



OM DHUNGEL

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MEDIA RELEASE

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FORMER REFUGEE AND BLACKTOWN RESIDENT LAUNCHES NEW REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

As the world celebrates Refugee Week this week, Refugee Week Ambassador Om Dhungel, a former refugee has launched a new consulting service to drive a paradigm shift in Refugee Settlement and Community Development – From Need-based approach to Strength-based approach. It redefines refugees with their strengths and also helps drive a sustainable resettlement model.

Australia is currently experiencing major changes in the social sector particularly with government reforms and funding model. It is a time filled with both uncertainty and real possibilities.

Mr Dhungel said “Refugee settlement and more broadly community development as well as human services delivery is currently driven largely through a ‘What do we need’ approach – thinking in terms of needs, problems and deficiencies such as unemployment, lack of education and training, youth issues and ageing.”

“It doesn’t adequately take into account the resources, skills and abilities that already exist in the community. This approach necessitates the growth of service sector, largely dependent on government funding, proportionately with the increasing needs in the community. This is clearly not sustainable.”

“On the other hand, we can take a ‘What do we have’ approach – starting on the premises that the community is resourceful and gifted and will be more likely to draw upon the skills of local people to address issues and solve problems.”

“Outside assistance and resources may still be required but the agenda will be set and driven by the local community. People in these communities are positioned as engaged citizens, capable of shaping their futures,” said Mr Dhungel.

Mr Dhungel believes that the way we approach refugee settlement and more broadly community development will mean a community completely relying on outside help or that which will harness its own resources and seek external intervention only to fill any gaps. During his international study tour as a Westpac Social Change Fellow in 2016, Mr Dhungel has seen the success of this model first-hand in a number of countries including Canada, USA, Norway and New Zealand. This approach will also foster social innovation and sustainability by driving a paradigm shift in service delivery from a ‘need-based approach’ to ‘strength-based approach’.

As the founding President and currently a senior Advisor of the Association of Bhutanese in Australia (ABA) Sydney, Mr Dhungel has successfully developed and implemented a bottom-up, strength-based approach to refugee settlement and community development.

Through his new consulting program Mr Dhungel will replicate his success with the Bhutanese refugee settlement in Sydney which has achieved significantly with high level of education, employment and house ownership. For instance, over 65% of families in Sydney have bought their



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own home within the first 5-6 years of their arrival in the country under the federal government's humanitarian resettlement program.

Driven by a passion to continue volunteering in the community, Mr Dhungel operates his practice on a Fifty:Fifty model, committing 50% of his time in paid work to support the other 50% in volunteering focussed on creating champions in the wider community.

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About Om Dhungel



Om Dhungel, FAICD, MBA, B.Sc. Engg

Formerly a refugee from Bhutan brings diverse range of Board, management, community development and volunteering experience. He is an established consultant, trainer, mentor and a speaker in refugee settlement.

Om brings a deep understanding of the service sector having served as a Director on the boards of prominent service providers such as Settlement Services International, SydWest Multicultural Services and MTC Australia.

Additionally, with extensive cross-sectoral experience of working in the government, private and the NFP sectors, he is now launching his practice as a trainer, mentor and speaker and help individuals and organisations to explore and utilise their full potential.

As a Thought Leader and a Strategic Connector, Om Dhungel offers consulting services to all levels of governments, the not for profit sector and businesses and help create opportunities for collaboration for mutually beneficial outcomes.

A telecommunications engineer by profession, Om has been volunteering to work with refugees for over two decades, both here in Australia as well as overseas including six years in the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal.

Om draws on his personal experiences of the strength based holistic approach, the success of which has been well recognised, including through awards such as the 2016 Westpac Social Change Fellowship, 2016 Community Service Lifetime Achievement Award and 2012 National Volunteer Award.

As a Westpac Social Change Fellow, he visited and studied refugee settlement in a number of countries including Canada, USA, Norway and New Zealand. Having seen first-hand and documented the success of many of these settlements by utilising the strengths and assets that refugees bring to the resettlement countries, Om is convinced of the potential and working towards changing the global debate on refugees from "Sharing the burden" to "Sharing the opportunity".

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