

Capacity building, training & employment

REMOTE AREA POWER SUPPLY TRAINING

CONTEXT

Stretching across 10,000km² of Central Arnhem Land, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) has developed a range of services for its 800 clients living across 32 outstations in this area. Within this area, there are approximately 90 stand alone solar power systems running. The ongoing maintenance and repair of these systems presents a significant challenge to BAC. BAC identified that there were not enough people living in central Arnhem Land with the necessary skills to fix the solar power systems when they broke down or needed maintenance.

As a strategy to address this challenge, BAC and the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) worked together to deliver training of a Certificate II in Remote Area Power Supply (RAPS) Maintenance Course to a group of CDEP participants living in Maningrida, Central Arnhem Land. This course helps train participants in how to maintain and fix solar power systems found in outstations, cattle stations and remote communities.

The successful delivery of this training required collaboration with a number of stakeholders. Besides CAT and BAC, Maningrida Employment Service, STEPS and the Major Industries Training Advisory Council (MITAC) were also involved.



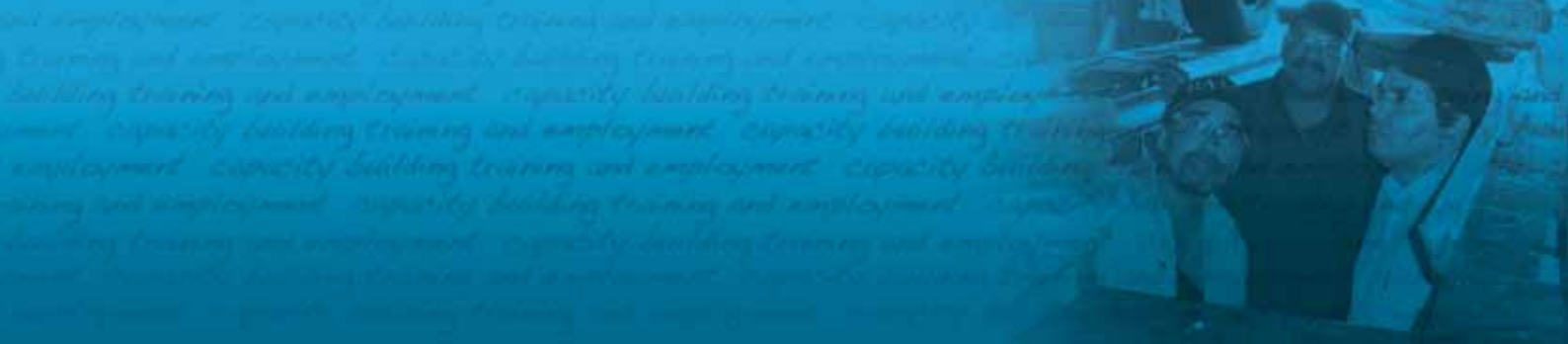
Checking Bushlight maintenance logbook.



SCOPE

In April 2010, fourteen men enrolled in CAT's Certificate II in Remote Area Power Supply and Maintenance. The course balanced theory and classroom work with many opportunities for 'on the job' learning. This method provided learners with a fundamental understanding of how electricity and renewable energy works, as well as valuable 'hands-on' experience repairing and maintaining stand-alone solar power systems on outstations.

In addition to providing participants with the skills and knowledge needed to maintain remote area power supply systems on country, the course also provided participants with a range of transferable skills that will assist them transition to full-time employment.



Maningrida course participants in front of battery storage tank.

Low levels of literacy and numeracy provided a challenge to the successful delivery of the course. However, the challenge also provided an opportunity for useful collaboration with STEPS and MITAC organisations to help make delivery of courses effective and understandable. This led to further refinement and improvement of learning resources.

OUTCOMES

Throughout the delivery of this course there have been a number of positive outcomes. These include:

- Successful attainment of the full Certificate II for half the participants, with several others achieving competencies in the majority of core units.

- Further career opportunities opening up to graduates such as attaining a Restricted Electrical License or undertaking a Certificate III course.
- Two trainee RAPS maintenance positions at Bawananga were created.

USEFUL ABBREVIATIONS:

- BAC:** Bawananga Aboriginal Cooperation
- CAT:** Centre for Appropriate Technology
- MITAC:** Major Industries Training Advisory Council
- CDEP:** Community Development Employment Program
- STEPS:** Steps Disability Employment Services