Survey of Indigenous employees at Century Mine: Completion of mining and implications for Gulf communities

Research paper no. 7

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May 2007
Acknowledgements

This report is the outcome of a research project jointly funded by the Queensland Government (Department of State Development and Innovation) and Zinifex Century Mine.

The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining would like to thank all the employees of Zinifex Century Mine who voluntarily participated in this research. Particular thanks go to Community Development Facilitator, Patrick Wheeler and Mine Operator, Louise Busch for their support and valued contribution to the project.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents a study of local Indigenous employees at the Zinifex Century Mining operation in the Gulf of Carpentaria, northwest Queensland. The project was a joint initiative between Century’s Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA) Support Department, and The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM). Funding for the study was provided by Zinifex and the Queensland Department of State Development and Innovation.

Objectives

The key objective of the project was to identify how employment at Century mine has impacted on local Indigenous employees and their communities, with a central aim being to identify opportunities for Century to leave a positive legacy post closure.

This research is part of a broader study jointly funded by the Queensland Government (Department of State Development and Innovation) and Zinifex Century Mine, which aims to assess Century Mine’s economic and social contribution to Gulf communities, identify potential impacts on the region after mine closure, and identify opportunities for Century Mine to contribute to sustainable development of the Gulf region.

Overview of Research Methods

Primary Research
Quantitative surveys and semi-structured interviews were the primary research methods used in the study. The survey was distributed to approximately 140 GCA employees working at Century mine, including direct company employees and contractors. A total of 89 responses were received, representing a 64% response rate. Fifty-four GCA employees were interviewed; either individually or within small groups.

Secondary Research
This project included a desktop literature review of both academic and industry publications addressing Indigenous employment and mine closure.

Main Findings

Experience of working at Century

The majority of employees surveyed had positive work experiences at Century:

- Respondents stressed the social aspects of working at Century, highlighting learning new skills and meeting people as a positive job attribute
- The financial benefits of working, and the positive example this serves for children and others in the community, were cited as additional benefits
- Most felt generally supported by their community
• Most stated that there was considerable informal support and mentorship provided by fellow employees but noted a need for a more formal Indigenous support position

• The majority said that working at the mine would help them in the future.

However, some aspects of working at Century attracted criticism. There was a general perception that there is:

• A lack of training opportunities for GCA employees, and the training pathways on offer are not particularly relevant to local contexts

• Poor communication between GCA employees and Century management, and between the mine and Gulf communities

• A lack of respect for cultural issues by mine management.

**Impacts of Employment on employees and communities**

According to those surveyed, working at the mine has had a significant impact on many GCA employees and their families but not on Gulf communities generally. Employment has enhanced mobility and can have either a positive or negative impact on health:

• The financial impact of working at Century has benefited workers and their families in the short term but there is no evidence of long term financial security

• Employment at Century appears to have facilitated movement of GCA employees within and out of the Gulf

• The health of employees is either improved or worsened, depending on individual choice

• Most thought there had been little change to Gulf communities since the mine began, noting employment impacted on individual workers and their families, but there was only a marginal ‘trickle down’ affect on communities

**Impacts of Closure**

While the majority of respondents stated that the mine had only a limited impact on Gulf communities, there were differing opinions about the impact of closure:

• Many thought mine closure would have a negative impact on direct employees, but there were mixed responses on how closure would affect Gulf communities more generally.
Respondents thought closure would primarily affect ‘lifestyle’ – an inability to support children’s education, increase in family debt, less employment opportunities and a decrease in mobility.

Future Plans

- There is little interest in returning to CDEP\(^1\) work and a preference for full time work in the future, with many wishing to remain in the mining industry.
- Seventy-seven percent of respondents stated that working at Century would help them in the future.

Key Recommendations

Key recommendations made in this report are summarised below.

*Leaving a positive legacy post closure*

1. **Identify opportunities to increase training**
   Around half of respondents stated that they had not received any training since starting work at Century and nearly all respondents (93%) said they would like some form of training. If more training opportunities were developed GCA job satisfaction may improve and positively influence workforce retention.

2. **Investigate opportunities for community and Indigenous specific training**
   A number of interview participants felt that available training choices were too mainstream and narrow in focus (primarily mining related). There was a desire for training that was more tailored to Indigenous and rural needs, such as trades (electricians and plumbers) and operating road-maintenance machinery.

3. **Introduce Life skills Training**
   The financial benefits associated with working at Century are arguably the most direct and tangible benefit to GCA employees, however there was little evidence of managing these finances for longer term security.

*Workforce Issues*

The following recommendations relate to improving workforce issues that in turn could improve retention and influence the legacy post closure:

1. **Identify and support Mentor position for all new recruits and trainees**
   Interview participants stated that informal mentoring amongst GCA employees was common practice and an essential attribute of working at the mine that positively contributes to both job satisfaction and performance.

2. **Implement better systems for recording and analysing HR and training data**
   There remains a shortage of up to date employment and training data on site. Collecting and tracking data for Indigenous people and training and employment will enable Century to monitor and report progress over time.

\(^{1}\) The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program is an Australian Government funded initiative for unemployed Indigenous people outside of major urban and regional centres.
3. Investigate opportunities to increase cultural awareness training
During the period that the current research was undertaken, there were a large number of people working at the mine who had not yet undertaken the cultural awareness training. Some participants felt that this illustrated that the mine was not really serious about or value Indigenous issues.

4. Ensure consistency across operation
Amongst numerous GCA employees there was considerable variation in job satisfaction and training opportunities across different operational areas. Perceived inequity in relation to pay structure rates and rosters across various operational/contractor areas, combined with a dearth of training opportunities in some contexts, negatively impinges on some GCA employees level of job satisfaction and therefore may influence retention.

5. Review Health Education session on site
The majority of respondents had never attended any health education sessions since working at Century, (76%) Addressing health education on site can not only improve the well being of employees but it can contribute to retention.

6. Follow up on respondents’ suggestions
Respondents made several suggestions about how Century could improve workforce issues and/or ensure Century leaves a positive legacy to the Gulf region. Although some of these may not be practical, this is valuable data.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABDT  Aboriginal Business Development Trust
CDEP  Community Development Employment Projects
CSRM  Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining
FIFO  Fly in Fly out
GCA  Gulf Communities Agreement
ICMM  International Council on Mining and Metals
SPSS  Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
ZCM  Zinifex Century Mine

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GCA employees
For the purposes of this report the term ‘GCA employee’ refers to all those employees identified as having local Indigenous status in the GCA databases, as of February 2007. The term ‘local Aboriginal’ encompasses members of GCA Native Title Groups (regardless of whether they live locally) and other Aboriginal people who have lived in the Gulf communities for five years or more.

1. Respondents
Respondents are people who completed the survey.

2. Interview Participants
Interview participants are people who were interviewed (individually or as part of a group) and who also completed the survey.

Survey
A survey is a set of structured questions used to collect information from a number of people. It can include both closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions ask respondents to select their answer from a pre-determined set of answers. Open-ended questions ask respondents to provide their own answers.

The Gulf
For the purpose of this report, ‘the Gulf’ refers to the communities surrounding the Zinifex Century mining operation in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland. It includes Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Normanton, Karumba, Burketown and Bidunggu.
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to assess how employment at Century Mine has impacted on local Indigenous employees and their communities and to identify opportunities for Century to leave a positive legacy post closure. This research is part of a broader study jointly funded by the Queensland Government (Department of State Development and Innovation) and Zinifex Century Mine. The aim of the broader study is to assess Century Mine’s economic and social contribution to Gulf communities to date, identify potential impacts for the region on closure and highlight further opportunities for Century to contribute to sustainable development in the Gulf region.

The mining industry has recently made a commitment to sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. Principle 9 of the International Council on Mining and Metals’ (ICMM) Sustainable Development Principles states that member companies such as Zinifex will ‘contribute to the social, economic and institutional development of the communities in which we operate’ (ICMM 2003). The Minerals Council of Australia developed its Enduring Value Framework to build on these commitments. In relation to principle 9 above, the MCA require that signatory companies contribute to community development from project development through to closure in collaboration with host communities and their representatives; encourage partnerships with governments and non-government organizations to ensure that programs (such as health, education and local business development) are well designed and effectively delivered; and enhance social and economic development by seeking opportunities to address poverty (MCA 2004).

In addition to being a signatory to the MCA’s Enduring Value, Zinifex Century is also committed to the Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA). The provision of Indigenous employment and training opportunities are the foundation of the Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA), which constitutes an accord made between Zinifex Century Mine, the Queensland Government and four Native Title groups - the Waanyi, Mingginda, Gkuthaarn and Kukatj.

Zinifex Century Mine (ZCM) is a fly in fly out (FIFO), large open-cut zinc, lead and silver mining operation located in the Gulf of Carpentaria region, northwest Queensland. Century mine employs a higher proportion of local Indigenous people than do most other remote area mines in Australia (Barker and Brereton 2004). Indigenous employees currently account for approximately 16% of the total workforce.

There is a general assumption that Indigenous people will benefit from increased employment in the mining industry. However, to date, little research has been undertaken to understand the extent, and ways in which, Indigenous people are affected by mining employment. Given the increasing focus in the minerals industry on sustainable development, this research contributes to the broader issues of how Indigenous people can derive a long term benefit from large-scale resource projects.

Structure of the report

This report is set out in three sections, the first section provides an overview of the research methodology and the profile of research participants. The second section presents the findings of the study and the third section summarises and discusses the main findings and provides recommendations where appropriate.
METHODOLOGY

Overview
In addition to desktop research, the study involved the collection of primary data at Zinifex Century Mine in Northwest Queensland. Multiple research methods were used, comprising a quantitative survey (Appendix 1), semi-structured one on one interview’s and group interviews.

Survey
The survey was administered to approximately 140 GCA employees at Century Mine, including direct company employees and contractors. A total of 89 responses were received from GCA employees, representing a 64% response rate.

Interviews
A CSRM research team comprising one male and one female visited Century Mine for eight days to undertake interviews with both male and female GCA employees. In all, 54 GCA direct company or contractor employees across all work roles participated. Of these, 39 were one on one interviews. The remaining 15 participated in 3 group interviews consisting of 2, 5 and 8 participants. All interviewees also completed the survey.

Generalising conclusions
Recognition of diversity amongst GCA employees, Native Title Groups and communities is essential. Just as there is no generalized Indigenous culture there is also no single, homogenous Indigenous development vision (see Martin et al.2002). Factors to be considered in identifying implications of mine closure on individual employees and Gulf communities include: cultural variation amongst Native Title Groups; demographic, social and geographic differences between townships; and, individual attitudinal and preferential variation (which may or may not be observably linked with gender, age, life-experience etc). Any generalised conclusions must take these variations into consideration.

Methods
The following section outlines the approaches for the three research methods used in this study: the GCA employee survey; GCA employee one on one and group interviews, and; the collection and analysis of socio-economic data.

Survey
Design
The survey instrument consisted mostly of closed - but including some - open-ended questions. Closed questions ask respondents to select from a pre-determined set of answers, while open-ended questions allow respondents to provide their own answers. The draft survey was trialled by a GCA support staff member, and feedback was sought from The University of Queensland’s Ethics Committee and both funding representatives.

The survey was designed to ascertain information from GCA employees about:
- demographic profile and employment arrangements
- experiences of working at Century Mine
- how working at Century Mine has impacted on them and their families
how their community/town has or has not changed since Century began
• their plans when they stop working for Century
• predictions of how closure might impact on them personally and on their communities

Distribution
The survey was distributed by an Indigenous GCA support staff member and a mine operator. CSRM distributed a small number of additional surveys on site as required. Completed surveys were returned to CSRM by reply paid envelopes, which were available to all respondents.

Analysis
Closed responses were entered into SPSS to obtain basic frequencies, compare responses between groups and explore relationships between different variables. All analysis conducted for the employee survey used a significance level of p<.05. Open ended responses were entered into NVIVO\(^2\) and grouped according to themes.

Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a cross section of GCA employees. These interviews were pre-arranged in consultation with GCA support staff.

Sampling targeted GCA employees currently living in local communities, a broad cross-section of job roles and types and inclusive representation across geographic locales and Native Title Groups. Females were targeted for around one third representation of the sample, to align with current GCA female representation at Century (28%).

In most cases, participants were interviewed by a same sex researcher. This methodology was presented as an option to Indigenous participants for cultural reasons. In other cases one researcher led the interview and the other researcher recorded notes.

Researchers recorded detailed notes for each interview and subsequently grouped responses according to coded themes in NVIVO.

Ethical Considerations
This project incorporated the ethical issues of informed consent, cultural considerations, confidentiality and participant feedback.

Informed consent
All GCA employees were invited to participate voluntarily. Project information sheets (Appendix 2) were given out to all participants and informed consent was gained before recording any data.

Cultural considerations
One male and one female Indigenous employee of Zinifex Century were involved in coordinating the interviews and distributing the survey.

\(^2\) A Qualitative Data Analysis Software Package
Confidentiality
All participants were given a code and names were not recorded either in the researcher’s notes or in the final report. Any information that is potentially identifiable is kept securely at The University of Queensland.

Participant feedback
All participants will receive summary feedback via mail or email.

Limitations of the research
There were some methodological limitations which emerged through this research that need to be considered when interpreting results. It is possible that, as most of the data analysis and coding was undertaken by non-Indigenous people, some responses were misinterpreted. This issue was addressed by involving local Indigenous employees in the design, administration and interpretation of data.

SAMPLE GROUP
This section of the report describes the profile of survey respondents and interview participants. The reported percentages in this section provide ‘valid’ percentages rather than ‘actual’ percentages (thereby excluding missing or non-applicable data).

Profile of Survey Respondents
A total of 89 GCA Indigenous employees completed the survey, representing a response rate of 64%. Of those approached to participate, females accounted for 35% of respondents, which is slightly over representative of the current percentage of Indigenous employees at ZCM who are female (28%).

Most respondents (69%) were aged between 25 and 44 (Figure 1).

![Figure 1 Respondents Age](image)

Fifty-seven percent of respondents were married or partnered, 36% were single and 7% separated or divorced. Seventy percent of respondents had children. Of these, 77% had children who are school aged (Figure 2).
Of the respondents with school aged children, 49% reported that their children attended local schools, 33% attended schools outside the Gulf, and 18% attended both.

Forty-six percent of respondents identified as belonging to the Waanyi Native Title group (Figure 3), which is representative of the total percentage of Waanyi employees at Century (approximately 43%) at the time of survey.

Respondents live in various communities throughout the Gulf (Figure 4), with the most common being Normanton (25%), Doomadgee (22%) and Townsville (20%). There were significantly more male respondents from Mornington Island than female (11 Male/1 Female).
Survey respondents worked across various roles and operational areas. Half the survey respondents (50%) worked as operators. This is over representative of the current percentage of GCA truck drivers and plant operators (approximately 40%) and is likely due to an Indigenous mine operator assisting with distributing the survey.

Forty-one per cent of respondents had worked at Century for over two years, while 24% had worked for Century for 6 months or less. Thirty-seven percent of respondents had worked at Century previously. These data are shown in more detail in the results section of this report.

**Profile of interview participants**

A total of 54 Indigenous GCA employees participated in individual or group interviews, in addition to completing the survey. The interviewee profile is largely reflective of the larger group that completed the survey.
RESULTS

Employment

Education and Work History
The majority (84%) of respondents had completed Year 10 or above (Figure 5). Only six respondents had completed a level above Year 12. Female respondents were significantly more likely to have completed a higher level of education than males.

![Figure 5 Highest Level of Education](image)

The majority of respondents attended school outside the Gulf (74%). The 26% who attended school within the Gulf went to Normanton (16%), Doomadgee (8%) and Mornington Island (2%).

Forty-six percent of respondents were working in either a full time or part time/seasonal position prior to working at Century, and 47% were working for CDEP (Figure 6). This suggests that a substantial amount of participants had previous exposure to the mainstream labour market.
Respondents who worked prior to Century worked in various occupations (Figure 7). Only three respondents had previously worked in the mining industry. Both men and women were typically working in traditional gendered roles. No females had previously worked in mining.

‘Female’ roles are those work roles usually associated with women, including administration, catering/cleaning and professional support roles such as HR, public relations, community relations. Roles usually associated with men are mine engineers, metallurgists and operational roles, such as truck driving.
Current Employment
Survey respondents worked across various roles and operational areas. Half of the survey respondents (50%) worked as truck drivers or operators (Figure 8). This is over representative of the current GCA total truck or plant operators (40%). Thirty-three percent of operators were female which could suggest a slight change from previous traditionally gendered roles.

Forty-one percent of respondents had worked at Century for more than 2 years and 24% for 6 months or less (Figure 9). Thirty-seven percent of respondents had worked at Century previously. Based on data published in 2004, 20% of Indigenous employees had had a previous stint of employment at the mine (Barker and Brereton 2004). This may represent an over representation in the sample, an increase in cyclical employment, or both.
Most respondents (81%) had three or more relatives working at Century Mine. Only 10% of respondents reported having no relatives working at the mine (Figure 10).

**Future Plans**

The majority of respondents (57%) said they would like to stay working at Century ‘as long as the mine is here’ (Figure 11).
Just over half of all respondents (52%) indicated they planned to work in the mining industry post Century (Figure 12). Of these forty-six respondents planning to remain in the mining industry, 28 were male and 19 were female.

Forty-four percent of respondents planned to find other work such as childcare, labouring, clerical, sales and service workers. Only two respondents planned to work for CDEP and only one planned to stop work altogether. The majority of respondent’s (92%) intent on working post Century said they would prefer full time positions.
Experience of employment

Likes and Dislikes

Interview participants said they most enjoyed the social aspects of working at Century and learning new skills:

“Chance to further knowledge, meet new people, there’s something new to learn everyday”

“Different people you meet, learning different things”

“Close to home, good people to work with, meet lots of people from other Gulf communities”

“got me to be confident in myself, learning more”

“working at Century mine has really settled me down, if I wasn’t here I most probably [would] be in jail”

In addition, interview participants spoke about the financial benefits of working at the mine and the positive impact that employment has in terms of providing a good role-model to their children and others in the community.

An often quoted downside of working at the mine was being away from family:

“less time with kids, but showing kids that there are other things out there”

“The lifestyle at home is better, the missus and kids are happier” “It makes a good example for the younger kids, shows them what’s possible”

“Have more things, but lifestyle not better as you have to be away from family”

“The worst things about working at the mine is being away from family, and only seeing the kids every second weekend”

“The worst thing about the mine is being away from family, not being able to go hunting and fishing”

“the long hours, being away from everything, being away so long”

Some participants also noted that being away from family can create complications in terms of personal relationships, such as fuelling jealousy and providing opportunities for infidelity.
Support

External
Interview participants thought the community was generally supportive of their employment at Century, although a few people noted examples of “getting a hard time” from individuals in their community. Examples include accusations against employees that they thought they were ‘better than them now’, and the presumption by some in the communities that they were now ‘rich’. One employee said that the recent Zinc spill in the Gulf had resulted in an Elder accusing him of being partially responsible because he worked for Century.

Internal
Interview participants noted there were successful informal mentorship across all operational areas from fellow Indigenous workers, but perceived a need for a more formally identified position within HR and the GCA.

“get people from community that are not used to the environment here...hey ...need someone to help people get through...who they can relate to...”

“No support mechanisms in place...they’re uneducated, need to work out where they are now... and usually put at a higher level...expect too much of them”

“No people in HR....need to think [is the HR] person approachable from an Indigenous perspective”

“They need a GCA person at the go-line [in the pit] that people can talk to. People have problems at home and work and don’t know how or who to talk to”

“No one to support them, GCA only see ‘em when somebody gets sacked”

Communication

Interview participants generally felt that they were kept out of the loop about many GCA matters:

“People generally don’t know what’s happening”

“we’re mushrooms”

“No one understands how ADBT4 works”

The ‘Wunma’5 incident was mentioned several times as an example of the perceived lack of effective communication extant between Century and Indigenous communities in the Gulf:

4 Aboriginal Development Benefits Trust
5 On February 7 2007, the 5000 tonne ore barge Wunma was disabled after taking on water during tropical cyclone Nelson. The crew had to be rescued by helicopter, and the ship was later towed safely into the Port of Weipa. The incident was being investigated at the time of this report.
“People shouldn’t have to hear it on the news”

It was suggested that Century need to intensify their engagement with Gulf communities generally, including more visits by management personal.

There were suggestions for an internal “...GCA newsletter or something” to regularly inform GCA employees about current issues.

Participants noted that there was a general lack of willingness from GCA employees across all operational areas to approach supervisors and request training (see also Training section p. 29), or complain about unfair treatment:

“They’re [GCA employees] just waiting for someone to walk up to the them ... when I got a chance it was no looking back eh...”

“There is a lack of willingness to complain...don’t see the point”

“Many people from the communities don’t have the confidence to talk to non-Indigenous people”

“Not many people got to see supervisor or managers about problem”

Interview participants thought there was a general lack of people management skills from many supervisors:

“No awareness about how to talk to people”

“To get ...productive fruit......ya don’t trim the roots, ya don’t cut at the bottom, ya prune the top”

“Military style mentality for dealing with people”

**Cultural issues**

Several informants specifically raised ‘cultural issues’ as a significant concern that impacts upon their employment experience. The main issues raised were: (1) Cultural Awareness Training; (2) Ochre (Hematite), and; (3) ‘Sorry-business’.

There were concerns by some participants that a general lack of cultural understanding existed amongst many supervisors, and that cross-cultural communication between company, communities and Indigenous workers - especially around cultural issues - was ineffective. Several participants stated that they thought that senior level management deliberately held back sensitive cultural information so it didn’t negatively impact on production, and that there was a basic “…lack of common courtesy” and informed awareness of Indigenous cultural issues generally.

During the period that this research was undertaken, the mines ‘cultural site monitors’ had “walked off the job” over an incident relating to cultural issues, with two participants stating that management had not taken the concerns of some Indigenous employees seriously.
1. Cultural Awareness Training

Several interview participants felt that the companies’ Cultural Awareness Training was not valued by non-Indigenous workers (including management):

“Cultural Awareness Inductions are tokenistic”

“Everyone should do it like they have to do everything else [other inductions] before they can go on site. It’s just respect”

During the period that the current research was undertaken, there were a large number of people working at the mine who had not yet undertaken the cultural awareness training. As workers are not allowed on site without participating in other ‘inductions’, such as health and safety training - some participants felt that this illustrated that the mine were not really serious about Indigenous issues.

2. Ochre (Hematite)

Hematite is found throughout the Century Mine lease site, and is of significant cultural importance. In Indigenous Australian contexts ochre pigments were/are used in a variety of ways, including body decoration, artefact and cave painting and festive, ceremonial and other ritual purposes. Amongst some of the Native Title Groups working at Century, red ochre is specifically the domain of men (important in male ceremonial contexts) and it is considered offensive and dangerous for women to touch, or be in close contact with, hematite.

Several informants stated that while Century were aware of the cultural sanctions surrounding hematite and made an effort to make sure that women truck operators, for instance, were not involved in transporting ochre deposits, proper protocols were not always followed. According to negotiated agreements, ochre should be dumped and covered in a particular fashion. However, during the research period we observed a large tract of uncovered ochre, and this was raised (unprompted) as an example of cultural disrespect by several informants.

“Been pushin’ hematite for two to three months now, and there are no monitors keeping an eye on it...[Can’t protest] ...as they make you sign a piece of paper so you can’t say anything or you’ll get the sack”

“Past supervisors would say that hematite was not hematite [clay or something]) just to get more trucks in”

“This site is disrespectful in the way they treat Gulf people. They are disrespectful in the way they treat our culture and laws. In the old day we would speared them in da leg”

3. ‘Sorry-business’ (Funerals)

The issue of ‘sorry business’ was raised on numerous occasions; both in a positive and negative light in terms of employer support. Several participants stated that management did not understand how Indigenous culture works, and don’t always

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6 ‘Sorry business’ broadly refers to numerous Indigenous sanctions and practices associated with mourning that take place when a person dies.
appreciate the pressures and importance of attending funerals – even of ‘distant’ relatives:

“Mine doesn’t realise how our culture works........your cousins are ya brother and sister”

“it’s disrespectful for community member not to go regardless of relationship....some where down the track [we are all] related”

‘Shame job when go back to community because didn’t go to funeral”

“Someone’s granddaughter died, and they wouldn’t let them go because [the mine was] short staffed”

"People have walked off job because it’s a "shame job” not to turn up for “sorry business”"

While the above comments are all critical, there were also participants who stated that the mine were generally supportive of leave to attend funerals, and that the system was being abused by some people. Several informants said that on occasion people claimed that they needed to go to a funeral, but after receiving leave went home without attending the funeral. Some people also commented that the mine was very supportive of leave, and that the transport supplied by the mine for people to attend funerals was welcome and illustrative of the companies support.

**Impacts of Employment**

**Future**

Respondents were asked if working at Century would help them in the future. Most (77%) of respondents said ‘yes’, with 22% ‘unsure’ and only one respondent answering ‘no’ (Table 1).

**Table 1 Will working at Century Help Employees in the Future**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Financial**

Not including their children, the majority (62%) of respondents supported at least one other relative or family member (other than their children) ‘on a regular basis’ (Figure 13). Many interview participants commented that they occasionally support up to 10 relatives or family members.
The majority (82%) of respondents had purchased at least one asset since working at Century (Figure 14). Most respondents had purchased cars (63%), followed by whitegoods (47%) and furniture (23%). Only 8% of respondents had purchased a house. Those who had moved were significantly more likely to have purchased a house. Only two employees from Gulf communities (one from Doomadgee and one from Normanton) had purchased a house, both in Townsville. Respondents who had worked prior to Century were significantly more likely to have purchased a car.
Groceries

Just over half of respondents (54%) estimated that they spent between $101 and $300 each week on groceries (Figure 15). Thirty per cent of respondents spent over $300 each week. Males spent more than female respondents on groceries.

![Amount spent on groceries per week](image)

Figure 15 Amount Spent on Groceries Per Week

Flights

The majority (79%) of respondents said they did not personally pay for any flights in or out of their community. Seventeen percent said ‘less than 5’ and 3.4% said more than 10.

Managing Money

Interview participants reported problems with managing money and debt:

“A lot of black fellas can’t handle that money...not brought up like that, money still doesn’t mean anything”

“we all tend to blow our money”

“the money is good but also puts you in debt”

“The more money you make the more you put yourself in debt”

Money management was cited by some respondents as an area of potential capacity training that would benefit some employees. A wage payment system that could automatically transfer money to a nominated savings account (on request) was mentioned as a potential innovation that could assist people in money matters.
Familial and community pressure to share finances were raised by some employees:

“if you go and work it’s not all your money, it’s [also] there’s”

“Have to pretend you’re broke sometimes, have to harden up, took me a lot of years to get over that”

While an issue for some, many other employees did not cite ‘reciprocal obligation’ as a major issue. Some respondents noted that when approached for financial assistance they simply stressed that the money earned from working at the mine was for their immediate families use and their children’s future. Several interviewees noted that moving out of the Gulf was not only beneficial in terms of children’s education (see Mobility below), but also provided relief from such demands.

**Mobility**

Thirty-five percent of respondents had moved residence since starting work at Century. Of those who had moved, the main destinations were Townsville (51.2%), Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Mount Isa and Cairns (all 9.7%). Around half (49%) of the respondents who had relocated moved out of the Gulf area (Figure 16). Of these, 8 were unsure if they would return, 5 said they would return and 2 stated that they would stay out of the Gulf.

![Figure 16 Respondents Who Had Moved Since Working at Century](image)

It must be noted that the survey results are likely to under-represent the extent of mobility, as the surveys only provide a snapshot of two points in time. The survey did not capture continuous movement or short stays elsewhere.

Respondents who had moved since starting work at Century cited problems in their community, their children’s education and better health services as the most common reasons for leaving (Figure 17).
Reasons for moving since starting work at Century

- Easier to access Century
- Family ties
- Better community services and facilities
- Better housing
- More economic opportunities
- Better access to health services
- Children’s Education
- To get away from problems at where I was living
- Other

*multiple responses permitted

**Figure 17 Reasons for Moving Since Starting Work at Century**

Around one third (34%) of respondents who chose the ‘other’ category did not list a reason. The remaining two thirds of respondent’s listed various motives, such as ‘fishing’, ‘university’, ‘fear of flying’ and ‘needed a change’.

Interview participants who had moved or planned to move out of the Gulf during their employment with Century said that providing a good education and opportunities for their children was their main motivation. For example:

“My family has moved to Townsville for legitimate reasons such as higher education for my daughter, new lifestyle and new job opportunities”

“I’d never take my kids back to Doomadgee”

Some employees said the added pressure to share money with family was also a factor in their decision to leave:

“Lots of humbug from my family. That’s why some people move away”

Interview participants noted that opportunities for free flights from Century had given people in the more remote communities a chance to move on a more continuous basis. For example:

“Working here gives people from Mornington and Doomadgee an opportunity to move, breaking the cycle of being stuck in town”

“They [Mornington Island people] can get out more, which is really important”

Respondents were asked where they planned to be living when they stop working for Century. Fifty-four percent of respondents said they would either stay or return to the Gulf (Figure 18). Almost one third were unsure (29%) and only 6% said they would leave the Gulf area.

* Aboriginal English for ‘pester’ or ‘annoy’
Health

Employee Health

Around half of all respondents (51%) said they participated in mine organised exercise (Figure 19). Use of the company gym was the most commonly reported form of participation (39%), followed by sports teams (20%) and physical fitness programs (3.4%).

Younger respondents were significantly more likely to use the gym and participate in at least one mine organised exercise.

Interview participants suggested health could be improved or worsened depending on the individual. Some employees choose to cut down on alcohol, eat better food and
exercise more than before, while others increase their food and drink intake and exercise less, resulting in weight problems (locally referred to as the ‘Century spread’).

“Worse on site because too much food, not as much exercise as usual”

“can go either way, can eat too much and get overweight too”

When asked if they had attended any health education sessions since working at Century, 76% said “never”. Nineteen percent had attended 1 or 2 and only 2% had attended 2 or more.

Some female interview respondents stated that a women’s organised sports team was warranted. Several interview participants mentioned that a nutritionist was available for consultation.

Community Health

Interview participants reported little or no change in the overall health of Gulf communities since the mine began operating. A few informants noted that employees and their close relatives might have experienced some positive change due to the ability to buy more, and a wider variety, of food stuffs.

“The only impact in terms of health has been that families of mine workers have been able to buy more food”

“Health is not related to the mine, no changes [in communities] since the mine started”

Increase in mobility allowed some people to visit relatives in care in urban centres such Cairns and Townsville on a more frequent basis than previously.

Some interviewees felt that Century should be doing more in terms of regional Indigenous health - either directly funding health interventions and/or advocating and working in partnership with state authorities, NGOs and local Indigenous communities to improve the status of health in the region. Several interviewees stated that they were aware that health was outside the ‘traditional’ purview of the company’s development brief, but nonetheless felt strongly that the mine had a obligation to assist ‘their ‘neighbours’ in reversing the low status of Indigenous health in the region.

Bush Tucker

Sixty-one percent of survey respondents reported that they were not able to eat the same amount of bush tucker since working at the mine (Figure 20). Women were significantly less likely to have eaten bush tucker prior to working at Century.
Additional Suggestions

Some additional suggestions made by GCA employees were:

**Employment**

- **Should employ more people from Mornington Island**
- **I think Century has created a lot of great opportunities for people who may not be able to obtain employment elsewhere to experience having a job and a regular income. I know how great it feels to work for your money it gives a sense of achievement. Although everything is great while in place today, unless these people are leaving with qualifications and skills etc at the end of a certain time frame then Century has not really equipped these people for the future.**
- **I personally would like to see more Aboriginal women in administration. Why are there so many non-indigenous site clerks here. Why aren’t these positions being filled with GCA women. They train young women at Century + then don’t slot them into positions. We can do more than clean + be kitchenhands.**
- **I think we need more local women working in CMA in the office and also operating in the pit. More local people filling management and supervisory roles for CMA.**
- **I’d like to see more community people here working In supervisor position, management roles + responsibility. Other business opportunities at the mine site for Indigenous people Cultural issues**
- **Would be good to bring them out here for a site visit and show them what its like, what’s possible if they might like to work here.**
- **Century has let the Native Title people down. Where’s the original agreement between Century and Native Title people. Where’s the jobs, traineeships, apprenticeships for native title people. Everybody other than native title people are offered these positions.**
**Training Opportunities**

Around half of all respondents (49%) said they had not received any training since starting work at Century (Figure 21). This lack of training can in part be attributed to the time worked at Century. Of those who said they did receive any training, 60% had worked for Century for 1 year or less.

![Training received since working at Century](image)

*Multiple responses allowed for all excluding ‘no training’

Figure 21 Training Received Since Working at Century

When respondents were asked if they would like to receive training, 93% said yes (Figure 22). The most common request for training was for truck or other operator jobs (33%), followed by cultural and community (22%), administration (21%) and management (19%).

![Training Preferences](image)

*Multiple responses allowed for all excluding ‘would not like training’

Figure 22 Training Preferences
Women were significantly more likely to want training in administration and men were significantly more likely to want an apprenticeship/trade. Ninety-four per cent of women said they would like to receive training, of whom, 23 per cent requested management training. Eighty six per cent of men said they would like to receive training, of whom, 16% requested management training.

GCA employees in the pit perceive that supervisors tend to favour their friends and/or non-Indigenous employees over Indigenous employees in terms of access to training opportunities:

“People come from cities, friends of operators, get on a shovel in a couple of months, some of us are stuck on trucks for years”

“People passing the buck, always make excuses, people come from Brisbane and get a job straight away”

“Lack of opportunity that coloured fellas’ have, we’re not given a fair go. ...other people come from Melbourne or Cairns come and get above us”

“18 months is a long time on a truck. I’ve almost quit, many boys have pulled out”

“this is where the buddy buddy system comes into play”

“I’ve been here for 6 yrs and I’m still a truck driver, have I been overlooked? Yes definitely”

“There is segregation in crews because of favouritism... causing tension”

Other comments about career development opportunities from GCA employees in the pit were:

“have a performance review, but it’s just pretend”

“Don’t get asked opportunities for training, would like it... but have to push to get it.....I just gave up”

“Once you become a shovel or digger operator they want you to stay there”

“They take the best shovel drivers and make them supervisors, truck drivers [are] overlooked. I want to move up but no opportunity”

**Contractor-GCA Issues:**

There was significant variation amongst respondents in relation to job experience and training opportunities depending on which operational area they worked in.

Some GCA employees felt very supported, but acknowledged this was dependent on their individual supervisor:

“Depends on what area your in, I’m lucky here”

One employee thought that there was too much support for GCA employees and that they were getting away with not working as hard as others
“OK to give support at first… but after been here a while it should be fair for everyone”

There were some complaints about contractors from both direct employees and employees from other areas:

“Get Government money for traineeships and get kids to work… and treat ‘em like slaves… use and abuse of trainees has got out of hand”.

“dead-set against [a particular contractor] getting people from down south for jobs when there is heaps on, when there are people in the communities up here that could do it”

“Definitely don’t take the GCA seriously”

“Bad attitude point blank”

“I work as hard as anyone else for half the money” [as non-contractor employees]

“Don’t understand why there has never been a permanent Indigenous woman in office administration… only one trainee now”

“promise to get training during the interview, and talk about the GCA agreement, but nothing happens [once employed]”

Transferable Skills
Interview participants perceived a need for Century to train Indigenous people skills that are transferable to communities:

“I’m a 100% positive [they are] not training for communities… how is training on trucks going to help someone going back to community”

“Century should be looking at skills, crying out for electricians and plumbers in communities, should be training”

“Century could be training skills that you can take back to community more… what are people going to do with mining truck skills…”

“They bleed communities of all the people who want to work here, I’d like to see them help the ones who are still in community who want to do other things. They are just as much a part of the GCA”

Employees thought there was need for training that is tailored to Indigenous people and rural contexts:

“Focusing too much on the mainstream training for mine sites and not for Indigenous people….should be separate department that just focuses on Indigenous people coming in training”

Contribution to the Gulf
Interview participants were asked how they perceive their community to have changed since Century began mining.

There were mixed perceptions about Century’s contribution and impact on the Gulf Communities. Most participants thought there had been little or no change to the community as a whole, but acknowledged some contributions from Century.
“…seen heaps of new employment and opportunities for people, but no changes in community itself” [Doomadgee]

“People have decent vehicles now…take more pride in themselves I suppose”. [Normanton]

Positive contributions included employment opportunities, the assistance with flights and funerals and donations to local community organisations and programs.

“Only helped with rural skills program, people ask for donations for things but that’s about it”

“Some families can buy more stuff, and it is easier for people to get around”

The rural skills program in Normanton was considered a success by participants from all communities and some expressed a wish to have a similar program in Doomadgee and Mornington Island. There were a couple of criticisms of the program, with one participant noting that the people involved did not have blue cards, and another thought that the age range deterred 16 to 18 year olds:

“ the 16-18 year old could go but they don’t because of too many younger ones, nothing for that age group”

There were also negative comments relating to inter-community differences in terms of benefits, and a general perception that Century has done little to nothing for local communities, and should be doing a lot more. Most employees thought that there was no better access to services or consumables in there community since the mine began.

Comments included:

“Doomadgee and Mornington Island have been left on the side line, too hard basket”.

“We [Mornington Island] are forgotten about”

“Lots of promises in the beginning, but never delivered” [Doomadgee]

“Local mine employees have used their own money to support a youth club” [Doomadgee]

“Century done nothin’ for Mornington Island”

“Zinifex should build a road and do things like they’ve done for some other communities. Only hope for Doomadgee [is the road], be glad for that”.

Some respondents noted there was expectation within communities:

“That big pot of gold at the end of the rainbow still along way off yet” [Normanton]

“In Doomadgee before the agreement was signed, Zinifex were in the town everyday, waking people up with planes all the time, taking people out and about, talking to everyone, but since it was signed you hardly ever see anyone’

“People expected that more positive changes would happen, and are a little disappointed that there hasn’t been [more positive changes]” [Normanton]
Some participants from Normanton noted that there has been an increase in drinking, overcrowding in houses and people sleeping on the street since the Government's Alcohol Management Plan was introduced. It was suggested by employees that people are coming to Normanton from local communities nearby to access alcohol (not related to the mine).

“Mine unrelated to increase in alcohol, direct result of Alcohol management plans”

**Additional Suggestions for Century and Government**

Additional Suggestions for Century and Government contribution were:

**Community**
- Need to support more sporting things
- Now, they should build better roads (i.e. Doomadgee). Mornington Island also needs channel markings. It’s expensive to register boats, get a licence and register trailers. They also need an all weather airstrip, and could use local people to build it.
- Thinks mine should sponsor and support more football teams, and do a youth program like they did in Normanton, or something else, for the young people especially. Need to “...get ’em away from the community for awhile”.
- Improve access to the community in the wet season by building a bridge and fixing the road
- The government should extend the school to year 11 and 12, so people don’t have to send kids away from home....A sobriety house to help people get weaned of alcohol... would not only benefit the community, but also be a good idea in terms of increasing employment opportunities and filling position at the mine by making it easier for people to pass the drug test. People need to be taught how to drink. In the communities we all just binge drink.....more role-models that have been working at the mine should work in the communities
- Burketown needs a supermarket, lower the prices of food. Fresh stuff costs too much, would help with community health.

**Employment and enterprise**
- Century should encourage private enterprise in Mornington Island, take the time to build relationships, know who people are
- Get Waanyi involved in rehabilitation
- Need to employ more Rangers, Century and/or Government could help.
- Potential business opportunities that might work in the community, but this is useless without identifying if there are individuals who can operate them. Initiatives mainly support things that are their, which is good but easy to do.
- Further back-up support such as a mentor program.
- I would like to see more GCA employees given opportunities in administration, and management and supervisors position or involved. It seems that Indigenous people are looked over or simply ignored when opportunities arise. I think GCA people deserve administration training, management training, supervisor training. I know we have the potential to do anything we set our mind to, but are not given any chances or any opportunities.
- Century should focus on traineeships in other than mining.
- Small business training.
**Impacts of Closure**

The majority (87%) of respondents provided information about how they thought ceasing work at Century would impact them and their families. Most respondents thought it would have a negative impact.

**Employees**

Some comments included:

“We would be effected majorly ... our lifestyle has changed to suit our income”

“It will effect me a lot, because I would have to find a other job in the mining industry”

“Financially. No other work opportunities...have to seek work else where maybe move town”

“It would be hard because I work to pay my car off and my girls go away for school next year”

“Well I pay child support and I pay for my kids to go on school trips that they never use to go on before”

“Given I don’t have a job to go to, it’d effect myself and my family greatly, I’d be financially unstable and depending on the family while in desperation in looking for another job”

“It will be harder to find employment while studying and therefore I would need to rely on family members for financial support. I wouldn’t like that to happen as they need the money to look after themselves, I might end up not completing university”

Those who thought it would not have a big impact were reliant on finding other employment:

“It wouldn’t because I want to use my skills that I was taught here in other mine sites. And I would be proud I got my skills from Century”

“All depends if you had another job lined up or not”

“It wouldn’t matter because I would find work else where either on my community or at another mine site”

Interview participants thought that mine closure would have a big impact on individual workers and their families financially. For example:

“If Century’s not here, it will be harder for people to travel”

“those who have got loans will not find it easy to keep up”

“A lot of people will go back on CDEP”

“There will be less money for people to put towards things such as education”

…”
Communities
There were mixed responses from interview participants on how mine closure would impact on communities, with some perceiving a big impact and others predicting it would only impact on employees and their direct family:

“Probably a bit of a shock” [to community]

“Big impact. So used to having money. Standard of living will go down”

“just go back to how they’ve always been” [employees and community]

“I believe that most communities will suffer economic disasters, examples are financial insecurity for families who are under financial arrangements, inability to provide the education, health and housing opportunities, community employers unable to employ the “overflow” and the list goes on!”

“Only effects people who work here”

“There will be a domino effect... families of workers will be affected... people will stop shopping as much, economy affected, will be spending less”

“I don’t think a great effect on Mt Isa or Townsville as there are other jobs available in these areas. For the smaller communities though, I think if the people do not leave or have obtained a qualification or other required skills to go to another workplace there would be a really huge effect regarding employment and a regular income”

“Potential and self motivation will be very low for the community people trying to make a good life them & their families”

“Dramatically work wise, but on the other hand skills will be brought back to town on a more permanent basis”

“I think it wouldn’t affect the community as such, but would affect community members who work at Century Mine”

“Century has been a major support for all Gulf communities, the employment statistics will go down, as in all Indigenous communities we are a close knit family and a majority of people will not want to leave their families to work elsewhere”
SUMMARY

This section summarises the key findings of the survey and makes recommendations where appropriate.

Key results

Experience of working at Century

The majority of employees surveyed had positive work experiences at Century:

- Respondents stressed the social aspects of working at Century, highlighting learning new skills and meeting people as a positive job attribute.
- The financial benefits of working, and the positive example this serves for children and others in the community, were cited as additional benefits.
- Most felt generally supported by their community.
- Most stated that there was considerable informal support and mentorship provided by fellow employees but noted a need for a more formal Indigenous support position.
- The majority said that working at the mine would help them in the future.

However, some aspects of working at Century attracted criticism. There was widespread perception that there is:

- A lack of training opportunities for GCA employees, and the training pathways on offer are not particularly relevant to local contexts.
- Poor communication between GCA employees and Century management, and between the mine and Gulf communities.
- A lack of respect for cultural issues by mine management.

Impacts of Employment on employees and communities

According to those surveyed, working at the mine has had a significant impact on many GCA employees and their families but not on Gulf communities generally. Employment has enhanced mobility and can have either a positive or negative impact on health:

- The financial impact of working at Century has benefited workers and their families in the short term but there is no evidence of long term financial security.
- Employment at Century appears to have facilitated movement of GCA employees within and out of the Gulf (see ‘Mobility’ section below).
The health of employees is either improved or worsened, depending on individual choice

Most thought there had been little change to Gulf communities since the mine began, noting employment impacted on individual workers and their families, but there was only a marginal ‘trickle down’ affect on communities

Impacts of Closure

While the majority of respondents stated that the mine had only a limited impact on Gulf communities, there were differing opinions about the impact of closure:

- Most thought mine closure would have a negative impact on direct employees, but there were mixed responses on how closure would affect Gulf communities more generally
- Respondents thought closure would primarily affect ‘lifestyle’ – an inability to support children’s education, increase in family debt, less employment opportunities and a decrease in mobility.

Future Employment Plans

There is little interest in returning to CDEP work and a preference for full time work in the future:

- Fifty-three percent of respondents were either on CDEP (46%) or did not work (7%) prior to Century
- Forty-six percent of respondents worked for CDEP prior to working at Century but only 2% said they planned to work for CDEP post Century
- Seven percent did not work prior to Century but only 1% planned to not work post Century
- Only 4% of respondents worked in mining previously but 52% said they would work in mining industry post Century
- Most (92%) respondents intent on working post Century said they would prefer a full time position

Seventy-seven percent of respondents stated that working at Century would help them in the future.

Mobility

Thirty-five percent of respondents had moved residence since starting work at Century. Of these, nearly half (49%) had relocated out of the Gulf and 13% had moved back to the Gulf. Respondents cited problems in their community, their children’s education and better health services as the most common reasons for leaving.

Viewed through an intercultural lens, Indigenous mobility is one of the more ‘tangible’ examples of the interrelationship between mining and Indigenous culture(s). Taylor and Bell (2004) argue that the ‘circular mobility’ of much of the Indigenous population can be seen as a trade-off aimed at balancing a range of cultural, economic, social and political considerations (2004). For many Indigenous employees engaging in
mainstream employment such as mining, it is not solely about fiscal rewards but is also part of maintaining kin relationships and customary practices (Taylor and Bell 2004). The impact of having a greater ‘opportunity to move’ was cited by participants as particularly positive for people in the more remote communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee.

The ability to travel independently around the region is also important for many people. Sixty-three percent of GCA employees had purchased a car since starting work at Century. Several interview participants noted that purchasing a four-wheel-drive made it easier to fish, hunt, visit relatives and maintain a ‘connection to country’. In such instances transport is supporting the ‘customary economy’ (see Altman 2001). In other contexts (remote community art and craft centres) numerous commentators have noted that increased transport has been central to enhancing customary practices (see Michaels 1987; Onus 1990). While economically speaking vehicles are a depreciating asset, they can also facilitate the appreciation of social and cultural capital.

**Individual-Familial Financial Support**

The majority of respondents supported at least one other relative or family member ‘on a regular basis’. Although not clarified in the data set, anecdotal information suggests that older, male GCA employees (who still reside in the Gulf) are more likely to be involved in the distribution of goods and money than younger employees. The sample is too small to make concrete inferences, but relative to some older literature -which emphasises the pressure of ‘demand sharing’ in some Indigenous contexts (eg. Petersen 1993; Trigger 2005) - the results may suggest that ‘individualisation’ is increasing and the practice of reciprocal obligation is decreasing. Some respondents noted that when pestered for money (humbug) they stressed that the money earned from working at the mine was for their immediate families use and their children’s future. However, this observation could also be explained but the timing of payments. Unlike government and CDEP payments which are deposited fortnightly, employee wages are paid monthly. Employees may simply be conscious of needing to make their money last longer, rather than increasing their ‘individualisation’. As noted by Barker (2006), currently little is known about the extent to which mining income changes pre-existing patterns of wealth distribution or impacts upon familial relations and intra-community power structures. Anecdotal information from Indigenous mine workers on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory suggests that property purchased using “sweat money” (money earned from an ‘honest’ job) is easier to refuse others use of.

**Financial security**

Most respondents had invested primarily in depreciating assets such as motor vehicles and whitegoods since starting work at Century. Thirty-seven percent of respondents had worked at Century previously. As is the case in the Fitzroy river area of Western Australia, many people appear to ‘target work’ to save enough for a particular item, moving in and out of mine work as the need arises (Arthur 1994). Just 8% percent of respondents had purchased a house since working at Century, although this could also be attributed to legal restrictions on purchasing houses in Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, evidence from some remote communities does suggest that some informal modes of home ownership do exist (Moran et al. 2005). Wesley Aird (2005) states that while housing is ‘problematic’ in Doomadgee, local employment at Century and businesses in town have led to maintenance improvements in some houses (2005).
**Recommendations**

This study has found that Century Mine has provided substantial employment and training opportunities for local Indigenous people in the region, and the experience of employment seems generally to have been positive for most individuals. However, employees do not perceive there to have been an improvement in the socio-economic conditions in the Gulf, or an increase in the capacity of the communities to sustain themselves over the longer term. The following section suggests possible actions that management could take to address many of the key findings previously mentioned in order to increase the region’s capacity post closure.

**Leaving a positive legacy post closure**

1. **Identify opportunities to increase training**

Forty-nine percent of respondents stated that they had not received any training since starting work at Century. Nearly all respondents (93%) said they would like some form of training. As evidenced by the quotes reported above (see Training section p24), for some respondents this is a highly contentious issue with many stating that they have not been given the training opportunities they were promised. This is particularly true of those who work in the pit. Perception of favouritism amongst supervisors and non-Indigenous workers was a recurrent theme. There was also a view of inconsistency in job training opportunities related to place of residence with people from Mornington Island, for instance, being less likely to have participated in training. This could in part be attributed to the fact that 9 out of 12 respondents from Mornington Island who said they had not received training, had worked for Century 12mths or less. While the majority of employees (57%) planned to stay at Century until closure, 26% were unsure. If more training opportunities were developed GCA job satisfaction may improve and positively influence workforce retention.

2. **Investigate opportunities for community and Indigenous specific training**

A number of interview participants felt that available training choices were too mainstream and narrow in focus (primarily mining related). There was a desire for training that was more tailored to Indigenous and rural needs, such as trades (electricians and plumbers) and operating road-maintenance machinery. Building diversity in local capacity is integral to the long term sustainability of Indigenous Gulf communities (Martin et al. 2002), and ensuring some GCA workers have the opportunity to develop locally relevant skills can further this goal. Suggestions were also made to investigate opportunities to train people in the community who do not wish to work in mining, arguing they are as much a part of the GCA.

3. **Introduce Life skills Training**

The financial benefits associated with working at Century are arguably the most direct and tangible benefit to GCA employees, however there was little evidence of managing these finances for longer term security. Numerous respondents were concerned that post closure individuals and families would be more in debt than before the mine began. A deficit in money management skills was widely noted, and several informants recommend that a money management program, perhaps supported by a formal (but
voluntary) savings scheme or salary sacrificing scheme for house payments or desired assets, would be a valuable development.

Workforce Issues

The following recommendations relate to improving workforce issues that in turn could improve retention and influence the legacy post closure:

1. Identify and support a Mentor position for all new recruits and trainees

Interview participants stated that informal mentoring amongst GCA employees was common practice and an essential attribute of working at the mine that positively contributes to both job satisfaction and performance. Some participants felt that a more formal (GCA operated) support service was warranted, while others felt such that ‘formalisation’ would create yet another layer of bureaucratisation that could potentially undermine the effectiveness of the informal system. While there are contrasting views, all those specifically queried felt that some recognition of the mentoring process would be appreciated.

2. Implement better systems for recording and analysing HR and training data

Under schedule 2 of the GCA, Zinifex is required to “provide employment statistics and other information to communities on a regular basis”. There remains a shortage of up to date employment and training data on site. This has been identified in earlier reports (Barker and Brereton 2004; 2005). Collecting and tracking data for Indigenous people in training and employment will enable Century to monitor and report progress over time.

3. Investigate opportunities to increase cultural awareness training

Several interview participants felt that the companies’ Cultural Awareness Training was not valued by non-Indigenous workers (including management). During the period that the current research was undertaken, there were a large number of people working at the mine who had not yet undertaken the cultural awareness training. As workers are not allowed on site without participating in other ‘inductions’, such as health and safety training, some participants felt that this illustrated that the mine was not really serious about Indigenous issues. It was also noted that employees working in Karumba should have cultural awareness training relevant to the area.

4. Ensure consistency across operation

Amongst numerous GCA employees there was considerable variation in job satisfaction and training opportunities across different operational areas. Concern was raised about the current lack of GCA traineeships and apprenticeships, in addition to suspicion about how much government funding - for traineeships and training infrastructure – actually benefited local GCA people and their community. Perceived inequity in relation to pay structure rates and rosters across various operational/contractor areas, combined with a dearth of training opportunities in some contexts, negatively impinges on some GCA employees level of job satisfaction and therefore may influence retention.
5. Review Health Education session on site

Interview participants stated that employee health could either improve or worsen while working at the mine, depending on the individual. In other studies, Hall and Driver (2002) observed a positive contribution of mine mess and alcohol consumption rules on the health of long-term employees, but noted that higher salaries could also increase alcohol consumption for individuals, nuclear and extended families. When respondents were asked if they had attended any health education sessions since working at Century, 76% said “never”. Nineteen percent had attended 1 or 2 and only 2% had attended 2 or more. Addressing health education on site can not only improve the well being of employees but it can contribute to retention. Fourteen percent of respondents to a survey of former Indigenous employees at Century cited medical reasons as the main reason for leaving work at the mine (Barker and Brereton 2005).

6. Follow up on respondents’ suggestions

Respondents made several suggestions about how Century could improve workforce issues and/or ensure Century leaves a positive legacy to the Gulf region. Although some of these may not be practical, this is valuable data.

CONCLUSION

Employing local Indigenous people impacts on individuals and communities across a range of social, economic and environmental factors. The effect on each of these dimensions can be direct and indirect, multi-faceted and interlinked (Barker 2006). A strategic, holistic and culturally informed approach which recognises and values diversity is essential if GCA employees and Indigenous communities are to derive any long term benefits from the mine. Additional research yet to be conducted – which targets Gulf communities and key stakeholders and opinion leaders in these communities – will add significant breadth to the current data set and provide a more informed analysis of the implications of mine closure.
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MCA (Minerals Council of Australia)

MCA

Michaels, Eric.

Onus, Lin

Peterson, Nicolas

Taylor, J. and Bell, M.

Trigger, D. S.
APPENDIX 1

GCA Survey
COMPLETION OF MINING AT ZINIFEX CENTURY: IMPLICATIONS FOR GULF COMMUNITIES

A survey of GCA employees at Zinifex Century Mine

Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining
University of Queensland, Australia

February 2007

csrn@uq.edu.au
www.csrn.uq.edu.au
Please complete all questions.

Even if you feel unsure, please have a go!

Do NOT put your name on the survey.

Returning the survey:
There are three options to return the survey:

**By Post:**
Return the completed questionnaire using the reply paid self-addressed envelope provided with the survey. If you did not receive one, they can be obtained from GCA employee Patrick Wheeler, or by contacting CSRM researcher Joni Parmenter, details below.

**By Hand**
Return the survey to a CSRM researcher while on site during week Feb 20-Feb 28 2007.

**By Email**
Send as an attachment to j.parmenter@smi.uq.edu.au. Please be aware that your name will appear in the email, however this email address is to a CSRM researcher, so confidentiality will be maintained.

Return Date:
Please return the survey by FRIDAY 23 March 2007.

Need Help?
Please feel free to contact either of the following people from the CSRM for assistance:

**Project Manager**
Professor David Brereton
Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining
The University of Queensland
Brisbane 4072
Email: d.brereton@epsa.uq.edu.au
Ph: 07 33464043
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**Researcher**
Joni Parmenter
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WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?
The purpose of this study is to assess the contribution of Century mine to the economic and social development of the Gulf communities and identify what might happen once mining has been completed around 2015. The aim is to identify opportunities for Century mine to leave a positive legacy and contribute to sustainable development of the community and region.

HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE?
This survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?
Your answers will be coded and combined with all other survey information to build an overall picture of the experience of GCA staff working at Century.

CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS
Your survey responses are anonymous. Please do not put your name on the survey. Your answers and any comments you make will not be linked to you in the research outcomes.

DO YOU HAVE TO DO THIS?
Your participation is voluntary, you don’t have to answer all the questions, and you can stop at any time. There are no risks to you personally for being involved in the research, or for withdrawing from the research ‘above the risks of everyday life’.

CAN YOU FIND OUT WHAT THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY ARE?
Yes. Towards the end of the research a brief overview of the results will be sent to participants in a newsletter format. If you wish to receive this feedback please contact Joni Parmenter (07 3346 4008, j.parmenter@smi.uq.edu.au).

ETHICAL ISSUES?
This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. If you would like to discuss your participation in this survey with one of the researchers, you are welcome to contact Joni Parmenter on (07) 3346 4008 or 0401 062 345. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you can contact the Ethics Officer on 07 3365 3924.
1. Are you:  
- Female  
- Male

2. About how old are you?  
- 18 - 24 years  
- 25 - 34 years  
- 35 - 44 years  
- 45 - 54 years  
- 55 - 64 years  
- 65+ years

3. Are you:  
- Single  
- Partnered or married  
- Separated or divorced

4. Which Native Title Group do you belong to?  
- Unknown  
- Waanyi  
- Gkuthaarn  
- Kujatj  
- Mingginda  
- Other (please specify)____________________  
- Undetermined

5. What community/town do you currently live in?  
- Normanton  
- Townsville  
- Mount Isa  
- Doomadgee  
- Mornington Island  
- Other (please specify)____________________

6. Were you living somewhere else when you started work at Century?  
- Yes  
- No → go to Question 9

7. If yes, where was that?  
- Mornington Island  
- Doomadgee  
- Mount Isa  
- Normanton  
- Townsville  
- Other (please specify)____________________

8. If you have moved what was the reason? (tick all that apply)  
- Children’s education  
- To get away from problems where I was living  
- Better housing  
- More economic opportunities  
- Better community services and facilities  
- Better access to health services  
- Family ties  
- Easier to access Century  
- Other (please specify)____________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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| 9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?           | ☐ Below Year 8  
☐ Year 8  
☐ Year 9  
☐ Year 10  
☐ Year 11  
☐ Year 12  
☐ Diploma/Advanced Diploma/Certificate  
☐ University degree |
| 10. Where did you go to school?                                        | ☐ Normanton  
☐ Townsville  
☐ Mount Isa  
☐ Doomadgee  
☐ Mornington Island  
☐ Other (please specify)__________________________________________|
| 11. How many children do you have?                                     | ____________ |
| 12. How many of them are school aged children?                         | ☐ None → go to question 14  
☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3  
☐ 4 or more |
| 13. If you have school aged children, do they attend the local schools or schools outside the Gulf? | ☐ Local schools  
☐ Outside the Gulf  
☐ Both |
| 14. How many of your relatives/family members do you support? (NOT including your children) | ____________ |
| 15. How many of your relatives/family member's work at Century mine?  | ☐ None  
☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3 or more |
| 16. What were you doing before you came to Century mine?               | ☐ Worked fulltime  
☐ Worked part-time/seasonal  
☐ CDEP  
☐ Did not work → go to question 18 |
| 17. If you were working before Century, what type of work were you doing? | ________________ |
| 18. Is this the first time you have worked at Century?                 | ☐ Yes  
☐ No |
| 19. How long have you been currently working at Century?               | ☐ 6 months or less  
☐ 7 months- 1 year  
☐ 1 - 2 years  
☐ Over 2 years (please specify)________________________________ |
| 20. What is your current position at Century?                          | ☐ Truck driving or other plant operator  
☐ Utility person (e.g. kitchen hand, cleaning)  
☐ Administration |
### 21. Have you completed any training since starting work at Century? (tick all that apply)
- No training
- First Aid
- Cert I
- Cert II
- Cert III
- Cert IV
- Apprenticeship
- Traineeship
- Other (please specify)

### 22. If you had the opportunity, what kind of work would you like to be trained for? (tick all that apply)
- Would not like training
- Administration
- Apprenticeship (please specify type)
- Cultural and Community
- Labouring
- Lab technician
- Management
- Professional (e.g. geologist, engineering)
- Trade person (e.g. electrician, carpenter)
- Traineeship (please specify type)
- Truck driving or other plant operator
- Utility person (e.g. kitchen hand, cleaning)
- Other (please specify)

### 23. How much longer would you like to work for Century?
- less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- more than 2 years
- as long as the mine is here
- unsure

### 24. When you stop working at Century is it likely that you will:
- leave the Gulf area
- stay in the Gulf area
- return to the Gulf area
- unsure
- stay where you are (if live out of Gulf)

### 25. When you stop working for Century, do you plan to: (tick all that apply)
- find work in the mining industry
- find CDEP work
- find other work (please specify type)
- stop work altogether → go to question 26
- unsure
26. If you plan to find other work, would you prefer it to be:

- Full time
- Part time
- Casual
- Unsure

27. Do you participate regularly in:

- Mine organised sports teams
- Mine related physical fitness programs
- Use of the company gym
- Do not participate

28. How often have you attended health education sessions during your employment at the mine?

- Never
- 1 or 2
- 2 or 3
- More than 3

29. Have you been able to eat the same amount of bush tucker since working at the mine?

- Yes
- No
- Didn’t eat it before working at Century

30. About how many flights in and out of your community/town would you pay for personally each year?

- None
- Less than 5
- 5-10
- More than 10

31. Since starting work at Century Mine have you bought any of the following: (tick all that apply)

- A house
- A car
- A boat
- A fridge or washing machine
- Other asset: please specify____________________
- None of the above

32. About how much of your wage is spent each week on groceries from the local store where you live?

- $______________

33. Is working at Century mine going to help you in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

34. If you were to stop working at Century, how might this affect you and your family?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
35. How would mine closure affect the community/town you live in?

If you have any other comments please write them in the space below.

END OF SURVEY

THANK YOU!!!!!!

Please return this survey to the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM) in the reply paid envelope provided.
About the project

This project is being undertaken by the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at The University of Queensland. It is designed to inform both the closure planning process and the upcoming Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA) review. The work is being jointly funded by ZCM and the Queensland Government (through the Department of State Development and Innovation). The study will include the distribution of a survey to all GCA employees and several face to face interviews with GCA employees, key opinion leaders and stakeholders. This will be managed so as to minimise duplication with the GCA review.

Focus of the Study

1) assessing the contribution ZCM has made to the Gulf region
2) estimating the potential impacts of mine completion
3) identifying opportunities for ZCM to leave a positive legacy and contribute to sustainable development of the community and region.

The research process

Desktop research: Initially, we will analyse publicly available information and reports, such as ABS census data, as well as information provided by ZCM.

Employee survey: Early in 2007 we will be conducting a survey of the GCA workforce to find out what they plan to do in the lead up to, and following, mine completion. We will also collect information about their current levels of social and economic involvement in the community.

Community consultation: During March and April we will hold discussions with a broad cross-section of opinion leaders and stakeholders in the Gulf area to find out how the community might be affected by the completion of mining at ZCM.

We are committed to providing feedback to all research participants. This is part of UQ ethics policy, and also a commitment from CSRM to the transparency and accountability of our research.

Timeframe

Late 2006: Project commences.
Early 2007: Employee survey and opinion leader and stakeholder consultation undertaken
Late 2007: Release of research findings

For more information on the project, please contact:

Project Manager

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