



OUR COMMUNITIES

CASE STUDY | June 2009

Pathways to the Future

Woodside recognises that many Indigenous communities in Australia, including those in the Pilbara region near our Pluto and North West Shelf operations, face social and economic disadvantages, high unemployment; lack of educational attainment and poor health.

We support these communities to help address these issues through an active engagement and investment program, with the goal of achieving strong, healthy and sustainable communities. This includes employment opportunities, support for capacity building programs, and creating opportunities for Indigenous businesses.

Roebourne Pathways Project was established in 2006 to increase the participation, retention and completion rates of Indigenous students enrolled at Roebourne School, a K-12 school with about 260 students.

Woodside's financial support of this project is through its participation in the North West Shelf Venture.



School attendance rates are improving

The Challenge

Roebourne is one of Western Australia's oldest surviving towns and until the 1960s was a major regional administrative centre. The iron ore boom of that decade saw the departure of many non-indigenous people to live at company towns located near the ports of Dampier and Wickham, and emerging towns near the inland mine sites. At the same time Roebourne experienced an influx of Indigenous people from inland camps and reserves and pastoral stations.

Today Roebourne is a community that is predominantly Indigenous, with a population of about 1000 people. Government services are now largely provided from Karratha, which is about 40km to the west.

The Project

The Roebourne Pathways Program is an initiative that has been driven by concerned staff, students and parents from Roebourne School who were determined to improve the prospects for Indigenous students who were struggling to meet basic educational milestones and transition from school to employment.

A number of factors were seen to be contributing to the lack of educational achievement, including a lack of positive role models; low priority to education within families; and a general lack of interest by young people with delivery and content of traditional education models. A steering committee was formed comprising representatives from the local community; education and training organisations; and industry, including Woodside.

The committee oversaw the development of a new approach to help students complete their secondary schooling, including:

- Appreciation and flexibility around local cultural obligations.
- Integration of life skills and work readiness into the academic program.
- Mentoring from local community and family members, industry representatives, past and present students, sporting identities and school teachers.
- Flexible delivery including a self-paced education package to complete the Western Australian Certification of Education.
- Incentives for attendance and performance, including scholarship payments for work placements and academic results.
- Flexible exit points for school-based traineeships in association with Pilbara TAFE. Certification is provided at the end of each semester rather than completing two years before gaining accreditation. This gives students portable accreditation that can be used at a later date.



Work readiness is a program priority

Achievements

Since 2006, 89 students have been accepted into the Roebourne Pathways Program. At the outset a target was set to ensure at least 70% of participants remained engaged in the program. Pleasingly, this target has been achieved each year and the school attendance rate of 15 to 17 year olds involved in the program has doubled. In 2006 the school attendance rate averaged 28% and every subsequent year ended with an increase in participation at times up to 60%.

More Information

All stakeholders are invited to contact Woodside for additional information at:

sustainabledevelopment@woodside.com.au