



Focus on the mining boom

Native Title and You



By National
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THE current resource boom in Australia has many people focused on the mining and exploration industry – and native title holders are no exception. Many Indigenous people are keen to participate in local developments. One major challenge is to ensure that native title holders are appropriately involved in decisions about exploration and mining on their traditional lands, and reap some benefits from the resources boom.

Three recent developments illustrate different steps taken to reach that goal.

In April this year, the Goldfields Land and Sea Council (GLSC) released a mining policy aimed at providing greater certainty and procedural clarity for traditional owners and industry bodies.

GLSC CEO Brian Wyatt said the policy was put together to develop relationships between traditional land owners and mining companies where they are equal partners or players.

Mr Wyatt said the mining industry was a leader when it came to ensuring that Indigenous people received a fair share of the nation's opportunities and that the

industry was hungry for mutually beneficial agreements and out-of-court settlement of native title.

The Martu People of Western Australia's Central Desert region had their native title recognised in a consent determination in September 2002.

They are reported to have negotiated a ground-breaking agreement with minerals exploration company Reward Minerals Ltd. The agreement allows Reward to mine potash on their native title land in exchange for an equity stake of potentially more than 10 per cent of the company.

The agreement will deliver ownership of shares as well as royalty payments based on project development milestones.

It gives the Martu people financial rewards and an ongoing involvement in the future of the project as company shareholders.

Another State experiencing the recent boom is Queensland, and some native title holders have shown that they are keen to benefit from it.



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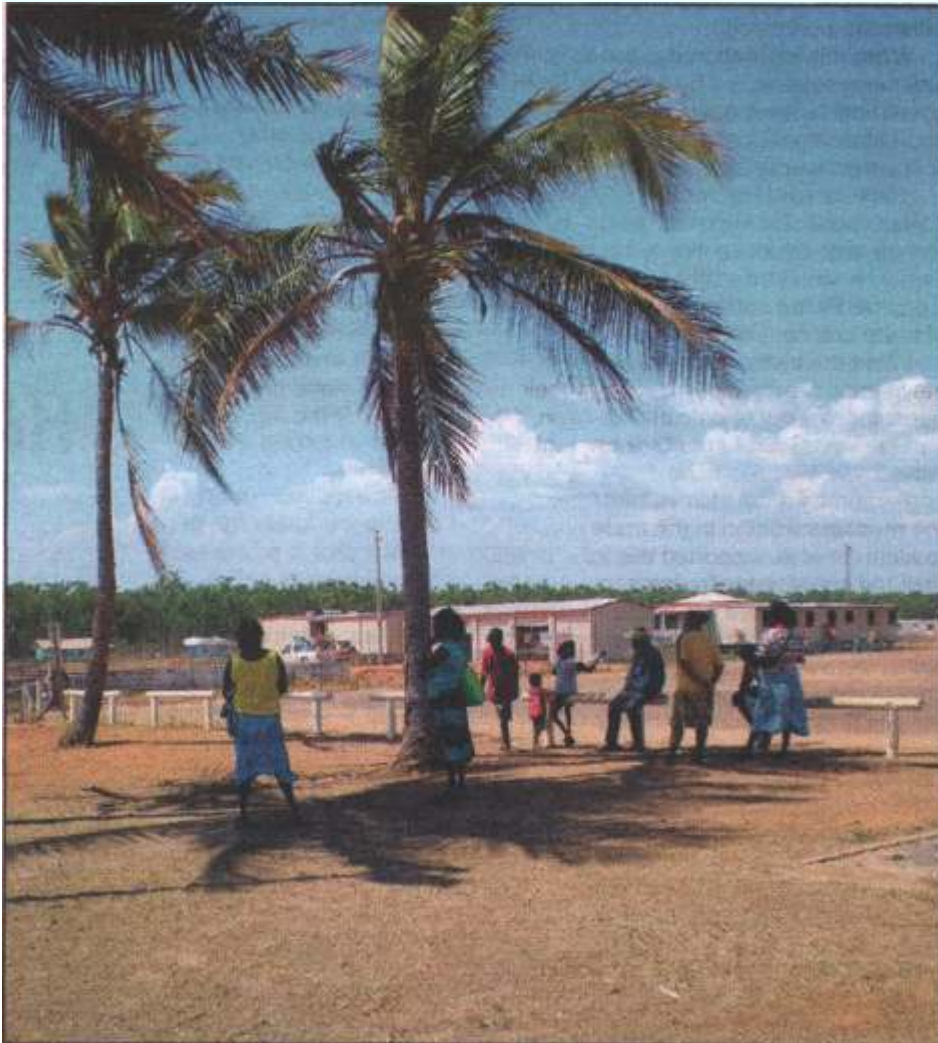


Native title allowed the Wik and Wik Way People of Cape York to negotiate a mining agreement with Chinese bauxite mining company Chalco.

The agreement will provide the Wik and Wik Way people with employment as well as training so that they may continue to work in the industry and obtain

benefits well into the future.

Hundreds of exploration and mining agreements have been made with native title holders or potential native title holders around the country. These examples pave the way for many more in the future.



Wik and Wik Way People of Aurukun, north Queensland, look over Chalco's Bauxite Project Office buildings.