

DESERT KNOWLEDGE AUSTRALIA OUTBACK BUSINESS NETWORKS PROJECT

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Abstract

Desert Knowledge Australia, with the support of a range of corporate and government partners at a national and regional level, has embarked on an ambitious business networking project that links nine desert regions to create business outcomes for SMEs in remote Australia.

The three year Outback Business Networks Project builds on the networks developed, outcomes created and lessons learned from previous Desert Knowledge Australia cross border collaborative projects, particularly the Linked Business Networks Project and the Our Outback Tourism Partnership.

The Australian Government- through Enterprise Connect and the Aboriginals Benefit Account, BHP Billiton, the Northern Territory Government, Telstra and Qantas have supported DKA and a range of regional host organisations and in-kind partners to create nine Network Development Officers (in Kalgoorlie/Boulder, Mid West Gascoyne, Pilbara, Northern South Australia, Western NSW, South Western Queensland, North Western Queensland, the Barkly NT and Central Australia NT) as well as a Project Manager for the Our Outback Tourism Partnership.

The presentation will examine

- the challenges faced in setting up the network of hosted staff
- processes used in maintaining communication and engagement with the wide range of stakeholders
- SME response since the project started to roll out in late 2008
- the strategy used to engage Indigenous SMEs and stakeholders
- Project Outcomes to date
- Initial plans for network sustainability into the future.

Biography

Mike joined Desert Knowledge Australia in Alice Springs in Australia's Northern Territory in July 2000. As Networking and Communications Manager he plays a key role in the development of business and knowledge networks for an organisation that is linking the people and businesses of inland Australia to national and world markets.

His major current undertaking is the development of cross borders business networks project linking nine desert Australian regions and building upon the Linked Business Networks Pilot Project and the Our Outback Tourism report.

Mike was a finalist in the 2006 Northern Territory Innovation Award.

He has extensive senior management experience across a range of organisations including:

- Commercial Manager for the internationally recognised Alice Springs Desert Park
- Regional Manager for the Northern Territory Department of Sport and Recreation
- Regional Manager and Deputy Director for the Northern Territory
- Open College which provided training to people in remote Northern Territory communities.

Mike has been based in Alice Springs since 1991. Prior to that he worked in Alaska, as a trekking leader for Raleigh International, and in Darwin, as the executive officer of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Youth Program and as a high school mathematics and economics teacher.

Mike has a Masters of International Management from Charles Darwin University as well as a Bachelor of Arts (Mathematics and Physics) and Diploma of Education from Macquarie University.