

DESERT BUSINESSES GET A BOOST

A \$10 million cross border business networking project that will significantly strengthen the critical small medium sized business sector in desert Australia will become a reality following an announcement by Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Minister, Kim Carr.

A commitment of \$1.07 million over three years from the Aboriginal Benefit Account and \$1.9 from the Enterprise Connect Program will combine with major corporate support from BHP Billiton (\$1.807 million) Telstra Country Wide (\$368,000) and Qantas (\$368,000) as well as a range of state and regional partners.

The Desert Knowledge Australia Cross Border Business Networks Project will develop the business opportunities and capacities of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across nine regions of desert Australia.

Key regional development and tourism organisations, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments and SMEs will collaborate to build upon previous Desert Knowledge Australia successes.

Desert Knowledge Australia facilitated the project's development and will manage the project. Included in the project is the development of cross border business network development services for key industries such as mining services, tourism, sustainable building and bush products and local foods, as well as resourcing to further progress the 'Our Outback' tourism partnership. An important element of the project will be the development of business opportunities for Aboriginal owned and staffed businesses through partnerships at a regional and cross border level.

Desert Knowledge Australia Chairperson, The Hon Fred Chaney AO, said, "I am delighted to see the hard work of our partners and Desert Knowledge Australia staff will now be used to help make the SMEs of desert Australia more competitive. We have already established successful networks and developed considerable expertise in this field through our linked business networks and Our Outback Tourism project. The funding from the Federal and NT governments and our corporate partners- BHP Billiton, Telstra Country Wide and Qantas will enable us to work with our regional partners to build on these foundations and further extend the coverage of the networks across desert Australia."

"The project strongly aligns with DKA's approach that builds capacity, resilience and opportunity across the 70% of Australia that is desert through partnerships and innovation." he said

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Desert Knowledge Australia's partners in the Cross Border Business Networks Project are:

Australian Government, through Enterprise Connect and the Aboriginal Benefit Account

Corporate Partners

BHP Billiton
Telstra Country Wide
Qantas

Research Partner

Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre

Regional Partners

Alice Springs	Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development (DBERD) Tourism Central Australia Chamber of Commerce NT
Tennant Creek	Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development (DBERD) Chamber of Commerce NT Tennant Creek Town Council
Broken Hill	Broken Hill Chamber of Commerce Broken Hill City Council Alliance Engineering
Mid West / Gascoyne	Mid West Development Commission Gascoyne Development Commission
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	Goldfields Esperance Development Commission
Central West Queensland	Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mount Isa	Department of State Development and Innovation
Pilbara	Pilbara Development Commission
Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North SA	Northern Region Development Board

'Our Outback' Tourism Partners

Cross Border Partner

Regional Partners

Aboriginal Tourism Australia
Australia's Golden Outback (WA)
Outback Queensland Tourism Authority
Outback Regional Tourism Organisation (NSW)
SA Tourism Commission
Tourism Central Australia
Tourism Eyre Peninsula (SA)
Tourism Flinders (SA)
Tourism New South Wales
Tourism NT
Tourism Queensland
Tourism Western Australia

For Information please contact Mike Crowe, Networking and Communications Manager, Desert Knowledge Australia

Mobile 0411114266 Tel: 08 8959 6014 E: mike.crowe@desertknowledge.com.au