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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***African-Australians have their say***

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Opening to Sudanese-Australian vocalist Ajak Kwais' powerful rendition of the Australian national anthem, the three-day inaugural *African Resettlement in Australia Conference* concludes today at the University of Melbourne. The theme is "walking together at the same speed...a forum to dialogue".

The Conference hosts expert input and discussion on education, family, employment, health and youth within the framework of capacity building to strengthen our new and emerging African-Australian communities.

An initiative of the Melbourne-based African Think Tank, the conference was organised by Dr Berhan Ahmed and Mr Haileluel Gebre-selassie, to develop settlement and community relations policy recommendations to government.

"African-Australians are highly motivated and have a wealth of potential to contribute to Australia in all fields given the chance," says Dr Ahmed.

Mr Gebre-selassie said: "the conference is a pathway to maximising social cohesion and integration through strategic partnerships within the Australian community. This forum is about finding ways to help fulfil the social commitment we all share," he said.

The fully subscribed conference has attracted over 450 delegates from across Australia. From America, the office of Democratic Presidential Candidate, Barak Obama, conveyed good wishes and interest in hearing of the conference outcomes.

The conference was formally opened by the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC. Speakers included Melbourne Lord Mayor John So, the Federal Minister Workforce Participation, Dr Sharman Stone, the Shadow Minister for Immigration, Integration and Citizenship, Tony Burke and the Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Urban development and Consumer Affairs, Laurie Ferguson.

Sister in law of the Opposition leader, Akhola Rudd, spoke inspiringly of her transition from Botswana to Australian life, including the challenges of higher degree study and integration.

For more information please see <http://www.union.unimelb.edu.au/conferences/att>

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