

Supporting remote communities during COVID-19

Update 10 – 27 October 2020

Context

Mining companies are working hard to stay connected with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landholders and communities while in-person engagement is limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staying connected is important to maintain relationships, progress shared goals and, most importantly, keep people safe from COVID-19.

Our tenth stakeholder bulletin includes examples from four mines in the Northern Territory and Queensland. The next bulletin will include examples from other states.

Northern Territory

Using technology to stay connected with the Borroloola community

While the nearest community of Borroloola is 65 kilometres away, staying connected is always a priority at Glencore's [McArthur River Mine \(MRM\)](#).

With in-person engagement limited during the pandemic, MRM focused on:

- Ongoing email and phone contact with the Roper Gulf Land Council, Mabunji, Mungoorbada, Borroloola School and other local organisations
- Updates in the dedicated community newsletter and the MRM mobile app.

Through the [McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust](#), videoconferencing facilities

were upgraded in Borroloola so Traditional Owners had the option to attend trust board meetings virtually. MRM also delivered eight tablets with video conferencing capability to Borroloola to help stay connected with community members.

MRM's response included transferring 30 local Borroloola employees from on-site work to community projects. Establishing a paid community workforce helped enhance local facilities and infrastructure such as fencing and no contact between nearby communities and the mine.



Glencore transferred 30 local Borroloola employees from on-site work to community projects as a safety precaution.



Staying engaged to progress shared priorities

Newmont works closely with the Central Land Council and remote Warlpiri communities near its Tanami gold operations. Collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic has minimised transmission risk, extended local assistance and progressed long-term community and mine priorities.

Activities have included:

- Engaging regularly with CLC on site health measures, operational activities, to identify and extend Global Community Support Fund (CSF) opportunities, progress cultural heritage clearances, manage land access permitting, implement Tanami Desert Ten Year Plan priority actions and make arrangements for local Aboriginal workers
- Maintaining emergency support for locals travelling the Tanami Highway under strict protocols
- Video conferencing so strategic commitments including the Tanami Desert Ten Year Plan Steering Committee and support for the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust and the Granites Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation meetings can continue
- Maintaining open communication with remote communities such as Yuendumu and Lajamanu through CLC, local Walpiri radio, key community and organisational contacts.

Newmont engaged all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees early in the pandemic to advise of COVID-19 risks and to screen for remote community interaction risks. It then organised for employees at higher risk of illness and/or living or connected with remote communities to transition to paid special leave.

Newmont also sustained support for its Yapa Crew, an entry-level employment programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by scheduling off-site training and work in communities. Non-essential activities at the Tanami operation were suspended during this time.

Most Aboriginal employees not living in remote communities have since returned to on-site work. Newmont is currently talking with CLC about the return of remaining Indigenous employees, including the Yapa Crew, in a manner that protects both the workforce and remote communities from COVID infection.

Queensland

Keeping the conversation going at Glencore's Aurukun Bauxite project

Glencore took the decision to suspend project team travel to Aurukun prior to official restrictions being imposed in Cape York.

While travel was suspended, the team made information videos for display in the community and the dedicated project Facebook page. These videos gave updates on project information and summarised feedback received during past Traditional Owner consultation.

Glencore and the Traditional Owner Working Group continued discussion by video conference using tablets. Glencore team members based in the community facilitated the meetings.

When regional travel restrictions lifted, Weipa-based personnel joined the local community at the 2020 Aurukun Community Day.

With Queensland intrastate travel restrictions eased, Glencore's Queensland-based employees and contractors can now visit Aurukun for field work and to talk with Traditional Owners in person.

All personnel travelling to Aurukun must undergo assessment and must comply with health, travel and other requirements detailed in the local community pandemic response plan. Interstate employees are not permitted to travel to site. Physical distancing and other health and hygiene measures are also observed.

Using social media to stay connected

Short videos featuring Rio Tinto Weipa Operations' General Manager and other updates via social media have helped keep communities informed about health measures and community support. This complements direct discussions to ensure ongoing stringent health and travel protocols and local support.

Types of information covered in the updates include:

- How Rio Tinto has sought to address community feedback or concerns
- Engagement with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services
- Working in partnership with Local Disaster Management Groups from across the Cape to support the COVID-19 response and keeping communities safe.

Rio Tinto has also mobilised significant local support. This has included working with the Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council in support of a generator and coldroom for essential food supplies and donating hand sanitiser made by the Rio Tinto Weipa lab to local health organisations in Weipa, Napranum and Mapoon.

