

Building a future for Indigenous construction workers

Providing jobs and skills training for Indigenous workers is high on the agenda, particularly in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory. Deltareef is a locally owned and operated construction company working towards providing sustainable careers in the construction industry for Indigenous workers.

Based in Nhulunbuy, Deltareef employs more than 23 local Indigenous people. Aided by the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development (DBERD), they are currently moving towards training their staff with skills required to progress their careers in the construction industry.

Owner Michael Martin has a long history of involvement and empathy with the Yolngu culture and flexibility is central to Deltareef's operations. For example, for each new job a pool of Yolngu workers are employed and workers are picked up each morning.

Deltareef works towards not only providing training and immediate jobs for Indigenous people, but also committing to longer term employment sustainability. Recent growth coupled with their success in gaining building contracts from Alcan and the Northern Territory Government has assisted them in providing job security for their employees.

Mr Martin recognises the importance of not only providing their staff with skills training, but also ensuring they are happy and motivated while they are at work. He has implemented an 'Employee of the Month' program to provide staff with a monthly award system to strive towards, and over coming months, DBERD will provide sponsorship to enable this program to continue.

Each month, a staff member is named 'Employee of the Month' at a staff barbeque, and receives an award of a battery-operated power tool from Gorrkbuy Industrial Supplies (GIS) for their hard work.

Mr Martin says that the program aims to encourage and reward performance by staff.

'We want to encourage our staff to continue working hard, and show the other staff what they can receive if they too work equally as hard.

'The most immediate result is that it becomes a talking point among the employees, something to joke about', affirms Mr Martin.

'It's difficult to say if the program improves regular attendance because there are too many other influencing factors. It definitely helps to create a good atmosphere in the workplace though.'

Over the coming months Michael Martin is looking at consolidating his growing business by participating in DBERD's Business Growth program.

For more information about the Business Growth program, or how DBERD can help your business visit www.nt.gov.au/business, call Stuart MacLean on 08 8987 0531 or e-mail stuart.maclea@nt.gov.au.