

Labour rush on at The Granites gold mine

There's a new rush on at The Granites gold mine in the middle of the Tanami Desert north-west of Alice Springs.

Increasingly, the Warlpiri traditional owners are finding the mine is bringing them windfalls beyond the obvious financial dividends it offers to TOs. Each year the Central Land Council's prevocational training course at The Granites is being taken up by Warlpiri people in greater numbers.

The 10 week course is strongly backed by Newmont Mining which is keen to build up a local workforce.

"The motivation, firstly, is just out of the fact that we are on Aboriginal land and the Aboriginal people of this community deserve to be able to be given the chance to work at an operation," Newmont's geology manager Jamie Pendergast said, "and then I suppose secondly, another factor is the mining industry's suffering a shortage of personnel, a shortage of people, skilled people, so if we can get some the local people into these training programs, build up their skill levels, they're going to be suitable to help us out with the manning shortage.

Marie Elena Ellis is an Arrernte/Warlpiri woman from Amoonguna and said the prevocational course has been an excellent introduction to working at a mine and thinks others should take up the chance.

"I strongly would encourage people to come

along and do this because this is something different," Marie said.

"Yeah, come out and try it, it's really good and a chance to have a permanent position and a chance to have pride in yourself and your skills as well and earning a lot of money. You feel like you're earning enough to buy a house and live comfortably."

Lorraine King lives in Papunya and Yuendumu and is a Pintupi/Luritja/Warlpiri woman.

"CLC helped us get onto the course at Yuendumu," she said.

"It has worked well for us because it's actually the first time they've got a Warlpiri majority like there's more Warlpiri in this group than before so it's great."

Warlpiri man Gerard Sullivan from Yuendumu and before that Darwin said he's hoping to use the course to get an apprenticeship.

"I'd like to get an apprenticeship for diesel mechanic or something, still just looking around," he said.



Bobcat operation is just one of the skills picked up during the Central Land Council's prevocational training course at Newmont's The Granites mine in the Tanami Desert. An increasing number of Warlpiri traditional owners are joining the course.

"(The CLC) just encouraged us a lot. Helped us out with the forms. It's a bit scary but you get helped through. It's a good chance to earn some money and it's a good job."

More than 100 of the 500 employees at The Granites are Aboriginal. The CLC's employment unit provides trainees who undertake the prevocational course with ongoing mentoring and support after they've completed their training.

Award for reporting

Annual reports are generally not seen as the most exciting publication produced by an organisation.

And as the end of the financial year comes around it is one project dreaded by many senior managers.

However, it is increasingly seen as the blueprint of the organisation, as well as a reflection of corporate governance.

Believe it or not, in the 'governance' world there are annual awards for the best reports in the previous year for NGOs, local government bodies and private sector companies.

This year the Northern Land Council entered for the first time in the Australasian Reporting Awards, and surprised organisers with their silver award for its 2006/2007 Annual Report.

"The NLC received a silver award for its 2006/2007 Annual Report, its first-time entry in the ARA awards – a most impressive achievement," ARA director Malcolm Duce said.

NLC commits to national jobs plan

A national jobs plan for Indigenous Australians is welcome, but highlights deficiencies in education and training by successive Australian and State/Territory governments, according to the Northern Land Council.

Fortescue Metals Group's chief executive, and Australia's richest man, Andrew Forrest, has pledged to create 50,000 private sector jobs for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

In a public statement, the chairman of the Northern Land Council Wali Wunungmurra committed the Land Council to working with the Government and industry on the development of an effective plan and called for additional resources in order for Land Councils to effectively contribute to the plan.

"I welcome this bold initiative of Andrew Forrest and Fortescue Metals and the willingness of the Australian Government to join with employers to prepare Aboriginal people for employment and to create real jobs for our people,"



**NLC Chairman
Wali Wunungmurra**

Mr Wunungmurra said.

"One of the key questions before us is exactly how did we arrive at this situation where Indigenous people are not job-ready and are often unable to access employment opportunities."

He said overcoming the historic underspending of successive Northern Territory and Australian

Governments in Indigenous education and training is critical to providing job-ready Indigenous people into the future.

"The Northern Land Council and other peak Indigenous organisations have the experience, expertise and proven track record in training and employment – our challenge has been that the education system has failed Aboriginal people and we have never received adequate funding to properly train our people and create real and sustainable jobs," Mr Wunungmurra said.

Mr Wunungmurra said it is important for government and industry to acknowledge the significant unrealised economic potential of Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

"Significant economic opportunity exists on Aboriginal land and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act provides the framework for genuine and sustainable economic development," he said.