



**Regional
Development**
Australia

Fitzroy and Central West Inc.

Central Queensland
Resource Sector
Indigenous Employment
Pathway Strategy
2011-2012

Preamble

Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West in an effort to support and contribute to the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation* have commissioned the theme of this document in developing a Central Queensland Industry [Resource Sector] based Indigenous employment pathway strategy.

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to 'Close the Gap' in Indigenous disadvantage.

On March 26, 2008, COAG agreed to a new national target for its reform agenda – halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

On July 3, 2008, COAG leaders reaffirmed this commitment and agreed to a sustained engagement and effort by all governments over the next decade and beyond to achieve the 'Closing the Gap' targets for Indigenous people.

Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West recognise the *National Partnership Agreement's* commitment as a significant step in addressing the disadvantage associated with Indigenous unemployment and sincerely believes that the content and intention of this document has the potential to significantly contribute to breaking the cycle of disadvantage endured by the Indigenous community in the Central Queensland region.



Introduction

A national increase in the demand for labour of the order of 200,000 looks miniature compared with the total level of the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) unemployment, which is of the order of 950,000. We could transfer 20 percent of the unemployed into jobs generated by the mining boom. Unfortunately there are various reasons why not – two main reasons are skills disparity and geographic variance.

For many years NIEIR has pointed out that a high level of unemployment can co-exist with unfulfilled demands for labour due to mismatches of skills, (where skills include not only the training and tickets required to work but the social skills required to work with other employees and relate to customers). The NIEIR unemployment measure is based on employer and worker expectations as they were in the era of full employment – since then both formal and informal expectations have risen, while expenditure on the up-grading of workforce skills has stagnated.

Needless to say only a small portion of the NIEIR unemployed are work ready for employment in construction and other industries stimulated by the demand of the resource sector. An indicator of this is the persistence of NIEIR unemployment in the regions, most affected by the demand – the boom reduces the unemployment rate but cannot eliminate the unemployment of people who simply do not have the right skills.

The geographic variance arises because only one of the mining regions lies within close proximity of an under-employed labour force. This is the NSW Hunter region, which has the opportunity to draw labour made available by the decline of manufacturing in neighbouring centres such as Newcastle. Even so, many of the mine sites are beyond an easy driving distance from established homes and family support and once again the problem of skills disparity intrudes.

The Central Queensland resource sector growth is unprecedented with a significantly high demand for skilled labour continuing over the next decade. Unlike the Hunter region, Central Queensland does not have the critical mass of available skilled labour to draw from and relies on domestic migration strategies such as the FIFO and immigration's 457 options. The Central Queensland region to maximise local participation has to invest in employment pathway strategies that concentrates on progressing local candidates to a 'work ready' status.

This document refers to the contribution of the proposed Central Queensland Resource Sector Indigenous Employment Pathway Strategy to the skilled labour shortage forecast for the region during this unprecedented growth phase whilst at the same time addressing the chronic levels of disadvantage endured by Indigenous people who currently as a direct result of work ready deficits are denied access to economic participation.

Proposal Summary

Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West (RDAFCW) refer to the preamble statement within this document where reference reflects on the commitment of government, in this particular case Local Government, in the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation.

RDAFCW clearly recognises the critical role of Local Government in progressing participating Indigenous candidates to an employability status that will enable access to economic participation. The commitment to strengthening current procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment will incorporate a variance that will imply a level of commitment to providing a skills development.

RDAFCW suggests, acknowledging that dialogue has not yet commenced, that Local Government provide their existing operational framework as a 'constant' skills development platform to advance otherwise skills deficient Indigenous candidates. RDAFCW recognise the impost associated with this level of commitment and would have the expectation that such a commitment will be garnished with the provision – subject to and conditional upon Australian and State Government funding subsidisation.

It is obvious to RDAFCW that the Central Queensland Resource Sector Indigenous Employment Pathway Strategy is subject to and conditional upon the cooperative engagement of the key resource sector stakeholders in developing in the first instance, a minimum entry level skills-set requirement to work in the resource sector.

RDAFCW also recognises that a commitment from key resource sector stakeholders in this regard will require a measureable output that will validate any investment. Advancing such a statement by the resource sector stakeholders will require specific cost benefit considerations that will offset any predisposed caution and demonstrate effective contributions to future labour market demands.

RDAFCW emphasises that solicited support from resource sector stakeholders is not linked to their Corporate Social Responsibility obligations but rather, support for a strategic service delivery framework that will contribute to Indigenous disadvantage and forecast regional labour market deficits.

The Strategy

The Strategy, namely the Central Queensland Resource Sector Indigenous Employment Pathway Strategy is a partnership alliance aimed at establishing a local industry endorsed consistent skills delivery framework that will bridge the identified skills deficiency gap. As a result this will:

- » maximise economic participation of the Central Queensland Indigenous community
- » alleviate associated elements of disadvantage
- » contribute to the forecast regional skills shortages

The Strategy can be best described as a sustainable productive model with the capacity to provide participating stakeholders with measureable outputs opposed to more traditional, socially driven strategies that focused on social responsibility agendas.

The Strategy will be made up of a number of elements:

- » In the first instance, the most profound element of the strategy that will dictate its overall evolution is the in-principle support of industry to work collaboratively and cooperatively in developing a 'minimum entry level skills set for the resource sector' statement. The resource sectors in-principle support will initiate the drive required to progress the remaining elements of the Strategy.
- » The second and third element is the stakeholder alignment identified as being responsible for providing the overall delivery that will convert ideas to outcomes.
- » The second element consists of an agreement in principle from Local Government to provide the service delivery framework.
- » The third element is a culturally appropriate program coordination unit capable of establishing and delivering commercial, cultural and economic outcomes.

This third element, similar to Northern Projects Contracting (NPC) who, operate effectively in the Cape will extend their stakeholder alignments further, engaging for instance, local traditional owner organisations to deliver the local support aspects such as cultural awareness and mentoring of participating candidates.

An important expansion of element three and an addition to the key stakeholder framework is the inclusion of incorporating sport related disciplines to the employment and education service delivery framework. Based on the Clontarf model (attached) the Strategy will utilise sport disciplines and training science to develop the talents and confidence of Indigenous participants. The alignment with the Central Queensland REVS Sporting Academy will provide a starting platform conducive with the aspirations of Indigenous youth who will progress through the duration of the intended pathway program to either re-enter the education system and/or workforce with a much higher level of confidence and self esteem.

Methodology (Simplified)

Within the Strategy the resource sector maintains their individual local (Central Queensland) recruitment implementation with candidates deemed 'not work ready'. Those worthy of future consideration are progressed to the Indigenous Employment Pathway Pipeline where they commence a rigorous structured training employment program.

The structured training employment program coordinated by the likes of Northern Projects Contracting will progress the endorsed candidates through a two tiered training regime.

- » The first tier of the regime (6 weeks) will include life and personal skills development designed to develop the intellectual and emotional and physical aspects of personal growth. The course structure will target strategic and analytical thinking, leadership skills, goal setting and self management.
- » The second tier of the regime (3-6 months) will include a work placement program with Local Government in an area conducive with candidate strengths and aspirations. The on-the-job training program will be augmented with relevant accredited training components designed specifically around the minimum entry level skills set statement developed in accordance with the resource sector.

The program coordination unit namely (example only) Northern Projects Contracting will, coordinate all operational aspects of the structured training employment program and sub-contract delivery units as indicated.

The coordination unit in an effort to maintain a high level of cultural appropriation will enable joint venture contracting of local traditional owner groups to provide program support mechanisms such as cultural awareness training (Indigenous and Workplace) and candidate mentoring.

Indigenous Jobseeker Categorisation Schedule

Category	Description
A: Job Ready – Primary	<p>Category ‘A’ jobseeker candidates are deemed ‘work ready – primary’ and require minimal assistance to gain entry into the public and private labour market. Assistance required may include access to ICT to research employment opportunities and up-grade resume. This assistance could extend to qualification up-dates, specific technical certifications and supply of current PPE requirements.</p> <p>Category ‘A’ candidates possess <i>excellent/good</i> skill-sets and competencies include: tertiary or secondary qualifications; trade qualified; certification qualified; workplace experience; recent referee report, demonstrate <i>excellent/good</i> life skills, numeracy and literacy and technate skills, holders of current drivers licence or reliable transport options and have access to Tax-file-numbers and personal identification documentation.</p>
B: Job Ready – Secondary	<p>Category ‘B’ jobseeker candidates are deemed ‘work ready – Secondary’ and require moderate levels of assistance to gain entry into the public and private labour market. Assistance required may include access to ICT to research employment and training opportunities, up-grade resume, access to supervised short-term [6-12 weeks] labour market programs that have an ability to provide candidates with specific technical certification, complimentary PPE and current referee report.</p> <p>Category ‘B’ candidates possess <i>moderate level</i> skill-sets and competencies with minimal deficiencies include: tertiary or secondary qualifications; trade qualified; certification qualified; no current workplace experience; out-of-date referee report, demonstrate moderate life skills, numeracy and literacy and technate skills, holders of current drivers licence or reliable transport options and have access to Tax-file-numbers and personal identification documentation.</p>
C: Job Ready – Tertiary	<p>Category ‘C’ jobseeker candidates are deemed ‘work ready – Tertiary’ and require high levels of assistance to gain entry into the public and private labour market. Assistance required may include access to ICT to research employment and training opportunities, up-grade resume, access to supervised long-term [13-26 week] structured employment and training labour market programs that have an ability to provide candidates with professional and personal training, specific technical certification, complimentary PPE and current referee report.</p> <p>Category ‘C’ candidates possess <i>moderate-low level</i> skill-sets and competencies with identified deficiencies and personal barriers include: tertiary or secondary qualifications; trade qualified; certification qualified; little to no workplace experience; no referee report, demonstrate low levels life skills - numeracy and literacy and technate skills and no current drivers licence or reliable transport options. Do not have ready access to Tax-file-number and/ or personal identification documentation.</p>
D: Job Ready – Nil	<p>Category ‘D’ jobseeker candidates are deemed work ready – Nil and required extensive levels of assistance in addressing personal barriers and deficiencies prior to further investment in employment and training. Referral candidates.</p>



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