

Feature from the NT Division – Minerals Council of Australia 20010 Yearbook

Surveying a bright new future for Billa



Two years ago, 20-year-old Billa Knox Two years ago, was moving between periods of unemployment and short term labouring jobs.

Today, he has a bright future with leading Northern Territorian surveying company Ausurv Pty Ltd as a trainee surveyor, thanks to a start with the Northern Territory Indigenous Mine Training Program.

Billa was one of the first group of students to undertake the program, and his potential was recognised almost immediately. Within months he was plucked from the course to take on fulltime work with Ausurv. He has now been with the company for five months, and is going from strength to strength.

'Billa is a really bright young guy and has taken to surveying really quickly,' said Ausurv Regional Manager, Jim Walker.

'We currently have him working a trainee surveyor at the Frances Creek Mine about 210 kms out of Darwin. He is also undertaking distance studying with Leederville TAFE in Perth. Once he completes his Associate Diploma of Surveying he will progress to surveyor.'

Jim said Ausurv had almost turned full circle by taking on Billa. 'When the company was established in 1991 we often used the

services of indigenous employees as surveyor's assistants, so it was a natural progression for us to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Larrakia Development Corporation to work together to employ more indigenous people in the future.'

Jim said both the company and Billa had benefited greatly from his employment.

'Billa has a Partner and young daughter, and it is very important to him to have a steady job and an income to support her. This job allows him to fulfil his family commitments and to have an interesting and well paid career at the same time.'

'For us, Billa is a welcome addition to the company. He has great potential. He has a very high aptitude – which you need for surveying, and is a good team player. I can see him going a long way with us, finishing his studies, and stepping into a senior role within a few years.'

Jim said Ausurv would increasingly strive to support indigenous workers in the future.

'Not only does it allow us to 'give back' to the Northern Territory, because much of our work is carried out in indigenous communities; but it also benefits us in a business sense. Part of the evaluation of many government tenders is on local and indigenous input, so it is important for us to fulfil this requirement.'

He said employing Billa was just the start for the company. 'This program has been a real asset for the industry. We hope this is just the beginning of new era in employing indigenous workers.'

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