

Eureka strikes training gold

PERTH-based offroad driver training provider Eureka 4WD Training has become one of the first companies in its field to comply with new Federal Government training standards, and says the achievement will work to significantly increase its standing in the eyes of existing and potential clients.

It may have taken Eureka almost eight months to make the necessary changes to business practices to meet the revised Australian Quality Training Framework guidelines and gain the relevant qualifications from the Training Accreditation Council of Western Australia, but, according to general manager Ray Harris, it was worth the time and effort, if only for the sake of enhancing the company's reputation.

One of the major changes under the new standards, which came into effect last year, has been a more rigorous framework for training session and assessment documentation. As part of this process, companies are obligated to carry out an internal audit of their documentation at least once a year. They are also required to document agreements with clients, and undertake set written procedures for recruitment, induction and professional development of staff.

As a result, Harris said administration duties had become considerably more involved. "We have to keep very strict documented controls over all aspects of the business," he said. "We undertake monthly internal audits and are subject to audits from the WA Training Accreditation Council to ensure that we are performing to the very highest of standards."

Arguably the most important function of the increased emphasis on documentation is to eliminate the "cowboy" element from the industry and ensure companies are providing qualified trainers and assessors with specified competencies.

Harris said achieving accreditation had instilled Eureka's clients with confidence that they were dealing with a reliable, reputable and monitored company. So much had Eureka's reputation as a safe and reliable trainer increased in recent months that it was being recognised by insurance companies such as Western QBE, which now offers a 10% policy discount to drivers who have completed a Eureka course.

Harris said this was good news for Eureka's mining industry clients, with whom it was enjoying a growing association. In the 2003-04 financial year mining companies represented 21.4% of the company's total business, but that figure had jumped to 61.4% in the new financial year.



Fresh from achieving compliance with new Federal Government training standards, Eureka 4WD Training has experienced a surge in business from mining companies.

Harris said the rise in mining business for Eureka was in no small way linked to the greater emphasis on safety across the industry. "When mining companies come to Eureka 4WD Training for our expertise, it's because they want to reduce their potential risk, of staff operating a four-wheeled drive vehicle in an inappropriate or dangerous manner," he said. "A mining company's staff are probably its most valuable asset and need to be looked after so implementing a good, safe training program is vital."

Harris said there was a need for quality, flexible training for offroad driving in

the mining industry in order to fulfil duty of care.

"We often conduct our training on a fly-in fly-out basis, which appeals to the miners because it drastically reduces the time employees require to do the training and the cost of the training," he said.

"Some mining companies require different types of training and we work with our clients to achieve this. Whether it is underground driving training or it is remote travel, we work to give our clients what they need. We also offer them an insight into what they might need in terms of offroad training because prevention is better than a cure."