



## Funding secured from Commonwealth

The GLSC has successfully negotiated funding from the Federal Government for a comprehensive program of activities for the 2006-07 financial year.

There'll be an increased number of native title claims taken to the Federal Court, and a Government commitment was also secured for further work in the Wongatha native title case, in the almost certain event that appeals will follow. The Court recently advised a further delay in its decision on Wongatha, which is now expected sometime after September.

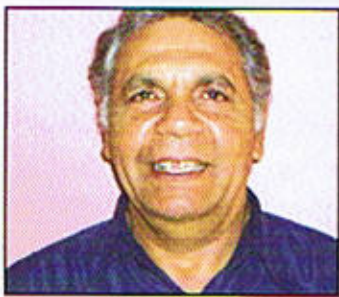
Executive Director Brian Wyatt said he was pleased with the budget outcome. "It was good to have the GLSC's high standard of management and

commitment to good service and quality outcomes given solid acknowledgement by the Federal Government," he said.

The GLSC plans to place added emphasis on heritage protection in the year ahead and will be recruiting an extra anthropologist and a future acts officer.

A major funding issue was rising fuel prices. Extra money was provided to cover this, alongside plans to rationalise the vehicle fleet.

Another significant issue on the horizon is changes to the WA Mining Act, expected to trigger the release of many back-logged Section 29 tenement applications. This will require a lot more consultation with claimants and more heritage assessments.



Trevor Donaldson

### Welcome Trevor

Trevor Donaldson joined the GLSC in May as our new Operations Manager. Based in Kalgoorlie, he's providing senior management support for the effective running of field activities throughout the Goldfields,

including liaison by our Project Officers with claim groups.

Trevor has wide experience in both the government and private sectors, including running his own business. He was recruited from Coolgardie where he was working with Hampton Transport Services.

## Native title – busy year ahead

The GLSC's native title activities are going to increase significantly in the 2006/07 financial year, mostly because of the desire of the Federal Court to get as many claims resolved by mediation as possible. Negotiated settlement of claims is something the GLSC wholeheartedly supports. The Court has endorsed mediation timetables for all claims represented by the GLSC.

Major activities with claims for the year ahead include:

- Wongatha – dealing with the decision (expected late this year), including any appeals and establishment of prescribed bodies corporate.
- Northwest Cluster of claims (Sir Samuel, Koara, Tjupan, Wutha, Ngalia Kutjungkatja) – mediation of claim overlaps and reconfiguration of claims, and securing their registration, as required.

- Mantjintjarra Ngalia – lodgement and registration of a new, un-overlapped claim followed by further connection research.
- Esperance Nyungar – preparation of an additional connection report and resolution of overlaps and mediation with other respondents. Securing joint management of the extensive conservation lands in the claim area.
- Central West, Gubrun and overlapping claims – mediation to resolve numerous overlaps and objections from non-indigenous respondents. Further preservation evidence.
- Central East and Nullarbor – preparation of a regional connection report; preservation evidence.
- Mirning – preparation of a comprehensive connection report, together with the gathering of evidence from elderly people (preservation evidence).
- Ngadju – mediation with the State and overlapping claim groups, and further connection research.

## Government policy

The GLSC is very concerned about the direction of government policy with respect to indigenous affairs, both nationally and in WA.

At the federal level, the disbandment of ATSIC stripped regional areas of elected representation in Canberra's policy making. Into the vacuum the Federal Government has pushed things like 'mutual obligation agreements', which, as predicted, are now proving to be a failure. The confusion that resulted led to widespread calls for the closing down of many remote communities, including some in the Goldfields.

### A stronger voice

The GLSC has led the charge in opposing the disruptions to communities. We instigated the formation of the National Native Title Council, which strongly represents Aboriginal people on a range of issues and coordinates their interests nationally.

In WA, we marshalled the leaders from major Aboriginal organisations and remote communities to form the WA

Aboriginal Leaders Group, which is negotiating with the State Government ways for gaining more input into indigenous policy development and for improving the standard of services to remote communities.

### Review of Native Title Act

The Federal Government is in the midst of a review of some parts of the Native Title Act. One aspect of the review is looking at how native title representative bodies in general might operate better. It is not looking at individual NTRBs, and even if it was the GLSC would be on safe ground, as the recent funding allocations to us from Canberra have confirmed (see story page 1).

Unfortunately, the early signs are that the review is headed toward making it even more difficult for Aboriginal people to achieve land justice. Again, the GLSC has been very active – we have made submissions through the National Native Title Council, and have had discussions with the Minerals Council of Australia to give them a better understanding of how existing native title processes can be made to work better.

The GLSC will be undertaking a large number of other native title-related activities relevant to all claim groups, including: protecting their interests with future act applications; and negotiating, implementing and monitoring numerous agreements on their behalf (heritage agreements and others).

There will also be increased effort with monitoring and ensuring compliance by mining and exploration companies with Heritage Agreements struck with claimants as part of the companies receiving prompt approval of tenement applications. A steady growth in future acts work is expected as a result of new mineral exploration tenement applications.

## Access to land

The GLSC's Land Unit has been reorganised to enable it to be more active and responsive to the increasing need for ownership and access to land by Aboriginal people. Native title has been a disappointment in this regard, so we're now stepping up efforts to secure access through other means.

Phil Drayson now heads the Land Unit, which is pursuing many options, including joint management of conservation lands (CALM reserves etc), transfer of ownership and management of ALT lands and other reserve lands ('lost lands'), and negotiating access agreements with pastoralists and miners.



Land Unit Coordinator Phil Drayson

## STOLEN WAGES

The Australian Senate is currently holding an inquiry into 'stolen wages' – things like wages for pastoral workers and child endowments and pensions that might have been withheld from Aboriginal people by station owners or missions. The inquiry is also looking into the issues of

physical, sexual and employment abuses of indigenous workers.

The GLSC is preparing a submission to the inquiry. If you or your family were affected, or if you have information that you think would be relevant, please call the GLSC in Kalgoorlie (9091 1661) to register your interest.