

### Share My Plate – Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre Cookbook

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre in Brunswick provides a range of different services for asylum-seekers. Along with casework, information, referral services and English tutoring services, the ASWC provides people who use their services with opportunities to connect socially with other asylum-seekers and with the wider community. For several years, ASWC has hosted Tuesday night dinners - community dinners which give people who use the service, service-providers and community-volunteers an opportunity to meet together and share a meal.

In 2008 - from the enjoyment of sharing food from cultures as diverse as Persian and Papua New Guinean - came the idea of collating a book of recipes of dishes that had been served at Tuesday night dinners and the stories evoked by the sharing of those foods. As the project grew, it became clear that lots of people would be interested in such a cookbook and that maybe the income generated through book sales could support the sustainability of Tuesday night dinners.

Even as the world becomes progressively more globalised, it remains important for people to maintain a connection with their 'home' culture. Cultural practices such as cooking and eating provide opportunities for people to build an identity for themselves, and a connection with other members of their community. In a new country, food provides the opportunity to maintain connection with a country of origin, home, family and friends. Cooking familiar foods provides an opportunity to remember joyous occasions – perhaps to remember the first time a certain food was eaten, to remember learning to prepare the particular food. When people meet together to share food and to share the stories that surround that food, opportunities for increased understanding and connection are created.

A cookbook emerging from the ASWC Tuesday night dinners will provide opportunities for even more people to share the food and the stories with new arrivals to Melbourne. Recipes for meals from the countries of the people who attend or volunteer at the ASWC, and the stories surrounding the preparation and sharing of those meals, will provide more and more Melburnians with opportunities to connect with the cultures of Melbourne's newest residents, generating more opportunities for community connectedness. By extension, revenue raised by the cookbook will enable the valuable opportunity for newly arrived people seeking asylum in Australia to continue sharing food on Tuesday nights.

**To find out more about the Share My Plate Cookbook contact Kat Monson at EastWeb [eastweb@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:eastweb@infoxchange.net.au). To volunteer at the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre email [aswc1@uniting.com.au](mailto:aswc1@uniting.com.au)**