GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO BUILDING A NEW FUTURE FOR GOVE

29 November 2013

The Northern Territory Government was this morning informed by Rio Tinto’s Australian Chief Executive that despite our tireless efforts to offer gas for Gove, the company has made an economic decision to suspend its Alumina Refinery operations.

“I know this is a dark day for the people of Gove but I want to assure the community that we will be working with Rio Tinto in supporting the community over the difficult months ahead,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“I want the people of Gove to know that my government and I fought until the end to keep the refinery open but Rio Tinto has disappointingly decided that the economics of the business no longer stack up.

“Rio Tinto has categorically acknowledged that this decision had nothing to do with the Government’s gas offer for the refinery and that there is nothing more we could have done to turn the situation around.

“Now is the time to look to the future and I have secured an assurance from Rio Tinto that they will be making the continuation of a viable Gove community and economy a priority.

“I will be holding them to that commitment.

“While Rio Tinto has given us assurances about the Bauxite operations continuing, we expect them to do much more than this to support the community going forward.

“Gove is a mining town, run by a mining company, which has obligations to the whole community of which it has been the main economic driver for more than 40 years.

“We have talked to Rio Tinto about the need to provide lease payment relief to property owners and have also negotiated with them that no one will have to move out of their company homes in the immediate future.

“Rio Tinto will continue to provide essential services for the town including power, water and sewerage.

“The company is seeking assurances from airlines about continuing their flights into Gove. The Government is also lobbying in this regard.

“The Government will have a role to play in planning for Gove’s economic future and I will be taking personal charge of coordinating our efforts to support Rio Tinto’s response.

“We will continue to provide key public services such as hospitals, schools and police and we will be supporting economic development.
“Refocussing Gove’s economy and finding new business opportunities will not be easy but it is essential for the town to survive.

“Later today I will be meeting with the Regional Economic Development Committee to discuss options. I will also be working with the Chamber of Commerce on business sector development.

“I have already spoken to the Prime Minister who has given assurances that his government will work alongside the Territory Government in complementing Rio Tinto’s efforts.

“I have mobilised the highest levels of the Territory public service to work on this issue and my department will be coordinating efforts across all government agencies.

“A senior officer has been appointed as the Government’s point-person on the ground in Gove.

“Mike Chiodo will coordinate our efforts alongside Rio Tinto and the Federal Government.

“From Monday, he’ll be working out of a new Community Support Centre we are setting up in conjunction with Rio Tinto as a one-stop-shop for advice and information.

“People can also phone the Government Information Line on 1800 785 644 or the Rio Tinto Community Support Line on 1800 747 354.

“We are guaranteeing every public servant with a permanent position in Gove that there will be no change to their job circumstances before 31 March 2014.

“All school staff with a permanent position for 2014 in Nhulunbuy can be assured their positions will remain unchanged until the end of Semester 1.

“I want the people of Gove to know that I share their deep disappointment at this decision but I am committed to helping you work with Rio Tinto to build a new future for your town.”

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