

# Rolling out welcome mat for newcomers

**TANIA BAWDEN**

THE rising number of skilled migrants to South Australia has led to some creative solutions to help settle newcomers.

Teaching new arrivals the meaning of “g’day mate” is part of the integration plan offered by ElectraNet in Adelaide.

The power transmission company is developing human resources solutions after recruiting 10 engineers from overseas during the past two years.

A severe shortage of experienced engineers forced ElectraNet to look offshore.

Its recruits were care-

fully screened and selected, then given a range of incentives to improve their arrival and settling-in process.

ElectraNet provides a relocation agent to help them find housing and pays some of the moving costs.

The company has also introduced a “buddy” system and multicultural training seminars.

Engineering consultant for substations and recent recruit from India Tejas Patwa said: “Having an employer like ElectraNet to hold your hand, moving to South Australia and Adelaide has been a great positive change in my life.”

Principal customer engineer Leon DuPreez

said the support system had been invaluable for his family after migrating from South Africa.

“We were welcomed by a senior staff member at the airport – and introduction to all staff members was well planned,” Mr DuPreez said.

ElectraNet human resources manager Jonathan Bands said the initiatives to attract and retain international recruits helped fill shortfalls of graduate and interstate recruitment.

“At the end of the day, the more welcome they feel, the longer they stay and the better it works for us all,” he said.

More than 13,000 migrants arrived in SA in 2006-07, and the rate was

picking up this year as the supply of Australian workers declined with the current jobs boom.

Locher Human Resources managing director Christine Locher said: “South Australia is enjoying the highest annual overseas migration rates in 35 years, but if employment expectations aren’t met there is a risk migrant workers will move to employers, go interstate or even return home.”

The consultancy’s organisational development division, including Kate Carter, has helped ElectraNet and other SA companies devise migrant worker strategies.



**SETTLING IN:** Kate Carter with new Indian migrant Tejas Patwa