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Cast of strength

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Le Pine and White Lady Funerals were the deservedly standout winners at the annual Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards on 21 November.

The funeral home fresh from a high-tech makeover took out the overall Business of the Year category as well as best large business.

Touting itself as a funeral home for "today and the future", it provides a wide spectrum of choice.

It hosts the largest chapel in the South East for up to 200 visitors as well as offering the increasingly popular informal lounge as a venue.

The recent merger also offered the choice of the "theatrical", "soft" and "sensitive" White Lady service and the traditional Le Pine offering that draws on more than a century of experience.

"We work in tandem. When a customer comes in we talk with them and work out what brand is better for them," regional manager Tia Worrall said.

The other worthy winners included Financial Foundations, which took out best small business.

The financial-planning firm have been wealth creators for mums and dads as well as businesses for 35 years.

"We regularly are dealing with mum and dads, their mum and dad and their children," says chief executive Ty Cockle.

"We know our clients in-depth and we're all about that long-term relationship."

Afghan Rahimi Restaurant, well-loved by foodies locally and interstate, won the retail award.

The traditionally-prepared Afghan food and attentive service has built this institution.

"This award will encourage me to work harder, not only with the business but in the wider Australian community," owner and co-chef Baryalai Rahimi said.

Dandenong Basketball Association romped in the Corporate Social Responsibility award.

With 20,000 visitors a week, the association branches out with a long list of inclusive programs.

Such as school outreach, all-abilities basketball and youth teams from the African community.

"It's all about the community," chief executive Graeme Allan says.

Advanced Robotics Australia was a showcase winner of the innovation award.



White Lady Funerals regional manager Tia Worrall and NAB managing partner Paul Wood with a brace of awards. 187278 Picture: GARY SISSONS

The firm has partnered with CSIRO and manufacturer Titomic to design the largest metal 3D printer in the world.

Advanced Robotics helped design state-of-the-art equipment for cold gas spraying of titanium powder.

It effectively turns powder into metal - with far-reaching applications in the aerospace industry, says general manager Robert Stojanovic.

Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre with

its incredibly diverse workforce and clients took out the employment award.

Its vast, loyal and multilingual volunteers are largely former clients. They help support more than 7000 new arrivals a year, guiding them to education, training and work.

"We have a very multicultural workforce," chairperson Brian Oates told the awards audience.

"That's the business we're in. Though if you're in Dandenong and you're not working,

in a multicultural business, you're probably missing out."

Rita Karki's extraordinary journey as an engineering student at Chisholm Institute was rewarded with the Youth Enterprise award.

She had been supported for 10 years under a scholarship in Nepal, while being a tutor and fundraiser for needy schools.

Nine months ago, Ms Karki arrived in Australia as a self-funded international student and is among the brightest in her class.



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Funeral home's big job

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

There was no mistaking the delight of funeral home regional manager Tia Worrall.

She was doubly thrilled as Le Pine and White Lady Funerals claimed the main prize of overall winner as well as the best large business prize at the 2018 Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

Ms Worrall also dropped the best line of the night at her acceptance speech:

"If you're passing Le Pine and White Lady Funerals, we're happy to give you a cup of coffee."

"Don't worry, it ends there."

Another pearly was: "It's a big job being a funeral director."

"It's a job that's either been a conversation maker or a conversation breaker."

She paid tribute to her dedicated team putting hours into serving families in their hour of need. In March, the Dandenong business received a \$3.4 million rebuild and refurbishment, making it one of the most innovative and high-tech funeral homes in Australia.

It is hailed as a 'funeral home for today and the future'.

It holds a 200-capacity non-denominational chapel - the largest in the South East with state-of-the-art multimedia facilities.

As well as two arranging rooms, a viewing room, a celebration/memorial lounge with an outdoor area, commercial kitchen, and on-site car parking.

Owned by global company IvoCare, the funeral home offers choice - from State funerals to more informal services in its memorial lounge.

The recent merger also offered the choice of the "theatrical", "soft" and "sensitive" White



Paul Wood (NAB), Diana McAleese (White Lady), Tia Worrall (White Lady), Jeanne Davis (Le Pine), Cheryl Good (Le Pine) and Paul Broom (Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce president).
Picture: GARY SISSONS 187278

Lady service and the traditional Le Pine offering that draws on more than a century of experience, Ms Worrall said.

"We work in tandem. When a customer comes in we talk with them and work out what brand is better for them." The home prides itself on compassionate, exceeding expectations and delivering outstanding service.

"You're not a number in the queue like with some bigger funeral outfits that hold one (funeral) after the other and you're pushed out quite quickly."

"At our parlour if you need more time you can have it."

The stunning transformation was the result of in-depth customer research into the changing

OVERALL BUSINESS AWARD
SPONSOR: NAB
WINNER: LE PINE WHITE LADY FUNERALS
NOMINEES: ADVANCED ROBOTICS, AFGHAN RAHIMI RESTAURANT, DANDENONG BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION, DANDENONG OASIS YMCA, FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS AUSTRALIA, FOOD SAFETY LABELS, FROM GRANNY, LE PINE WHITE LADY FUNERALS, SOUTHERN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE, SUPERGROUPS, TELFORD SMITH.

LARGE BUSINESS AWARD
SPONSOR: GREATER DANDENONG CHAMBER
WINNER: LE PINE WHITE LADY FUNERALS
NOMINEES: DANDENONG OASIS YMCA, LE PINE WHITE LADY FUNERALS, SOUTHERN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE, SUPERGROUPS, TELFORD SMITH.

needs of the funeral industry.

The Le Pine and White Lady Funerals team also play a strong role in supporting the local community.

Le Pine Funerals has supported local nursing homes with horse therapy days and the team at Dandenong most recently launched a series of education seminars including dementia awareness and loss and grief.

They are planning a suicide prevention seminar in coming months.



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Silver service for support

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

The ever-active Barylal Rahimi has not only built a thriving 120-seat Afghan Rahimi Restaurant in central Dandenong.

He has also been a long-standing supporter of new arrivals, volunteering for several years with Southern Migrant and Resource Centre.

Before arriving in Australia, Mr Rahimi also helped a UN program for refugees while in Pakistan.

"This award will encourage me to work harder, not only with the business but in the wider Australian community," he said as he accepted the Retail Award at the 2018 Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

"Some people say Australia is one of the best countries.

"I disagree - Australia is the best country in the world."

Trained in IT, Mr Rahimi re-invented his career path as a restaurateur in 2001.

He started cooking for crowds when volunteering as a chef for weddings and funerals within Melbourne's Afghan community.

But the truth was that cooking "was in my blood", he says.

When Rahimi first started up in Thomas Street 14 years ago, he was told he was making a mistake. His restaurant was one of about eight shops in the street, a dead part of town at the time.

At the same time, he worked two other jobs, as a migrant resource worker during days and

a cabbie on Friday nights to support his family.

High standards meant his business had to succeed, he says.

Afghan Rahimi Restaurant prides itself on its culinary authenticity and calibre.

It treats guests with traditional Afghan hospitality, healthy flavourful dishes and banquets with Afghan decor present throughout.

Established in Dandenong in 2013, the venue has become well known as the premier location for Afghan food in Melbourne.

The team pride themselves on their customer-centric and highly attentive service. All the dishes are prepared freshly and to the highest standards with traditional preparation methods and local ingredients.

The restaurant has aimed to send the message across that they are a true representation of Australia's amazing multicultural environment.

RETAIL AWARD

SPONSOR: CITY OF GREATER

DANDENONG

WINNER: AFGHAN RAHIMI

RESTAURANT

NOMINEES: AFGHAN RAHIMI

RESTAURANT, LE PINE AND WHITE LADY FUNERALS, SUPERGROUPS.



City of Greater Dandenong's group manager of Greater Dandenong Business Paul Kearsley and Barylal Rahimi. 187278 Picture: GARY SISSONS



Congratulations to Le Pine White Lady Funerals 2018 Large Business Award Winner

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For more information, please contact:

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Happy to go the extra mile

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A busy office is a happy office at Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre.

The not-for-profit community-based agency took out the Employment category in the 2018 Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

It is a friend to 150 staff, 200 volunteers and the hundreds of refugees and migrants who are helped into education, training and work.

It's also a skilled office with most staff speaking at least two languages. Collectively, they speak more than 50.

Many are former clients who are giving back, says client services director Caroline Radowski.

"We have refugees from (the former) Yugoslavia who are now helping our African clients."

One of its innovations is to help staff achieve their nominated dreams. So far, 82 per cent of dreams have been fulfilled, Ms Radowski says.

Under its 'wisdom and wellness' program, staff are also treated to talks on sleep management, healthy eating, tai chi as well as superannuation and human rights.

The staff are clearly motivated. They're helping more than 7000 clients during about 100,000 contact hours of settlement services.

"They don't care if they're working 9-5 or 9-7, because they love it," Ms Radowski says.

For the past 25 years, the SMRC has helped new arrivals integrate and contribute to the community in Greater Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia Shire and surrounds.



Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre board members and staff with the Employment award. 187278
Picture: GARY SISSONS

SMRC's vision incorporates values of empowerment, resilience, respect, diversity, integrity and inclusion.

It runs social participation, economic development and health and wellbeing programs for its clients.

These innovative programs, along with their social enterprise initiatives such as Div-ers Care are widely recognised.

Chairman Brian Oates said Dandenong was often the first word that new arrivals knew. Because that was where their relatives were living.

"We have a very multicultural workforce," he told the awards audience.

"That's the business we're in. Though if you're in Dandenong and you're not working in a multicultural business, you're probably missing out."



Client services director Caroline Radowski and chairperson Brian Oates accept the Employment award 187278

EMPLOYMENT AWARD

SPONSOR: MACPHERSON KELLEY LAWYERS

WINNER: SOUTHERN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE

NOMINEES: DANDENONG OASIS YMCA, FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS AUSTRALIA, LE PINE AND WHITE LADY FUNERALS, SOUTHERN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE, SUPERGROUPS.



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and congratulates this year's winner
Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre
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Rita scales the heights

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Bachelor of Engineering Technology student Rita Karki's journey is extraordinary.

The Nepalese international student took time out of a busy exam period to accept the Youth Enterprise trophy at the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

In her homeland, she had applied herself in studies with the help of a charitable scholarship Room To Read between Years 2 to 12.

The international charity provides tuition and school fees for select students in underprivileged situations.

While in Nepal, Ms Karki volunteered as a high-school tutor and helper for Room to Read.

She formed an astronomy club that raised money for needy schools, as well as a prose speaking club to improve her and her friends' debating and public oratory skills.

Nine months ago, she self-funded herself to fly out to Chisholm Institute in Dandenong to start a three-year engineering technology degree.

"The toughest challenge was being alone away from my family," Ms Karki says.

She took up a house-painting job to meet ends meet during the year.

In first semester, she was ranked second out of her 144-student cohort at Chisholm Institute with a 88 per cent score.

She impressed teachers with her inquisitiveness and enthusiasm in helping other students. She took a regular seat at the front-

of-class for lectures.

"I get excited in coming up with different ideas on how to solve a problem in different ways."

Ms Karki has plans for higher learning, perhaps a Masters course, when her degree is due for completion at the end of 2020.

In five years, she envisages herself working in a large engineering firm working on a project that's "important for society".

"Technology is always growing and improving."

"Engineers contribute to society and make things that make it easier for humans to survive - and I want to be part of that."

YOUTH ENTERPRISE AWARD

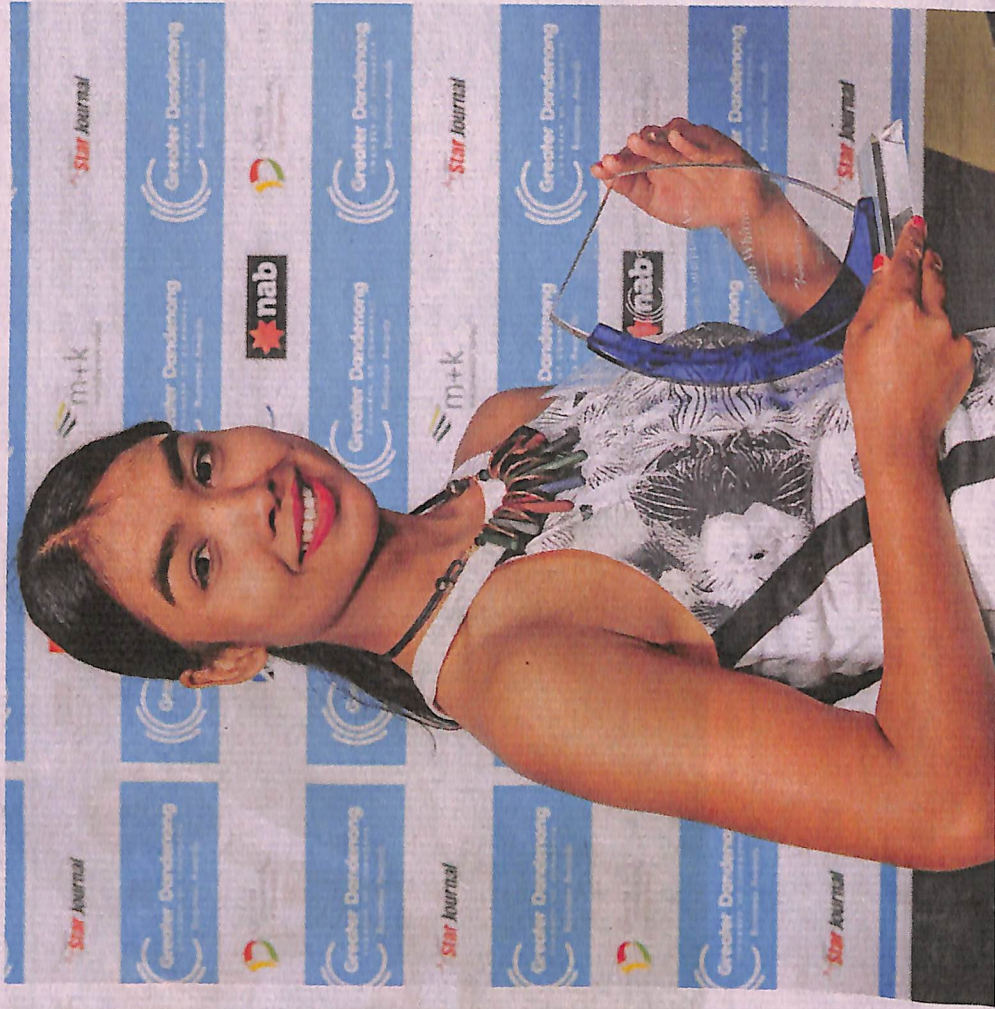
SPONSOR: CHISHOLM INSTITUTE

WINNER: RITA KARKI

NOMINEES: MATTHEW GAUCI,

BROOKE FERNANDEZ, RITA KARKI,

MINH CONG VU



Chisholm Institute student Rita Karki with the Youth Enterprise award. 187278

Picture: GARY SISSONS

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Planting seeds for future

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Financial Foundations takes pride that they still advise clients who have been with them since the very start - 35 years ago.

It reflects the quality of time and information given by the firm, says chief executive Ty Cockle.

"We spend a lot of time educating our clients so that they can make informed financial decisions."

Mr Cockle accepted the Small Business trophy at the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

Over the past five years, he's seen FFA's client list increase from 900 to 1300.

"It's a very privileged position we're in.

"We regularly are dealing with mum and dads, their mum and dad and their children.

"We know our clients in-depth and we're all about that long-term relationship."

Since 1983, the firm has helped individuals, small and medium-sized businesses with a range of financial needs.

Such as investment advice, strategic planning around tax, estate and Centrelink income, retirement and superannuation advice, personal and business succession insurance and aged care strategies.

With its Australian Financial Services licence, FFA is free to pursue the best financial solutions for their clients.

The firm offers a portfolio management service which is anything other than "set and forget".



Stephen Layfield (Financial Foundations), Ted Turner (Ashfords) and Ty Cockle, John Kestopoulos and Eddy See, all from Financial Foundations. 187278
Picture: GARY SISSONS

Clients' portfolios are monitored and changes can be made in accordance with a pre-agreed risk portfolio so as to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

The firm is rigorous in its research and compliance system analysis and has invested in the most reliable investment advisory ex-

perts which sit on their investment committee. "Financial planning can be quite daunting," Mr Cockle said.

"We get a kick out of seeing the anxiety wash away because we plan for this.

"We planted the seed a long time ago to create the oak tree."



Ted Turner, of Ashfords, and Financial Foundations Australia chief executive Ty Cockle. Picture: GARY SISSONS
187278

SMALL BUSINESS AWARD

SPONSOR: ASHFORDS
WINNER: FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS AUSTRALIA

NOMINEES: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AUSTRALIA, AFGHAN RAHIMI RESTAURANT, DANDENONG BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION, FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS AUSTRALIA, FOOD SAFETY LABELS, FROM GRANNY.



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FOCUS ON ... DANDENONG CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARDS

State-of-the-art robotics

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Innovation means different things to different people, says Advanced Robotics Australia's operations general manager Robert Stojanovic.

For his company, it's providing something "new and exciting".

Such as working with CSIRO and manufacturer Titomic to design state-of-the-art automated robotic lines and equipment for the world's largest metal 3D printer.

It works by a process of cold-gas spraying titanium powder. It's almost alchemy, a case of converting powders to metal components.

The applications for this are various such as economically creating parts for the aerospace industry. Traditionally it has involved enormous waste of titanium, Mr Stojanovic says.

Fittingly, Advanced Robotics Australia won the innovation category at the 2018 Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Awards.

"Our people are our biggest asset and our success is underpinned by our people," he told the audience as he accepted the award.

The company specialises in providing robotic solutions, system design and integration, software control and PLC automation, turn-key project delivery, maintenance and service support.

For more than 30 years, the family-owned business has delivered cutting-edge solutions to a wide array of industries including manufacturing, aerospace, automotive, building construction, mining and fast moving consumer goods.

The company has successfully worked

INNOVATION AWARD
SPONSOR: HILTON MANUFACTURING
WINNER: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AUSTRALIA
NOMINEES: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AUSTRALIA, FOOD SAFETY LABELS, FROM GRANNY, LE PINE AND WHITE LADY FUNERALS, TELFORD SMITH.

INNOVATION AWARD
SPONSOR: HILTON MANUFACTURING
WINNER: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AUSTRALIA
NOMINEES: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AUSTRALIA, FOOD SAFETY LABELS, FROM GRANNY, LE PINE AND WHITE LADY FUNERALS, TELFORD SMITH.

closely with their customers and industry partners to deliver highly specialised solutions.

The closer the team are to their customers, the better placed they are to provide innovative and cost-effective solutions that are structured to deliver long-term benefits to all stakeholders.

"Innovation has been one of our values in our decision-making, getting the projects we want to be doing and the company we want to be," Mr Stojanovic says.

"I think our future is looking bright."



Andrew Scott and Robert Stojanovic accept the innovation prize. 187278 Picture: GARY SISSONS

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