

MENTORS SOUGHT FOR TIBETANS ON THE NORTHERN BEACHES

When Pos Simson first signed up to be a mentor in the Tibetan Mentoring Program, she hoped she would get to help someone; little did she know they would end up helping her too.

The program, which is run by Northern Sydney Local Health District's Multicultural Health Service, pairs a Beaches-based mentor with a Tibetan refugee to help them become accustomed to life in Australia.

That's when Pos met Tenpa Chomphel.

"Essentially I inherited a second family when I met Tenpa," she said.

"I've helped Tenpa, his wife and kids family with things like appointments and paperwork, and he's helped me as well. Tenpa was a former carpenter for the Dalai Lama and he has helped me at my home with carpentry needs plus, he keeps my knives sharp."

The mentorship started in 2016 and was supposed to last six months, but three years later – the pair are still friends and Pos is continuing to learn from her new mate.

"Tenpa doesn't speak much English but we communicate perfectly, just not through language," Pos said.

"Being immersed into Tibetan culture has been fascinating. Tenpa is a practising Buddhist and plays traditional Tibetan music and instruments, which he has performed across Sydney."

Tenpa moved to Australia in 2014 and now lives in Dee Why. Through an interpreter, he said he was grateful for everything Pos had done.

"Pos is like a sister to me. She is also like family to my wife and children. I am so grateful for the help she has given me. I will always be praying for her health and prosperity," he said.

"Pos has explained important things about Australian culture such as the need to arrive on time at appointments. She has helped me understand when to take medications, different foods and what foods are best to eat. I have learnt a lot from Pos about how to stay healthy.

"The mentor program is very important. It has helped me understand many things and has helped my family settle in Australia."

People interested in becoming a mentor can undertake a free training program in Brookvale, starting on Wednesday, February 20. The program will be held from 9.30am- 2.30pm once a week over four weeks.

Cathy Butler, NSLHD's Multicultural Health Service manager, said many Tibetans had arrived in the last 18 months and they were eager to be linked with a mentor, share their culture and have an Australian friend. Further details on the program are available from Cathy on 0421 610 610 or cathy.butler@health.nsw.gov.au