

Our Stories



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April 2014

IJC celebrates achieving ownership of Bilwon Training Farm

Indigenous Job Connections four year commitment to their dream of a rural training facility was celebrated in February with the handing over of Bilwon Farm Mareeba to their ownership.

In recognition of their commitment to, and improvement of, Bilwon Farm Mareeba, the Indigenous Land Corporation has divested the Farm to IJC.

Chairperson Maria Richards addressed the gathering, enthusing listeners with future plans.

"IJC took over this fallow property four years ago on a lease and have invested significant amounts of our own funds, always believing this day would happen", she said.

"At our own cost, we designed and secured approvals for a 20 bed residential training complex, improved existing infrastructure, and the land - including stabilising the Barron's riverbank and growing cattle".

She added "Our commercial purchase of the next door property has further added to the acreage's viability".

Pilot training courses on the farm in horticulture, chemical handling, heavy vehicle use, farm operations and other rural training have been well attended and secured real jobs for graduates.

Maria said IJC concentrated on investing in commercial operations that can sustain their community beyond government subsidies.



L-R Bill Hill Indigenous Land Corporation, IJC Board Members and CEO, and Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch celebrate the handover

She explained, "since stepping away from delivering CDEP contracts, these independent commercial operations are sustaining the organisation and providing profits to fund community improvement activities - activities that often Governments fear to assist".

She continued "Rural training facilities like our Bilwon Farm provide both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous long term unemployed with real options for jobs while allowing them to remain in their communities."

"I see this farm changing lives already. The first groups of young ones have gone home with skills that make them proud and enthusiastic to work".

View Win News coverage of the event on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7SQ9P7eEo0>



A wide range of stakeholders joined in the celebration at Bilwon Farm

IJC Training launched with Certificate III in Aged Care & Home and Community Care

Search successful for local modelling talent

IJC's new Victoria Street training rooms hosted a keen group of students undertaking their Dual Certificate III in Aged Care & Home and Community Care during March.

Experienced Aged Care trainer, Christina Kelly sees the courses offered by IJC Training making a real difference for indigenous, migrant, mature-age and English-As-A-Second-Language students.

With nearly 40 years in nursing, over 20 years specialising in Aged Care, Christina feels from a care perspective these parts of the community have been poorly serviced in the past.

She explained "our communities and our care facilities are becoming more multicultural every day and it is important to offer training to people who can assist those in care with empathy and culturally appropriate behaviours".

"We have men and women, migrants and refugees, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, mature age and really young learners - all in our

classes. This offers everyone a broader learning experience - each providing the others with great examples of how to care better", Christina said.

"Each student is getting more confidence, and their English is improving, while they master aged care techniques".

Students Colleen Lucas and Burnese Sagigi have both found their dreams.

Colleen had been looking for a course for a long time and this combined Cert III allowed her to train for a new career. She said there is so much more to caring than anyone looking in would imagine.

"The level of detail we have to know is amazing. It's not till you learn, that you realise. But it all makes sense once it's been explained".

Burnese is also studying her Diploma of Nursing but she wanted to fast track her specialty nursing skills to get a job in aged care. "I love being with older people, they have so many stories to share", she said.

"This course has been really good, with plenty of practical examples to make the difficult things make sense and lots of positive feedback as we learn".

IJC Training is offering rolling starts in :

- Dual Certificate III in Aged Care & Home and Community Care (Cairns and Mareeba)
- Certificate III in Conservation & Land Management (Bilwon)
- Certificate III in Horticulture (Bilwon)
- Certificate III in Child Services (Cairns)

Enquiries to IJC Training 07 4041 8800

Sixteen enthusiastic and talented young Kuranda people participated in a two day modelling and self-improvement course recently, run by local modelling agency, LuLu's Model Management in partnership with Indigenous Job Connection's Bundarra Sportswear label.

The course got a kick-start when IJC's Bundarra Sportswear label was looking for some local talent to model their next team wear range on their sales website, Facebook page and printed promotional material.

The "Face of Bundarra Model Search", course launched in torrential rain, and the participants and their families showed great dedication making it to the venue on both days.

Graduation on day two saw the participants demonstrate individual as well as group catwalk routines, presentation of professional portfolio images and the presentation of graduation certificates.

LuLu's Agency Manager Barbara Head said the course concentrated on giving indigenous people more self-assurance and public confidence.

"This course didn't just benefit those interested in modelling, although that was our main focus", she said. "Each participant learned techniques from physical presentation and posture, to interview skills and goal setting".

Barbara explained "We learned to walk, pose for photographs and practise core strength exercises. These are great skills whether you want to model or just present better in your life and at your job."

Other subjects covered over the two days included: nutrition, skin care, makeup, and dressing for individual body types.

This was a great opportunity for the 13 women and three men who nominated they would like to take on more public roles.



Students Colleen Lucas (left) and Burnese Sagigi discuss the course with trainer Christina Kelly (centre)



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IJC keeps an eye on their goals even when business operations change

Indigenous Job Connections Auditor Peter Catterson from Altius Chartered Accountants sees many organisations, particularly not-for-profit organisations, struggle to deliver to their original goals when Governments change, funding models change or the markets change.

Many organisations close down or get absorbed by other service providers. But not IJC.

"I work with many not-for-profits and many indigenous organisations who struggle to remain relevant and remain funded in a world that keeps changing around them. Their dreams are worthy, but are hard to keep alive," Peter Catterson says.

"However, the IJC Board and CEO have worked hard to remain viable. They identified their weaknesses both financially and operationally years ago when government first communicated that funding for their core programs was going to disappear."

"It is to their credit that they didn't wait to see if this change would happen, they confirmed their goals were to improve the lives of their community members through funding social welfare activities, and then went about finding other ways to fund these goals."

"If the Government had changed their minds it would have made them even stronger, but after four years of hard work developing truly commercial activities, they are closer than ever to being independent from the grant dependency so common in the Indigenous business model."

"Every Board member has become competent in organisational governance, concentrating on the strategic direction of the organisation and leaving operational matters to the specialist staff - being paid professionally to meet the objectives set by the Board."



"Creating clothing manufacturing companies, a training farm and partnerships with both a Job Service Provider and Registered Training Organisation have seen their decision making become more nimble".

"The organisation has restructured its finances to be able to manage cash flows. Incomes are no longer fixed, they rise and fall with the business trade generated. They have to sell enough to buy the next order's raw materials, manufacture items, get them to market, and pay wages. And then start again".

"Board and staff have successfully transitioned to making hard commercial decisions, influenced only by the business' needs. Family ties and politics has taken a back seat to make sure the profits are there to fund their community goals."

"Great ideas are presented all the time, but IJC have kept their overall goals in mind when assessing business opportunities and community requests".

"Their plans are looking at 10-20 years into the future, while their operational plans address every month on the way to that future".

"They have built a model that, if well managed, can continue to provide an income stream to meet their goals, even when goal posts are moved".

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