

Media Release

JULIA GILLARD MP

Deputy Prime Minister

JENNY MACKLIN MP

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

MARTIN FERGUSON MP

Minister for Resources and Energy

BRENDAN O'CONNOR MP

Minister for Employment Participation

Embargoed to 7.00 PM

Government and mining industry join forces to help close the gap

The Australian Government and the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) have today agreed on an innovative partnership that represents another major step towards closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

The partnership will tackle Indigenous poverty in Australia's mining regions by expanding access to the employment and business development opportunities available to Indigenous people and communities.

The new agreement builds on a partnership commenced in 2005, and is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) officially launched today by the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

The MoU was signed by Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Employment Participation, Brendan O'Connor, and Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson and by MCA Chairman, Ian Smith.

This agreement will widen economic benefits for Indigenous Australians by including opportunities associated with the minerals industry and government contractors.

The MoU will be supported by the Australian Government's Job Services Australia providers, the reformed Community Development Employment Projects and the Indigenous Employment Program, as well as the wide range of current employment, training and business development initiatives led by minerals companies.

The partnership is a great example of the Australian Government and corporate Australia working hand in hand, with Indigenous communities, to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and help lay the foundation for lasting change.

Mr Smith said members of the MCA have long recognised that engagement with Indigenous people needs to be founded in the mutual respect and recognition of Indigenous Australians' rights, interests and special connection to land and waters.

"The minerals industry recognises that the effective engagement of Indigenous people in our industry is not only the right thing to do, but there is a compelling business case," Mr Smith said.

"In working with the Australian Government to redevelop the MoU, it was agreed there was value in further aligning the minerals industry's efforts with the Government's priorities on Indigenous affairs."

Implementation of the new MoU will be overseen by a joint industry and government National Steering Committee.

Date: 27 May 2009

Media contact: Kimberley Gardiner (Gillard) 0434159842
Jessica Walker (Macklin) 0430166633