



Research Report on  
Aboriginal Employment and Enterprise  
in the Gunnedah Region

for the

Australian Government Department of Education,  
Employment and Workplace Relations

February 2009



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

### Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3	Black Business Connections.....	25
Opportunities for Employment.....	5	Training and Skills Development.....	26
2007 Industry Skills Requirement Survey		Case Study – Try-A-Trade Event...	27
.....	5	Government Indigenous Education	
Case Study – Apprenticeship.....	9	Targets.....	28
Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and		TESA Mining Traineeships Program.....	29
Regional NSW.....	10	Pathfinder Group – Transport & Logistics	
Government Indigenous Employment		.....	30
Strategies.....	10	TAFE Training Program.....	32
Case Study – Hunter New England		Case Study – Care for Country	
Health Aboriginal Employment		Project.....	33
Strategy.....	12	Aboriginal Economic Development	
Case Study – Reconciliation Action		Program.....	34
Plans.....	13	Case Study – Job Compact,	
NSW Public Sector Indigenous Cadetships		Tamworth.....	35
Program.....	15	Skills and Training Needs of Aboriginal	
Careers Calendar.....	16	Health Workers.....	37
Disability Services & Supported		Driver's Licences.....	38
Employment.....	16	Workplace Based Training, Mentoring	
Pathfinder Group – Mechanical &		and Personal Support.....	38
Engineering.....	17	Case Study – Retail Trainee.....	39
Case Study – Overcoming Employer		Case Study – Iron Man Welders	
Resistance.....	18	Project.....	40
Enterprise Opportunities.....	20	Strategies to Provide this Report to the	
Community, Land & Business Plans.....	21	Indigenous Community.....	42
Case Study – Tree Propagation Unit		Recommendations.....	43
.....	21	Appendices.....	45
Regenesis Climate Recovery Project.....	22	A – Skills Held by Indigenous Persons	
Clean Business Australia.....	23	Available for Employment.....	45
Gunnedah Flight Training College.....	24	B – Terms of Reference.....	47
Northern Inland Food & Wine Industry		C – Research Methodology.....	48
Development Project.....	24	D – Researcher Disclosure.....	49



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### **Executive Summary**

It is clear that there are numerous success stories of Aboriginal employment and enterprise in the Gunnedah region without being ignorant of the many challenges that exist to achieve levels of employment and economic independence comparable with that of the wider community.

Within the broad pool of potential Aboriginal employees there is a strategic opportunity to especially focus on the needs of the substantial number of individuals who have the qualifications and/or skills required for many entry level jobs in the market however are currently wanting for genuine opportunities to work in ongoing (rather than time bound trainee or project based) positions and gain practical experience and skills.

Successfully acting on this opportunity in part requires improved collaboration and coordination of key organisations, agencies and services across the Gunnedah Region. A range of Case Studies are included in this Report, both local and from elsewhere, as a way of providing working models with possible lessons of relevance to these key stakeholders in the Gunnedah Region.

The imminent expansion of the coal industry in the Gunnedah region will create direct employment opportunities and the flow on effect of supply chain industry and the broader economy is expected to be substantial.

Given the limitations of the coal rush, such as the risks posed by climate change and past trends of mining employees being sourced from outside the region, this research has also sought to identify Aboriginal employment and enterprise opportunities in the sustainability sector – a Mining-Plus approach. With an ancient strength of Aboriginal culture and heritage in the area of environmental custodianship it is not surprising that there are both current and developing opportunities in the sustainability sector for the Aboriginal community – such archaeological surveying, bushland and habitat regeneration, culture based tourism and more.

With regards to training and skills this Research has identified the value in broadening perspectives of training to include the critical workplace based training, mentoring and personal support strategies which have proved effective for the purpose of Indigenous employment outcomes, such as cross cultural understanding and communication on the one hand, and workplace ethics and practices on the other.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

While there are clearly many individuals and organisations – both non-Indigenous and Indigenous – in the Gunnedah Region that hold unhelpful and/or unhealthy beliefs about Indigenous employment and enterprise, this report highlights that successful, even highly successful, outcomes are realistically achievable. In view of the growing shortage of skills facing not only the Gunnedah Region but Australia more generally, the findings of this report become more meaningful and central to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Gunnedah Region and beyond.

The key recommended strategy is to build upon and complement the existing successes and working models in the Gunnedah Region, together with consideration of other models which are likely to be beneficial. It is recommended that the refinement and prioritisation of the strategies detailed in this Report include a series of forums with Indigenous and other key stakeholders to assess these strategies and identify other strategies for consideration.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region Opportunities for Employment**

The most current research for the Gunnedah Region detailing opportunities for Employment is the *2007 Industry Skills Requirement Survey*.<sup>1</sup> Other employment opportunities were also identified through the course of the research for this Report.

There are many positive examples of successful Aboriginal employment in the Gunnedah region, both in Aboriginal enterprises and mainstream businesses. While each situation is of course unique they each demonstrate Aboriginal people can and do make good quality employees.

The expanding coal rush in the Gunnedah region is seen by some as an economic opportunity while others are more sceptical having 'heard it all before'. The issue of Climate Change creates a further degree of uncertainty for this carbon intensive industry.

In the event that BHP's Caroonna Mine is approved some 800-1,000 direct jobs will be created with an Indigenous employment target of possibly 10%. A further 2-3,000 further jobs will be created in supply chain requirements and flow on economic benefits to the region. While research indicates that past mining booms have benefited communities 'east of the mine' there is nonetheless a considerable opportunity in the Gunnedah region for direct employment and supply chain enterprise arising from Caroonna.

Expectations are that the mining sector will continue to draw employees from other industry areas, particularly agriculture, retail, trades and transport, creating opportunities for employment in 'back filling' positions vacated by employees moving to the mines.

More generally there continues to be a shortage of skilled tradespeople in the region, particularly metal trades such as welders and boiler makers.

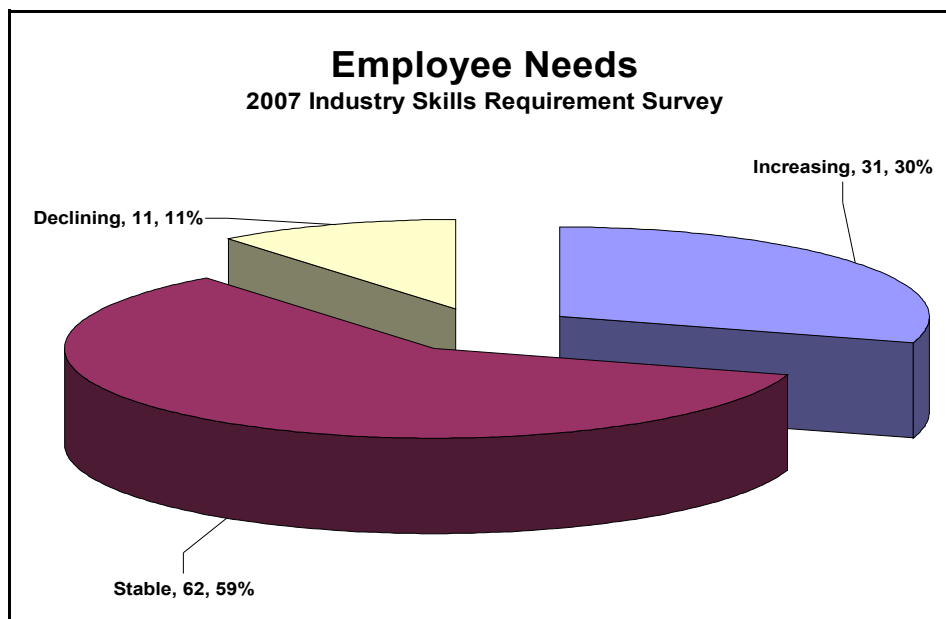
### ***2007 Industry Skills Requirement Survey***

Overall, there is a strong market for employees with a large majority of businesses (71%) in the Gunnedah Region expecting skills shortages in the future (i.e. within 5 years). 22% of businesses did not believe there would not be a skills shortage within their industry.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

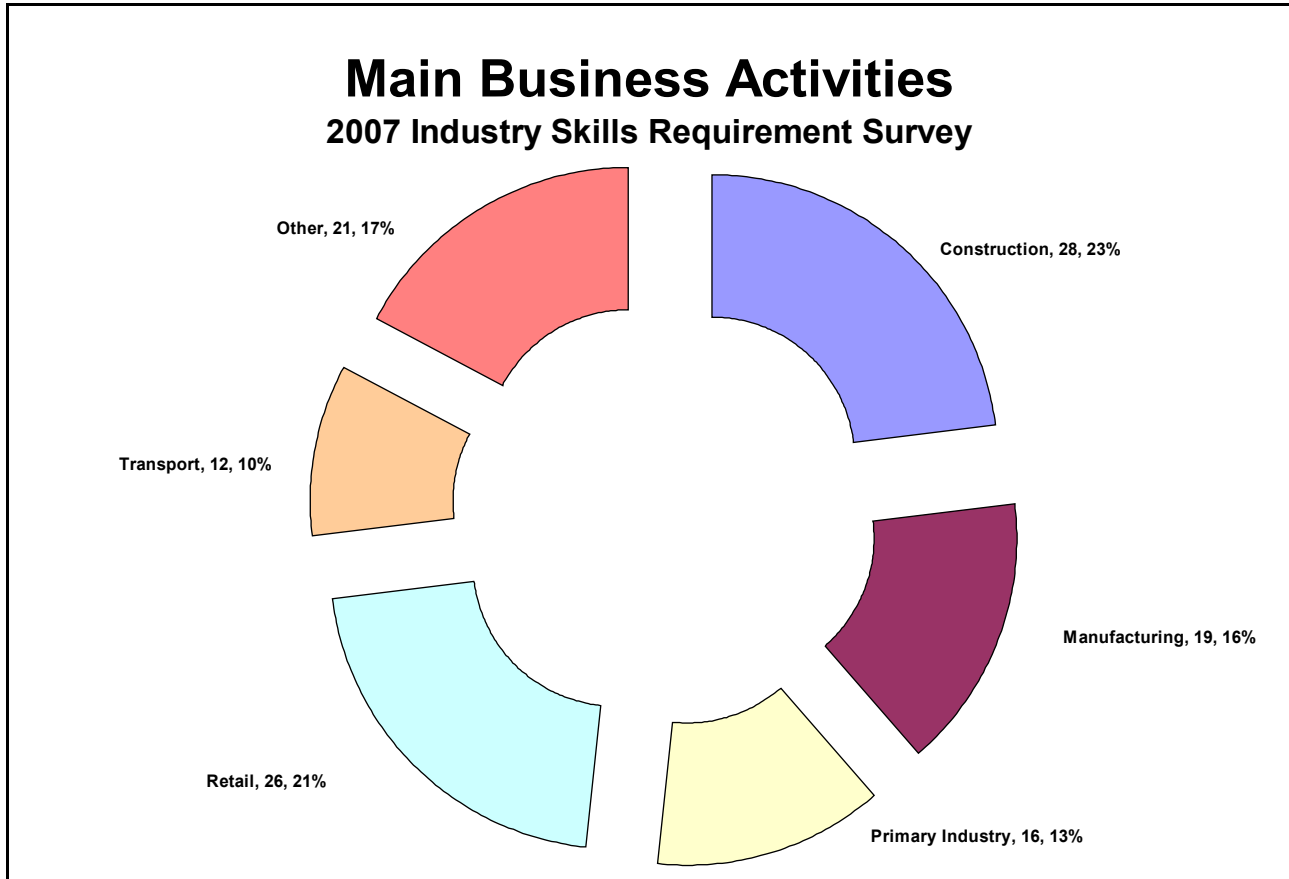
This belief probably reflects in part these businesses own activity levels and needs for employees. Businesses in the Gunnedah Region identified their employee needs were increasing, stable or declining as charted below:



The 2007 Industry Skills Requirement Survey involved 109 businesses from the wider Gunnedah region – including Wee Waa, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Quirindi, Boggabri and surrounding districts – broad enough to allow further in-depth analysis of the range of business development, skills and training needs issues that the survey covered. The business areas of activity in which this employment occurs are depicted in the below chart, noting that the “Other” category included: electrical contractors; service industry; veterinary and mechanical activities.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region



In light of the significant profile of the coal industry and rush in the region, it is noteworthy that 64% of business respondents stated they did not currently supply any mining operations within the New England or Northwest region. At the same time however the majority of respondents identified a likely impact on their businesses within 5 years.

	1 Year	3 Years	5 Yrs
<b>YES</b>	42%	34%	66%
<b>NO</b>	16%	1%	1%
<b>UNSURE</b>	18%	24%	27%

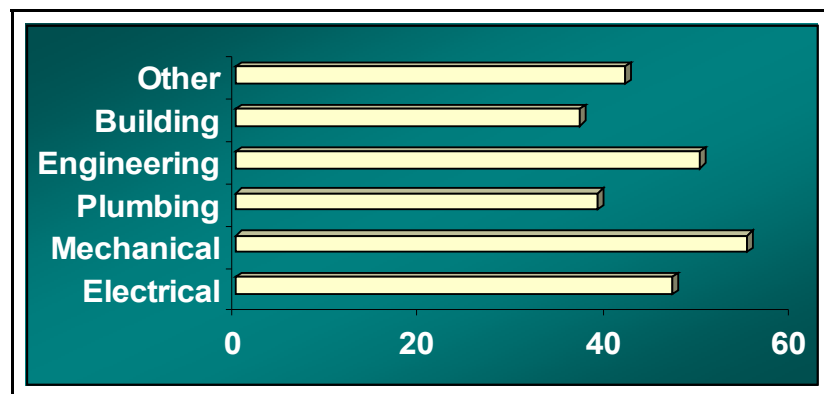
Two further aspects to the Survey sought to identify more specifically the nature of jobs and skills requirements forecast by business. In addition to identifying industry areas where employment demands were, the skills and experience requirements needed from employees were identified:



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

Trade Qualifications	48% (52)	Literacy	15% (16)
HR/HC Licences	27% (30)	Car Licence	19% (21)
Fork Lift Licence	22% (24)	Computer Skills	16% (18)
Labouring	31% (34)	Retail/Sales	18% (20)
Administration	30% (34)	Customer Service	16% (18)
Green Card	18% (20)	Reliability	14% (15)
Tertiary Education	11% (12)	Chemical Licence	3% (4)

And more specifically, employers identified the following areas as being where most difficulty was being experienced for staff recruitment (with the Other category including truck drivers, agronomists, panel beaters, excavation and surveying).



What is especially significant for the purpose of this current research regarding Aboriginal employment is that 62% (68) of respondents said they would consider employing less skilled workers if Government support was available, however a majority of these same respondents stated that they would not consider long term unemployed options.

This willingness of businesses to employ people in traineeship-type situations, be they formal or informal on the job training, is significant because while there are clearly job opportunities with levels of skills requirements that could be met by Aboriginal people living in Gunnedah, there is also a significant amount of employment available that requires higher levels of qualifications, skills and experience and so further training would need to be undertaken by Aboriginal people.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

**Appendix A** provides details of the skills, qualifications and experience identified as being held by Aboriginal people available for work in the Gunnedah Region drawn from surveys of Job Network Agency clients.

### ***Case Study – Apprenticeship***

The following case study highlights a successful placement of an Aboriginal person into an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships have proved successful in providing both employment and training for Aboriginal employees, with one success factor being identified as the practical, hands-on way that skills are taught in such arrangements.

*We have had a few good successes with local employers. In 2007 one of my case managers had a young client who was very keen to work in the smash repair industry. She made up an information pack about apprenticeships and went out visiting local employers. The second site she visited were keen but had just put on an apprentice, however a few days later they called her and said the placement hadn't worked out and was our fellow still interested. They started him the next day and he is still there!*

– Job Network Agency

The other success factor that is apparent from this case study is the eagerness of the Aboriginal employee, who also had decided they were specifically interested to work in the smash repair industry. In the course of this research, Job Network providers frequently identified the value and importance of these attributes, and conversely stated how reluctant they were of putting employees forward where some level of enthusiasm and interest was not present. One respondent stated that they “*wouldn't risk their business and reputation by putting forward a possible employee unless there was a shared commitment to try and make it work*”.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional NSW<sup>ii</sup>***

A year earlier than the above Survey, the NSW Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development led an inquiry into skills shortages. This 2006 Inquiry included a case study by the Hunter Valley Training Company from the Gunnedah Region.

Contrary to expectations of the Inquiry, the Hunter Valley Training Company found that over the period 2000–2002 41% of businesses in Gunnedah had grown, 44% had held steady and 15% had shrunk. While the overall picture of business activity was positive, it appears that a lot of the labour capacity used to achieve this was provided by existing rather than new employees as evidenced by the fact that 14% of business owners were working more than 75 hours per week, and 76% working between 35 and 75 hours per week.

The future outlook for business and employment was a mixture of growth, stability and decline, making it difficult to determine a clear overall trend:

- 10% of businesses expecting their staffing levels to increase, 50% expected them to stay stable, 18% expected a decrease and 21% were unsure
- 35% of businesses expected their turnover to increase, 18% expected stability, 35% expected a decrease and 24% were unsure
- Almost one third of businesses expected to make some sort of operational change to their business in the coming year, half being diversification and expansion and the other half contraction.

### ***Government Indigenous Employment Strategies***

On March 26 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to the target of halving the gap in employment outcomes within a decade.

This far reaching high level Australian, State and Territory Government agreement provides the overarching context for Aboriginal employment right across Australia, including the Gunnedah Region, particularly as Australian and State Governments move to develop and implement local strategies and programs to achieve them.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

This work is being taken forward by the COAG Indigenous Reform Working Group which is chaired by the Honorable Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and co-chaired by the Northern and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

The current discussion paper on Indigenous employment reforms provides more detail of how this COAG target is being progressed. The following information has been excerpted from the Joint Media Release issued on 19 May 2008 by The Hon Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Employment Participation and The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs:

The Government is developing a new strategy to build the strong foundations necessary for sustainable Indigenous economic development across Australia.

The nationwide consultations will focus on how to reform two existing employment and work-readiness programs – Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP).

This includes how to remove disincentives for people to study, train, or take up other work outside CDEP and how to encourage people to travel for work and training opportunities.

Building the job aspirations of young Indigenous people is key to turning around the low participation rates and passive welfare.

Indigenous employment participation is low and many communities cannot access job opportunities. Demographic changes mean that the gap will only widen without urgent action.

The discussion paper looks at how individuals, businesses, communities and partnerships must be involved to lift Indigenous employment rates. It also builds on the principle that improved universal employment services and training places are essential for sustained economic development.

The paper also looks at how employers of Indigenous workers can be better supported, building on the success of the Structure Training and Development



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

Program (STEP) and Structured Training and Employment Projects Related Services (STEPERS) programs.

The Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (IEDS) will be launched later this year and will complement the Government's new employment services model to be implemented from July 2009.

*Increasing Indigenous economic opportunity – A discussion paper on the future of the CDEP and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) along with details of consultation sessions are available at [www.indigenous.gov.au](http://www.indigenous.gov.au).*

### ***Case Study – Hunter New England Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy***

The Hunter New England Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy is one example of how a government department is working to improve Indigenous employment outcomes and states:

Aboriginal people make up 2.1 per cent of the NSW population and 3.3 per cent of the Hunter New England Health population, and we believe that our workforce should at least reflect these ratios.

The current rate of Indigenous employment across HNE Health is 1.59 per cent of all employees; the NSW Government EEO benchmark is 2.2 per cent.

This commitment translates to the need to recruit an additional 250 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in full-time permanent positions over a three year period within HNE Health.

The goals of the Hunter New England Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy are to:

- Provide a range of recruitment, retention and career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that satisfy the needs of HNE Health and contribute to equitable service delivery
- Impart a working knowledge and appreciation of cultural safety into the



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

everyday business of all HNE Health employees

- To provide a culturally sound and safe work environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

The Employment Strategy aligns with the NSW State Plan priorities for Indigenous people.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that a more extensive research project be undertaken to identify and summarise all government Indigenous employment strategies which are of relevance to the Gunnedah Region.

### ***Case Study – Reconciliation Action Plans***

A diverse range of organisations have developed Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) to build positive relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in ways that also advance their own organisational or business objectives.

The overall goal of the RAPs is to close the 17-year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, and employment strategies are frequently identified as part of the Plans.

It is significant to note that there do not appear to be any local government (local or state), business or community organisations in the Gunnedah Region who have developed Reconciliation Actions Plans which provides an opportunity for further investigation.

Examples of two RAPs which hold relevance to the Gunnedah Region are provide below:

#### **ANZ Reconciliation Action Plan**

- ANZ has a goal of 3% of Regional and Rural staff being from Indigenous backgrounds by December 2011
- Commitment to expand the school-based traineeship program in partnership with the Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES). Since the joint program began in May 2003 ANZ has recruited over 50 Year 11 and 12 students as trainees in regional ANZ branches.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

- The program provides trainees with practical banking and workplace experience, nurturing the capabilities and confidence that can allow them to broaden their future employment or academic opportunities. This can result in full time employment with ANZ or another organisation or tertiary study.
- ANZ will recruit at least 100 young Indigenous trainees each year until 2009 and, together with the AES, extend the program to further regional and metropolitan areas across Australia.

### **BHP Billiton Reconciliation Action Plan**

The possible development of the Coroona mine would provide Aboriginal people and organisations in the Gunnedah and wider Region and opportunity to engage with BHP Billiton about their Indigenous Programs through their Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy and this Reconciliation Action Plan, namely:

- Business programs to make use of opportunities for Aboriginal Organisations to supply goods and services to our operations
- Medium to long term employment targets both for ourselves and our contractors, based on a number of criteria including how many Indigenous people versus others are living in the local and regional area, the level of unemployment, employment requirements by other employers in the region
- Education and training programs at all levels, however major emphasis is on senior secondary initiatives and traineeships/cadetship programs



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

Other Organisations of relevance to Indigenous employment in the Gunnedah Region that have RAPs include:

- Australian Government: Centrelink; Indigenous Business Australia; Defence; Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Education, Science & Training; Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Health and Ageing; Transport and Regional Services
- Business: NRL; ARL; Qantas

### ***NSW Public Sector Indigenous Cadetships Program***

The NSW Public Sector Indigenous Cadetships Program provides the opportunity for Indigenous students to combine study with part-time employment in a NSW Government Agency.

At the time of preparing this research report there were four Indigenous Cadetships on offer.

Upon successful completion of the cadetship study and workplace components cadets are offered permanent jobs by the agency. During the Cadetship students receive a study allowance (\$600 per fortnight), \$500 per semester to cover books and study materials, plus salary for 12 weeks fulltime work per year.

Cadetships are advertised at various times throughout the year in the:

- Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times and other newspapers (national and local)
- Aboriginal Education Centres within NSW and ACT universities
- [www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au)



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Careers Calendar***

The Careers Calendar will be available across the Gunnedah Region shortly to better highlight skills shortages and employment opportunities as well as profile businesses. The Calendar is to be distributed through schools, businesses and to homes and will:

- Profile local employers, job opportunities, skills required for these jobs and training options
- Be complimented by a matching website to advertise current vacancies and be updated on a regular basis

The creation of the Careers Calendar has been led by TESA in conjunction with the Gunnedah District Development Board and the NSW Department of Education and Training, supported by a working group with representatives from the community, training organisations and schools.

### ***Disability Services & Supported Employment***

One of the more specialised and perhaps low profile opportunities for Indigenous employment is with disability services in the region. There are a few Aboriginal people already employed and working well within these services however many more Aboriginal people are likely to qualify for such supported employment.

Statistics indicate the total qualifying population in the region, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, is 1,100 people – which compares with the current 37 employees in this regard.

**Recommendation:** A separate research project be initiated to identify Indigenous employment opportunities within the disability services and supported employment arena.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Pathfinder Group – Mechanical & Engineering***

The Mechanical & Engineering Pathfinder Group forms part of the larger Gunnedah skills development project being led by the Gunnedah District Development Board.

As highlighted earlier in this Report, a Region wide survey indicated a perceived skill shortage in mechanical and engineering enterprises. Further investigation has highlighted these enterprises as being:

- Automotive repair and service
- Agricultural machinery repair and service
- Heavy equipment repair and service
- Manufacturing – metal fabrication

Further, the specific skills required by these enterprises were seen to be mostly encompassed by the following trades:

- Light vehicle automotive mechanics
- Heavy vehicle automotive mechanics
- Plant mechanics
- Welders
- Machinists
- Sheet metal workers



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Case Study – Overcoming Employer Resistance***

A common barrier faced by Indigenous job seekers is employer prejudice. One job network provider successfully applied strategies with a relatively large regional employer to address such issues.

Many attempts had been previously made to promote indigenous employment to this employer with little success. The employer was reluctant to hire Indigenous workers due to their perceptions and previous negative experiences including unreliable attendance, requests for pay advances, security issues and a lack of understanding of employer expectations.

The benefits of employing Indigenous job seekers, including the financial resources available, were promoted and an attractive wage subsidy was offered to employ two Indigenous workers as yards men. The amount offered took into account the additional supervision that would be required as a result of the time that the job seekers had been out of the workforce. Underpinning the wage subsidy was also a structured approach to employer and job seeker “matching” and post placement support.

As a result two indigenous job seekers were hired by the employer. Over the course of several months, the agency provided a high level of support to the job seekers and the employer. This support included pre-employment preparation, mentor support, liaison with the employer and job seekers regarding queries about wages, leave, safety and employer expectations.

The job seekers have gained valuable work skills throughout their employment and one job seeker has now committed to undertaking literacy and numeracy training to assist with his work communication and promotion opportunities. The employer has been extremely happy with the outcomes achieved and is now more willing to offer work to other Indigenous workers when it becomes available.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

The key success factors identified in achieving this outcome was:

- ensuring that only job ready job seekers with suitable skills were referred to the employer
- conducting employer expectation training
- maintaining a good relationship with the employer and ensuring that they are culturally aware
- maintaining an ongoing relationship with the job seekers
- providing continual on going support and mentoring to the employer and job seekers
- maintaining trust by not promising anything to the job seekers which cannot be delivered



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

### Enterprise Opportunities

As is the case with Aboriginal employment there are also successful Aboriginal enterprises in the Gunnedah region which provide demonstrated examples and models for developing and new enterprise as well as potential platforms for business expansion.

The growing coal rush and growing need to address environmental issues such as Climate Change both provide enterprise opportunities for Indigenous business.

As mentioned earlier in this Report, in the event that BHP's Caroona Mine is approved some 800-1,000 direct jobs and 2-3,000 supply chain and other jobs will be created. While research indicates that past mining booms have benefited communities 'east of the mine' there is nonetheless a considerable opportunity in the Gunnedah region for supply chain enterprise arising from Caroona, particularly given BHP's Reconciliation Action Plan (see Case Study later in this Report) policy on supporting the development of local Aboriginal businesses as suppliers for their mining operations, such as:

- Direct services to mining, such as labour hire services or meeting supply chain requirements such as archaeological surveys, habitat regeneration and rehabilitation services
- Indirect opportunities such as labour-hire services created by the likely continuation of mining operations drawing employees from other areas, particularly agriculture, retail, trades and transport
- Broader opportunities created by increased economic activity in the area such as hospitality, entertainment and tourism

Agriculture in the region has been depressed from weak rainfall and water access more generally. Should this turn around a likely boom could quickly emerge, particularly given global shortages of food crops and high global prices for wheat.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Community, Land & Business Plans***

A further significant opportunity for enterprise lies with the transitions taking place with Land Council and CDEP services. This has already been referred to earlier in this Report in regards to the Australia Government and COAG targets and reviews.

While the uncertainties regarding changes to Land Council and CDEP arrangements are an issue, significant effort is being applied through the Community Land and Business Plans process to establish new enterprise such as carbon offsets and Caring for Country programs, cultural centres and tourism and commercial uses of Aboriginal land (motels, conference centres).

It is mandatory for all Land Councils to prepare and implement a Community Land and Business Plan, unless the Land Council has been granted an exemption. The Plans will provide a mechanism for outlining key strategies and goals regarding the future direction for the Land Council, including details of the services and products that will be provided.

Within the range of opportunities to be considered within the Community, Land and Business Plans, the significant amount of 'community' housing and infrastructure owned by Land Councils provides potential for the development of service enterprises to meet repairs, maintenance and construction needs for the community, as well as other needs such as community transport and health. Several Aboriginal corporations are already working in this direction.

Aboriginal Land Councils are required to prepare and adopt a plan no later than 1 January 2009.

### ***Case Study – Tree Propagation Unit***

Whitehaven Mines developed a relationship with Aboriginal Organisations to address operational needs for undertaking Aboriginal Archaeological Surveys.

When looking to address the operational needs for site rehabilitation the opportunity to develop an Aboriginal business was successfully explored. Working together with Red Chief Land Council and TAFE a tree propagation unit was established on site at Whitehaven's Coal Handling and Preparation Plant. Whitehaven have provided a range of in-kind support to the establishment of this business, including rent free land and free water and electricity.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

While the Tree Propagation Unit was originally developed for rehabilitation of Whitehaven sites, it now has the potential to become a commercial business and income stream for Red Chief Land Council, with opportunities now arising through mine rehabilitation, Climate Change and Biodiversity regeneration programs. (Refer to the Regenesi Climate Recovery Project below for an example of the possible business opportunity in this respect.)

### ***Regenesi Climate Recovery Project***

Liverpool Plains Shire Council are planning for growth and have recently approved plans to allow for 3,000 more homes. One aspect of the growth of the Shire is the recently awarded funding from the NSW Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Program to offset the carbon emissions for Blacktown City Council in Sydney, a sister city of Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

This project will be linked to other environmental sustainability initiatives that the Councils are undertaking in relation to responsible management of both the natural and built environments and to be recognised as a leader in environmental management, particularly:

- For Blacktown, their Climate Protection Program and role as Australia's first Solar City
- For Liverpool Plains Shire Council this includes strategies that facilitate growth and guide Council toward environmental sustainability

These strategies will collectively enable the two Councils to work towards carbon neutrality and systemic change in their core business operations. Such operational changes will assist both Councils to influence their commercial sectors and communities by leading through example.

The Climate Recovery Project has received \$2 million dollars of grant funding for the three-year project and the total value of the project is approximately \$4.5 million dollars.

The project will use revegetation processes with the objective of maximising environmental, economic and social outcomes, particularly by planting trees for carbon sequestration, using State and Commonwealth emissions trading systems as the way of accounting and trading the carbon rights generated by the planting.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

To assist in development and delivery of this project Blacktown City Council and Liverpool Plains Shire Council have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including: Greening Australia ; Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority; Namoi Catchment Management Authority; Department of Planning; Landcom ; Country Energy; Transurban; Integral Energy.

The long-term goal of the Climate Recovery Project is to facilitate effective carbon capture and storing, which is well marketed to businesses and individuals. The long-term future of the project relies on income from businesses principally, and the tying of income from the NSW Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme with a range of other funding options such as biodiversity funding through CMAs and the support of the broader community.

The project will allow people to be involved while empowering the community to learn more about what they can do to reduce their impact on climate change.

But it is more than that, it is about “future proofing” our city. It is a ‘get involved’ approach to bringing climate solutions to people – something that is yet to be achieved well in Australia.

The people of Blacktown City and the people of the Liverpool Plains will be part of an inspirational partnership, which addresses climate change at a very grass roots level.

### ***Clean Business Australia***

The Clean Business Australia Strategy forms part of AusIndustry's program for Regional NSW and includes three areas of funding which align with current and potential Indigenous business activities in the Gunnedah Region:

1. ***Green Building Fund.*** Designed to help businesses implement cost saving energy efficiency measures
2. ***Re-Tooling for Climate Change Program.*** Grants of \$10,000 to \$500,000 to assist manufacturers improve their production processes, reduce their energy use and cut carbon emissions
3. ***Climate Ready Program.*** Grants of \$50,000 to \$5,000,000 on a matching funding basis to support research and development, proof-of-concept and commercialisation activities to develop solutions to climate change challenges



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Gunnedah Flight Training College***

The Australian Wings Flying Academy and Gunnedah Shire Council have agreed in principle to the development of the Gunnedah Flight Training College. The College will ultimately cater for 200 students, including classrooms, flight briefing, planning and instructional areas, three simulator rooms, recreation areas, dining facilities, aircraft hangers for over 30 aircraft and an aircraft maintenance hanger.

With an estimated global shortfall of 20,000 commercial pilots, the Academy forms part of the growing aviation industry, and may become a catalyst for other business such as aircraft maintenance and education.

The Academy will generate about 80-full time and part-time jobs, with opportunities for suppliers during construction as well as ongoing service for the facility. The first induction of students is expected in July or August 2009. The facility will cost approximately \$20m and annual turnover is expected to be around \$15m.

### ***Northern Inland Food & Wine Industry Development Project***

The NSW Department of State and Regional Development Regional Business Growth Plan for 2008–2009 includes a strategy of developing initiatives to improve adoption of value-add technology to agriculture, including the Northern Inland Food and Wine Industry Development Project.

Several Aboriginal Organisations in the Gunnedah Region have described interest in developing bush tucker business which could potentially find support within this Project and Strategy, which in part aims to foster collaborative efforts for product development by food producers in the region and support further investment and growth of innovative food value-added activities.

The Department anticipate up to an additional 250 jobs to be generated in the region over the next 2 years in this area.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Black Business Connections***

A new voluntary Strategic Indigenous Economic Development Group is being formed to cover the Northern Inland region and work to identify, assist and support potential indigenous business developments and existing businesses in the region.

The voluntary committee will:

- focus on community issues;
- approach the government ( local, state and federal) and key stakeholders on behalf of the local communities;
- encourage collaboration between towns, groups and organisations within the region; and
- create a quarterly newsletter with current developments, ideas, events throughout the region.

An invitation to participate – either directly ( becoming a committee member) or indirectly (being added to an email list to enable your ideas and thoughts to be heard) – has been circulated through networks across the Region.

The Northern Inland Regional Development Board can provide further information.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region Training and Skills Development**

The most successful delivery of training for Aboriginal people identified in the course of this Research was when the training was delivered either on site (such as the partnerships between TAFE, the Namoi Catchment Management Authority, Red Chief Land Council and Gunnedah Gunya – refer separately to the Case Studies in this Report) or where a group of Aboriginal people were trained together (rather than one or a few Aboriginal people in a larger group).

A clear message for schools' careers counselling was to start counselling earlier in High School and broaden their focus to HSC/University plus trades, retail and other non-HSC non-University career pathways for students. Also, some students would benefit from being counselled towards alternative education pathways, such as completing their HSC via TAFE.

Accessing the future employment and enterprise opportunities identified above requires a longer term plan to trades training and skills. Employers prefer younger people in trades (ie. Year 10 rather than Year 12 leavers) which prompts the need to engage school students earlier – some suggest the beginning of High School or by Year 9 at the latest.

This finding echoes earlier recommendations from the NSW Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional NSW. The Inquiry similarly identified the importance of school-based learning for Aboriginal young people, reflected by the Recommendation “that the NSW Government, in collaboration with local businesses, should look to invest in successful school-to-work programs in Aboriginal communities.”<sup>iii</sup>

Further, practical exposure to trades (such as Try-A-Trade) was strongly recommended, since while everyone knows what an automotive mechanic does, few students know what a boiler maker is. There is a strong belief that accessing particular trades and careers is strongly influenced by an individual's past exposure to that work, particularly through family and friends. The obvious intergenerational lack of such exposure that is often the case for Indigenous people heightens the importance and value of practical, hands-on exposure to jobs and job seeking strategies such as the below.

Joblink Plus have indicated they will be opening a job network agency in Gunnedah in the next 3 months with J Petters and Personal Support Programs on offer.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

### Case Study – Try-A-Trade Event

The Try-A-Trade Event is based on the Dusseldorp Skills Forum and WorldSkills Australia model and successfully trialled by the Cessnock District Learning Centre in the Cessnock area in 2004.



The event offers Year 9/10 students the opportunity of actually performing tasks that will give an insight and perspective of what selected trades and professions entail. Students will be offered up to six trade areas to experience.

Typically, around 30 students from each school are selected to participate.

Students are allocated groups made up of students according to their trade selection. Each group then receives a 30 minute “hands on” practical lesson by apprentices and qualified professionals.

Trade presenters are invited to attend on a voluntary basis to share their skills and knowledge with the next generation of tradespeople.

Students are provided with lunch free of charge and a Participation Certificate. Lunch is also be provided for all Presenters and people assisting on the day.

As way of a guide, the following trades were represented at the recent Musswellbrook Try-A-Trade Event:



Bricklaying

Building

Business Services/IT Support

Electrical Industrial

Electrical – Domestic

Electrotechnology

Fitting & Machining

Fitness

Finance

Floristry

Food & Beverage Service

Gardening/Horticulture

Hairdressing

Information Technology (IT)



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

Massage Therapy & Alternative therapies	Nursing
Painting & Decorating	Plastering
Real Estate	Refrigeration/Air conditioning
Retail	Surveyor
TAFE Course Info	Army
Police	Fire Brigades
Ambulance	

### ***Government Indigenous Education Targets***

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) have agreed to a range of targets relevant to Indigenous education and these far reaching high level Australian, State and Territory Government agreements provide the overarching context for Aboriginal education and training in the Gunnedah Region.

The relevant COAG agreements and targets are:

<b>Target &amp; Date Agreed</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>
Universal access to early learning for all four year olds to a quality early childhood education program  26 March 2008	Within 5 years	COAG – Indigenous Reform Working Group and Productivity Agenda Working Group which is chaired by the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education and co-chaired by the Victorian Government.  DEEWR and FaHSCIA
Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements  20 December 2007	Within a decade	COAG – Indigenous Reform Working Group  DEEWR and FaHSCIA



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

Target & Date Agreed	Time-frame	Lead Responsibility
Halve the gap in Year 12 attainment or equivalent retention rate  26 March 2008  (Overall lift the Year 12 or the equivalent retention rate to 90% - 20 December 2007)	By 2020	COAG – Productivity Agenda Working Group  DEEWR

### ***TESA Mining Traineeships Program***

TESA have recently commenced offering their Traineeships Program for employers and trainees in the Gunnedah region, providing an opportunity for employers in the coal mining industry identified above who are willing to consider employing less skilled workers with support being available.

TESA specialises in the provision of supplementary labour and delivery of training and competency assessment to the Black Coal Mining Industry and is part of the SKILLED Group of companies which have over 150 offices and operational centres across the nation. TESA also has clients in the Hunter and Bowen Basins. TESA is a Registered Training Organisation.

TESA is registered for the MNC04 Coal Training Package which includes the following:

Code	Title
MNC20104	Certificate II in Surface Coal Operations
MNC30104	Certificate III in Surface Coal Mining Operations
MNC20304	Certificate II in Underground Coal Operations
MNC30304	Certificate III in Underground Coal Operations
MNC20204	Certificate II in Coal Preparation
MNC30204	Certificate III in Coal Preparation



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

Traineeships are jobs that combine work and structured training. Traineeship qualifications are nationally recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and are designed to provide employment and training opportunities for people of all ages, whether they are new to the workforce, re-entering it or are an existing workers (if they have been employed with the enterprise for more than three months full time or for more than twelve months as a casual employee).

### **TRAINEESHIP INCENTIVES**

#### **New Trainee**

New Trainees may be eligible to have their training paid by State Government funding, and the employer may be eligible to receive Commonwealth incentives.

#### **Existing Worker**

The employer may be eligible to receive Commonwealth incentives.

### ***Pathfinder Group – Transport & Logistics***

The Transport & Logistics Pathfinder Group also forms part of the larger Gunnedah skills development project mentioned earlier in this Report.

The skills required for employment in transport and logistics were identified in consultation with an Industry Reference Group and included:

- literacy and numeracy
- operation of various associated machinery, e g forklifts
- handling of livestock and saleyard operations
- occupational health and safety, site induction
- licences extending from light trucks through to heavy haulage requirements including B doubles

**Private Sector Training:** Truck and bus training and assessment is available through the private sector company, Compass Truck & Bus Driver Training, located in Tamworth. The applicant is first

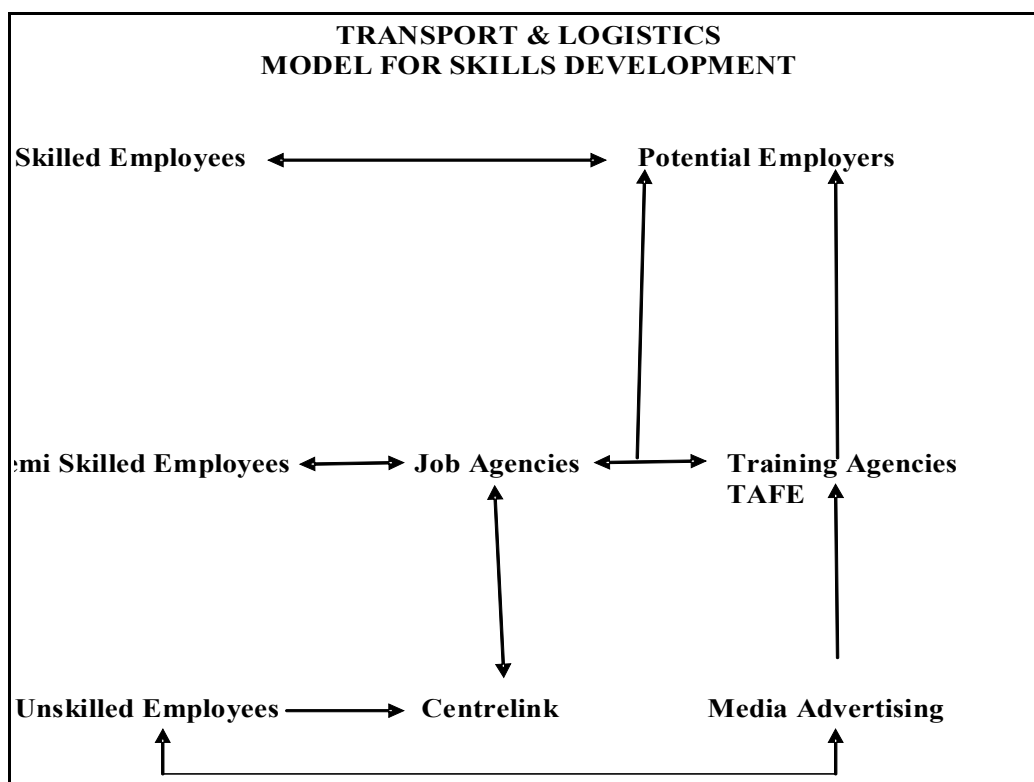


## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

required to sit and pass a computer knowledge test at the Roads and Traffic Authority's office and then completes their training with Compass. On successful completion of the course the applicants' log book is signed off by Compass' accredited assessor and the applicant can present to the Roads and Traffic Authority for the issue of a photo licence.

**Public Sector Training:** The New England Campus of TAFE advised it is in a position to offer training in the transport and logistics industry. It would be necessary to have ten to twelve applicants in the first instance to complete the comprehensive industry based courses. The extensive regional network of TAFE campuses would make it cost effective to run such courses provided there is sufficient interest. As shown above, industry consultation has revealed that there is a demand for employees to have licences such as fork lift as well as green and blue cards and occupational health and safety certificates, all of which are taught within the TAFE system.

It should be noted that the National Industrial Skills Training Centre ([www.wodonga.tafe.edu.au](http://www.wodonga.tafe.edu.au)) already exists in the southern area of New South Wales as a joint initiative between the Wodonga and Albury TAFE campus.





## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

The above model for skills development in the Transport and Logistics area has particular relevance for Indigenous people in the Gunnedah Region. What this model highlights is three broad pools of employees and their training requirements – skilled (work ready); semi-skilled (requiring additional training through job agencies, training agencies, TAFE and employers); and unskilled.

As highlighted throughout this Report there are Indigenous people in the Gunnedah region who are in the 'semi-skilled' category of this model, potentially able to access jobs in transport and logistics with appropriate support and training.

**Recommendation:** Consideration of the National Industrial Skills Training Centre as a possible model for public sector transport and logistics training in the Gunnedah or broader Region.

### *TAFE Training Program*

Over the past few years TAFE New England Institute have delivered the following Aboriginal Specific courses to complement the main stream TAFE courses.

Conservation & Land Management	Horticulture
MYOB	Office Administration
OH&S	Chemical Handling and Weed Spraying
Decorative Welding	Plant and Heavy Vehicle Operation
Retail	Youth At Risk Courses
Aboriginal Art and Craft	Chainsaw operations
Aboriginal Art and Culture	

While essentially this range of programs have been run across the Gunnedah Region (including Quirindi, Caroon and Narrabri), Gunnedah specifically has been the centre for trainees in the Enrolled Nurse Program to which we have been hoping for an increase in Aboriginal students.

Many of these programs have been run more than once, in particular Horticulture and Land Management and there is a partnership between TAFE, the Namoi Catchment Management



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

Authority and local Aboriginal organisations (refer to below Case Study).

TAFE has identified future training needs for Aboriginal people in the fields of Land Management, Business Management, Retail, Office Administration and Health related Programs.

### ***Case Study – Care for Country Project***

The Care for Country Project is an innovative example of successful training for Aboriginal people in the Gunnedah region, which has also led to employment for the majority of participants involved. The training was created out of a comprehensive partnership between local Aboriginal Organisations, TAFE and the Catchment Management Authority.

#### **Background**

The Care for Country project came about as the Aboriginal people of Gunnedah identified a significant generational knowledge gap with regards to the preservation and conservation of Aboriginal landscapes. The cultural, knowledge, rights and responsibilities of Australia's first people are being lost. It has been identified that Indigenous people in the community have the ability to care for "Country" and need to be able to connect to Country and be actively involved in the protection and management of Country, including site identification and preservation.

The Gunnedah community also had aspirations to develop a native plant nursery to support the ongoing rehabilitation and revegetation of the "Wallaby Trap" site. (Refer to separate Case Study detailing the *Tree Propagation Business*.)

A further driver to the project was that of large scale mining activity and the concern expressed by the local Aboriginal community of further destruction of cultural heritage sites. Mining also presented employment opportunities; namely Aboriginal site management and landscape rehabilitation to the local community.

#### **Project Delivery**

Namoi CMA, in partnership with the New England Institute TAFE, merged two



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

stand alone training courses – Conservation and Land Management and Horticulture – into one course to deliver the most relevant training modules and to meet the needs of the community. The training delivered was Certificate 2 in Indigenous Land Management.

The project focus was to increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities in Aboriginal landscape management directly relating to natural resource management (NRM). The intention was to promote the following:

- The skills and confidence to engage in NRM activities and represent Aboriginal community interests in and responsibilities for Country;
- To develop the skills to negotiate appropriate management with respect to emerging NRM issues, such as mining in the Namoi;
- To provide knowledge transfer as the basis for a career path for young people, who are not currently engaged in NRM as there is no perceived outcome for them;
- To maximise opportunity for Aboriginal people to connect with country and play an active role in appropriate management given a paucity of land ownership and access in the Namoi; and
- To improve relationships and partnerships between Aboriginal communities, managers of public lands government agencies and the private sector.

### ***Aboriginal Economic Development Program***

The Aboriginal Economic Development Program aims is to support the business development needs of Aboriginal enterprises through the identification, development and implementation of strategies to address these needs.

The Program will be run for 18 months by the Northern Inland Regional Development Board with the support of funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

A number of potential economic development opportunities have already been identified within the Gunnedah region, while the Project works across the larger 'northern inland' region. Currently this project is involved with local businesses within the Wee Waa and Gunnedah region in establishing and assisting potential economic business opportunities in areas of film and tourism.

The Black Business Connection, an initiative which has arisen from this Project and liaison with local individuals and representatives, is separately detailed earlier in this Report.

Future directions for this Indigenous Economic Development project include possible new programs revolving around issues in relation to climate change and carbon trading initiatives.

### ***Case Study – Job Compact, Tamworth***

The NSW Rural and Regional Task Force Report to the Premier recommended that the NSW Government expanded the Job Compact Strategy to cover Aboriginal people in all major regional centres. Further, that as part of this process multi-agency responses which should include job network providers are developed detailing educational and employment strategies for a region. These should be included within the responsibilities of each of the Regional Engagement Groups established to support State Plan Priority F1.

The Job Compact Strategy is led by NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and has the goal of forming action based agreements around the outcome of increasing Aboriginal employment in the private sector. This is achieved through four core strategies, namely:

1. Work to optimise use and effectiveness of existing agencies and resources in relation to Aboriginal employment initiatives
2. Coordinate and mobilise key agencies, industry and organisations to ensure communication, collaboration and coordination
3. Develop a local or industry based action plan to harness the above resources and engage businesses and private industry in committing to quantifiable Aboriginal employment outcomes
4. Through an understanding of business and industry needs, streamlines businesses' ability to access assistance that will help them achieve Aboriginal employment outcomes



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

In Tamworth, coordination between agencies is taking place via a number of small projects which were identified and developed through the natural networking that occurred during the planning meetings. Examples of these projects include a commitment to closer working relationships between the TAFE's Aboriginal Education and Training Unit and the Training Manager of one of the local Job Network members, an Aboriginal Services Directory for the region to be funded by the Area Consultative Committee, and a guide for employers who are employing Aboriginal people being developed jointly by the NCAP officer and one of the local Australian Apprenticeship Centres.

A small team of Job Compact reference group members has now met with a number of employers to canvass them about their ability to take on new Aboriginal employees. A cluster of employers have been chosen who have employment difficulties within a "job family" of entry-level kitchen hand and cleaning and manual positions. The employers include Hunter New England Area Health Service (HNEH), who have identified up to six positions, Cargill Beef Australia (Cargill) who have identified two positions and Wests Entertainment Group and Peel Nursing Home / Amity Nursing Home who often have vacancies in these areas, but are not guaranteeing positions.

Through consultation with the identified employers a combined pre-vocational and targeted skills-based training program has been put together that will provide training and support in the following areas:

- Pre-vocational – work ethics, personal hygiene, personal presentation, resumes, selection criteria, interview skills, OHS and EEO
- Skills based training – Safe Food Handling (All Employers); Senior First Aid (All Employers); Certificate II in Health Services (HNEH, Nursing Homes); Certificate II in Meat Processing (Cargill)
- Electives – Literacy and Numeracy; License Training; other (based on needs assessment of job seekers)
- Mentoring - Aboriginal community mentors will be trained to provide mentoring to job seekers through work experience, transition to work and a work adjustment period of three months. Mentoring relationships can be extended by mutual agreement between the mentor and mentee at monthly intervals after the initial period of three and a half months.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

Additionally, employers may choose if they wish to take up an offer of:

- Aboriginal cultural education for themselves and frontline staff
- Managing Workplace Diversity training package
- Behavioural profiling of vacant positions being offered through the Job Compact to assist with better matching of candidates

### ***Skills and Training Needs of Aboriginal Health Workers***

Complimenting the inclusion a Case Study about the Hunter New England Health Aboriginal Employment Strategy, a submission was sought from the Min Min Aboriginal Corporation regarding their research into the training needs and skills for Aboriginal health workers in the Gunnedah Region. The key finding of the research were:

- Many workers are moving into the health sector for the first time and as such would benefit from more extensive induction processes, particularly to clarify their roles and the roles of other health workers
- Specific training on relevant computer systems, recording tools and administrative requirements
- The need to consider support for ongoing travel and accommodation which is often required for study and ongoing professional development programs that form part of their work responsibilities
- The value in identifying strategies to address or overcome barriers such as the above which are disincentives to undertaking further training – such as in social welfare and counselling – and flow on possibilities for employment in other areas of health and welfare



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***Driver's Licences***

A continuing issue identified across the Region is that of being able to obtain drivers licences. While good progress has been made with programs to support getting Learner Licences, the challenge is now completing the required supervised driving (120 hours) to be eligible for Provision License testing.

Some of the most common problems faced are low levels of literacy, trouble passing the Driver Knowledge Test and fines with the Office of State Debt Recovery.

The NSW Ministry of Transport runs a two week training course to assist people gain their Drivers Licence. Across the New England North West region the trainers have assisted about 210 Aboriginal people to gain a licence.

There are ten trainers able to run this Program in the Gunnedah Region.

With regards to meeting the supervised driving requirement, some possible solutions are community based. For example, in Tamworth and Lismore local service clubs have organised 'drives for reconciliation' where club members partners with people on their 'L's and held a rally – driving to a set place, have a BBQ and returning, and at the same time building up valuable supervised driving time.

### ***Workplace Based Training, Mentoring and Personal Support***

One of the strong and consistent messages from this research was the identification of a significant pool of potential Aboriginal employees in the Gunnedah region who already hold skills, qualifications and experience and so need jobs more than further training.

Taking the issue of training and skills in broad terms, what is required for these potential employees are strategies to address employer and workplace understanding, perceptions and myths about Aboriginal employees which in themselves have become significant barriers to increased Aboriginal employment.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

At the same time strategies are required to provide mentoring and personal support to address non-skills based issues for Aboriginal employees. Successful models use a multifaceted approach incorporating:

- Two-way between employer and employee
- Employee assistance plans addressing personal and vocational needs for the Aboriginal employee addressing on and off job issues
- Cultural understanding and communication skills for the employer (management and peers)

The value and effectiveness of these strategies is highlighted in the below Case Study.

### ***Case Study – Retail Trainee***

The promotion of traineeships and apprenticeships by job network providers to employers is a critical element in overcoming regional skills shortages.

A twenty one year old Indigenous male attended an interview with a job network agency in preparation for job marketing. Whilst the job seeker was looking for labouring work, it was noticed during the interview that the job seeker's engaging personality and personal presentation could provide other opportunities and they were encouraged to consider a career in customer service even though they had not previously considered this line of work.

The job seeker was excited by the idea and agreed to allow the agency to canvass a local retail outlet in an attempt to secure a retail traineeship. The agency promoted the financial and cultural benefits of hiring the indigenous job seeker and offered a combined strategy of financial assistance along structured post placement support. The retailer accepted the offer and the job seeker commenced into a retail traineeship.

The placement of this job seeker into a retail traineeship was an outstanding success. The job seeker gained a sense of achievement, a nationally recognised qualification and ongoing sustainable employment. In addition, as a frontline worker he has also become a positive role model for other Indigenous job seekers in a regional town where Indigenous workers are not highly visible. The visibility of Indigenous workers is paramount in breaking down barriers and prejudice



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

within the community.

The critical elements identified for working with Indigenous job seekers and gaining successful employment outcomes for them include:

- Maintaining an awareness and respect of cultural differences (for both case managers and employers)
- Promotion of the benefits of Indigenous employment
- Maintaining a strong relationship with employers where successful outcomes have been achieved
- Being prepared for and delivering highly intensive mentoring and post placement support
- Preparing job seekers with pre-employer and employer expectation training which is aligned to the employers induction training
- Promoting success stories wherever possible
- Being creative in the assistance offered to employers and always tailoring those strategies to the needs of the individual job seekers
- Ensuring job seekers are carefully matched with an employer who can meet their needs
- Thinking outside the square when considering the types of employment the job seeker may be suitable for

### ***Case Study – Iron Man Welders Project***

The Iron Man Welders (IMW) Project is an innovative training and employment strategy that has achieved significant outcomes for young Aboriginal men. While IMW is located in Armidale, it has been included in this Report as an inspiring model that could be adapted for implementation in other locations such as the Gunnedah Region. It is also included because IMW has formal support from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development which gives it a broader relevance.

The Iron Man Welders is a youth project designed to engage and re-engage young people in either education or work through exposure to trade experiences, TAFE and running the IMW “business”.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

The exposure is through the IMW Shed – this is considered mutual ground in the sense that it acts as a pathway (back) into formal learning institutions and workplaces. The project is targeted toward young people who are considered ‘marginalised’ in their access to work and education. The program targets young people through High Schools, TAFE (Youth Links), Job placement agencies and Street Beat youth program. People can also self-refer to the program. NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet are also a project partner.

The IMW “business” services the wider community by manufacturing products for community organisations and fulfilling commercial contracts through exiting businesses in order to help them with their productivity and to gain “real world’ experience

The Iron Man Welders Project has successfully trained and placed in excess of 90% of participants in ongoing employment in metal work trades.



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region Strategies to Provide this Report to the Indigenous Community**

The primary means of providing this information to the Indigenous community will be through circulation and discussion of this report, supplemented by approaches to media.

There is clearly scope to increase and improve communication between key stakeholders across the Gunnedah region regarding Aboriginal employment and enterprise. It may be that a suitable and neutral agency could hold a Forum to bring key stakeholders together to discuss the findings of this research, the implications it has for their work, as well as consider possible collective action. Strategies such as the Job Compact and Reconciliation Action Plans lend themselves to consideration at such a Forum.

The Northern Inland Regional Development Board have recently appointed an Aboriginal Economic Development Officer who has been closely involved with this project. It is likely that they will be able to utilise the findings of this research in their work with Aboriginal enterprise in the region.

It is also worth considering the development of a social marketing strategy to leverage further employment and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people through media and other communications based around stories and case studies of successful outcomes. Such a strategy would need to bring together not only examples of what is working and has worked but also identify past and current challenges and how they are being addressed. The ultimate goal of such a strategy is to generate further public and employer engagement and as such a central point of coordination and contact would be required, again ideally a suitably neutral agency.

In the event that a social marketing strategy was pursued, it would be important to consciously manage the fine line between highlighting examples of what is working (to role model for other employers, employees and industries) and these examples in some way causing 'shame' – be that of other Aboriginal people or employers. In such respects it may be most suitable for a more subtle and low profile strategy.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

### Recommendations

The key recommendation of this Report is to refine and undertake a series of strategies aimed to improve employment and enterprise outcomes for Indigenous people in the Gunnedah Region already holding the necessary entry level work skills. The suggested time frame for this work is eight to ten months.

While recognising the need to integrate the feedback and suggestions that arise from circulation of this Research Report to the Indigenous community and other key stakeholders, the following strategies are proposed for initial consideration:

1. Progress discussions with the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs with a view to negotiating a Indigenous Job Compact for the Gunnedah Region
2. Identify and implement strategies to expand and replicate the successful workplace training, mentoring and personal support model identified in this Report
3. Undertake further research to develop a consolidated summary for the Gunnedah Region of existing government (Australian, NSW and Local) strategies and targets for Aboriginal employment
4. Undertake further research to develop a consolidated summary for the Gunnedah Region of existing industry strategies and targets for Aboriginal employment
5. Design and implement a social marketing campaign, involving community and industry leaders and utilising relevant case studies, to communicate key messages, strategies and recommendations
6. Convene a Gunnedah Region Skills Committee to specifically guide and support the implementation of these strategies
7. Document the model of working to enable both evaluation and possible replication of these strategies for other Regions and communities



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

It is also recommended that a series of forums be convened with Indigenous and other stakeholders to present and workshop the research findings and recommendations with a view to assessing these recommendations and identifying other strategies for consideration.

The Black Business Connections and broader Northern Inland Regional Development Board Indigenous Economic Development Project should be aligned an integrated wherever complimentary to the above strategies.



## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

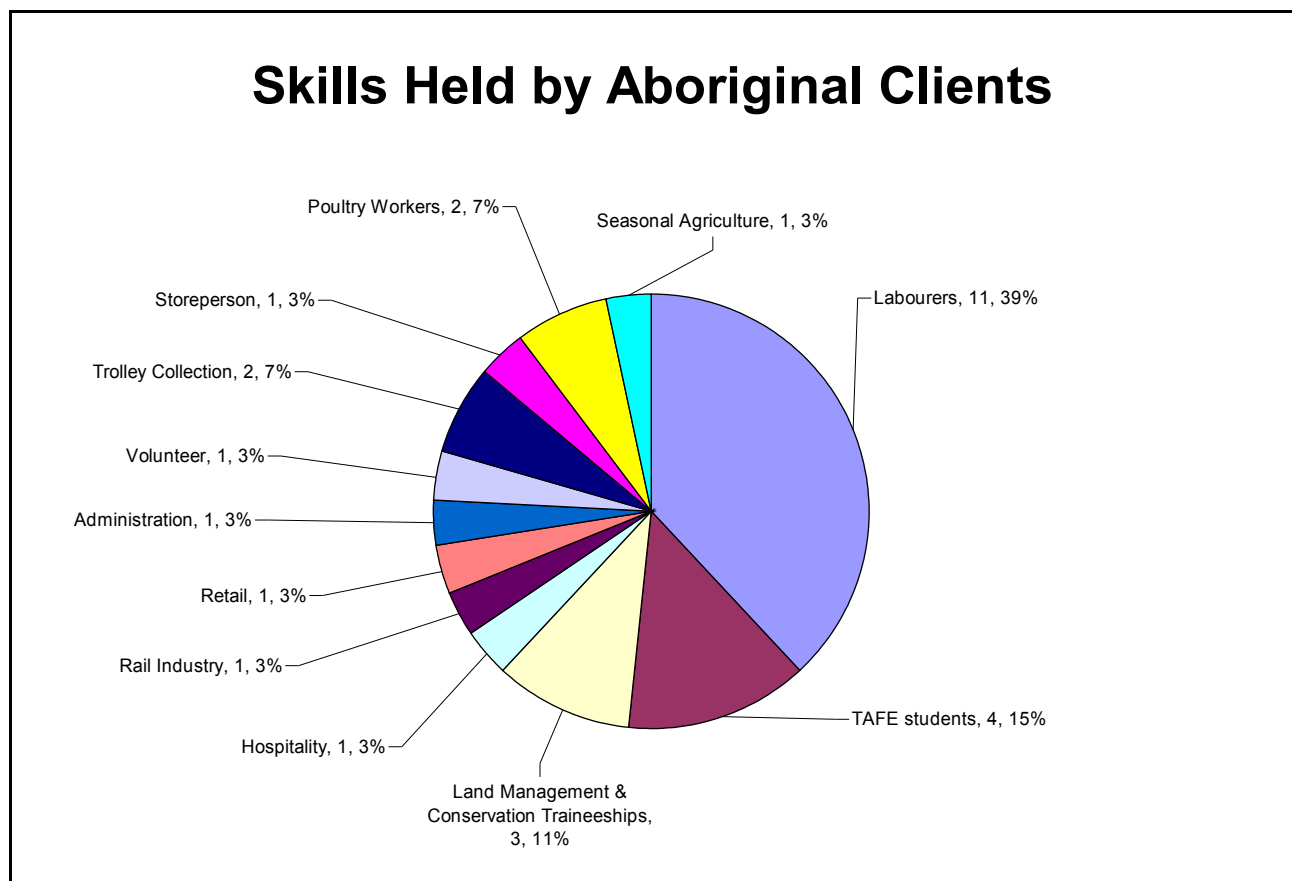
### Appendices

#### A – Skills Held by Indigenous Persons Available for Employment

During the course of undertaking this Research several Indigenous Organisations stressed a view that there was a sizeable number of Aboriginal people in the region who held a range of skills and qualifications and rather than requiring more training, different strategies were required to successfully place them in employment.

Job Network agencies were asked to outline the skills and qualifications held by their clients to help better understand this area.

Of the 32 Indigenous clients at one Job Network Agency the following skills were identified:





## Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region

A second Job Network Agency was able to separately identify qualifications and experience held for their current Aboriginal clients numbering approximately 50 persons.

<b>Previous Experience</b>	
Cleaning	3
Clerical/Admin	3
Computer/IT	1
Drivers/Transport Industry	1
Trades	1
Food/hospitality	5
Gardening/Farming	3
Labouring	14
Sales/Customer Service	3
Welfare/Nursing/Aged care	5
Plant operators	3
No previous employment history	8

<b>Training Courses &amp; Tickets Held</b>	
Conservation & Land Management	2
Horticulture - TAFE	2
Responsible Service of Alcohol	3
Responsible Conduct of Gambling	3
OH& S Green Card	13
First Aid Certificate	10
Cert III in Aged Care TAFE/ACE	2
Food Handling Hygiene Course	3
Plant Operating tickets	3
Fork lift Tickets	4
Welding/Engineering	3



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***B – Terms of Reference***

The Terms of Reference for this Research Report were to:

1. identify skill requirements and opportunities for employment in the Gunnedah region
2. identify enterprise opportunities in the Gunnedah region
3. determine the training and skills development needed to access the opportunities identified in (1) and (2)
4. identify the public and private sector training organisations capacity to provide this training and skills development
5. determine strategies to be used in the provision of information to the Indigenous community which will facilitate their access to the opportunities identified
6. place a particular emphasis on identifying "sustainable business/industry" opportunities within the overall mix of opportunities identified

A Final Project Report will be prepared to include:

1. An evaluation of the value of the project and impact within the Indigenous community
2. Review and evaluation of the strategies established to support the project and their success including:
  - a) the identification of issues and responses to them;
  - b) lessons learnt; and
  - c) the identification of best practice



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***C – Research Methodology***

The research approach taken focussed on meetings with key stakeholders to gather information, followed up by email and telephone contact, together with desk-based internet research.

Meetings were held in Gunnedah, Quirindi, Narrabri, Wee Waa and Tamworth with a range of key stakeholders including:

- Aboriginal Organisations: Gunida Gunya, Red Chief Land Council, Min Min Corporation, Narrabri Local Aboriginal Land Council, Wee Waa Local Aboriginal Land Council,
- Local Shires/Government: Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains and Narrabri
- Job Network Providers: Best Employment, Jobs Australia, Country Employment Services and Job Link Plus
- Private Industry: BHP Billiton, Whitehaven, Grass Roots Eco Store, Jeremy Holcombe (consultant)
- Community Organisations: Gunn Workshop, Ascent Group
- Other Government: Aboriginal Affairs, TAFE, Namoi Catchment Management Authority, State & Regional Development

A range of strategic questions were used to guide interviews and this research more generally:

What is already happening and working in the Gunnedah Region with regards to Aboriginal employment and industry? What is nearly working and under development and could benefit from support?

What are the likely future jobs and industry developments in the Gunnedah region? What are the required skills for these jobs/industries compared with existing available Aboriginal skills? What training and skills development for Aboriginal people is required to access these jobs/industries?

- What data and reports can you provide to support the above?
- How can this information be best provided to reach Aboriginal people?



## **Aboriginal Employment & Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region**

### ***D – Researcher Disclosure***

Adam Blakester of Paradigm Play prepared this Research Report under contract with the Northern Inland Regional Development Board. Paradigm Play is a virtual network of social change experts working on projects to increase community wellbeing and sustainability.

Adam holds qualifications in commerce and taxation law, complimented by extensive study and research in the areas of social change which includes community and human development, social leadership, wellbeing and sustainability.

Adam's work has involved Indigenous communities for more than 12 years, through his role as Finance Director of Greenpeace's operations in the Pacific and Australia (1998 – 2003), CEO of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (2003 – 2007), Director of Families Australia (2004 – 2007) and Reference Group advisor for the National Child Protection Clearinghouse (2004 – 2007).

Adam is a Director of the Antarctic & Southern Ocean Coalition and Minerals Policy Institute, Sydney Leadership alumnus and a member of the Greenpeace Australia Pacific Finance & Audit Committee, Great Transition Initiative, Vibewire Advisory Council and Wellbeing Australia Steering Committee.

- i Industry Skills Requirement Survey, Gunnedah District Development Board, June 2007
- ii Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional New South Wales, Parliament, Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, Report 31, May 2006, Sydney, pp 38-39.
- iii Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional New South Wales, Parliament, Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, Report 31, May 2006, Sydney, p 133.