

# Certification Powers e-Government in the Northern Territory

As the roll-out of e-government services continues to gather speed in Australia, the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) is fast emerging as the benchmark IT skills qualification that will help public sector employees make a confident transition to the e-government environment.

In some countries like Hungary, the government recognised long ago the role that certification play. It issued a resolution as early as 1999 designating the ICDL as the ICT certification standard for its 10,000 public servants. More recently, almost 4,000 public servants in Ireland have received their ICDL. The Irish Institute of Public Administration believes that certification has played a role in the modernisation of Ireland's public services.

In Australia, momentum has been steadily building and many Government departments are looking to the ICDL as their preferred IT certification standard. The NSW Department of Lands is one such agency, which introduced the scheme to some 1,000 staff members last year. And, the Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS) is likely to adopt the ICDL as a suitable tool for delivering basic IT training skills to its 14,000 public servants, following the completion of a successful pilot program.

## **Building a Better Territory**

In November 2003, the Northern Territory Government put ICDL on trial to evaluate its effectiveness in powering e-government initiatives. Over 35 Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) staff participated in the pilot and obtained their ICDL over a period of six months.

DCIS has just unveiled the findings of its evaluation report into the ICDL trial program. It has recommended the adoption of the program, to develop the basic IT and Information Management skills essential for the delivery of e-business across its agencies. It considers the ICDL a suitable tool for delivering basic IT training and as such may introduce it as mandatory training to all entry level programs in DCIS/NTPS. Several agencies have already expressed interest in establishing the ICDL as a reliable benchmark for IT literacy.

Comments from the pilot participants demonstrated the value of the ICDL program in the NTPS. Donna Williamson said "I think this is a great tool for use within all of government," while Craig Lush believes "it was a worthwhile program and should be mandatory for all employees."

## **Breaking the Skills Barrier**

According to the recommendations contained in the DCIS report on the pilot, "the ICDL program will enable the NTPS to offer a set of internationally recognised standards" said Trudy Turnbull, ICDL Business Development Manager. "It will also make staff more confident and receptive to IT while empowering them to build a better territory through the implementation of their national ICT strategy."

"In adopting the ICDL as a standard of basic IT literacy, the Northern Territory has demonstrated a leadership role, based on national and international best practice" added Trudy.