

IT training – Bridging the Digital Divide

Because of the pervasive influence of IT within contemporary life, IT knowledge and skills have never been more important. In an attempt to help bridge the “digital divide” CISCO Systems has developed strategic collaborations with non-profit organisations like the Salvation Army to enable them to reach out to disadvantaged and at-risk people. Through this relationship, CISCO provides online curricula and materials to these organisations at no cost.

The CISCO training will help disadvantaged people to reconnect with society at the Oasis Youth Support Network in Surry Hills, Sydney. The Network, run by the Salvation Army, views training as part of a stabilisation process for their clients – as training coordinator, Larry Gordon, explains, ‘for homeless young people straight off the streets the immediate needs are accommodation and the stabilisation of often problematic substance abuse. When those immediate needs are addressed we look at other services that will help young people re-establish their lives.’

With IT training resources donated by CISCO Systems, Oasis will conduct courses in IT support and network administration. However, the Network also wanted to offer learners the opportunity to have their achievements recognised by nationally endorsed qualifications or statements of attainment. This would have required a time-consuming process of mapping CISCO course outcomes to the IT Training Package (ICA05) – instead IBSA provided the solution.

In an effort to help the Network recognise the achievements of disadvantaged people, IBSA mapped the outcomes from CISCO Essentials I and II to the nationally endorsed Training Package. The completed mapping has been added to IBSA’s online vendor mapping portal. The portal allows training providers, employers and learners to match outcomes from a wide range of vendor certifications to competencies from the IT Training Package – the addition of CISCO Essentials I and II further expands its range.

The Network, which already has scope to deliver the Certificate II in IT from the IT Training Package, has recently had a trainer accredited by CISCO. An extensive renovation and refurbishment of the centre is underway and when it is complete CISCO will wire up the training room for course delivery. The training program will be offered to clients of the Oasis Youth Support Network as well as to disadvantaged people more generally through other local service providers. It is anticipated that 10-20 people per week could access the Centre’s IT training – building their IT skills and their connection with society at the same time.