

RIO TINTO REPORTS

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Daniel leads the way at Ranger

Turning rocks into valuable commodities and protecting precious water resources are among the many metallurgical challenges facing Daniel Hill, the first indigenous chemical engineering graduate to join Energy Resources of Australia (ERA). Daniel, who left his Larrakia family in Darwin five years ago to study chemical engineering at the University of Melbourne, returned to the Top End this year to take up a position at ERA's Ranger uranium mine in Jabiru.

With a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering, Daniel is one of three graduates bringing the latest engineering and environmental science skills to ERA in 2009 under Rio Tinto's Graduate Placement Programme.



ERA Human Resources manager Ray Gentle explained that Daniel had worked for ERA before as part of the Federal Government's National Indigenous Cadetship Programme. "Daniel is ERA's first indigenous chemical engineering graduate, and his skills and training in metallurgy and chemical engineering will make a great contribution," Ray said. "We knew Daniel from his cadetship placements here during his study vacations, so we were really keen to offer him a position."

As part of the Rio Tinto graduate programme, Daniel will do a series of rotations throughout ERA, gaining detailed knowledge about company operations, impacts and challenges. A natural talent for maths and chemistry in high school opened up chemical engineering as a career path, but Daniel said another reason for his interest in metallurgy and mining was being able to help protect precious water resources.

"It's really important to protect the water," Daniel said. "I'm interested in water treatment processes, and the water treatment plant at ERA, because a critical part of the chemistry is cleaning up the water used in processing. "At ERA we have to ensure we have no adverse impact on the environment, and there are complex regulations and procedures which are designed to protect the surrounding environment." In addition to stringent water management and environmental protection procedures, Daniel said another positive aspect of ERA's operations was the opportunity to communicate with local indigenous communities about mining activities.

"That's also important, because the local community has to know what's happening, and Ranger is good in that the elders are able to come on site and look around." Part of Daniel's induction to ERA will include a Cultural Awareness and Welcome to Country programme, designed in conjunction with the Mirrar, traditional owners of the land on which the Ranger mine operates.

ERA's strong support for providing indigenous employment opportunities has seen numbers of Aboriginal employees double over the last two years. Today indigenous employees represent almost 20 per cent of the ERA workforce.