



Edition 2, September 2009

Produced by the Cotton Catchment Communities

Aboriginal Employment Strategy School Based Traineeships

Introduction

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC in conjunction with CRDC and the Aboriginal Employment Strategy has been piloting a school-based traineeship program for indigenous students in the cotton industry for the past two years.

The AES school based traineeship program provides an opportunity for local indigenous students currently enrolled in Yrs 11 and 12 at Wee Waa and Narrabri High Schools to gain paid work experience, a nationally recognised qualification, credit towards their Higher School Certificate and exposure to the different career opportunities available in the cotton industry.

The students are required to undertake 800 hrs of work over the 2 years.

The trainees are working with staff from CSIRO, CRDC, NSW DII and the Cotton CRC and are based at the Australian Cotton Research Institute and CRDC in Narrabri. The trainees are currently working in IT and Entomology at the Research Centre, with another trainee at the CRDC office doing administration work. These young trainees from the region are tackling their topics and tasks with wonderful enthusiasm.

Key Outcomes of the Project

During the 2 year period all of the participants of the program have noted the following outcomes:

- It increases the skills, experience and capacity of the young indigenous students involved in the project.
- Exposes these students to range of vocations available through the cotton industry including business administration, research, IT and farm management.
- It is a possible source of future employees for agricultural organisations and businesses in regional areas.
- It breaks down the barriers between non-indigenous employees and indigenous students.

- Provides positive examples of workplace engagement to the trainees family and the community.

Our Experiences



Advisor Helen Dugdale

Helen Dugdale, one of the advisors involved in the programme said that *"having a trainee has been enlightening, worthwhile and rewarding"*.

Helen noted that she would recommend other agricultural organisations to take on an Aboriginal Traineeship with AES as it is a potential source of future employees.

Dave Larson, also an advisor in the programme noted that in recommending the programme to other organisations they must be flexible – *"school schedules and commitments are a priority for these students. It is important to work out at the beginning of the project the time the students are required to complete the project and then to schedule in some full weeks early in the traineeship to avoid time constraints at the end when school commitments may be looming"*



Advisor Dave Larson



'Community Conversations'

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Advisor Sharon Downes

Sharon noticed a huge change in the trainee that she mentored stating that there was "amazing improvement in confidence, ability and manner in the way they conduct themselves and perhaps a change in attitude towards their future."



Trainee Beau Quirk

Beau's interest in the traineeship was sparked by the opportunity to learn new skills and also be in an office environment. He also said "it was great to get to know who is who at the re-

search station. He would like to tell others who are considering getting involved, it is a great thing to be involved in because you get paid to do it. Also you gain a great deal of experience. I would try and encourage them to apply through their school and the AES program".



Trainee Chloe Pokarier

Chloe said "she liked being able to meet new people in the work place. While one of the highlights of the traineeship, she enjoyed the friendly people, experiencing different work tasks and learning new skills whilst earning money".



Trainee Bronwyn Scott

Bronwyn said "It would be great if you could offer a trainee an opportunity like this, if you are interested get in contact with the AES and find out how you can be involved in the program to have someone come and help you."

All the trainees were enthusiastic about encouraging other people eligible for the traineeship to get involved and apply as they will gain confidence, engage in a great learning experience and get paid at the same time.

In relation to agricultural organisations thinking of taking on a trainee she believes it is not only for the company's benefit but a great benefit to the trainee.

Conclusion

Over the last 2 years the supervisors of these trainees have seen a lot of change. The trainees have gained a lot of experience and confidence. They have increased their skills and their capacity and has exposed these students to a range of vocations available through the cotton industry. It has broken down the barriers between non-indigenous employees and indigenous students. The Cotton CRC is working with the AES over the coming months to place more trainees for next year.

Contact

If anyone would like more information about the advantages of taking on a trainee please contact Kate Schwager, Cotton CRC or Lisa Green, Field Officer at the Aboriginal Employment Strategy in Tamworth Tel: 02 67669388 or Email: lisa.green@aes.org.au.

For Further Information
Contact Community Officer
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