

**Radio Interview Transcript - 2000FM 'The Voice of Atour'
Assyrian Program (98.5FM)**

Speaking with Helen Zimmerman (ACL Group Managing Director)

with

Agnes Polese (Assyrian Program presenter)

7 April 2008

Duration: 10 minutes

[Music plays]

Introduction by Agnes Polese: You are listening to 2000FM 98.5, the Assyrian Program. ACL centre Managing Director, on the line with us Ms Helen Zimmerman.

Helen Zimmerman: Good morning Agnes.

Agnes: Good morning to you Helen. Helen is from largest provider of English classes is ACL centre for migrants and refugees.

Helen: It's lovely to be with you.

Agnes: Thank you very much.

Agnes: Helen there are Assyrians studying at ACL centre, could you inform us briefly about that please?

Helen: Agnes, at any one time we would have about 500 Assyrian students enrolled in our Adult Migrant English Program. This makes them the fourth largest group of students studying the AMEP at any one time. The majority of our Assyrian students have been with us over the last five years, although since 1998 we've catered for over 2250 Assyrian students.

Agnes: I'll just say in Assyrian now - I have to translate...

[Assyrian translation]

Helen: So most of our Assyrian students are based at our Fairfield College and many of them have also been with us through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme. Which is another federally funded program that aims to help humanitarian entrants settle into Australia. We have a case management approach there where we help our entrants gain access to mainstream services such as banks, specialist and general health and medical... education training and very importantly employment.

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: Talking about employment Helen, what's the employment initiative, and how will it help the students find work?

Helen: The initiative is one that we are very proud of because it's working with employment AMES, a Victorian based job network provider and ourselves and it's a combination of English language and the work required for employment in IT and in warehouse preparation, and the reason we're doing it, is really to overcome one of the major barriers for newly arrived migrants and refugees and that's that they don't have the vocational skill training to get a job in Australia, even though they have worked overseas.

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: That's very interesting and very important to have this vocational?

Helen: It's a key part of it because employers really are looking for people who have some local work experience and when you are a migrant or a refugee you have not had that opportunity.

Agnes: Absolutely.

Helen: So what we're doing, we've taken two groups of students from our Fairfield College, and they're participating in two courses. One is warehouse preparation and the other's an introduction to IT... and they are reasonably short courses because these students have already done quite a bit of English language with us and they include for example, the warehouse preparation course includes one week of practical experience at a forklift training and licensing centre. The students that are doing that course are actually studying for their forklift license as well and two of the students have already received their licence.

Agnes: Wonderful.

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: It's very, very interesting and very helpful for the students Helen.

Helen: It is indeed, and a number of them are already going on and making plans for either how they can do further qualifications for example at TAFE in IT, or in fact doing more work so that they can gain employment in warehousing.

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: Do you want to add more on this, Helen?

Helen: I think really, it's part of the work that we do for the Commonwealth Government, and that our role is about - assisting migrants and refugees to settle effectively in Australia, and be part of our social fabric... and it's important that we match our courses and what we do to make that happen as fast as possible.

Agnes: That's wonderful. What else is ACL involved with, with the helping newly arrived refugees and migrants?

Helen: Well this employment initiative is just one of them. One of the ones that we did recently was, late last year we launched a Road Safety DVD which was again to assist our migrants and refugees to better understand driving and road safety in Australia. So it's a great resource because it's in simple English, it provides practical road safety skills and knowledge... and so it's not only helping migrants and refugees understand the Australian road system, it's also assisting them to gain their drivers licenses and again that adds to them feeling independent and reduces social isolation.

Agnes: That's excellent, because going into forklift, they need their first license, isn't it - to get into that?

Helen: Absolutely.

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: I was just wondering Helen, is it in English their learning? Because there is test in driving in languages... or do you do it in their language?

Helen: No it's in English, actually. So it's both an English language learning tool... it's got simple English and it's used within the classroom as well as in independent study. So that it's teaching English but it's also teaching road safety rules.

Agnes: Excellent, do you want to add something else on this road safety initiative?

Helen: Well it's incredibly successful and it's something that in fact I'm trying to persuade my young daughters who aren't migrants and refugees, to use as they go for their driving test because it's such a useful (DVD).

Agnes: Excellent...and their grandfather was a refugees or migrant.

Helen: He was, he was indeed, he was.

Agnes: So your name is from German background...

Helen: I am... yes

Agnes: Okay, Helen do you want to leave a number or something for anybody who wants any information?

Helen: The telephone number for all enquiries is a 1300 number. 1300 798 111.

Agnes: 1300 798 111

[Assyrian translation]

Agnes: ACL Manager Director Helen. Thank you very much for your time. Very valuable information, very informative and very helpful for the community and the students in Australia.

Helen: Thank you Agnes, and also a very big hello to your Assyrian listeners. It's been wonderful working with them all these years and we look forward to doing it for many years to come.

Agnes: Thank you very much. Good bye.

Helen: Good bye

[Music plays]