



AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Project Overview

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) Pilbara project is sponsored by BHP Billiton Iron Ore. It specifically targets the areas of Hedland and Newman and is part of BHP Billiton Iron Ore's three year commitment to health in the Pilbara region. The project aims to:

- o engage families, schools, local government and other stakeholders in the Hedland and Newman communities and provide support and training to undertake the first stage of the AEDI community planning process;
- o utilise the experience of implementing the AEDI in these communities to develop and evaluate training resources and an on-line community implementation guide/manual for other communities undertaking the AEDI process as part of the AEDI national project.

Research Focus

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is the Australian adaptation of the Early Development Index used in other countries, most notably Canada.

It represents an innovative approach to understanding child development in Australia. For the first time, communities have access to local data about childrens' development to inform their early childhood policies and enable them to plan and organise their community-based services for young children and their families.

The AEDI provides communities with a tool to focus attention on how young children are doing, and gives data that can serve as the impetus for community mobilisation and building capacity around early childhood. The AEDI is designed to also assist communities to monitor and evaluate early childhood programs and interventions.

In mid-2006, BHP Billiton Iron Ore sought Kulunga engagement specifically to be involved in this project. BHP is keen to foster positive relations with the Pilbara community through its Health Partnership. The Health Partnership is a three-year commitment aimed at building healthier communities. It flows from an extensive feasibility study that identified health as a critical social issue for the future success of the Pilbara.

The Pilbara Health Partnership sees a combined investment of more than \$5 million in the Pilbara region over three years. New initiatives will focus on complementing existing services to develop world-class health care across a range of areas.

The Health Partnership was developed in consultation with Pilbara communities, local governments and service providers and will target areas of identified need, reaching out to Indigenous communities in particular, and enhance the sustainability of the region.

Kulunga's work on this project has only recently commenced. To date activities undertaken include:

- o consultation with key stakeholders and potential partners
- o scoping and mapping of programs and services with which this project might be aligned.

Kulunga recognises the value of engaging a staff member to be located in the Pilbara, probably in Hedland and possibly operating out of one of the key Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

Liaison and negotiation is also underway with a view to linking the work of this project to other programs with similar aims. This will maximise the outcomes while enabling a greater investment in actual community and early years based activities.

Other activities planned over the next few months are:

- o ongoing consultation with key stakeholders and potential other partners
- o establishment of a Project Review Committee
- o establishment of Early Years Coordinating Groups in Hedland and Newman
- o engagement of schools, families and community groups to undertake the AEDI process
- o development of a communication strategy
- o commence development of community information and support resources
- o site visits.

The Pilbara Australian Early Development Index project is Kulunga's first involvement with the practical application of the AEDI. It also supports Kulunga's new relationship with BHP Billiton Iron Ore so it represents an opportunity in the area of AEDI more generally as well as the future development of an Indigenous AEDI.

Further Information

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