



AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS ASSOCIATION

Real-life accounts of how the National Workforce Development Fund is benefiting Australian transport and logistics enterprises.



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From outback towns with grass aerodromes to metropolitan aviation hubs servicing millions of passengers a year, the Australian Airports Association has had a flying start in giving a national standard of training to its 250 members.

The AAA began in 1982 to represent the interests of airports and aerodromes Australia-wide. It moved to Canberra in 2010 and, with support from industry, underwent major change with the appointment of staff and increased resources.

AAA's membership is "vast and diverse", says its chief executive Caroline Wilkie. "There are distinct differences in needs between the different sized airports, but the NWDF training was a fantastic overview on all the rules that are required."

The AAA coordinated training for a Certificate III in Aviation (Ground Operations and Service) under the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF), which the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (TLISC) administers.

CASA, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, doesn't mandate how training must be delivered, but the appointment of "appropriately trained" Aerodrome Reporting and Works Safety Officers (AROs and WSOs) is a legislated requirement, Wilkie says. AROs ensure an airport is serviceable for aircraft; WSOs ensure it is safe.

When the Commonwealth Government had a comprehensive training program for airport staff when it used to operate regional airports, Wilkie says.

"But they then handed back the regional airports to the regions, creating a training vacuum. I think the AAA has a role to play to fill that vacuum."

The coordinated approach sent a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) trainer to several regional locations to make it easier for AROs and WSOs to participate.

"You can't just have everybody leave the airport for training, you have to have people remain on site to maintain operations throughout," Wilkie says.

The industry gave the training scheme its full support and collaborated by making facilities available and hosting trainees from other regions, "so it worked very well", says AAA policy and research manager, Salomon Kloppers.

Hamilton Island was a popular regional destination, providing training facilities, accommodation for trainers, and time off the job so its airport staff could attend.

Prior to the NWDF sessions, Hamilton Island's airport manager had written his own manuals, tailored to suit the resort's specific needs, and trained the airport staff, says Hamilton Island's learning and development manager, Eileen Lockett.

So the NWDF was "a brilliant opportunity to benchmark against other industry professionals, and network to gain insight to current trends within the industry".

"All participants found the course very informative," she says. "They appreciated the fact that their existing

skills and knowledge were recognised through the appropriate RPL (recognition of prior learning) assessment where possible."

Kloppers says some trainees have since undertaken "train the trainer" courses to be able to pass on Certificate III learning to colleagues, particularly to industry inductees, "so it's got far wider benefits than just the 113 people we sent."

In delivering training, the AAA was keen to promote "best practice, because it's really important for safety," Wilkie says, and to attract the best people into the ageing industry by offering career progression through recognised qualification.

Now AROs and WSOs have a standardised, national qualification, or "status", which is good for the industry and its workers, Kloppers says. With the chance to build a career, people "will stay in the industry, if not the job, longer."

Airports are also "the biggest, most extensive, national infrastructure in the country", Wilkie says. A 2012 report by Deloitte Access Economics found they inject \$17.3 billion into the economy annually and employ 115,000 people nationally, "so we need to develop and maintain those assets as best we can".

Wilkie says she'd had no prior exposure to training and development when she began as chief executive two years ago. She found out about the NWDF through an industry veteran "who had been on one

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of the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council working groups, and that's how he heard about it."

She speaks enthusiastically about the efforts of TLISC staff, who were "incredibly supportive" in giving advice and help to complete the application forms. "This project would not have got off the ground without the assistance of TLISC."

It freed up Wilkie to concentrate promoting the program to industry and coordinating the members' registrations, "and then largely handing it over to the RTO to deliver."

Wilkie's advice to other associations is that it's an achievable ambition to deliver nationally standardised training to a geographically dispersed membership.

"When we started this process, there were three of us in our office, so you don't need a 20-person association to make it happen. You will be surprised how many members will want to get involved, particularly in industries where members are spread nationally, and smaller businesses that can't access training alone.

"I'm really proud that we've now got 113 people who are better trained and no doubt more effective in their workplaces. When we started, the objective was to achieve 80 participants, so the result is well above expectations."

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) is the national voice for Australian Airports and represents the interests of over 250 airports and aerodromes across Australia, from regional landing strips to major international gateway airports.



Industry advocate

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1982 and is the leading advocate for appropriate national policy relating to airport activities.



Skills growth

AAA assists the airport industry to increase productivity as well as the skills pool available to them by providing the workforce with the opportunity to enhance their skill levels through formal training.



NWDF value

Total value of NWDF program to date:
\$678,000.



Big picture

The airport industry directly contributes \$17.3 billion and over 115,000 jobs to the Australian economy each year.

For more information about how TLISC can assist your enterprise in accessing the National Workforce Development Fund, please contact our Workforce Development team:

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