

**MEDIA RELEASE      Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

---

**Regional Forum on Aboriginal Employment  
Announced**

The Northern Inland Regional Development Board (NIRDB) has announced today that it is convening a Regional Forum on Aboriginal Employment. The Forum aims to bring together key stakeholders – local, regional, state and national – to work together and identify strategic priorities that can improve Aboriginal employment outcomes for the Keepit Region<sup>(1)</sup>.

“The Regional Forum is designed to bring together stakeholders interested in working towards a regional strategy for Aboriginal employment” said Kim-Trieste Hastings, Project Officer for the NIRDB. “We believe this focus will help address the well recognised need to increase both the number and the quality of employment outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal people. This is especially important since Aboriginal employment rates are lower in the New England North West Region than any other region of NSW<sup>(2)</sup>.”

“While the challenges around Aboriginal employment and enterprise are widely discussed,” continued Ms Hastings, “the focus of this Forum is also to identify and build on successes and strengths of the recent Keepit ACES (Aboriginal Community Employment Strategy) Consortium that formed to tender for the Australian Government Indigenous Employment Panel.”

A wide range of stakeholders are expected to attend and participate in the Forum – employers and employment service providers; training organisations and schools; Aboriginal and other community organisations; government bodies and agencies. The Forum will have a workshop based approach to enable attendees to work together and identify issues, solutions and strategies. Background briefings will be provided to attendees as well as other relevant information on employment and training services available to Aboriginal people.

This work builds on NIRDB's recently completed research report – Aboriginal Employment and Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region – which was released earlier this year. The research was undertaken by Adam Blakester, an independent consultant with business and community development expertise, on behalf of NIRDB.

“A key recommendation arising from this research was to host a Forum,” said Mr Blakester, “with the purpose of addressing two strategic questions. First, is there sufficient interest by key stakeholders to develop an Aboriginal community employment strategy? Second, what are the regional priorities to improve the amount and quality of employment for Aboriginal people?”

The Regional Forum and Research Report has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The Northern Inland Regional Development Board is now inviting RSVPs for the Regional Aboriginal Community Employment Strategy (ACES) Forum, to be held in Gunnedah on Tuesday 19 May. Free transport is available from Wee Waa, Narrabri and Quirindi if required. To RSVP contact Dianne Bannigan on (02) 6771-3284 or at [nirdb@nsw.chariot.net.au](mailto:nirdb@nsw.chariot.net.au).

---

1. The Keepit Region includes the Shires of Gunnedah, Narrabri and Liverpool Plains  
2. 74.5% for Aboriginal men (93.7% for non Aboriginal men); 75.3% for Aboriginal women (93.9% for non Aboriginal women). Two Ways Together, Report on Indicators 2007, New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs



**Keepit ACES Planning Meeting attendees discuss the next step towards improved Aboriginal employment... Business Enterprise Centre representatives, Shane Levy and Derek Vale; Pam Smith and Simon Smith from Narrabri Local Aboriginal Land Council; and Northern Inland Regional Development Board Consultant, Adam Blakester**

**Contacts: Kim-Trieste Hastings | Project Officer | 02 6771 3284 | 0427 008 572  
Adam Blakester | Consultant | 02 6775 2501 | 0419 808 900**