Award winning community engagement

MRM is the proud winner of the Northern Territory Minerals Council 2006 Resource Awards of Excellence for Community Relations. The award recognises MRM’s more than $1 million commitment to community infrastructure to improve health and recreation benefits in the Borroloola region during 2006.

MRM General Manager, Brian Hearne said providing infrastructure within remote indigenous communities is a key challenge the mining industry can support through financial assistance, resources, materials, labour and project management.

“In partnership with Government and community organisations, MRM has improved, upgraded, restored and provided infrastructure which may not otherwise have been made available,” Mr Hearne said.

“This type of contribution is a key way we can bring value to our community.”

In collaboration with Government, community committees and local organisations, MRM undertook a program of initiatives in 2006 specifically focused on building infrastructure support to deliver short and long term benefits to the community. These initiatives had an estimated value of $1.06 million and were:

• Supporting the establishment of a Dialysis Unit adjoining the Borroloola Health Clinic in partnership with NT Renal Services
• Upgrading the King Ash Bay Road, the key access point for this remote community and a critical transport link for both commercial and recreational/tourist fishermen
• Participating in the development of the Borroloola Swimming Pool as part of the Federal Government’s Remote Pools Program to improve health outcomes within the community
• Improving hygiene facilities at the Borroloola Rodeo grounds to ensure the growing attendance at this focal annual event for the community could be safely and comfortably accommodated
• Upgrading the irrigation and amenities for sports fields in Robinson River
• Upgrading of the bore at Borroloola to support year round use of the oval.

Wherever possible, MRM utilised members of its traineeship program for unskilled labour, the Maintenance Service Team, to perform the construction work as part of an effort to ensure they gained real work experience through meaningful projects. All trainees under this program are drawn from the region surrounding the mine.

The benefits to the community through this infrastructure are:

• Equity and convenience in receiving health care locally for a chronic disease with significant family impacts
• Improved amenity for all community members and particularly families, children and youth through upgraded facilities at sporting grounds leading also to improved health and social development outcomes
• Accessibility and economic support for the King Ash Bay community as a burgeoning hub for the region’s tourism industry.

“We look forward to continuing to work with our partners to achieve genuine results for the community,” Mr Hearne said.

Additionally, MRM is finalising negotiations with the Northern Territory Government regarding the $32 million Community Benefits Program, which formalises the mine’s commitment to delivering long-term social and economic benefits to the region.
A message from the GM

Our operations were influenced by an unusual wet season during the past quarter.

The wet season runs between December and April and generally brings around 650mm of rain around the mine. This year, the rain didn’t really start until February and then we received 595mm (10% lower than the seasonal average) in the three months to April.

What this has meant on site is that at a time when we would have expected to lose days to the weather, we were able to keep working.

The open pit development operations are, as a result, proceeding well and an update is provided in this edition.

Production is on schedule assisted by the higher grade of ore mined in the stage of the open pit we were working on.

It has been a tremendous team effort to achieve these results.

Another team effort we are very proud of is the award I was pleased to accept on behalf of both MRM and our community partners for our Community Relations program in 2006.

In April, MRM won the Award for Excellence in Community Relations in the Northern Territory Minerals Council’s annual awards program. It recognises work progressed on more than $1 million worth of community infrastructure. I would like to acknowledge the support of the communities of King Ash Bay, Robinson River and Borroloola, the Northern Territory and Federal Governments, the Borroloola Community Government Council and civil works contractor Central Desert Enterprises in progressing all of these projects.

The results are a great example of what can be achieved when we work together. This year, we look forward to some of those key pieces of infrastructure coming on line like the pool and the dialysis unit.

Brian Hearne
General Manager

New MRM info

MRM has produced a series of four fact sheets on key areas of the Mine Management Plan (MMP) for the open pit development. The topics covered by the fact sheets include the River Rechannelling, Tailings Storage Facility, Overburden, Environment management and Community engagement.

The MMP is a highly technical, operational plan used by the mine to guide its work annually. It is based on this plan that regulators from the Northern Territory Government audit the mine’s activities each year.

The fact sheets have been developed to ensure information from the MMP which has been of most interest to the community is presented in an easy to read format and style.

If you are interested in detailed, technical information then please refer to the Public Environmental Report (PER) available via the MRM website http://www.mcarthurriver.com.au/publications.html. The scientific and technical basis for the development plan is well documented within this report. The action in the MMP is consistent with the design and planning in the PER.

The fact sheets are available online at the MRM website http://www.mcarthurriver.com.au/publications.html or printed copies are on hand at the mine site, in the MRM Borroloola community office and in the Darwin office.

Staff movements

MRM currently has 148 employees and 504 contractors. We would like to welcome the following new staff to the Administration Department:

- Darryl Smith as Payroll Officer
- Damian Thompson as MST Trainee
- Dennis Coolwell as MST Trainee
- Kenny Bonney as MST Trainee
- David Marshall as MST Trainee
- Justin Peach as MST Worker
- Kane Hartell as Supply Officer.

In the Mining Department, we would like to welcome Dennis Bolton as Production Senior Supervisor.

The following staff received promotions in April:

- Sam Fuller entered Apprentice Electrician 3rd Year
- Gary Chisholm was promoted to Operator Maintainer Level 1 in the Metallurgy Department.

MRM is currently recruiting for the following permanent positions:

- Boilermaker Metallurgy Department
- Fixed Plant Fitter in Metallurgy Department
- MST Superintendent
- Mine Services Supervisor
- Mine Production Supervisor
- Mine Safety Advisor
- Training Coordinator
- Training Advisor
- Technical Services Superintendent
- Senior Safety Advisor
- Surveyor
- Community Relations Advisor
- Apprentice Fitter Metallurgy Department
- Apprentice Electrician Metallurgy Department.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Meg Ellis (8975 8242) or Kate Morse (8975 8133) if you have any queries.
Community update

There has been plenty of activity in the Borroloola region recently. Progress on community projects and various sponsorships as well as site visits have filled the past few months.

Dialysis Unit

The Northern Territory Department of Health conducted an inspection of the facility in April to ensure the building met the necessary construction standards to gain a building permit.

After a few alterations the building passed the requirements for such a facility and MRM is now ensuring the building is certified before handing ownership of the project back over to the department who will install the dialysis unit.

Swimming Pool

MRM has recently been appointed the project manager for the Borroloola Swimming Pool project and Adam Kinna, project engineer for MRM, has been given the responsibility of leading the work.

After extensive negotiations with the Federal and the Northern Territory Governments, it was agreed that management of the project would be handed over to MRM who will now aim to complete the swimming pool by the end of the dry season.

Once the swimming pool is operational, a ‘No School, No Pool’ policy will be introduced. This initiative encourages children to attend school and as a reward for attending school, students are entitled to use the community pool.

Sponsorships

MRM is proud to continue their long-term commitment and support of the local community through the provision of sponsorships and donations. Over the past few months, MRM has made the following contributions:

- Financial support for students completing Certificate II in Road Transport at Charles Darwin University
- A donation of $1,000 prize money for the Katherine Game Fishing Competition
- Provision of a three year conditional scholarship for Karlene Shadforth to complete a Bachelor of Nursing at Charles Darwin University
- St Patrick’s Day Races at Tennant Creek donation of $1,500 for the MRM Race
- Donation of $600 to support the Mums and Bubs parenting program at the Borroloola Health Centre – the program provides essential medical assistance for babies up to 12-months old
- Sponsorship of the King Ash Bay Fishing Competition, providing $7,000 in prize money for many categories
- Sponsorship of the Daly Waters Rodeo Buckles by donating $1,400 to produce belt buckle awards for winners of each category
- Provision of flights for health professionals, educational staff, technicians, sporting competitors and local Borroloola community residents.

Mine site visits

Gurdanji Traditional elders Ronny Ragget, Harry Lansen and Billy Coolibah recently visited the MRM site to inspect the proposed construction area for the airport runway extension.

The extension to the airport runway will double the current length and accommodate a new 70 seat jet recently purchased by Airnorth. The new jet will support the increase in demand for travel and transportation of goods from Darwin to McArthur River for the open pit project.

After inspecting the construction area, the Traditional Elders confirmed that no sacred sites or sites of cultural significance would be affected by the proposed airport extension.

Students from the Katherine School of the Air visited MRM in May as part of their annual Barkly Mini School program. The mini school program is for School of the Air students to meet and study with their teachers and class-mates.

The Barkly Mini School provides children living in isolated areas with a break from learning via the radio and internet by providing the opportunity for face-to-face learning and interaction.

Katherine School of the Air teacher Jessica Plummer coordinated the recent Barkly Mini School visit to Borroloola and said the experience at the mine was amazing.

‘Through the tour of the operations, we all gained valuable insight into the operations,’ said Ms Plummer.
Environment report

Water monitoring

Water monitoring has progressively reduced since April due to the end of the wet season. This wet season we experienced a below average rainfall – receiving a total of 595mm. Interestingly 530mm of this rain fell over the past three months!

The lower than average wet season has seen the creeks dry at an earlier stage, with no water flowing in Barney and Surprise Creeks since the start of April. The McArthur River continues to flow and sampling continues at the downstream and upstream sites.

The Environment Section has been very busy working on a variety of activities which includes:

- Conducting weed surveys and implementing a weed control program
- Completing the second bird survey and starting the third fish survey
- Capturing and releasing fish from the Barney Creek channel
- Collecting seeds for rehabilitation projects
- Implementing the Diffusive Gradients in Thin Film (DGT) monitoring system around Bing Bong loading facility.

DGTs are small filters that are placed in the marine environment (either anchored to the bed of the channel or swing basin, or secured to the beacons along the channel). Preliminary monitoring results of the DGT placement and analysis indicate that bioavailability levels of metals analysed well below Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) levels, which indicates if metals are at levels which will accumulate in organic matter.

Fish monitoring

During the wet season the excavated section of the Barney Creek Diversion filled with water allowing fish to swim into the area via flood water from McArthur River and Barney Creek. Before progressing work in this area, the water was drained and the fish were relocated to the McArthur River by MRM environment personnel who hold necessary fishing permits and followed appropriate regulations. All the species relocated were recorded and a monthly report is provided to the Fisheries Department for ongoing monitoring.

Site inspections

The Department of Primary Industries Fisheries and Mines conducts bimonthly visits to MRM to monitor the progress of the open pit project. Eileen McGovern, Team Leader Evaluations and Kee Hah, Senior Mining Engineer conducted a site visit in March and toured various locations including the Bing Bong loading facility.

The bimonthly inspections were introduced by MRM to ensure the Department is kept up to date with the progress of the civil project and the other operational aspects.

Environment Section news

The Environment Section is pleased to welcome Kelli Whitehurst, who has joined the team as an Environment Technician to assist with the increasing work associated with the open pit project.

The Environment Team had exciting news in April with Allan Dodrell (Bundy), Environment Technician and Cindy Morgan, Administration Assistant announcing their engagement.

The happy couple have already started preparing for their future together and recently purchased land in Borroloola to build a new home.

Congratulations to Bundy and Cindy from everyone at MRM!

The happy couple: Allan (Bundy) Dodrell and Cindy Morgan recently engaged
Open Pit Development Update

Work on the open pit development is progressing well. The program has benefited from the light wet season which meant far fewer than anticipated days were lost to wet weather.

Barney Creek rechannelling

Work on the new Barney Creek Channel is almost complete with approximately 250 metres of rechannelling remaining on the downstream end.

Approximately 1.3 million cubic metres of material has been excavated to date, with rock rehabilitation works currently underway and planting to follow.

Overburden Emplacement Facility

The OEF haul road is complete to subgrade level and construction of the new Barney Creek bridge will commence in June.

A portion of the OEF has been cleared and stripped in preparation for the development works.

McArthur River rechannelling

Clearing works are almost complete for the diversion while drilling and blasting continues the rechannelling process.

A rock crushing and screening plant has been set up adjacent to the diversion to convert the excavated rock into road base for the airport runway upgrade.

Excavated rock is also being transferred to Barney Creek to line the channel banks increasing stability for flood events.

Approximately 300,000 cubic metres of material has been excavated to date and has been used in a variety of infrastructure projects on site.

Main levee wall

The northern section of the temporary mine levee wall, from the mine to McArthur River is almost complete with rock protection currently underway.

The whole footprint of the levee is cleared and stripped except for the river crossings which will remain open until the diversion is complete.

Haul roads have been constructed adjacent to the levee for the full 7 kilometres and approximately 1 million cubic metres of non acid forming rock has been used to provide protection against erosion by flood waters.

Airport runway upgrade

Work has commenced on the new 2.5 kilometre runway which comprises constructing a new 1.4 kilometre section and upgrading the existing 1.1 kilometre runway.

The upgrade is to accommodate the new 70-seat Embraer E170 Regional Jet, which Airmorth has purchased to service Top End communities including the Darwin to McArthur River route.

The jet triples the seating capacity of current services and will commence operations later this year.

Open pit civil works progress

Work on Stage C of the open pit is currently underway with the removal of the Southern Bund allowing work on Stage D to commence shortly.

MRM moving ahead

Rechannelling work at MRM is being made possible by a state-of-the-art plough specifically designed for this key part of the open pit development.

An engineering company from Queensland’s Sunshine Coast built the plough which weighs about 32 tonnes and has a cutting width of 4.5m. The discs are more than 1.5m high and 25mm thick – twice the size of an average plough disk.

Hooper RJ and JM Pty Ltd has been producing heavy-duty machinery for five decades and was commissioned to design and construct the giant plough which is among or arguably the largest plough of its type in the world.

The plough arrived in May will be used in rechannelling a section of the McArthur River.
Cyclones Soccer Club news

MRM Sponsorship

MRM has launched a sponsorship arrangement for the Borroloola Cyclones Soccer Club to support all club teams over the next three years. The sponsorship will assist representative teams in travelling to participate in competitions held in Darwin or interstate.

The new partnership with the Cyclones Soccer Club goes beyond monetary support, by introducing initiatives aimed at encouraging players to attend school and be environmentally aware.

A new agreement has been established between the Borroloola Community Education Centre, Cyclones Soccer Club and MRM to encourage school attendance on a regular basis and specifying it as a condition for participation in the sponsored teams.

To encourage environmental awareness, the Cyclones Environment Conservation Group has been introduced as a new initiative encouraging all players to be actively involved in maintaining the Borroloola community. Players are involved in group activities designed to raise awareness of respecting and caring for the natural environment.

All Cyclone club members will also receive a new water bottle to use while training and competing in soccer matches.

Latest results

With assistance from the new sponsorship agreement, the Cyclones Soccer Club Men’s Open Team competed against the Arafura Representative team in Darwin over the Easter long weekend. The team narrowly lost against the Arafura Games Representative Team with the full time score 4-3.

Five minutes with Matt Guinane

What do you most enjoy about living in the Northern Territory?

The outdoor lifestyle that the territory offers.

What do you enjoy doing during your time away from the mine?

I enjoy spending time with my family, getting out on the water and motor sports.

What is your role at MRM?

At MRM I am a surveyor – My role provides accurate and timely surveying services to all departments at MRM in a safe, efficient and environmentally responsible manner.

How long have you worked at MRM?

I have worked at MRM for nearly 12 months, with four months as a contract surveyor.
Ewen Koch, Mine Site Supervisor for Northern Guards Security

Supplier update: Northern Guards Security

Who is Northern Guards Security?
Northern Guards Security is based in Darwin and has been providing 24 hour security services for MRM since November 2004. The company is responsible for the security at the gatehouse and miners’ camp as well as conducting patrols of the pipeline connecting the mine to the tailings dam.

Ewen Koch Mine Site Supervisor manages staffing, training and supervision of Northern Guards Security staff at MRM and has more than 35 years experience in the security business. Ewen is supported by his wife Betty Koch who manages the company office in Darwin.

What does the company do at MRM?
Since July 2006 the Northern Guards Security has provided x-ray and screening services at the new MRM airport. The company employs nine people specifically to service MRM. MRM is the core client and represents the majority of the company’s revenue.

What else does the company do?
In addition to the work at MRM, Northern Guards Security provides a variety of security services for stores in Darwin and Palmerston including banking and return change facilities.

Contact details:
Northern Guards Security
Phone: 08 8945 3320
Fax: 08 8945 6438
Mobile: 0418 812 038
Ewen: 0419 848 681 (when in service area)
Email: kochs2@tpg.com.au

ERT update

Over the past few months the Emergency Response Team (ERT) has been extremely busy expanding their management skills and team experience.

Team leaders and key ERT members attended an ‘Emergency Response and Preparedness’ course in Darwin run by the NSW Mines Rescue Service – the service that coordinated the rescue for the Beaconsfield mine collapse. The course provided the ERT with valuable training in emergency management and the opportunity to apply these strategies in simulated scenarios.

Four ERT members successfully completed an Industrial Paramedic course with St Johns Ambulance in April. The intensive course strengthened team members’ skills in handling first aid and medical emergencies. This is an ongoing course that will include training with the Northern Territory Ambulance Service.

The whole ERT has also completed training in first-aid, rope skills, haulage systems and vehicle extraction techniques.

Over the past three months, there has been a number of changes to the team. The ERT says farewell to Dan Callander, Todd Malthouse and Natasha Elphick and would like to thank them for their hard work during their time with the team.

The ERT would like to welcome new members Rylan Burt (Buddha), Jeff O’Brien, Luke Garthon, Samuel Fuller, Joshua Limbert, Bob Collins and Carlos Da Costa.

The Northern Territory Mine Rescue competition is fast approaching and the ERT have already started preparing for the event. The MRM team will be announced in the next couple of months.

Trevor Crean
Trevor has spent 25 years in the hospitality industry in his native ‘Land of the Long White Cloud’ and Australia. Minesite catering is a new challenge for Trevor who boasts an illustrious and distinguished career.

Don’t be fooled by his demeanour, he is a very approachable sorta character. So, if you see him around the kitchen or the bar and have anything you need help with, or just wanta chat, say ‘hello’.[PS He drinks mid strength, if you’re wondering (he told us to put that in).]

Brendan Saunders
Brendan is relatively new to our kitchen family. You would have seen him recently working the graveyard shift cooking your breakfast (he’s the shy little guy who’s always hiding behind the fridge). Brendan has been cooking for eight years now, having started his apprenticeship in a Toowoomba Chinese restaurant. He has recently worked for both Paspaley Pearls and Marrara Tavern.

As of early May, Brendan will be taking over as relief day shift chef.

He is a shy and quiet guy, but once you get him chatting he’s a right clown and character. Be sure to try and drag him over to the bar for a chat and a rum soon.

We would also like to share one of our favourite recipes highlighting current seasonal ingredients.

La Chumba – Malaysian salad

- 4 medium ripe diced tomatoes
- 4 diced spanish onions
- 1 or 2 sliced green chillies too taste
- ¼ cup of white wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp of white sugar
- 2 tbsp of salt

Combine fresh ingredients in a medium bowl, dissolve salt and sugar into vinegar and add to tomato mix. Allow to stand for at least 1 hour, preferably overnight.

Kitchen scribbles

Greetings from the McArthur River kitchen crew! This is the first of what is hoped to be a regular feature article written by and about your kitchen, its crew and their recipes. As a lot of our long-term regular diners would be aware, our kitchen has been undergoing some pretty major changes in staffing, menu, equipment and procedures over the last six to eight months. All-in-all these changes are expected to create a memorable and nutritious dining experience. We the kitchen crew are very excited about the direction we’re now headed in!

We’d like to introduce some of our familiar faces.

Trevor Crean and Brendan Saunders
Training simulator drives safe skills

A high-tech training tool has just arrived at MRM that will help improve the safety of heavy machinery operator training at MRM.

MRM is the first mine in the Territory to acquire a Heavy Machinery Simulator which gives trainee operators the look and feel of operating heavy machinery while in a safe, simulated environment.

MRM Community Relations Manager, Patrick Collins said the training tool had the potential to dramatically improve the performance of machinery operators.

“It will assist in reducing operating and maintenance costs for the machinery and support our local employment strategies,” Mr Collins said.

MRM’s change to open pit mining places greater emphasis on the use of heavy machinery such as dozers, haul trucks and excavators and with this comes a need for a different set of skills.

Mr Collins said the mine’s future training needed to include a major focus on the development of highly competent machinery operators.

“The simulator gives us the ability to safely train beginners and reassess experienced operators in a wide range of realistic situations and scenarios, including emergency procedures,” he said.

“For the operators, it is much safer to practice and learn from mistakes in a simulated environment than from the driver’s seat of a multi-million dollar piece of equipment where the margin for error is small.”

Mr Collins said the availability of the simulator on site was also important for attracting and retaining local recruits from the Borroloola region.

“We need to be able to provide local recruits with the expert training they need to develop meaningful careers in the mining industry,” he said.

“By having all the facilities to offer this training locally we can improve their skills and also prevent segregation from their community.”

The simulator resembles a large video game which can take trainees through different skill levels that need to be passed before moving on to training in the actual machinery.

It uses different consoles to simulate a range of machines and each console exactly replicates the controls and seating positions of the real machine. So far, MRM has purchased the consoles for five machines – the Caterpillar 777 and 785 Haul Truck, the Caterpillar D10 and D11 Dozer and the Hitachi 2500 Excavator.

Tailored training programs for each machine are now being developed including pictorial and survey data loaded into its programs to create a virtually real impression of MRM haul roads and open pit area of operation.

“The more realistic the simulation the more confident we can be that we are developing all operators to a high consistent level of skill to ensure good driving practice on site,” Mr Collins said.

The simulator will be utilised to facilitate the initial stage of machine training. Participants will then be enrolled into a conventional metalliferous training program for commencement of the machine training phase in the mining environment. Graduates of the Metalliferous Mining training programs will be certified with nationally accredited licences, which will in turn open doors to career opportunities across the Australian mining industry.

The show is coming

The Annual Borroloola Show and Rodeo is fast approaching, make sure your diary is free on the weekend commencing Saturday 18 August.

This year, as part of the Annual Borroloola Show, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra will be performing on Saturday 18 August. The performance is sponsored by MRM and Airnorth and will be held at the Borroloola Council Chambers.