



Northern Territory

New driving app for indigenous drivers

ASHLEY MANICAROS, NT News

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AN interactive driving app developed in indigenous language with Federal Government assistance has delivered promising results in its first pilot testing.

DriveAbout is a blended learning "Learner Driver" program developed in a partnership between the Commonwealth Government, Senator Nigel Scullion and 48.5 Consulting and is the vision of Clinton Hoffmann from Ambrose Business Solutions.

The app delivers the NT Road User's Handbook in an electronic format with a demonstration on specific tasks.

Mr Hoffmann said the gaining of a car license was critical in remote communities but made harder by the poor literacy and numeracy levels in those communities.

He said helping those get a license may also have a positive impact on the Territory's prison populations.

"With 25 per cent of the NT prison population locked up for driving without a licence and other compounding offences due to literacy skills, I believe this is a problem which can be fixed," he said. "Up until now the only legal way to get your Learner's Permit was to read and understand the NT Road User's Handbook and the written theory test or convince the appropriate official you knew them – problem being no auditable trail to competency demonstration. These are all in English and only in the written form which requires a high level of English literacy.

"Many remote indigenous Australians, while multilingual in Aboriginal languages, have low or no English literacy.

"What we did was not only animate content and make it more accessible to visual learners it is also a program that can be managed by local community members.

"Ambrose took the official lengthy and wordy learner's guide and put it into a format that is easy to replicate by following the DriveAbout Trainers Guide.

"This gives community members the ability to become trainers and teach the blended learning method with a few simple tools; demonstration mats, a couple of toy cars and a mobile interface.

"The ebook version of the Trainers Guide, which has the training videos embedded, is a step-by-step guide how to train a learner driver from the app and with the mats and cars."

In a recent pilot in the community of Galwin'ku Elcho Island, the blended learning techniques were used.

Each participant who had English as a second language responded positively to the content and interacted with both the app and the mats through to the testing stage.

East Arnhem Regional Council learning and development co-ordinator Kylie Owens, said having it in their language was helpful.

“I have seen some definite benefits to DriveAbout with all of the materials,” she said. “Seeing a lot of our learner drivers having to go through a book right now, seeing the actual change between them using the app and being interactive with the mats I can definitely see they’re more engaged.

“DriveAbout is definitely better than the book. I think the biggest benefit is having it in their local language, along with the great animations that go with it.”

The Northern Territory Government has been offered a license but is yet to make a decision on it.

Meanwhile the export potential for the app is being explored. Mr Hoffmann is working with Austrade and Developing the North to take the app to eight countries, initially, where he has strong connections.

He had recently returned from the economic powerhouse India.

Mr Hoffmann said the edutech space is continually evolving and has already started to develop the next iteration of the app.

It will be a game in the Gran Turismo format with a testing component. It will add a simulation component to the rules being learned.

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