Economic participation underpins NT Government’s Aboriginal Affairs Strategy

8 February 2016

Increasing opportunities for Indigenous economic development and decentralisation is at the heart of the Northern Territory Government’s Aboriginal Affairs Strategy released today.

Chief Minister and Indigenous Affairs Minister Adam Giles said the strategy was focussed on building the capability and capacity of Aboriginal Territorians so they can take full advantage of business and economic opportunities.

“About 30 per cent of the Territory’s population is Aboriginal and some 80 per cent of the Aboriginal population lives in remote or very remote communities, with many of these areas having little or no economic activity,” he said.

“Our Aboriginal Affairs Strategy is focussed on working in partnership with Aboriginal people to build sustainable regional economies and create the economic independence so many of us take for granted.

“We’ve set a number of ambitious employment targets and policies including doubling public sector Indigenous employment from 1800 to 3600 employees by 2020, and initiating Aboriginal employment requirements for all Government infrastructure contracts above $500,000 (Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum).

“In addition, we’ve introduced a new remote contracting policy that requires 70 per cent of all contracts for civil and construction projects under $5 million in remote Aboriginal communities go to local Aboriginal businesses by 2017.

“A Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework will be finalised by mid-March and that will highlight the Government’s progress in meeting the targets of our Aboriginal Affairs Strategy.

“While there is more work to do, we are making significant progress towards meeting our targets and in some cases are ahead of schedule.

“For example, the percentage of Aboriginal people employed in the public sector has already risen from eight per cent to 9.5 per cent within six months, and I congratulate the public service for the hard work they have done in this area.
“Through the Department of Infrastructure’s Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum initiative, 576 Indigenous people have been employed on Government construction contracts since October 2014. Prior to this initiative, there were just 40.”

Mr Giles today visited a Top End construction company, SH Build, at Humpty Doo to see first-hand how the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum initiative had helped the business expand its efforts to provide employment to Indigenous Territorians.

“SH Build was recently engaged as a contractor to assist with the recovery at Daly River after the recent floods, and assembled a team of 19 Daly River locals to assist with clean-up efforts,” he said.

“Following the completion of the clean-up works, four Daly River men have stayed on with the company and have been working on an SH Build NT Government contract at Litchfield National Park’s Termite Mounds.

“It’s an example of how the Government’s initiatives are generating genuine job opportunities for Indigenous people in the construction industry in the Northern Territory.”

Mr Giles said the Country Liberals Government had worked hard to decentralise decision making in Aboriginal communities and had set up 63 of 73 local authorities.

“We also want health centres to be controlled by local communities with 40 per cent already under local control with the aim to have 100 per cent over time,” he said.

“We will also be making further announcements in relation to housing in the near future.”

Mr Giles said the Government was also investing in essential services like power, water and waste disposal, telecommunications services, education and health facilities, and town planning, to ensure remote communities had the right ‘enabling environments’.

“We have created an Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Alice Springs and Darwin to spearhead government initiatives, drive the creation of enabling environments and focus on creating economic opportunities for Aboriginal people,” he said.

“The Northern Territory is a unique place with a proud, strong Aboriginal identity, culture and languages. As a Territory, we want to see this strength resonated in all areas of people’s lives – such as education, health, employment and business development.

“My Government strongly believes that the integral link between economic and cultural success is through local Aboriginal people gaining access to and participating in a local economy, and that’s what our Aboriginal Affairs Strategy is focussed on.”

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