

# Award fit for a king

By CASEY NEILL

A DANDENONG North man has received Cambodia's highest honour.

Thay-Horn Yim was among six people to receive a King's award in June.

"That's the highest award in the Cambodian system," he said.

The Cambodian Buddhist Monk Council of Australia and New Zealand held an awards ceremony at Wat Buddharamsi Melbourne in Springvale South to honour the recipients.

Mr Yim said they'd all made a contribution to completing a new Prasok Park in Cambodia on 25 February. The council contributed \$2 million.

He said Prasot Park was a replica of Angkor Wat in Siem Reap of Cambodia and commemorated the place where Buddha was born.

"The Cambodian people of Australia are very proud of Prasot Park and this endeavour has been a key focus for the Cambodian communities for many years," he said.

"When we have a big project like that, normally the king would suggest that we reward people who've made a great contribution to Cambodia."

Mr Yim said the award was usually only presented in Cambodia.

"Australians have never received the King's award before," he said.

"I never thought that I would get one as well. I only knew at the last minute.

"I feel really honoured."

He's been involved with the temple for almost 20 years.

"I was a Khmer Rouge survivor. I lived in a refugee camp for two



Thay Horn Yim with his award. He says he now wants to help rebuild Cambodia. 142696

years," he said. "I never expected very much. I didn't have anything much.

"When I came to Australia I got my tertiary education - I got my degrees, my honours degrees."

Mr Yim worked as a public servant, holding a senior position for more than 10 years, and has raised four children.

He has received the Victorian Government's Award for Excellence in Multicultural Affairs, Centrelink's National Award for Excellence in Multicultural Youth Service

and an AMES Humanitarian Award.

"I never expected this sort of thing," he said.

"I want to give back. I got more than I bargained for."

He said Australia's "land of opportunity" tag rang true.

"We don't have to worry about food for the next day," he said.

"It's important to go back to help communities, some of those migrants and refugees who can't afford to pay.

"Thankyou to Australia for giving me the opportunity, a second

chance to live here and have family, have a life. Now I have an opportunity to help to rebuild Cambodia."

The council's president, the Venerable Sovann Srey also received an award. He established organisation in 1995.

Along with the Springvale South temple's Abbot Venerable Sudhej Nan, Venerable Srey among the most senior monks in Australia.

"They escaped to Thailand, so they were not disrobed by Khmer Rouge," Mr Yim said.