

WARLPIRI USE ROYALTIES FOR EDUCATION

Royalty payments to Aboriginal people from mining on their country have attracted more than their fair share of negative publicity. But for the last four years, Warlpiri people from the CLC region have been using some of that money to educate themselves and their children.

Several years ago, the CLC made an agreement with mining giant Newmont Gold to make extra payments to the Kurra Aboriginal Corporation specifically for training and education.

The Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) was set up by the CLC to advise Kurra on suitable programs.

Educator Marlkindi Napaljarri Rose from Lajamanu in the north west of the CLC's region, sits on the WETT advisory committee with members from Willowra, Yuendumu and Nyirripi and other education stakeholders.

"WETT is about using royalty money for further education and training for Warlpiri communities," Ms Rose said.

"We have been talking about a lot of things that people have wanted to see, like a Warlpiri early childhood program, a Warlpiri youth and media program and a Warlpiri Learning Community Centre where we could go and do night school in our own community.

"There are other things we are funding which are very important, like secondary support for our children going to both our local schools and to boarding schools," she said.

Funding has been approved by Kurra to support Warlpiri secondary students for the next three years through rewards, trips to and from boarding school, holidays away or family visits for boarding school students.

Last year Lajamanu students went to Melbourne for a school excursion.



Marlkindi Napaljarri Rose

WETT has engaged the Mt Theo Substance Abuse Program to work on the youth media program and training has begun.

In partnership with World Vision, and with some Australian Government funding, WETT has also set up an early childhood program.

And access to library books and the internet are now possible through Community Learning Centres at Lajamanu. Willowra is still in the planning stage but money has been allocated for a new building.

Ms Rose said it's important that senior Aboriginal people now get paid with a small WETT allocation for their long, and often unrecognised, contribution in schools

She says these are projects that Warlpiri have wanted for years and the benefits of community ownership will be enormous.

"People are supportive because they want to see things happening in their communities.

"Some people don't understand what it's all about. So we need to go in there and say 'we're doing it for ourselves, for yapa (Warlpiri) people'. Not look at kardiya (non Aboriginal people) all the time," she said.

"It has taken the Government a long time to do what people have been asking for in education.

"With WETT because its yapa money, some of it can happen now.

"I think it is really important that people come up with something like this that benefits the whole community. I think it has really helped people decide and think about how they want to spend their money.

"Education is important for Aboriginal children – it helps them become part of Warlpiri society and part of Western society, to learn to read and write in our own language as well as English."

"Having something like WETT for our community really will make a difference to our children growing up and how they receive their education.

"We have community mentors involved and the programs are programs that people ask for themselves." Ms Rose said.

Maintaining ecological knowledge through generational change

When young people are willing to speak out about their excitement at being involved in a new program rolling out across the Northern Territory it's a strong indicator that something interesting is on offer.

Jessie Bartlett and Shaun Angeles are just two of the young Aboriginal people speaking passionately about the Natural Resource Management Board (NT) Intergenerational Transfer of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) program.

The IEK program is designed to help young people develop concepts that will help them return to country with their old people while maintaining knowledge and practices relating to their country.

Jessie is studying conservation and land management with the eventual aim of becoming a teacher.

She is planning a trip to her grandmother's country with her grandmother, mother and other members of her family. Jessie hasn't been there since she was 16.

"I was always interested," she said, "but now I'm getting older and my grandmother is getting older and I want to spend that time with her

before she's gone and get it (cultural knowledge) before it is lost forever.

"I want to learn from my grandma and then I can go back and do teaching and take all the knowledge that has been passed down to me and then I can teach my kids and family and at school and that's what I want to do.

"I've been talking about it. I'm excited. I can't wait. I just don't want culture to disappear," Jessie said.

The IEK program is helping Shaun visit a place he's never been to before.

"There's a lot to learn, it's not just a matter of going and visiting," he said.

"That's how we do it apart from burning off and looking after places. Performing ceremony and that increasing plant species and animal species and that.

"It's all one, all one. This white side tries to pull out and dissect everything and make this separate from this and this but in our world everything is just one, everything is just one, everything," he said.

"I've dreamt of something like this. Like a place just for that, where old people, an old man feels like he's coming to the end of a life and he's got



The Tennant Creek Walk: Recording traditional ecological knowledge books and books and books up here to hand down and he goes to a place like this and he says I need your hand. That would be a special place I tell you."