

School helps people secure mining jobs



From left, NPC Director Derek Flucker, Gary Fenlon MP, Federal Minister Brendan O'Connor, trainee Dwayne Conlan, the Rev Goma Conlan and NPC Director Brad Foster and, front, trainees Shannon Turbane and Daniel Conlan.



Federal Minister Brendan O'Connor tries his hand in the simulator.



AN Indigenous mining company has launched a school designed to train Indigenous people to work in Australia's booming mining industry.

The Northern Project Contracting Mining School, officially launched by Federal Minister for Employment Participation Brendan O'Connor in Brisbane, was set up to meet a growing demand in the mining industry for skilled workers.

NPC Director Bradley Foster said the school was designed to ensure that mining projects – many of which were located close to Aboriginal communities – could use local Indigenous labour a great deal more than they currently were.

"We've developed this mining school specifically for Indigenous

people so that the mining industry can locate skilled Indigenous workers and Indigenous people can gain the skills required to enter the industry," Mr Foster said.

"We think we could make a significant contribution to the aims of the Australian Employment Covenant which wants to create

50,000 Indigenous jobs over the next two years. We're playing our part in achieving that goal."

Minister Brendan O'Connor said the Mining School was a great opportunity for Indigenous job seekers to gain skills in areas of shortage.

"The mining industry is currently calling out for workers who can provide these sorts of skills," he said.

"This model is consistent with both the Prime Minister and the AEC's ambitious but realistic objective of 50,000 Indigenous jobs."

Mining industry projections suggest that the resources sector in Queensland will require a further 15,000 workers by 2015, with a total of 70,000 new workers needed nationwide.

Representatives from OZ Minerals Century, formerly known as the Zinifex Century mine, attended the launch, and General Manager John Lamb said the company was committed to increasing its Indigenous employment and retention rates.

"Employing Indigenous Australians in the mining industry is not an altruistic act. Our Indigenous employees give OZ Minerals Century clear competitive advantages," Mr Lamb said.

"Local people have a deep knowledge of the land they are mining and a vested interest in caring for it. They are keen to work on country, which improves retention rates. As a remote operation, it makes sense for us to employ people who live near Century."

Northern Project Contracting

currently operates several contracts out of the OZ Minerals Century mine, in crushed aggregate, labour hire and machinery hire.

The 100 per cent Indigenous-owned company recently won the Premier of Queensland's Smart Award in the Rising Star category, against 20 other mainstream competitors.



Tony Johnson and Nat Minniecon were among the people at the NPC Mining School launch held in Brisbane.

The Mining School program includes work-readiness training, and centres around the use of an innovative mining simulator which enables instructors to simulate an on-site mine environment.

Trainees have opportunities to drive haul trucks, loaders, dozers and to confront workplace health and safety issues on-site through the simulated environment.

Five young Indigenous people from the Inala community attended the launch as potential trainees for the Mining School and tried out the mining simulator – along with Minister O'Connor.

The NPC Mining School is currently in a trial phase, and will run trials at the Mining Industry Skills Centre, at Salisbury in Brisbane, and in Townsville later this year.

Cape project encourages aged-care career



CAPE York Indigenous people will be encouraged to join the aged-care workforce under a project announced by Commonwealth

Employment Participation Minister Brendan O'Connor.

Mr O'Connor launched the Blue Care Cape York Employment Facilitation Project on 14 August

during a visit to Salvin Park Nursing Home in Brisbane's Carina Heights.

The Australian Government has provided Blue Care with \$100,000 to appoint a regional Indigenous employment co-ordinator in Cairns to work with local communities in Cape York.

The aim is to develop an Aged Care Indigenous Employment strategy,

"The strategy will have a particular focus on training opportunities for people who want to work in the aged care and associated health sectors," Mr O'Connor said.

'Opportunities

"There will be opportunities in aged care, disability work, community development, horticulture, carpentry, business

management, asset management, hospitality and allied health.

"Aged care and associated services are growing, and the Australian Government wants Indigenous Australians to share in the employment opportunities that will flow from that."

Federal MP for Leichhardt Jim Turnour said the project would assist in raising employment levels in Cape York, and

communities will benefit from the lasting effects of the strategy.

Blue Care is the largest provider of aged-care services nationally. In 2006, it became a signatory of the Government's Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project.

Over seven months last year, Blue Care increased its Indigenous staff numbers in Queensland from eight to 100.