



**TRAIN ...** PiP project graduates, Bessie Shepherd, *front*, with Louisa Geia, *back left*, Theresa Thimble, Norah Shepherd, Robert Johnson and Delores Seaton *Photo: SCOTT RADFORD-CHISHOLM*

## Local indigenous job-seekers learn skills

INDIGENOUS job seekers looking to improve their skill-set have been given a 'hand up' with the official launch of a new program.

The Participate in Prosperity (PiP) project, funded by the State Government and run by Centacare Townsville, aims to provide modern vocational, trade and life skills training to local indigenous people who live in public housing.

Members of the program's pilot class, all former Palm Island residents, graduated at an emotional ceremony last week. Along with recognising

the efforts of the graduating group, the ceremony also marked the official launch of 'PiP2' — in which a further 51 local indigenous people will undertake the program.

Program alumni Bessie Shepherd said she 'gained a lot' from the 12-month course.

"It's a good program, and I really enjoyed it," Ms Shepherd, 19, said.

"Not only does it teach you everyday skills, you also get (exposed) to lots of different jobs.

"That's really good because

it's difficult to make up your mind sometimes."

PiP program team leader Pania Brown said the goal-orientated course aimed to build both life skills and confidence to give participants greater autonomy.

"The unfortunate reality is that many of the participants lack the basic life skills to make the choices and perform the simple, everyday tasks most of us take for granted," Mrs Brown said.

— ANDREW STRUTTON

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