



2 NTEC'S ISAAC PHUA, DEBORAH BATCHEN AND ANSARI MA.



TOM NEWSTEAD (RIGHT) LEADS THE BARISTA TRAINING.



# The southern way

A new Auckland establishment has become the first in New Zealand to combine a cafe business and training facility while intending to fill a hole in the market by offering students individual unit standards.

**T**he National Technology Institute's Southern Café is targeting school leavers, migrant and new cafe owners who want to upskill, and business owners who want staff to have immediate food service qualifications. The location is also the Auckland 'office' of the Southern Institute Of Technology's distance-learning students – hence the name, the Southern Café.

"What we want to do is be as flexible as we can and say 'you don't have to come in and study for 40 weeks – you can come in and do one unit standard and walk away if that's all you need'," says special projects manager Deborah Batchen.

"Many [providers] have grown from the constraints of education structuring. The market says you can either do a diploma or degree or on-the-job training. There's a whole band of small businesses in the middle saying 'we're not big enough to do modern apprenticeships and pay our staff to do courses!'"

"What we are doing is what HSI has seen needs to be done for a while. That's what they want."

Subsequently students are trained in the cafe's first-floor classroom environment before working on the floor downstairs.

Batchen, who has over 25 years' experience in hospitality training, initiated the joint business/training idea when she was brought in by the NTEC's owners Ansari MA and Isaac Phua last December.

"Having seen what is needed, I said 'what you need is a simulated or live environment'. Not one of those restaurant set-ups at training institutes – a real busy environment."

Tom Newstead, ex-NZMA employment advisor who initiated that school's training/placement concept with the Heritage Hotel group last year, has joined the business as barista and operations manager. Other tutors will be handpicked accordingly and a Mandarin speaking tutor is likely.

"I believe that hospitality tutors need to be regularly re-involved with the industry after teaching for a while, because it changes so fast – probably more so than any other industry," Batchen says.

Currently NTEC is accredited by HSI and NZQA to deliver unit

standards which go toward National Certificates and Diplomas. These are Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5 as well as short courses, including HSI Certificate Of Achievements in food safety, barista, hospitality operations and customer service.

Students will be able to study at night, part-time, at the weekend and to train remotely via CD Rom content before coming in for assessment at the school.

Next, the school wants to offer alcohol components but, having missed the 2008 funding round, will apply again for the 2009 round. "When this happens, it means a school leaver can come and study full time – there is a whole different code of ethics requirement when it comes to foreign students – they aren't allowed to do alcohol studies if they're under 18.

"So we are going to target the international market on a small scale. Also, industry and recent migrant students who want to know the Kiwi way of doing things – because a lot of them are really failing," says Batchen.

The school has begun to provide Gateway work experience for two Auckland high schools and NTEC's sibling education company Concordia has a student base of 500 recent migrants who it can market to. Batchen says there are no collaborative initiatives outlined with other providers but it may look at including a Maori food module.

She says a benefit of the cafe/training set up is that the trainees will be taught in all aspects of cafe operations, including costing and choosing suppliers, and won't be unleashed on to the public until they are ready.

"They'll be readily identified to the customers. It's no different from a student training on a part-time job – but these guys have been trained. Many providers are too big to be [as] flexible."

NTEC has aligned with Chiasso in Devonport as its coffee choice. "He's a local guy and it's good because we can send students over there to look at the business. We're also looking at getting in New Zealand products. We've decided to stick with Coke too, as they're pretty good with sponsorship and student support." ■