

DesertSMART Origins

The term was coined in Alice Springs, 2004, by the Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) and the Centre for Sustainable Arid Towns (CSAT) to brand internal activities that targeted improved energy and water use, waste management and building performance. Examples include "DesertSMART" house open days, home water audits and a house rating scheme. The tag has been very well received and ALEC and CSAT are now encouraging its use by others.

The DesertSMART Working Party

In April 2005 a working party was ratified by the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development. The group currently includes representatives from Desert Knowledge Australia, Central Australian Tourism Industry Association, Brendan Meney Architects, Centre for Sustainable Arid Towns, Arid Lands Environment Centre, Power and Water and the Northern Territory Government.

The DesertSMART initiative has been very well received in the local community. The working party has now expanded to include key local business people and trade professionals who are driven to support our regional centre in its bid to develop much needed skills and services, to generate business opportunities and economic growth. A DesertSMART building and trade steering committee has been formed comprising of key local building and trade professionals and involving the Chamber of Commerce. DesertSMART has also built and is building partnerships between key national industry organisations that recognise the benefits of being part of an influential program such as this one.

Objectives of DesertSMART

The objectives of DesertSMART are to:

1. Facilitate the connection of key national industry associations with the building, design, landscape, plumbing, mechanical and electrical business sectors of Alice Springs.
2. Open a mobile showroom three times a year, displaying locally available sustainable living products and services to consumers.
3. Facilitate nationally accredited education and training schemes for tradespeople and service providers that are tailored for local conditions, in partnership with national industry organisations and associations.
4. Develop a local certification scheme for tradespeople and professionals which meets national standards and is customised to address local needs.
5. Create an open-source brand which can be used by industry organisations and businesses to tag products, services and activities.
6. Include DesertSMART components into existing apprenticeship schemes, helping to retain apprentices and trades people in the region through nurturing pride in local expertise that is gained over time.
7. Stimulate competition between local businesses, unearthing niche market opportunities for them.
8. Employ DesertSMART trainees and encourage other businesses to do the same.
9. Facilitate local firms to form joint ventures and business collaborations, to increase their capacity to tender for large projects and compete more effectively with large interstate businesses.
10. Promote Alice Springs as a ³DesertSMART¹¹ town through use of its branding.