

KICKING GOALS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2010—it's been hectic, hence the lateness of this our first edition—and there's plenty to announce for both jobseekers and employers on the mid to north coast of NSW.

NORTEC were recently given funding through the Australian Government to provide mobile training from Coffs to Tweed Heads. On the right of this page you can read how the idea came to fruition and how this training will benefit regional jobseekers throughout the mid to north coast, especially the many with transport issues. The slogan on our mobile classrooms says it all 'Training that Really Gets to You!' - and we urge communities to Get On Board and support this initiative that will ultimately enhance the skills and employability of jobseekers in our region.

In March NORTEC kicked another major goal by being granted funds to open a not-so-ordinary cafe in Nambucca. The cafe will train disadvantaged jobseekers in hospitality, retail, small business and customer service, while also providing cheap meals to financially disadvantaged community members. The cafe will also be selling local artworks and native plants and will also promote local tourism for Nambucca and surrounds. NORTEC are very excited by the opportunities this cafe will give local jobseekers as well as the broader community in the region. The cafe is expected to open by June/July this year—stay tuned to local media reports and the NORTEC website for further information.

Also in this newsletter—on Page 2, gain an insightful look into the work that NORTEC Youth Services perform through an interview with NORTEC Youth Connections Coordinator for the Northern Rivers— Lisa Mitchell. Read about the unique challenges and highlights experienced by Lisa in her role working with young people and the NORTEC Youth Services team.

On Page 3 — We ask the question, What is an Employer of Choice? Read why it's important to be an employer of choice and how your company can strive to be one — or how you as a jobseeker can recognise one!

More community news on the back of this newsletter, including the announcement that NORTEC are now delivering the Youth Connections program throughout the NSW Mid and North Coasts.

Stay safe and happy reading!

TAKING THE CLASSROOM TO THE STUDENT!

It was a staff member making a passing 'quip' that got the ball rolling. When being advised that the Federal Government was making available funding for innovative ways to improve skills shortages in regional areas and the ensuing discussion of the lack of available classrooms for courses, one NORTEC Training staff member simply said 'Why don't we ask for funding for *mobile* classrooms?' It was a 'square bottom taco' moment — and it paid off.

Recently provided with funding by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) program - Investing in Community Education and Training - NORTEC will be able to bring classrooms to our students from Nambucca to Tweed through these mobile training units.

This exciting project will consist of mobile classrooms (refurbished trucks), buses and equipment trailers that can travel to regional areas where jobseekers or students may be disadvantaged by a lack of transport options. As it says on the side of the truck—it's training that really gets to you!

The launch of these 'Get on Board' mobile training units is expected in May/June of this year. A range of accredited and non-accredited courses will be available to regional students on the North Coast, including hospitality, horticulture, business & administration and much more!

For further information, please regularly check the NORTEC website at www.nortec Ltd.com.au/training—you can also subscribe to hear about any upcoming courses in your area through the website.



Left and below: Trucks that are currently being refurbished as mobile training classrooms.



Inside This Newsletter:

Page 1 — Introduction
— NORTEC's Mobile Training Units

Page 2 — Meet the Team— - Lisa Mitchell,
Coordinator Youth Connections Northern Rivers
— What is Youth Connections?

Page 3 — Is your business an Employer of Choice?

Page 4 — Guiding Small Business Growth on the North Coast
— Looking for a Better Way to Work?



“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant”

Robert Louis Stevenson

MEET THE TEAM—AN INTRODUCTION TO LISA MITCHELL, YOUTH CONNECTIONS COORDINATOR NORTHERN RIVERS



Lisa Mitchell is NORTEC's Youth Connections Coordinator for the North Coast region. We took some time to ask her a few questions about her role.

How are you liking your role as coordinator for Youth Connections on the North Coast? It's been great especially when you have an inspirational manager and awesome team to work with, makes life and work very easy.

Tell us about any unique challenges so far? One of the unique challenges so far has been changing our mind set from the previous Youth Pathways program which was quite structured and rigid and to a more flexible, responsive and workable program environment with Youth Connections.

What have been some of the highlights? Changing our mindset! Hearing DEEWR (the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations) say 'It's up to you...you work with the young people... you know what best meets their needs'. Being a part of the new Youth Connections program which recognises and accommodates for all of the work we do with our young people.

What are your strategies for promoting team spirit amongst your staff? Dressing them up at Christmas time helps as well as making them all camp and sleep in tents on non-existent mattresses, while looking after a group of hormonal teenagers in the middle of winter keeps the spirits up.

What inspired your career path into Youth Services? My love of working with young people.

Have you always lived on the North Coast of NSW? Unfortunately no...I grew up in Campbelltown (South Western Sydney) where as kids there were great opportunities to gain skills in excessive anti-social behaviours! We used to escape to the beaches down at Wollongong which is where I lived while going to Uni and I also spent a few years growing up in NZ. After I grew up I took off overseas for a couple of years where I lived out of a backpack. My husband and I moved to the coast in 2005 after spending many a Christmas and New Year holidaying with friends at Ocean Shores.

What do you do to relax, any hobbies or special interests? I love to play any sport, I enjoy cooking - actually that's incorrect it should be eating, surfing (well I try), hanging out with friends and family, camping and travelling, anything active really (got to work off all that good food).

What has been the most exciting thing to happen to you in your life? There have been a few highlights along the way which have included: finally marrying my partner after 10 years of service, photographing a wedding at a Canadian Ski Resort in near blizzard conditions; being offered and sharing a martini with Charlotta at the Bourbon and Beefsteak in Kings Cross (for those that don't know who she is she was the lead for the Les Girls show), seeing in the wild a grizzly bear, wolf, moose, bald eagle, bison, coyote, road runner and whales all while travelling America and Canada, listening to Chevy Chase play the piano while on a break from being an extra in a film he starred in about a great goose chase, spending 3 weeks in Italy, I could go on and although all of these things were exciting I have the feeling that they will all be trumped by the birth of our first child in October this year!

What is Youth Connections?



Stuck in a rut?

If you're not sure where you are heading and have recently left school or are thinking of leaving school, Youth Connections can help!

Youth Connections is a confidential and free service that works to help you find a better direction—whether that's at school, in further training or making a career choice.

One-on-one guidance from your Youth Connections Case Worker supports you in clearing away the confusion and obstacles to get you out of your rut and onto a positive track.

1800 355 415

www.nortecitd.com.au

Youth Connections is funded by the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations



Youth Connections is a program that aims to provide support to young people who are at-risk of disengaging or have already disengaged from education. The program offers the students support and counselling, referral to other services, along with career guidance and direction - it aims to break down and alleviate the barriers that are preventing students from making the best choices for their future education and career path.

Youth Connections is being delivered in community partnership with leading youth service providers across each region. NORTEC Youth Services, working in partnership, deliver Youth Connections on the Mid North Coast (Coffs and Clarence Regions) and Far North Coast of NSW (Richmond, Northern Rivers & Tweed).

For more information:

Far North Coast Youth Connections (North Coast DET Northern Network)

For this region, Youth Connections providers are:

- NORTEC Youth Services (region wide) Phone 1800 355 415
- Byron Youth Service (Byron Shire) Phone 02 6685 7777
- Youth Connections North Coast (targeted programs, Lismore) Phone 02 6622 3143

Mid North Coast Youth Connections (North Coast DET Central Network)

For this region, Youth Connections providers are:

- NORTEC Youth Services (in school, or recently disengaged) Phone 1800 355 415
- North Coast Youth Career Connections (out of school, severely disengaged) Phone 1800 303 830

NORTEC Business Incubators, NORTEC Youth Services and NORTEC Volunteering are initiatives of NORTEC Employment and Training Ltd—as part of our commitment to building stronger regional communities.

WHAT MAKES A BUSINESS AN 'EMPLOYER OF CHOICE'?

What Defines an Employer of Choice?

The current skills shortage and ageing population has resulted in valuable employees becoming more selective about the companies they choose to work for. This in turn prompts employers to address staff retention strategies for their business.

Employers who gain a reputation as valuing their employees—through strategies such as work/life balance and incentives such as financial or wellness strategies, can therefore establish key points of difference to their competitors and ultimately retain their skilled employees and attract the best future candidates for the job — they gain a reputation as being an employer of choice.

So how do you know if you are an employer of choice, and how do you go about becoming one?

Strategy

To ensure identification, attraction and retention of key people, organisations should have in place a recruitment and retention strategy. The strategy needs to identify measurable recruitment objectives and establish how the company can differentiate themselves from their competitors. A common misconception is that 'competitors' means only similar companies in similar industries but from a labour market viewpoint a candidate's skills may suit a variety of employers in different industries.

Staff turnover

Being aware of your staff turnover is a key measure. Different businesses and industries will have different average lengths of employment but the most important measure is keeping the right people. If a business is not asking its current employees 'what makes you stay', then it needs to re-evaluate its retention strategies.

Another measure of whether an organisation is successful as an employer of choice is the time and cost associated with filling staff vacancies. Tracking this information over time, performing exit interviews to ascertain why people leave an organisation and by also asking long-serving employees why they remain, reveals a collection of data that can then be used in staff retention planning.

An Opportunity to Advance

Most employees would like to advance in their career and without this opportunity within an organisation they are likely to look elsewhere for opportunities.

Professional development opportunities through on-the-job or subsidised accredited training, as well as a defined career path for your employee shows commitment to staff and encourages loyalty. Allowing the opportunity to demonstrate new skills and learning, either through promotion or with more responsibility shows dedication to continued excellence while empowering and providing job satisfaction for your employee.

To determine whether your company offers appropriate career opportunities for staff, look at the number of promotions made internally over a certain period (maybe 3-5 years) and review annual performance reviews for individual staff to ensure your end of the bargain has been kept from prior reviews.

Overlooking and not rewarding the quieter or less assertive staff with valuable skills is a common mistake, especially in larger companies — encouraging and having an understanding of all personality types in a work team builds a cohesive team spirit and allows everyone to shine to their best ability.

Staff incentives

Who said money isn't everything? When it comes to work it (almost) is! Bonuses, profit share schemes and other monetary incentives are ways to demonstrate that staff are valued by the company. Setting yourself apart from competitors by offering competitive salaries and financial reward is a major differentiation in being an employer of choice.

Work/life balance

It's true that very few people will get to their deathbed wishing they'd spent more time at the office and work/life balance is perhaps one of the most essential ingredients to becoming an employer of choice.

Creating work/life balance for your employees includes providing flexible work policies to cater to employees' family commitments, their health and introducing wellness initiatives such as gym facilities and employee assistance programs - right through to being able to leave work at a reasonable hour each day.

Since the recovery of the 'Global Financial Crisis' when companies reduced working weeks to four or less days, many businesses have since kept the strategy—not only because of reduced overheads but because staff were happy to reduce their pay for reduced hours, allowing them time to pursue hobbies or spend time with their family.

NORTEC Employment and Training is at the forefront in our industry for providing flexibility in the workplace and strives to ensure employee satisfaction. Most staff at NORTEC work four days a week (and have been doing so for many years prior to the GFC), and all staff are part of an annual bonus scheme and have allocated amounts over the year to invest in personal health and wellness strategies.

Being an 'Employer of Choice' is an intangible term but for the benefits of retaining skilled staff, having a productive team and maintaining a competitive edge, it is something all businesses would do well to constantly and diligently strive for.

(Based on an article sourced from <http://www.ferret.com.au>)

Please note—NORTEC provides this information for reference only, sourced from relevant websites and publications.

GUIDING SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH ON THE NORTH COAST

More than four in every five companies on the North Coast are small businesses, posing unique issues as they look to grow their operations.

"That is where small business incubators come in", NORTEC CEO Paul Bennett said. "Small business is the dominate characteristic of the business profile of the Mid to North Coasts of NSW:" he said. "Small business is therefore a dominant driver of economic and employment activity in the region".

Mr Bennett said NORTEC incubators resolved many of the problems faced by small businesses. In addition to offering flexible leases, companies can access mentoring support, marketing and cost savings through group purchasing.

The idea of small business incubators is not new, NORTEC, a community-based not-for-profit organisation, has been operating centres out of Ballina, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby for quite a few years with great success.

An example of one of its successful 'graduate' businesses is Paper Wings, which designs, manufactures and distributes a range of children's fashion, around Australia, had a staff of three when it moved into an incubator. It notched up 550 per cent growth in its first year of operation and within two years employed 12 people.

NORTEC is now developing plans for a fourth incubator in Lismore to service Lismore-based businesses. It is scheduled to open this year, providing a home to 14 businesses, in addition to 34 businesses at the other sites.

The idea is that small businesses come together to find synergies. Mr Bennett said many new companies were reluctant to sign long-term leases for larger premises that their existing backyard, for fear they would be liable if the company folded and they were forced to break their lease.

"Issues like these are holding businesses back" he said. "With more people moving up here as a tree or sea change and setting up their own businesses, this is where future employment is going to come from".



NORTEC Business Manager Martyn Mills talks business strategies with Jules Hunt, a ceramicist based at Byron Creative, one of NORTEC's business incubator sites.

Article sourced from the Northern Star, Peter Weekes, February 16, 2010

LOOKING FOR A BETTER WAY TO WORK?

NORTEC Employment and Training provide a range of recruitment services for businesses and jobseekers, including accredited training, labour hire temporary staffing as well as permanent no-cost recruitment services.

A not-for-profit, community-based organisation with the primary activities of providing direct assistance to the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups within the community, NORTEC foster initiatives for our local communities to promote social participation and economic capacity building.

NORTEC offices are located throughout the Mid and Far North Coasts of NSW - at Nambucca, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Woolgoolga, Dorrigo, Grafton, Yamba, Casino, Lismore, Kyogle, Ballina, Byron Bay, Brunswick Heads, Pottsville, Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads.

A Better Way to....Find Staff?

Whether you're looking for labour hire temp staff or a new permanent staff member for your team, NORTEC can help! NORTEC has a reputation for a committed holistic service to local business needs and can provide advice on the best staffing or training options to ensure professional growth for your team and for your business.

It's free to lodge your vacancy with NORTEC and you can do so online at www.nortecld.com.au, email recruitment@nortecld.com.au or simply call 1800 NORTEC.

A Better Way to....Find Work?

Looking for work? When you register with NORTEC we listen to your job-search needs and support you all the way! NORTEC can also provide training and skills to ensure you are confident, capable and a stand-out from the pack at your next interview

A Better Way to....Get Skilled?

NORTEC deliver accredited and non-accredited training in a wide range of industries including business administration, horticulture, retail, hospitality, community services, aged care, child care, asset management, OH&S and more! NORTEC deliver flexible and customised training and traineeships to suit your individual or business needs.

Now that really is...

A Better Way to Work!

For more information visit www.nortecld.com.au

NORTEC Business Incubators, NORTEC Youth Services and NORTEC Volunteering are initiatives of NORTEC Employment and Training Ltd—as part of our commitment to building stronger regional communities.