

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND CRITICAL INQUIRY**

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**October 2001**

**SOUTH EAST ARNHEM LAND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

**REPORT TO RIO TINTO LIMITED**

**FIFTH PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2001**



# **SOUTH EAST ARNHAM LAND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT**

## **Report to Rio Tinto Ltd for the period April to September 2001**

This report covers research activities for the period from April to September 2001. It is the fifth report provided in compliance with the Research Grant Contract between Rio Tinto Services Ltd. and the University of Wollongong.

### **The milestones for the recent period are:**

- publication of two Working Papers:
  - Working Paper #2 entitled *Ngukurr Crying: Male Youth in a Remote Indigenous Community*, by Aaron Corn, June 2001.
  - Working Paper #3 entitled *South East Arnhem Land Collaborative Research Project: The Origins in Rio Tinto*, by Paul Wand and Jeff Wilkie, September 2001.
- submission of drafts of four papers for the Working paper series. They are currently being reviewed by the Director and, where appropriate, external readers. It is expected that all of these will be in press during the next month. The draft papers are:
  - *Separation of Powers: Sources of Authority and Frameworks for Decision-Making in a South East Arnhem land Community*, by Mary Edmunds.
  - *Health Beliefs and Behaviour: the Opportunities and Practicalities of "Looking after Yourself" in Ngukurr*, by Kate Senior.
  - *Compensation at Ngukurr: The Reality of its Relations*, by John Cook.
  - *Local and Regional Governance: a Community Perspective*, by John Bern.
- publication of Ngukurr News #17-20. Ngukurr News recommenced publication in March this year with assistance from the Ngukurr Language Centre and Ngukurr Community Education Centre. The current editorial committee is led by Daphne Daniels, Kate Senior and John Bern. The aim is to produce four more issues during the remainder of 2001.

### **Staffing and research personnel**

No appointment to the vacant Research Fellow was made until August. Ms. Kate Senior, who had been undertaking research work for SEALCP on a casual basis, was appointed Research

Fellow for one year from 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Ms. Senior will work under the supervision of the Director on a range of topics within the Project, participating in research on:

- the policy and practices of service delivery at Ngukurr;
- training and employment;
- and contributing to the preparation and writing of the Project's final monograph.

Ms. Senior will have particular responsibility for research on:

- Ngukurr household expenditure patterns; and
- the social life and attitudes of teenage girls and young women at Ngukurr.

Her appointment goes beyond the term of the current contract for SEALCP and has been partially subsidised by the Faculty of Arts.

Dr. David Perkins is working with the project on the Ngukurr income and expenditure study. David brings economic expertise and quantitative research skills to the study. Dr. Perkins, a health economist, is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Wollongong's Centre for Health Service Development.

The Ngukurr Research Assistants have been working on a casual basis throughout this year. Daphne Daniels has been the backbone of the group and has taken a leading role in the production of Ngukurr News. Keith and Miranda Rodgers have been more intermittent. All three are now providing significant assistance to Kate Senior on the expenditure study.

#### PhD Theses in progress

Rosie O'Donnell. 'Aboriginal Religion and Christianity: shifting frameworks for constructions of self and community in Ngukurr, South East Arnhem Land'. The work that Rosie has produced is of a high order, though her progress is on the slow side. She has been based down south since January and is working on the outline of her thesis with a central focus on the theoretical approach. She has presented a seminar on her thesis and drafted a thesis outline which has been commented on by her supervisor.

Kate Senior. 'A Gudbala Laif? Health and its relationship to quality of life in two Aboriginal communities'. The first draft of the thesis has been completed and commented on by her supervisors. Kate has to date completed three chapters of her revised draft. Subject to other work commitments, the thesis will be submitted to the Australian National University for examination before the end of 2001.

## **The Current Work Program**

A revised work program has been developed for the third year of the project. This was necessitated by staff changes and developed, in part, through discussions with stakeholders, including a lengthy discussion at the last Reference Committee meeting in Ngukurr in June. A draft of the Program was sent to the General Manager, Aboriginal and Community Relations on 16<sup>th</sup> July last. An updated version is included here.

SEALCP Work program, July 2001 to June 2002

Date	Field Research projects	Wollongong based research	Deliverables
2001 July	RAs on Ng News #18 [done].	<p><b>Senior:</b> preparation of WP #5 [draft received 23/8].</p> <p><b>Perkins and Senior:</b> planning household expenditure survey</p> <p><b>Bern:</b> edit and review WP #3 [done replied to author 7/8] &amp; 4 [done replied to author 9/8 and 12/9]</p>	<p>WP #3 [see below].</p> <p>Ngukurr News #18 [published 20/6].</p> <p>Preparation of notes of June Reference committee meeting [sent to Chair 16/7]</p>
August	<p><b>Bern</b> Darwin and Katherine 14th-29th: interviews with service agencies Ngukurr:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. interviews and case studies re: attitudes and beliefs surrounding mining and exploration.</li> <li>2. prepare for expenditure study, recruit volunteer households for the study</li> </ol> <p>RAs on Ng News #19 [done].</p>	<p>Finalise expenditure survey materials [done].</p> <p>Edit and review of WP #5 [review in progress]</p>	<p>WP #4 [awaiting revised text]</p> <p>Ngukurr News #19 [published 24/8]</p>
September	<p><b>Senior</b> Ngukurr 9<sup>th</sup> Sept to 10<sup>th</sup> Oct:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. conduct survey and case studies with RAs to investigate household expenditure.</li> <li>2. commence research with teenage girls and young women</li> </ol> <p>RAs on Ng News #20 [done].</p>	<p>Analysis of mining case studies and interviews.</p> <p>Edit and review WP #6 [done replied to author 11/9]</p> <p>Preparation of WP #7 [first draft completed].</p>	<p>WP #3 [published 25/9].</p> <p>Ngukurr News #20 [published 26/9].</p> <p>WP #5 [with reviewer]</p> <p>WP #6 [awaiting revised text]</p>
October	<p><b>Senior:</b> Ngukurr (as above)</p> <p><b>Bern:</b> Ngukurr:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. follow up of perceptions of mining</li> <li>2. approaches to development</li> </ol> <p>RAs on Ng News #21</p>	<p>Edit and review WP #7</p> <p>Draft WP #8</p>	<p>Ngukurr News #21.</p> <p>WP# 4 to7 [expected to be published in October]</p>
November	<p><b>Bern:</b> Darwin and Ngukurr Approaches to development</p> <p><b>Senior:</b> Ngukurr Female youth</p> <p>RAs on Ng News #22</p>	<p>Edit and review WP #8. Analyse results of expenditure survey.</p> <p>Analyse approaches to development</p>	<p>Ngukurr News #22.</p> <p>WP #8</p>

December	<b>Bern &amp; Senior:</b> Ngukurr Reference Committee meeting 4 <sup>th</sup> December  RAs on Ng News #23	Draft WP #10  Review and edit of WP #9 & 10.  Draft WP #11	Ngukurr News #23.  Reference Committee meeting.  WP #9 & #10
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<b>2002</b> January	<b>Senior:</b> What does “work” mean in Ngukurr?	Edit and review WP #11  Draft WP #12	WP#11
February	<b>Senior:</b> Ngukurr cont. on ‘work’.  RAs on Ng News #24	Edit and review WP #12  Draft WP #13	Ngukurr News #24.  WP #12
March	<b>O’Donnell:</b> Ngukurr on PhD  RAs on Ng News #25	Edit and review WP #13  Writing of Ngukurr monograph  Draft WP #14	Ngukurr News #25.  WP #13
April	<b>O’Donnell:</b>  Ngukurr on PhD	Edit and review WP #14  First draft of Ngukurr monograph	WP #14
May	<b>Bern:</b> Ngukurr Discuss monograph draft  Study evaluation and projected developments.  RAs on Ngukurr News #26.	Review and edit monograph	Ngukurr News #26.
June	<b>Bern:</b> Ngukurr: Final Reference Committee meeting and wind up of project  RAs on Ng News #27	Preparation of final draft of monograph	Ngukurr News #27.  Presentation of final draft of monograph

### THE FORTHCOMING WORKING PAPERS AND MONOGRAPH

Working paper #	Author	Title/subject	Publication date
3	<b>Paul Wand and Jeff Wilkie</b>	South East Arnhem Collaborative Research Project: The origins in Rio Tinto	July 2001, now Sept
4	<b>Mary Edmunds</b>	Separation of powers: sources of authority and frameworks for decision making in a South East Arnhem Land community.	August 2001, expected Oct

5	<b>Kate Senior</b>	Health beliefs and behaviour: the opportunities and practicalities of 'looking after yourself' in Ngukurr	September 2001, expected Oct
6	<b>John Cook</b>	Compensation in South East Arnhem Land: How we understand it.	September 2001, expected Oct
7	<b>John Bern</b>	Governance in Ngukurr and South East Arnhem Land	October 2001, expected Nov.
8	<b>John Bern &amp; Kate Senior</b>	The Framework and practice of Service delivery to Ngukurr	November 2001
9	<b>Sue Blanchfield</b>	The Ngukurr Arts screen printing project	December 2001
10	<b>Kate Senior &amp; David Perkins</b>	Where does all the money go? Household expenditure in Ngukurr.	December 2001
11	<b>Rosie O'Donnell</b>	Christian practice and performance at Ngukurr: continuities and change	January 2002
12	<b>John Bern</b>	A mine of information: perceived costs and benefits of mineral exploration and mining in South East Arnhem Land.	February 2002
13	<b>Kate Senior</b>	Boyfriends, Babies and Basketball: Young Women at Ngukurr	March 2002
14	<b>John Bern &amp; Kate Senior</b>	All trained up and nowhere to go: understanding Work at Ngukurr	April 2002
Monograph	<b>John Bern et.al.</b>	<p><b>A Prospect for Prosperity? Individual and collective responses to change in South East Arnhem Land</b></p> <p>Introduction Context and Coverage</p> <p>Ch1 Decisions and the locus of responsibility in Ngukurr: the fractured base of self management</p> <p>Ch2 The Health and Education nexus: understanding the present and constructing the future</p> <p>Ch3 Land and Community: redefining sectional interests</p> <p>Ch4 Enterprise (f)or dependency: economic models for a sustainable future?</p> <p>Ch5 The business of the young: getting on with life.</p> <p>Ch6 Partnerships across the matrix: Extending community and co-operation</p> <p>Ch7 Conclusions and Recommendations</p>	July/August 2002

The major new initiative in our fieldwork is the study of household income and expenditure under the leadership of our Research Fellow, Kate Senior (at Ngukurr) and Dr. David Perkins (in Wollongong).

A key element of this work is our innovative approach to surveying people's expenditure patterns. Diary type Household expenditure surveys where individuals record all their spending during a set period have previously been used by the Australian bureau of Statistics in the broader Australian context, though not in a remote Aboriginal context. Translating this technique into the remote Aboriginal context required rethinking the unit of investigation, the mode of administration and the content and method of collecting additional information.

Our approach does not emphasise the individual recording their own spending independently but includes a researcher and research assistant working with individuals and their families to record their expenditure. Unlike the ABS our unit of study is not the individual but the household. Identifying the parameters of households is itself a major task as these are not defined by a single dwelling (though some may be contained within such a structure) and, while having a relatively stable core, have a shifting composition. Additional interviews, discussions with participants and ongoing participant observation enrich the data and facilitate our understanding of the data in the context of people's daily life and expectations about income, expenditure, debt and saving. We are analysing the completed surveys to extract the patterns of expenditure as part of our economic study and are also producing the results in a format designed to allow the participants to easily understand their spending patterns and assist them in developing budgeting strategies.

The *Ngukurr Family Income and Expenditure Survey* is included as an appendix to the report. This document is copyright and provided on a confidential basis. We believe that it is a unique instrument for investigating family economic circumstances in Aboriginal communities and are publishing it together with our results from the study in Working Paper #10.

The questions raised in the Wand and Wilkie Working Paper #3 are very broad ranging and are evident in the concerns of all of our research activity. The priority now is to extract material from that work and focus it on addressing the issues that are of more immediate concern to the Company. This is being undertaken by the Director and has formed one focus of his recent work in Ngukurr. He has carried out interviews and discussions with different sections of the community into the range of attitudes and beliefs surrounding mining and exploration. Within a context of generally favourable attitudes about the material benefits of mining, there are

undercurrents of concern and ambivalence about matters ranging from the protection of traditional country (including sacred sites); the size, equity and impact (in the sense of social disruption) of the distribution of royalty equivalents; the impact of an influx of outsiders; and, the opportunities for work and economic development. There is much more to be brought together on the specifics of the Ngukurr concerns and aspirations. These will form the basis of the Working Paper #12 and be developed as a central theme in the final monograph.

The inquiry into local governance and relations with external agencies is developing rapidly under the influence of a number of factors both internal and external to Ngukurr. Internally, the level of questioning of the operations of Yugul Mangi Local Government Council, the CDEP and a number of local enterprises has risen and recently complaints have been made to the Northern Territory Ombudsman. The change in Government in the Northern Territory appears to open up the opportunity for reorganising both Commonwealth and Territory relations with remote regions and communities. It is too early to state how this will develop but the Director is building contacts with people in both the Departments and the new Government to keep in touch with these developments as they may effect Ngukurr.

The Working Papers have been somewhat slower to appear than earlier indicated principally due to a longer than expected turn around of the draft manuscripts. This slowdown will be overcome with three or four publications over the next month.

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3<sup>rd</sup> October 2001