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PRESS RELEASE

NSW Government devaluing the contribution of immigrant women and men in the Australian economy

The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW, a peak body of migrant and refugee women is appalled at the NSW government's announcement yesterday to terminate the funding for the Skilled Migrant Placement Program (SMPP). Ms Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis, the Chairperson of the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association said that this action by the NSW government is counterproductive as it affects the most vulnerable people in our community.

"Cutting the program devalues the contribution of immigrant women and men in the Australian economy", she said.

For over 10 years the Skilled Migrant Placement Program has been implemented and funded by the New South Wales government through its Community and Adult Education Unit at the Department of Education and Training. The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association is one of the non-government, community organisations that has been receiving funding from this scheme since 1990.

The Speakout's SMPP is a Specialist service assisting migrant refugee women in obtaining Australian work experience, recognition of their overseas education and skills and eventually employment and participation in developing the Australian economy.

Last year alone the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association assisted 150 women in having their overseas qualifications and experience assessed and recognised. One of the Speakout clients interviewed in a survey conducted last year said:

"Dear Immigrant Women's Speakout SMPP staff, I am happy to tell you I have found a job! Thank you for all your support that you extended to me these past few months that I have known you."

The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association calls on both the New South Wales and Federal government to:

- immediately review policy and program supporting newly arrived migrants to enter the workforce, in partnership with the community and non-government sector
 - design a new scheme that will fast-track the recognition of overseas education and skills of immigrants and refugees
 - immediately put in place an interim project to support the service recipients of the Skilled Migrant Placement Program who now will be left without any assistance
- (End)

For more information please contact:

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