

Computer Business Workshop

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Project Title	Computer Business Workshop
Project Team	Associate Professor Michael Christie (SiMERR Northern Territory), John Greateux (Charles Darwin University).
Period	May 2006
Funding Agency	Indigenous Business Australia
Organisational Base	SiMERR NT

Description

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Remote Aboriginal homeland centres in the NT are under pressure from radical disinvestment in small communities by governments. Yet many homeland centre residents are determined to remain on their traditional lands observing religious obligations to their ancestral estates and to the 'growing up' of younger generations on country. Digital technology is playing an increasing role in the development of economic and cultural sustainability of remote Aboriginal communities.

This project is one of a number of research projects undertaken by the Internetworking Communities (INC) group at Charles Darwin University (see www.cdu.edu.au/inc). As part of the INC research program's effort to involve Indigenous elders from remote communities in the governance of emerging family-level micro-business, Indigenous Business Australia provided \$7900 for a workshop, which was held in Darwin over the Mayday weekend, 2006. This workshop, and others planned for the future, aimed at eventually integrating the work of remote schools with the move from Community Development Employment Projects to sustainable livelihoods in remote communities.

The group attended a Computer Business Workshop at the School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, where they set up email accounts, experimented with web-based communication software and learnt some of the basic skills required to maintain a computer for a micro business. This includes interpreting, transcription and translation work, cultural awareness training, eco-tourism, craft marketing, internet banking and cooperative store development. The group also worked with software that can be used in intergenerational knowledge transmission, including satellite images and working with images of plants and animals.

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Ten Yolŋu operators of family-level microbusiness.

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Integration of school-based computer systems and education in remote communities with the family-level business activities of remote groups.

For a full description of the program see <http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/inc/completedprojects.html>

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The ten people who attended the workshop have all shared their knowledge with others in their community, and several communities are now able to do their banking on-line and help with website updating for tourism ventures, art marketing etc. One of the participants recently gave a keynote address to the Australian Environmental Educators Association national conference, on his work with digital technology and knowledge. The success of the project led to further research funding from the Australian Flexible Learning Foundation under their Indigenous Education Initiatives. Indigenous champions were trained in computer business work in three remote homeland communities in a project called Indigenous e-learning champion networks for very remote community microbusiness. This research project won the NT 2008 Innovation award for Indigenous research.

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