

# CASE STUDY



NEW SOUTH WALES  
MINERALS COUNCIL LTD  
MININGENUITY™

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## Working with the Aboriginal Community in the Hunter Valley

*Coal & Allied has pioneered a holistic approach to working with Aboriginal communities in the Hunter Valley to deliver partnerships and sustainable outcomes. This approach is based on the community's visions for the future, the commitment by the company to build meaningful, long term relationships, and sustainable community investment. Coal & Allied has committed funds and resources for an Aboriginal Relations Specialist to drive the program and build mutual respect and trust within the community.*

### Background

Coal & Allied, managed by Rio Tinto, ensure they engage effectively with the Aboriginal community to earn and retain their social licence to operate. For the past decade, Rio Tinto and Coal & Allied has worked on ways to ensure Aboriginal relations is embedded into its business.

Engaging with and building the trust of Aboriginal communities is a significant challenge for many companies. Cultural nuances and a history of comparative disadvantage and societal division have created barriers to engaging with Aboriginal people. Coal & Allied recognised the need to make a meaningful long term investment in the Aboriginal community if they were to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

### Action

In 2006, Coal & Allied commissioned a socio-economic baseline study in the Hunter Valley. It highlighted a number of differences between the Aboriginal community and the rest of the community. Compared to the total population, Aboriginal persons were more likely:

- To be unemployed
- To have lower median individual and household incomes
- To not have completed the highest level of schooling or post school qualifications.

### Working with the Community

Coal & Allied used the results of the study to guide their social investment in the Aboriginal

community. The aim was not simply to develop programs or provide handouts. The company wanted to work with Aboriginal communities to facilitate opportunities across all age groups. This approach is gradually building capacity and pride in the Aboriginal community as well as the potential of a unified future for the whole community.

Coal & Allied appointed a **dedicated Aboriginal Relations Specialist** to drive the program, foster enduring relationships and embed cultural heritage into the business.

### Development Committee

The Aboriginal Development Consultative Committee (ADCC) is a key component of the program, established after extended consultation with the community in 2006. The ADCC has a commitment of \$10 million over 20 years to fund programs that demonstrate the potential to address disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people. The ADCC supports projects that can become self sustaining or that can secure alternative funding over time.

Programs supported by the ADCC include the Parents and Learning program. This program supports Aboriginal parents and extended family to get involved in their children's pre-school learning through weekly home visits over a two year period by a tutor.



*Tutor working with a local family*

The ADCC has also supported the Ka-Wul Education and Cultural Resource Centre. This Centre has contributed significantly to improved attendance, retention and academic outcomes for students at Singleton High School and has created a hub of cultural activities. The ADCC has supported a program co-ordinator, computers, cultural resources and planned the development of a bush food garden at the Centre.



*Ka-Wul Education and Cultural Resource Centre with Cate Sims, Coal & Allied's Aboriginal Relations Specialist in the background*

ADCC funding has been vital to NAIDOC week celebrations in schools and the Singleton and Muswellbrook communities. This includes the inaugural NAIDOC Week Awards in 2010 to honour local Aboriginal heroes.

### **Providing training and employment opportunities**

Coal & Allied recently committed to an Aboriginal employment target of 5%. Opportunities to increase training opportunities and new employment pathways into the business are being developed. Since 2007, 36 Aboriginal trainees have graduated or are undertaking operator traineeships and are employed full-time with Coal & Allied or labour suppliers in the mining sector.

Identifying and removing barriers to mainstream employment for Aboriginal people, including women and those with little experience in the mining industry, has been a focus of the program.



*This Aboriginal mum is one of a new breed of miners*

Administration traineeships are run annually at all Coal & Allied operations. Coal & Allied's Mount Thorley Warkworth mine has established two annual indigenous scholarships with the University of Newcastle. These scholarships will feed into the Rio Tinto Vacation Work and Graduate programs.

Aboriginal culture and heritage assessments are important to meet statutory obligations and are an important source of temporary employment for Aboriginal people. In 2009, Coal & Allied employed members of the local Aboriginal community for more than 109 days in Aboriginal culture and heritage assessments and mitigation.

Coal & Allied also delivers cultural awareness training to all new employees and contractors.

### **Building strategic relationships**

Working proactively with local Aboriginal communities has led to multiple benefits for Coal & Allied which have flowed to other mining operators in the region. The company does not subscribe to the approach that its work must benefit only local communities. Coal & Allied is focused on benefiting the entire community, long after mining ceases. This approach has enabled the company to create partnerships and opportunities which provide an environment for Aboriginal people to realise a brighter future.

*Disclaimer:* This case study is intended to provide summary information only. It does not intend to be comprehensive or to provide specific legal advice. Given the changing nature of legislation, regulations, program rules and guidelines, there is a potential for inherent inaccuracies and potential omissions in information contained in this case study. All information in this case study is provided "as is" with no guarantee of completeness or accuracy and without warranty of any kind, express or implied. In no event will New South Wales Minerals Council Limited, any related members, consultants or employees thereof be liable to anyone for any decision made or action taken in reliance on the information in this paper or for any consequential damages.