

Looking for New Experiences



*Spanish psychology student **ANGEL LASANTA** came to Australia looking for new experiences. He spoke to **RICHARD WALKER***

What made you want to work at STARTTS in Australia?

AL: I'm studying psychology at the University of Mallorca. I did some placements there, but I didn't feel motivated by the type of work I was doing. A good friend of mine was coming to Australia, and she asked me to come with her. I thought, "Australia must be really nice", and I had never really travelled before, so I thought, "Let's give it a try".

But I was studying, and had to complete my studies, so I thought I would not be able to go. But I started to investigate what options there were in Australia, and I found out that my tutor knew people in Australia. And I saw this centre [STARTTS] and I thought it was amazing what you do here. I thought I could learn so much from the people here. I thought that I would find the work here more motivating and feel that I am helping people.

What have you been doing so far at STARTTS?

AL: So far I have been attending all the clinical meetings, I have been doing a community profile of the Fayli Kurds. Also I have been doing interviews with people here to understand how STARTTS works, and I have been at Intake, seeing how they work and I have been trying to do it.

I came here without help, the university said, "OK we can arrange this", but it is very new, and for STARTTS too it is very new. There are no scholarships or anything at the moment. I think this is the first international exchange that STARTTS has done, certainly with Spain at least.

How have you found working at STARTTS so far?

AL: The people at STARTTS are terrific. They have been very helpful. What I feel most at this centre is the harmony between departments, how people in different fields work together. I think that it is ideal. For example in Spain, it is more like everyone has their field which they think is the best, but I have never been in a centre like this where they have Neurofeedback, counselling and other things working together. It's pretty amazing.

What will this experience mean for you in your future studies or career as a psychologist?

AL: I think this [trauma counselling] is maybe the most extreme situation in psychology, so it is like a type of test. If I can manage it then I can be confident that I can manage other situations as well. I may go back and work in the same field in Spain. There are a lot of problems there with people who come as refugees. But I'm not sure that the work there will be as good as it is here – I will need to investigate what is happening there.

I think it is important for people from overseas to come here and share this. I think the work you do here is quite unique – I have never seen a centre like this one before. I think it would be beneficial to develop a more organised system of exchange. There are people in my university who are really willing to do things. They would really want to come here and learn.

It would be positive if STARTTS could organise a system for student exchanges. Also it would be a good way to communicate STARTTS' way of working and their philosophy to all countries. The students are the future, so the more people that come and share what they are doing here, the more they can help around the world. **R**