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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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21st Century School of the Air Launched in Broome

AN innovative plan to deliver pre-university courses to Aboriginal students in remote and isolated areas of Western Australia via the internet will be launched in Broome today.

The project is the result of collaboration between Argyle Diamonds and the University of Notre Dame, for which Argyle will provide up to \$230,000 over the next 3 years.

Students living in isolated communities, many of whom may never have completed secondary schooling, will now be able to study on-line for diplomas and certificates that would enable them to qualify for university entry.

The project is called Pathways On-Line and is an extension of the university's Pathways Program, an existing Vocation and Educational Training (VET) Program.

It is believed to be the first time that a pre-university level program tailored specifically for Aboriginal students has been put on-line.

Dean of Notre Dame's Broome Campus Professor Tony Ryan said Pathways On-Line would be interactive, engaging, self-paced and flexible.

"At present our Pathways Programs consist of written material presented in booklets and are studied primarily by correspondence," Professor Ryan said.

"Pathways On-Line will enable the students to enjoy the support and comradeship of Notre Dame's E-Learning community from within their own community. In putting this program together we are moving the school of the air concept into the 21st century."

Managing Director of Argyle Diamonds, Gordon Gilchrist said that since Argyle's commencement in the early 1980s, the company had been committed to a role that was broader than an involvement in diamond mining and marketing.

"Since 1983, Argyle has been involved in a large number of local and regional initiatives and partnerships that promote both community development and the development of individuals", Mr Gilchrist said.

"Pathways On-Line is most complementary to this work, with particular learning and developmental benefits for individuals, groups and communities and beneficial linkages across regional and remote parts of the Kimberley and Pilbara and beyond".

"While it is exciting to contemplate the potential of web-based programs in this context, the capacity of our young people to be able to stay close to home to learn is a great bonus".

There are currently around 180 students enrolled in Pathways courses at the Broome campus. The students live in rural and remote communities from Esperance to Kununurra.

Media alert: Pathways On-Line will be launched at the Mangrove Hotel, Broome at 5.45pm Thursday April 18. Students who will benefit from the program will be available for interview at the Broome Campus earlier in the day. Please call 0408 959 138.

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