

Case Study: ESS serving opportunity to Indigenous jobseekers



OPERATING in some of Australia's most remote locations, ESS Support Services Worldwide knows first-hand just what sustainable jobs mean to Aboriginal communities, and diversity & indigenous engagement general manager Vanessa Davies is taking every opportunity to help 'close the gap' on Indigenous employment.

Since 1998, the resource industry service provider has set a strong example of successful Aboriginal engagement, currently they employ more than 486 Indigenous Australians with 58% being in its West Australian operations.

This year alone, ESS has welcomed more than 143 new Aboriginal employees, placing them well on the way to reaching a target of 350 new Aboriginal staff by December 2014, but Ms Davies does not make light of the challenges involved.

"Critically, we have more vacancies to fill than available, suitable Indigenous jobseeker candidates to fill these jobs, and we are competing with numerous mining companies and other key subcontractors to attract Indigenous staff from the same small labour pool," she notes.

Ms Davies says its training and recruitment partnership with Indigenous careers centre Access Working Careers and resource industry workforce development initiative AMMA Skills Connect, presented the perfect opportunity for ESS and Aboriginal jobseekers.

"We have first-hand experience with the challenges and benefits that come with a sustained effort to employ and retain Aboriginal peoples, particularly those in remote and regional communities who often have fewer employment options and opportunities," she says.

"This is why we invest in up-skilling and training Aboriginal people, who have little or no employment experience – for each person we successfully train, we employ them within our operations."

Collaborating with Access Working Careers to reach into Perth's Indigenous talent pool, ESS turned to AMMA Skills Connect to help realise the dreams of 19 hopefuls chasing employment in the resource industry.

"ESS was involved in the AMMA Skills Connect Perth Jobseeker Forum in August 2013, where over 35% of the attendees were women and 15% were from an Indigenous background," Ms Davies says.

"We have worked very closely in partnership with Access Working Careers to develop and implement a highly successful collaborative Indigenous screening, selection, up-skilling, training employment placement and mentoring strategy.

"Our involvement with Access Working Careers has also incorporated advice, direction and support from AMMA Skills Connect on the collaborative delivery of our Certificate II Hospitality up-skilling programs."

The AMMA Skills Connect Indigenous Jobseeker program helped pave the way for eligible candidates to gain not just the knowledge, but also the experience to become a crucial member of the ESS team through the organisation's comprehensive Indigenous engagement strategy.

"Each Aboriginal candidate gets the opportunity to be exposed to the nature of the job and required tasks on a real ESS operational site," Ms Davies says.



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This project is supported by the Australian Government through the National Resources Sector Workforce Strategy

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"They are with their peers and we have trainers and staff that provide them with support so they can adjust to working and living within a mining village operation, which helps with confidence and retention."

Backed by positive feedback and an average five -month Indigenous retention rate of 96%, Ms Davies believes that AMMA Skills Connect and Access Working Careers have together entrenched sustainable jobs for Aboriginal Australians in the DNA of the business.

"We have many positive comments from our site managers very pleased with the calibre of Aboriginal employees and their vocational competencies, skills and how they work with others," she says.

"As the results and employment outcomes reflect, our partnership with Access Working Careers in WA has greatly assisted us in sourcing and screening suitable Aboriginal employees for either up-skilling and employment placement or for direct employment opportunities within our WA operations."

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