

Media Release

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Indigenous groups welcome housing project

Traditional owners of the Larrakia Homelands recently held a 'smoking ceremony' to welcome Ostwald Bros and other members of a construction alliance completing major indigenous housing works across the Northern Territory.

As a partner in the Earth Connect Alliance (ECA), Ostwald Bros is working with two other building consortiums to deliver the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) - the largest housing program ever undertaken within the nation's remote aboriginal communities.

The Larrakia Development Corporation invited those associated with the housing venture to attend a special 'Welcome to Country' event aimed at bringing goodwill to the project

Kenbi dancers, direct ancestors of the traditional owners of Darwin and beyond, performed the ceremony to free the ECA office building of spirits and deliver greater harmony to all that work there.

Ostwald Bros CEO Brendan Ostwald said the ceremony signified the successful relationship being developed between the alliance team and aboriginal communities.

"The ceremony was held at ECA head office as a sign of respect for traditional owners of the land who we are partnering with to complete the housing project.

"Over the next five years we will be working with a number of aboriginal communities and it is important that we respect traditional ownership and understand the indigenous culture," he said.

ECA deputy employment and workforce manager and Jon Harris, who is part of the IPA team contracted to deliver training and employment, said Earth Connect was the only alliance working with indigenous communities that had thanked traditional owners for allowing them to operate on their land.

"ECA will be working at Belyuen Community where the Kenbi dancers live so it's all about respect, manners and acknowledgement of the true owners of the land no matter who has the deed to the property. We are hoping to do this in all the communities ECA works in," he said.

The project involves the design and construction of extensive housing and infrastructure works that will provide jobs and training for indigenous people.

By upskilling indigenous people SIHIP aims to achieve a sustainable workforce in each community capable of completing ongoing maintenance and management of the housing.

The ECA aims to maximise indigenous employment, training and mentoring providing good wages and employment opportunities.

Earth Connect has been working with the traditional owners and indigenous housing groups to ensure the design of the houses meets the needs of the community.

The alliance is also liaising with communities to find out how they can leave a positive and lasting legacy. Community ideas put forward to date include the construction of a playground, BMX track and improvements to the youth hall.

“With this legacy and indigenous employment, pride will come for all to share,” Mr Harris said.
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