



Media Release

Wednesday, 4th March 2009

AGED CARE GRADUATE LURED FROM FLINDERS ST. STATION TO SPECTRUM COURSE

On **Thursday 5th March**, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (SMRC) will be playing its part in contributing to alleviating the skill shortage in aged care and ensuring people expand their options in the economic slowdown, with its latest graduating class. SMRC's training arm, Spectrum Education & Training (SET), will be presenting 12 students with their *Certificate III in Aged Care*. The mature aged students, from various backgrounds, have retrained to be able to work in this expanding field and expanded their employment options, including one lured from a previous job in Flinders Street Station. In the current economic climate, it seems many employers are skilling up their existing staff.

Alphington resident, Rex Said, a graduating student with an Italian/Albanian background, recalls when he first felt he might be meant for a new career in aged care. "I used to work as a Station Assistant in Flinders Street Station and, one day, watching the crowd go by, it just occurred to me that what I really wanted to do was to help the elderly and the people with a disability. So I started working in the care and service industry, but without a proper qualification, I could only do limited work. My employer encouraged me to gain qualification, and now I can finally do the kind of professional work I couldn't do before."

"Rex has always been a very positive person," said **Calvary Silver Circle's Client Service Officer, Ms Melinda Sterry**, "but without a qualification, his professional pathways were very limited. We encouraged him to retrain because, with a fast ageing population, this industry needs qualified people. Now that Rex has completed the course, he has acquired a high level of knowledge and skill in handling complex issues like dementia. Upgrading existing qualifications or retraining in areas of skill shortage and high demand is really important, especially in today's uncertain times."

"It is easy to become pessimistic in today's global financial crisis, but we are confident that the 12 graduates, the majority of which are migrants, have much to offer to potential employers, because they bring with them the added value of life experience and bilingual and bicultural skills. This is invaluable if we think that in 2011, one in two people aged over 65 will speak a language other than English in Melbourne's northern metro region," explained **SET's Acting Manager, Ms Angela Pickering**. "This is why the language and cultural background of aged care workers is such an important asset, ensuring a cultural matching between care recipients and support workers. We've had nearly 100% success rate in our graduates gaining employment after their course. They have done a fantastic job and we would like to offer other people, in particular, migrants and refugees, the same opportunity to undertake some free training in selective areas to change the course of their careers and life," said **Ms Pickering**.

In its first year, SET has provided Certificate II & III level training, as well as short courses, to over 200 students, predominantly in the skills shortage areas of Home & Community Care (HACC), Aged care, Hospitality, as well as Children's services. Literacy and numeracy training is embedded into all courses. SET also offers short courses in hospitality. SET offers courses across the state, predominantly in Melbourne's northern metropolitan region.

EVENT DETAILS:

EVENT: *Graduation Ceremony*

DATE & TIME: Thursday 5 March 2009, 12pm

VENUE: Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, 251 High Street, Preston

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Photo opportunity can be arranged prior or on the afternoon.

Media Contact: Cristina Marras 0429 707 547 communications@spectrumvic.org.au

www.spectrumvic.org.au