

No beefs about this training course



Stepping aboard a wily stock-horse for the first time can be a daunting experience, but this group of young men are taking their introduction to station horsemanship in their stride.

The up and coming ringers come from across the Northern Territory and are the latest inductees into the Northern Land Council's stockmen's training course, based at Mataranka Station, 100km south of Katherine.

The 20 indigenous trainees are half-way through the six-week preparation phase of the stockmen's course, and horsemanship and working safety are their core subject.

The course provides access to dozens of hardy Top End stock-horses and for many of the trainees, their first chance to sit in the saddle.

But not all of them.

20-year-old Richard Collins is emerging as one of the star pupils in this, the seventh induction of trainees to enter the year-long training course.

He says he's been riding horses for nine years, but never regularly.

"I joined to learn a bit more about working with stock.

When I finish this course I want to be out there, working," he said.

More than 90 young men have now undertaken the NLC's stockmen's course.

Those who complete the program walk away with a Level 2 Certificate in Beef Production, a qualification which is recognised all over Australia.

"For me it will be a good life," Richard Collins said.

"Working on a station. It's better than working in town and I reckon it's a good life out bush and I want to use the job to travel, too."

John Jansen is the Northern Land Council's project manager for the stockmen's course.

He's managed and worked on stations across the Top End for most of his life and wants to see indigenous workers return to an industry which is crying out for quality staff.

"The industry needs workers," he said.

"The NLC knows there are many Aboriginal people that want to work in the pastoral industry and this course aims to provide them with the tools they need."



Young stockman Richard Collins

Central Australian cattlemen build their skills

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association says a partnership between it and the Central Land Council is successfully helping Aboriginal stockmen secure a long-term future in the industry.

Ten men from around Central Australia undertook a two week pastoral training course at the Bohning Stockyards south of Alice Springs in April.

They were trained in safety around horses, starting horses, occupational, health and safety on stations and animal welfare.

The NTCA's Tony Freshwater said the training is helping to bring benefits to the industry on two fronts – building up the capacity of the participants themselves and filling a skills gap on stations in the Northern Territory.

"They all seem pretty happy," Mr Freshwater said.

"Some of these blokes have been around the traps for a while. The gap in our workforce is a third or fourth year ringer. It's about filling that third year gap.

"Our focus is on those blokes who've got a bit of experience and can climb up the ladder."

Mr Freshwater said numeracy and literacy training is also provided to help the young stockmen advance rather than remain at the one level and in 10 years be receiving orders from someone younger than them.

He said the partnership with the CLC is working well.

"It's been great for us working with the land council.



Above: Justin Dickerson and Carl Manfong-O'Cleary at the workshop

"The employment unit's done a lot of work identifying these blokes and getting them here," Mr Freshwater said. "The CLC have done a heap on this and it's a great partnership."

Project officer with the CLC's employment unit, Becky Mack, said the land council recruited the participants and is helping to mentor them.

"We've been spending days with them, helping them out with the organisation of a variety of matters, having dinner with them, working through any issues they have," she said.

Jason Davey, who has been working on Tanami Downs said he was having a second go at the course.

"Done a bit of this last year and so I've come back to do it again. Just to learn a bit more stuff before I go back to work."

Mr Davey said he was enjoying his time at Tanami Downs.

"It's a good place," he said. "I hate just

sitting around. Finally doing something."

Caleb Anderson from Tennant Creek is only 17-years-old but said he enjoys working on stations.

"Been doing it for good enough three years now. Some of my mates, I tell them get out working. Get em out of town it's no good (just staying in town)," he said.

Justin Dickenson is also from Tennant Creek and is another who points to the benefits of keeping busy working.

"You keep out of trouble in town," he suggested. He said his family is clear on their opinion. "(They say) Go back out and work, make money for yourself. They encourage."

Eight of the 10 participants in the course have jobs at Neutral Junction, Deep Well, Atula and Tanami Downs stations.

Other Tennant Creek graduates from an earlier course are working on Victoria River Downs.