

MEDIA RELEASE

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Council WHS team clocks up 50,000 remote kilometres to sell safety message

Keeping 400 staff and 1300 Community Development Program participants scattered across 186,000 square kilometres of the Northern Territory safe is a logistical problem that would be a nightmare for most organisations, but Roper Gulf Regional Council has overcome the challenge with innovation and the equivalent of one-and-a-quarter trips around the earth.

With 12 sites in its Local Government Area, the Council's Work, Health and Safety (WHS) team spent the past year tailoring the delivery of procedures and training programs to a culturally diverse workforce.

Acting WHS Co-ordinator Renae Jarrett said the key procedural change had been the implementation of the Take 5 risk assessment booklet, which provided staff with a user-friendly tool for identifying potential hazards.

"The beauty of Take 5 is that it is an easy-to-use system for staff to assess a job's risk before they start it," she explained.

"The pocket booklet walks staff through the five steps needed to undertake a task safely, including spotting hazards and making changes to work practices to circumvent identified risks.

"Take 5 has allowed the WHS team to nurture a cultural change that means safety is at the forefront of everything our people do."

The success of the approach can be measured by the fact that 2016 was the safest on record for the Council, a result highlighted by a milestone 100-day recordable injury free run and five months without an incident reported.

Face-to-face training was identified as the most effective way to drive home the WHS message, with driving the key word as the team clocked up more than 50,000 kilometres on some of the NT's remotest roads in 12 months.

During National Safe Work Month alone, the team drove 10,000km in order to present a roadshow that transformed a barbecue into an interactive learning experience for staff.

Chief Executive Officer Michael Berto said the staggering statistic demonstrated the Council's commitment to safety.

“WHS is a critical part of any organisation’s operation, but managing it in an area as remote as the Roper Gulf region presents a unique challenge,” he said.

“We have been able to get around it by hitting the road to deliver onsite training, because staff told us they preferred to discuss things like alcohol and other drugs in a face-to-face environment.”

“It’s taken an incredible commitment and a rethink on how we do things as a Council, but the results speak for themselves.”

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For further information, please contact the Communications Co-ordinator on 0427 674 212 or at roper.governance@ropergulf.nt.gov.au.