

Business success stories

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Well, the surprising things you hear about at the latest Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce business awards showcase.

One of the award nominees on 10 October was Springvale Botanical Cemetery, whose 422-acre gardens of immaculacy are four times larger than the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

Business development manager Megan Petty told of its mass of 80,000 trees and 30,000 rose bushes - the RBG boasts 15,000 rose plants.

It requires one million litres of water a day to maintain - all harvested from the site's three vast dams and roof-sourced rainwater tanks, Ms Petty said.

No organic matter leaves the site, it's recycled as nutrients for the garden, she added.

The cemetery has branched into community programs beyond its 'core business'. One of them is the Centre for Care & Wellbeing, which offers grief and support services for the bereaved.

It was also the first international winner of the American Cemeteries Excellence Award.

Another nominee Ecostar Double Glazing - a market leader in Europe - repurposed its product for the Victorian climate.

Based in Dandenong, its unplasticised polyvinyl chloride (uPVC) windows have double panes filled with a void of argon gas.

They are reinforced for better sound reduction and thermal efficiency for local conditions, operations director Paul Woods told the event at Atura Hotel.

"Our business has gone from strength to strength since we moved to Dandenong."

Palm Plaza Lotto, the third nominee, boasts an enviable strike-rate with 37 division-1 lottery winners thus far.



Megan Petty, of Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, with Jason Ashton of Macpherson Kelley. 198954

But owner Sineth Sareth Sar said she welcomed the challenge.

"It makes you go out of your comfort zone and be creative.

"You have to create something different for people to experience.

"It's not just selling a ticket but selling a service."

In the past three years, her business had



Silvia Koslow, of Chisholm Institute, with youth enterprise nominee Andrew Kemp. 198954
Pictures: CAM LUCADOU-WELLS



Sineth Sareth Sar of Palm Plaza Lotto. 198954

risen from the 300th biggest-selling lotto outlet in Victoria to inside the top 50.

South East Local Learning and Employment Network - the fourth nominee - is launching a program This Is It to distribute businesses' depreciated laptops to disadvantaged students.

Chief executive Andrew Simmons described how the network was set up as an "intermediary" for students between schools, higher education and employers.

It was part of a Navigator program tackling the 12,500 chronically abstinent students in the South East. Of 800 referrals, the program had got 350 students engaged back with school, Mr Simmons said.

Chisholm Institute student Andrew Kemp was nominated for the youth enterprise award.

The Work Education Certificate 1 student was hailed for his astute eye for detail, including OHS and maintenance issues.