

Whirlwind visit to city

VOLUNTEER recognition, Aboriginal jobs in the mining sector and funding for the BackTrack Aboriginal youth program were among the issues bringing NSW Aboriginal Affairs Minister Victor Dominello to Tamworth on Wednesday.

Mr Dominello and member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson had a busy day of meetings, visiting the Aboriginal-owned Somerton property Trelawney, catching up with staff and volunteers of the Oxley Community Transport Service and meeting with Shenhua mining executives to discuss the signing of an historic employment agreement between the NSW government and the NSW Minerals Council to encourage Aboriginal employment in the mining sector.

Mr Dominello said under the industry-based agreement, signed on June 3, the NSW government and the mining industry would work together to help kick-start Aboriginal businesses in the resources sector.

Shenhua Watermark coalmine project manager Paul Jackson said if the project was approved, it would create more than 900 jobs across Gunnedah, Tamworth and the wider New England.

He said the project was committed to using a local workforce.

"We recognise the importance of workforce diversity as a means to employee engagement, productivity and maximising the availability of a local workforce," he said.

The Oxley Community Trans-

port Service was congratulated for signing a statement of principles promoting recognition and fairness for volunteers when Mr Dominello visited. He said volunteers in NSW contributed more than 240 million hours of voluntary work each year, estimated to be worth \$5 billion.

"Volunteers might work for free, but their contributions are priceless – as I'm sure anyone who has benefited from the Oxley Community Transport Service knows well," he said.

Oxley Community Transport Service manager Kelly McCrohon said the statement was long-overdue recognition for the work of volunteers.



ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT: From left, Shenhua Watermark project manager Paul Jackson, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Victor Dominello, member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson, Shenhua chief executive officer Wang Ningbo and liaison officer Zhao Liang.
Photo: Gareth Gardner 040913GGE02