



*Managing director Sarina Russo*

# \$100m Sarina

"We didn't make anyone redundant during a period when the government didn't want to give us a contract – they wanted to give other providers the opportunity to work in Queensland and diminish our service. We thought, let's let the employers decide.

"In a period of five months we were stronger than we ever have been and that's what I call leadership, that's what I call entrepreneurship."

On the back of that success, the Sarina Russo Group has gone global in a deal with the Department for Work and Pensions in the UK, which she says is worth 'many millions of pounds'.

"We visualise a global organisation – with the change in government policy we realised it's important to diversify your work as having 902 staff brings with it a certain amount of accountability," she says.

"As unemployment is rising and employers have to re-strategise their own companies and so much has changed as a result of the global credit crunch, we're seeing a new paradigm. To borrow money you're going to need more security, but our future is bright.

"We've got a good platform with lots of expertise after 30 years with a great executive team and tremendous financial stability."

She also believes that foreign student

demand has not been too influenced by media attention surrounding racial attacks on Indian students in Melbourne.

"When people compare us to the US and the UK, they turn to safety and that's what they get here. It was a small hiccup but we have a stable history of education and what happened with the Indian students was a small incident which blew up," she says.

"Integrity is what it's all about and if you don't have that, what have you got?"

Russo says education is like food for the mind and she is very proud of the work she has done enhancing the lives of millions of people.

"We're indebted to the job seekers and the employers who give us the confidence to go forward and be there with them, which has made me into a better leader too," she says.

## EDUCATION AND HR



**Sarina Russo Group**

**Managing director**  
Sarina Russo

Established: 1979  
Revenue: \$100 million+  
Staff: 902

THIRTY years ago Sarina Russo established her first typing school with a budget of \$600, but now her education and training company Sarina Russo Group is turning over more than \$100 million a year.

The managing director has faced many challenges in that time, but with a conservative financial approach and a great deal of enthusiasm, her business has endured the economic downturn to record its best financial result yet.

"Working as a private company you've got to be prepared for when the tsunami hits you without a life jacket," she says.