

\$340K to reform remote governance

remoteFOCUS, a national initiative facilitated by Desert Knowledge Australia, today received \$340,000 from the Pilbara Development Commission, through the Regional Grants Scheme to run the remoteFOCUS Pilbara Project.

The remoteFOCUS Pilbara Project will consider how governments need to alter how they govern, administer and interact with the Pilbara region. The project involves developing recommended measures and reforms for the Pilbara region, and also testing and improvement of the national remoteREFORM Package. The Project will also enable a dialogue around how governments can better govern and interact with the communities of the Pilbara region so that the government contribution to the development of the region is most effective.

This project is an integral part and subset of the national remoteFOCUS project which kicked off in Western Australia in 2008 when 28 Australians with extensive experience of government, government administration and remote Australia met to discuss the apparent failure of current structures to deliver effective government to the 85% of the country which is remote from the national state and territory centres of administration. Wide consultation across remote Australia over 2 years has confirmed that despite frequent *ad hoc* efforts to address concerns there is a need for more fundamental changes to ensure good government in the bush. Proposals for fundamental reform are in process of development.

John Huigen, CEO Desert Knowledge Australia said, "We are very pleased to receive funding for this program that will allow us to further the remoteFOCUS agenda. We look forward to releasing the draft remoteREFORM package as part of an extensive community engagement process in the Pilbara. Our aim is get on-ground feedback to the package and look at the practical effects of applying these reforms to one of remote Australia's most challenging regions".

A wide range of organisations and people have already participated in the remoteFOCUS initiative, which is facilitated by Desert Knowledge Australia, a national organisation headquartered in Alice Springs that aims to help build a stronger and more sustainable society and economy in the desert.

The Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia and convenor of the remoteFOCUS initiative, the Hon Fred Chaney AO, said, "the Pilbara is one of the key economic engine-rooms of Australia. And yet persistent challenges remain. Episodic government interventions demonstrate that the ordinary processes of government are inadequate and that new approaches are needed."

"We are grateful to the Pilbara Development Commission of this opportunity to explore in depth how government arrangements could be altered to address some of the underlying barriers to improving these circumstances in a sustainable and long-term way".

The Regional Grants Scheme, a program of Royalties for Regions, aims to improve economic and community infrastructure and services in regional Western Australia. The Scheme highlights one of the central themes of Royalties for Regions - putting money back into communities for projects and services that are determined and driven by regional communities.

For further information on remoteFOCUS visit: www.desertknowledge.com.au/remotefocus

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