

Sea Swift is Australia's largest privately owned shipping company. In 25 years, the maritime enterprise has expanded from a seafood processing and distribution service to now deliver essential goods and services to remote communities in Australia's northern waters.



Locally owned

Sea Swift makes a significant contribution to the employment and skill development of local communities. In some locations 80 to 90% of the staff are local indigenous people.



Experience counts

The 350-strong staff are employed across Cairns, Thursday Island, Horn Island, Bamaga, Gladstone, Weipa, and Darwin and on vessels throughout northern Australia.



NWDF value

Sea Swift invests nearly \$1.3 million in training annually with little external funding support.



SEA SWIFT

Case studies of transport and logistics enterprises and real-life accounts of how they have benefited from upskilling their workforce.

For more information about how TLISC can assist, please contact our Workforce Development team:

Email workforcedevelopment@tlisc.org.au

Telephone 03 9604 7200

tlisc.org.au



SEA SWIFT

Sea Swift invests nearly \$1.3 million in training annually with little external funding support, but the returns on its culture and credibility are priceless.

TRAINING HELPS PROVIDE A CAREER PATHWAY IN THESE REMOTE COMMUNITIES WHILE BOLSTERING TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SERVICES.

The Cairns-based marine distribution business delivers essential goods, services and people to dozens of remote communities in Australia's northern waters, from Cape York Peninsula through the Torres Strait and on as far as Darwin.

The award-winning company also delivers essential training to its 350 staff who work on 31 vessels and out of six main depots, some more than 1000 kilometres away, in roles as diverse as deckhand, warehousing, engineer, and ship captain.

Sea Swift's specialised and job specific training includes national qualifications developed by the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (TLISC).

The marine business won the Innovation and Excellence in Workforce Development Award – Maritime at the 2013 TLISC Awards for Excellence.

"When we received notification of the inaugural Awards, we thought it was the perfect opportunity to showcase what we've been doing in training and development," says Sea Swift's human resources manager, Dan Erbacher.

Erbacher says winning the TLISC award helped Sea Swift "crystallise the end goal" of continuing training and development and was a thrill for all company

staff, seeing their hard work ratified and rewarded in front of industry peers.

It is particularly hard work – and costly – to engage in training across the seas.

"We like to employ locally," Erbacher says. "Our depots up at Bamaga, Thursday Island and Horn Island: 80 to 90 per cent of the staff are local indigenous people.

"But getting first aid and CPR training is difficult up there, even to get driver's licences and truck driving qualifications: there are no driving schools up there.

"So, to get people trained up, we either have to fly them down here or we have to take the training to them, to fly the registered training organisations in there."

Erbacher says the training helps provide a career pathway in these remote communities while bolstering transport and logistics services for the same.

"Some of these programs we're doing are also developing their communities, so they get to see what we're doing is something tangible with a result at the end for their children and their future; our company can be a part of that," he says.

Tangible results through workforce development have lifted Sea Swift's culture and reputation, but the original impetus was the "safety bent" of the company's chief executive officer Fred White, says marine manager Terry Russell.

"For us to grow as a corporation, we had to do two things," Russell says. "We had to drive the culture towards safety, and to drive down lost time through injury."

Russell joined the company three years ago, when its lost time injury frequency rate was around the mid 50s. It now sits just under six: "That is really satisfying."

He recalls a successful job he says shows how Sea Swift has improved in safety.

A ship was delivering critical cargo to an island hospital, but wild weather forced it to shelter two hours from its usual dock. The crew had a "toolbox talk" on how to safely finish the job, and then drove through scrub in convoy for two hours.

The hospital staff was "staggered," Russell says. "They couldn't believe we did it."

Sea Swift is also integral to large enterprises, such as mining magnates Rio Tinto and the Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS), which owns and operates

supermarkets on islands throughout the Torres Strait.

Russell says Rio Tinto bosses were "amazed" at the standard of Sea Swift's safety systems. "Their worldwide safety adviser was very complimentary," he grins.

The forethought Sea Swift gives safety has also improved the attention it gives to customer service. One remote IBIS outlet was so taken with Sea Swift's customer service, it asked Sea Swift to regularly rate and report back on their standards.

But the flip side to Sea Swift's new credibility as a company of choice is that its employees are even more desirable, both within and without the industry.

Erbacher says that, especially with more expensive training, Sea Swift negotiates a staff training contract, "which means that upon completion and attainment of that qualification, they agree to stay with the company a certain time. That's fair."

The contract with more senior staff has helped strengthen retention while, at entry level, Sea Swift's cadetship also gives a measure of surety over four years.