**Our Multicultural Service Officer (MSO) program celebrates 35 years**

Menka: I've been an MSO a really long time.24 years. I started in 2001, back in the day when MSOs would actually be on site when refugees first arrived. And now celebrating 35 years of this program and of this role, I think it's testament to the great work that's done in the community.

Asmahan: I guess what gives me that advantage is being myself as a former refugee. I can relate to some of the issues and challenges that they're going through and I’m able to tailor our services to meet their individual needs. That makes me feel like they trust me quicker, and they open up and they talk to me about anything.

Mitzi: It’s not just newly arrived refugees that we assist, it’s basically every Australian. Whether the impact is immediate or after a long period of time, you're just making a huge difference in their lives. And then they come back to you saying, oh, you've done this and then you say, oh, I did? Oh, that's good to hear. You just, you sometimes forget and you don't dwell on it, on the victories, but you just want to focus on how you can be more impactful in their lives, I guess.

Christian: You feel yeah, you feel that, as I said, you make the difference. That you actually did something that's significant for somebody that went through a lot, that went through a lot of hardship. But just that - and just to see sometimes the just the smile when they explain, say ah, I understand what it's about. You know, that's a great feeling.

Menka: We are working at the grassroots level. So, basic information on arrival within that first 12 weeks, which a lot of times is a really stressful time for newly arrived refugees.

Asmahan: We guide them and we tell them about what's out there for them so they are more equipped. When they go to front of house, they are more likely to understand what their rights are and what they are meant to do and what they can apply for, and so on.

Christian: To break the ice that way. To say look, I’m here, that's what I’m here for. That's what's sometimes the hardest, more than the language itself. Language, you got interpreters, you can work around. But to break that barrier of the trust, to build that trust in the system. That's what it is.

Mitzi: I usually ask people who come to my seminars how do you find Australia? Many a times, people will just say, it's good. It's cold. Just, you know, say general things like that. The group that I asked on Tuesday and Wednesday, the first thing they said, they said thank you. Thank you to Australia. Thank you for taking us in. Yeah, you don't get that anywhere to, to be appreciated, not as a person, maybe there's an element to that, but as an agency for what we do in the community.

Menka: I’m really blessed to be in this role for a long time, and it's been a really great, great journey. And I wouldn't change.

Mitzi: I remember celebrating 20 years, 25 years, 30 years, 35 years. I’m proud to say that, you know, it has survived and I know it will, it will continue to thrive and create an impact in the community.