

50 years on, still a centre to learn

By ANITA
McPHERSON

IN 1962 when The Centre opened in Warrigata High School's former Chisholm Street buildings, it was the first venue by the Victorian Education Department into adult education in regional Victoria.

The driving force behind its establishment, then executive officer and senior high school English teacher Colin Cave, oversaw a syllabus which included classes in "science today" and "the modern necessity of owning and maintaining a motor car."

While subjects might change, the overriding concept of a self-sustaining organisation providing the community with "a second chance" to learn, has gone from strength to strength, much to the delight of current chief executive officer Denny O'Donoghue.

"The Centre has gone from a £1000 turnover in 1963, to a \$4.5 million budget turnover for this year, and there have only been four 'executive officers' in the last 50 years which is amazing," said Mr O'Donoghue, who took on the role in 1998.

"The previous staff and managers set up a fantastic organisation with a great culture, which also has a proud history of being strong financially, and I've been lucky enough to inherit it."

The Centre currently



MEMORIES: Centre staff Kria Penney, Joanne Hughes, Sergio Moreno, Louise Neale, Rob Newman and Sheree Knott shared some laughs with Edge FM announcer Andrew Brett at Friday's celebrations.



• CEO Denny O'Donoghue

Staff share some memories

By LEAH TINDILL

THE Centre kicked off a big year of 50th anniversary celebrations on Friday with staff and students, past and present.

To commemorate the anniversary a special enrolment prize was given to the 50th enrollee, Neil Cressy, whose forklift license course fees will

be fully reimbursed along with a \$100 bonus prize.

Staff participated in a live radio broadcast and enjoyed a barbeque and free giveaways with the community.

Celebrations will continue throughout the year with the 50 stories and images exhibition, and the 50th anniversary dinner in October.

employs 44 staff and this year offered a broad range of educational services, courses and qualifications to around 3000 students.

Mr O'Donoghue said as a freshly bearded "community college." The Centre offered a second chance to learn for adults, people with a physical or mental disadvantage, volunteers, and an increasing number of young people who found it difficult to

cope with the rigors of secondary school.

He said while the organisation worked hard to secure government tenders it also worked with an increasing number of businesses because of its ability to provide flexible, vocational education in any environment.

"The Centre succeeds because it continues to be very responsive both

to what the government wants communities to do, and what the community wants to do themselves; directed by its interests and the social and economic issues of the day," said Mr O'Donoghue.

"Teaching these days is about facilitating people, whether young or old, in how to access the knowledge available and how to relate it to the sort of work they do, which is the key

to adult education.

"I like to hear the stories about the people who come here, and there are hundreds of them from people of all ages, who come to improve their skills and they say it's a welcoming and friendly environment."

"I like to say we're here to give people a hand up, not a hand out, and we're helping people to help themselves."

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