



Australian Government

# A U S T R A L I A N A P P R E N T I C E S H I P S

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## Calling on Indigenous recruits

### Centrelink Area North Australia

Northern Territory region



Centrelink Area North Australia (ANA) has streamlined its Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships program and is constantly adapting training to suit their apprentices' needs and attract and retain Indigenous apprentices and trainees.

The organisation employs three Australian Apprentices—two Indigenous Australians and one African from a non-English speaking background—doing a Certificate II in Business.

Centrelink ANA has recruited Indigenous Australian Apprentices since 2001.

Renee Long, Manager of Corporate Strategy, says Australian Apprenticeships are a great way to recruit Indigenous staff.

'We have a 60 per cent Indigenous customer base, so we want to boost our Indigenous staffing to match this,' Renee explains.

Centrelink ANA has an Indigenous Employment Team and an Indigenous Employment Action Plan to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The aim is to build a sustainable Indigenous workforce by 2011.

The current Australian Apprentices work in the greater Darwin area, but there have been Indigenous Australian Apprentices based in, or from, remote communities. Training and induction is tailored to meet individual needs.

Darwin-based Australian Apprentices go to Charles Darwin University one day a week and then have a study day where a dedicated Australian Apprentice coordinator coaches them.

'This is really good because it lets us see how they're progressing. And for the apprentice, it's a chance for them to ask questions,' Renee says.

Centrelink ANA also support their Indigenous Australian Apprentices with a buddy system.

'Buddies give them someone they can contact when they're not sure where to get information. Instead of feeling embarrassed asking someone they don't know, they can ask their buddy things like where to get stationery or how to apply for leave. It helps them settle in,' Renee explains.

Centrelink ANA's support of Australian Apprentices reflects Centrelink's overall training culture.

'Centrelink has a fantastic national people plan and key leadership qualities they follow which embrace individual's skills and knowledge, which are vital to any employers' success,' Marree Boucher, Field Officer with Australian Apprenticeships Northern Territory, says she says.

'As an apprentice within Centrelink you can pursue many avenues such as Indigenous scholarships, cadetships and the opportunity to complete nationally recognised learning,' Marree says.

Centrelink ANA encourages Australian Apprentices to give feedback during their training.

‘This helps us manage retention and highlights issues we may not be aware of. Things like managing work–life balance. So for the younger people it can be about managing their social life and making sure they can complete their studies and on the job component,’ Renee says.

The dedicated Indigenous Employment Team helps managers and team leaders to work with Australian Apprentices—particularly with some of the cultural aspects.

‘It’s about support and little things, like how to approach leave or sensitive issues. Giving managers an understanding of things like extended family obligations, particularly for people from remote communities,’ Renee says.

‘To have our efforts recognised through winning a national award is encouraging and we will continue to look for innovative ways to increase Indigenous employment across our region,’ she says.

Centrelink ANA is now looking to the future and focusing on pre-recruitment.

‘If we can get more entry level people in and nurture them in the early stages, we have more chance of keeping them. It’s about making sure that they are confident. We want to show them the work environment and that they can really do it,’ Renee says.

