School library grows on the airwaves

Port Hedland School of the Air began the school term with a significantly expanded library, thanks to funding through the BHP Billiton Iron Ore Community Grants Program.

The School caters for the educational needs of isolated children from Kindergarten to Year 7, across an area of some 540,000 square kilometres, who do not have access to a mainstream school.

Senior Manager of Community and Indigenous Affairs, BHP Billiton Iron Ore, Chris Cotter described the essential services Port Hedland School of the Air provides in the Pilbara.

"The School offers children in isolated regions of the Pilbara region the opportunity to remain with their family in the formative years of their lives, while still receiving a quality education," said Mr Cotter.

BHP Billiton Iron Ore is committed to empowering local organisations to find custom, flexible and culturally relevant education solutions.

The funding, secured by the School through the BHP Billiton Iron Ore Community Grants Program, will see around $12,000 invested into the purchase of resources for the library.

Port Hedland School of the Air Principal, Michael Pritchard explains the value of the community sponsorship program to the Pilbara region.

"Our students throughout the Pilbara will directly benefit from this funding from BHP Billiton Iron Ore," said Mr Pritchard.

For further information about the Community Development Program please contact the Port Hedland Community Office on 9173 6680 pilbara@bhpbilliton.com or the Newman Community Office on 9175 3670 newmancommunity@bhpbilliton.com.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees real winners in new funding round

Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees have a key role to play in shaping regional infrastructure investment to meet regional needs during Round Two of the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF).

Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Simon Crean this week announced of Round Two of the fund, worth $260 million.

Key aspects of Round Two are a two-stage application process that will reduce costs for applicants; embed local decision making, and provide early certainty for project proponents about funding for their project.

As part of this new role, RDAs committees will review Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from all potential applicants and select three viable priority projects from their region to progress to full application.

Collene Longmore, Chair of RDA Pilbara said that RDA committees are community leaders uniquely placed to determine viable projects that align with their regions’ priorities and plans.

We as RDAs committees are jointly appointed by the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Simon Crean and we are also closely in touch with our local communities. This enables us to match what is happening on the ground to available funding approaches, she said Collene.

"We welcome the opportunity to have a stronger voice and contribute directly to the Government’s localism approach. The regions and local communities are going to be the real winners.

The new process for RDAF Round Two is as follows:

- Eligible applicants are required to submit one EOI form for a single project, to their RDA committee by Thursday, 1 December 2011. The form is available from the Department’s website.
- All expressions of interest need to align with RDAF’s Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014
- RDA committees will review each EOI and select three viable priority projects from these to proceed to full application.
- Full applications will be assessed by the Department of Regional Australia Regional Development and Local Government against the eligibility and selection criteria; risk; and value for money.
- Applications will be considered by the RDA Advisory Panel which then provide advice to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Hon Simon Crean MP. The Minister will make decisions on projects to be funded.

In prioritising our three viable priority projects, the Minister has asked RDA committees to take into account the priorities of our Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014, the capacity of the project to address needs in the region, the level of community support for the project, impact of the project on the region and neighbouring regions, and readiness to proceed.

The RDAF is worth almost $1 billion over five years (some of which is subject to the passage of the Minerals Resource Tax Act) and is designed to boost economic and community development as part of the Australian Governments commitment to regional Australia.

More information including the Round Two Guidelines, key dates and full details on the EOI process can be found at www.regional.gov.au. Applicants can ask questions relating to the application and assessment process by emailing rdaregional@labour.gov.au

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