



# Community say a key component

■ Adam Orlando

THE Pilbara Community Foundation was launched this week to support grassroots community projects in the mining community through a founding donation of \$100,000 from the Pilbara Development Commission.

The foundation was established under the trusteeship of the Western Australian Community Foundation (WACF), an independent not-for-profit organisation created to nurture philanthropic partnerships between individuals, communities and business.

WACF is an umbrella organisation for the state's communities to benefit from philanthropy without the burden of administration and governance responsibilities.

WACF chairman Michael Anderson said the Pilbara Development Commission's "visionary approach" towards community development would make a lasting difference in the Pilbara region.

"The [WA Community] Foundation's unique model empowers communities to take some control of their destiny because it is designed to ensure benefit in perpetuity from gifts to a community fund," he said.

Donations or gifts are accepted and managed by WACF to earn annual income, which is reinvested in the nominated community or community group as a regular source of funds for the future.

Principally, gifts or donations go towards establishing a permanent

body of funds, with the interest earned distributed in the form of grants to selected local projects and initiatives.

In 2007 the WA Community Foundation enjoyed 179 per cent growth in the value of endorsements under trusteeship. The foundation continued to grow during 2007-08, with the value of endowments increasing by 230 per cent.

In 2008, WA community funds under management remained at about \$3.5 million, including the foundation's first \$1 million donation, from nickel producer Minara Resources.

Mr Anderson said growth would not be possible without the foundation's cornerstone partners St John of God Health Care, Wesfarmers, Alcoa and Rio Tinto.

Alcoa of Australia was the first corporate company to establish a fund with WACF, launching the Wagerup Sustainability Fund in 2004 to develop initiatives to make a positive contribution to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the region surrounding the Wagerup refinery.

In WACF's 2008 year book, Alcoa managing director Alan Cransberg said it was important for Alcoa to support communities in the way they wanted to be supported.

"This endowed fund is a first for Alcoa and offers the best return for our community. It is the perfect vehicle to ensure the community benefits in perpetuity," he said.

Alcoa spokesperson Kathryn Sydney-Smith this week said the sustainability fund was a unique vehicle through which communities could be involved in shaping their future and ensuring their local health, social and welfare services have access to much-needed funding.

"At the heart of Alcoa's 'stronger communities' program is understanding that in providing support for community organisations for current needs, we also need to look for ways of building the capacity of community organisations to be able to support themselves into the future," she said.

"What is also important to note is the way the fund has been established that other businesses and people are able to also donate.

"Our community as a whole is under enormous pressure during these times. This includes community service organisations which provide vital programs and support to people in need in our communities.

"Alcoa is honouring its commitment to communities, and working with its employees to find ways they too can support local organisations through our employee volunteering programs."

Alcoa made an initial investment of \$400,000 in 2004 and is finalising the terms of another donation in the next few months.

The aluminium giant has committed an annual donation to the Wagerup Sustainability Fund for the next 20 years, which could see up to \$15 million donated to the fund.



**BENEFIT:** Michael Anderson says the organisation is committed to establishing long-term community funds. **Photo: Grant Currall**