

## Press release

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### **Coal miners learn more about Aboriginal culture**

**Tuesday 16 June 2009**

The walk to work for employees at a Queensland coal mine is now an opportunity to learn more about Indigenous culture, due to the establishment of a walking trail showcasing items of cultural significance to local Aboriginal people.

Rio Tinto Coal Australia's Hail Creek Mine worked with local Traditional Owners, the Wiri Yuwiburra people, to establish a walking track that runs from the site's employee accommodation village to the mine.

The track features items of cultural significance such as scar trees and signage explaining the significance of native vegetation.

Hail Creek Mine General Manager Operations, Andrew Woodley, said the walking track is an enduring symbol of the mine's relationship with the Wiri Yuwiburra people who are the Traditional Owners of the land upon which Hail Creek Mine operates.

"Rio Tinto Coal Australia recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage, and in particular the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people who have traditional ownership of, or historical connections to, the land on which we operate," Mr Woodley said.

"That is why we asked the Wiri Yuwiburra to help us develop interpretive signage for the walking track at Hail Creek Mine.

"We want to encourage our employees to learn more about the cultural heritage found in this region and help them develop a greater appreciation of Wiri Yuwiburra culture.

"We believe by taking this proactive approach, we are building constructive relationships with the Wiri Yuwiburra and further developing our employees understanding of cultural values found on the land where they work."

Two scar trees, which are trees that have been scarred by Aboriginal people through deliberate removal of bark or wood, are located on the walking track.

Scar trees are of great significance to Wiri Yuwiburra as traditionally they would remove bark from the trees to get bush honey, or to use for shelter materials, containers and other tools.

"The scar trees were relocated from the mine site using a method developed with the Wiri Yuwiburra cultural heritage committee," Mr Woodley said.

"We also worked in partnership with the committee to develop signage for the trees, which explains how and why the trees were scarred."

The opening of the walking track follows the mine's recent extension of the Wiri Yuwiburra Traineeship programme, aimed at boosting employment opportunities for the Wiri people, and launch of the Wiri Yuwiburra Aboriginal Community Benefits Trust which supports projects that work towards providing Wiri Yuwiburra people with opportunities in business development, education and training initiatives or community development.

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**Media Enquiries:**

Eleanor Nichols 07 3361 4347/ 0439 098 990