

### Cross-cultural training

It is now relatively common for companies conducting mining-related activities in areas with significant indigenous populations to mandate some form of cross-cultural training for company and contractor personnel. The more innovative programs:

- focus not only on giving a historical understanding of the relevant community, but on providing practical advice that can enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding (eg advice on body language, initiating and ending conversations, culturally disrespectful actions, etc)
- involve local indigenous men and women in the delivery and teaching of the program (eg in conducting welcoming ceremonies and sharing their experiences)
- are differentiated according to the target audience (eg more intensive tailored programs for company personnel who supervise indigenous employees)
- differentiate between cultural awareness and cultural competence<sup>24</sup>
- include follow-up and refresher sessions, rather than just being delivered as a one-off
- where Indigenous Peoples use a different language, develop the capacity of project supervisors to communicate in that language.

### 3.2 Cultural preservation

Cultural heritage management and preservation (or preferably going beyond preservation by enhancing culture and increasing cultural importance) involves protecting and enhancing the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage. Tangible aspects include such things as artefacts, buildings, and sacred and other sites of significance. Intangible cultural heritage includes things such as traditional practices around governance, ceremonies, spiritual practices and traditional knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

In a growing number of countries, specific legislation is being developed or is in place to protect significant aspects of cultural heritage, such as archaeological sites, ethnographic sites<sup>26</sup> or areas and aspects of traditional knowledge. In Australia, for example, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 aims to protect “areas and objects ... that are of particular significance to Aboriginals in accordance with Aboriginal tradition”.<sup>27</sup> There may or may not be tangible physical manifestations of these components – for example, archaeological sites by definition are physical sites, whereas ethnographic and traditional knowledge components may not always have physical expressions.

It is becoming more common for companies to prepare cultural heritage management plans at the outset of projects, or when expansions are being planned. This is mainly done to meet a legislative requirement, but some companies now do this voluntarily. Some leading companies have also retrospectively developed plans for “legacy sites”.

Guides such as *Why cultural heritage matters*, produced by Rio Tinto, provide detailed information on how companies can manage the impacts of mining – both positive and negative – on tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

<sup>24</sup> Cultural competence requires employees and contractors to not only be aware of cultural differences, but to integrate this awareness into their work practice to improve the outcomes of their workplace behaviour, interactions, relationships and service delivery.

<sup>25</sup> See Unesco, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Unesco, Paris, 2003. [www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002)

<sup>26</sup> A working definition of an ethnographic (or sacred) site or area is a site or area of ritual, mythical or ceremonial significance to Indigenous Peoples based on their cultural customs and laws.

<sup>27</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, s 4.