

BUSHLIGHT NATIONAL WORKSHOP

How does a national program, like Bushlight, operate most efficiently across at least three jurisdictions? And how does Bushlight continue to provide a reliable and regular maintenance service to renewable energy systems spread across almost 250 remote communities (see map overleaf), whilst remaining responsive to significant shifts in government policies?

It was questions like these that were asked of more than 30 attendees at a recent national Bushlight workshop held in Alice Springs in February.

The workshop was hosted by the Australian Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Department Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts (who jointly make up the Bushlight Steering Committee). A broad range of Australian, State/Territory and local government agencies from SA, WA, the NT and QLD were represented as well as a host of other interested organisations.

The Bushlight Steering Committee was particularly interested to hear views on how Bushlight can best respond to the current National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

Bushlight's reflection on the workshop was that the attendees were overwhelmingly supportive of the program and the role we play in the effective delivery of essential services. A general consensus did emerge during the workshop that greater engagement between Bushlight and relevant States/Territory government agencies is required for the future. We are looking forward to the opportunity to build and strengthen these relationships.

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Powersavvy field officers in QLD

NEW ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

Energy efficiency programs are commonplace in many cities and towns across Australia, but access to such programs for residents of remote Indigenous communities remains limited. This is despite the fact residents of Indigenous communities may stand to benefit most from these programs, as it is well understood lower socio-economic households spend proportionally more of their available income on essential services (including electricity) than do higher socio-economic households.

developing a new program to address this issue. The Bushlight Energy Efficiency Program has been designed specifically to assist residents of Indigenous communities save money on electricity use in their homes. The program focuses on household community education and encourages behavior change. Energy saving technologies such as CFL light bulbs and low flow shower heads are installed as part of the program.

Central to the program is a train-the-trainer approach, in which local community residents are trained as 'community energy efficiency

In early 2009, Bushlight began

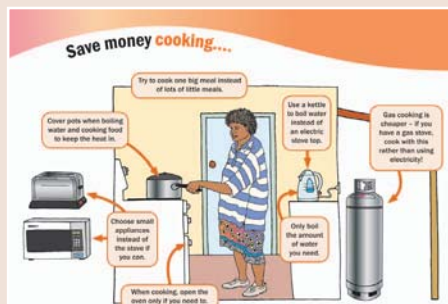


Image based resources form an important part of the Bushlight Energy Efficiency Program

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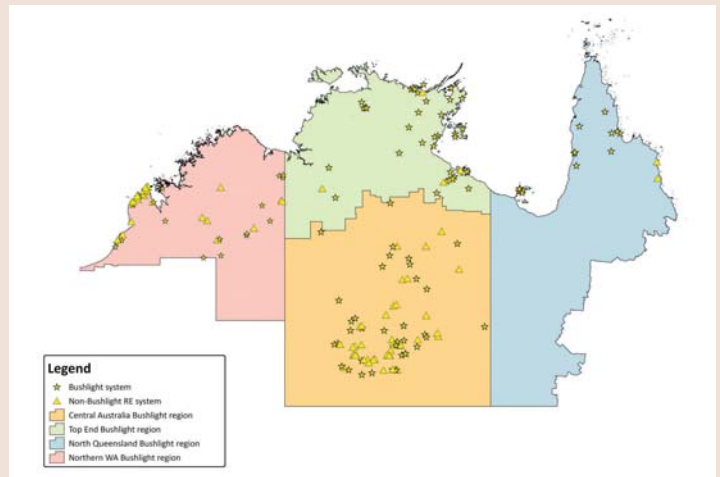
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consultants'. Once trained, the consultants work with householders in the broader community to deliver energy efficiency education and provide practical ideas and demonstrations on how to save electricity.

To assist the energy efficiency consultants explain energy saving concepts to householders, Bushlight has developed a range of supporting resources. These include pictorial information booklets and posters, reminder stickers and action planning tools. The resources have been carefully designed to be accessible to all residents, regardless of their literacy, numeracy, or background knowledge of energy. The energy savings tips and tricks are also targeted at people living in challenging climates and people living in rental homes.

In mid-2009, Bushlight was approached by Ergon Energy (a large power utility servicing regional QLD) to collaborate with them on the development and implementation of a pilot energy efficiency project in five communities in Far North Queensland. Ergon's pilot program, known as powersavvy, is now well underway. During the powersavvy collaboration, five local residents were trained and employed as energy efficiency consultants to undertake household energy efficiency education and audits in the 1800 homes in the region. Before starting work, Bushlight coordinated the delivery of a training program for the field officers covering energy efficiency concepts, householder education processes and communication skills. Home consultations have commenced in the Torres Strait, with most households in Horn Island and Thursday Island having already received a visit from the field officers.

For more information about Bushlight's Energy Efficiency Program, contact Marteena McKenzie on 08 8959 6159 or 0418 852 496.



Map showing the 250 RE systems that are currently maintained by Bushlight stretching across three jurisdictions

STAFF CHANGES

Ken Aitchison has been farewelled from Bushlight after five years with the project. Since 2005, Ken has worked in various capacities, first as a Project Officer in Bushlight's Darwin office, then as the Top End Regional Manager, and most recently as Bushlight's Regional Operations Manager based in Alice Springs. Ken made a significant contribution to Bushlight over a period of five years and will be greatly missed.

Barbara Dalloway has recently been appointed as the new Regional Operations Manager. Barb brings considerable management and community development experience to Bushlight and we look forward to her joining the team.

Delia Naughton has also recently left Bushlight. Delia worked with Bushlight for more than 18 months as a Renewable Energy System Designer. Delia played a pivotal role in solving various technical issues as well as designing numerous Bushlight systems in Central Australia and Queensland.

Bushlight would like to welcome Barb to the team and to wish both Ken and Delia all the very best with their future endeavors.

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