

Environmental Responsibilities

Increase Need for Training

The result is a five day course based heavily on class interaction, where trainers and participants share their own knowledge for the benefit of all. Phil, who leads most courses, says, "One of the most beneficial ways of learning is hearing other peoples environmental problems, and discussing the best approach to issues such as Erosion and Sediment Control and Spill Management, where definitive solutions are hard to find."

Another aspect of the course attendees have found valuable is participating in an Environmental Survey on a working site. Phil explains, "The usual comment I receive is how hard it is for participants to take off their 'OH&S hat' and purely concentrate on the environmental aspects of a site. This really drives home how hard it can be when you are out in the field to detect possible environmental hazards without the proper training and awareness."

The course has now been running for over three years with more than 850 participants from a wide range of industries and occupations, with the success of the course leading Phil to establish Absorb Training as a National Registered Training Organisation in early 2009.

Absorb Training has now launched an Advanced Diploma of Environmental Management. This course builds on the Certificate IV course covering a range of subjects, and concentrates on the practical application of environmental management and developing a deeper understanding of the issues which Environmental or OH&E Managers are required to handle.

The course is offered as a blended course requiring an initial two days class time followed by 20 weeks of online instruction. The online segment uses a social networking based Learning Management System to allow flexibility of participation with respect to timing within each week.

The participants each select practical exercises in which they have a particular interest in such as Stormwater Management, Erosion & Sediment Control, or Energy Audits and present their findings during a final two day classroom session.

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Phil Abernethy, Managing Director of Absorb Environmental Solutions points out, "Health Safety and Environmental Officers are required to have the minimum of a Certificate IV in Health and Safety to perform their professional tasks. Many of these officers require qualified training to fulfil their environmental responsibilities. Many find they lack knowledge of how to manage environmental impacts, including how to objectively complete an environmental site survey and identify environmental aspects."

These practices are impacting upon personnel to the extent that this role is becoming a full-time occupational necessity. This role is a valid new and emerging occupational requirement that previously had no vocational qualification to support it.

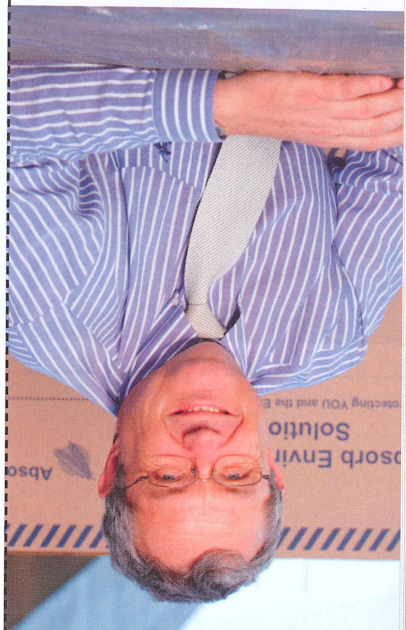
Seeing this demand in the market, Phil responded by creating Australia's first Certificate IV in On-Site Environmental Management in 2007, which recognised the requirement for Health Safety and Environmental Officers to strive for industry standard and provide qualifications equivalent to OH&S.

After extensive industry consultation, he decided the best approach was to design a comprehensive nationally recognised course that developed environmental management skills on a practical level, covering the legislation, theory and practice of delivering positive on-site environmental outcomes.

Phil adds, "My philosophy has always been to provide practical environmental knowledge that allows participants to understand and immediately deliver new environmental awareness to their day to day work. Significantly, this course has provided attendees with a practical foundation in the policies and principles to create and implement their own Site Environmental Management Plan.

"The objective is not only to measure your site's environmental compliance and manage risk but to continually improve your site's environmental performance, so I created a training environment where trainers could inspire people and foster a motivation to commit to good environmental governance," Phil continued.

As Environmental Management Systems (EMS) are now an essential part of our standard operating procedures and thought processes, it has become necessary for field and operational staff in the mining industry to take on the responsibilities for supervision of on-site environmental compliance.



(Above) Phil Abernethy, Managing Director of Absorb Environmental Solutions

