Building Local Future

A family-owned business in Winnellie is looking to the future as it reshapes its business model to target new opportunities.

Winnellie Hydraulics was established in 1983 and provides a wide range of specialised products and services for hydraulic and pneumatic tools.

Max Nicholson grew up around his parents’ business and has taken over the reins to be Winnellie Hydraulics’ General Manager. He said changing local economic conditions meant the business needed to respond to new opportunities and prepare for the future.

“When INPEX came in, we saw the opportunity to shape our business toward the oil and gas industry,” Max said.

“We’re learning from contractors to understand what they want, what products they need and planning for the next stages of onshore and offshore projects.”

Max and his Sales Manager, Keith Howland, put their success supplying the Ichthys LNG Project down to hard work and relationship building.

“It’s all about relationship building – understanding what you want, what products they need and what we need to do to deliver,” Keith said.

“We’re building a business case around what contractors need and the results are flowing from that.”

Providing a specialised service locally gives the company a competitive edge, Max said.

“We can complete a job here in Winnellie within a couple of days, instead of the client needing to send it to Perth or Adelaide,” he said.

“Working on the Ichthys Project has really given us a foundation for the next phase of our growth.”

Marking out a path to employment

TRAFFICWERX NT managing director Chris Boyer took a risk 18 months ago and it has paid dividends for everyone since.

The risk came in the form of a phone call from a Borroloola and Gulf Region traditional owner Daniel Multholland wanting to know if there was some way his people could get work in the traffic management area.

Neither man knew the other so the inquiry was a bit out of left field and there was trepidation regarding reliability crucial in traffic management.

“I didn’t know him from a bar of soap. He wanted to get his people working and after a few discussions I told him we’d act as a mentor for them. We’d get them accreditation,” Boyer recalls.

Eighteen months on Trafficwerx is on the brink of starting the traffic management contract on the duplication of Vanderlin Drive using a 100 percent indigenous staff. The gamble is paying off.

“The fantastic training programs the government has in place are real proof of the rewards being reaped by remote indigenous people,” Boyer says enthusiastically.

“We will bring workers in from Borroloola on a rotating basis which works well for them. They are working 12 hour day shift on award. On nightshift they are earning double penalties.

Traffic controllers are required to complete certification in Work Zone Traffic Management. There are four levels, and a minimum of two levels is required to work on the roads and to operate the lollipop.

“With the assistance of the Department of Business in Tennant Creek, we have trained and are currently employing a pool of 22 indigenous people in traffic control, civil and specialist labouring.”

Trafficwerx has had several jobs with Department of Infrastructure and private companies all over the NT, but is yet to get a continuous flow of work. Mr Boyer said he hoped to get the news out about the project and its success.

Trafficwerx has just undertaken the installation of audible tactile fatigue management systems at test locations at four points on the Stuart Highway south of Darwin: 50km, 120km at Adelaide River, 202km at Pine Creek and 503km at Larrimah.

“We’ve spent 57 days on it so far, and still have about six weeks to go. We were working night shift for four weeks in a row and we got 100 per cent attendance the whole time.”

The client was Avante Line Marking who were so impressed by the efforts of the Borroloola crew they said they would help find any community project the group wanted on a dollar for dollar basis.

“At a meeting at the Adelaide River pub the crew decided the project would be either targeted at the youth or the elderly. Eventually a shade structure for the elderly was agreed upon with the group telling management.

“This time we will focus on the elderly. The next time it will be for the kids,” he said.