



MEDIA RELEASE

From:

African Think Tank Inc.

**WORKING WITH
VICTORIA'S AFRICAN COMMUNITY
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DATE: 14 June 2009

FREEDOM FROM FEAR: AFRICAN REFUGEES CELEBRATE NEW LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

REFUGEES MAJOR ECONOMIC RESOURCE FOR AUSTRALIA

Melbourne, 14 June 2009: The Chairperson of the African Think Tank, Dr. Berhan Ahmed, has called for Australians and Australian-Africans to join together in harmony to celebrate Refugee Week 2009 (June 14th to June 20th).

“Australia has given so much to refugees,” said Dr. Ahmed. In Australia, they have freedom from fear, from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and torture, from the danger of disease and starvation in refugee camps. They have the chance to make new lives for themselves and their families and to contribute to our beautiful multicultural land. Refugee Week 2009 is an opportunity for them to thank the wider community by sharing their food and culture and extending a welcome to all Australians.

“This is also an opportunity for Australians to remember the many gifts and opportunities that refugees, among them the recent African refugees, have brought to this nation. Members of these communities have started to make major contributions in science, in medicine, in business, and in sport. They enrich our culture by bringing us the ideas, knowledge, food, music and arts of their culture. The more humble members of the communities also contribute. Every day, tens of thousands of refugees labour in our transport services, our hospitals, our restaurants, our offices and factories, and the strength of the Australian economy depends on their services as much as on the work of the more fortunate and prosperous.

“Refugees are also a resource of contacts and understanding of their countries – a resource that Australia can use to build its international status and develop economically. “The theme of this Refugee Week is Freedom from Fear. Many – the vast majority – of refugees come from challenging backgrounds. Sixty percent have experienced torture. All still have relatives or friends in camps overseas. Australia is one of the few countries in the world to still have a strong and growing economy in the face of a global crisis. By remembering its humanitarian history and continuing to give safe harbour to those in fear and in danger, Australia can only continue to strengthen its economic and world status. This week is a time for us to rejoice in what we have all achieved and to look to the future with confidence, optimism and hope.

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