

Merle Mitchell

Spirit of Enterprise project recognised at international awards

The City of Greater Dandenong has been recognised for its outstanding contribution to culture at the United Cities and Local Government Awards in Mexico City.

Council nominated the Spirit of Enterprise Project, which began more than a decade ago, for the international award earlier this year. This project was the only Australian project to be recognised as part of the awards.

What started as a history project by a group of local volunteers in 2008 has evolved into a trail of significant sites which acknowledge the important contribution that Springvale has made to the settlement of migrants and refugees.

The project celebrates the history of the Enterprise Migrant Hostel in Springvale which provided accommodation and settlement services to more than 30,000 migrants and refugees from all over the world between 1970 and 1992.

A website, funded by the City of Greater Dandenong, also captures the evolution of the project since the first exhibition at the Immigration Museum in 2008.

Greater Dandenong Mayor Cr Youhorn Chea said the project was a fantastic community project, with many people contributing to its success over the years.

"Congratulations to all involved in the Spirit of Enterprise project over the years. Merle Mitchell and the team from the Spirit of Enterprise are to be commended for their ongoing contribution to culture in this city through initiating and delivering this project." Cr Chea said.

"I would also like to acknowledge the role Council staff has played in supporting the Spirit of Enterprise project."

One of the project group members, Merle Mitchell, said the initiative had been driven by the local community.

"This project grew from one idea to hold an exhibition and every time we did something, the community asked us to do more. That's what makes this project so unique, it's been driven by the community," Merle said.

"I feel that I have been fortunate to have lived and worked in a great community my whole life. Springvale proves that if you really welcome all people you can create a wonderful place."

While the Greater Dandenong project was not selected as the overall winner the jury requested the project be used as an example of good practice.