



PROVET

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



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Telling the difference between analgesics, antibiotics and antihistamines at speed is essential for a picker and packer of a 12,500 veterinary product range.

Warehouse staff for Australasian veterinary distributor Provet must meet this challenge every day: to fail to do so could result in life-threatening consequences, and not just for their animal clients, but for the longevity of the company itself.

A Certificate III in Warehousing Operations, under the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF), coordinated by the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (TLISC), is helping Provet's workers rise to the challenge.

"About a third of our employee population is warehouse-based," says Provet's human resources adviser in the New South Wales city of Newcastle, Troy Wright.

"The store person role is pretty generic, yet it's a critical part of our business, getting our orders out, getting them right, so the training has been largely aimed at retaining and developing our people to provide that excellent level of service.

"We lose clients if their order's wrong: it's as simple as that."

Wright says Provet aims to be a "one stop shop" of veterinary pharmaceuticals, nutritional products and animal care paraphernalia, alongside vet-specific information technology, business consulting, training and education.

It's a "value-add" business model in a time of cost-conscious clients, he says, "so we're needing to take our service to a whole new level to stay ahead of the competition."

Delivering a nationally standardised qualification has also helped safeguard business operations by recognising, retaining and recruiting warehouse staff.

"Our store persons represent such a big chunk of our people, so we want to create a career path for them," Wright says. "We've found, in the past, that path has been blocked by a lack of development and qualifications for those people."

The lack of training also meant limited workforce mobility, despite Provet having 12 warehouses across Australia and New Zealand and, more recently, a global reach, since US healthcare products distributor Henry Schein acquired it.

The Certificate III is part of a generic induction for all new store people to ensure they get "the same opportunity at the same standard", Wright says. "We want to achieve a standard of training that people can pick up and take with them."

It's just one of a "long list of benefits" of training, Wright says. It was also "a way to try to differentiate ourselves in attracting store persons. It's the type

of role that people could get \$2 an hour more up the road and that's often all it takes.

"Our hands are tied with what we can pay, and this was something that we could say, 'We offer this to our team, this nationally recognised qualification'. We've added it our job advertisements because it's a real selling point with applicants."

It's also tapped a talent pool for Provet, whose warehouse managers had been reluctant to hire unskilled people before the NWDF "almost guaranteed" training.

"It's opened their eyes to hiring new recruits for the right cultural fit, and we can give those recruits the skills through this training program, which is great."

Provet also offered the Certificate III to long-term workers, some of them with 15 years' service. "A lot of the training for them was almost a sign-off, they've been doing it so long, but it was nice to recognise their experience," Wright says. "It's about being as good as they can be at their job, and this was a platform for that."

Registered Training Organisation (RTO) TransQual delivered the training. "One of the reasons we went with TransQual was their national footprint," he says.

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"They've been brilliant, coming from a specialist background, for looking at our procedures with fresh eyes, and the guys have been really happy with them, too."

Provet's internal training supervisor, Tracy Woodland, had sourced and obtained NWDF co-funding through another industry skills council for training in animal care, and realised there might be NWDF opportunities for warehousing training.

"So I got in touch with TLISC and they stepped me through the procedure and made it easy," Woodland says.

"I don't know if other employers are aware of how easy it can be to source the NWDF, but it's definitely an opportunity for other employers to tap into."

Wright says there are many benefits from the training: "Operational ones, like productivity, less damaged stock, and reduced incidents of injury, as well as increased retention. Across the board we've seen improvements in those areas."

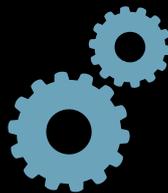
It's Provet's "responsibility to employees that they are better positioned when they leave us than when they started," Wright concludes. "Offering a qualification, particularly in a role where traditionally there hasn't been a great deal of training and development for people, it raises the bar for the industry."

As a subsidiary of multi-national Henry Schein Inc., Provet is Australasia's leading veterinary distributor, supplying more than 14,000 products, instruments and equipment to over 1,900 independent veterinary practices in Australasia.



Best fit

In addition to recruiting from within, Provet look to hire new recruits for the right cultural fit and then provide them with training to develop their skills.



Whole of business

The veterinary arm of Provet's business also obtained NWDF funding for training in animal care and management.



NWDF value

Total value of NWDF program to date:
\$255,150.



Where they are

Provet has over 330 employees across 13 warehouses in Australia and New Zealand including regional operations in Newcastle, Wagga Wagga and Townsville.

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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