



# OCHRE: *Four years on*

Changing our perspective and practice as public servants



Education  
Aboriginal Affairs





# OCHRE

stands for:



Ochre is culturally significant to Aboriginal people within NSW and is used in ceremonies to bind people to each other and their Country. Ochre is recognised for its special healing powers which promote physical, emotional and spiritual health.



## ARTIST RECOGNITION

Kim Healey is a descendant of the Bundjalung and Gumbaynggirr nations, and also a descendant of the Djunbun (Platypus) Clan, original custodians of the Washpool at Lionville in Northern NSW. She currently lives within Country in South Grafton NSW, creating and telling her stories along the mighty Clarence River. Kim strives to capture Country and utilise her voice through her work, to interpret the world around her.

This work captures Kim Healey's connection to Country. It speaks of the Bundjalung and Gumbaynggirr nations which were created by the Yuladarah, the creator of rivers, boundaries and tribal land. This is the Clarence River boundary with Susan Island in the middle of these two tribes which is a birthing place. Using a sgraffito technique, scribing in the sandy medium is a mapping system of Country.

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## MINISTER'S FOREWORD



This fourth annual report documents our achievements and the lessons we have learnt through the implementation of Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (*OCHRE*). The report highlights the NSW Government's ongoing commitment to further developing our relationship with Aboriginal leaders and communities across NSW – a relationship-based on partnership, deep respect and continuing conversations.

I am pleased to report participation across all *OCHRE* initiatives continues to grow and I am encouraged by the many positive messages I hear from Aboriginal people about the fresh and innovative approach that *OCHRE* takes. In particular, the plan embraces a forward looking and strengths-based agenda.

In reflecting on the past year as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I am struck by the depth of change *OCHRE* has inspired, reaching far beyond the set of discrete initiatives described in the plan. The NSW Government's \$73 million Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme extends the commitment under *OCHRE* to healing and trauma-informed responses, and the passage of the *NSW Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* confirmed our commitment to refresh the NSW Languages Policy.

Most significantly, all aspects of *OCHRE*'s implementation are undertaken in close partnership with Aboriginal communities. This has been extended and embedded into our community-led evaluation which means

Aboriginal leaders and communities decide on what success under *OCHRE* looks like and how it should be assessed.

Earlier this year, The McKell Institute published a case study into the development and implementation of *OCHRE*. The study points to the importance and complexities of genuine co-design with Aboriginal people and concludes that while other jurisdictions have attempted co-design "*OCHRE* stands alone in its scale and ambition".

While there is so much to be proud of, we also know there are many aspects of *OCHRE*'s design and implementation we need to build on. The release of the first evaluation report of *OCHRE* in 2018 will consider how well *OCHRE* is being implemented and the early outcomes that it has achieved. This report will provide an important evidence base to inform our investments and practice under *OCHRE*.

I would like to extend my thanks to all the Aboriginal leaders and community members who work tirelessly with me and my Cabinet colleagues to realise the true potential within *OCHRE*, our community-focused plan for Aboriginal affairs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS



NSW continues to lead the way in Aboriginal affairs reform with a forward looking and strengths-based agenda that rejects outdated deficit approaches that focus exclusively on disadvantage.

In delivering this fourth report on the implementation of *OCHRE* I am thrilled to see its reach extend well beyond the initiatives described in the plan. I see the changes in the relationship between Government and Aboriginal communities developing within *OCHRE* initiatives taking flight and positively impacting on the way business is done in many areas including land reforms, nurturing Aboriginal languages, and healing our Stolen Generations.

It has been our unwavering commitment to a self-determining future for Aboriginal communities in NSW and our disciplined approach to working closely with Aboriginal people on all aspects of *OCHRE*'s design, implementation and evaluation that has made this possible. Embedding Aboriginal perspectives and experiences into the foundations of all our work, while building trust with communities by respecting cultural and language protocols, has been both challenging and rewarding.

In looking to the future, our next task will be to consider the evidence that is emerging through the independent and community-led evaluation of *OCHRE* that is currently taking place.

The release of this report next year is timely and will provide all of us who have a role in implementing *OCHRE* with the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to our policy and practice to keep *OCHRE* fresh and relevant.

I would like to acknowledge the chairpersons of the Aboriginal regional alliances whose wealth of experience and wisdom continues to guide and support our efforts. To our government partners, thank you for not only continuing to support *OCHRE* but for taking the core principles of the plan and using them to influence your own practice.

And to the team of people at Aboriginal Affairs who have worked with energy and commitment to advance the social, economic and cultural outcomes for all Aboriginal people in NSW, thank you for another deeply satisfying year.

**Jason Ardler**  
Head of Aboriginal Affairs

# VOICES AND STORIES

## TEACHING ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Teachers and tutors have shared their stories and experiences working within the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. They talk about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal languages, the importance of language to culture, the personal impact of learning language for the students and themselves, and their hopes and dreams for the revival of local Aboriginal languages.

What they have to say reminds us that Aboriginal languages carry knowledge and culture and are a unique and important part of the culture and identity of NSW. You can listen to their stories [here](#).

*“How are they going to learn if we don’t teach them?”*



Auntie Iris Reid talks about her experiences teaching Wiradjuri around the Dubbo area of NSW as part of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest.

*“I just wanted to get our language... out there”*



Lorissa Saville talks about her role as a language tutor in the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest located in the Mid North Coast of NSW.

*“One of the words I really love... gunganbuwawala... let’s all be friends”*



Michael Jarrett, the language teacher for the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest located in the Mid North Coast of NSW, talks about his experiences in the role.

*“My hope... it gives the child back their sense of identity, their sense of belonging to whatever community they come from”*



Auntie Di McNaboe talks about her experiences teaching Wiradjuri and her aspirations for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest in NSW.



*“The students have embraced it with an open heart and mind”*



Mark McLean, a teacher at Lightning Ridge Central School in NSW, talks about his experiences teaching the Yuuwaalaraay language as part of the Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest.

*“We’ve got to keep our language alive”*



Brenda McBride talks about her experiences as a language tutor at the Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest in Lightning Ridge, NSW.

*“I’m hoping that...all students will be immersed in Bundjalung”*



Glen Rhodes, the teacher for the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest in the Northern Rivers area of NSW, talks about his experiences in the role.

*“Without the Elders we wouldn’t know where our language came from”*



Suzanne Freeburn and Shane Caldwell, an Aboriginal Education Officer and the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest tutor talk about their experiences working in the Nest.

## WORKING IN A NEW WAY – LOCAL DECISION MAKING

The process of Local Decision Making is transforming the way that business is done between the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities. Some of the many NSW public servants involved in the process share their experiences of the challenges and rewards in being part of the process.

### Anthony Body

Department of  
Premier and  
Cabinet  
– Southern NSW



*As a public servant you witness lots of activity driven by both Government and Non-Government Organisations done to Aboriginal community. Local Decision Making as a process challenges senior leaders to stop, listen deeply, and ask “why not?” and start to work differently.*

*As lead NSW negotiator of the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation Accord negotiations, Local Decision Making has changed my approach when working inside of Government.*

*Local Decision Making allows communities and Government to build new cooperative relationships around the shared design and delivery of locally developed solutions. In many ways it allows Government and community to blend thinking and processes to develop unique locally appropriate ways of delivering more effective solutions that will, I believe, change the way we work way into the future.*

### Steve Hogan

Aboriginal Affairs  
– Dubbo



*Working with the Regional Alliances through their establishment phases and then onto negotiating an Accord with Government, I have seen the community grasp with both hands the opportunity to make real change at the local and regional level. The Alliances have worked hard to develop their plans and priorities. The authority that Local Decision Making gives to this process by bringing Government to the table to sit down and negotiate on these priorities, means that the work is buoyed by an optimism that will be the catalyst for real change.*

*I think the Local Decision Making process is changing the way the NSW Government does business with the Aboriginal community as it enables a partnership to be built on a level playing field with each stakeholder bringing their own expertise to the table. This partnership is being built on “yindyamarra”, Wiradjuri meaning being respectful, and developed through having open and honest conversations with each other.*



## WORKING IN A NEW WAY – LOCAL DECISION MAKING

**Stephen  
Howarth**

Aboriginal Affairs  
– Bourke



*As an Aboriginal public servant, I can attest to experiencing firsthand the commitment from the NSW Government to ensure our people have a voice at the regional and local level through Local Decision Making. I have observed the commitment from Aboriginal Affairs, the leadership, professionalism, determination, and inclusiveness to ensure there is a mechanism of mutual trust that enables the voice of our people to be heard by Government.*

*Our people now have the opportunity to be front and centre by sitting at the table with Government representatives.*

*Aboriginal Affairs has entrusted me to be the conduit for the Government to our people. The opportunity provided to me has given me the confidence to realise that our people and Government can collaboratively overcome many of the barriers that have previously undermined the willingness to make changes for the betterment of our First Nations people of NSW. I have been overwhelmed yet satisfied that I have been able to achieve this role and have enjoyed the privilege and experience. Through the Local Decision Making process, I am confident our people will be able to enter into negotiations with key stakeholders on a level playing field.*

**Jayne  
Humphreys**

Department of  
Premier and  
Cabinet – Dubbo



*I am involved with the Three Rivers Regional Assembly Local Decision Making Accord process, and work with the NSW Government Lead Negotiator in bringing together the relevant agency staff in the four priority areas identified by the Assembly.*

*The TRRA has identified the four priorities, Education, Economic Development, Health and Housing as very important to the communities that the Assembly represents. Through the Local Decision Making process we have seen that NSW Government agencies need to come to the table prepared to debate and negotiate solutions and outcomes that will benefit the Aboriginal communities of the Three Rivers Region.*

*For me, the Local Decision Making process has shown that the Three Rivers Regional Assembly and NSW Government agencies are willing to work together in a professional and respectful way to achieve high quality outcomes for the Three Rivers communities.*

## WORKING IN A NEW WAY – LOCAL DECISION MAKING

### Seth Merritt

Aboriginal Affairs  
– Illawarra  
South East



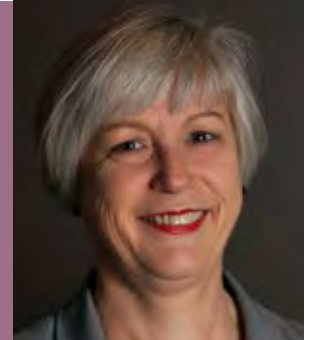
*Sitting at the negotiating table as an observer I witnessed firsthand the intention of Local Decision Making being put into practice. Local Decision Making provides a platform for community to be at the table as equals – on a level playing field – with Government decision makers. It also provides an opportunity for senior NSW Government decision makers to have conversations with community and to develop a better understanding and appreciation of what motivates Aboriginal people. I imagine this would be difficult at times, and challenging.*

*As an Aboriginal public servant who often walks in two worlds, I also found being an observer challenging at times. As a community person I have firsthand knowledge and experience of the very issues being put on the table by the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation but had to be conscious that I was attending in my capacity as a public servant.*

*One thing that stood out to me during this process was the growing respect between both parties as the negotiations progressed. Historically these processes would see the Government holding the reins.*

### Alison Morgan

Department of  
Premier and  
Cabinet – Sydney



*I have been fortunate enough to work closely with Aboriginal communities in the Far West of NSW. The Murdi Paaki Region is a very precious part of Australia. I have learned a great deal about the spirit of the people and the country. Local Decision Making has really driven me to re-think my core beliefs as a public servant; “what should a government do? How should we do it?” and “how can governments empower people to do for themselves?” My work with Local Decision Making hasn’t changed the world overnight but we have pushed the boundaries, improved the lives of people from the region and set the stage for profound changes in the near future.*

*Most importantly – we did it as community and Government working together.*



## WORKING IN A NEW WAY – LOCAL DECISION MAKING

### Kristy Swain

Aboriginal Affairs  
– Coffs Harbour



*Working on Local Decision Making has given me confidence that the NSW Government, and in particular Aboriginal Affairs, is prepared to lead the way in supporting Aboriginal communities to become self-determining.*

*Prior to Local Decision Making, I felt there was a real disconnect between what the community needed and wanted and what the NSW Government was delivering. There was also little means for the community to communicate this to Government. Local Decision Making has provided a clear channel of communication for Alliances to express their views and priorities.*

*My change in perspective has led me to become more consultative with community and more inclusive in whom I consult within community. It has provided me with a fresh perception of what Government can do at a regional and local level to support community in terms of sharing data, information about the financial investments that Government makes to community and the scope of programs and services being delivered to community.*

### Ryan Taylor

Aboriginal Affairs  
– Tamworth



*The Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance has worked tirelessly over the past 24 months to establish themselves in the region and develop a broad membership of stakeholders and interested community members to contribute to the success of Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance's first Accord with the NSW Government.*

*As an Aboriginal man working within the NSW public service and also supporting the Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance through the Local Decision Making process, I had first hand experience of the opportunities and challenges that Government and community experience with this initiative.*

*I struggled at first to promote the Local Decision Making process without seeing the potential it had for the community. It was a very new and different way of doing business. One thing I have realised is that change is not going to happen overnight and Local Decision Making requires a long-term commitment if it is to be successful. We all need to manage our expectations about what can be achieved just now – both Government and community. I can now say I promote Local Decision Making with confidence, whilst wearing both my community and my public servant hat.*



# ABOUT OCHRE



## History

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs was established by the NSW Government in late 2011 to inform a new plan – *OCHRE* – to improve education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW and to enhance service delivery to support these goals.

Extensive consultations with Aboriginal communities, stakeholders and industry gave some 2,700 people the opportunity to contribute to the Taskforce's work.

*OCHRE* was released by the NSW Government in Parliament on 5 April 2013 enabling implementation to begin. *OCHRE: Four years on* is the fourth annual report that takes stock of progress to date.

The full text of the *OCHRE* plan and previous annual reports can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).

## Aims

*OCHRE* aims to support strong Aboriginal communities in which Aboriginal people actively influence and fully participate in social, economic and cultural life. To achieve this, *OCHRE* identifies the need to:

- focus on creating opportunities for economic empowerment
- support more Aboriginal young people to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs
- support more Aboriginal students to stay at school
- grow local Aboriginal leaders' and communities' capacity to drive their own solutions
- make both NSW Government and communities more accountable for the money they spend.
- teach more Aboriginal languages and culture to build people's pride and identity.

## Key initiatives

### Staying accountable

- A robust accountability framework includes independent monitoring and assessment, program evaluation and a commitment to working with Aboriginal communities to determine how to assess success – as well as regular public reporting on progress and lessons learnt.
- Solution brokerage supports a creative approach to resolving issues that “fall between the cracks”.

### Local languages, local cultures

- Five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests provide communities with opportunities to revitalise, reclaim and maintain their traditional languages through the teaching of languages in public schools. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language.



### Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed

- Four Opportunity Hubs provide personalised support for Aboriginal young people in their local area, particularly those at risk of leaving school. By working with the community, businesses and other stakeholders, Opportunity Hubs match the needs of individuals to the local services, agencies or mentors best placed to help them. The Hubs are run by experienced organisations with strong links to Aboriginal community organisations, local businesses, regional industries and services for young people at risk, which hold a deep knowledge of local conditions and issues.
- Fifteen Connected Communities schools put local schools at the heart of rural and remote communities. By using Schools as Community Hubs to provide support from birth into early childhood, across the school years and on into further training and employment, the Connected Communities strategy works in partnership with local Aboriginal leaders and communities to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for young Aboriginal people.

### Growing jobs and economic opportunities

- The NSW Aboriginal Economic Prosperity Framework (AEPF) is a suite of integrated commitments to support participation by Aboriginal people in the NSW economy. The AEPF brings together actions in the areas of education, training, employment, housing, business development and land rights.
- As part of the AEPF, the NSW Government and industry partners are working together through Industry-Based Agreements (IBAs) to identify and develop more jobs and business opportunities for Aboriginal people and are supporting Aboriginal people to stay engaged in private sector jobs over the long term.
- Changes to land rights legislation, through the *Aboriginal Land Rights Amendments Act (2014)*, make the land claims process faster, more flexible and more efficient and helps deliver social, economic and cultural benefits.

### Local communities, local initiatives

- Local Decision Making is leading the way in supporting the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities to work together to ensure communities have a genuine voice in determining what services are delivered in their communities, and how they are delivered. This requires the NSW Government to do business differently with Aboriginal communities including “opening the books” to Aboriginal people to show what we are doing and what we are spending.
- Seven regional alliances have been established to represent their communities and negotiate with the NSW Government to sign an Accord which commits both to work on issues of mutual interest and priority.

### Healing

- By acknowledging the intergenerational trauma and loss suffered by Aboriginal people, *OCHRE* initiatives advance the dialogue across NSW to promote healing.



## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



### Building the evidence

- Aboriginal communities determined what a successful initiative looks like and how to assess it.
- Local community fieldwork plans developed and data collection commenced.
- Published the findings of research exploring the devolution of decision-making power from the NSW public service to Aboriginal communities.
- Published the findings of a literature review and case study examining the particular challenges of Aboriginal public servants in achieving participatory research and evaluation in their local community.
- Published the findings of a literature review of approaches to Aboriginal affairs policies and a case study of *OCHRE* development and implementation.
- Continued research into the practice of obtaining Aboriginal community consent and co-designing the *OCHRE* evaluation.



### Engaging Aboriginal students, schools and employers via Opportunity Hubs

- 178 schools engaged with a Hub, up from 96\*.
- 2,291 students connected to a Hub, up from 1,690\*.
- Personal Learning Plans developed for 650 students linked to Career Plans, up from 584\*.
- 403 job and training opportunities banked with the Hubs, up from 236\*.
- 126 school leavers transitioned to further study or employment.



### Promoting Aboriginal Economic Prosperity

- Independent review of state-wide Industry-Based Agreements completed.
- Progress made towards establishing an Aboriginal Centre for Excellence in Western Sydney.



### Boosting NSW Government spending with Aboriginal businesses

- Since *OCHRE* was released in April 2013, the NSW Government has spent an estimated \$86.3 million with Aboriginal businesses to June 2017, an increase of just under \$22 million from June 2016.<sup>1</sup>



### Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed at school

- Decreased the proportion of Aboriginal students in Connected Communities schools in the bottom two bands of NAPLAN from 2016 to 2017. For Year 3 reading the proportion decreased by 20 percentage points, from nearly 68 per cent to 48 per cent. For Year 5 reading, and for Years 3 and 5 numeracy, the decreases were between eight and 11 percentage points.
- Improved the proportion of Aboriginal students in the top two bands for Year 3 students in Connected Communities schools from 2016 to 2017. Caution is warranted as the proportions are based on a very small number of students, however, for Year 3 reading the proportion in the top two bands increased from four per cent to nine per cent, and for Year 3 numeracy from three per cent to seven per cent.<sup>2</sup>



### Strengthening Aboriginal languages and culture

- 67 pre-schools, primary and secondary schools engaged in the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, up from 60\*.
- 6,379 students learning an Aboriginal language, up from 5,166\*.
- \$194,702 granted to 156 organisations to support NAIDOC Week cultural events and activities.
- The *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* enacted on 24 October 2017, following 32 community conversations in 16 NSW locations involving 377 participants and written submissions.



### Building opportunities for Aboriginal people in the public sector

- 3.2 per cent of employees identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in 2017 compared to 2.9 per cent in 2014.



### Talking about healing

- Six *OCHRE* Healing Forums planned.



### Empowering Aboriginal communities to make decisions locally

- Seven regional alliances operating to represent the interests of their communities.
- One emerging regional governance structure supported.
- One Accord signed directing NSW Government and community actions on agreed priorities for the Murdi Paaki region.
- Two Accords in final stages between the NSW Government and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly and Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation.

\* Information reported in *OCHRE: Three years on*

1. Data are subject to improvements and data extracted at different points in time should not be used to draw trends. The method to calculate the spend in 2017 differed from that used in 2016, as a result the data for 2016 has been recalculated.

2. As there are only around 130 Aboriginal students who participated in each of the Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN tests in Connected Communities schools in 2017, there is likely to be considerable volatility from year to year in the figures provided.



## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT



### It's all about trust

In implementing and evaluating *OCHRE*, trust is developed between Government and community at two levels. The first is through *direct contact* that builds a personal relationship between those of us who directly implement an initiative and the community members who are impacted by the initiative. Local Decision Making is a case in point. It has taken time and commitment to change the nature of conversations between the NSW Government and Aboriginal regional alliances. The relationship is shifting from one of service provider-service recipient, to a genuine partnership in which Aboriginal people participate in decisions made about the investments that the NSW Government makes in their communities.

The second is *trust that is transferred* through the relationships forged between contracted providers and community members who are impacted by *OCHRE*. For the independent evaluation of *OCHRE*, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of NSW has been contracted by the NSW Government to deliver a community-led evaluation. This means Aboriginal people, not public servants, will set the measures of success for *OCHRE*. As a result, the public servants who implement *OCHRE* initiatives are a subject of the evaluation. To protect of the independence of this evaluation, they have had to step back.

It has been critical for the SPRC to build both a strong relationship with Aboriginal communities, while at the same time overcoming a legacy of mistrust when it comes to research. Regional staff of Aboriginal Affairs have played a key role in building trust amongst communities for the evaluation. Successfully negotiating the tensions between wariness and willingness has required regional staff and the independent evaluators to build community trust and a preparedness to take risks.

### A continuing conversation

Communication is the foundation on which trust is built in any relationship. For Government, one of the primary mechanisms to promote communication is through community consultation. In building trust with Aboriginal communities impacted by the implementation of *OCHRE*, it has been important to move towards a *continuing conversation* between Government and community to support an ongoing two-way exchange based on mutual respect and cooperation.

This lesson continues to resonate across all the *OCHRE* initiatives. For public servants working on the Connected Communities strategy, vast efforts have been made to increase communication and engagement with parents and community members to support their participation



in the current evaluation, led by the Department of Education's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE). For Training Services NSW, the transition in the management of Opportunity Hubs to the regional operating arm of the Department of Industry represents increased regional and local engagement with Hub providers and community members who access this program. For the *OCHRE* Healing Forums, there has been an unwavering support for engagement and community-led planning to support the forums which will facilitate local conversations between community and the NSW Government.

## Community leadership

The NSW Government's commitment to the centrality of Aboriginal communities in the design and delivery of policy and services can spread thin the time, attention and resources of Aboriginal community leaders. Aboriginal leaders need to continually prioritise their time according to their community's main concerns. This means at any one time an *OCHRE* initiative or an evaluation process may not be a high priority, compared to other responsibilities. What can appear to be a delay in either implementation or evaluation is, however, the result of respect and power-sharing.

While resourcing challenges affect all *OCHRE* initiatives, it is important to acknowledge and respect the time invested by Aboriginal leaders and community members and the knowledge so generously shared to support the successful implementation and evaluation of *OCHRE*. Nowhere is this more evident than in Local Decision Making, in which leaders of Aboriginal regional alliances and members invest significant hours to participate in formal negotiations with the NSW Government.

## Local approaches

The commitment to local approaches in the *OCHRE* plan drives continual adjustments to our practice, as Government engages with local communities and come to better understand local priorities and needs. The decision to trial Regional Industry-Based Agreements not only aligns with the core principles of *OCHRE*, but is supported by the evidence captured in an independent review of state-wide Industry-Based Agreements conducted by Centium. A copy of the Centium report can found [here](#).

While the evaluation of *OCHRE* was originally conceived as a single evaluation involving seven locations, it is, in practice, seven evaluations spanning 30 communities. Working in this way delivers many benefits and opportunities, particularly in developing quality evidence informed by the knowledge and experiences of those who are directly impacted by *OCHRE* and its initiatives.

## Skill and knowledge

*OCHRE* represents the most significant shift in the relationship between the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities to date. The authority that *OCHRE* provides public servants to work differently to support the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal communities presents an exciting professional opportunity for the sector. *OCHRE* supports innovative and flexible practice by adopting a strengths-based approach that capitalises on the assets and skills that communities possess, moving away from traditional approaches that focused on deficits.



# OCHRE: FOUR YEARS ON REPORTING BY INITIATIVE







## STAYING ACCOUNTABLE

The implementation of *OCHRE* is underpinned by a robust accountability framework that includes independent monitoring and assessment, regular public reporting and an approach to evaluation that has Aboriginal communities setting the measures of success.

Solution brokerage requires NSW Government agencies to work creatively with each other to find practical solutions to issues that “fall between the cracks”. Under *Premier’s Memorandum 2015-02-Solution Brokerage*, administrative power is vested in the Head of Aboriginal Affairs to “declare” an issue for solution brokerage. Once an issue for solution brokerage has been declared, an Officer in Charge is appointed to manage the development and implementation of a Response Plan within six months.

Solution brokerage incorporates a three-tiered approach that enables Response Plans to be individually tailored to suit the complexity and scale of a particular issue. Tier One is activated for local or community-specific issues, Tier Two for more complex local or regional issues and Tier 3 for major policy reform, including state-wide issues.

Information about Solution Brokerage can be found [here](#).

### Independent oversight

*OCHRE* Project Managers provide information to the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) who independently monitors and assesses *OCHRE*. Information about the work of the Deputy Ombudsman can be found [here](#).

### Evaluation

#### Lead Agency

Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Education. Information about the evaluation of *OCHRE* can be found [here](#).

### Key achievements

- Approval obtained from all Aboriginal communities involved in the evaluation of *OCHRE* for the evaluation to take place in their communities.
- Approval obtained from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee to enable the implementation of the evaluation methods requested by Aboriginal communities.
- Co-design workshops held with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, Tamworth Opportunity Hub, Campbelltown Opportunity Hub, the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest and North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest to jointly determine what the local communities viewed as success and how it might be assessed. Data collection commenced at these workshops.
- Independent and expert advice provided to Aboriginal Affairs and its NSW Government partners by the *OCHRE* evaluation Steering Committee, on an ongoing basis.
- Trial commenced of a ‘how to guide’ to improve research and evaluation practices when working with Aboriginal people and communities.
- A literature review and case study illustrating the design and implementation of *OCHRE* published, which can be found [here](#).
- Aboriginal Affairs Research Agenda finalised, including a chapter on the learnings from the evaluation to date. The Research Agenda can be found [here](#).
- A study into the process of obtaining community consent completed and the findings are due to be published in the near future.
- Research commenced to identify the learnings arising through the co-design process.



## Solution Brokerage

### Lead Agency

The Head of Aboriginal Affairs has the power to “declare” an issue for Solution Brokerage. Solution Brokerage activities involve multiple stakeholders, depending on the nature of issue, not just Aboriginal Affairs.

Information about Solution Brokerage can be found [here](#).

### Key achievements

#### Early childhood in the Murdi Paaki region, Far West

- This Tier 2 issue was declared in April 2015 to develop an integrated and sustainable early childhood service delivery model for the Murdi Paaki region, as reflected in the signed Accord between the NSW Government and Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.
- The Officers in Charge for this issue are based in the Department of Education (Early Childhood and Education Care) and Aboriginal Affairs.
- In 2017 Aboriginal Affairs commenced discussions within the NSW Government aimed at improving governance arrangements and accountability. The proposed new governance arrangements within the NSW Government will be discussed and formally confirmed with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

#### Economic development with the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, far south coast

- This Tier 2 issue was declared in July 2015 to resolve the long-standing issues for the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council arising from the 1999 Eden Regional Forest Agreement, including those issues relating to the management of public land, economic development opportunities and access to natural resources for cultural purposes.
- The Officer in Charge is a Director in Aboriginal Affairs.
- Resolution of all the relevant issues was achieved, resulting in the signing of an Accord between the NSW Government, Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Bega Valley Shire Council. The Accord commits all parties to ensuring the delivery of tangible, relevant outcomes in the areas of; training and workforce development,

access to and use of National Parks for tourism and cultural purposes, land transfers (including the first Aboriginal Land Agreement) and land use and planning support. Further information can be found [here](#).

#### Coordination of land use planning and municipal infrastructure, discrete communities

- This Tier 3 issue (major policy reform integration) was declared in September 2015 to develop a coordinated response to land use planning and municipal infrastructure issues on Aboriginal lands across NSW.
- A Deputy Secretary in the Department of Planning and Environment is the Officer In Charge.
- The Aboriginal Community Land and Infrastructure Project (known as “ACLIP”), aims to:
  - Standardise planning and infrastructure administration on 61 discrete Aboriginal communities located on former missions and reserves
  - Review planning controls across the 61 discrete Aboriginal communities to facilitate subdivision of residential land
  - Support Local Aboriginal Land Councils to leverage greater economic benefits from land acquired through the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983*.
- Initiatives implemented by the Department of Planning and Environment include: increasing the number of Aboriginal staff within the Department, offering university scholarships for planning courses for Aboriginal people, providing training to increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities to interact with the planning system and carrying out strategic assessments of Aboriginal landholdings through regional planning.

### Building community resilience in Bowraville

- This Tier 3 issue (major policy reform integration) was declared in September 2016 to respond to the complex needs of the Bowraville community.
- The declaration aims to address issues adversely impacting community resilience, cohesion, healing, social harmony and quality of life. This solution Brokerage matter is uniquely inclusive of the whole Bowraville community.
- Significant work was undertaken prior to declaration including identifying issues and developing governance in the community and across all levels of government.
- A broad range of issues were identified through community consultation and discussions. Issues include affordable housing, youth, health, education, training, employment, anti-social behaviour, and the isolation for Aboriginal people living in the Aboriginal mission outside the town of Bowraville. The Bowraville community identified, “Our Children, Our Future” as the theme reflecting the community consensus that the focus should be on changing the cycle of disadvantage and lack of opportunity for young people.
- Local governance for Bowraville is critical for Solution Brokerage. A Community Reference Group was established to be the voice of the Bowraville community and to ensure that their needs and aspirations are captured and the Bowraville Task Group to provide support and advice and drive reform across government.
- The Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment is the Officer In Charge.
- Significant work has been undertaken by members of the Bowraville community and multiple NSW Government agencies. Achievements pre and post brokerage are extensive and include: continuing support and advocacy for the families of the murdered children alongside supporting the families to develop their own communication protocols when interacting with the media, and funding and delivering Red Dust Healing for families affected by the Bowraville murders; reinstatement of the ROADMAPS Youth Program, establishing a Health Working Group that continues to bring together the health sector to broker solution around accessibility of local health services including mental health services; establishing a support class that placed an additional teacher, student support and learning officer into the local school; auditing compliance of housing renovations; providing a pathway and specific support to family groups referred to FaCS; and providing funding for the Bowraville Inception Social Enterprise Project, Community Connection project, Bowraville Beyond School project, and the Bowra L2P project.
- A response plan for implementation is being finalised. A local Accord will be negotiated between the Bowraville community and the NSW Government committing all parties to a forward work plan addressing the issues raised by this community, including increased access to public and community transport and the reinstatement of youth programs for Bowraville’s young people.







# PUTTING SCHOOLS AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES

## Opportunity Hubs

Opportunity Hubs are providing young Aboriginal people with clear pathways and incentives to stay at school and transition into employment, training or further education. Opportunity Hub providers work with Aboriginal young people, families and communities to help build expectations for success. There are four providers: MTC Australia in Campbelltown; TAFE NSW in Dubbo; Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) in Tamworth; and Aboriginal Employment Strategy in the Upper Hunter.

Further information about Opportunity Hubs can be found [here](#).

## Lead agency

Training Services NSW, Department of Industry.

## Key achievements

- All four Hubs continued to build relationships locally with industry, schools, employers and education and training providers which improve the outcomes from training and employment for Aboriginal young people.
- Hubs raised students' awareness about bullying, drugs, mentoring, leadership and cultural activities.
- Hubs continued a partnership with the Australian Army, which hosted a meeting of all four Hubs and officers from the Department of Industry at Victoria Barracks in May 2017. Hubs continued to build relationships with the Army at the local level through work experience programs, mentoring and excursions for students.
- All four Opportunity Hubs had their funding agreements extended until 31 March 2019.
- Highlights from the four Hubs are described below.
  - **Tamworth Hub** team has grown to four members. Three of these team members (including two trainees) were supported by the Hubs as students. For these students to secure employment through the Hub and give back to the program that helped them is a great outcome. The Tamworth Hub also secured funding to provide mentoring to young musicians who will go on to perform at the Tamworth Country Music Festival. In addition the Hub participated in the inaugural NSW

Girls Academy Showcase, strengthened its relationship with the Clontarf students from Oxley and Quirindi High Schools, encouraged students to be volunteers at the local Midnight Basketball and supported Aboriginal culture to be expressed and celebrated in local schools as part of NAIDOC Week celebrations.

- **Upper Hunter Hub** appointed a Program Mentor who has been successfully delivering cultural programs in schools, including dance lessons and a boys' mentoring program.
- **Campbelltown Hub** held a successful Indigenous Careers Expo in May 2017. With more than 40 stalls, the event was attended by more than 130 students from Years 9 to 12 at 13 high schools in Greater Campbelltown.
- **Dubbo Hub** participated in a NSW Girls Academy Showcase in Dubbo and ran a series of workshops on youth leadership and cultural identity. More than 160 Aboriginal girls from 10 high schools attended the event, which included cultural activities, guest speakers, and a rugby touch tournament.

## Monitoring data

From 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017

- The number of students participating in the Hubs increased from 1,690 in 2016 to 2,291.
- The number of NSW Government and non-government schools engaged by the four Hubs increased from 96 in 2016 to 178.
- The number of Year 9–12 students with career plans linked to their personal learning plans increased from 584 in 2016 to 650.
- 126 school leavers who participated in the Hubs made the transition to further study or employment.
- 403 job and training opportunities were banked with the four Hubs.

*Note: while Opportunity Hubs were established specifically to support Aboriginal students, many schools engage in the Hubs in ways which involve both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in activities. Hubs have not previously reported non-Aboriginal students in their monthly and quarterly reports. They are now doing so.*

## Connected Communities

Connected Communities schools are working in partnership with local Aboriginal leaders and the community to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students and all students. The Connected Communities strategy puts schools at the heart of the community, by positioning them as hubs to facilitate support from birth into early childhood, across the school years and beyond into further training and employment.

Further information about Connected Communities can be found [here](#).

### Lead agency

Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement, NSW Department of Education.

### Key achievements

- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) camps delivered in collaboration with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and Dr Chris Matthews, chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance. The camps are designed to encourage greater participation in STEM subjects.
- The Healing and Wellbeing model implemented, which helps Connected Communities schools address the current and historic oppression and trauma which are often experienced in their communities. This initiative will foster a skilled Aboriginal workforce able to work effectively with young people in schools.
- Workshops on project-based learning held for key staff in Connected Communities schools to increase their understanding of the practical and useful strategies this approach offers. By using real-world problems and team-based solutions, project-based learning has been found to engage students more effectively. The planning and teaching of project-based learning in Connected Communities schools will continue to be monitored.
- Aboriginal cultural education programs and Aboriginal language lessons delivered by Elders and community-based language tutors. The programs are supported by local AECGs.
- The Connecting to Country cultural immersion program delivered to all Connected Communities schools by local AECGs.

- Agreement reached with the NSW AECG to deliver the *Healthy culture: healthy country* program to all Connected Communities schools.

### Monitoring data

The 2017 NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) results indicate substantial improvements in reading and writing for Year 3 and Year 5 Aboriginal students in Connected Communities schools. Numeracy results are also somewhat higher compared to the previous year for these cohorts.<sup>1</sup>

### Reading

#### Strong improvement in Year 3 and Year 5 results

The Department of Education's Centre for Education and Statistics Evaluation (CESE) advised the proportion of Aboriginal students in the bottom two bands of NAPLAN decreased substantially for Year 3 and Year 5 students in Connected Communities schools compared with previous years. For Year 3 students there was a 20 percentage point decrease between 2016 and 2017, from almost 68 per cent down to 48 per cent in the bottom two reading bands. For Year 5 students there was a decrease of eight percentage points, from 59 per cent to 51 per cent. Aboriginal students in non-Connected Community schools showed only a small improvement, with decreases of four and two percentage points, for Year 3 and Year 5 respectively, in the proportion in the bottom two bands for reading between 2016 and 2017.

The proportion of students in the top two bands also improved considerably for Year 3 Aboriginal students at Connected Communities schools. From 2016 to 2017, the proportion in the top two bands for Year 3 reading doubled, from four per cent to nine per cent. This represents an increase from six student to 11 students.

### Numeracy

#### Moderate improvement in Year 3 and Year 5 results

CESE advised that for Years 3 and 5 Aboriginal students in Connected Communities schools, the proportion of students in the bottom two bands of NAPLAN decreased

<sup>1</sup> As there are only around 130 Aboriginal students who participated in each of the Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN tests in Connected Communities schools in 2017, there is likely to be considerable volatility from year to year in the figures provided above. It is important to look at growth trends over a longer period of time rather than year to year changes in order to assess progress.



in 2017, compared with previous years. From 2016 to 2017 there were decreases of eight and 11 percentage points in the proportion in the bottom two numeracy bands, for Year 3 and Year 5 Aboriginal students respectively, although the proportions remain above 50 per cent.

Similar improvements were evident in mean scores and the proportion of students in the top two bands for Year 3 students in Connected Communities schools. From 2016 to 2017, the proportion in the top two bands for numeracy increased from three per cent to seven per cent for Year 3 Aboriginal students in Connected Communities schools. This represents an increase from five students to nine students.

NAPLAN results for Year 5 Aboriginal students in Connected Communities schools for 2017 were similar to 2016.



# GROWING JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

## Aboriginal economic prosperity

The NSW Government is committed to employing more Aboriginal people, to using its purchasing power to drive Aboriginal employment and business development in the private and non-government sectors, and to supporting Aboriginal people to acquire the education, skills and economic agency necessary to participate in the NSW economy and compete successfully for jobs.

To achieve these aims, *Growing NSW's first economy*, a framework to promote Aboriginal economic prosperity in NSW, was developed. *Growing NSW's first economy* is not a stand-alone, Aboriginal-specific policy but an integrated set of new and existing programs which help Aboriginal people engage productively with the mainstream economy. The framework also supports the NSW Government's priority to foster economic growth. The framework is available [here](#).

Unlike previous approaches, the framework does not prescribe specific programs or initiatives. Instead, departments are responsible for delivering the NSW Government's commitments to Aboriginal participation. Each one will report on its own performance in meeting the targets it has been set, including those in the Premiers Priorities, available [here](#).

### Lead agency

Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education.

### Key achievements

Key achievements towards the commitments in *Growing NSW's first economy* are set out in the table.

## Industry-Based Agreements

The NSW Government is forging partnerships with peak industry bodies to support Aboriginal employment and enterprise through Industry-Based Agreements (IBAs). Under IBAs, industry sectors work with the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities to identify and develop sustainable jobs and business opportunities for Aboriginal people and to support Aboriginal people to stay engaged in employment over the long term.

Further information about Industry-Based Agreements can be found [here](#).

### Lead agency

Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education.

### Key achievements

- Action plans continued under the NSW Minerals Council, Master Builders Association of NSW and NSW Civil Contractors Federation IBAs.
- An Industry-Based Agreement signed with the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce in October 2016. The agreement's purpose is to make business advisory, support and development services more appropriate and accessible for Aboriginal businesses. It also seeks to increase awareness and to clear pathways for Aboriginal businesses to access NSW Government procurement opportunities.
- Negotiations progressed on Regional Industry-Based Agreements with the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly through the Local Decision Making Accord process.
- An independent review of state-wide IBAs completed which examines successful examples to inform the design and implementation of Regional IBAs.



ECONOMIC PILLARS	NSW GOVERNMENT PRIORITY	COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN NSW	PROGRESS
Jobs and employment	Public sector diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NSW Public Service to double the number of Aboriginal people in senior leadership roles</li> <li>Aboriginal employment in all clusters and salary bands to reach 1.8% by 2021</li> </ul>	<p>The NSW Government is on track to double the number of Aboriginal people in senior leadership roles in the NSW public service by 2025. The number of Aboriginal Senior Leaders increased from 57 in 2014 to 71 in 2017</p> <p>The number of Aboriginal employees in the NSW Government sector is still growing</p> <p>At 3.2 per cent of the NSW Government workforce, Aboriginal employment in the NSW Government is the highest it has ever been.</p> <p>2014 2.9%</p> <p>2015 3.1%</p> <p>2016 3.1%</p> <p>2017 3.2%</p>
	Creating jobs and supporting businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every government construction contract over \$1 million (and/or contracts specifically for Aboriginal communities), includes a target for expenditure on Aboriginal participation. The target must be at least 1.5% of the construction and design costs</li> <li>The NSW Government will strengthen its current procurement commitment beyond construction contracts</li> </ul>	A new Aboriginal Procurement Policy for goods and services procurement is being developed and will further support Aboriginal participation beyond the existing Aboriginal Participation in Construction (APIC) Policy commitments
Education and skills	Better Aboriginal education outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% of Aboriginal children to be enrolled in the year before full-time school in quality early childhood education programs</li> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy to increase by 30%</li> </ul>	<p>In 2016, 98.1 per cent of Aboriginal children were enrolled in the year before school in early childhood education (calculated using ABS data, and confirmed by the Commonwealth under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access). This represents a significant increase on 2015 (86.8%) and 2014 (79.6%). [Note: While this participation rate meets the target in <i>Growing NSW's first economy</i> in 2016, there is significant data volatility in measuring Aboriginal participation, and these results should be interpreted with caution.]</p> <p>The State Priority is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30 per cent by 2019. The target for 2019 is 11.6 per cent. Results in 2016 remained similar to baseline levels at 9.1 per cent. Official results for 2017 are not yet available, but early data suggests the proportion is likely to exceed 10 per cent</p> <p>The official 2017 results are expected to be available early in December 2017</p>
	Boosting apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% of 25,000 Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund scholarships to be awarded to Aboriginal young people</li> <li>Completion rate for Aboriginal apprentices and trainees to reach 65% by 2021</li> </ul>	<p>The NSW Aboriginal Training and Employment Initiative is a significant new investment in Aboriginal economic participation.</p> <p>Under the Initiative, each Training Services NSW regional office will employ an Aboriginal Training Services Manager, Aboriginal Training Coordinator and Aboriginal Training Advisor. These will deliver front-line employment services for Aboriginal people, including the development of career pathways. Most are already on duty. NSW is already likely to exceed its target of having five per cent of Aboriginal-owned businesses accessing the Government's supported advisory services each year. These new positions will ensure even more Aboriginal businesses receive NSW Government support in future</p>
Economic agency	Building infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All regional and district plans to include Aboriginal economic participation by 2019</li> </ul>	<p>Regional plans provide for the State's future housing, job and infrastructure needs and for a healthy environment. All regional plans now include Aboriginal economic participation. This commitment has been achieved well within the set timeframe. As a result, several Aboriginal Land Councils will now work with the NSW Government to identify and assess the strategic economic value of their landholdings</p> <p>Some local councils have also indicated they will work with Aboriginal communities to develop Aboriginal tourism and other industries that will benefit Aboriginal communities</p>
	Making NSW the easiest State to start a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 5% of Aboriginal-owned and operated small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in NSW are supported by the NSW Government's small business advisory services each year</li> </ul>	<p>Target exceeded for 2017 and on track to be met for 2018.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>381 Indigenous businesses have accessed services from July to September 2017, of which 45 accessed Business Connect and 336 the Aboriginal Enterprise Development Officer program</li> <li>The new Business Connect program commenced from January 2017, replacing Small Biz Connect services</li> </ul>
	Creating sustainable social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal households successfully transitioning from social housing into private rental and/or home ownership to increase by 20% by 2019</li> </ul>	<p>Target exceeded for 2017 and on track to be met for 2018</p> <p>The 20 per cent target represents an increase from 323 to 388 Aboriginal Households transitioning to private rental and/or home ownership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the 2016/2017 financial year, 380 Aboriginal tenants had made a positive exit from social housing.</li> </ul>

## Aboriginal employment in the public sector

The NSW Public Service Commission is leading the public sector's efforts to employ more Aboriginal people, improve retention, and create more pathways into senior roles.

Further information about the *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy* can be found available [here](#).

### Lead agency

NSW Public Service Commission.

### Key achievements

- The Aboriginal Employment and Development Program continued to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island employees who would like to join the public sector. Nine Aboriginal employees who were new to the sector took part. A further intake of up to 20 employees is planned for 2018. Under the program, participants complete a diploma-level qualification while working in a temporary capacity within one agency. Once qualified, participants who have performed satisfactorily move from temporary employment into a full-time role appropriate to their qualification.
- The Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program continued to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who aspire to leadership roles in the public sector. 120 graduates have successfully completed the program.

### Monitoring data

- At the NSW public sector workforce census date in 2017, 8,615 employees or 3.2 per cent of the total workforce, identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, compared with 2.9 per cent in 2015.
- The number of Aboriginal Senior Leaders increased from 57, or 2.6 per cent of Senior Leaders in 2014 to 71 in 2017, or 3.7 per cent of Senior Leaders.

## Complementing OCHRE

### Key achievements

The NSW Government also supported Aboriginal economic prosperity by:

- establishing a western Sydney Aboriginal Centre for Excellence (ACE). Intended to provide Aboriginal young people of the region with the skills and expertise they need to be competitive in the contemporary labour market, ACE will partner with industry groups and local employers so that training packages match labour market needs and opportunities.
- progressing Aboriginal Land Agreements (ALAs) which settle multiple land claims at the same time, rather than one by one as under the original process. Four pilot locations are trialling this approach – the Northern Beaches (Sydney), Federation (Riverina), Tamworth and Tweed Local Government Areas. Smaller, separate negotiations are also under way at Eden, Brewarrina, the Central Coast and Griffith.
- engaging Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Office of Water to work together under the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program to ensure water and sewerage systems in eligible discrete Aboriginal communities are maintained. The Office of Water is monitoring, repairing and maintaining the water supply and sewerage systems. Management plans that identify potential risks to the water supply and sewerage systems are also being prepared for each community. An independent review of the program has found that it is achieving its objectives and bringing value to Aboriginal communities.
- working with other NSW Government and Commonwealth agencies to develop training, employment and business opportunities in western Sydney under the Commonwealth Government's City Deals Program. The *Growing the first economy of western Sydney* project will use the considerable NSW Government infrastructure expenditure in Western Sydney over coming years, including the second Sydney airport at Badgery's Creek, to deliver improved outcomes for Aboriginal residents.





# LOCAL COMMUNITIES, LOCAL INITIATIVES

## Local Decision Making

Local Decision Making (LDM) is transforming the way Aboriginal communities and government work together by giving Aboriginal communities a progressively bigger say in what services are delivered in their communities, and how they are delivered. The initiative marks a significant departure from paternalistic past practices and “opens the books” to Aboriginal people. Ethical and participatory evaluation processes also put decisions about how success is measured in the hands of Aboriginal people.

Through LDM, communities are progressively delegated increased decision-making powers once their capacity is proven and agreed conditions are met. Government service delivery will be directed through binding agreements between Aboriginal regional alliances and government (called Accords) that outline how priorities will be addressed.

Further information about Local Decision Making can be found [here](#).

### Lead agency

Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education.

### Key achievements

- Ongoing support for seven regional alliances via direct resources and in-kind support, through the secondment of staff. Aboriginal Affairs continues to work closely with those alliances in the establishment and start-up phase in an effort to strengthen their capacity and preparedness to negotiate an Accord with the NSW Government.
- An audit of social housing providers and assets in the Far West was conducted by the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly which will form the basis of negotiations with the NSW Government on the development and implementation of a social housing model.
- Accord negotiations initiated with the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly.

- The Good Governance Guidelines Review completed. Stakeholders from regional alliances and the NSW Government were consulted throughout 2017. The purpose was to hear directly from Aboriginal regional alliances and public-sector stakeholders about where both the guidelines and related practices might be strengthened.
- A Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference held in November 2016. A report documenting the outcomes of the conference published in June 2017.
- The Local Decision Making Policy and Operational Framework updated in 2017 to reflect lessons learnt from the conference as well as insights from the Accord negotiations with the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly.
- The UNSW Social Policy Research Centre engaged to evaluate the Accord negotiation process between the NSW Government and the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly.

### Monitoring data

- Seven regional alliances operating to represent the interests of their communities.
- One emerging regional governance structure supported.
- One Accord signed directing NSW Government and community actions on agreed priorities for the Murdi Paaki region.
- Two Accords in final stages between the NSW Government and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly and Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation.

## Complementing OCHRE

### Key achievements

The NSW Government also supported Aboriginal community governance by:

- continuing to work with community working parties across NSW
- investing in the development of policies and tools to support collaboration between government and Aboriginal communities, including updates to the OCHRE Good Governance Guidelines and the Local Decision Making Accord process, which continues to inform negotiations between government and Aboriginal communities more broadly
- sharing lessons learned and building practice within government and with other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas to improve the way government works with Aboriginal communities, including by hosting *Creating a new relationship*, an interstate forum on Australian governments and Aboriginal nations (August 2017)
- providing financial and in-kind support for the Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (south western NSW).

## Strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs

The NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal non-government organisations (NGOs) to take up leadership roles across a wide range of relevant sectors and to progressively increase their role in programs and activities.

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat NSW (AbSec) and FACS are continuing to work together to build the capacity of existing Aboriginal NGOs to provide out-of-home care services to Aboriginal children and young people as part of a Growth and Partnership Project.

Following a co-design approach with AbSec, FACS committed to the *Plan on a Page for Aboriginal Children and Young People 2015-2021* with strategic directions to build capacity in the Aboriginal child and family sector in NSW. Following on from this, FACS is developing an

industry development strategy to create a safety-net of Aboriginal organisations across NSW to provide a continuum of child and family services.

The FACS Aboriginal Sector Capacity Building Project for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal NGOs with the capacity to deliver disability services.

In addition, the vision of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office is that every Aboriginal person in NSW has access and choice in affordable housing. The AHO continues to build the capacity of the Aboriginal community housing sector to deliver housing services to Aboriginal people and has invested over \$26m in direct grants and subsidies since 2013. The AHO believes that Aboriginal housing providers are best placed to deliver culturally appropriate services to the tenants of social and affordable housing. In 2016 the AHO funded the development of a partnership with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations to work with the Aboriginal community housing sector to form an independent NSW Aboriginal housing peak organisation.

### Lead agency

NSW Department of Family and Community Services

### Key achievements

- Continued to work in partnership with AbSec to deliver a range of capacity building initiatives for Aboriginal organisations delivering child and family services in NSW.
- Allocation of 30 per cent of investment for the Targeted Earlier Intervention for Aboriginal service provision across NSW. In some districts the proportion was higher, reflecting the proportion of Aboriginal people in those communities.





# LOCAL LANGUAGES, LOCAL CULTURES

Five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests bolster Aboriginal languages and culture through the teaching of Aboriginal languages in NSW public schools, with important flow on benefits for the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in NSW. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language. The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (AECG) is leading this vital work.

## Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

### Lead Agency

Aboriginal Education and Communities, Department of Education. Further information about the Nests can be found available [here](#).

### Key achievements

- A two-day professional learning workshop conducted for Aboriginal Language Nest teachers and base school principals to validate work undertaken, share practice, and identify future support needs and opportunities for students/families.
- The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) contracted to empower and build capacity in each of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest communities across NSW. Achievements include:
  - Establishment of a local reference group for each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest to ensure a functioning local reference group supported by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).
  - Recruitment of eight Aboriginal Language and Culture project officers across NSW to support local reference groups and Nest Communities.
  - Partnership with TAFE NSW to provide Recognition of Prior Learning certification for Aboriginal community members who hold language and culture knowledge to increase the number of available tutors.

- Promotion undertaken to encourage enrolment in Certificate I, II and III in Aboriginal languages in Nest communities, to build the capacity of local community members to deliver language teaching in schools.

### Monitoring Data

From 1 July 2016 - 30 June 2017:

- The number of pre-schools, primary and secondary schools engaged with Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests increased from 60 to 67.
- The number of students learning an Aboriginal language increased from 5,166 to 6,379.

## Complementing OCHRE

### Key achievements

The NSW Government also strengthened local languages and local cultures:

- 32 consultation workshops held on the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* (16 locations with two rounds of workshops) involving 377 participants and written submissions. The Bill was introduced on 11 October 2017 into the Legislative Council with a cultural ceremony involving language speakers from around NSW and enacted on 24 October 2017. The Act delivers on the OCHRE commitment to renewing the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy (2004). The legislation is the first of its kind in Australia that acknowledges the value and importance of language to Aboriginal people and the cultural heritage of NSW. A copy of the Bill can be found [here](#).
- Funding granted for NAIDOC Week events across NSW – in 2017, \$194,702 was provided to 156 organisations to support cultural events and activities.



## PROMOTING HEALING

OCHRE is the first government plan in Australia to formally acknowledge healing and intergenerational trauma and loss are real, significant and ongoing issues for Aboriginal people and communities. While all OCHRE initiatives advance the dialogue in NSW to promote healing, specific healing initiatives are providing new opportunities to open up positive discussions.

Further information about healing initiatives can be found [here](#).

### Lead agency

Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education.

### Key achievements

- Aboriginal Affairs continued its formal partnership with the national Healing Foundation, the lead organisation in Australia that develops and promotes knowledge about healing and works to connect Aboriginal people back to culture, philosophy and spirit.
- Selection of sites and agencies to host OCHRE Healing Forums, following an expression of interest process:
  - Kempsey Healing Together
  - Clarence Valley Aboriginal Healing Support Service
  - Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West NSW)
  - Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation (Greater Western Sydney)
  - Barang Regional Alliance (Central Coast)
  - Riverina Murray Regional Alliance.

## Complementing OCHRE

### Key achievements

In December 2016, the NSW Government announced its response to the report of the Legislative Council standing committee *Reparations for the Stolen Generations – Unfinished Business*. The \$73 million Stolen Generations Reparations package includes:

- a Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, which provides payments of up to \$75,000 and funeral assistance to survivors who were removed by the Aborigines Welfare Board under assimilation policies up until it was abolished in 1969
- funding to support collective healing initiatives, including a Stolen Generations Healing Fund of \$5 million over 10 years, and financial support for the four Stolen Generations Organisations in NSW.



## NEXT STEPS



### To stay accountable, Aboriginal Affairs will:

- work with local Aboriginal communities to finalise the key measures of success for each project
- finalise data collection in all evaluation sites
- report the findings of the first stage of the evaluation on the implementation of *OCHRE* initiatives and early outcomes
- continue to research and share knowledge and wisdom gained in undertaking the evaluation.

### To strengthen Aboriginal languages and cultures, we will:

- publish, on the Department's Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate's website, School Operational Guidelines for Language and Culture Nests, which will complement existing materials detailing the structure, role and function of the Nests
- support community members through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and certificate courses to increase the number of Aboriginal language tutors
- strengthen monitoring and data collection to support program management and the independent evaluation of *OCHRE*.





## To help Aboriginal students to succeed, we will:

### Opportunity Hubs

- make regional operations in Training Services NSW responsible for managing Opportunity Hubs, to give the Hubs greater local and regional support
- increase local engagement and participation by ensuring each community understands how the Department's programs and services apply to it
- implement a communication strategy to raise awareness of Opportunity Hubs
- strengthen partnerships and engagement with local schools
- strengthen monitoring and data collection to support program management and the independent evaluation of *OCHRE*.

### Connected Communities

- publish the evaluation of the Connected Communities Strategy in mid-2018
- strengthen the multi-focused Healing and Wellbeing Model through targeted and culturally relevant support for students, staff and community
- monitor the implementation of the Schools as Community Hubs program
- work with stakeholders to develop tailored approaches to student attendance, student engagement in learning, parent engagement and community capacity-building.

## To grow jobs and economic opportunities, we will:

### Economic development

- develop an Aboriginal Procurement Policy to further support Aboriginal participation in government procurement of goods and services
- strengthen governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements for Growing NSW's first economy
- finalise commitments for Regional Industry-Based

Agreements with the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly

- continue to partner with the Minerals Council of NSW, Master Builders Association of NSW, Civil Construction Federation of NSW, and the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce on state-wide Industry-Based Agreements.

### Aboriginal employment in the public sector

- work with the Premier's Implementation Unit and all Clusters to deliver the Premier's priority to double the number of Aboriginal senior leaders in the NSW public sector by 2025
- build on the success of the Aboriginal Employment and Development Program and provide up to 20 roles as additional entry points into the NSW government sector at grade 3/4 (equivalent) level for Aboriginal people
- continue to deliver the Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program
- develop – with Aboriginal people, including Stolen Generations survivors – a training package on the effect of past forcible removal policies and practices on Aboriginal communities, in order to build a trauma-informed public-sector workforce.

### Procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal-owned enterprises

- develop further opportunities to use the buying power of the NSW Government to procure goods and services from Aboriginal businesses and ensure that companies contracted to government employ more Aboriginal people and purchase from Aboriginal businesses
- complete the review of the Aboriginal Participation in Construction (APIC) policy, publish findings and address review recommendations.

### Aboriginal Land Rights Act

- Finalise and table in Parliament, the five-yearly review of the Act.



## To promote local communities and local initiatives, we will:

- negotiate a whole-of-government vision for Local Decision Making (Phase 2 and 3) in partnership with Aboriginal regional alliances
- start consulting with regional alliances, government and other stakeholders on legislation which will embed the principles of Local Decision Making and facilitate the progressive devolution of decision making and accountability to regional alliances
- publish the Local Decision Making implementation plan for 2017-2020 in consultation with regional alliances and key government stakeholders
- strengthen monitoring and data collection to support program management and the independent evaluation of *OCHRE*
- clarify and strengthen the Accord-making process by embedding the revised Good Governance Guidelines, and develop a policy to guide the resolution of disputes and the declaration and management of loss of faith (where either a community or government loses faith in the partnership)
- continue to prepare Aboriginal regional alliances to negotiate with the NSW Government and ensure they can demonstrate the governance required to progress to Phase 2 and 3 of Local Decision Making, including by:
  - commencing a review of the Murdi Paaki Accord, and negotiating a social housing model for the region
  - signing completed Accords between the NSW Government and the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly
  - commencing Accord negotiations between the NSW Government and Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance
  - working with the other Aboriginal regional alliances to equip them to negotiate Accords with the NSW Government
  - exploring ways to increase the resources available to regional alliances.
- continue to work with the NSW Government stakeholders to develop and implement governance and accountability arrangements (Phase 2 and 3), and strengthen government engagement and coordination by:
  - improving guidance and support for government staff who are negotiating or implementing Accords
  - improving current negotiating practices based on evaluations or discussions with those recently involved
  - examining governance and accountability arrangements to ensure agencies engage fully both when an Accord is being negotiated and afterwards when it is being implemented.

## To promote healing, we will:

- help local planning committees to host *OCHRE* Healing Forums in partnership with the National Healing Foundation.
- record the outcomes from the *OCHRE* Healing Forums and, using that information, establish the principles on which to base healing-informed practices for agencies engaged in delivering services.

