

Dr Astrid Perry

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Chief Operating Officer



Astrid oversees operations of SSI program areas to ensure integrated service delivery that places the client's needs at the centre. Astrid is passionate about quality improvement and productivity but also about service delivery within a social justice framework. Astrid holds a PhD in Sociology, a Bachelor of Social Science and a number of other qualifications, including in residential care for children and young people. Astrid spent 10 years of her early career in Switzerland working in children's homes with young people who had disabilities and behavioural challenges. Astrid's work experience spans over 30 years in leadership, management and multicultural work, both in government and non-government sectors.

Nourishing Social Cohesion Among the Newest Australians: A Third Sector Perspective

The lived experience of social cohesion is especially pointed for newly arrived migrants and refugees as they navigate and build a new life in Australia. Government-funded settlement services are an important part of the programmatic response to advance social cohesion for these new arrivals and the communities they live in. Settlement Services International (SSI), with its member agencies and partners, is the largest provider of these settlement programs in NSW. SSI augments these programs with other initiatives that have at their core maximising social and economic participation. These self-funded initiatives, which underpin social cohesion and complement funded settlement programs, are framed by our vision to facilitate the voice of newly arrived refugees and migrants, enhance opportunities for intercultural dialogue, and actively promote independence. The paper will provide examples of these initiatives including Ignite, which facilitates small business start-ups among refugees, and a range of community engagement and media initiatives that harness the lived experience and voice of clients to support intercultural dialogue. In addition, the paper will explore wider perspectives of community cohesion through SSI's delivery of Ability Links, a social inclusion program for people with disabilities, established in July 2014 by the NSW government in preparation for the NDIS. Diversity, in all its forms, generates creativity and innovation. Work to advance social cohesion in response to diversity allows the newest Australians to reach their full potential and Australia to realise the dividend of migration.

