Adam Giles
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Minister for Indigenous Affairs

Unlocking the potential of Aboriginal Territorians

28 April 2015

The Territory Government is creating a new Office of Aboriginal Affairs to guide policy development and drive economic reform.

“Late last year I took on the new portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs because I wanted to see better coordination of Indigenous policy across the Territory,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“The new Office of Aboriginal Affairs will lead this effort from Alice Springs, with a particular focus on economic development and job creation in remote and regional areas.

“We want to build the capacity of Aboriginal communities to help deliver frontline services locally, taking full advantage of business and job opportunities along the way.

“The Territory economy is booming and we want all Territorians to share in this wealth no matter where they live.”

Budget 2015 allocates $1.75 million a year ongoing for the new Office of Aboriginal Affairs which will also have a strong community engagement role. A further $4 million over two years has been provided for an Indigenous Economic Development Support Program.

“We want to work in partnership with communities in these economic development efforts, supporting local voices, ideas and initiatives,” Mr Giles said.

“To drive this approach, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs will oversee a three-year, $18 million Community Champions program designed to support locally-led economic projects in remote communities.

“We will continue to deliver services and drive economic reform in all communities and homelands/outstations across the Territory but the 13 Community Champions will focus on key communities or regions where economic opportunities are the greatest.

“To ensure local voices are heard at the highest levels of Government, each of the 13 communities or regions will be assigned a chief executive officer and senior Government employees who will be responsible for championing their interests and projects.”

The communities/regions are: Milingimbi & Ramingining, Groote Eylandt, Borroloola, Wadeye, Maningrida, Galiwin’ku, Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), Utopia, Ngukurr & Numbulwar, Yuendumu & Lajamanu, the Tiwi Islands, Hermannsburg and Yulara District including Mutitjulu and Docker River.
“There will also be a new $3.25 million grants fund attached to the Community Champions Program for investment in priority projects such as small to medium infrastructure that is a potential economic multiplier,” Mr Giles said.

Examples of projects which might be eligible for this funding include a toilet or shower block at a tourism site or seed funding for the purchase of machinery or equipment to support the winning of a work contract.

“The Government is also keen to work with communities to develop tourism business opportunities on Aboriginal land,” Mr Giles said.

“A new Indigenous Tourism Advisory Council is being established to help develop sustainable local enterprises. We have also allocated $4.75 million for a Tourism Infrastructure Development Fund with a special focus on regional, remote and Aboriginal tourism products.”

Additionally across the Territory we will also be driving economic independence through a three year, $6 million Business to the Bush program which is aimed at supporting remote Aboriginal enterprises and increasing local employment.

“We are introducing a remote Aboriginal procurement model designed to give Aboriginal businesses, communities and organisations greater levels of access to Government tenders and more importantly, jobs in the bush,” Mr Giles said.

“We are also working overtime to boost Aboriginal employment in the public sector with a commitment to double the proportion of Indigenous workers from 8 per cent to 16 per cent in five years.

“We are linking communities with $9 million over three years to expand mobile phone services and broadband into communities.

“There’s also $546 million being invested across every major regional arterial route in the Territory.”

The Budget also includes $20 million as part of a $49.6 million package to provide remote students with improved access to secondary education.

“In Budget 2015, the Government is investing in programs that connect the bush and break the destructive cycle of welfare dependency which has crippled communities for decades. We are laying the foundations now for the prosperous, independent communities of the future,” Mr Giles said.

Contact: Danielle Parry 0413 081 801