

BUSINESS IN FOCUS

Hotel man's quest for excellence

By Narelle Coulter

Dandenong got a new world-class business hotel when Quest Dandenong Central opened in Walker Street last year.

For franchisees Tim Cross and Aaron Rooke it was the culmination of a huge personal and professional investment in Greater Dandenong.

The hotel has 95 apartments and can accommodate up to 250 guests. It offers high-speed Wi-Fi, a gymnasium, conference room with state-of-the-art audio and visuals, fully equipped kitchens and desks in each room.

For Mr Cross the opening of the hotel also meant moving his young family from the inner suburbs to Dandenong so he could live on-site as manager.

Daughter Emilia was just three months old when he and wife Maya moved into one of the new apartments.

Mr Cross has been with Quest since 2007 working in the company's head office.

His role launching new hotels throughout Australia planted the seed that one day he would like to invest in the Quest brand and open his own hotel.

Dandenong, and its stunning transformation under the Revitalising Central Dandenong project, presented the perfect opportunity.

He was impressed by the Walker Street site, which is flanked by the Australian Taxation Office and is close to the large government services building, and by the presence in Greater Dandenong of world-class employers like Bombardier, Viridian, L'Oreal, Woolworths, Australia Post and Jayco.

"All these businesses bring in new people who need accommodation."

He also spent countless hours studying the CBD's future growth and mapping the growth of new industrial areas in Dandenong South and Keysborough.



Quest Central Dandenong franchisee Tim Cross in front of the new hotel. 165533 Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

"I also really liked Dandenong because there are several large tracts of land which are being developed right now - the Logis business park, two Keysborough business parks, Key 1 and Key 2, and then, further down, Innovation Park," he said.

"I spent a lot of time looking at all the development sites.

"I have seen the Quest group grow in my time from 68 to 130 plus properties.

"I've watched them to see what are the right ingredients. Some you can do with mathematics, some is gut feel as well.

"I've made the call not to travel interstate and plant my family interstate. I grew up in Melbourne

and I prefer to be in Melbourne."

When Mr Cross and his wife were talking about moving to Dandenong, he put a copy of the council's Great Bites Foodies Guide in Maya's hands, which "really opened her eyes" to the area's array of restaurants, cafes and delis.

"Within two weeks of moving in we were down at the market and we were blown away by the value of the market.

"Since we've moved in we've tried Ethiopian, Lebanese and Afghani. We love the multi-cultural aspect of the area."

Mr Cross said the international nature of the Quest Central Dandenong customer base had surprised him in the short time the hotel had been open.

He and his staff have welcomed guests from Germany, Italy and India, among other countries.

"Quest is excellent for project workers, people who need to be in Dandenong for a whole week or a couple of weeks, because we have apartment style accommodation where guests can actually set up and live in the apartment, they can cook a roast in the oven," he explained.

Quest held its official opening on 15 February.

The evening was chance for the business partners to take stock of what they and their team have achieved so far.

"It was wonderful to celebrate what we had put together," Mr Cross said.

"It's early days and, like with any business, it takes time to become solvent and profitable but the early signs are there for us.

"We can definitely see a path forward to making it a real success. We want to look after our customers who come to Dandenong, make sure they wake up refreshed and ready to grow their businesses as they go off to work and, hopefully, grow the local economy as well."

To tour the new Quest Central Dandenong contact business development manager Emily Grudic on 8710 5700.