

## MEDIA RELEASE

### YASMIN BUILDS BRIDGES WITH A SONG

For immediate release

2 June 2014

When Sudanese refugee Yasmin Mohamed arrived in Australia nine years ago, she began building bridges into her new community through the power of song.

With a rich voice and repertoire of contemporary Sudanese-Arab songs from her homeland, Yasmin is testimony to the fact that secure housing and being part of a strong community build resilience and a sense of belonging.

This week the Narwee resident will help launch an innovative new strategy at Redfern Town Hall to better connect low-income tenants with their local communities and to strengthen their participation in managing their own housing.

Yasmin is a tenant with leading Sydney community housing provider Bridge Housing whose *Building Bridges Community Building and Engagement Strategy* was developed for and by tenants to improve their well-being and strengthen their sense of community.

Bridge Housing CEO John Nicolades says: “No-one is immune from the risk of poverty or homelessness. The straw that breaks the camel’s back may be chronic or severe illness, being retrenched, family trauma or poor mental health.”

“Our tenants are people like you and me from diverse backgrounds who have had the misfortune to fall on hard times. Every one of our 1,603 tenants has an inspiring story to tell about how they overcame disadvantage.”

A wide range of initiatives will be delivered over the next three years as part of the strategy’s Community Action Plan including:

- A scholarship program for children, their families and tenants looking to build their skills and access to employment and other opportunities
- Working with tenants to develop design guidelines for new housing developments that incorporate best practice sustainability principles
- Engaging Aboriginal tenants and service providers to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan.

Bridge Sustainable Communities Manager Francesca Cathie says: “*Building Bridges* is a true partnership between tenants, staff and our community partners to build on the strengths, knowledge and capabilities of our tenants. At this week’s launch we are celebrating all their hard work in helping to plan a path for future community building.”

Yasmin says: “Living in community housing has helped me recognise the strength we all gain from coming together as a community, no matter what our cultural backgrounds.”

“I would love to develop my music projects further and to perform across Australia or even internationally. Music is a universal language,” she says.

Bridge Housing is a registered not-for-profit organisation that manages over 1,600 dwellings across Sydney, mainly in the inner west and inner east, to house vulnerable people at risk of homelessness or locked out of the private rental market by lack of affordability.

- Media are welcome to attend the *Building Bridges* launch at Redfern Town Hall on Friday June 6, 11.00am-1.00pm
- Entertainment includes local Gypsy band The Balkan Duo, Aboriginal performer Terry Olsen, and Yasmin Mohamed.
- Photo of Yasmin Mohamed attached. Other photo and interview opportunities involving our tenants, housing and community activities are available in your local area on request.
- A PDF copy of the *Building Bridges* strategy is attached.

**For further information:**

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