

Working in Partnership

The Mining Industry and Indigenous Communities

Geraldton, Western Australia Regional Workshop Report



Prepared for

Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

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Monday 24th December 2007

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Introduction

Background

The Working in Partnership Program was launched by the Commonwealth Government on 3rd August 2001.

The program is administered by the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET) and formerly the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, and primarily seeks to promote long-term partnerships between Indigenous communities and the exploration and mining industry. In addition to promoting long-term partnerships, the program aims to support and encourage the ongoing cultural change that continues to occur between the exploration and mining industry and Indigenous communities throughout Australia. In so doing, it seeks to build on relevant research which has been conducted in relation to sustainable mining practices.¹

Since the program's inception, the Department has developed, and continually updates an information kit which:

- presents selected case studies of successful partnership relationships between mining companies and Indigenous communities, showing a variety of approaches and outcomes;
- Reflects the diverse experiences of some of the people involved in the partnership process; and
- Illustrates the achievements of particular companies and Indigenous communities.

The information kit can be accessed by contacting the Department directly or through its working in Partnership Program website, at: <http://www.industry.gov.au/indigenouspartnerships>.

The program has involved the conduct of a series of regionally based workshops in key areas of interest throughout Australia. Previous workshops have been conducted in:

- 2002 - Alice Springs, NT
- 2003 - Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland, WA
- 2004 - Rockhampton and Cloncurry, QLD
- 2005 - Muswellbrook, NSW and Townsville, QLD
- 2006 - Illawarra, Orange and Cobar, NSW
- 2007 - Geraldton, WA and Horsham, VIC

The workshops have served to bring together stakeholders in major regional centres of mining activity, and to facilitate the discussion of local issues and progress towards achieving local outcomes.

The Geraldton workshop held at the African Reef Resort on Wednesday 21st and Thursday 22nd November 2007 represented the eleventh in the series of workshops conducted throughout Australia.

¹ See, e.g., Indigenous Support Services and ACIL Consulting, *Agreements between Mining Companies and Indigenous Communities: A Report to the Australian Minerals and Energy Environment Foundation*, 2001 (available at <http://www.naturalresources.org/minerals/CD/docs/mmsd/australia/finalreport/Indigenous.pdf>); The Allen Consulting Group, *Indigenous Communities & Australian Business: From Little Things, Big Things Grow*, 2001 (available online at <http://www.bca.com.au/content.asp?newsid=87347>); D Brereton, "The Role of Self-Regulation in Improving Corporate Social Performance: The Case of the Mining Industry", Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, University of Queensland, 2002 (available online at http://www.csr.uq.edu.au/docs/brereton_2002_1.pdf); L Tedesco *et al*, *Indigenous People in Mining*, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 2003.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide:

- An overview of the Geraldton workshop, including: background planning, theme, aims, methodology and structure; and
- Details of workshop outcomes and agreed actions.

The report recognises the diverse situations and circumstances that confront exploration and mining companies and Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal groups throughout Australia. For this reason, the suggestions provided in this report are not to be taken as necessarily applicable to other regions throughout Australia.

Workshop Planning

Background planning and research for the Geraldton Mid West Workshop commenced in February 2007 and involved:

- Consultation and input by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, Western Australia;
- Consultation and input by the key member companies of the Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance;
- Consultation with other key exploration, mining and contractor companies currently operating, or with interests in the Mid West and surrounding regions;
- Consultation with key Commonwealth, state, local government and non government organisations and agencies located, or with service delivery responsibilities in the region;
- Consultation with the Mid West Development Commission, the Yamaji Land and Sea Council and interested Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Reference Group Members and CDEP organisations;
- Consultation with key government representatives involved in the development of a proposed Regional Partnership Agreement – Employment for Aboriginal People in the Mid West; and
- Consultation with key members of the Office of Native Title, Government of Western Australia in relation to current Mid West Aboriginal land boundaries.

Throughout the consultation process it became obvious that there was considerable positive and high profile interest held among all stakeholder groups toward the conduct of a Working in Partnership workshop in the region.

This level of interest was attributed to the following factors:

- The Mid West region is considered to be the next potential boom area for mining in WA with a large number of companies having extensive and long-term interests;
- Based on current population data it is anticipated that once mining commences there is likely to be a significant shortage of qualified people living in the region resulting in a drain on local workforce numbers and companies opting to fly-in employees to fill the void;
- Industry representatives have a genuine desire to develop their understanding, appreciation and awareness of relevant Aboriginal groups, including the need to understand their problems, issues and aspirations;



- Industry and key government agencies are committed to the development of pre-vocational training programs which enhance local Aboriginal people's employment and business prospects and improve their social and economic position;
- Aboriginal stakeholders are keen to develop their understanding of the industry and local developments to ensure they can take full advantage of opportunities available, particularly for young people wanting to secure their social and economic future; and
- Key Government stakeholders were keen to use the workshop as an opportunity to promote a proposed Regional Partnership Agreement relating to economic, cultural and social sustainability for Aboriginal People in the Mid West, identify potential development opportunities and discuss industry specific training and skill requirements.

Theme, Aims and Agenda Items

The central theme of the workshop was the desirability of mining companies, Aboriginal groups and organisations, key government agency and service providers linked to the Regional Partnership Agreement to explore possibilities for partnership building, in a context in which they:

- Recognise that they have much to learn from each other;
- Acknowledge the need to plan ahead in readiness for expected future development in the region; and
- Recognise the potential for mutual benefit that exists in establishing sound working relationships and open and honest dialogue.

Workshop Aims

The central aim of the workshop was to provide a neutral regional forum, in which all stakeholder groups could meet to discuss regional problems and issues and consider solutions relevant to the support of regional partnerships. In particular, the specific aims and expected outcomes of the workshop were to:

- Promote positive interactions and enhance partnerships between relevant and appropriate Aboriginal groups, exploration, mining and contractor companies and key government and non-government organisations/agencies;
- Enhance Aboriginal people's understanding of the industry and provide an insight into future developments and opportunities in the region;
- Provide industry with a more detailed understanding of Aboriginal people's problems, issues and aspirations;
- Identify industry, government and community requirements relevant to building the capacity of local Aboriginal people to enhance opportunities for permanent employment; and
- Identify and discuss initiatives of mutual stakeholder benefit that could be incorporated to enhance the scope of the proposed Regional Partnership Agreement.



The workshop was designed to assist regional stakeholders to forge for themselves initiatives which they could develop and direct at a local level, wherever possible making more effective use of existing resources. All participants were encouraged to move their focus beyond short-term problems to the long-term mutual benefits offered by partnership relationships.

The intention was to direct stakeholders' efforts beyond debate towards a constructive dialogue addressing the six main themes of the Working in Partnership program:

- Employment
- Education and Training
- Business Opportunities
- Cultural Awareness
- Capacity Building
- Economic Empowerment

Workshop Agenda Items

Consistent with previous workshops conducted throughout Australia, agenda items 1, 2 and 3 below formed the foundation for the Geraldton Workshop while agenda item 4 provided the opportunity to consider and discuss future regional requirements, directions and strategies relevant to the potential formation of a Regional Partnership Agreement.

1 Open and Honest Problem Analysis

What are the real problems that confront Aboriginal groups working in partnership with exploration and mining companies and Government and non-Government agencies? AND - *What are the potential solutions?*

What are the real problems that confront exploration and mining companies working in partnership with Aboriginal groups and Government and non-Government agencies? AND - *What are the potential solutions?*

What are the real problems that confront Government and non-Government Agencies working in partnership with exploration and mining companies and Aboriginal groups? AND - *What are the potential solutions?*

2. Regional Partnership Analysis

Where are exploration/mining companies at now with their partnership arrangements with Aboriginal groups AND where do they want to be in five years time?

Where are Aboriginal groups at now with their partnership arrangements with exploration/mining companies AND where do they want to be in five years time?

Where are Government and non-Government agencies at now with their partnership arrangements with Aboriginal groups and exploration/mining companies AND where do they want to be in five years time?

3. Successful Regional Case Studies

Presentations were invited from exploration/mining, government and non-government agencies and Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal groups to showcase, consider and discuss key aspects, requirements and potential benefits relevant to any future partnership arrangement in the Mid West region.

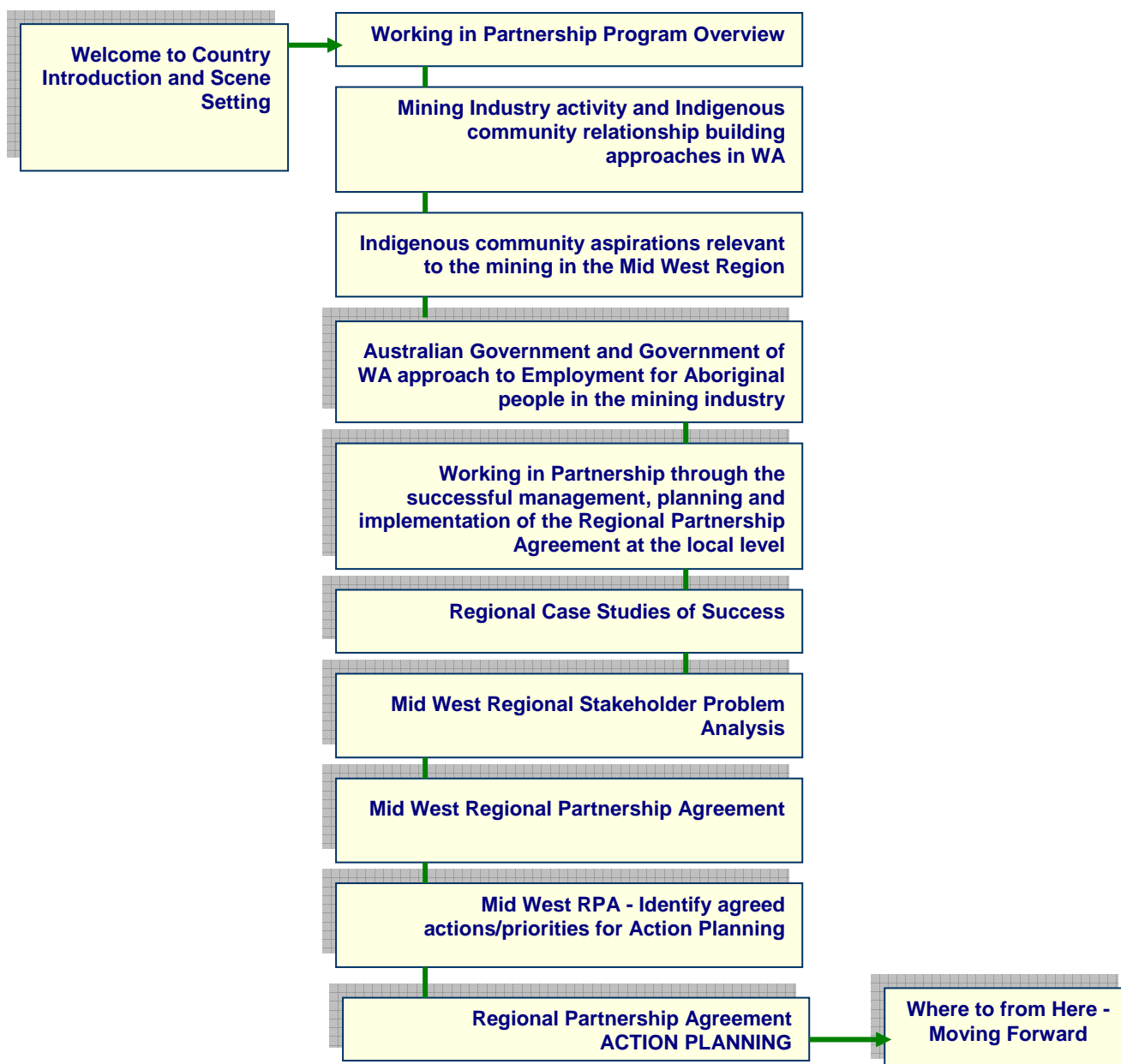


4. Regional Partnership Agreement – Employment for Aboriginal People in the Mid West

- What is the scope, aims and objectives of the Agreement and who will be involved?
- What models and structures are currently developed and what funding arrangements does the Agreement include?
- What communication strategy or process needs to be developed to sustain an effective Partnership Agreement with industry and Aboriginal communities in the region?
- What could be the mutual Vision and Strategic Goals and Priorities over the next five years for the Agreement?
- What are the likely operational priorities and key actions required over the next twelve months?
- Where to from here?

Methodology

In keeping with the workshop aims and the standard approach taken at earlier workshops in the program series, the Geraldton workshop was designed to maximise the time available for participant discussion of key issues. Following a planned traditional welcome to country, introductions and general scene setting, the workshop agenda was organised into the following sessions:



Workshop Overview

In opening the workshop, Yvonne Radcliffe, Yamaji Community Leader, performed a traditional welcome to country. Yvonne expressed her hope that the workshop would serve as a turning point in the development of Aboriginal people's economic and social status in the Mid West region, and that it would be grasped as an opportunity to coordinate the movement "beyond welfare" in a positive manner that would genuinely serve the interests of the Aboriginal community. She called upon participants to listen with open hearts and minds and for the benefit of all Aboriginal people throughout the region.

The Working in Partnership Program

David Abbott – Coordinator, Working in Partnership, DRET

Clarifying the aims and objectives of the workshop, David Abbott explained that the program is one which facilitates the process of developing regional solutions to regional problems, through a range of strategies. Working in Partnership has developed background material, including case studies of good work that the mining industry and Indigenous communities are already carrying out throughout the country.

"...I hope that the workshop will serve as a turning point in the development of Aboriginal people's economic and social status in the Mid West region, and that it will be grasped as an opportunity to coordinate the movement "beyond welfare" in a positive way that will serve the interests of the Aboriginal community."

Yvonne Radcliffe, Yamaji Community Leader

The program also organises and hosts workshops, such as the Geraldton workshop, which offer an informal, structured and neutral setting in which to foster and improve relationships between the mining / exploration industry and Indigenous people at the regional community level. Indigenous employment, training and business development are invariably key themes at the workshops, but discussion is not limited to these issues. Importantly, although Native Title and Indigenous cultural heritage concerns are recognised to be important, an effort is made to prevent these concerns from dominating workshop discussions, as there are other formal processes in which these issues can be addressed.

Mining Industry Activity and Indigenous Community Relationship - Building Approaches in WA

The first three substantive workshop sessions were dedicated to developing a context for later workshop discussions and analysis. In the first such session, representatives of three key Western Australian stakeholders were invited to present their views on the current state of the mining industry and approaches to building relationships with Indigenous communities in Western Australia.

Facilitating the Development and Participation of Indigenous People

Victoria Jackson – Acting Director, Aboriginal Economic Development, Department of Industry and Resources (DoIR)

Victoria explained that DoIR is the premier agency in the Western Australian government responsible for Aboriginal economic development. Its core values are:

- A commitment to grow a strong and sustainable economy with safe and thriving industries; and
- A commitment to knowing its business and the needs and expectations of its customers and the community.

DoIR works closely with the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Environment and Conservation. However, in the context of the Mid West, DoIR's focus is upon:

- Facilitating development that is sustainable and which benefits all of the people of the region, and the State generally; and
- Ensuring that the region's Indigenous people can participate in and benefit from the resulting economic activity.

As in all of Western Australia, the Mid West is experiencing strong economic growth which is the result of international demand for resources. DoIR is working with other agencies to manage this growth in a way that allows for Indigenous "buy-in", thereby creating opportunities for Indigenous employment, enterprise development and asset building.

Victoria stressed that although there have been mining booms in the past, these took place at a time when government and industry had a very different attitude towards working with Aboriginal people. Stakeholders have since moved a long way forward and, in fact, there is a sense in which industry's attitude has progressed in advance of governments in recognising that the only way to move forward is in a true partnership arrangement.

With this charter in mind, DoIR's global and regional role is to:

- Liaise with other agencies, including the Mid West Development Commission, explorers and miners and Indigenous groups;
- Facilitate the planning and development of resources infrastructure;
- Assist to manage environmental, heritage and native title processes;
- Regulate resources leases, royalties and rentals;
- Regulate environmental compliance on mining leases (under delegation from the Department of Environment and Conservation); and
- Work with Indigenous people to assist them in accessing government services in capacity-building – this is the role, in particular, of the Aboriginal Economic Development Group.

In this regard, DoIR has been involved in a range of key programs in the area, including programs hosted by the Yamaji Land and Sea Council and the Bayalgu Program (with Oxiana Golden Grove and Central Earth Moving).

In conclusion, Victoria emphasised that DoIR looks forward to working collaboratively with all stakeholders in capitalising on the opportunities presented by the current economic climate to fulfil their vision for the Mid West region as:

- A vibrant region for population growth and major infrastructure development, whilst maintaining a strong emphasis on environment and heritage protection;
- A region marked by active involvement of Indigenous people in the resource and services sectors; and
- A region with potential for an increased role for Indigenous organisations in delivering job outcomes.



The Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy Perspective

Cara Babb – Executive Officer Indigenous Affairs & Land Access, Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy

Cara explained that the Chamber is the peak body representing resource companies operating in Western Australia. As the industry advocate, it promotes the interests of its members to government in key areas including Indigenous affairs, training and employment. The Chamber operates regional councils, including one for the Mid West region, whose role it is to interface between government and community.

The Chamber was keen to be involved in the Working in Partnership workshop in Geraldton, believing the Mid West to be an excellent choice of location, with an exciting mix of emerging and mature projects making it well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities associated with the resources boom for the mutual advantage of industry and Indigenous people.



Cara stressed that the current and future projected shortage of skilled workers is a major issue for the resources sector in Western Australia – and hence for the sector nationally, with Western Australian sources accounting for half of total national mineral and petroleum sales and one-third of total Australian merchandise exports.

It is estimated that by 2015, an additional 42,000 workers will be required in Western Australia alone (a figure that does not even incorporate the effects of natural attrition through retirement, etc.). Understandably, the industry is looking to different and complementary strategies for recruitment, including attracting a broader pool of talented people into the sector.

At the same time, the concept of the industry's "social licence to operate" has become well-accepted, in the sense that industry employers appreciate that they need to be accepted as trusted members of the communities in which they operate, in order to have security of tenure.

"....the current and future projected shortage of skilled workers is a major issue for the resources sector in Western Australia."

Cara Babb, Executive Officer Indigenous Affairs & Land Access, Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy

The Chamber looked recently at trends in Indigenous participation in the resources industry and initiatives that people are taking around the State in this regard. Recent years have witnessed an intensification of efforts to build sustainable economic partnerships between industry and Indigenous groups, whether through employment or business enterprise development. On the employment front, there has been a considerable emphasis on improving Indigenous employment rates, including the adoption of target employment levels, usually supported by specialised recruitment and retention strategies.

The promotion of Indigenous business development has also become established as an alternative means for improving Indigenous employment and the overall economic base of communities, often supporting a broader range of options for participating in the resources boom than those involving a commitment to 12 hour shift work.

Companies are supporting the development of a range of associated programs in schools and the field of job-readiness training, to address barriers to accessing and succeeding within the industry. Meanwhile, many companies now recognise that in order for these and other initiatives to work, internal efforts must be made, through compulsory cultural awareness training and other methods, to develop an organisational culture that promotes such initiatives.

In conclusion, Cara said that although the Chamber's Indigenous affairs portfolio has traditionally focussed on land access issues, it is now much more proactive in working to assist members to develop better relationships with Indigenous communities, recognising the multiple areas where engagement and collaboration can benefit both industry and communities.

Indigenous Community Aspirations Relevant to the Mining Industry in the Mid West Region

The second major workshop session featured presentations from two local community members, who were invited to speak about Indigenous community aspirations relevant to the mining industry in the region.

Yvonne Radcliffe, community leader and local Aboriginal business operator emphasised the diversity of local Aboriginal communities and organisations within the region, and stressed that this must be taken into account when developing programs such as cultural awareness training for non-Indigenous people.



Her own organisation's aspirations were to seek strong partnerships with mining companies who respect and consult with Aboriginal people with respect to cultural heritage protection and securing long-term benefits to the local community in terms of Indigenous training and employment. Yvonne stressed that although similar aspirations will be held by many Indigenous groups, there is nevertheless no substitute for consulting with local people.

Yvonne's comments concerning the importance of recognising and working constructively with the diversity present

within the regional Mid West Aboriginal community were echoed by Jenny Kniveton, CEO of Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation. Jenny's presentation focused upon the work being performed by Bundiyarra and its aspirations for the future of the Indigenous community in the Mid West.

Jenny Kniveton - CEO, Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation

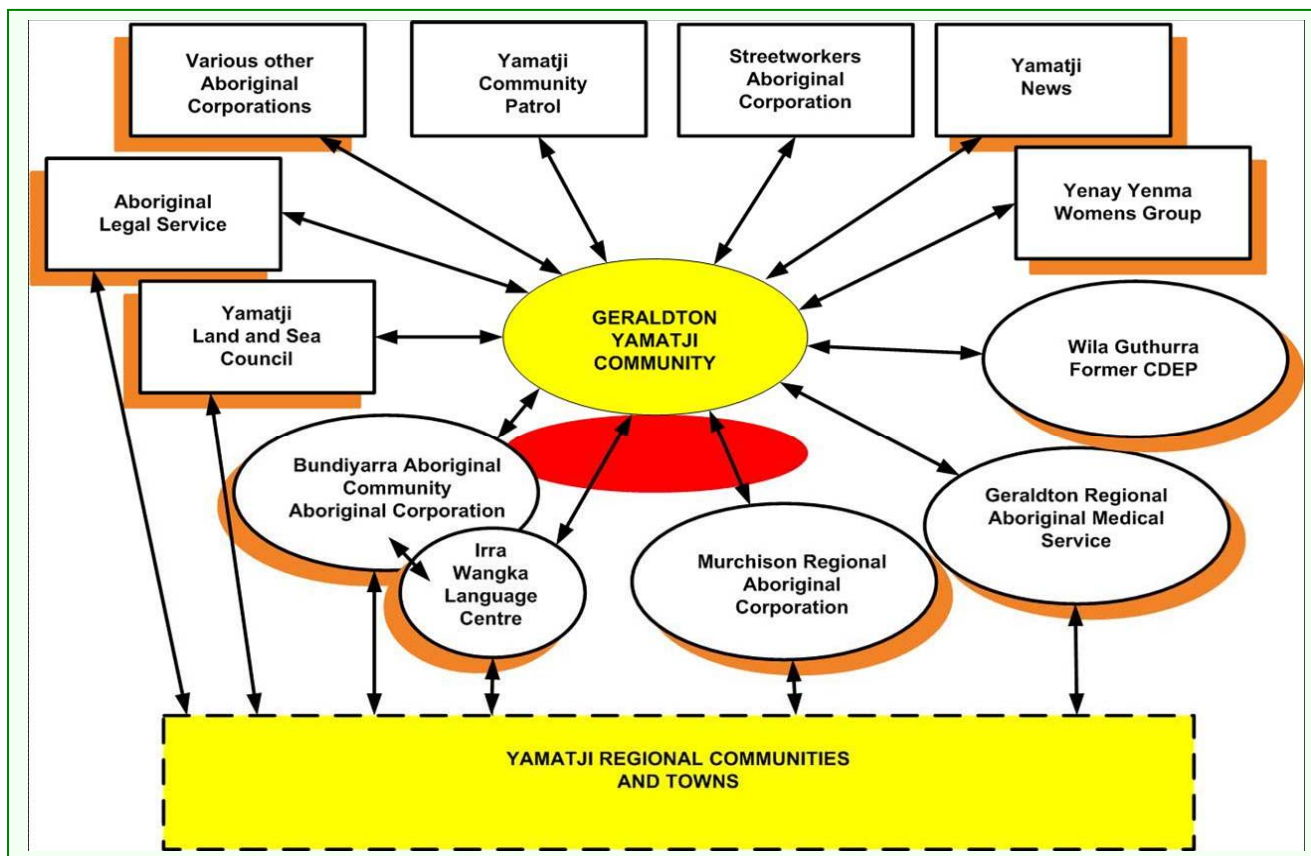
Jenny explained that Bundiyarra is a resource agency which runs multiple programs including a remote outreach as well as a town-based focus. It works with remote communities, undertakes business administration for several organisations, and manages housing repairs and maintenance.

Like Yvonne, Jenny emphasised the diversity present within the Mid West Indigenous community.

Many Indigenous organisations in and around Geraldton have been established and run by individual family groups, and this fact alone makes it impossible to identify a single person or small number of persons who can speak on behalf of **all** organisations in the region.

The presence of other organisations with very different charters and roles throughout the region, such as the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Yamaji Land and Sea Council and the Murchison Region Aboriginal Corporation, adds to the complexity.

In its capacity as an agency working with and for a diverse range of Aboriginal organisations in the region, Bundiyarra is well-placed to comment on the preconditions for effective, long-term Aboriginal community development. Bundiyarra itself has a comprehensive long-term business plan and has commenced creation of a professional corporate presence which can underpin many possible initiatives within the region.



Proposed model* for the Geraldton / Mid West Aboriginal Alliance – currently being employed by Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation. (Reproduced from W.D. Warner, B. Appl.Sc., Black Democracy: A Study of Aboriginal Leadership and Representation in an urban setting, Honours Dissertation, 2007). *The model is incomplete and continues to be updated to reflect local changes as and when they occur.

Bundiyarra also promotes the benefits of Aboriginal community sharing of resources and social capital for small organisations to access financial and guidance services to improve governance and community planning. To advocate the benefits of a cooperative working and planning relationship with Aboriginal groups, Bundiyarra has ensured that it maintains a representative structure, involving two people from each Indigenous organisation in the town.

For the same reason, Bundiyarra has convened a forum for Chairpersons of Aboriginal organisations in Geraldton (the Chairpersons' Cooperative), where the chairs of each organisation sit together as an Aboriginal Alliance (as outlined in the above diagram).

To date, this forum has met twice and has been fairly successful. Initiatives such as these, and the production of promotional materials such as the local Aboriginal Community Directory, assist Bundiyarra to serve as an incubator for small organisations' business and community development. For this reason, Bundiyarra is well placed to fulfil the role of a competent community development agency in Geraldton and surrounding regions, with the required expertise and human resources to create effective working relationships between the Aboriginal community and others.

Jenny explained that the Bundiyarra initiatives can yield a range of benefits for employment, training and capacity building in the Mid West region, including:

- Increased training opportunities by setting up training centres and using organisations as hubs for training Aboriginal people;
- Creating good, strong relationships with employer groups, mining companies and the chamber of commerce;
- Developing an Aboriginal Employment and Training Strategy to fit into the progress of economic development in mining and other sectors;

- Strong governance and community vision;
- The effective utilisation of organisations' current capacity and expertise, to support a structured approach to training in all areas;
- Creating businesses, equipped to compete for tenders in the open market;
- Local knowledge of the barriers to Indigenous entry into work, and consequent best strategies for addressing these issues; and
- Role modelling, through affiliated organisations, to create good work ethics.

Jenny identified the following things as being required, in order to realise these potential benefits:

- Commitment from mining and other industries for long-term projects (not short-term failures);
- A willingness from industry and government to let Indigenous people have a go and see if they can get it right themselves, using external expertise only as and when necessary;
- Promotion and marketing of the successes within the Aboriginal community; and
- Allowing Aboriginal people to drive their own programs.

Australian Government and Western Australian Government Approaches to Employment for Aboriginal People in the Mining Industry

The third substantive workshop session of the morning provided an introduction to initiatives being implemented by the Commonwealth and State governments which had the potential to bear upon workshop discussions. These initiatives include a proposed Regional Partnership Agreement for the Mid West region.

The Australian Government Approach

Colin Nagle - Western Australian State Manager, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)

On behalf of the Commonwealth, Colin explained that he would offer a government perspective on the significance of the Workshop and would speak about the possibility or expectation that a Regional Partnership Agreement may be an outcome from this forum. By way of background, Colin outlined the Commonwealth's current policy framework for Indigenous Affairs. He explained that the Commonwealth's current approach is informed by three factors:

1. Significant change in the Commonwealth's Indigenous Affairs focus

The current Commonwealth initiatives in the field of Indigenous Affairs are informed by the notion of a partnership between community (including the not-for-profit sector), industry and government, which is:

- Built around community priorities and needs;
- Flexibly funded;
- Coordinated by a whole-of-government approach; and
- Marked by a long-term focus and a commitment to shared responsibility.

The emphasis is upon moving away from a passive welfare model towards active participation and mutual obligation. For example, CDEP has been removed from urban areas with a strong labour market, and remote area exemptions are also being lifted, to remove the ability of people to remain on income support when they do, in fact, have the capacity to work.

At the same time, government's existing methods of service delivery are being overhauled. More intensive and targeted approaches are being commenced at the local level, using the energy, knowledge and experience that local people have, to deal with local issues and making the most of local opportunities to tailor services to the needs of individuals.

2. The Minerals Council of Australia Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth

In June 2005, the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and the Commonwealth Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning Indigenous economic development. The purpose of the MoU is to formalise a partnership between the Commonwealth and the MCA to work together with Indigenous people to build sustainable, prosperous communities in which individuals can create and take up social, employment and business opportunities in mining regions. The central question being addressed by the MoU is how to ensure that we have sustainable indigenous communities beyond the life of operating mines.

Lead agencies for the implementation of the MoU are the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and DEWR. A National Steering Committee oversees the MOU's implementation. Implementation is, necessarily, regionally-focussed as different members of the MCA have identified particular sites they wish to target at a local level. Six pilot locations (most of which are in Western Australia) have been identified for the roll-out of the implementation. Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) are being developed at each location: Western Cape York (Queensland), Tanami (Northern Territory) and East Kimberley, the Pilbara, Boddington and Wiluna (Western Australia).

“.....The emphasis is upon moving away from a passive welfare model towards active participation and mutual obligation.”

Colin Nagle, Western Australian State Manager, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

3. Indigenous Economic Development Framework

The Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments have signed a Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs and an Indigenous Economic development framework. This paves the way for more collaborative effort between governments in addressing Indigenous disadvantage, including Indigenous unemployment.

What is a Regional Partnership Agreement?

Colin explained that an RPA is a tool: a framework for various stakeholders to come together to identify a set of specific objectives and to determine strategies and tangible actions to achieve them. In RPAs, people agree who is going to do what and by when, in carrying out the determined actions, on a regional basis; they serve as a planning and project management tool.

Some RPAs involve a commitment to very high level policy actions. For example, in the Pilbara, an RPA agreed action was to change housing policy in Western Australia, so that Indigenous people did not lose access to their homes once they started earning an income from employment in the resources sector.

This commitment was made shortly after the signing of the Port Hedland RPA. The resultant two-year moratorium on people being asked to leave their Homeswest homes after exceeding the income threshold has provided an opportunity for people to accumulate wealth in order to be able to move into their own homes in a planned and organised fashion.

This particular initiative was accompanied also by strategies around home ownership and wealth creation, and is informed by the recognition that there is simply no acceptable alternative housing in the relevant areas.

Colin detailed the following examples of RPAs that have been developed to date in Western Australia:

<p>Parties: The Australian Government, the WA State Government, the Town of Port Hedland, BHP Billiton Iron Ore, Newcrest Mining, Fortescue Metals Group, Ngarda Civil & Mining, Pilbara Logistics, Indigenous Mining Services, Bloodwood Tree, Hedland CDEP, Pilbara Meta Maya, Pilbara Job Futures, Apprenticeships WA.</p>
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Within 5 years, to reduce the rates of Indigenous unemployment in the Port Hedland region by 50%; and ▪ To place at least 90 additional local Indigenous people in jobs in the Port Hedland region each year for the next five years.
<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a new working partnership ▪ Detail strategies and projects for joint action by Indigenous communities, Indigenous organisations, industry and government. ▪ Address and overcome major barriers to indigenous people engaging fully in the labor market – projects and initiatives focus on : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding an implementation team ○ Providing additional mentoring and case management support ○ Addressing substance abuse – new support and testing ○ Driver’s licenses - attainment and usability ○ Child care shortages ○ Indigenous business development ○ Housing affordability ○ Education and training and linkages to employment.

<p>Parties: Australian Government, WA Government, Shires of Wyndham/East Kimberley and Halls Creek; Argyle Diamond Mine (Rio Tinto), Voyages El Questro, Roche, Wunan Foundation, East Kimberley CDEP, Ngoonjuwah Council Aboriginal Corporation, Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation, Warmun Community Inc, Work Base, Kimberley Group Training, East Kimberley Job Pathways, Kimberley TAFE</p>
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To place at least 300 additional Indigenous people in jobs in the East Kimberley on an annual basis over the next five years ▪ To reduce the rate of Indigenous unemployment in the East Kimberley by 50% within 5 years ▪ To equalise the rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment in the region within 10 years.

Actions:

- Establish a working partnership
- Local industry and employer engagement – ‘300 club’
- Work readiness projects including additional mentoring support
- Business Development - business incubator
- Child care
- Accommodation for trainees and apprentices

Parties:

Australian Government, WA Government, the Shires of Ashburton and Roebourne, Pilbara Iron (Rio Tinto Iron Ore), Woodside Energy, Ngarda Civil & Mining, Fortescue Metals Group, HWE, Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation, Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation, Marnda Mia CNC Pty Ltd, Buurabalayji Thalanyji Association, Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation, Yamaji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation, Pilbara Development Commission.

Targets:

- Within 5 years, to reduce the rates of Indigenous unemployment in the Ashburton/Roebourne region by 50%; and
- To place at least 110 additional local Indigenous people in jobs in the Ashburton/Roebourne region each year for the next 5 years.

Priority Areas:

- Improve the work readiness of Indigenous people in the Ashburton/Roebourne region who are not currently engaged in the labour market
 - Targeted education and training for employment
 - Driver’s licences
 - Drug and alcohol support
 - Support for youth at risk
- Promote sustainable employment outcomes
 - Child care
 - Housing
- Development of sustainable business opportunities

Colin reported that in developing these and other RPAs, the Commonwealth and State Governments have learned that the following are keys to their success:

- The RPA content must be built around community priorities and needs;
- There is a need to maintain focus in developing agreements by looking beyond immediate problems, for solutions and capacity;
- The right people must be at the table – that is, those people in a position to make decisions and commitments;
- Multi-agency, industry and community connections and partnerships are invaluable;
- Parties must ensure that engagement with Indigenous people and communities is meaningful and effective; and
- Resourcing is required to implement the agreement – in particular, a project team is required to drive the initiatives, as with any major project.

The Western Australian Government Approach

Danny Ford - Director, Policy and Coordination, Department of Indigenous Affairs

Danny explained that he had been working with the Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) for the past six months. As a Noongah man, he appreciates the perception that Indigenous Affairs has to some degree lost direction in the recent past. However, today, Western Australia is a very strong supporter of the RPA process, under the terms of the Bilateral Agreement struck between the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Danny expressed his confidence that, as an emerging tool, the RPA framework would benefit the Geraldton region.

This is because broad collaboration at the local level is critical to achieving significantly better outcomes for Indigenous people in communities. One of the strategic strengths of the RPA process is that agreed commitments are signed off by State Cabinet: it is this that forces all State Departments, beyond DIA, to implement the commitments. Backed by this kind of structure, real change can be achieved – such as the Department of Housing & Works moratorium introduced on Indigenous people being required to leave their Homeswest homes as part of the implementation of the Port Hedland RPA (mentioned earlier by Colin Nagle). Danny emphasised that it was possible to learn from the lessons of past errors, and that respect and community consultation are critical to the success of all new initiatives.

At present, most new RPAs are being developed to facilitate engagement with the mining sector. There is considerable interest in seeing how RPAs might be developed to engage with other sectors of the economy in the not-too-distant future.

Management, Planning and Implementation of Partnership Initiatives at the Local Level

Following the three morning workshop sessions, which outlined the context for stakeholder engagement in the Mid West region, a further two whole-group sessions were dedicated to the collective discussion of matters which would inform later workshop discussions about how best to progress partnership-building initiatives in the Mid West.

The first such session was led by Grant Sarra, who sought to provide an overview of what has happened elsewhere in Australia in terms of developing relationships between the mining industry and Indigenous communities.

Grant first identified a number of common problems which were immediately familiar to workshop participants:

- Traditional Owners and other Indigenous people are generally still on a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding industry priorities;
- The mining industry and associated industries are also still on a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding the intergenerational psychological and sociological impacts of colonisation on Indigenous people;
- There is too much confusion, too much conflict and not much coordination;



“...broad collaboration at the local level is critical to achieving significantly better outcomes for Indigenous people in communities.”

Danny Ford, Director, Policy and Coordination, Department of Indigenous Affairs

- Existing Government agency programs and resources are often not being used effectively;
- Industry is turned to as the fourth level of government;
- Industry often feels it is being “set up”, whilst Indigenous people often feel they are being “left out”, in negotiation processes;
- Commonwealth and State Governments can often seem to be in conflict with each other;
- Land Councils are often expected to perform well beyond what their level of resources allow;
- Expectations are not clearly defined and can quickly become unrealistic;
- Factionalism – amongst Indigenous communities and within industry – is everywhere;
- Touches of ignorance and arrogance, combined with misinformation, complicate communication and negotiation processes;
- Missed opportunities abound; and
- Although resources sector jobs are there, a significant skills gap needs to be addressed to get Indigenous people into the jobs associated with the mining industry.

Following on from this discussion, Grant identified the needs of key stakeholders participating in the partnership-building process:

- The mining industry needs expedient access to land;
- Governments need to foster exploration and development to yield economic benefits that can be equitably distributed throughout the community, achieving tangible social justice outcomes – not least access, equity and participation for Indigenous people; and
- Indigenous people need to identify and preserve their ancient cultural heritage, whilst enjoying the same prospects for employment, economic prosperity and quality of life as other community members in today’s monetary economy.

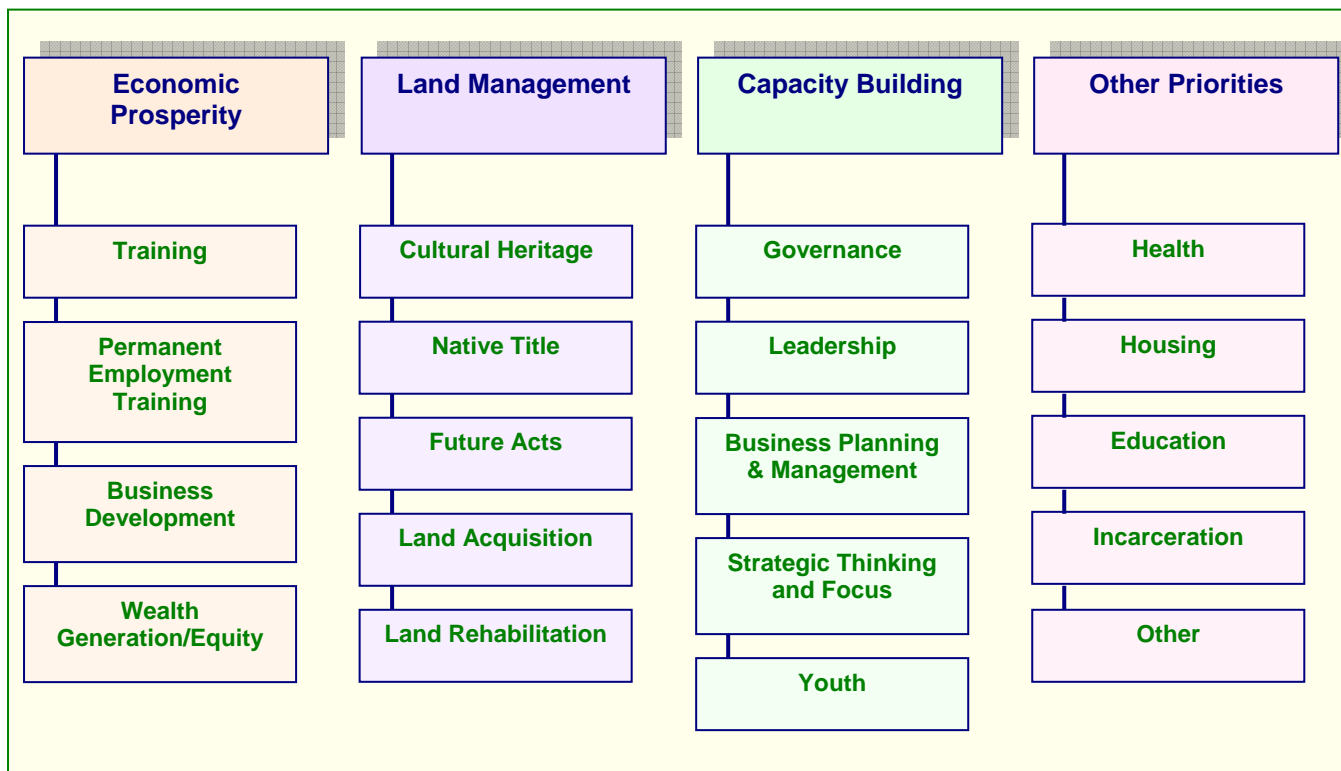
In order to progress towards the realisation of these needs, any partnership process needs to be cohesive, focused, coordinated, adequately resourced, functional and highly productive. At a minimum, it must address the following themes and priorities:

- Effective mechanisms for securing industry access to land which are appropriately linked to cultural heritage, native title, environmental management and general community engagement processes;
- Resolution of fundamental issues concerning who speaks for country and how the relevant persons are appropriately contacted and accessed;
- Relevant revision of policies impacting upon Indigenous engagement and employment at mine sites;
- Coordinated, well-resourced initiatives to address industry skills shortages in a timely fashion, with attention to the detail of the challenges involved in shifting Indigenous people from drug-dependence, improving literacy and numeracy, and achieving necessary prequalification such as driver’s licences and clean police records;
- The necessity of securing sustainable development – permanent employment (not just training), genuine business opportunities and overall long-term improvement in the pre-qualification levels of individuals within Indigenous communities; and
- Adoption of a coordinated, strategic focus for ongoing planning.

“...As a young Aboriginal woman, I hope that this partnership process can work effectively, because it is about my future as well...”

Samara Boyd, Workshop Participant

Grant emphasised that in order for progress to be made towards these goals, Indigenous groups must also become united and strategically focused (as outlined during the workshop by the diagram below) in their pursuit of pre-identified priorities.



Grant concluded by explaining that the ultimate solutions would not be found during the course of a two-day workshop but a good start could be made.

Overall solutions will require a collective capacity at regional level to show genuine leadership and that this type of leadership needed to start by acknowledging and discussing each other's problems, issues and aspirations.

Case Studies of Successful Partnership Initiatives

As a precursor to the afternoon problem and solution analysis workshop sessions, case studies were presented to participants, showcasing successful partnership initiatives that have been developed between industry and Indigenous communities throughout Western Australia.

The Rio Tinto Iron Ore Perspective

Brad Snell - Specialist, Community Education, Pilbara Iron / President, Shire of Roebourne

Offering an indication of the scale of Rio Tinto Iron Ore's operations in Western Australia, Brad Snell explained that the company is the largest employer of Aboriginal people in the mining industry in Australia, with 238 Aboriginal employees currently with the company (up from 130 in January 2006).

The company's target for Indigenous apprentices and trainees is 30% of the total workforce. Its overall target for Indigenous employment is 15% which approximates the Indigenous proportion of the population of the Pilbara region. Brad indicated that much of the progress that has been made to date in increasing Aboriginal employment within the company has come from building partnerships with Indigenous groups.

Brad emphasised here the importance of fostering such partnerships and the associated importance of breaking through the silences (failures of communication) that often exist between all levels of government.

Brad explained that Rio Tinto Iron Ore's Aboriginal Employment Strategy is managed by himself and a team of six Aboriginal people. The Strategy focuses upon initiatives that actively progress Indigenous people through the recruitment process wherever they meet selection criteria. At the same time, the Strategy aims to educate the non-Indigenous workforce in matters that impact upon Indigenous employment by a range of educational initiatives including:

- Short (2 hour) courses for non-Indigenous industry staff on the theme of working with Indigenous people;
- Longer (4 hour) courses for all company employees, which focus on the broader context for engagement with Indigenous people; and
- Two-day courses involving travel to remote communities, which offer a deeper insight into Indigenous communities and culture.

Entry of Indigenous participants into the mining sector is often through completion of the Certificate II in Metalliferous Mining. However, many people struggle to meet standard company selection criteria, such as the requirement to hold a Heavy Rigid driver's licence.

Rio Tinto Iron Ore's team works closely with TAFE and others to assist Indigenous people to log sufficient hours on vehicles to qualify to C-class and more advanced licences. Brad listed a large number of other Indigenous employment and related initiatives in which Rio Tinto Iron Ore has had involvement, including:

- The Gumala Mirnuwarni Program – now in its 10th year as an aspirational program improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in the shire of Roebourne,² and now being replicated in more than 40 other Australian communities.
- The Garnjurri Mirnumurri Ngurr-unga Program (Tom Price Education Partnership) – a partnership between Rio Tinto Iron Ore, the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, local Aboriginal community members, Department of Education Science and Training and the Department of Education (WA), which has just supported the first Indigenous student from a remote community outside Tom Price to complete Year 12.
- The Roebourne Pathways Program – a program aiming to smooth the transition into apprenticeships, traineeships and employment for Indigenous Roebourne students in Years 10, 11 and 12, and which has recently supported three young Indigenous people from Cape Lambert to obtain apprenticeships.
- The “On My Way Program” developed by the David Wirrpunda Foundation – a program using innovative techniques to focus youth on positive role models and other strategies for self-development (including signing a compact to stay out of police trouble, in return for which participants are rewarded by getting to attend AFL games).
- The Ashburton Work Start Program – a partnership involving Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Job Futures/North West Jobs, Skilled Engineering, Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, Pilbara TAFE, Pilbara Gascoyne Population Health and the Shire of Ashburton, which focuses on Indigenous people who are long-term unemployed and nowhere near work-readiness stage, providing them with literacy training and other skills in an adult learning environment. The Program recently won an Adult Learning Award in Cairns.
- The Roebourne Work Start Program – a partnership between Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Pilbara TAFE and Brida Contracting (Ngarilyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation's commercial arm), which exploits the additional Indigenous training and employment opportunities available through labour hire into mining and associated infrastructure operations.
- The Australian Technical College in Port Hedland – strongly supported and managed by Rio Tinto Iron Ore, the college is targeting an 80% Indigenous intake.

“...much of the progress that has been made to date in increasing Aboriginal employment within the company has come from building partnerships with Indigenous groups.”

Brad Snell, Specialist, Community Education, Pilbara/President, Shire of Roebourne

² Case Studies of these and other programs can be found on the Working in Partnership website, at <http://www.industry.gov.au/content/itrinternet/cmscontent.cfm?ObjectID=5F6E940E-CB3E-4F32-82E6F79F1E07BE26>

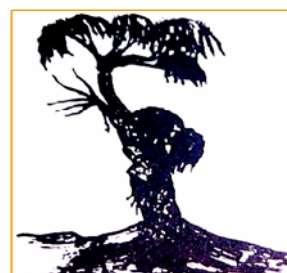
- Indigenous school-based and university scholarships.
- Indigenous Cadetships (DEWR).

Brad emphasised that real success in increasing Indigenous employment comes only with considerable effort being directed into “micro-strategies” that are needed to address the fundamental problems faced by Indigenous people (staying off drugs, getting a driver’s licence, keeping out of trouble with the police). These micro-strategies are heavily dependent upon the committed teachers, mentors and other people on the ground, who work one-on-one with Indigenous people.

Port Hedland Regional Partnership Agreement

Bob Neville - CEO, Bloodwood Tree

Bob explained that the Bloodwood Tree Association Inc. (BTA) is an incorporated non-profit Aboriginal organisation, based in South Hedland since 1977, managed by a community-based committee using government funding, donations and voluntary assistance to provide services to the community. The total income of the BTA grossed in excess of \$2.5 million in the 2006/2007 financial year.



Programs currently run by the BTA include:

- A sobering up shelter (which amalgamated with BTA in 2006);
- The Bunara Maya Aboriginal Hostel (short-term accommodation);
- A substance use program (offering education and counselling);
- Community patrols;
- A homeless support service;
- A perpetrator intervention program;
- A community advocacy service (housing, income, economic development, etc);
- Emergency relief assistance;
- Skills audits;
- Driver’s licence programs ; and
- Training and employment programs.

Because of their relevance to themes being discussed at the workshop, Bob offered further details concerning the last three programs in particular.

Skills Audits

BTA and the Pilbara Native Title Service (through the Yamaji Land and Sea Council) have joined forces to offer strategic support to groups implementing Native Title agreements which offer the foundation for increased Indigenous participation in the mining workforce in the Pilbara. To date, BTA has completed four skills audits for separate Native Title claimant groups and mining companies to assist in facilitating skills training and employment.

The audits have been funded by the mining companies involved. The first such audit, conducted for the Martu (Western Desert) People is understood to have cost Newcrest Mining approximately \$4,500.

Driver's Licence Programs

A Memorandum of Understanding between Pilbara TAFE (Pundulmurra Campus) and BTA was launched in 2005. Under the MoU, BTA and TAFE work together to support Indigenous people to gain the C-class and HR-class driving licences which are a prerequisite to work in the mining sector. In essence, BTA and TAFE have started their own driving school. The program uses three manual vehicles (including a dual-control instructor's car) and a tipper truck (mine-oriented). The program has been funded through Lotterywest, BHP Billiton, Newcrest Mining and the Commonwealth government (ICC).

Training & Employment Programs

Bob detailed seven initiatives in which BTA has been involved which have been successfully run to date to support the achievement of training and employment outcomes for Indigenous people within the Port Hedland region:

1. Hedland Local Employment Strategy

Initiated by BTA in 2003, this strategy brought together 21 Hedland providers in the employment, education and training fields. Through the development of a network, all participants agreed to:

- Identify and address barriers to employment (with unemployment running at 40% at commencement of the strategy);
- Create opportunities for training, employment and career advancement for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living in the Hedland region;
- Share and promote services;
- Develop and implement initiatives; and
- Develop and promote cultural awareness to employers (these are extremely important, as it has to be emphasised to employers that *they* need to undertake training, too).

The strategy served as a forerunner to the Hedland Regional Partnership Agreement.

2. Employment Directions Network / Aboriginal Education Training & Employment Officer

Staff within BTA can assist with all necessary support to give people the skills and confidence to apply for and maintain a paid job, including:

- Resume writing (guidance, advice and access to computers);
- Skills training (guidance, advice, enrolment support);
- Job search and selection criteria (guidance / practical support);
- Career counselling (guidance, advice, linkages); and
- Employment support (including mentoring and holistic support).

3. Preparing the Workforce

A Pilbara TAFE initiative supported by BTA and Job Network agencies, the Preparing the Workforce program is a 12-week program for candidates seeking employment in the resource and related industries. Participants gain a Certificate I in Industrial Skills. Program partners assist with practical, social and emotional supports, accommodation support, supply of protective gear, drug and alcohol counselling and goal setting plans. To date, 9 courses have been run, with a 95% success rate in getting participants into jobs.

4. Annual Training & Employment EXPO

Organised by BTA and Pilbara TAFE, the EXPO is held annually and is now attended by close to 500 people (mainly youth). Participating employers now number 25, and include major resource companies from the Pilbara and the Australian Defence Force.

5. Pingku Partnership

The Pingku Partnership is a unique strategic alliance between BTA, BHP Billiton, Apprenticeships WA and 7 contracting companies including Monadelphous, John Holland and Downer Engineering. The current programs are offering training and employment for up to 16 Indigenous people in Hedland. Under the program, BTA works with participants for 6-8 weeks on workshops, after which time participants attend the TAFE Campus for a further 6-8 weeks to gain skills, while also doing work experience on job sites. Participants are paid a training wage from the time that they commence training on campus. Eight participants graduated from the program on 16 November 2007, with a further 6 people commencing Pingku traineeships on 20 November 2007. Funding for the program has been provided by BHP Billiton.

6. Hedland RPA

The Hedland RPA was signed in November 2006. BTA chairs the RPA Committee – a critical role which allows local people to drive the RPA process. The RPA Committee meets quarterly to guide and oversee implementation of RPA commitments by the RPA Implementation Team (which includes representatives from Department of Indigenous Affairs, the ICC, Department of Industry & Resources and DEWR).

The targets set by the RPA are astounding, not least the 5-year target of reducing the regional Aboriginal unemployment rate by 50% within 5 years. This target is achievable, but all parties involved acknowledge that to go beyond this, to bring the rate down to the mainstream level, will be very difficult.

7. Job Track

After BTA's initial successes became more widely recognised, they were asked to develop a "model" for success in progressing unemployed Indigenous people through to full-time employment.

BTA developed a 9-step program, involving:

1. Assessment
2. Participant appraisal
3. Identify opportunities
4. Assess employability
5. Employment suitability
6. Employment training
7. Job interview
8. Employment expectation workshop
9. Into a "JOB" (job agreement, post-employment support).

BTA has developed an on-the-ground "work readiness" program, which makes strong use of group therapy, to support the achievement of employment outcomes. Organisers have found that issues such as substance abuse aren't as significant, as impediments to employment, as was initially thought: experience has shown that when people are motivated to work in the mining industry, they will just give recreational drug use away.

Indigenous program staff at BTA individually case manage, motivate and mentor participants, and a contract consultant is used to engage with major and minor employer groups to secure job placements.



BTA contracts with DEWR (under the STEPers program) to place up to 100 unemployed local Aboriginal people per year into real employment. Since commencement of the program in April 2007, 68 local Indigenous people have gained real jobs, and over 20 businesses and industry contractors have registered their interest in supporting Job Track.

Recently, the Pilbara Meta Maya Indigenous Housing organisation has commenced planning for a building construction program, as the demand for pre-skilled employees is extending into other employment sectors as well.

The East Kimberley Experience

Ian Trust - CEO, Wunan Foundation

Ian explained that the Wunan Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation based in the East Kimberley (centred around Kununurra and Wyndham and extending east to the Northern Territory border). The Foundation is managed by an Aboriginal Board made up of people from the East Kimberley.



It currently employs 55 people, 50% of whom are Aboriginal. The Foundation now has \$15 million in capital assets, with investments including buildings and offices (with Commonwealth and State Government tenants) yielding a \$450,000 annual rental income and a tourism company (partnership with Australian Pacific Touring).

Ian emphasised that the Foundation uses its capital assets to fund its operations. The aim of building the Foundation's investment base – a 10-year project which utilised opportunities presented during the ATSI era – has always been to build the Foundation's capacity to deliver programs.

The Foundation's programs are designed to move people off welfare, into employment, and extend from early childhood through to adulthood:

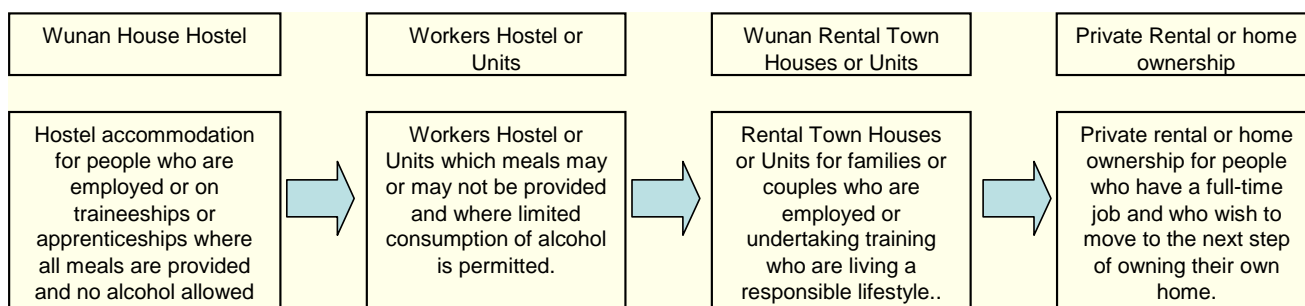
Wunan Foundation Helping people to help themselves Menu of existing and proposed programs focusing on employment, education & training					
Proposed Program	Existing Program	Existing Program	Existing Program	Existing Program	Existing Program
Strong Start 0 – Year 5	Work Readiness	Stepping-stone Housing	Training & Employment	Work-away	LCP
Education based program which provides mentoring & support for families & measures success by economic & social progress of the family & education achievement of their children	Program assists people who do not have any work ethics by training, mentoring & support to be able to acquire and hold a job or traineeship	Transitional housing program to assist individual and families to move from a dependency or consumption based lifestyle to one where they are in control of their lives by using housing as an incentive	Program assists people who do have the ability and a work ethic to find a job or to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship	Program assists people who may not have a work ethic to work in another location to broaden their horizons, increase their life skills and develop a work ethic	Program assists people from 13 – 19yrs to transition from school to work

Ian offered further details concerning several of these programs:

Stepping Stone Housing

Ian stressed that housing is a key to getting people off welfare into work. If you have 10 or 15 people living in a house, the chances are that they won't turn up for work every day, and that their children won't go to school every day.

If you solve the problem about housing, you will go a long way to solving the problems associated with welfare-dependency. The Foundation's approach is to use housing as an incentive to move people away from welfare, using a staged approach:



The Foundation owns a hostel (Wunan House) which is specifically available for Indigenous people, including those from remote communities, undertaking employment and training programs: to get accommodation, you have to be on these programs. The hostel is a regulated environment with strict rules, including no alcohol.

As participants in Foundation programs articulate into more advanced programs and ultimately permanent employment, they are assisted to move into the next stage of accommodation, appropriate to their needs and capacity.

The Foundation maintains a stock of houses which have been built by the Foundation's trainees and labour crews. These houses are less regulated environments: tenants can run their own household, but there are strong expectations as to their responsibilities which include the maintenance of their employment, sending their children to school, having a plan for their future life, etc. Families occupying these houses are assisted with other Foundation programs.

With our work-readiness programs, we are dealing with people who have, for two generations, never seen a member of their family get up at 7am and go to work every morning – this is a totally new idea to them.

Ian Trust, CEO, Wunan Foundation

Work Readiness Training

At this stage, the Foundation's focus is upon people who are not yet job-ready. As Ian explained, the target group for this stage of training is people who are on welfare and who have no idea about how to progress from this position.

The Foundation's work-readiness course runs for eight weeks and covers life skills, self-esteem, understanding what work is, what jobs are available and what they entail, job search skills and work experience.

Breaking in Yard Concept

An integral part of the work-readiness training is the "breaking in yard" concept. Participants are given the opportunity to undertake a basic kind of work – it might be as simple as washing cars – to sample a work culture. If participants show a commitment to this, program organisers will know they have a genuine desire to do something and the foundation of a work ethic, and can work further with the participants to progress them into other kinds of training and employment.

Building our investments has been like building a ship. The programs you carry to deliver to people are the cargo, but you must build the ship first.

Ian Trust, CEO, Wunan Foundation

One of the "breaking in yards" currently being fostered by the Foundation is the Wunan Construction and Maintenance Project. The Foundation employs qualified builders, but leaves spaces in the work crews for people who have never worked before. Some leniency is shown to the new crew members, as their participation is a process in which work ethics will gradually be inculcated to them by the rest of the crew.

After a while, it builds up self-esteem, all of a sudden, there is someone who sees them in the street and mates say “I want to be like those guys” – have a uniform, car, money, respect. Generally, Ian stated, for someone on welfare, it takes 6-12 months to become job-ready. Once participants reach the stage where they can hold down a traineeship or apprenticeship, they are transferred across to Kimberley Group Training, which works closely with the Foundation to progress participants through the next stage of their development.

Work Away Work Placement Scheme

Where work-readiness program participants are struggling to develop a work ethic, consideration may be given to offering them a place on the Work Away Work Placement Scheme. Under this scheme, people who have never worked before are placed into jobs far from home – some are in Cape York, others in Mildura, yet others in Melbourne.

The placements offer a sense of adventure and dramatically expand the horizons of participants whilst increasing their general life skills. Participants are given a one-way ticket to get to the placement; if they later wish to exit the program, they must fund the return trip from their own resources.

Through Cape York Partnerships, the Foundation has negotiated an agreement for 300 placements with the Australian Meat & Livestock Industry over the next 3 years. Industry has said that if participants last for a year in their placement, they will fly their families over at Christmas to visit them.

Program Achievements to Date

Foundation Program achievements to date include:

- 55 Indigenous people progressing from welfare into permanent work in 2006
- 12 people undertaking the work-readiness program in 2006
- 10 males and 12 females currently undertaking the work readiness program
- The establishment of two “breaking in” yards
- Provision of 30 Stepping Stone housing beds
- Effecting a slow change in the social dynamics in Kununurra, by creating a trendy place to work with the Wunan Construction & Maintenance Project



Lessons Learned

In conclusion, Ian outlined the following key messages for workshop participants looking to adopt something of the Wunan Foundation program models:

- The businesses you establish must be supported with contracts or be given work to be sustainable;
- You must have good quality staff;
- Your organisations must be politically stable;
- Your organisations must be supported by government and key stakeholders to achieve success; and
- To be extensively supported, you must establish a track record.

“...it might be as simple as washing cars – to sample a work culture.”

Ian Trust, CEO, Wunan Foundation

The Bayalgu Training Program

Bruce Anderson - General Manager, Golden Grove, Oxiana Limited

Bruce explained that Golden Grove mine is situated approximately 280 kilometres east of Geraldton, producing copper, zinc, lead, gold and silver concentrates which are exported from Geraldton port. The mine is an underground operation which has been operating since 1990 and has had a series of large corporate owners. It is currently owned by Oxiana Limited, who purchased the mine from Newmont and is keen to expand their social licence to operate in the Geraldton region.

Bruce outlined the operation of the Bayalgu Training Program project. This project began as a “spin-off” from the Mid West Football Academy program, which is one of the Football Academies for Indigenous youth run by the Clontarf Foundation.³ One of the frustrating facets of the Football Academy program was that those Aboriginal boys who did not go on to football careers were experiencing difficulties in transitioning into meaningful employment. Craig Patterson, a local contractor who manages Central Earth Moving,



recognised that those Aboriginal boys who are good at football will probably also have the coordination skills to be good plant operators, and this formed the basis for the Bayalgu Training concept.

The Program developers formed a Committee with a number of stakeholders (including the Department of Indigenous Affairs, TAFE and local schools) and examined what was available in terms of existing training courses. After concluding that the off-the-shelf courses were not going to meet participant and employer needs, they designed their own course.

The program is a STEP program, which uses the Certificate I in Industrial Skills as a foundation. Next year, the Certificate I in Resource Skills will also be incorporated into the program. Driver training, functional workplace literacy and other life skills are emphasised. Participants in the 10-week program become accustomed to taking regular drug and alcohol tests.

³ For further details of the Clontarf Football Academy Program, see <http://www.clontarffootball.com>.

Oxiana and Central Earth Moving both contribute funding towards the program, and emphasise the importance of keeping program administration lean rather than bureaucratic – implemented by a number of passionate, committed individuals.



To date, there has been an almost 100% success rate in participants completing the program obtaining employment. Oxiana will continue to support the program, even if the company does not itself recruit employees immediately from the program. Oxiana takes the view that investing in the program is an investment in participants' maturation – participants may well come back to Oxiana eventually, when they grow and mature.

One of the biggest challenges experienced by the program is, however, the difficulty of dealing with the many personal and social pressures experienced by participants. The

Bayalgu Team is currently working on developing a mentoring system which can support participants who might otherwise leave the program because of personal and family reasons.

Mid West Regional Partnership Problem Analysis

After lunch on Day 1 participants were divided into their respective stakeholder groups for the purpose of engaging in a partnership problems analysis. The aim of this session was to provide each stakeholder group with the opportunity to identify problems encountered by their respective group when attempting to work in partnership with the other stakeholder groups.

The following problems were identified and presented by individual stakeholder groups:

Aboriginal Stakeholder Problems

- The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) appears to have generated tensions because it is seen to benefit a certain group of people (Traditional Owners), in virtue of the way that the structure of the claims process has been set up – many community people are missing out. It was suggested that there needs to be a recognition of the fact that the wider Aboriginal community, beyond Traditional Owners, also need to benefit from and assist in local projects;
- Indigenous people sometimes don't work together – we are a community and we need to act like one – the vision unifying us should be our children;
- There are many language groups who can't speak on behalf of each other, but who should be trying to work together as a group, using Alliance concepts – government and industry needs a forum that they can come to, that is more representative of the total community;
- Education – there appear to be low standards in remote areas and the quality of education isn't as high as it should be – this hinders the capacity, access and eventual transition into employment for Indigenous people;
- There is a lack of training pathways from school to work. We have lots of fractured entities – Job Networks, etc, etc, but no strategy and this is further compounded by the presence of an unsuitable curriculum;



- Housing – overcrowding is a major problem: how can we get someone into a job, without adequate housing?
- Social issues – too much marijuana and harder drugs are present in community; criminal records prevent people passing police clearances;
- There is a lack of trust in Indigenous organisations to do the right thing – we should be funded and supported with the resources to do what we want to do, and left along to go and do it – often “partnerships” aren’t level because the sponsoring partner has the purse strings and policies too tightly attached;
- Employment up-skilling is required – a lot of Aboriginal people are falling through the cracks – the bridge is sometimes just too far – the entry-level is too high;
- Minimal self-employment – there is little support for small Aboriginal businesses to get started, which is compounded by a lack of business employment programs and mainstream support in the region.
- Too much training is for training’s sake – we need to make this relevant – perhaps we should have a little mining school here, like other regions eg, Kalgoorlie;
- Government involvement is often inefficient – we agree with government’s self-analysis! Too bureaucratic, over-stringent, no involvement in small business (interventions and Shared Responsibility Agreements);
- Parents and guardians have to do their bit;
- Lack of mentoring programs – no scholarships are available around the region;
- Lots of ideas, but lack of action;
- Lack of communication within the Aboriginal community – e.g., Yamaji News was stopped because it could not receive ongoing funding; and
- Insufficient cultural awareness among employers hinders their capacity to understand and therefore manage complex cultural issues such as cultural leave requirements.

Industry Stakeholder Problems

- One of the biggest issues for industry is critical mass – during the Case Studies session, there were presentations from some people from major companies, but many of us aren’t that big and therefore could not generate those sorts of outcomes, even though we would love to be able to copy what they do;
- There are a number of companies in the exploration stage or going through the development process (particularly with iron ore): these companies are in the early stages of their programs and aren’t of sufficient size to be able to sustain training and employment programs. They are being asked to make commitments to social programs before they have mining development approvals – a real “chicken and egg” situation. How can they make commitments before they know they have a project?
- Negotiating with different claim groups and understanding the cultural significance of consultation protocols is challenging – not only with Native Title land owners, but also with different government departments that represent Indigenous interests, who often generate confusion about where companies need to go and who they need to deal with;
- Funding programs are very short-term and they need to be up-front for projects, so that when people come on-stream they are ready;



- We often feel that we walk on eggshells when we are dealing with multiple claim groups - eg, understanding and dealing with internal tensions, family politics and other people that appear to ride in on the back of what you are doing and who are not part of the claim group - we are often unsure whether we should be dealing with them or not;
- Work starts and shift times are a significant issue with fly in/fly out versus residential rosters eg, the latter have to drive to and from work making 12 hour shifts difficult;
- There was not one person in the room who said "I don't want to participate", but all equally agree there is a lack of job-readiness, and unavailability of entry-level skilled Indigenous people ready to work, resulting in difficulty in meeting Indigenous employment targets;
- A lot of training is centralised in Perth – geographically this creates problems;
- There sometimes is a reluctance by contractors to take up Indigenous training obligations because of the commercial pressures implicit in hard dollar contracts and dangers with training on site relating to heavy machinery;
- Exploration has a major problem with sustainability of any employment – if a company cannot find anything, how can they keep anything by way of commitments? Very short-term benefits may be available but unless a viable deposit is discovered, they cannot commit to providing longer-term continuing benefits;
- Big companies have economies of scale because of the size and comprehensiveness of the contracts they hold – it would be a good idea to break off smaller contracts where smaller players could take on more social commitments;
- The Mid West is at least a generation behind the Pilbara in terms of development – there is a real lack of skilled mentors who can help mining companies in their dealings with cultural issues and assist Indigenous recruits make the effective transition into full time employment – we need assistance in dealing with these kinds of issues.

Government/Other Non-Government Stakeholder Problems

- We have a lot of problems in the government – we had a really good exchange and a lot of great ideas. We brought back the issues, warts and all;
- A major problem is the presence of "Silos" - eg, breakdowns in communication between local, State and Commonwealth Government agencies;
- We have the capacity to coordinate activities but there is a lack of coordination;
- Despite the fact that current policy rhetoric is committed to rewarding outcomes, we are still largely driven by measuring inputs and outputs (in particular, measuring how much we put in);
- The expectations we have of our clients and that clients have of us don't always match reality;
- There is a lack of clarity in terms of who is responsible for what – and therefore a lot of buck-passing;
- Lack of timeliness – we are slow, we can be very slow;
- Skill shortages are critical – mining companies are sucking all the talent out of government, community and each other
- Difficulties in consultation with the Aboriginal community – not knowing who? How widely? When? What then? - presents huge problems;
- Politics versus policy – the people at the table are very professional but are often driven by political imperatives much of the time;
- Lack of community engagement frameworks;
- Don't understand each other's responsibilities and resources;
- There needs to be appropriate resourcing to meet logistical requirements;
- There is a wide variability of models for appropriate service delivery and this causes confusion;

- Mining organisations, Aboriginal organisations alike are “welfare dependent” – i.e. they tend to be reliant on extra government intervention;
- Program inflexibility – we have lots of guidelines and rules;
- Life-cycles of government and funding rounds create problems – we have three-year federal government returns; funding is annual on a lot of programs;
- Broader policy settings often impact at the regional level but often we can’t influence it back;
- Political correctness – we are sometimes hesitant to roll out a program because of possible perceived impacts;
- Native title, land access and land management issues have generated their own problems – e.g. gate keepers scarring from the past – we are all victims of past mistakes;
- Perceptions and biases of public servants can pose problems.

Mid West Regional Partnership Solution Analysis

Following the problem analysis session, participants were organised into mixed stakeholder groups to identify collectively their common problems and to consider the priorities that should be agreed for addressing those problems, as these might inform a potential Regional Partnership Agreement. The following priorities/solutions were identified and presented by each group:

Group 1

Community engagement

- Funding support for an effective engagement process;
- Stakeholder identification;
- Improved communication;
- Community unity;

Employment Pathways

- Education;
- Mentoring;
- Improved housing opportunities;
- Recognised indirect employment opportunities;
- Industry-readiness – employers and employees – two-way street (employers also have to be prepared to receive Indigenous employees);
- Immediate versus future employment opportunities;
- Cross-cultural awareness training;
- HR flexibility.



Working with all levels of Government

- Enterprise development support (indirect employment outcomes);
- Improving / increasing time line synergy – alignment of policies;
- Aligning solutions to budget process (changing the service system);
- Funding collaboration;
- Outcome-based funding.

Economies of scale

- Improving capacity;
- Collaborative Mid West planning – to address issues such as where skills shortages are most urgent, where resources will be required (eg, for housing) – there is an issue here about recognising that the market is a competitive labour-source;
- Coordination of effort.

Group 2

Employment & Training

- Mentoring program;
- Eligibility criteria – eg, skills sets required and desired;
- Skills audit;
- Driver's licence program, either through TAFE or some other provider to get to HR level if that's what is required;
- Pre-employment training – social & life skills training to prepare for full time employment.



Business Development

- Identifying needs, viability, interest levels within different groups – start-up focus;
- Helping people who have an existing business to grow the business;
- Provision of support agencies and resources to allow people to develop own business (whether to start up or grow);
- Mentoring.

Human Resources

- Fitness for work;
- Cultural awareness training – supervisors, management;
- Developing flexible policies – e.g. to coexist with leave requirements on site (notification periods, policies for amount of time and circumstances, etc);
- Setting retention and recruitment policies to cover the above.

Coordination

- RPA must agree in writing to coordinate;
- Must have a structure that represents everyone – whether through a working committee or sub-committee or overall management team;
- Minimise duplication between government agencies.

Capacity Building

- Unified approach required across all areas;
- Identifying strengths of each group – particularly within government agencies and between Indigenous groups;
- Having tailored programs that match what are trying to do.

Community Engagement

- Communications required between all parties;
- Understanding cultural awareness – work ethics, Indigenous cultures.

Group 3

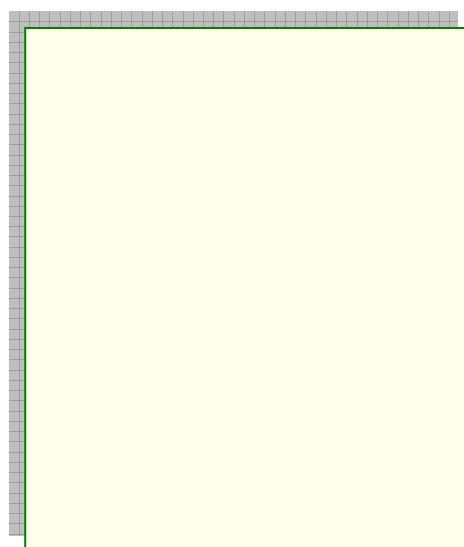
- There is a feeling that we need to get outcomes – we have done enough talking as a group, we want some things that are really happening, fast. We need to be driving the bus (not government): we will identify the jobs from a business point of view, Indigenous people can work with us to identify candidates for work, we will develop the training plans and THEN we will direct government on how to help us;
- We need to get some small successes out there. Then we can expand this beyond mining out to other sectors of the community including retail;
- We want something more than a report – we want something physical that we can say started as a direct result of this meeting.

Improve Communication

- Mentoring support for issues on site, workplace and cultural awareness training;
- Need to bring all parties together – total community, though, not just those related to the mining industry;
- Has to be an overarching group that drives the process from government level;
- Overall rider: must have traction and need to fund an action plan - i.e. need to turn words into measurable activities into results and be “solutions-focussed”.

Specific goals and priorities:

- Develop short (2-3 years) and long (5-10 year) term training plan, to be;
 - Regionally focussed
 - Address LL&N issues
 - Relevant both on & off-site
- Skills audit of the region, yielding a matrix to show what is needed now compared to what is needed for the future and to also show what is needed to close the gap;
- Regional training needs analysis, looking at;
 - Project needs
 - Jobs/business
- Collaborative approaches required for small-to-medium sized enterprises who can't afford to fund initiatives and support them to the same degree as major companies;
- Develop a *process* (as against a *system*) that will accommodate and support regional development;
- Build a training/education focus/place;
- Build relationship/communication map of who to talk to – put this “issue” as a standing agenda item in key forums (government, industry, community);
- Measure tangible outcomes and celebrate success (get early success);



- Outline a framework for a career development plan for the region/stakeholder groups and individuals, looking at:
 - Employability framework
 - Career transitions
 - “Life long” learning approach
 - Community/regional inclusivity
- Establish mentoring program for Indigenous Board/Structure to;
 - Set priorities and get wins on the board
 - Support regional needs – driven by industry and helping young workers

Summary of Group Presentations

Based on the group presentations, the following broad areas of common interest were identified and presented by Grant Sarra for consideration during the action planning session scheduled for Day Two of the workshop:

1. Employment and Training
2. Indigenous Business Development
3. Building Partnership Capacity and Human Resource Management
4. Community Engagement
5. Communication and Collaboration.

Grant’s identification of these themes was followed by some participant discussion. It was considered important that something concrete, in terms of outcomes, be established during Day Two of the workshop, to ensure that the workshop did not turn into “another talk-session”.

This point was acknowledged and it was subsequently agreed that the focus of Day Two should be to identify key actions under each of the above headings, although it was also recognised that these broad areas may change as result of discussions the following day and that they were, therefore, only to be used as a guide.

Ron Shepherd (Manager, ICC Geraldton) explained that despite what we have seen happening with RPAs in other regions throughout Australia and what has been discussed about RPAs during the Day One workshop proceedings, it was important to consider the proposed RPA as just one possible tool for the Mid West region. Ron emphasised that, regardless of whether the workshop participants elect to go down the path of an RPA or to use some other coordination tool, we will need to consider the following important questions:

- a. Will the proposed RPA framework be the best tool for our region or is there a better alternative?
- b. If we decide to develop an RPA or an alternative model, who needs to take charge of the process and how?
- c. From an individual stakeholder point of view, what is your interest and likely involvement going to be?
- d. Do you want to be involved in developing the model for the Mid West region or just be kept informed?
- e. Do you want to be a signatory or do you want only to be involved in the implementation process?

Introduction and Review of Day 1

Participants agreed that Day 2 of the Workshop should be focused upon the development of an action plan for progressing partnership initiatives in the Mid West. Before participants were divided into breakout groups to develop further their ideas for an action plan, Grant Sarra invited the group as a whole to refocus upon the core issues at stake in their discussions. To this end, Grant invited Frank Basham, CEO of Wila Gutharra Aboriginal Corporation based in Geraldton, to address the forum.

Australian Government Employment Services – Existing frameworks for facilitating the uptake of Indigenous employment opportunities

Frank Basham – Chief Executive Officer, Wila Gutharra Aboriginal Corporation

Frank explained that Wila Gutharra Aboriginal Corporation had been working very closely with all service providers in the employment area over the last three years, seeking to recruit people who have experience in employment-related services, but who are either Aboriginal themselves or who know how to mix with Aboriginal people, train them and work with them.

As an Aboriginal Corporation, Wila Gutharra is, Frank maintained, better placed than non-Indigenous organisations to address the problems associated with Aboriginal unemployment. To date, the Job Network agencies in the region have had very limited success in engaging the Aboriginal community, and a major reason for this has been the fact that Aboriginal people generally do not access mainstream training and employment service providers in the region. As an Aboriginal Corporation, Wila Gutharra offers an environment which is culturally sensitive and which employs Indigenous trainers and staff.

To this end, Wila Gutharra is utilising a range of established government-funded programs, including:

1. CDEP program

Frank indicated that personally, he believed that CDEP was a brilliant program. Because, however, it was for many years under-resourced and inadequately managed, problems emerged which have generated the Commonwealth government's recent response in closing CDEP programs. This is unfortunate because, in regional areas in very recent years, the mood had started to change and positive use was being made of the flexibility of the CDEP model. For example, Wila Gutharra has run bus services through CDEP for young Aboriginal primary school students to attend school. With the loss of the CDEP program, it has become more difficult to maintain this service and it may have to be phased out in Geraldton – which will be a setback, because school attendance rates for Aboriginal children in Geraldton had increased above the State average.

2. STEP ERS

Wila Gutharra is accessing STEP ERS funding through DEWR to provide mentoring, pre-employment training, structured training and employment support, to up to 200 Aboriginal people in Geraldton. The mentoring program is critical to the success of these initiatives, providing participants with support from Day 1 until they are well-established in stable employment.

3. Department of Education Science & Training programs

In 2008, Wila Gutharra will receive DEST funding to provide Aboriginal children in Years 8-12 with elective choices in areas involving a trade / skill acquisition that can lead to apprenticeship opportunities. The aim is to put 120 children through the program over the next two years. Wila Gutharra is also in discussion with DEST to develop a pre-employment training program in the region.

Frank stressed, however, that these kinds of programs will **not** answer the current or future project needs of industry: there simply is not the required level of funding available, nor sufficient people with the required expertise, to achieve such an ambitious aim. The problem is compounded by the fact that initiatives in this area have been marred by a serial "quick fix" approach to problem-solving. The reality is, now, that the region is up to four years behind where it should be, given what is happening in the economy, to keep pace with employment and associated service-delivery demand.

Frank was hopeful that the process of action planning and its immediate implementation, being discussed by the Mid West workshop group in this current forum, would be completed within the next 12 months. In undertaking this planning and implementation, Frank offered workshop participants a number of insights and observations, in order to inform the group's collective understanding of what can be achieved, where efforts should best be directed, and the level of resourcing that will be required to effect desired outcomes:

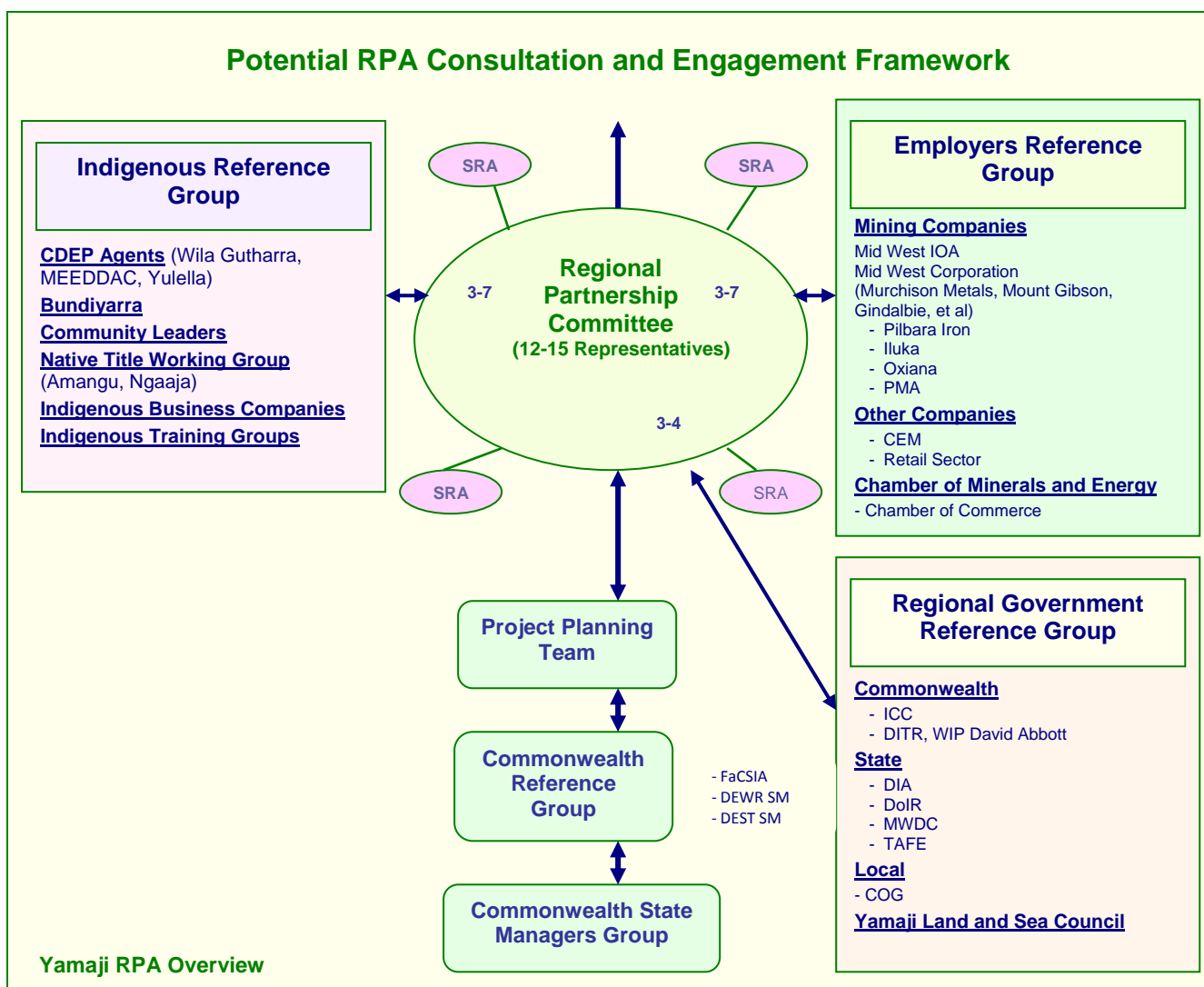
- A major focus of regional efforts should be **school children**. Many Aboriginal children would be far better served by participating in training in a vocational context (a realistic workplace), rather than by sitting in an academic environment for Years 11 and 12 only to emerge with low literacy levels in any event.
- It is, therefore, critical to develop **live training situations**. Wila Gutharra is currently in discussions with another partner to establish a building company which will hopefully be operational some time in 2008. Such an enterprise will provide the kind of training which will allow program participants to acquire skills more quickly and practically than is possible within the constraints of a normal apprenticeship, whilst also providing affordable housing for Aboriginal people.
- There are some barriers to employment which, whilst endemic within Aboriginal communities, are nevertheless capable of being addressed in a reasonable timeframe and with the cooperation of key agencies. Such issues include literacy and numeracy problems, lack of driver's licences, traffic convictions, outstanding fines and the like.
- There are, however, other issues which are much more intransigent. These include issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy and single-parent families, substance abuse and addictions, and – underlying all of this – massively low self-esteem. The consequential problems that these issues present – such as the lack of role-modelling and opportunities for everyday learning – are enormous obstacles to achieving sustainable outcomes for Indigenous people. Stakeholders must maturely recognise this fact, and this recognition must inform their ongoing efforts to achieve these outcomes. Personally, Frank believes that the only model to use which can address these kinds of problems is a **50 / 50 work environment**, where Aboriginal clients with severely disadvantaged backgrounds comprise about 50% of the workforce, alongside mainstream work crews. Such an environment can offer participants the necessary challenges which do not wholly deter them from progressing.
- A similar problem is presented by mental health issues within Aboriginal communities. Mental health issues seem to be dealt with by Aboriginal people within their own families and communities, without the opportunity for professional medical diagnosis and treatment. Frank's opinion is that what we need to create for these clients an environment in which they can come to work, acquire skills, earn some money, and gradually move along a continuum towards a position where they can ultimately gain sustainable employment. This process may take two, three or even four years for each individual – but at least this is progress, while at the present time, nothing is happening to assist these people.
- It is imperative upon all of us to assist Aboriginal people to move from lower-paid jobs within our organisations towards **management roles**, and the onus is on existing managers to provide appropriate training and experience for Aboriginal people to step up into those positions.
- Much talk is now occurring about the importance of **mentoring** work. When Wila Gutharra works with a client, mentoring is intensive: mentors have to be prepared to attend to clients at all times of the day and night, and standard on-the-job support (day visits) may last up to 1-2 hours at a time. The kind of support required for Indigenous clients who are distressed and alienated by their initial experiences of mainstream workplaces does not come cheaply and is not catered for by current levels of funding. Again, this must be recognised and acknowledged in order for future initiatives to have more success than past ones.

Mid West Regional Partnership Action Planning

The Focus for RPA Action Planning Discussions

Prior to the scheduled breakout group sessions, Grant Sarra facilitated a whole-group discussion in which participants were encouraged to identify a clear basis for their action planning.

Grant noted that in addition to presenting a compelling, human perspective upon regional issues, Frank Basham had also issued a challenge to the group: to develop and begin implementing a meaningful partnership process within twelve months.



Grant drew participants' attention to the draft RPA document, entitled **Background Overview: Proposed Warlgamananyulu RPA**, which has been developed by the Geraldton Indigenous Coordination Centre in association with key State government agencies.

This document – copies of which had been supplied all workshop participants – already contains suggested priorities, roles and responsibilities, and a draft action plan, including a draft RPA consultation and engagement framework (as illustrated in the above diagram).

Grant suggested that participants could best respond to this document by focussing on the following themes and questions:

1. What should be the RPA's mission?
2. What should be its vision? What would things be like if the RPA worked for two, three or five years? What specific strategic goals and priorities should be endorsed?
3. What shared values would underlie the RPA?
4. What key challenges would be confronted?
5. What should the scope of the RPA be? Might it be extended to support the engagement of Indigenous people with industry in a broader sense than mining? If so, how?

In response to Grant's comments, Craig Patterson (Central Earth Moving / Bayalgu Training Program) stated that what was required, in his assessment, was immediate assistance to industry employers who are looking to support Indigenous employment and training initiatives – something in advance of the RPA development process running its full course. Craig emphasised the problems that currently threaten the successes being achieved already by the Bayalgu program, and others like it, with a lack of funding or assistance to support key initiatives such as mentoring for program participants, and cross-cultural awareness training for companies' broader workforces, in addition to management.

Craig's input generated some extended discussion within the forum concerning both the issue of the best models for overcoming mentoring and cross-cultural problems and, at a deeper level, the issue of whether focussing energies upon the progression of an RPA process would assist with these kinds of problems, at this point in time.

In relation to the former issue, a number of participants recommended recruitment and utilisation of mature, Aboriginal workers on company's workforces – people who can double as workers and mentors within the workplace, simultaneously inculcating work values to junior Indigenous employees and increasing the cross-cultural understanding of non-Indigenous employees. The consensus was, however, that improving cross-cultural understanding is a long, experientially-based process.

In relation to the latter issue, Colin Nagle (State Manager, DEWR) noted the potential inherent in the RPA process – which has been realised in other RPA locations such as the Pilbara – to channel much-needed funding support into pre-employment programs, to enable relevant organisations to engage Indigenous mentors as part of the workforce.

DEWR fully appreciates that this is a critical factor in the success of such programs, and that not every company is big enough to sustain dedicated Indigenous mentors and coordinators as part of the workforce.

Part of the rationale for the STEP ERS funding model is to provide the kind of intensive case-management support which is not possible through the Job Network system. At the same time, Government believes it is necessary to broker partnerships between the private sector and suitable Aboriginal corporations. Above all, Colin emphasised, the RPA process is intended to provide a framework for these and other initiatives. The question for those concerned to progress an RPA should be: how does government help support, fund and grow the capability of Indigenous organisations, to assist industry in an immediate and real sense?

RPA Action Planning – Feedback Session

Immediately following the extended general discussion it was agreed that sessions 11, 12 and 13 be rolled together into a consolidated action planning session in the interest of closing the workshop at the agreed time. The aim of the session was to review the broad headings presented at the conclusion of day one and consider key actions that could be taken under each of these areas.

For the purposes of this exercise, participants divided into three breakout groups, with facilitation assistance provided to each group by Commonwealth and State government officials.

After an hour's discussion, the groups reported back to the larger forum as follows:

Group 1

Facilitators: Marilyn Alborough (Geraldton Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC)) and Jacqueline McGowan-Jones (DIA)

Speakers: Zain Laudehr (Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation) and Greg Kaeding (Gindalbie Metals)

Group 1 recommended the following key steps, as part of their preferred Action Plan model:

1. A Steering Committee be formed today, at the workshop, with equal representation from government (Commonwealth and State), industry and the Aboriginal community – its role will be to drive the process forward and to structure particular initiatives within a “bigger picture” which seeks to maximise sustainable Indigenous employment and other benefits by leveraging off the resources boom (but not confining attention to the mining industry itself).
2. The Steering Group should work to identify issues from a whole-of-community perspective (vision, mission and goals), engage necessary people with appropriate expertise, and go forward and begin to solve some of the issues.
3. It will no doubt be necessary to form smaller Working Groups to work on particular, specific issues; recruitment to these Working Groups would be based upon the topic for the Group's consideration – eg, youth, local government, training and employment, education.
4. The Steering Group should report back to the broader group (this forum) regularly to ensure a level of accountability. Review sessions could be held at six-monthly intervals, to ensure that the Steering Group's activities don't drift.

Group 2

Facilitators: Colin Nagle (DEWR) and Ron Shepherd (Geraldton ICC)

Speaker: Neil Roberts (Mid West Corporation)

Group 2 recommended the following series of actions as the core of its preferred Action Plan:

Proposed Action 1 – Skills Set Audit of:

- Demand side: analysis of skills required in the region (to be conducted by Chamber of Mines & Energy in conjunction with the Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance).
- Supply side: analysis of available skills within the Indigenous community (to be conducted by the Indigenous Alliance – Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation).

Proposed Action 2 - Mentoring Programs

- Train mentors.
- Establish a pool of mentors with relevant industry experience.
- Identify host organisations for these people: may be scope even to develop a successful business in this area.
- To be funded by DEWR and industry (user pays basis).

Proposed Action 3 – Licensing Programs

- Look for models to increase number of driver's licences – need to research what has and hasn't worked in other parts of the State.
- Investigate work done on “licence recovery” programs.
- Investigate possibility of linking to school / other educational attendance.
- Grapple with the difficult question of responsibility: in one sense, this is clearly a State government responsibility as States establish their own licensing regimes, with unintended consequences now costing more than the licensing regime itself.

- Coordination and funding perhaps through Department of Indigenous Affairs, via Director-General's appropriate committees.

Proposed Action 4 – Pre-employment Programs

- Undertake an audit of what is available and proposed and required to fill the gaps – Indigenous Alliance (Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation) could perform this.

Proposed Action 5 – Education Programs

- Actions need to be taken in relation to early childhood education.
- Need also to address school retention rates and adult literacy and numeracy education.
- Responsibility primarily lies with government.

Proposed Action 6 – Community Engagement

- Formalise the Geraldton Indigenous Alliance – important to establish a point of focus that industry can consult and engage with, at least as a first point of contact. Responsibility for this could lie with Indigenous organisations and Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation.
- On the industry side, the priority is early and proper engagement, perhaps initially with the Indigenous Alliance, but then moving onto specific stakeholders who have a much more intimate involvement in their projects.

Group 3

Facilitators: Wayne McDonald (Mid West Development Commission) and Peter Ryan (DEWR)

Speaker: Charmaine Green (Geraldton ICC)

Group 3 said it was “rebellious” in the sense that it did not specifically endorse an action plan using the “How? When? By Whom?” - Template. Rather, the group focused its discussion on how best to capture the excitement, energy and enthusiasm of this forum.

To this end, the group identified three priority actions:

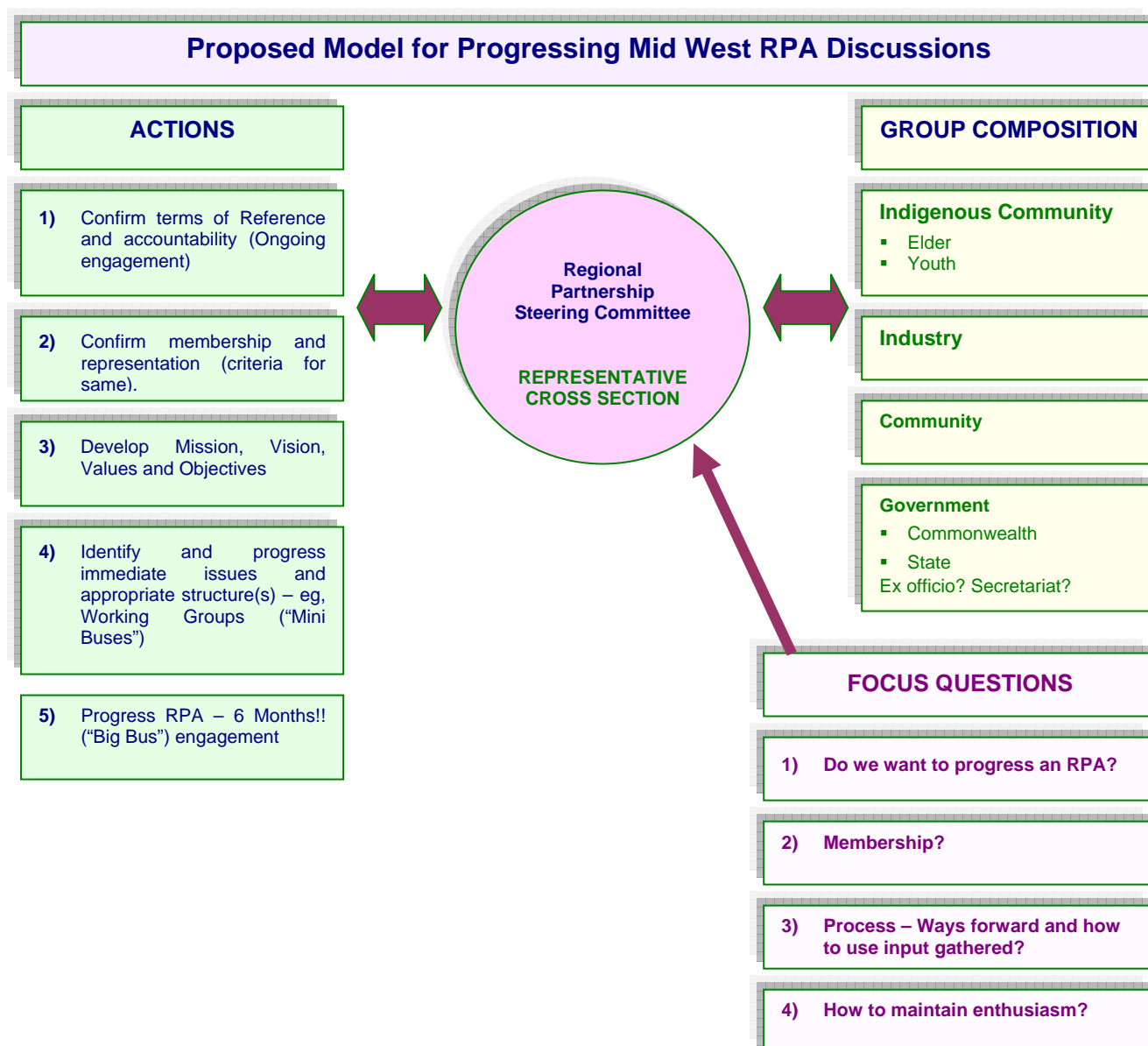
1. All stakeholders present at today's forum should commit to continuing to convene meetings and discussions, with the ICC facilitating this process (perhaps by establishing a secretariat for this purpose).
2. Actions and outcomes should be circulated from today's meeting to all participants.
3. A shared website should be established to maintain this process and to assist in overcoming barriers to communication. One partner – Worley Parsons – has committed to setting up the website and circulating passwords to partners on the site.

RPA Action Planning – Securing Agreement on a Way Forward

In order to consolidate the feedback from breakout group discussions, Grant Sarra called on Colin Nagle (State Manager, DEWR), who offered to pull together the ideas raised by individual groups in the previous session.

Colin first noted that although the three breakout groups had each come back with quite different perspectives on what was required to progress the regional partnership agenda, these perspectives complement each other extremely well, in that:

- **Group 3** was concerned with how we capture and enthusiasm and outcomes from this workshop – and threw out a challenge and objective, to continue to meet and to circulate agreed outcomes.
- **Group 1** sought to identify a clear process for structuring this forward progression.
- **Group 2** identified specific actions that will be focused on, stakeholders who should be responsible for these actions and some frameworks and collaborations which can assist in the process.



Informed by these perspectives, Colin explained that he, Greg Kaeding (Gindalbie Metals, Mt Karara) and Ron Shepherd (Manager, Geraldton ICC) had put together the proposed model above for how the RPA process might be progressed. Colin and Grant invited participants to comment on this proposed model, beginning first with the question: **Do we want to progress an RPA?**

Participant responses to this question suggested that although there was a general consensus in favour of progressing RPA discussions, many participants were cautious about committing to an RPA – some because they were insufficiently familiar with the concept and what it will entail, others because they were fearful that too heavy a focus on the “processual” side of developing an RPA would detract from real “on the ground” initiatives. Participant observations included the following:

- An RPA is possibly a valuable tool and an acceptable way of moving forward, but probably is not essential to this process.
- The RPA process may be the bond that binds all of the individual stakeholders together.
- The RPA process may be the “big bus”, but there are many smaller “mini buses” that are ready to leave, in the form of things that can happen immediately, to add value to existing initiatives – whilst it is acceptable to keep working on medium- to long-term goals, we don’t want to wait for another six months just to start something.
- By talking about an RPA, we might be begging some of the bigger questions that people want to see addressed. It might be best to start with the more concrete initiatives that have been discussed, and then if we ask the RPA question again in three months’ time, the chances are that people’s trust will have developed to the point where they will say “yes”.
- Does the formalisation of an agreement under an RPA process bring with it some recognition, support and resources that would not otherwise be available? If not, what is the point?

In response to this last question, Jackie Tang (Director-General, Department of Indigenous Affairs) indicated that from the point of view of the Western Australian government, committing to an RPA process does indeed facilitate additional resourcing from multiple State departments and agencies – as State Cabinet is a signatory to the RPA.

Summarising the mood of the workshop, Colin Nagle said that there appears to be a strong will to go forward with an agreement for action. Whether or not this is a formal RPA is something yet to be decided. Nevertheless, there is a degree of comfort about deciding now to work further to develop an agreement which may or may not – depending upon what further information comes out of these efforts – become a formalised RPA. There may be some advantages to going with an RPA, but at this point in time, not everyone is sufficiently comfortable with saying that “yes, this is the way”. All participants agreed with this assessment of the situation.

That being so, Colin suggested that if the group wished to move forward, it needed to decide upon an appropriate **representative structure**. In the previous session, Group 1 had proposed the establishment of a representative Steering Committee with representation from:

- The Indigenous community (one youth representative, one elder representative)
- Industry (one established industry representative, one new industry representative)
- The broader community (including other Indigenous community organisations)
- Government – both Federal and State.

Colin opened up to participants the question of whether they were satisfied with this suggested structure for progressing the agreed agenda.

We as Aboriginal people need to drive this, with the assistance of you other guys. If you can assist us strongly, we will get there in a short time.

Gavin Egan, Wajarri

A number of participants expressed impatience with and a degree of scepticism about the proposed structure.

The point was made, for example, that the suggested framework was cumbersome and would not suit industry or yield the real outcomes that industry seeks, for several reasons:

- What industry wants, it was suggested, is to capitalise on the unprecedented alignment that now exists between the interests of the Indigenous community and industry, by immediately starting to fund programs that would yield results within 1-2 years. Putting faith in the RPA process may lead to missing this singular opportunity, even though an RPA may be unobjectionable as a longer-term process.
- You cannot expect to have one (or even two) industry representatives who will speak for industry as a whole, because all companies will make decisions based on their own imperatives.

In response to these criticisms, other participants stressed that an RPA was not being prescribed as a model for adoption by the group – it was, rather, merely being considered. A number of participants defended the role of government in the process, insisting that it was beyond the capacity of industry (or Indigenous groups) to resolve the current and future project skills shortage in a manner that coordinates and maximises Indigenous involvement, distributing benefits as equitably as possible throughout the community.

On behalf of the Commonwealth, Colin Nagle emphasised that government had no intention to take control of the process – on the contrary, the desire being expressed by industry participants, in particular, to take ownership of and drive the process, without relying on government, was something he very much welcomed.

After some debate about these issues, the forum resolved to move forward with the process in general terms, and not to be distracted by issues such as, for example, the naming of the coordinating group which would progress efforts beyond the workshop.

The key question became, then, **do people need to get back together and, if so, who do these people need to be?**

During discussion about this question, the following participants volunteered, and were accepted by the remainder of the group, as representatives to serve on an Interim Regional Partnership Committee to guide the process forward after the workshop:

▪ Rob Jefferies (Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance)	▪ Jenny Kniveton (Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation)
▪ Bruce Anderson (Oxiana)	▪ Jacqueline McGowan-Jones (DIA)
▪ Greg Kaeding (Gindalbie Metals)	▪ Craig Turley (ICC)
▪ Tony Sparks (Extension Hill)	▪ Christine Douglas (Central West College of TAFE)

Participants recognised that this particular representative structure and composition of the Committee was not intended to be final. It was, for example, noted that further consultation is required before Indigenous community representation to the Committee can be finalised, as there needs to be a consensus that the whole of the Aboriginal community will be adequately represented.

It was suggested, too, that it would be a good idea to approach the Indigenous Youth Council (through the Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation) and/or for government to approach the employers of Zain Lauder and Samara Boyd, to request their presence on the Committee to ensure adequate representation of Indigenous youth.

The following additional support was also offered by workshop participants:

- **Marcelle Anderson**, on behalf of Worley Parsons, offered to develop a web site to support communications of the Steering Committee and any associated partners.
- With the approval of the workshop participants, the Geraldton ICC committed the ICC to providing support by calling meetings, making venues available, and so forth.

The next question, Colin Nagle suggested, is: **is it reasonable to set a time-frame?**

Discussion amongst participants in response to this question suggested that there was a strong consensus in favour of moving as quickly as possible to reconvene a meeting of the Interim Regional Partnership Committee, to consider the published report emerging from this workshop, and to agree the steps that would then be taken to progress accepted initiatives within a strict timeframe (estimates ranging from three to twelve months).

RPA Action Planning – Concluding Comments

In concluding this final workshop session, Colin Nagle reiterated on behalf of the Commonwealth that he was very comfortable that this process is being driven by the community, and that government is keen to assist and take direction from the stakeholders in terms of what is required in that regard.

On behalf of the State government, **Jackie Tang** (Director-General, Department of Indigenous Affairs) spoke about what the State perceived was at stake in the Mid West partnership process, and what it was prepared to commit to that process.

Jackie outlined her understanding that partnership is about shared responsibility and shared benefit. In a context where it has traditionally been non-Indigenous people in positions of power (“driving the bus”), what must specifically be aimed for, in the present context, is to equalise that power distribution and share responsibility in a meaningful way.

“Our personal situation as an emerging mining company in the region is difficult – we need employees and investment into our project within the next two years. I see today as Day 1 in that journey.”

Greg Kaeding, Gindalbie Metals

In the Mid West, there is a strong local forum which is coming together to say that, collectively, there is a desire to do something constructive. The process by which this occurs is, however, as important as the actual partnership.

“You’re not waiting – it’s already started. You don’t have to wait for government to allow you to talk to Aboriginal people. There are Aboriginal people in the room and you have already started making those connections.”

Jackie Tang, Director-General,
Department of Indigenous Affairs

In particular, there cannot be a tokenistic engagement of the Aboriginal community; if this occurs, Aboriginal people will vote with their feet and you will not see them.

Jackie said that the capacity-building required of all people – most particularly non-Indigenous people – in this process is great, and is often seriously underestimated. If you aren’t challenged in this process in terms of your personal values, then you are probably not sufficiently personally committed to the process. A key part of the process is, understanding each other’s culture, which involves taking the time to listen to each other’s stories.

Unless you understand the past of Aboriginal people, you will never understand where they are today.

Unless you understand the pressures on Aboriginal people, you won’t understand their problems. For non-Indigenous people, the process is really about asking Aboriginal people permission to share their story with you.

Jackie outlined the following specific commitments that would be made to the process by the State government:

- The State can commit approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000 to undertaking a “mapping and gapping” analysis for the Mid West area, to understand what is available in the area in terms of current skills and employment opportunities. A similar process was undertaken for Roebourne in the context of its RPA.
- We have an RPA person within the Department of Indigenous Affairs, who works across the State with Indigenous groups and business. Making this person available has been a State contribution to previous RPAs. When the Mid West Interim Partnership Committee meets again, if you want this person to attend and talk to you about what he has learnt so far, the State will commit to doing this.
- Similarly, **Helen Shanks**, a State departmental regional manager in the Pilbara, has worked there to assist in pulling together the Pilbara RPA. If Helen is available to come to the Mid West, we are more than willing to offer her time to talk to you about her experiences.

In conclusion, Jackie emphasised that if the Mid West adopts a formal RPA, this will allow DIA to go to State Cabinet to get their endorsement for additional support and funding from other State departments. In the context of the Pilbara RPA, another \$420,000 was made available to assist non-government organisations and the Pilbara RPA coordinator to facilitate implementation of the agreement.

Greg Kaeding (Gindalbie Metals) explained that while he could not speak on behalf of the mining industry as a whole, from his company’s perspective, the workshop had generated considerable interest and enthusiasm which now needed to be harnessed to support ongoing action to address issues which will impact on Gindalbie Metals and similarly-situated companies in the coming years. Greg reiterated that young companies like Gindalbie urgently require employees and investment to support their project development. For this reason, Gindalbie is strongly committed to working with other regional stakeholders to develop strategies to expand and enhance the pool of available local Indigenous labour and the capacity of local Indigenous businesses, and looks forward to moving this process forward expeditiously.

On behalf of the City of Geraldton-Greenough, **Ian Carpenter** (Mayor, City of Geraldton-Greenough) thanked the workshop participants and the Aboriginal elders who had participated or who had given their permission for the forum to be conducted on their country. Ian said that he was confident that if commitments can be obtained from key stakeholders, and the support of Indigenous people and their businesses secured, the City will have the capacity to solve many of its existing problems.

Ian explained that the City was itself committed:

- To having the same percentage of Indigenous people on its staff as there are in the community;
- To forming a committee to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to progress reconciliation in the area; and
- To assisting in whatever way is appropriate and feasible with the Mid West partnership process, as it develops from this workshop.

Yvonne Radcliffe concluded the workshop proceedings on behalf of the Yamaji people.

“Don’t worry about our Indigenous people. We’ve been down before, many times, but we are standing tall now – we’re walking again, we’re walking our lands. We’ll come together again, and when we do, we’ll have agreement to pass on.”

Yvonne Radcliffe, Yamaji Community Leader

She congratulated workshop participants on their constructive and robust participation in the two days of proceedings, and encouraged people to welcome the healthy debate that had marked the second day of the workshop as a necessary precondition to a mature approach to difficult issues.

She was, she said, very positive about the outcomes and optimistic for the future of the Indigenous people of the Mid West.

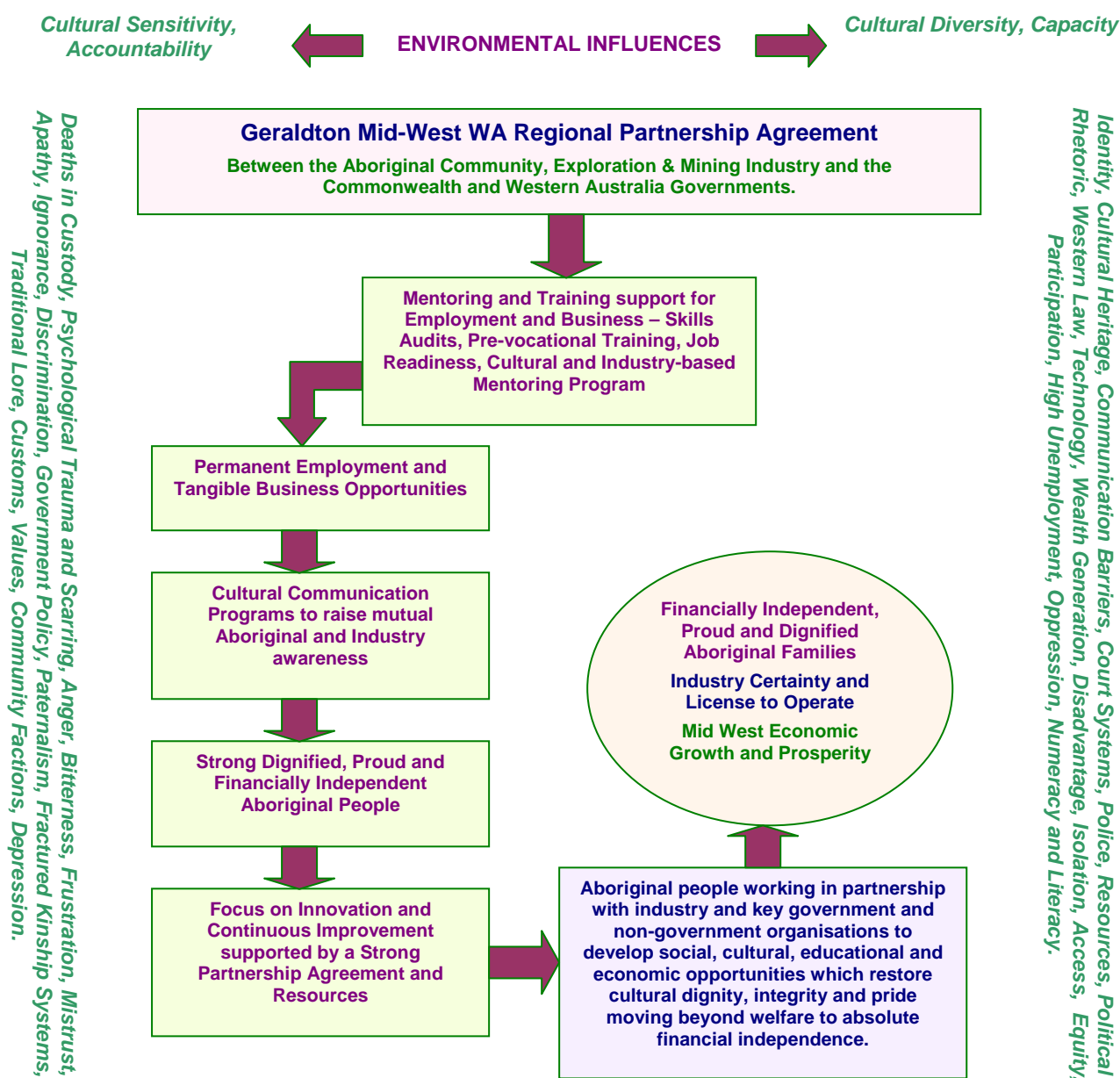
Making the Geraldton Mid West WA Partnership Real – Key Challenges

Like previous workshops held throughout Australia, the Geraldton Working in Partnership workshop exposed a number of critical issues that need to be addressed if a regional partnership is to be of mutual benefit to all stakeholders.

The following provides a summation of these common issues relevant to the Mid West region, with suggestions for consideration by the Interim Partnership Committee.

Environmental Influences - Reality versus Rhetoric

Among other things, the Geraldton workshop generated a high level of enthusiasm and exposed a genuine commitment among industry and Government and non-government stakeholders to work with Aboriginal people to forge a successful partnership arrangement.



Government Funding, Welfare, CDEP, Racism, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Governance, Colonisation, Dispossession, Stolen Children Generations, Child Abuse, Confusion, Fear, Poverty, Native Title.

Model designed by Grant Sarra Consultancy Services

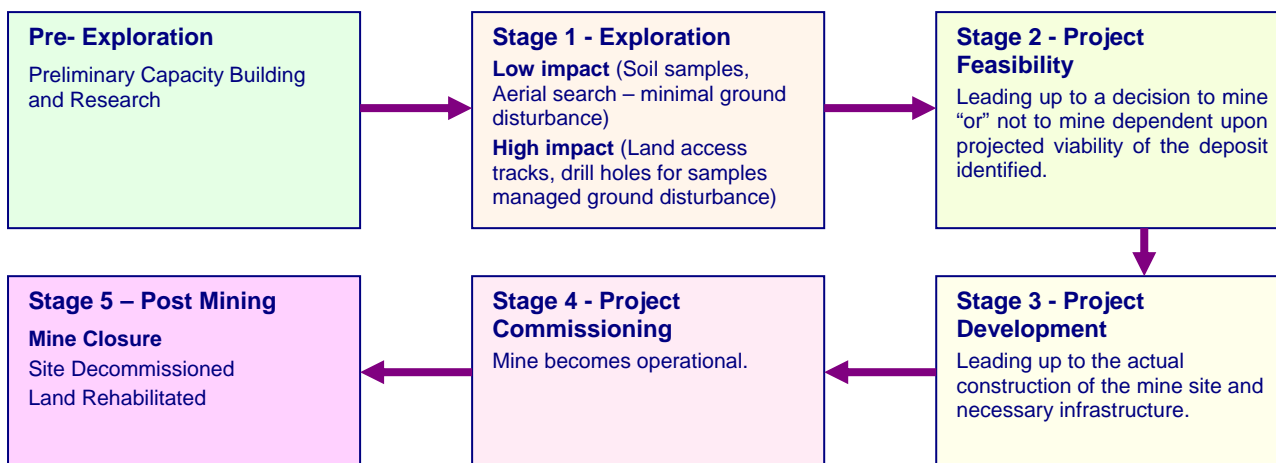
From an Aboriginal stakeholder perspective, given the current national attention and focus that has been recently placed on the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children in remote areas, alcohol and substance abuse, housing, health, education and other complex factors, this level of enthusiasm and commitment, must in itself, become balanced within the day-to-day reality of Aboriginal Australia.

If the Mid West partnership is to produce what could be life changing outcomes for Aboriginal people living in the region it is of critical importance for industry and Government and non-government stakeholders to become acutely aware of the real problems, issues and environmental factors (outlined in the diagram on p47) which confront Aboriginal people on a day-to-day basis.

In this respect, it is vitally important that any partnership initiatives developed seek to genuinely break the cycles of injustice, psychological scarring, trauma, disadvantage and poverty that have had such a detrimental affect on Aboriginal people over many generations, by helping them to forge for themselves the opportunity to become absolutely financially independent. Should this outcome be achieved, it will provide an excellent example, not only for the Mid West region, but for other regions throughout Australia, of how financially independent Aboriginal people can manage their own affairs as this relates to their own wealth generation, homes, children, housing, health and education.

The continuing mining boom coupled with an expected shortfall in workforce numbers provides the perfect platform for these initiatives and should be, as stated by Ms Radcliffe in her traditional welcome, the turning point in the development of Aboriginal people's economic and social growth and well being in the Mid West region. It should be grasped as an opportunity to coordinate the movement "beyond welfare" in a positive manner and genuinely serve the interests of the Aboriginal community.

If the Mid West partnership is to produce real benefits for exploration and mining companies operating in the region it is of critical importance for industry to clearly define and articulate the key stages and requirements in the exploration and mining process. From an industry perspective, a successful partnership should seek, among other things, to provide greater certainty in terms of knowing who to consult in the Aboriginal community, provide expedient access to land for the purpose of exploration and mining, and afford a legitimate licence to operate. While acknowledging that there is a range of additional specific activities, elements and functions attached to each stage in the overall industry process,⁴ the diagram below seeks to identify the broad but basic stages which need to be understood by Aboriginal and Government and non-government stakeholders.



An appropriate definition and articulation of the key industry stages in the process – particularly amongst Aboriginal groups – should contribute to greater clarity, strategic insight and focus, enhanced decision-making processes and general understanding among all stakeholders.

⁴ In general, the broad stages for exploration and mining throughout Australia will be defined differently in different places, and will vary in accordance with relevant State and Territory legislation.

Diversity of Indigenous Representation and Participation

Perhaps the most difficult problem that confronts exploration and mining companies and Government and non-government agencies in the exploration and mining process is their ability to identify key people to consult or with whom to conduct general business negotiations, within each Aboriginal group.

In many instances, this also becomes problematic for some Aboriginal groups who either feel that their interests are not properly represented in negotiations, or that they are being completely left out of discussions relating to exploration and mining activity on their traditional lands. While this workshop could not be expected to solve this problem, it is worth noting that the problem of identifying key Indigenous people in the process is a direct result of history. In particular, past government policies and practices which led to the dispersal of Indigenous people from their traditional lands continue to impact upon present-day Indigenous people in the exploration and mining process.

The reality for exploration, mining and government stakeholders is that they need to be patient, understanding and respectful of each Aboriginal group's background, situation and circumstance and continue to develop processes that are culturally proficient and community sensitive.

Native Title Representative Bodies can be of valuable assistance to exploration, mining and Government stakeholders in the early stages of the process, however, it also needs to be recognised that some Aboriginal groups have developed the capacity and a willingness to negotiate directly with miners and explorers.

In either case, in order to establish effective partnerships with Aboriginal groups, explorers, miners and Government and non-government agencies should use all available avenues, and remain focused on establishing and building relationships with Aboriginal groups, as a whole, while maintaining a respect for the individual positions and rights of each group to use, or not use, their respective NTRB.

Community Engagement - Establishing and Maintaining Relationships

The importance of establishing and maintaining relationships at the regional level should not be underestimated. Good relationships between explorers and miners, Government and non-government agencies and Aboriginal groups need to be developed as early as possible in the process.

Effective relationship building processes will ensure that:

- Potential project problems and issues are identified and resolved early on;
- Key people in the process are identified and factored into relevant negotiations from the outset;
- Opportunities for mutual trust, confidence, understanding and respect are established early; and
- Greater certainty for all stakeholders is created.

Once again, it is important that exploration, mining and Government and non-government agency stakeholders understand the range of historical factors that have impacted upon the current cultural, social and economic position of individual Traditional Owner groups and the broader Aboriginal community. In particular, they should continue to develop their respective capacities to deliver culturally proficient and community-sensitive outcomes, while simultaneously promoting the importance of developing business-minded approaches among Aboriginal groups.

Developing and Maintaining Mutual Awareness, Knowledge and Understanding

A fundamental issue often raised by exploration and mining companies and Indigenous groups is their respective lack of understanding and respect for each other's situation and culture.

- Indigenous groups often highlight a need for better understanding and respect by companies for Indigenous people's employment and business aspirations, cultural heritage, the significance and importance of land in Indigenous culture and the protocols which operate within Indigenous communities (as to who should be consulted, in what contexts, etc);
- Miners and explorers often acknowledge their need for an improved understanding of the significance of Aboriginal culture, but also highlight the need for the Indigenous groups to understand the "exploration and mining culture". In particular, Indigenous groups need to be aware that whilst mining companies have the potential to make substantial profits in the long term, the risk involved in the early stage of the mining process (especially at exploration) is significant, with operating budgets being relatively small.

The development of effective training programs by all stakeholders at the local level will enhance mutual awareness, knowledge and understanding within each group. The effective development and ongoing delivery of such programs will ensure that relationships are developed, nurtured and maintained, that confidence in and respect for each other is developed, and that greater certainty is secured for all parties involved at each key stage in the mining process.

From an exploration and mining company perspective, training should, as a minimum, seek to develop awareness, knowledge and understanding within Aboriginal groups by:

- Explaining the key stages in the exploration and mining process and discussing company requirements at each stage;
- Explaining the company's approach to working with Indigenous communities;
- Presenting relevant information relating to projects;
- Providing relevant information relating to the company's history, structure and decision-making processes;
- Explaining the importance of meeting project deadlines within the mining culture;
- Explaining the on-site numeracy and literacy and industry culture and work ethic requirements; and
- Promoting the importance and significance of, and demonstrating a commitment to, working in partnership.

From a Aboriginal community perspective, training should be provided for persons engaged at all levels of mining, exploration and associated contracting companies, and should, as a minimum, aim to:

- Provide an insight into traditional through to contemporary Indigenous culture, heritage and society;
- Provide an insight into the historical problems and issues that impact upon Indigenous people in the region, and/or the specific Traditional Owner group;
- Explain Aboriginal communication requirements and protocols;
- Highlight Aboriginal strategic priorities and aspirations; and
- Promote the importance and significance of, and demonstrate a commitment to, working in partnership.

From a Government and service agency perspective, training for other key stakeholders should, as a minimum, aim to:

- Highlight and explain government programs and support options relevant to projects;
- Provide updated information relating to relevant legislative changes;
- Provide information and advice on how to access relevant support or assistance; and
- Promote the importance and significance of, and demonstrate a commitment to, working in partnership.

Meeting Time/Project Deadlines

Difficulties in meeting timelines will be better anticipated and addressed if stakeholders' differing attitudes to time are acknowledged.

From an industry and Government perspective, a significant premium attaches to the core business values of accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in project management. It is important for the Aboriginal groups to acknowledge this requirement, and to continue to develop business-minded approaches when dealing with these stakeholder groups.

Similarly, in order to understand the perspective of Aboriginal people, other stakeholders must comprehend and accept the manner in which historical events have impacted upon individual Aboriginal groups. For example:

- The geographical displacement of Indigenous people from their traditional lands, and their subsequent formation of historical connections to other areas has complicated issues of group-identification, and often makes more onerous the time and cost commitments required of Traditional Owners in attending meetings.
- Aboriginal groups face a significant challenge in having to adapt to changing circumstances, procedures and attitudes to time, many of which are inconsistent with cultural traditions and processes.
- There have been and still are limited opportunities for Aboriginal groups to develop knowledge and skills in time and project management.
- Individual Aboriginal people often carry significant responsibilities requiring them to attend to cultural business within their group.

From a company and Government perspective, this process can be enhanced through more effective internal strategic planning and community consultation processes being adopted – i.e., plan well in advance and ensure that early consultation with Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal groups is conducted, maintain a consistent presence of key personnel (people who are honest and can gain respect and trust) on the ground, and strive to build relationships that are culturally appropriate, community sensitive and built on mutual respect, honesty and trust.

From an Aboriginal community perspective, this process can be also be enhanced through more effective strategic planning processes and a recognition that a business-minded approach to negotiations is required to ensure that realistic outcomes are achieved – i.e., planning well in advance, ensuring that strategic priorities for land management, employment, training and business development are identified and formalised, establishing culturally appropriate communication protocols and ensuring that all communications are inclusive of the entire group.

In all cases, it needs to be recognised that, in addition to managing the important project planning parameters of Time, Quality and Cost, effective and efficient project management also requires sensitivity, trust and respect among all stakeholders to build partnerships and produce mutually agreed outcomes. Partnerships of this nature will be significantly enhanced if all parties enter negotiations without any pre-conceived ideas or misconceptions toward the other parties.

Traditional Owner/Aboriginal Community Strategic Goals and Priorities

The identification of Traditional Owner/Aboriginal community strategic goals and priorities (as illustrated in the diagram p20 of this report) will significantly enhance their capacity to lead, plan, organise and control activities within their respective groups in accordance with standard business management practices. In turn, it will significantly enhance their capacity to negotiate realistic outcomes with industry, and to operate within reasonable timeframes and budgets.

The process of identifying Traditional Owner/Aboriginal community group strategic goals and priorities will also assist exploration, mining and Government and non-government stakeholders by providing clarity and assisting them to collectively identify opportunities where each can contribute to the achievement of Traditional Owner and wider Indigenous strategic goals and aspirations.

In particular, this process will help to ensure that industry and Government and non-government stakeholders do not replicate each others' efforts, yielding more cost-effective and relevant stakeholder outcomes.

It should also assist the Traditional Owner groups and the wider Indigenous community as a whole, in the important process of developing a unified and business-minded approach to working with industry and government agencies.

Addressing Resource Disparity

The disparity of resources between Traditional Owner/Aboriginal groups and explorers, miners and Government and non-government stakeholders must be acknowledged to ensure that partnerships succeed in the region. A genuine acknowledgement of, and an effective, responsible and consistent response to this problem requires commitment from government, as well as industry, but will significantly contribute to better partnership outcomes.

As in other regions throughout Australia, it is often assumed that Traditional Owner/Aboriginal representatives can travel to and from meetings relating to exploration or mining at their own expense. This is not always the case, and contrasts with the situation of other stakeholders whose costs are borne by the organisation they represent.

From an Indigenous perspective, the basic human dignity of the Traditional Owner/Aboriginal group needs to be respected in the exploration and mining process. In this respect, there must be an acknowledgment that individual socio-economic circumstances differ greatly from one Indigenous person/group to the next. However, as a basic minimum, where Traditional Owner/Aboriginal representatives are required to attend negotiation meetings or participate in ongoing partnership building processes relevant to specific exploration or mining projects, their genuine requirements should be enquired after, and they should be entitled to enjoy the same or similar conditions in terms of travel, accommodation and meals, to those enjoyed by other stakeholder representatives.

Flexible, Innovative and Sustainable Programs

A number of areas that could contribute to greater sustainability of programs are often highlighted by all groups. In particular:

- The creation of more “permanent employment opportunities” allowing for genuine wealth creation to occur rather than a reliance on statistical outcomes;
- The development of comprehensive skills audits for employment and business development as vital pre-requisites to the identification, training, recruitment and retention of potential Indigenous employees and business operators;
- The development of mining industry traineeships and pre-employment workshops that assist potential Indigenous job applicants in writing up resumes, developing interview skills, licensing, work ethics etc., as possible ways to increase Indigenous community participation in work;
- Acknowledgement that current job application procedures and processes are not sensitive to cultural differences: e.g. some mining companies use only online application procedures, which require applicants to have access to the internet and a knowledge of how to use it;
- The development of pre-business workshops that assist potential Indigenous business operators in writing up tenders and developing project plans, and general business taxation and management advice, principles etc., as possible ways to increase Indigenous community participation in business;
- The development of comprehensive regional agreements between all parties (**all** levels of government, mining industry and Indigenous communities) to deal with broader regional issues of cultural heritage, employment, training and business development for Indigenous people;
- The development of localised cross-cultural training to increase awareness of Indigenous issues in the context of the exploration and mining industry and to include the participation of management, mine workers who worked on-site and company contractor employees;

- Greater coordination between all levels of government including, local, state and federal government departments; and
- The development and delivery of culturally specific Mentoring Programs that seek to reintroduce and reconnect Indigenous people to their traditional lores, customs, values and obligations and responsibilities to their land, people and environment in a modern day context **AND** address the issue of how these all transfer into the workplace and broader community environment.

Strengthening Regional Partnership Alliances

An effective Interim Regional Partnership Committee should seek to enhance communication, general awareness and understanding among all stakeholder groups and should not seek to displace or attempt to replicate the functions of existing organisations within the region.

Rather, it would attempt to:

- Provide leadership and strategic direction for all stakeholder groups;
- Provide basic advice, information and direction to individual stakeholder groups seeking assistance;
- Disseminate information to all stakeholder groups promoting the importance and benefits of working in partnership throughout the region;
- Identify and actively promote successful partnerships throughout the region; and
- Serve as a forum for enhancing and developing relationships based on goodwill.

Human Resource Management Policy

The importance of establishing and maintaining relationships at the regional level does not stop once an Indigenous person is recruited to a position or takes up a business opportunity at a mine site. Good relationships will be greatly enhanced in all cases where companies demonstrate an ongoing sensitivity, commitment and awareness reflected in internal company policy.

Effective industry policies will ensure that:

- Racial discrimination or harassment is taken seriously and will not be tolerated;
- Key people in the process are identified and factored into relevant training to ensure overall site compliance; and
- Company Indigenous Policies are transferable and compliant in all dealings with Indigenous people.

Conclusion

The Geraldton Mid West WA region is considered to be the next potential boom area for mining in WA and based on current population data it is anticipated that the imminent commencement of new mining projects is likely to compound current and future projected demand for skilled workers located in the region. The region's Aboriginal population is approximately 5,500 or 10% of the general population. Half of these Aboriginal people are under the age of 19, with the Aboriginal population experiencing an unemployment rate of 38% (based on 2001 Census data) compared to a non-Aboriginal labour force unemployment rate of 9.5%.

With these key factors in mind and in keeping with the theme of the Working in Partnership Program, the Geraldton workshop was designed to provide a neutral regional forum, in which exploration and mining companies, Aboriginal groups and Government and non-government stakeholders could meet to discuss regional problems, issues and aspirations and consider solutions of mutual benefit that could be addressed through a Regional Partnership Agreement.

Like other workshops held in the series, the Geraldton workshop provided stakeholders with an important opportunity to forge for themselves initiatives which they could develop and direct at a local level.

The workshop identified problems, issues, aspirations and agreed actions which have been supplemented in this report by additional challenges that will need to be considered and addressed to ensure that a successful and mutually beneficial regional partnership arrangement can be sustained in the Geraldton Mid West Region.

In this regard, an opportunity exists for the Interim Geraldton Mid West Regional Partnership Committee to take up responsibility for developing further regional initiatives to deliver on actions and respond to challenges.

The Committee's initial task will be to define its own mandate, partnership planning framework and role relevant to the region, and to specify criteria for monitoring its own performance.

DRET has indicated a willingness to provide support and guide the Interim Committee in keeping with the objectives of the Working in Partnership Program for the development of long-term and effective partnerships between Indigenous communities and the exploration/mining industry.

While DRET has indicated a preparedness to provide support to begin the process of implementing initiatives which will carry the partnership-building process forward, it is imperative that regional stakeholders commit to making a more effective use of local resources to ensure the ultimate success and sustainability of the partnership arrangement.

Appendix A - Workshop Participants

Indigenous Representatives	ORGANISATION
Basham, Frank	Wila Guthara Community Aboriginal Corporation
Boyd, Samara	Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service
Connors, Tony	Gumala Enterprises
Dyball, Peter	Gumala Enterprises
Egan, Karen	Morawa Indigenous Representative
Egan, Gavin	Wajarri
Forsyth, Rick	Central West College TAFE Aboriginal Student Support
Gray, Gordon	Aboriginal Community member
Green, Merrilyn	Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation
Hamlett, Colin	Wajarri Elder
Jackamarra, Glenda	Regional Yamaji Murni Wangga
Kniveton, Jenny	Bundiyarra Community Aboriginal Corporation
Laudehr, Zain	Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation
Piota, Catherine	Bibi Wuba Productions
Radcliffe, Yvonne	Yamaji Cultural Tours (Weeara)
Scott, Colleen	Yulella CDEP Mount Magnet
Strickland, Janice	Yulella CDEP Mount Magnet
Trust, Ian	Wunan Foundation
Valentino, Jason	Murchison Employment Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation
Warner, Wayne	Yamaji Consultancies
Yarnold, Wendy	Wila Guthara Community Aboriginal Corporation
Industry Representatives	ORGANISATION
Anderson, Bruce	Oxiana Golden Grove Pty Ltd
Anderson, Glenys	Compass Group Australia (Eurest Support Services)
Anderson, Marcelle	Worley Parsons – Yilgarn Infrastructure
Babb, Cara	WA Chamber of Minerals & Energy
Banks, Mikalya	Murchison Metals Ltd (Jack Hills)
Bean, Christine	Tiwest Northern Operations
Davies, Cedric	Iluka Resources
Griffin, Kathleen	Gindalbie Metals (Mt Karara)
Hill, Naomi	Gindalbie Metals (Mt Karara)
Hopkins, Amanda	Murchison Metals Ltd (Jack Hills)
Ingvarson, Darryl	Small Business Centre Mid West
Jefferies, Rob	Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance
Jupp, Richard	Murchison Metals Ltd (Jack Hills)
Kaeding, Greg	Gindalbie Metals (Mt Karara)
Manning, Brett	Ferrowest
McKeever, Thomas	Worley Parsons – Yilgarn Infrastructure
Murphy, Jasmine	Gindalbie Metals (Mt Karara)
Niesler, Paul	Mount Keith Operations (BHP)
Oxenham, Ahslee	Arc Energy (Hovea, Erima & Xyris)
Patterson, Craig	Central Earth Moving
Powers, Gary	Mount Gibson Iron Limited (Tallering Peak)
Roberts, Neil	Midwest Corporation (Koolanooka)
Schintu, Allan	Arc Energy (Hovea, Erima & Xyris)

Snell, Brad	Pilbara Iron (Rio Tinto) / President, Shire of Roebourne
Sparks, Tony	Extension Hill Pty Ltd / Asia Iron Holdings
Wither, Ben	Barrick Gold Corporation (Plutonic)
Government /Other Agency Representatives	ORGANISATION
Abbott, David	Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources
Alborough, Marilyn	Indigenous Coordination Centre, Geraldton
Beevers, Bert	Central West College TAFE
Carpenter, Ian	Mayor, City of Geraldton-Greenough
Cottier, Yvette	Indigenous Business Australia
Donovan, Adrian	Mission Australia
Douglas, Christine	Central West College TAFE
Douglas, Steve	Mid West Development Commission
Duke, Ted	Department of Housing & Works (WA)
Ford, Danny	Department of Indigenous Affairs (WA)
Forrest, Simon	Geraldton University Centre
Geerlings, Lyn	City of Geraldton-Greenough
Godfrey, Karen	Geraldton Chamber of Commerce
Gray-Forrest, Roni	Geraldton University Centre
Green, Charmaine	Indigenous Coordination Centre (DCITA)
Gregory, Trevor	Department of Housing & Works (WA)
Hartman, Tom	Shire of Mullewa
Hewitt, Mark	Indigenous Coordination Centre, Hedland
Jackson, Victoria	Department of Industry and Resources
Kerley, Veronica	Indigenous Coordination Centre, Geraldton
Maddren, Terry	Apprentice & Traineeship Company
McDonald, Wayne	Mid West Development Commission
McGowan-Jones, Jacqueline	Department of Indigenous Affairs (WA)
Miles, Lee	Department of Education Science & Training
Mills, Jill	Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs
Nagle, Colin	Department of Employment & Workplace Relations
Neville, Bob	Bloodwood Tree
Pitman, Alan	Office of Aboriginal Economic Development
Rasa, Margaret	Indigenous Business Australia
Ryan, Peter	Department of Employment & Workplace Relations
Shepherd, Ron	Indigenous Coordination Centre, Geraldton
Tamaschke, Louise	Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources
Tang, Jackie	Department of Indigenous Affairs (WA)
Thompson, Alan	Mission Australia
Turley, Craig	Indigenous Coordination Centre, Geraldton
Wells, Stacey	Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources

Appendix B - Participant Evaluations

Working in Partnership Geraldton Regional Workshop													
The following is a table of results from participants' evaluation sheets about the workshop. There were 29 respondents. Not all respondents answered all the questions													
		Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	> Neutral	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%	%
Workshop Objectives	The objectives of the workshop were clear to me and relevant to my role in my organisation	3	10	20	69	79	5	17	1	3	0	0	100
	The structure and format of the workshop allowed the objectives to be achieved	2	7	17	59	66	8	28	2	7	0	0	100
Working with others	As a result of the workshop, I have a better understanding of the things other groups see as important in developing partnerships	11	38	15	52	90	2	7	1	3	0	0	100
	I met a number of people at the workshop that I will probably contact or deal with again	9	31	18	62	93	2	7	0	0	0	0	100
	The information kit (case studies) provided will be useful in demonstrating to others some of the examples of mining companies working in partnership with Indigenous communities	3	10	22	76	86	4	14	0	0	0	0	100
Organisation & format	The workshop was well organised and the time spent on each session/topic was about right.	0	0	16	55	55	10	34	2	7	0	0	97
	The time allowed for meeting with and talking to others was about right	0	0	20	69	69	6	21	2	7	0	0	97
	The facilitators (Grant and Sally) encouraged discussion and the sharing of ideas	17	59	9	31	90	1	3	0	0	0	0	93
	The social function was worthwhile and a good chance to network with others	0	0	21	72	72	8	28	0	0	0	0	100
Workshop conclusions	The results of the workshop are something I will be able to talk to others about and use to build partnerships in the future	8	28	14	48	76	5	17	1	3	0	0	97
Total		53		172			51		9		0		285

Appendix C - Participant Comments

- We should continue to do what we are doing as we are on track to achieve a good outcome.
- *More time on the practical breakout sessions (needed) - less on the introductory.*
- Keep it on time. Set clear objectives. Provide clearer information as clearly participants were not sure about focus.
- *Pretty good!!! Allowed for divergent views... well done.*
- It's finally going to happen.
- *Presentations long - need to be kept on target. Allow more discussion time.*
- Perhaps let industry/Indigenous groups talk amongst themselves first, and then bring Government in as necessary. Good start but there is still a lot of tension across + with mining and Indigenous groups. Opportunity to bring them together.
- *Keep doing what we are doing and maintain/develop partnerships.*
- (Need) to start networking and assess our workforce skills within our Indigenous community.
- *The bus is in 1st gear.*
- There is a long way to go. Keep on time because last sessions were most important but were cut short.
- *Education is the main focus.*
- Open transparent communication will benefit all regions.
- *It is an exciting time for change in the Mid West. Work continues to be done in this area.*
- Opportunity for Indigenous self-determination and work towards economic independence.
- *Don't come with preconceptions about what will come out of a group process. Facilitate don't lead by the nose.*
- Could have made more use of breakouts to move actions, strategies a bit quicker. Government here to facilitate, not drive. The pre-work that went into this workshop meant good progress was made over the 2 days.
- *Bit more upfront housekeeping about solutions and actions not problems and talk.*
- Community inputs are a must. Communicate more freely and explain yourself more clearly.
- *There are things happening out there to facilitate change.*