

RIO
TINTO

Rio Tinto **Indigenous Employment in Australia**



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Rio Tinto and Indigenous Employment

Rio Tinto's vision is for strong regional economies in which local communities and Rio Tinto businesses work together to build on and benefit from the opportunities generated through our mining operations.

While Rio Tinto has always worked with local Indigenous communities, it was a major change to Australia's Native Title law that triggered an overhaul of our approach more than a decade ago. We publicly welcomed this change as it was clear that the Australian resource sector was short of international best practice in engaging with Indigenous people.

Employing a local Indigenous person - either directly in our operations or through our contractors - is one way Rio Tinto can help distribute the wealth generated through mining and deliver sustainable economic benefits. We also focus on building skills and supporting development programmes that enhance local community capacity through education, training and enterprise facilitation.

As most Rio Tinto operations in Australia are in remote or rural areas, an understanding of demography is vital. Research commissioned by Rio Tinto and undertaken by Dr. John Taylor¹ from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University shows that in northern Australia - particularly in regions such as the Pilbara, East Arnhem Land, the Gulf of Carpentaria, East Kimberley and Cape York - the Indigenous population is growing at a rate of between two and four per cent per year and is conservatively projected to increase by some 10,000 people, or 39 per cent, by 2016.

By 2016, people aged between 15 to 45 years - those in their prime working years - will comprise 50 per cent of the Indigenous population in regions associated with Rio Tinto operations. Growth in permanently resident non-Indigenous populations in the same regions is not expected to be as strong.

Rio Tinto recognises that employment can make a significant contribution to redressing Indigenous disadvantage. This booklet outlines Rio Tinto's Indigenous employment programmes in Australia.

¹ Taylor, J. and Bell, M. *Implementing Regional Agreements. Aboriginal Population Projections in Rio Tinto Mine Hinterlands 1996-2016. (2001)* Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research ANU Canberra.



“We set out to build enduring relationships with our neighbours that are characterised by mutual respect, active partnership and long term commitment.”

Our policy and approach

Rio Tinto’s policy worldwide is to recognise and work with local and land-connected people in the planning and development of our operations. Rio Tinto’s Communities Policy provides overarching guidance:

“We set out to build enduring relationships with our neighbours that are characterised by mutual respect, active partnership and long term commitment.”¹

In Australia, as elsewhere, the Group takes a partnership approach towards developing relationships with Aboriginal Traditional Owners and with governments to assist Aboriginal people engage in the local economy. Robust regional economies are built through initiatives such as enterprise and small business development, industrial services and procurement, tourism and cultural activities, sports and recreation, agribusiness, joint ventures, and direct employment.

These activities require a skilled and educated workforce and Rio Tinto operations provide training and support for Indigenous people to participate actively in these opportunities.

Land access agreements and cultural heritage recognition and protection are also applications of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

Additionally, the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund contributes to community capacity building activities in Indigenous communities throughout Australia.

Rio Tinto Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

In all exploration and development in Australia, Rio Tinto will consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ issues.

Where there are traditional or historical connections to particular land and waters, Rio Tinto will engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and their representatives to find mutually advantageous outcomes.

Outcomes beneficial to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will result from listening to them.

Economic independence through direct employment, business development and training are among the advantages that Rio Tinto will offer. We will give strong support to activities that are sustainable after Rio Tinto has left an area.

This policy is based in recognition and respect. Rio Tinto recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia

- have been disadvantaged and dispossessed;
- have a special connection to land and waters; and
- have native title rights recognised by law.

Rio Tinto respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’

- cultural diversity;
- aspirations for self-sufficiency; and
- interest in land management.



¹ The way we work - Rio Tinto statement of business practice (www.riotinto.com/library/reports/corppublications)



Since 1996, Rio Tinto Group businesses have signed six major mine development or future act agreements and more than 70 land access and heritage agreements with Aboriginal groups.



Argyle Participation Agreement

Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians gathered at Argyle Diamonds in Western Australia in June 2005 to celebrate the registration of the Argyle Participation Agreement, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The Governor General of Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery and the then Premier of Western Australia, Geoff Gallop attended the event.

The agreement between the Traditional Land owners, Argyle Diamonds and the Kimberley Land Council, was three years in the making. It formally sets out a shared vision for the regional development in the area of the mine and supersedes Argyle's 20 year old Good Neighbour Agreement. It outlines a view of the future and expresses a mutual recognition of rights including Traditional Owner ceremonial responsibilities associated with the mine lease area.

The terms of the agreement emphasise economic participation and regional development. As evidence of its commitment Argyle has substantially lifted the number of Aboriginal employees in its workforce to over 20 per cent during the three year negotiation period.

Benefits to Traditional Owners provide for present day and post mining programmes in health, education and culture. The management plans which specify the programmes also include training and employment and provide for cross cultural training for mine employees and contractors.

Mick Hutton, Gene Hyde and Damien Johns on-site at Argyle Diamonds, Kimberley, Western Australia

Agreements with Aboriginal Traditional Owners

Rio Tinto establishes relationships with Aboriginal Traditional Owners and groups affected by its operations. Rio Tinto does this to help gain access for exploration and gain consent for mining operations through the development of Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Since 1996, Rio Tinto Group businesses have signed six major mine development or future act agreements and more than 70 land access and heritage agreements with Aboriginal groups. Negotiations are conducted in a manner consistent with the Indigenous Land Use Agreement provisions in the Native Title Act. Where practical, Rio Tinto seeks to elevate these agreements to the status of regional agreements with the inclusion of state governments in tripartite arrangements. Ultimately, the objective is to progress agreements to full Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

The agreements cover how Rio Tinto and Traditional Owners work together, communicate and resolve issues.

These issues include:

- how benefits are paid;
- arrangements for employment and training;
- how cultural heritage and environmental protection are managed;
- the nature of economic development and business opportunities; and
- social, cultural and community support.

For example Argyle Diamonds and Traditional Owners have signed the Argyle Participation Agreement in East Kimberley and Rio Tinto Aluminium has negotiated the Western Cape Community Co-existence Agreement in Western Cape York, Queensland. Rio Tinto Iron Ore has two substantial Land Use Agreements and is undertaking further regional negotiations in the Pilbara region.



Rio Tinto focuses on building strong regional economies beyond the life of its mines through investing in early childhood development, education, employment and business development programmes for local Indigenous people, in partnership with others.

Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund

The Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund supports Indigenous education, health, sporting and cultural preservation programmes throughout Australia, in addition to the programmes undertaken by Rio Tinto businesses. Established in 1996, the Fund aims to improve the capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A key focus of the Fund is the support of Indigenous community initiated projects that aim to address specific needs and contribute direct and lasting benefits to Indigenous people, families and communities.

Examples of programmes supported by the Fund include:

Diabetes Management and Care Programme.

In partnership with the Unity of First People of Australia (UFPA), this programme aims to provide intervention and practical prevention strategies to address the significant incidence of Type Two diabetes in Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School.

The School brings together Indigenous secondary students from all over Australia to gain an insight into the role of engineers and the career opportunities open to them. Each year about 20 Indigenous students are selected to attend the School where they can experience campus life, learn more about applications of engineering and hear from mentors and role models. There are currently 18 people studying engineering after attending the School, with a number being accepted into the Rio Tinto National Indigenous Cadetship Programme.

Ngaanyatjarra to English Dictionary.

From the more than 250 Aboriginal languages spoken prior to Europeans arriving in Australia, around 20 are still alive today. The Fund is supporting IAD Press, the publishing arm of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, to help preserve these languages. The Fund contributed to the publication of the *Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra to English Dictionary*. These languages are spoken in the central desert area of Western Australia.

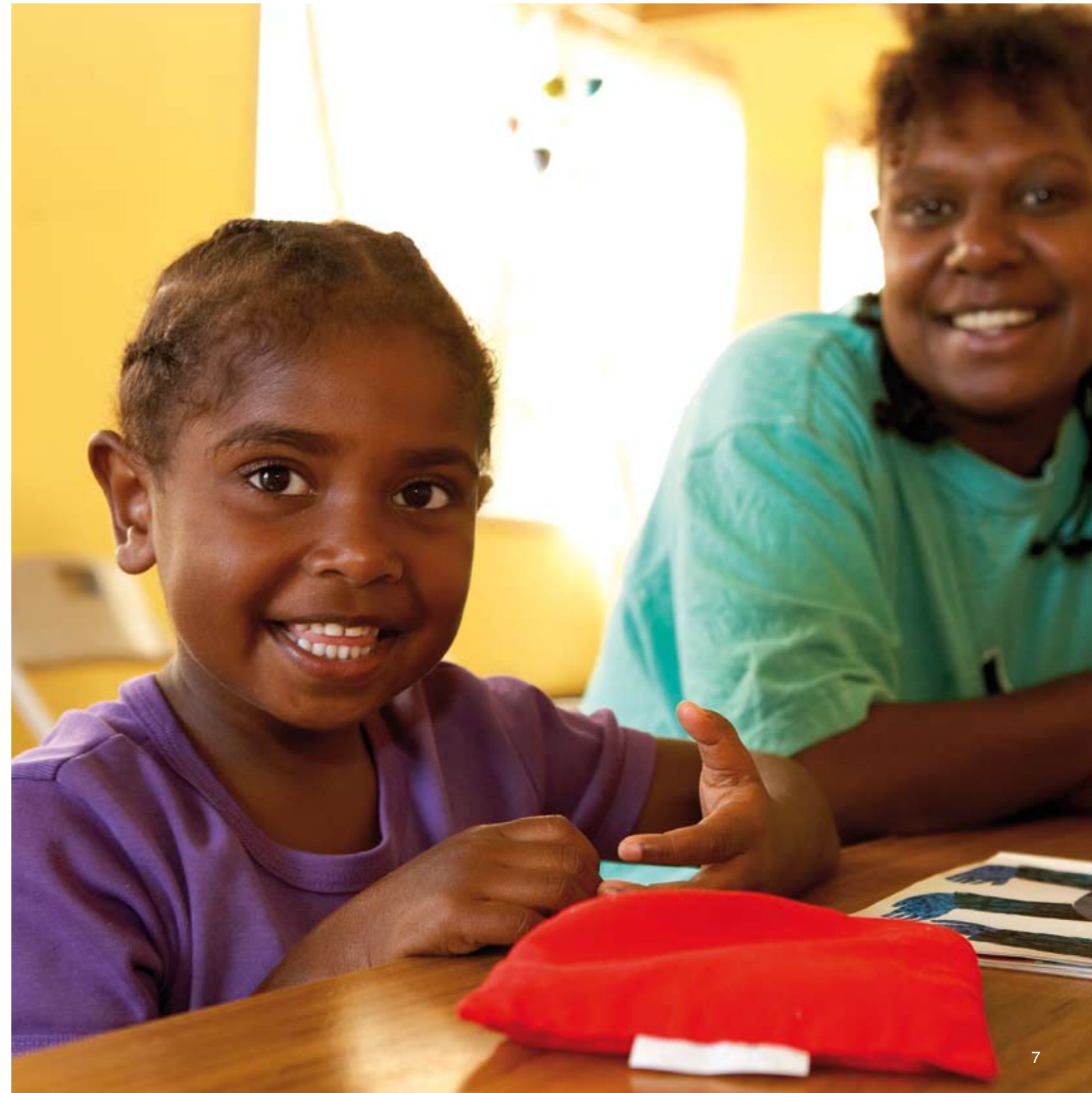
Assistance for Indigenous students

The Gumala Mirnuwarni Education Enrichment Programme is proving valuable in assisting Western Australian Indigenous students with their secondary school studies. Over the past decade, Gumala Mirnuwarni, which means “coming together to learn”, has resulted in significantly higher school retention rates, improved academic performance, higher rates of tertiary entrance, increased participation in apprenticeships and traineeships and heightened self-esteem and pride among participants.

The programme was the first of a number of education projects established by the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation and partners in the north of Western Australia. Developed as a partnership between Rio Tinto companies - Hamersley Iron and Dampier Salt, Woodside, the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, Western Australia’s Education Department and the Federal Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the programme involves after-school activities centred on academic and personal mentoring and counselling.

Participating Indigenous students work with mentors, who also work with the students’ families and schools to ensure the pupils have stable, supportive environments in which to learn and grow. Students also have access to information technology through dedicated “homework centres”.

Tammy Ara and her daughter Relena participate in the early literacy and numeracy programme for Indigenous Communities PaL Group, that has been developed by the Napranum Preschool on Western Cape York with support from Rio Tinto.





Rio Tinto favours a partnership approach to community capacity building, working with Indigenous communities to develop successful programmes in response to local needs and employment and business opportunities.



Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Programme

In 1999, the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business launched the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Programme. Rio Tinto was one of the first companies to embark on a contract with the Government that required the Group to meet milestones in the employment of Indigenous people and assist in their placement, training and retention. The Government committed to providing funding.

Rio Tinto set an ambitious target to recruit and retain an additional 200 Indigenous people over a three-year period. Meeting this target meant ensuring that Indigenous employees were skilled and competent, integrating training into mainstream operations, meeting production targets, maintaining a high level of productivity and adhering to Rio Tinto safety standards.

Engagement in the Corporate Leaders Programme has been a catalyst for Rio Tinto to:

- Establish Indigenous employment targets that reflect local demographics;
- Develop an integrated Indigenous employment approach within its mining operations;
- Ensure the Group's operations are focused on long term retention of skilled Indigenous employees;
- Develop cross cultural awareness education for employees; and
- Monitor performance through a Group-wide data recording system.

Fourth year apprentice Isaac Guinness and TAFE lecturer Bob Hunter at the Pilbara TAFE campus workshop in Karratha

Building capacity: a partnership approach

Rio Tinto's approach is to work with Indigenous communities to develop successful programmes in response to local needs and employment and business opportunities.

Rio Tinto works in collaboration with Indigenous communities and Australian Governments to develop and implement ways to increase positive employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Across all of our operations the provision of Indigenous employment opportunities is accompanied by education, training and support programmes. These include: family and community support programmes to assist families to settle into mining towns; workplace communication skills training; and community information campaigns about the Group's drug and alcohol policies.

While Rio Tinto seeks to collaborate with Indigenous communities near its operations, it also works with these communities to link with Government programmes and seeks tripartite agreements with Indigenous communities and governments.

Examples include:

- Involvement in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Government and Minerals Council of Australia to create Indigenous job opportunities and business development in mining regions;
- A contract with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to increase Indigenous employment at Rio Tinto operations;
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (now Department of Education, Science and Training) to provide pre-vocational, literacy and numeracy training and support for apprenticeship and traineeship programmes; and
- Inclusion of state governments in participation and regional agreements. This facilitates progression to Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Rio Tinto also works with other resource companies and philanthropic organisations to support capacity-building programmes for Indigenous communities.



Now, approximately seven per cent of our employees - around 850 people are Indigenous.



Indigenous Employment Performance

In the mid 1990s, less than half of one per cent of Rio Tinto's Australian workforce was Indigenous. Now, approximately seven per cent of our employees – around 850 people – are Indigenous.

Rio Tinto businesses have set challenging targets to increase success in recruiting and retaining Indigenous employees. For example, Argyle Diamonds plans to increase its Indigenous workforce to 40 per cent by 2010.

To assist in meeting such targets, Rio Tinto operations directly oversee recruitment, selection, training and career development programmes and ensure that these programmes are culturally appropriate and relevant to Indigenous people.

Employees and contractors at Rio Tinto operations undertake cross cultural education. Rio Tinto businesses have developed two-way learning and cultural competencies programmes, which are facilitated by local Aboriginal Traditional Owners who introduce people to the local Indigenous culture and traditions.

Within the workplace, the emphasis is on long term full time employment and success is measured by the number of Indigenous people retained in our workforce.

Rio Tinto's retention rate for new Indigenous employees beyond 26 weeks exceeds 80 per cent.

The high retention rate is attributed to:

- Family and community support programmes that assist Indigenous employees and their families to settle into both the working environment and residential mining towns;
- Pre-vocational training and support in developing workplace communication and life skills;
- Mentoring of Indigenous employees, usually by experienced Indigenous employees who provide advice and support during the critical first year of employment; and
- Cross cultural education programmes and effective workplace communication.

Creating job opportunities in mining regions

Rio Tinto, through its membership of the Minerals Council of Australia, is involved in a unique project to expand economic and job opportunities for Indigenous people living in mining regions.

In June 2005 the Minerals Council and the Australian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate with Indigenous people to "build sustainable, prosperous communities in which individuals can create and take up social, employment and business opportunities in mining regions".

Through the development of regional partnerships between Indigenous people, governments and mining companies, the project focuses on overcoming barriers to participation and commits increased resources to support local employment.

Pilot regional partnership sites in Western Australia (Eastern Pilbara, Western Pilbara, Wiluna, Boddington and Kununurra), Northern Territory (Tanami) and Queensland (Western Cape) will focus on projects relating to employment, business development and training and education.

Rio Tinto is represented on the National Steering Committee, which is implementing the MoU and overseeing the development of regional partnerships. Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Argyle Diamonds and Rio Tinto Aluminium Weipa are involved in developing three of the regional partnerships.



Ashley Dodd, a Process Technician - Calcination and Steam, works at Rio Tinto Aluminium Yarwun in Gladstone

Rio Tinto's Indigenous Employment Programme

Rio Tinto's Indigenous Employment Programme has a multifaceted integrated approach, including initiatives such as:

- Job Readiness Training and Recruitment
- Literacy and Numeracy Support
- Skills Development – traineeships and apprenticeships
- Retention and Career Development

When strategic recruiting counts

At Argyle Diamonds, in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, significant changes in the company's human resource practices in recent years have led to a greater number of Indigenous employees.

Recognising that traditional recruiting practices such as psychometric testing, questionnaires and formal panel interviews could possibly alienate potential Indigenous candidates, Argyle introduced a hands-on approach to recruitment.

Indigenous job seekers attend four day workshops at the mine site, where they engage in a series of practical and theoretical training and problem-solving activities alongside supervisors and other relevant Argyle employees.

Potential employees are given one-on-one feedback about their skills and provided with training to improve future employment opportunities. Argyle then works through the required pre-employment training that employees need to become work-ready.

The programme is reaping rewards. Argyle lifted its ratio of Indigenous employees from 4.5 per cent to above 25 per cent of its workforce in the first three years of the programme.

More than half of Indigenous people attending assessment workshops are offered employment with the company, in a range of diverse roles, apprenticeships and traineeships. Those who are not successful are guided into other programmes to enable them to become more competitive in the job market.

Argyle also has in place a number of retention processes, involving individual training plans, assignment of workplace mentors, life skills training and family support.

Job Readiness Training and Recruitment

Rio Tinto takes a holistic approach to ensuring potential Indigenous employees are ready for work.

Mindful that mining operations can be alien and overwhelming for new employees, Rio Tinto provides training and coaching support in areas such as life skills, safety, industry competencies, technology, communication skills, and shift work requirements, fit for work requirements, fatigue and first aid.

Literacy and Numeracy Support

In remote and regional Australia, few people have had access to employment and so require preparation for the workplace. English may be a second language and many Indigenous people have to overcome basic literacy and numeracy barriers to enter the mainstream workforce.

Rio Tinto helps to build a platform for future skills development through high school student tutoring and homework support schemes, such as the Gumala Mirnuwarni programme (outlined earlier in this booklet). To supplement this programme Rio Tinto Iron Ore supports new apprentices and trainees in achieving a minimum Year 10 standard.

The Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund supported the establishment of the Parents and Learning (PaL) Programme - an early childhood education programme developed in Napranum on Western Cape York. This programme empowers parents to introduce literacy skills to their preschool children, enabling these children to be confident in learning to read and participate in school activities when they begin school. The programme was expanded to operate in five rural and remote communities in eastern Australia in 2006 through a partnership that is part of Rio Tinto's *Business with Communities* programme¹. Plans are in place to find pathways to extend the programme to other parts of Australia.

¹ For additional information about Rio Tinto's Business with Communities programme go to www.riotinto.com/library/3608_partnerships.asp



“I spend time with Pilbara Iron Indigenous employees and give them mentoring and support and try to help them with any issues whether they are workplace or personal.”

Clinton Walker
Indigenous Mentor
& Liaison Officer
Pilbara Iron

Skills Development – traineeships and apprenticeships

A shortage in skilled labour in northern Australia and an expanding resources industry were catalysts in the development of a skilled employment programme with a focus on increasing Indigenous employment.

Rio Tinto offers two-year Indigenous traineeships in civil earthworks, business administration, warehousing and transport and metalliferous mining.

Three and four-year apprenticeships are offered in a range of fields, including heavy equipment, metals, engineering and electrical.

Many of Rio Tinto's traineeship and apprenticeship programmes are nationally accredited, with high standards ensuring both internal and external support.

Student becomes mentor

Clinton Walker was one of the first Indigenous students from the Pilbara town of Roebourne, in Western Australia, to complete Year 12 at high school.

Clinton, 24, undertook a traineeship with Pilbara Iron's Aboriginal Employment programme in 2000, completing a Certificate II Engineering Production (mechanical/metal fabrication). He went on to complete a mechanic apprenticeship in the Light Vehicle Workshop, maintaining and repairing a variety of cars and trucks.

In 2001 he was awarded Engineering (Automotive) Intermediate Apprentice by West Pilbara College of TAFE and in 2002, was named "Outstanding Individual" in the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Programme Awards in Canberra.

In mid-2006, he became a full time Indigenous Mentor with Pilbara Iron in the newly created Indigenous Employment Strategy team, based in Dampier on the north-west coast of Western Australia.

"I spend time with Pilbara Iron Indigenous employees and give them mentoring and support and try to help them with any issues, whether they are workplace or personal," Clinton says. "It's a great job."

Clinton also provides support to Indigenous employees' supervisors and superintendents, and regularly visits Indigenous communities throughout the Pilbara region. "We want to help community members get into the workforce," he says.

Clinton says the impetus for his career was provided through participation in the Gumala Mirnuwarni Education Enrichment Programme, which he entered when he was in Year 9 at high school.

"It was a great thing and it really helped me out," Clinton says of the programme.

Clinton and his wife have two children and he sees his career as providing a foundation and inspiration for their future.





“It is a programme that nurtures the employee from day one”

Frank Fell
Superintendent
Plant Operations
Rio Tinto Aluminium Weipa



Focus on support and retention

In 26 years with Rio Tinto Aluminium, Superintendent Plant Operations Frank Fell has worked in a wide variety of roles and currently manages 55 employees in the beneficiation plant in Weipa.

With such a large number of employees reporting to him, a broad range of activities going on at any one time, and a myriad of safety, training and human resource issues to manage, Frank is conscious of the need to build strong relationships with his colleagues.

“I’m so passionate about the right communication and using the right words and body language,” he says. “If you’re passing on information, you must challenge the employee as to whether he or she understands it – it is very important.”

Frank has overseen record production and an excellent safety performance at the beneficiation plant, where crude ore is washed, screened and sorted onto stockpiles before the bauxite is transported onto the shiploader. Frank has been Superintendent of the plant since 1998. His staying power in the job is mirrored by a high retention rate among his employees.

An Indigenous employee programme, developed and implemented for his team by Frank and trainer Derek Pearl, has assisted in retaining employees through recognition of the adjustments that Indigenous people need to make in the workforce. There are eight Indigenous employees in the team who have been supported through the new programme.

“It is a programme that nurtures the employee from day one,” says Frank of the initiative, which involves intensive skills and safety training and mentoring over several weeks.

Frank and his wife have four children, including son Howard, who worked for Rio Tinto Aluminium after obtaining his degree in Materials Engineering at the University of Queensland, through the National Indigenous Cadetship Programme.

The commitment Frank has shown to leading teams and developing employees saw him awarded the prestigious Neville Bonner Award at the 2004 Corporate Leaders Awards for Indigenous Employment in Canberra.

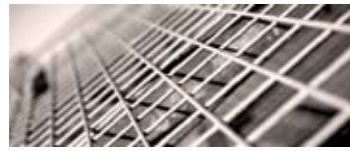
Retention and Career Development

Like other employees, new Indigenous employees are encouraged to see a long term future in mining, and they are provided with accredited training.

Indigenous employees have opportunities to take on roles such as team leaders and superintendents, or to enter the technical and professional streams of career development through the Group’s cadet scheme.

Appropriate mentoring and career and personal counselling services are provided to ensure that Indigenous employees have every opportunity to explore job options.

Programmes to enhance interaction between Indigenous and mining communities such as sporting and cultural activities are also supported.



“The vacation work really complemented my studies because it gave me hands on experience. There are some things that you really can’t learn that well in class, you learn better on site.”

Kurt Simpson
Graduate Civil Engineer
Rio Tinto Iron Ore Expansion Projects

Professional Indigenous Employment

Rio Tinto aims to recruit Indigenous employees across a range of areas, including in professional roles.

Through the National Indigenous Cadet Programme (NICP), Indigenous employees are increasingly filling professional vacancies in the Group.

Rio Tinto was one of the first private sector organisations to participate in the NICP, an initiative that aims to generate professional employment following tertiary study.

Since 1999, Rio Tinto has supported 34 students in various stages of their tertiary studies, in fields including law, commerce, environmental science, archeology, engineering and public affairs.

More than 12 have graduated into professional roles with Rio Tinto businesses and contractors.

The NICP is administered by the Indigenous Employment Branch of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and is designed to provide financial assistance and employment support to Indigenous tertiary students.

Students are provided with a study allowance to cover their living expenses, as well as paid vacation work that enables them to gain practical industry experience.

They are given the opportunity to participate in workplace workshops, conferences and various education initiatives.

Cadetship lays the foundation for a big career

Kurt Simpson, a graduate civil engineer, works on one of Rio Tinto Iron Ore’s major expansion projects in Western Australia - the Dampier port upgrade. At just 24, Kurt has already had a variety of challenging roles with Rio Tinto, both during and following his National Indigenous Cadetship.

Kurt was awarded the cadetship while studying civil engineering at Newcastle University in New South Wales. He undertook vacation work at Rio Tinto’s Coal & Allied mining operations in the Hunter Valley for three years and at Argyle Diamonds in Western Australia over two summers.

“The vacation work really complemented my studies because it gave me hands-on experience. There are some things that you really can’t learn that well in class, you learn better on site,” he says.

While completing the cadetship programme, Kurt enjoyed the opportunity to act as a mentor at a Rio Tinto sponsored a science workshop (facilitated in partnership with the Centre for Appropriate Technology) in Alice Springs for Indigenous high school students.

Building relationships and networks is central to his career, and Kurt says he is grateful for the support he has received from older, more experienced Rio Tinto employees. He is also appreciative of the guidance provided by other Rio Tinto graduates, who have shared their own experiences with him.

Kurt is reluctant to describe himself as a role model, but he is the first in his family to go to university. His younger sister is now undertaking business studies, while his cousins are looking to study at university.





“It has been an amazing journey for me with Rio Tinto over the last six or seven years and I have greatly enjoyed experiences and places that I never dreamed of doing or going to when I was 15 or even 25.”

Dale Jones

Construction Supervisor
Underground Project
Argyle Diamonds



Combining engineering with community relations

When underground project engineer Dale Jones was asked if she would be happy to move to Kununurra to work for Argyle Diamonds, her first words were, “When do I pack my bags?”

Dale, 32, has worked on site at Argyle, in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, since early 2005 in a role that she “absolutely loves”.

Dale was part of the National Indigenous Cadetship Programme, receiving her cadetship in the second year of her Degree in Applied Science in Construction Management at Curtin University.

In mid-2004, the final year of her degree, Dale took vacation work with the underground team at Argyle, where she flagged her interest in eventually joining the team.

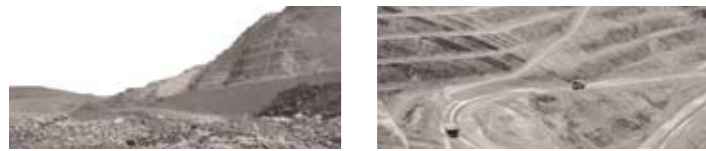
Dale says, “I don’t believe anyone should dismiss the idea of returning to study - regardless of age. I did not decide to study at university until I was 25. This was after I had worked in several jobs and had experienced enough of life to know what sort of job I would be happy in, which would also provide the challenges and satisfaction I require in my career. For anyone who has not been able to complete high school or do tertiary studies at the “typical” age of 17 to 22, it does not mean you can not change that and still strive to achieve your goals at any stage of life.

“Through my time at university when I received a National Indigenous Cadetship with Rio Tinto up to today where I am now working for Argyle Diamonds in a role I love, there have been so many doors and opportunities opened to me because of the efforts I have put into my studies and career. I cannot begin to calculate the value to me of having Rio Tinto believe in me as I believe in myself. It has been an amazing journey for me with Rio Tinto over the last six or seven years and I have greatly enjoyed experiences and places that I never dreamed of doing or going to when I was 15 or even 25. The opportunity for me to do paid vacation work experience for different Rio Tinto business units (including Hamersley Iron and Argyle Diamonds) was not only financial assistance to help me through the lean years of studying, it also helped me to start my career in a way that suited me.

“Rio Tinto has also aided me in personal interests of assisting remote Indigenous communities and particularly Indigenous children through their *Business with Communities* programme. To be able to give encouragement and support to these kids has been so rewarding for me and it is work I hope to continue with. Additionally, I was also granted a Rio Tinto employee fellowship to work with the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) on a report about *Energy Efficiency and Sustainability in Housing Construction for the Remote Desert Region*. Through the Fellowship, I was able to share my skills and knowledge in a way that may assist the broader Indigenous community. Now, I have been made an Associate of the CAT Board which gives me the opportunity to have greater input into areas that CAT is able to make positive changes for remote Indigenous communities.” said Dale.

Dale’s role is broader than project engineering – she has also taken on a voluntary community relations function in liaising with Traditional Owners and organising their visits to the Argyle mine site.

Dale says the Traditional Owners are encouraged to see an Aboriginal woman working in a professional role at Argyle, which is situated on land that has particular significance to Aboriginal women.



“We look after community recruitment and retention and it is very much about taking one step at a time – you can’t rush things when you are dealing with people and their lives”

Gavin Vea Vea
 Team Leader - Indigenous Employment and Communities
 Rio Tinto Aluminium Yarwun



Strong retention at Rio Tinto Aluminium

Rio Tinto Aluminium’s Gavin Vea Vea says it is not too difficult to encourage Indigenous people to seek employment within Rio Tinto – the real challenge is ensuring they are retained within the organisation.

“We need to make sure they have the right expectations about their job, get them used to shiftwork and help their families adjust to shiftwork too,” Gavin says. “It can be a big lifestyle change for some people and there are all sorts of cultural issues that need to be addressed, both for employees and their families.”

Gavin, a 49-year-old Torres Strait Islander, thrives on the challenges of his role as Team Leader Indigenous Employment and Communities for Rio Tinto Aluminium in Gladstone, Queensland. He describes the role as being a “go-between between Indigenous communities and Rio Tinto Aluminium’s human resources function”.

“We look after community recruitment and retention and it is very much about taking one step at a time - you can’t rush things when you are dealing with people and their lives,” Gavin says.

Gavin and his team have a strong success rate. There are more than 80 Indigenous people, including operational employees and contractors, working across the Boyne Smelters and Yarwun sites in Gladstone. Indigenous employment has both increased and stabilised in recent years, thanks to the work of the team.

Gavin took up his current role in 2004, after a career in the boiler-making and construction industries. He was working on the construction of Yarwun when the opportunity arose to work in community relations. Gavin had also worked as a project officer with Gladstone’s Local Aboriginal Employment Promotional Committee.

One of the keys to success in retaining Indigenous employees is continual follow-up, and Gavin is involved in a mentoring programme, meeting with Indigenous employees regularly and facilitating career development and counselling sessions, often in conjunction with local colleges. He also works closely with local high schools and guidance officers to encourage Indigenous youth to seek traineeships and apprenticeships with Rio Tinto. This includes taking students on site tours and talking about the importance of having confidence in themselves and their potential.

“I tell them that they need to learn to stand up and talk about themselves with confidence,” Gavin says. “Don’t be embarrassed and don’t be afraid of achieving.”



“Everyone takes me at face value and that’s why it is so enjoyable working here. It’s a great environment.”

Mick Hutton
Reliability Engineer
Hismelt®



Balancing the challenges

As a graduate mechanical engineer at Argyle Diamonds, Mick Hutton became adept at juggling a number of roles and tasks. Mick moved to a different operational area every six months, and while in those areas, signed on in a number of roles, from project engineer to reliability engineer to maintenance engineer.

Others might find it tough going, but it is the variety of his work that Mick loves, along with the challenges that come with tight production schedules and a constant drive to keep mining equipment running to peak performance capability.

Mick is now with Rio Tinto’s Hismelt® operations as a Reliability Engineer within the Maintenance and Reliability Department. Hismelt® is a direct smelting process for making iron straight from the ore, without any intermediate processes.

His role involves maintenance and reliability engineering as well as project engineering. As task leader he co-ordinates different work fronts dealing with many different trades people and contract groups.

Mick says, “My confidence in these roles is due to the team leader and engineering experience I obtained at Argyle Diamonds. The Hismelt® work environment is very positive which is largely due to the people that work here. I feel very privileged to be a part of the Hismelt® team and involved with this new ground breaking technology.

This new role is a challenging prospect for me. The challenge is to understand this new technology and the maintenance requirements for this specialised equipment so as to improve the reliability. Plant reliability is one of the important elements in achieving our goals here at Hismelt®.”

“The people here at Hismelt® are great to work with and I enjoy the high standard of professionalism. Everyone is focused and as a united team we endeavour to prove that this new iron smelting technology is the way of the future. This small Hismelt® team have accepted me with anticipation which is very positive from a professional indigenous person’s perspective” said Mick.

Mick’s career was already established before he joined Rio Tinto in early 2004. As an aircraft maintenance engineer at Qantas, he was named the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Apprentice /Trainee of the Year at the National Training Awards in 1995.

“I was doing well and I had a trades paper, but I was looking to become qualified through a degree,” the 35-year-old Mick explains.

He decided to undertake an engineering degree at Perth’s Curtin University of Technology and during his first year of the course was accepted into Rio Tinto’s National Indigenous Cadetship Programme, which involves vacation work for students at Rio Tinto mining operations.

“It was a great experience for me. I went to Paraburdoo (a Hamersley Iron iron ore operation) in the second year of my degree, then at the end of my third year I went to Argyle Diamonds,” Mick says. “Everyone takes me at face value and that’s why it is so enjoyable working here. It’s a great environment.”

After completing his degree, Mick obtained a graduate position at Argyle in the Kimberley region. He worked on a two weeks on/two weeks off commute roster from Perth, where his wife and two sons live, and aims to move into a more senior engineering role within the next five years.



“While I was working in Jabiru there was an Aboriginal educator working with Aboriginal trainees, teaching them about things like hygiene, budgeting, computer skills and driving. It was great to see.”

Denay Wanganeen
Receptionist and Assistant to
External Relations Department
Energy Resources of Australia

Pursuing what you enjoy

Visitors phoning or calling into the Darwin office of Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) are usually greeted by the cheery presence of Denay Wanganeen, a self-confessed “people person”. Denay, 26, works on reception at ERA and in addition, provides assistance to the External Relations team. She is often the first point of contact at ERA, and says that being on the frontline and meeting lots of different people is one of the highlights of her job.

Denay joined ERA in 2000 as an administrator in the Aboriginal Community Development team. She spent periods working at Jabiru, the township next to ERA’s Ranger uranium mine, and in the company’s strategic planning division before taking up her current post in early 2006.

“I really enjoy what I do,” Denay says. “I love helping out with the External Relations work, and doing things like putting together newsletters.” Denay, a Darwin local, completed high school in 1998 and undertook a government traineeship, before working in hospitality at Jabiru’s Croc Hotel. While she was primarily attracted to a job at Rio Tinto because of the good working conditions offered by the Group, she has since been impressed with the range of training and career opportunities on offer, particularly for Indigenous people.

“While I was working in Jabiru there was an Aboriginal educator working with Aboriginal trainees, teaching them about things like hygiene, budgeting, computer skills and driving,” Denay says. “It was great to see.”

Approximately 14 per cent of ERA’s workforce is Indigenous, and Denay says she has received nothing but support and encouragement from her workmates. She also receives strong support from her parents and brother, who live in Darwin.

Denay plans to eventually undertake formal tertiary study. “I just need to work out what it is that I want to do!” she says. “But for now, I’m very comfortable where I’m at and I look forward to taking on a few new challenges.”





A Final Word

The case studies in this booklet demonstrate how a carefully thought out employment policy can extend the benefits of mineral development.

It starts with programmes that counter educational disadvantage and build self esteem. These programmes dovetail with others that help Indigenous Australians make the transition to regular employment and a career.

The dividend is threefold: a mining operation gets a growing core of skilled employees; neighbouring communities become more stable and less dependent on welfare, and the skills and aptitudes of the local workforce eventually translate into a stronger, more sustainable regional economy.

Further Reading

For more information about the mining industry's approach to Indigenous employment in Australia see: Tiplady, T. and Barclay M. (2007) *Indigenous Employment in the Australian Minerals Industry*, CSRM: Brisbane.

This two year research project was funded by Rio Tinto Australia and conducted under the auspices of the Minerals Council of Australia's Social Policy Task Force.

For additional information about Indigenous Employment in Australia, see www.csrn.uq.edu.au. The site contains the full report and supporting tools conducted of a Rio Tinto funded study by the University of Queensland's Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining.

Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London listed public company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. The two companies are joined in a dual listed companies (DLC) structure as a single economic entity and have a market capitalisation of over US\$80 billion.

The Group finds, mines and processes the earth's mineral resources - metals and minerals essential for making thousands of everyday products that meet society's needs and contribute to improved living standards.

To deliver superior returns to shareholders over time, Rio Tinto takes a long term and responsible approach to the Group's business. This means concentrating on the development of first class orebodies into large, long life and efficient operations, capable of sustaining competitive advantage through business cycles.

The Group's major products include aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy products, gold, industrial minerals (borates, titanium dioxide, salt and talc), and iron ore. Its activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America. There are also significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and southern Africa.

Wherever Rio Tinto operates, health and safety is the first priority. Group businesses also put sustainable development at the heart of their operations. They work as closely as possible with host countries and communities, respecting their laws and customs. For Rio Tinto it is important that the environmental effects of its activities are kept to a minimum and that local communities benefit as much as possible from operations.

● Rio Tinto Aluminium

Rio Tinto Aluminium is an integrated product group with major operations in Australia. They include a bauxite mine at Weipa and the Yarwun and Queensland Alumina (Rio Tinto: 38.6 per cent) refineries in Gladstone. Primary aluminium is produced by smelters at Boyne Island (Rio Tinto: 59.4 per cent) near Gladstone and Bell Bay (Rio Tinto: 100 per cent) in Tasmania. It also maintains a 42.1 per cent interest in the Gladstone Power Station.

● Rio Tinto Copper

In Australia, Rio Tinto has an 80 per cent interest in Northparkes, a copper-gold mine in central New South Wales, Australia.

● Rio Tinto Diamonds

In Australia, Rio Tinto wholly owns and operates Argyle Diamonds in the east Kimberley region of Western Australia. Argyle Diamonds is the world's largest supplier of diamonds, producing approximately 30 million carats each year.

● Rio Tinto Energy

The Energy group comprises coal and uranium operations. Rio Tinto Coal Australia (RTCA) manages the group's Australian coal interests. These include, in Queensland; the Blair Athol (Rio Tinto 71 per cent), Kestrel (Rio Tinto: 80 per cent), Tarong (Rio Tinto; 100 per cent) and Hail Creek (Rio Tinto: 82 per cent) coal mines and Clermont deposit (Rio Tinto: 50 per cent).

RTCA also provides management services to Coal & Allied Industries (Rio Tinto: 75.7 per cent) for operation of its four mines located within the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. Coal & Allied wholly owns Hunter Valley Operations, has an 80 per cent interest in Mount Thorley operations, a 55.6 per cent interest in the Warkworth mine and 40 per cent interest in the Bengalla mine which abuts its wholly owned Mount Pleasant development project. Coal & Allied also has a 37 per cent interest in Port Waratah Coal Services coal loading terminal.

Energy Resources of Australia Ltd (Rio Tinto: 68.4 per cent) has uranium operations in the Northern Territory. It is world's third largest uranium producer.

● Rio Tinto Iron Ore

Rio Tinto's Iron Ore group wholly owns Hamersley Iron in Western Australia. Hamersley Iron operates eight mines in Western Australia, including two joint ventures, 630 kilometres of dedicated railway, and port and infrastructure facilities located at Dampier. These assets are run as a single operation managed and maintained by Pilbara Iron. The Rio Tinto Iron Ore group also includes Rio Tinto's 53 per cent interest in Robe River Iron Associates' two mines in Western Australia. The group produces more than 130 million tonnes of iron ore annually. In addition, the Iron Ore group includes the Hismelt® direct iron smelting plant in Western Australia.

● Rio Tinto Minerals

In Australia, Rio Tinto Minerals manages Dampier Salt's (Rio Tinto: 64.9 per cent) three salt operations located in Western Australia. It produces industrial salt by solar evaporation at Dampier, Port Headland and Lake MacLeod, where it also mines gypsum. Rio Tinto Minerals also operates a talc mine and processing facility at Three Springs Talc in Western Australia.

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