



Go Down Under

An agent counsellor, Gail Baker heads Southern Cross Student Services, first guidance centre run by Australians

NAVDEEP SANDHU

WE may have had our differences with them on the field, but when it's not cricket Australians can be really warm hosts, especially when you are a young student. This got affirmed with the inauguration of Southern Cross Australian Education Centre. We got hold of the lady responsible for bringing Southern Cross Student Services Private Limited, Gail Baker, for a chat.

Since her maiden visit to India four years back Baker has been passionate about the country. "I came to attend a student's wedding in Bangalore and absolutely fell in love with the country. I like Chandigarh a lot specifically because of its semblance with Melbourne. Both cities are well-planned." With her background in social work and as a qualified agent counsellor, Baker has been in the field of education for over 20 years. She has spent the past seven years of her life working as National student Services Manager counselling students in areas like welfare, academic monitoring, learning support, careers assistance and visa compliance.

"The main problem with international students is that they go to Aus-



tralia without clear knowledge of what they want to study. As a result they fail in studies and are sent back home without a degree," she tells. Simple things like time management, cooking, washing clothes et al can lead to depression. She adds that most students are in the dark about Job Placement In-charge. "These basic things become a burden

for students and they at times drop out or get into drugs etc. The motive of our company is to give proper academic, professional, legal and emotional guidance to students of the process right from the start. Every international student must first learn of the facilities and opportunities available to him than the hurdles."

And how do Indian students fare abroad? "Indian students have the best sense of humour," she smiles. "Young Indians are hard working, enthusiastic and eager to learn." But language is where they fail. "Indian students may have perfect English back home but they face a lot of difficulty grasping Australian accent, so they should definitely work on that," she says adding a few tips, "Students must read aloud, watch BBC news, practice English, focus on different accents and speeds."

While hospitality, community welfare, nursing, mechanical engineering and horticulture remain the popular courses, it's hair-dressing that lays her bets on. "In Australia hairdressers are among the top earners! They are also among the best in the world. India is also awakening to the beauty industry so why not study in Australia for that?" she invites. Any takers?