



WA Indigenous Affairs dept restructure planned

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The Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs will be restructured into two specific areas, with the Office of Native Title being transferred to the agency in March 2009, Premier Alan Carpenter has announced.

One section of the department will deal with statutory roles of land, heritage and culture, while the other will be responsible for developing indigenous policy and economic development.

The Premier also announced a forum of industry figures, indigenous stakeholders, training providers and government personnel to tackle state's 14 per cent indigenous unemployment rate would be held in November.

The full text of an announcement from the Premier's office is pasted below

A major forum to tackle indigenous unemployment in Western Australia has been announced by Premier Alan Carpenter today.

The Premier also announced a major restructure of the Department of Indigenous Affairs and nearly \$4 million towards training and community programs, all designed to increase employment opportunities for indigenous West Australians.

The forum, to be held in Perth on November 30, will bring together the leading figures in business and industry, indigenous stakeholders, training providers and Government, to discuss and develop new initiatives to promote Aboriginal job creation and economic development in WA.

"More indigenous West Australians need to be engaged more successfully and more sustainably in the state's powerhouse economy," Mr Carpenter said.

"Industry is crying out for workers and there are thousands of potential indigenous workers in both Perth and in the regions.

"We are at a point in time in our State's development when we must seize the opportunities that are emerging to create the underpinnings for economic viability on a long-term basis for indigenous West Australians."

Mr Carpenter said that when the State Government was elected in 2001 the indigenous unemployment rate was almost 20 per cent compared to the WA rate of 7.3 per cent.

"Currently the indigenous unemployment rate is around 14 per cent compared with the WA rate of 3.3 per cent," he said.

"We have made significant progress since we came to Government but more needs to be done to get the indigenous unemployment rate much closer to the overall rate.

"However we can't address this issue alone. This will require sustained effort from the Government, industry and the indigenous community.

"The view that it is government and the broader welfare sector alone which can resolve the fact of Aboriginal disadvantage is wrong.

"Government has a primary policy and leadership role to enable indigenous West Australians to participate fully in the State and nation's economy, however this effort needs the willing participation and partnership of the private sector and of indigenous people to have any chance of success."

The Premier said the Department of Indigenous Affairs would be restructured into two specific areas.

"One area of the department will deal with the specific statutory roles of land, heritage and culture," Mr Carpenter said.

"The other will lead in developing indigenous policy, economic development and determining and measuring strategic outcomes are being met.

"This will ensure that the department is well placed to drive and lead change through a coherent policy framework focused on economic development and social responsibility."

The Office of Native Title will transfer to the Department of Indigenous Affairs in March 2009.

The State Government has committed nearly \$4million towards training and community initiatives to increase employment opportunities for indigenous Western Australians:

- \$2 million for four new mobile training facilities in the regions to provide indigenous people with pre-employment plant, fitting, machining and boiler making skills to further improve their job readiness; and
- \$1.7 million over the next two years to those programs that deal with community safety, child protection and domestic violence, that have had funding cut by the Australian Government with the abolition of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme.

"We have a great opportunity here and now to fundamentally change the long-term economic and therefore social outlook of indigenous West Australians," the Premier said.

"We want that outcome, and look forward to working with industry and the indigenous community in meeting that challenge."