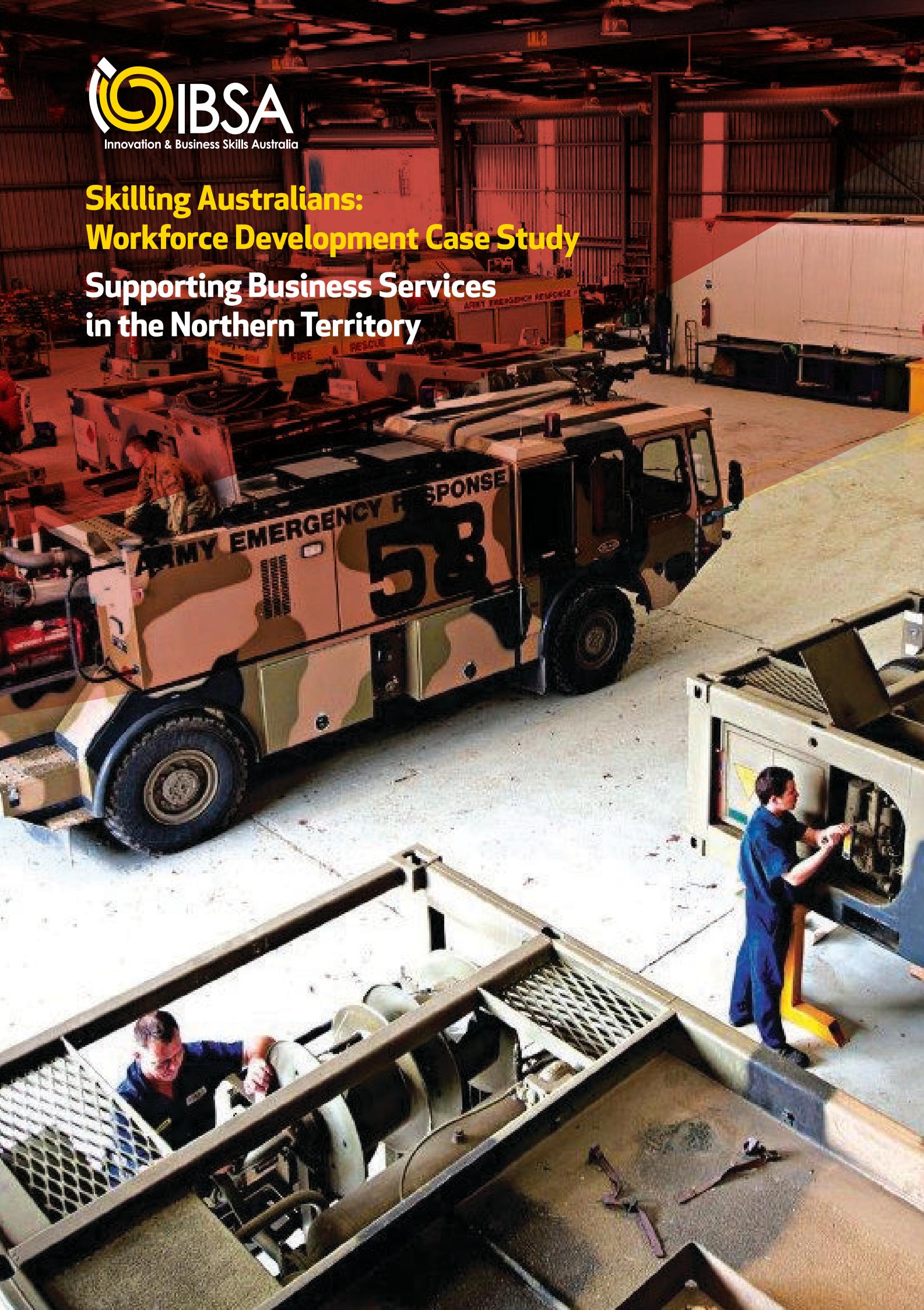




# Skilling Australians: Workforce Development Case Study

## Supporting Business Services in the Northern Territory



Through the Australian Government's National Workforce Development Fund, IBSA works with organisations like the Australian Industry Defence Network to motivate, develop and upskill staff to increase their performance and ultimately contribute to the profitability of member businesses and the productivity of the Australian workforce.

Australian Industry Defence Network – Northern Territory (AIDN-NT) is a not-for-profit industry association operating under the auspices of the Northern Territory Government Department of Business and is the premier representative body for small to medium enterprises working in the Defence support industry in the Northern Territory. Member businesses benefit from a suite of services, including training and support, aimed at enhancing their capability to win Defence work and maintain stable and successful enterprises in the industry.

AIDN-NT's Defence Education and Learning (DEAL) program was established in 2008 to improve the management and operational capabilities of the local NT Defence support industry. Businesses are able to maximise growth potential and sustainability by up-skilling employees using nationally accredited training and mentoring across a range of disciplines.

### **Workforce Development, Vocational Education and Training and the National Workforce Development Fund**

The National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF) is a new approach to skills training that focuses on meeting business training needs. It is an innovative, industry-driven model that enables businesses to work through an Industry Skills Council and co-invest with the Government to train, reskill and upskill workers in areas of skills need.

AIDN-NT worked with Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) to identify the priority skills and successfully access funding assistance through the NWDF for the delivery of training in:

- Diploma of Management
- Diploma of Project Management
- Certificate IV Project Management
- Certificate IV Frontline Management.

### **Medical Equipment Management skilling project**

AIDN-NT member Medical Equipment Management (MEM) supplies, repairs and maintains equipment for the medical and scientific communities of the Northern Territory. While MEM has been a supplier of services and equipment to the Defence industry in previous years, changes within the Department of Defence have led to a new supply chain model with the loss of some contract work for MEM. As a result the organisation has sought other income opportunities whilst maintaining a workforce ready to renew business relationships with the Department of Defence via their nominated supply chain prime contractor.

### **Meeting skills challenges**

MEM sees succession planning as central in the workforce development and planning process. As a consequence, high potential employees are supported not only in current jobs, but also for future roles within the business. Hence the Service Supervisor is now undertaking the Diploma of Management as preparation for moving into a future Senior Management role when the business expands the scope of its operations. At present the Service Supervisor is supported by the Senior Technician who, when the Service Supervisor is absent, steps up to provide supervisory support to the Technical Services team and apprentices operating in the field. As a result, the Senior Technician is currently enrolled in the Certificate IV Frontline Management.

Trevor Riessen MEM Managing Director is confident of the return on investment. Having completed the Diploma of Project Management a few years back, he was then able to prepare the winning tender for supply of services to an NT Government department based in Alice Springs. On securing the five year contract, worth an estimated \$3 million, he was advised that while MEM's was not the most



competitive proposal in dollar value, their tender included the added value of a project plan that reflected the professional commitment to update skills of MEM employees. Trevor Riessen is clear that this outcome was a direct benefit of having completed the Diploma of Project Management and is now keen to have team members participate in new skills initiatives. He intends to enrol in the Diploma of Management.

Although he is an experienced operator with significant practical knowledge of business operations and management skills, Trevor states that in undertaking the Diploma of Project Management training, he has been able to convert his experience into formal skills and a system of practice using vital business tools such as time logs to track critical activities and assess lost time as well as evaluation and prioritising of daily activities to achieve greater productivity and organisation performance.

Charles Darwin University was identified by AIDN-NT as the most suitable partner for the delivery of their training. In consultation with the AIDN-NT members and the university, the timetable for the delivery of units has the built in flexibility to allow for needs of different AIDN-NT member businesses. MEM uses the option of two days classroom time per month led by facilitators who are suitably skilled in the teaching of adults. This allows the learners to be self directed while ensuring the learning progresses at an appropriate pace. The face-to-face learning environment minimises the distractions of work and maximises the exchange of ideas with other like-minded learners.

Project work for the Certificate IV Frontline Management and Diploma of Management has been contextualised to the working environment of learners and learning materials. Case studies and research questions are designed to integrate the learning and work

environments, facilitating clearer understanding and more importantly providing workplace application of the skills being developed.

A key area of learning for MEM participants was the learning around management of health and safety within their workplace. Being focused on dealing with daily business activities, the shift from occupational health and safety to Work Health & Safety, with the introduction of new national legislation needed attention. Through this most recent up-skilling initiative they had the opportunity to re-visit their work practices and contract obligations to ensure compliance with the new legislative requirements.

At present MEM has a workforce of 14 fulltime equivalent employees, being slightly down on their peak operating capacity of 19 employees. In taking advantage of the NWDF training opportunity presented through AIDN-NT, Medical Equipment Management is positive about future business development knowing they will be skilled and ready to respond to business demand from the growth of the Defence industry and Government health services across the Northern Territory.

### **Connecting AIDN-NT and skills**

Assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the defence industry to build and grow their businesses through management and project management skills development supports AIDN-NT's objective of building the defence industry in the Northern Territory. Through the National Workforce Development Fund AIDN-NT is able to support SMEs across all sectors of the defence industry including platform maintenance, base services, construction and ICT providing opportunities that are otherwise unavailable.



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To keep abreast of an ever changing and increasingly demanding business environment, the team at MEM is continually updating their knowledge and skills by doing courses and training. The AIDN-NT DEAL training through National Workforce Development Fund assistance has been an essential element in allowing us to do this.

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#### More information about Australian Government programs

[www.skillsconnect.gov.au](http://www.skillsconnect.gov.au)

### Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) is one of 11 Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) funded by the Australian Government to:

- provide integrated industry intelligence and advice to governments on workforce development and skills needs
- maintain and improve training materials and supporting products and services and
- provide advice on skills, training and workforce development to enterprises.

IBSA is committed to building the capability of businesses and to ensuring individuals have contemporary skills through the vocational education and training system in ICT, telecommunications, education and training, small business administration, printing, finance and the cultural and creative industries. IBSA is an expert intermediary on qualifications, skills needs and workforce planning and works as a central coordination point for the Australian Government's workforce development programs.

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