

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio
Budget Estimates
28 May 2012

Question: **BR8**

Topic: **Indigenous Agenda – workshops and program evaluation**

Proof Hansard Page: **118-119**

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT: I want to go to the budget statements. One of your deliverables is effective engagement between the resource sector and the Government's indigenous agenda. What do you intend to do to achieve this objective? How many resources are you contributing to achieve that agenda?

Ms Constable: Thank you for that question, Senator. The department is engaged in a range of indigenous issues. We have the Working in Partnership Program. It is a series of workshops that we have run over the course of about seven years now in different jurisdictions around Australia. It is a workshop that involves industry, services and indigenous participants. We bring those groups together to have a conversation about the issues that are facing particular regions and what they might do about it in establishing their own program to address some of those issues. In addition to that, we have also been participating through a memorandum of understanding run by FaHCSIA. That is a whole of government partnership run by FaHCSIA with the Minerals Council of Australia. So there is a number of initiatives within that memorandum of understanding. The secretary of the department represents RET on that particular committee.

Mr Clarke: If you are interested, we could talk to you tomorrow about this in the section on tourism, because there is quite a strong Indigenous engagement in our tourism policy work as well.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. I will try to get here. I am running between committees. Otherwise I will put some more questions on notice. What about the resources that are committed to running those workshops and the MOU?

Ms Constable: We have a consultant that has run the workshops over a period of time. It is a very experienced consultant. We also have two dedicated resources within the department that participate in that workshop in the preparation of the workshop. In addition to that, my colleague Mr Stamford has participated as a speaker within those workshops over a period of years. Indeed, previously, when I headed up the resource development branch, I also participated in those workshops.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you perhaps provide me with a copy of some of the outcomes from the workshops or the agenda for the workshop, please?

Ms Constable: Certainly, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT: And maybe take on notice what level of financial resources you commit to running those workshops.

Ms Constable: The actual amount for that on a yearly basis is \$500,000.

Senator SIEWERT: For the workshops?

Ms Constable: For the workshops.

Senator SIEWERT: And how many do you run each year?

Ms Constable: We run two workshops per annum.

Senator SIEWERT: Two workshops. So they each cost \$250,000?

Ms Constable: Around about.

Mr Clarke: I should emphasise that that sounds a little simplistic. There is a lot of preliminary work and engagement that goes on. The workshop is, if you like, the centrepiece of each of those exercises. But there is extensive consultation and engagement that goes on leading up to the workshop and there are follow-up activities as well.

Senator SIEWERT: Do you evaluate them?

Ms Constable: We do evaluate the workshops. There have been performance audits within the department on those workshops in the past. Then the outcomes of the workshop we leave to the various participants to follow on from those.

Senator SIEWERT: So you do an evaluation of each of the workshops. Have you done an evaluation of that particular program itself and whether it is delivering what your objectives are against this particular deliverable for the department?

Ms Constable: I should have been more explicit. Yes, we have certainly undertaken a program evaluation within the department on the Working in Partnership Program. From memory, it was a very good outcome for the Working in Partnership Program. It was considered to be one of the critical programs that have been delivered for the government over a period of years.

Senator SIEWERT: Is it possible to be provided with a copy of an evaluation?

Mr Clarke: We will take that on notice.

Answers:

Portfolio Involvement with Indigenous Policy

1. In 2011/2012 departmental expenses on Outcome 1 (in relation to working with stakeholder and other government agencies to ensure the development of the resources sector contributes the Government Indigenous objectives and reforms) is expected to be approximately \$480,000 including salary costs. This includes the provision of policy advice and support to the Minister for Resources and Energy in relation to the Government's Indigenous policy; support for the Memorandum of Understanding on Indigenous Employment and Enterprise Development between the Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Government (represented by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (RET); the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; Regional Development Australia; and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) and RET's Working in Partnership (WIP) initiative.
2. The WIP initiative is departmentally funded and seeks to support and encourage the cultural change taking place in relations between Indigenous communities and the mining industry. It promotes long term, effective economic and community partnerships. RET aims to sponsor two WIP workshops each year.
3. WIP Workshops are subject to stakeholder surveys and evaluation in the form of a final workshop report. A copy of the report for the Condobolin (NSW) workshop held in March 2011 is provided at **Attachment A**. A copy of a DVD for this workshop is provided at **Attachment B**. A WIP workshop was recently conducted with the Gnarla Karla Booja people, industry, community and Governments at Mandurah, WA in March 2012. A copy of the

workshop report and DVD will be provided to the Committee once completed. The WIP website link is http://www.ret.gov.au/resources/resources_programs/working_in_partnership/Pages/WorkinginPartnership.aspx

4. Two evaluations of WIP have been conducted in 2003 and 2009. The first was undertaken by the Budget Evaluation and Strategic Unit of the former Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (a predecessor portfolio to RET) to assess the appropriateness; effectiveness; and efficiency of WIP. It found that the program met its key targets for the period and that WIP activities were well targeted and consistent with the government's broader approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage through partnerships involving governments, Indigenous Australians and the private sector. The second was a program review conducted in 2009 by KPMG. It found that sound management practice was displayed, including procedures to manage salaries, contractors and administration costs, monitor financial expenditure and stakeholder relationships. Regular workshop assessments were undertaken to assess their effectiveness and to enable the implementation of improvements. Copies of these reports are provided at **Attachment C** and **Attachment D** respectively.

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources**Budget Evaluation and Strategic Unit, 2003****EVALUATION OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES/MINING INDUSTRY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM****Introduction**

This is a mid term review of the *Indigenous Communities/Mining Industry Regional Partnerships Program*, commonly known as the *Working in Partnership (WIP)* program. The WIP program was launched in August 2001 with the aim to support and encourage the cultural change that is taking place in relations between the mineral exploration and mining industry and Indigenous communities, and to promote long term partnerships between them. In launching the WIP program, the then Minister for Industry, Science and Resources, Senator the Hon Nick Minchin, said that the initiative was part of the Government's commitment to increase economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians in rural and regional areas.

The main purpose of the review was to ensure that program's activities are well targeted, and to assess the potential for a successor program. Accordingly, the review examined and reported on:

1. the WIP program's continuing *appropriateness* against the Government's broader social and industry policy objectives relating to Indigenous Australians and the exploration and mining industry;
2. the *effectiveness* of the program by assessing the extent to which WIP has met the program's objectives, including raising of awareness of the benefits of constructive partnerships between Indigenous communities and the exploration and mining industry; and
3. the *efficiency* of the program by taking into account the costs involved in the program's administration and measurable outcomes.

The review also proposed changes to the program's activities to enable the objectives of the program to be achieved more effectively and efficiently and to ensure efficient coordination and/or integration of the program with new and existing Indigenous and public consultation processes, involving the exploration and mining industry. This was considered in the context of the existing level of funding for the program.

Full terms of reference are at [Attachment 1](#).

Data and information for the evaluation were drawn from published material, including Ministerial media releases and speeches, reports of public inquiries, consultants' reports on various regional workshops, direct feedback from workshop participants, and the ABARE survey of mine sites in Australia.¹

Background to the WIP Program

The Australian Government provided \$1.2 million, over four years, in its 2001-02 Budget, to foster partnerships between the mining industry and Indigenous communities under the WIP program.

¹ *Indigenous People in Mining*, abare eReport 03.19, October 2003

Key elements of the program are:

- an information kit highlighting examples of effective partnerships between the mineral exploration and mining industry and Indigenous communities, and containing information on relevant government and industry programs, which can support partnership initiatives;
- a website, designed to promote examples of good practice; and
- a series of regional workshops bringing stakeholders together to promote discussion of ways of developing better relations and outcomes.

Australia's mineral exploration and mining industry is an important contributor to regional communities and the national economy and is often the sole provider of social infrastructure – health, education and welfare – in remote areas of Australia.

The industry (minerals excluding petroleum) accounted directly for around 5.8 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in 2002-03. It directly employs in excess of 50 000 persons (around 4.5 per cent are Indigenous employees) many of whom work in sparsely populated, remote and regional areas of Australia. For example, close to 50 per cent and more than 40 per cent of total jobs in the Carnegie (Mt Magnet) and Lefroy regions of WA respectively, and around 30 per cent of all jobs in the Lyell region of Tasmania are in mining.

Much of the mining activity often takes place close to Indigenous communities, and on Indigenous land. This, combined with the fact that in many cases the exploration and mining industry is one of the few industries operating in these regions, can create both challenges and opportunities for the industry and Indigenous communities.

One of the key challenges and opportunities is to establish sustainable relationships between the two groups. The establishment of enduring, cooperative partnerships is critical to the long term sustainability of the industry. For example, it can affect not only the exploration and mining companies' ability to source a locally trained workforce but also their corporate reputation.

The focus of the WIP program is on facilitating long-term constructive relationships, which can provide many enduring benefits for all parties.

Analysis of the WIP Program

The appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the program were evaluated against the background of recent developments in relationships between the exploration and mining industry and Indigenous communities, and Government's policies and programs aimed at supporting the aspirations of Indigenous communities to build community capacity and develop commercial enterprises.

Continuing Appropriateness of the WIP Program

A key element of the changes that have taken place in the exploration and mining industry over recent years has been a redefining of the nature of relationships between exploration and mining companies and Indigenous communities.

Increasingly community relations are viewed as part of the 'core business' of exploration and mining companies. More particularly, exploration and mining companies operating in remote areas realise there is a strong business case for supporting the development of a trained local workforce in the area of their operation. Major corporations see the potential for competitive advantage in establishing a reputation, both in Australia and internationally, for being leaders in the field of Indigenous community relations – being 'good people to deal with'. For example, the ABARE survey found that over 80 per cent of industry respondents consider investing in goodwill between mining companies and Indigenous communities, and Indigenous human capital development through education and training, as important issues.

There is also greater recognition by both parties that they have much to learn from each other, and acknowledgement of the potential for mutual benefit in establishing sound relationships with each other. This includes recognition of cultural differences, and opportunities for economic independence through employment, training and business enterprise.

Feedback from regional workshops and the ABARE survey results indicate that the contemporary approaches of leading companies and Indigenous communities to building effective and sustainable partnerships are multi-faceted. They involve commitment not only to jobs and training opportunities but also to pre-employment training, skills and career development for Indigenous employees, business opportunities for local communities often involving joint-venture arrangements, and facilitating opportunities by Indigenous businesses.

To the extent that the WIP Program encourages a wider adoption of good practice in developing partnerships between Indigenous communities and the industry, it can assist in achieving Government policy objectives for Indigenous Australians. These include: increasing opportunities for economic independence through enhanced training and education and by generating more jobs in the private sector for Indigenous workers; and increasing opportunities for Indigenous people to generate better economic returns from their land.

Latest employment data show that Indigenous unemployment is several times the national average. Recent forecasts suggest that Indigenous unemployment could rise from around 20 per cent currently to around 30 per cent in 2011. A recent Senate Inquiry into the progress towards national reconciliation also found that indicators of Indigenous disadvantage are not improving in many areas.²

The Senate Committee's report acknowledged that there has been some progress in recent years by all levels of government in addressing Indigenous disadvantage. However, the report was critical of the slow progress being made in setting appropriate targets, benchmarks and evaluation mechanisms that will help to reveal a truer picture of how effectively Indigenous disadvantage is being addressed.

The *Reconciliation: Off Track* report recommends greater accountability from Australian Government departments involved in Indigenous issues, including by incorporating reporting on Indigenous problems into performance agreements for Chief Executive officers of Government departments. The report also recommends that Government agencies provide detailed information on Indigenous outcomes in annual reports. There was bipartisan support from Committee members for these recommendations.

In its submission to the above mentioned Senate inquiry, the Australian Government reiterated its approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage through practical measures based on genuine partnerships involving governments, the private sector and Indigenous Australians. Key elements include:

- increasing opportunities for local and regional decision making by Indigenous people, and improving program coordination and flexibility to respond to local needs;
- improving access to mainstream programs and services so that Indigenous specific resources can be better targeted to areas of greatest need, particularly where mainstream services do not reach; and
- encouraging and supporting self reliance and independence from welfare.

The objectives of the WIP program are consistent with and support the Government's stated approach. Given the continuing Indigenous disadvantage, as indicated by the recent statistics on Indigenous unemployment and the findings of the Senate inquiry into progress towards national reconciliation, there is an identifiable need for programs aimed at addressing this disadvantage. This

² *Reconciliation: Off Track*, The Senate, Legal and Constitutional Committee Report, October 2003

highlights a continuing need for a WIP type program which can not only provide practical benefits for Indigenous communities but also facilitate industry development.

WIP Program's Effectiveness

One of the factors considered in assessing the effectiveness of the WIP program was the extent to which the program met its objectives. As stated earlier in this report, the overall objective of the program is to support and encourage ongoing changes aimed at promoting partnerships of mutual benefit to Indigenous communities and the exploration and mining industry. Each element of the program attempts to achieve this in a slightly different way.

The information kit contains 17 published case studies of successful partnerships, showing the variety of approaches and outcomes. Several other case studies have been prepared by the Department and are ready to be added to the compendium by early 2004. The focus of case studies is on demonstrating how long-term constructive relationships can provide benefits for all parties. The kit also contains details on relevant Commonwealth, state and territory programs for assisting industry and Indigenous communities in working together in partnership.

So far, around 20 companies and organisations have contributed 'case studies' and other relevant information for use in the kit. Contributors ranged from large mainstream, mining companies such as WMC, Rio Tinto, and BHP Billiton to wholly Indigenous owned and operated businesses, such as Carey Mining and BYAC Contractors. Government and industry organisations, including Indigenous Business Australia and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia Inc also contributed.

Twelve hundred information kits were printed for distribution to stakeholders across Australia. Of these, approximately 500 were mailed out to industry associations, ATSIC and other government agencies/departments and participating companies, as part of the program launch. Approximately 150 copies were handed out to participants at WIP workshops, while an additional 200 or so were distributed at industry events or mailed out to interested parties, on request.

While each of the organisations and companies included in the information kit would be expected to promote their own activities and examples of successful partnerships to stakeholders, there is no other publication which brings together a variety of approaches and outcomes in a single folder. The case study material therefore fills a niche in the market not covered by individual organisations and companies. In addition, the willingness of numerous non-government bodies to contribute information suggests that they see value in this approach.

Quantitative indicators of the success of the information kit in raising awareness are difficult to obtain. However, given that there is no similar publication in the market place and the willingness of non-government organisations and companies to provide material for the kit, it would appear that the exercise is worthwhile. The ongoing value of this form of information is discussed below.

Much of the information contained in the hardcopy publication can be accessed electronically via a dedicated website. The *Indigenous Partnership Program* (IPP) website (www.industry.gov.au/indigenouspartnerships) features partnership case studies, program updates, and links to relevant information for companies and Indigenous communities.

Since its launch in September 2001, the website has received approximately 2 500 'hits'. This compares favourably with the number of information kits distributed to stakeholders, and is a relatively significant figure given the size of the target audience and the low key promotion of the site. Greater awareness of the site could lead to higher usage.

A key advantage of the website over the hardcopy publication is that the information on the website can be updated more easily and quickly. This helps to ensure 'freshness' and continuous relevance of the material, thus making it more useful and attractive to stakeholders.

The effectiveness of the website, however, is critically dependent on the ability of potential users to access the internet. Recognising that many Indigenous communities are located in remote areas, some of which currently do not have internet access, the WIP program also relies on hardcopy communications and workshops in regional areas.

The third element of the WIP program is a series of regional workshops designed to bring together Indigenous groups, mining companies, and service providers. The primary focus of these workshops is to identify ways various stakeholders can work together at the regional level to develop long term and mutually beneficial partnerships. The objective is to improve working relationships as a result of effective communication and interaction between various groups.

The concept for the workshops is based on two fundamental premises:

- that mining and Indigenous communities can better achieve their respective goals by engaging in dialogue with a view to developing partnerships; and
- that a regional focus is necessary to identify specific local requirements.

Since the launch of the program, workshops were held in Alice Springs, Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland. Representatives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, government and non-government organisations, and community service providers attended the workshops. Further workshops are planned in Queensland in 2004.

The aims of the Alice Springs, Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland workshops were to focus on local issues and to identify practical actions and steps for successful partnerships. Participants were, therefore, encouraged to identify their own priorities, analyse their current situation and decide what actions to take to improve the status of partnerships between Indigenous communities and the exploration and mining industry.

Feedback from participants indicates that the workshops aims were mostly achieved. In particular, the workshops were judged a good opportunity for networking and developing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations in the resource sector. Feedback also suggests that participants gained a greater awareness of Government programs available to assist those relationships.

There was overwhelming support for holding similar workshops in other regions. A majority of participants felt that the overall value of regional workshops could be enhanced by having a better balance of different stakeholders. In particular, many of the attendees considered that representation from Indigenous communities needed boosting at future workshops, and some also suggested there should be more mining company representatives.

Another way that that regional workshops could be enhanced is by utilising information from the recent ABARE survey of mine sites to develop discussion topics for future workshops. Industry respondents to the survey identified several key issues for consideration as part of the WIP program. These related primarily to health, education, training and cultural issues. Feedback on these issues could be sought from other participants, particularly Indigenous representatives, at future workshops.

Detailed reports on the WIP workshops held to date, including information generated from the workshops and outcomes, are available from the Sustainable Mining Section of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources and on the Departmental website.

Efficiency of the WIP Program

The key factors considered in evaluating the efficiency of the program were the cost of the program and outputs.

The total cost of the program is \$1.2 million, over four years. This is a very modest amount compared with the overall expenditure by the Australian Government of approximately \$2.3 billion per annum on Indigenous-specific programs. The WIP program, however, is currently the sole

program in the Industry, Tourism and Resources portfolio focused on Indigenous issues, although the Government recently announced that it will provide \$4 million for an Indigenous tourism ready program to develop business management capacity.

Staff salaries, consultancies and publications accounted for the bulk of the program expenditure in 2001-02 and 2002-03. In total, around \$130 000 was spent on staff salaries during this period, while approximately \$104 000 and \$71 000 was spent on consultancies and publications respectively.

The bulk of the consultancy expenditure was on engaging external consultants to organise and facilitate regional workshops and to prepare reports on them. URS Australia Pty Limited was engaged for Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland workshops, while Yarran Consulting Pty Limited was the successful tenderer for the Alice Springs workshop. Both consultants were selected via a restricted tender based, among other things, on their interest and expertise in the area of Indigenous liaison, and their knowledge of the region in which the workshops were held, the mining industry and Indigenous communities.

The rationale for using external consultants was to allow the use of specialists to achieve outcomes, while enabling Government officials to participate as 'stakeholders'. More importantly, this approach allowed the Department to select facilitators with local knowledge and familiarity with Indigenous and mining issues, thus increasing the likelihood of achieving practical outcomes. Feedback from participants concerning the use of consultants was positive.

Participants reported a variety of meaningful outcomes including networking as well as discussion of practical solutions to many identified common issues. Feedback comments suggest that many organisations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, government and industry, had a take home message about better approaches to key issues.

After the first regional workshop was held in Alice Springs in 2002, there was a public commitment to hold further workshops in 2003. The Department delivered on this commitment by holding workshops in Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland in March and May 2003 respectively.

There were several specific outcomes from regional workshops. A key outcome from Alice Springs was the establishment of effective working partnerships between many of the participants. These related, among other things, to provision of training contract work and assistance to help meet educational targets. There was also a commitment to revisit the region within 18 months, should the participants identify the need.

At the Kalgoorlie workshop participants identified specific initiatives to address some key priority issues in the region. Initiatives included a commitment by the Indigenous Employment Forum to work on providing better information about tendering and contractual requirements of mining companies, key stakeholders to work cooperatively to rejuvenate the Indigenous People in Mining Program (IPiM), and commitment by relevant participants to support fledgling programs for high school vocational training and mentoring.

To date, IPiM has held one regional forum with the ongoing production of a newsletter the end result. It has also held a booth at the annual Goldfields Mining Expo in Kalgoorlie on 21-23 October 2003. The Department has made a commitment to provide updates on its website on the progress of Kalgoorlie initiatives.

The principal concrete outcome from Port Hedland was a commitment by a number of participants to establish a regional partnership committee. This group was tasked with addressing key issues within their control in the region. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources undertook to provide support, financial and otherwise, to assist in the establishment of such a committee from the WIP program. Due to a changing role of a few key members, this group has not progressed significantly beyond confirmation of its charter document. The Sustainable Mining Section has advised that it will follow this up in 2004.

Key themes from Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland workshops were incorporated into a brief promotional video, produced by the Department to further encourage good practice and highlight innovative approaches through which mining companies can further build mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous communities. The video will be distributed to key stakeholders and it will also be used at future workshops. In addition, it is intended to utilise the video at industry events/conferences to publicise the program.

While the number of participants at various regional workshops held so far totalled less than 150, it is reasonable to assume that many of them would have taken messages from these workshops back to their organisations and communities and discussed them with their colleagues and community members. It is therefore likely that messages from the workshops reached an audience many times the number of actual attendees. This suggests that regional workshops compare reasonably well with both hard copy publications (around 800 copies distributed) and the website (approximately 2 500 hits) as a means of reaching key stakeholders.

The *Indigenous Partnership Program* website provides a relatively inexpensive means of disseminating information to stakeholders. In areas with internet access, the website can deliver similar information as contained in publications to Indigenous communities but it can do it more quickly and at a much lower cost.

The website, however, is less of a substitute for regional workshops, which have a much broader purpose. For example, workshops can facilitate face to face discussions between stakeholders, particularly in regard to specific local and regional issues. This face to face interaction allows for greater networking and information sharing than could be provided through the website. The element of trust is also developed in the establishment of working partnerships in this way, something which is particularly important given the legacy of interaction between Indigenous peoples and mining companies.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of data and information relating to the WIP program, including feedback from stakeholders, the review found that:

- the WIP program's activities are well targeted and are consistent with the Government's broader approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage through practical measures based on genuine partnerships involving governments, the private sector, and Indigenous Australians;
 - recent data on Indigenous unemployment and reports on the issue of Indigenous disadvantage also highlight a continuing need for a WIP type program;
- the program's key targets for the period under review have been reached including holding of additional workshops and production of additional case studies;
 - there is scope, however, for improving the reporting of these and other relevant outcomes, particularly in annual reports. This approach would be consistent with the recommendations of the recent Senate inquiry into progress towards reconciliation, relating to the provision of information on Indigenous outcomes in annual reports;
- while it could not be expected that a \$1.2 million program, over four years, would create a 'sea change' type improvement in relationships between mining companies and Indigenous communities, the program is making an incremental contribution in this area, including by providing initiatives not elsewhere pursued by governments;
- regional workshops are an effective means of bringing together Indigenous groups, mining companies and other stakeholders to identify practical actions and steps for successful partnerships at a local level;

- the effectiveness of future workshops could be further enhanced by increasing relative representations from local Indigenous groups and mining companies;
- in addition, there are a number of initiatives arising from regional workshops which require actioning by the Department, including a commitment to provide updates on the progress of these initiatives. It is important that this matter be given high priority to ensure effective and timely delivery of outcomes;
- The *Indigenous Partnership Program* website provides an effective and efficient mechanism for achieving most of the objectives of the program;
 - its main advantages over hard copy publications are cost and scope for updating information;
 - the website is relatively inexpensive to maintain and the information can be updated quickly and easily;
 - its overall effectiveness, however, is critically dependent on potential users' ability to access the internet, and on how well it is promoted;
 - greater awareness of the site should lead to higher usage;
- The provision of WIP information kits serves a useful purpose, particularly for reaching remote Indigenous communities;
 - however, the updating of information kits is relatively time consuming and expensive process and the issue of their continued use could be raised for discussion at future regional workshops.

Other Comments

External factors, such as land access issues, commercial imperatives, and the success or otherwise of broader policies aimed at reducing Indigenous disadvantage, will continue to drive changes in relationships between mining companies and Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, as discussed above a WIP type program can play an important role in supporting and encouraging the cultural change that is taking place in relations between the two groups.

Indeed, the WIP program will be a key element of the Community Engagement Strategy being developed by the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources. The objective of the Community Engagement Strategy is to establish a nationally accepted framework of principles for effective community engagement which recognise that all stakeholders have the right to be engaged in decisions that affect their interests. The WIP program will provide an important platform for establishing links and communicating information between Indigenous communities and other stakeholders.

Close monitoring of the broader issues impacting on relationships between the mining industry and Indigenous communities will help to ensure that WIP program's activities remain well targeted. It will also help in deciding whether a successor program is warranted. This decision could be best made in the final year of the current program, when there will be more information available to assess its full effectiveness.

Recommendations

In general, the WIP program is well targeted and administered. Further enhancement of the program could be achieved by:

- increasing relative representation from local Indigenous communities and mining companies at future regional workshops;

- where appropriate, using the results from the ABARE survey of mine sites to develop discussion topics for future regional workshops;
- increasing the awareness of the Indigenous Partnership Program website through, where appropriate, Ministerial statements, including speeches and media releases, and at conferences; and
- timely and effective reporting of outcomes, including in the Department's Annual Reports and on the Departmental website.

It is also recommended that:

- ongoing use of information kits be discussed with participants at the Queensland workshops to be held in the first half of 2004;
 - if feedback from participants was not supportive, any funds notionally allocated for the production of information kits in 2004-05 be redirected to other WIP activities; and
- decision on any successor program be made during the final year of the current program, taking into account developments in Government's broader policies for Indigenous Australians and in relationships between the exploration and mining industry and Indigenous communities, and any additional information on the effectiveness of the WIP program.

Attachment 1

Indigenous Communities/Mining Industry Regional Partnership Program (Working in Partnership Program)

Terms of Reference

The *Working in Partnership (WIP)* program aims to support and encourage the cultural change that is taking place in relations between the mining industry and indigenous communities, and to promote long term partnership between indigenous communities and the exploration and mining industry. This is to be achieved primarily through:

- a case study publication highlighting examples of partnerships between mining industry and indigenous communities;
- a website, designed to promote examples of good practice; and
- a series of regional workshops bringing stakeholders together to promote discussion of ways of developing better relations and outcomes.

The Government has allocated \$1.2 million over four years to the end of 2004-05 for the WIP program.

This mid-term review of the program will examine, and report on:

1. The WIP program's continuing *appropriateness* against the Government's broader policy commitment to improving the circumstances of Indigenous Australians, including by increasing economic opportunities for greater economic independence and more job opportunities for Indigenous Australians in rural and regional areas;
2. The *effectiveness* of the program by assessing:
 - the extent to which the WIP program has met the program's objectives;
 - the relative importance of WIP in promoting awareness of achievements and efforts in the areas of Indigenous communities/mining industry regional partnerships and for encouraging wider adoption of good practice in developing effective partnerships between mining companies and indigenous communities; and
 - any overlaps with activities of other entities in the private or public sectors.
3. The *efficiency* of the WIP program by taking into account:
 - the costs involved in the program's administration; and
 - measurable outcomes from the program, including any unexpected impacts.

Having regard to the stated objectives, and the existing level of funding for the program, the review will also report on:

- means to ensure efficient coordination and/or integration of the program with new and existing indigenous and public consultation processes carried out within the mining sector; and
- any necessary changes to the program's activities to better meet its objectives.

The review will report to the Executive Committee by the end of December 2003.