make strident effort to overcome the challenges that lie ahead and build a strong foundation upon which future generations will look back with pride and say 'our grandparents had foresight'."

Additionally, the VMC would like to thank Bill Poon and his photography design students at NMIT for their contributions: Geoff Morrissey, Lisa Schrader, Rod Donald, Tricia Tjondropuro, Gustavo Reyes, Bec Humphries, Rebecca Rocks, Gerard Hynes, Ben Telford, Brennan Barry, Phillip Brown, Nico Keenan, Spiros Spirou, Wen Jie Lim, Natasha Ward, Grant Hargreaves, Julia Olle, Graham Parsons, Haley Franklin, Belinda Nance, Lauren Marshall, Meaghan Ross.