

# Tanami Regional Partnership Agreement signals a new era of Aboriginal businesses

The Central Land Council says an agreement signed in October between the CLC, Newmont Asia Pacific, the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government will make a significant difference to Aboriginal people who live in the Tanami region, north west of Alice Springs.

The Tanami Regional Partnership Agreement (TRPA), which initially involves Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Kalkaringi, seeks to create opportunities for employment in the mining industry, improve education, develop Aboriginal businesses and build the capacity of local communities.

CLC Director David Ross said the TRPA builds on the hard work done by the CLC and Newmont over many years.

"Our partnership with Newmont to get Aboriginal people into em-

ployment and training has set a national example and I congratulate them: many Warlpiri people already have taken the step out of welfare and become valuable skilled workers," Mr Ross said.

"The TRPA takes that successful relationship a step further – for the last year we have been talking to Warlpiri people about their ideas for business enterprises.

"This has been extraordinarily successful and a number of Warlpiri people have approached us about

businesses they would like to set up like vehicle recovery and repair businesses, campgrounds, market gardens, bakeries, earth moving businesses, mustering companies, and housing maintenance companies" he said.

"Our job is to assess the ideas, develop business plans if they look feasible, and assist them to get the business up and running in a sustainable way so that they can truly participate in the economy of the Tanami.

"Some of these



Above: l-r Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Jenny Macklin, Harry Nelson and MLA Karl Hampton signing the partnership agreement filmed by PAW Media member Francis Kelly

ideas are building on already successful businesses, some are new. We already have some tangible outcomes: JW Ringers in Kalkaringi is already up and running and employing three men at Wave

Hill station. A fencing contract for Newmont by people from Kalkaringi was done in record time. Business plans are being done for small Aboriginal organisations gearing up to contract to the

mining industry.

"We are linking in the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust which Warlpiri people have set up with their own royalty money to achieve educational outcomes that

the community wants," he said.

Mr Ross said Aboriginal people are increasingly keen to engage and utilise the opportunities presented to them in the mainstream economy.

# Tiwis claim the Vernon Islands

After more than 30 years, Tiwi Islanders appeared before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner for the first time this year to claim traditional ownership of the Vernon Islands – a series of uninhabited islands between Darwin and Melville Island.

The claim covers 7655 hectares of land and areas of the inter-tidal zone.

The claim provided an opportunity for the Tiwi and the Northern Land Councils to work together, with the NLC representing the claimants and Tiwi Land Council providing advice and logistical support.

The NLC conducted over 100 consultations in preparation for the claim and extensive traditional evidence was presented to the Land Commissioner at the Nguiu hearings.

Traditional owners recounted the creation stories for the Vernon

Islands, told of ceremonies on the Islands and spoke of the history of travel by dug-out canoes from Nguiu to Darwin.

As one claimant explained: "(Old people) used to travel in a dugout canoe from Nguiu to Darwin. And coming back, hunted for turtle at the three islands (Vernon Islands)."

Traditional owners argued that they have strong links to the islands, which Tiwi people regard as a plentiful spot for turtle and dugong.

In a show of solidarity, NLC chairman Wali Wunungmurra attended all three days of the Nguiu



hearings, together with members of the Tiwi Land Council.

The Aboriginal Land Commissioner is likely to make recommendations about the claim in early 2009.

Above: Tiwi traditional owners give evidence the Aboriginal Land Commissioner