



# OCHRE

*Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment*



NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs:  
education, employment & accountability







**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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# 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.



## 1. MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Aboriginal people in NSW come from strong, vibrant cultures – some of the oldest living cultures in the world. They are proud of their rich history, their identity and the deep spiritual connection they have with Country. Aboriginal people draw strength from that identity, knowing who they are and where they come from.



As the First Peoples of our beautiful land, Aboriginal people have an important role to play in shaping the identity of our state and our nation.

The majority of Aboriginal people in NSW are living productive, fulfilling lives. However, we know that there are still a significant number of Aboriginal people who do not enjoy a standard of living comparable to that of the broader community.

We – Australians – must strive for a society in which disparities between Aboriginal people and the broader community no longer exist. To achieve this, we must chart a course based on respect and mutual responsibility between Government and communities.

In the past, the language of Aboriginal affairs has focused on 'the gap' and on 'disadvantage'. I genuinely believe that if we shift our terminology from disadvantage to advantage, that if we spend more time celebrating our wonderful Aboriginal cultures and the contribution they make to our collective Australian identity, then it will be easier for the inner strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities to drive the solutions to the challenges they face.

This document represents a new beginning, for it has been developed by NSW Aboriginal communities and Government, working together. We have moved beyond symbolic consultation. The Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, represented by Stephen Ryan along with Professor Shane Houston, Maydina Penrith and Danny Lester, together with seven Cabinet Ministers, have worked over the past year, visiting, and listening to, Aboriginal people across NSW. Their visions and aspirations form the basis of this plan.



This plan is less about Government and more about Aboriginal people. It focuses on revitalising and promoting language and culture, creating opportunities, increasing people's capacity, providing choice and empowering people to exercise that choice, as well as giving them the tools to take responsibility for their own future.

This plan includes a number of initiatives: *Language and Culture Nests* will create learning pathways for Aboriginal students, teachers and community members. Revitalising language and culture will help motivate younger and older Aboriginal people to learn traditional languages, both within their communities and in schools. This will help build identity, self-esteem and resilience. Proud young people want to go school, and proud parents want their kids to do well at school.

*Opportunity Hubs* will link education with employment opportunities to connect Aboriginal students to real and sustainable jobs. By laying the stepping stones leading from school to work early on, students will be able to see the value of school more clearly. Mentoring and incentives will ensure our future Aboriginal leaders stay on track to employment and fulfilling lives.

*Local Decision Making* will empower Aboriginal communities to take responsibility for their own futures. It will drive greater capacity amongst local leaders and organisations and foster stronger Aboriginal communities that make decisions around government service delivery.

Making people more accountable for how they spend money and what they achieve by doing so will be embedded in these new initiatives, both for government and communities. It is not about spending more money; it's about getting better outcomes on the ground for the money we already spend.

Aboriginal Affairs will have a high level strategic function and will regear itself towards empowering Aboriginal people and brokering opportunities with communities.

However, we cannot impose initiatives on communities that may not yet have the capacity or the willingness to drive them. It is important then, that we begin in strong communities in which there is the greatest chance of success. Once success has been demonstrated, they can show other communities the way.

This plan does not make bold statements about changing the world overnight, or even within a generation. Aboriginal people have heard this all before. This plan deliberately acknowledges that it will take time to reach the destination of parity.

Indeed, the path will not be without difficulties and will require adjustments along the way. However, if we work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people, if we focus on strengths, if we place culture and language at the heart of the journey and if we focus on education, employment and transparent service delivery, we will make faster progress towards our goal.

I would like to personally thank the Aboriginal leaders on the Taskforce including Stephen Ryan, Geoff Scott, Shane Houston, Danny Lester and Maydina Penrith and the many people I have met along the way, for allowing me to be part of this journey with them.



The Hon. Victor Dominello MP (Chair)  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



21  
Taskforce reports  
released



427  
surveys completed  
by the public



207  
submissions  
received from  
the public



27  
community and  
industry forums held  
by the Taskforce



2,700+  
people participating  
in the community  
and industry forums



## 2. OCHRE - AT A GLANCE



### **OCHRE emphasises:**

- Partnerships over paternalism
  - Opportunity over disadvantage
  - Successes over shortfalls
  - ‘Listening to’ over ‘talking at’
  - Local solutions over ‘one size fits all’
  - Evidence over assumptions
  - Participation over marginalisation
  - Practice over theory
- ... and recognises the importance of **Healing**.

### **Beliefs**

OCHRE has been developed around our core belief in *fostering aspirations, identifying opportunities* and *promoting responsibility*. Our evidence-based approach recognises that:

- Government should do things *with* Aboriginal communities, not for or to Aboriginal communities
- The strongest communities are those that drive solutions
- There is no quick fix. Sustainable change occurs over a generation and young Aboriginal people are at the centre of that change
- The business community has a key role to play in broadening opportunities for Aboriginal people
- Recognising the diversity of Aboriginal communities is paramount.

### **Aims**

To support strong Aboriginal communities in which Aboriginal people actively influence and fully participate in social, economic and cultural life, we need to:

- Teach more Aboriginal languages and culture to build people’s pride and identity
- Support more Aboriginal students to stay at school
- Support more Aboriginal young people to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs
- Grow local Aboriginal leaders’ and communities’ capacity to drive their own solutions
- Focus on creating opportunities for economic empowerment
- Make both Government and communities more accountable for the money they spend.







## 3. BACKGROUND

# 3.

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

The plan responds to the findings of three key reports into the administration of Aboriginal affairs in NSW:

- The 2011 NSW Auditor-General's performance audit report into the *Two Ways Together – NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan*, released by the previous Government in 2003, found it had not delivered the intended improvements for Aboriginal people.
- Similar shortfalls were identified in the NSW Ombudsman's special report to Parliament, *Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage – the need to do things differently*.
- A review by the Allen Consulting Group, requested by the Minister, of the *NSW Government's Employment and Economic Development Programs* also highlighted the need for improved coordination and collaboration to support better economic outcomes for Aboriginal people.

These reports confirmed concerns raised by Aboriginal communities over the absence of genuinely shared decision-making, the duplication of services, lack of coordination, unclear accountability pathways and – despite significant investment over time – limited demonstrable improvement in the lives of Aboriginal people in NSW.

Despite a stated goal of 'doing things differently' no significant progress had been made in reducing the economic disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

The Taskforce recognised that Aboriginal people must be at the heart of decision making if real improvements were to be achieved in the future.

## What Aboriginal communities told us

During 2012, a comprehensive consultation process gave Aboriginal communities the opportunity to participate in the development of this plan. Some 2,700 people participated in community and industry forums, 207 written submissions were received and 427 people completed a comprehensive survey on the proposals put forward by the Taskforce.

Aboriginal communities expressed concern that they are often 'over serviced' but 'under-delivered' and that they are 'talked to' not 'worked with'. Aboriginal people also told us what matters to them:

- **Aboriginal languages and cultures**

“Giving Aboriginal people the opportunity to learn (their local) language is a huge step for many in regards to not only discovering their personal identity but also in grounding themselves and maintaining their connection to who they are as an Aboriginal.”

“Language in a school would bring confidence back to the kids and make them proud of their culture giving them confidence they can do anything.”

- **Education and employment**

“The ideals of encouraging all youth, especially Aboriginal young people to have a good education and a chance at full and long-term employment is a challenge that is well worth the effort.”

“I believe that the best way forward is to get government, NGOs, schools, business and training organisations to work together.”

“Greater emphasis should be placed on building employer relationships with unemployed Aboriginal people with potential for training in the skills required in the growth industries.”

- **Local leadership**

“Aboriginal communities need to have more say in how their community is run.”

- **Partnerships**

“There is great scope for partnerships between

government, private sector and the not-for-profit sector.”

- **Accountability**

“[There is a] fundamental lack of accountability to how we allocate and spend Aboriginal monies.”

## What are we doing?

For over a year representatives from the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations and specialist Aboriginal advisers sat around the Taskforce table together with seven senior Cabinet Ministers and Government officials to consider how tangible outcomes can be achieved.

Recognising that seeking to solve a broad range of issues at the same time had, to date, achieved limited success, the Taskforce deliberately narrowed its Terms of Reference to: education, employment, service delivery and accountability. Consequently, the NSW Government responded with a plan that supports the following initiatives:

- **Connected Communities** to change the way educational services are delivered in some Aboriginal communities
- **Opportunity Hubs** to give school students pathways to real jobs by getting local employers involved in career planning at school
- **An Aboriginal Economic Development Framework** that sets the strategic direction for NSW
- **Industry-Based Agreements** to improve employment and job retention outcomes for Aboriginal people
- **Language and Culture Nests** to support Aboriginal students to learn languages in communities and schools and better engage families in education so languages are preserved and used
- **A Local Decision Making model** to increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities and non-government organisations to make decisions about local service delivery
- **An independent Aboriginal Council** to ensure a stronger voice for Aboriginal people in Government and help monitor the delivery and design of the initiatives



- An *independent Coordinator General* who will chair the Council, to work in collaboration with NSW Government agencies to broker solutions and obtain information to assist the Council in assessing the Government's performance.

*OCHRE's* objectives are consistent with the overall goals of the NSW Government's ten-year strategic plan, *NSW 2021*, to strengthen local communities, devolve decision making, drive economic growth, deliver quality services and restore Government accountability. The plan also supports *NSW 2021's* emphasis on partnerships with, and opportunities for, Aboriginal communities.



### *Why is this plan different?*

*OCHRE* represents a meaningful change in the way Government goes about its business because it is underpinned by a commitment to ongoing partnerships and a commitment to tracking and measuring success. Implementation, too, will be guided by a new approach. It will be:

**Targeted** – Key initiatives will be initially rolled out in selected locations to allow for a focused effort, as well as review and evaluation, ahead of wider adoption. Initiatives will only be implemented in Aboriginal communities where there is broad support and agreement.

**Long-term and sustainable** – Real change requires long-term commitment. *OCHRE* is a long-term, evolving plan which will build on successful outcomes, and learn from experience.

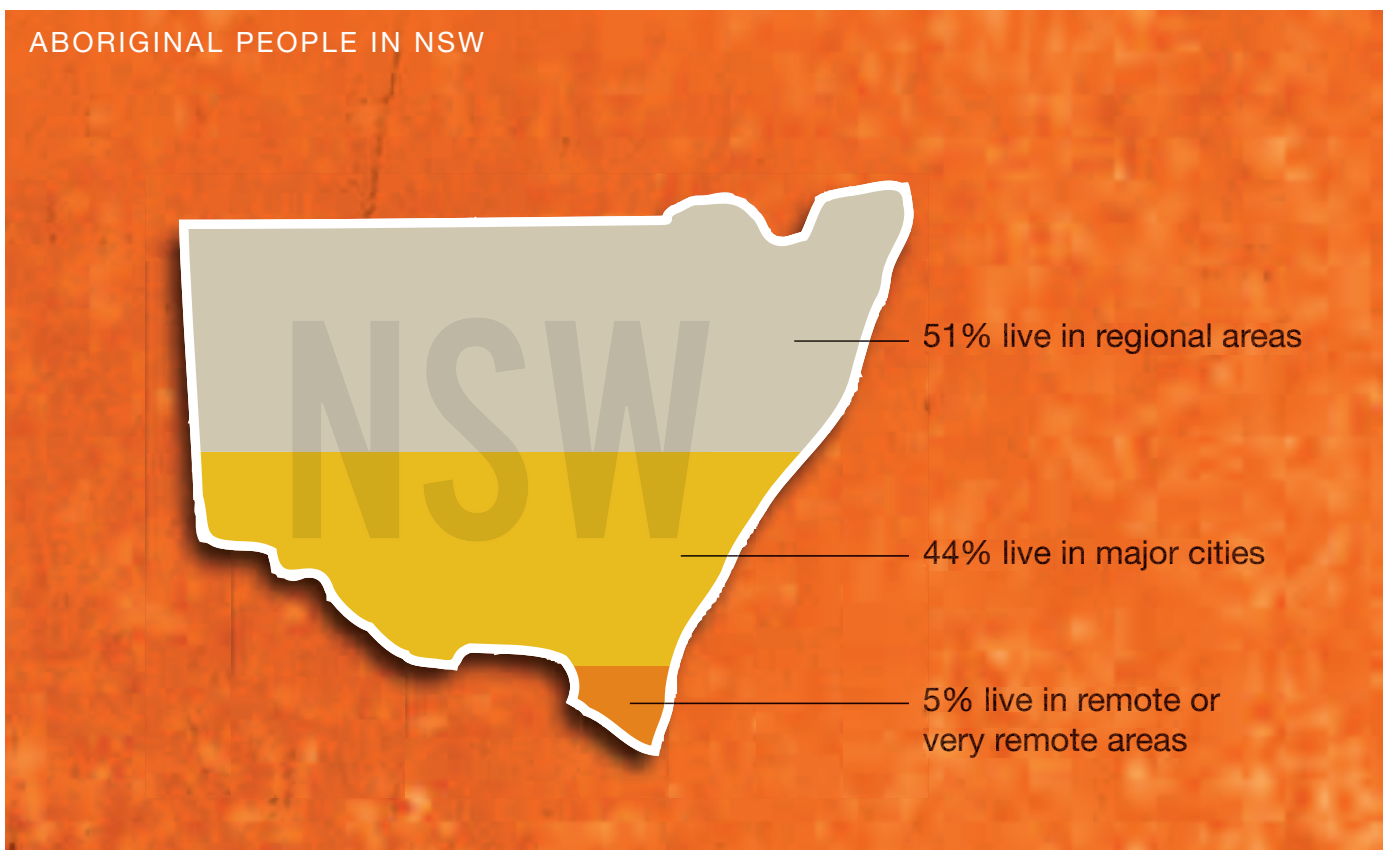
**Evidence-based** – Ongoing evaluation of programs and initiatives will be built into implementation, so that forward planning and future decisions can be informed by, and based on, real evidence.

**Local outcomes** – Every community is different and one size does not fit all. Initiatives will be measured locally, with measures of success determined by Aboriginal communities and outcomes will be publicly reported.

### *Aboriginal People in NSW*

The Aboriginal population in NSW is larger than in any other state and is characterised by the proximity of many communities to cities and towns. Such proximity represents an opportunity to improve service delivery and to boost education and meaningful economic participation – aims which are less easily achieved for remote Aboriginal communities in other states. The NSW Government recognises the importance of this opportunity, just as the relative younger age profile of Aboriginal people in NSW enables important programs to be delivered through schools.

The 2011 Census population estimates show that 208,364 Aboriginal people live in NSW, 31 per cent of the Australian Aboriginal population. With a median age of 21, compared to 38 for the non-Aboriginal population, Aboriginal people make up a higher proportion of Australia’s children and young people and a lower proportion of the elderly. Unlike other parts of Australia, in NSW, 95 per cent of Aboriginal people live in regional areas or major cities, and only five per cent in remote or very remote locations.







## 4. HEALING – WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

During community consultations undertaken by the Taskforce the issue of healing and wellbeing was continually raised by Aboriginal community members.

It became clear that for Aboriginal communities the need for healing, and thereby overcoming inter-generational trauma and loss, is a significant and fundamental issue which must be recognised and addressed in order to achieve real change and to improve the everyday lives of Aboriginal people.

This document's formal recognition of the need for healing is, therefore, central to its broader purpose.

While the term healing was frequently used in consultations, it clearly meant different things to different people.

However, a number of common principles emerged. Notably, healing was not just about resolving physical trauma. Aboriginal wellbeing has social, economic, emotional, cultural and spiritual dimensions and healing needs to occur at the individual, family and community level. Healing is a process that takes time and cannot be achieved through a one-off event or program.

For many Aboriginal people, the legacy of colonisation and the consequences of successive government policies have been powerlessness and a loss of control over their own lives; a loss of purpose and an inability to fulfil responsibilities for themselves, their families and their community; the undermining of community leadership and decision making structures; and the continuing devaluing of their culture and identity.

This history of trauma and loss has left many Aboriginal people angry, frustrated and disenfranchised and is often expressed in high levels of disadvantage, depression, substance abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Treating these symptoms of trauma alone will not heal communities, yet this has largely been the emphasis of governments' efforts to date.

In two recent reports released by the NSW Ombudsman, *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities* and *Addressing Aboriginal Disadvantage: the need to do things differently*, the importance of healing for Aboriginal communities is highlighted.

Rather than proposing new programs to treat these symptoms, this response from the NSW Government aims to tackle trauma by addressing its underlying causes.

Such an approach is being advocated by Aboriginal people themselves. Throughout our community consultations, Aboriginal people emphasised that community development, including increasing employment and educational outcomes, and enhancing Aboriginal leadership and community decision making, were inseparable from achieving healing and wellbeing in Aboriginal communities.

It also cannot be underestimated how important it is to Aboriginal communities that the NSW Government, through this document, formally recognises that healing and inter-generational trauma and loss are real, significant and ongoing issues for communities. The overarching aim of the document is to commit Government to ongoing changes to its relationship with Aboriginal communities to achieve improvements to Aboriginal people's wellbeing.

Recognising the need for healing is a key step in that process, especially as many previous government programs and policies contributed significantly to the trauma, loss and pain felt by many Aboriginal people.

As a start, the NSW Government will work with Aboriginal communities, policy practitioners and service providers to advance the dialogue in NSW about trauma and healing and to begin developing responses informed by evidence of good practice.





## 5. MAJOR INITIATIVES

The Taskforce deliberately focused on only three Terms of Reference – education, employment and service delivery – to ensure real and measurable progress can be achieved through the major initiatives detailed in this section.

In his report, *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities* the NSW Ombudsman highlights the link between building the economic capacity of Aboriginal communities and improving social wellbeing more broadly.

In his report, *Addressing Aboriginal Disadvantage: the need to do things differently*, the NSW Ombudsman recommended that the NSW Government work to improve Aboriginal employment outcomes and enhance Aboriginal economic capacity through identifying and facilitating partnerships between the private sector, government and Aboriginal entities.

### 5.1 LINKING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Economic participation is essential for strong and sustainable communities. As well as improved financial security and prosperity, sustainable employment generates substantial personal and social benefits for individuals, families and communities. However, there are large disparities between economic outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in NSW.

The NSW Government recognises that meaningful economic participation cannot be achieved in isolation. To generate real opportunities for satisfying careers and work, new pathways must be forged to link strengthened school communities to further education and training, ‘job-ready’ programs and entrepreneurial capacity building. This in turn, must be linked to employers and business opportunities.

This pathway of opportunity begins in the early years of school by fostering improved educational outcomes and boosting school retention rates and must be continuously supported, right through to effective engagement with businesses and industries and capacity-building initiatives for Aboriginal entrepreneurship.

#### *What the evidence tells us*

In their 2011 *Closing the school completion gap for Indigenous students* for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Sue Helme and Professor Stephen Lamb reported that a key factor in increasing engagement, achievement and school completion is school culture.

Positive aspects of this culture include:

- A shared vision for the school community
- High expectations of success for both staff and students
- A learning environment that is responsive to individual needs
- A drive for continuous improvement
- Involvement of the Aboriginal community in planning and providing education.

Completion of secondary education has demonstrable economic benefits for Aboriginal young people. On average, a student who completes Year 12 will earn half a million dollars more over the course of his or her lifetime than a student who leaves school in Year 10 or below. The difference is even greater for those who complete higher education. Early school leavers are generally more likely to be unemployed, be in lower paid jobs, be reliant on government income support, become young parents, experience homelessness, become involved in crime, and have poor health outcomes.

Sue Helme and Professor Stephen Lamb identified a need for hands-on assistance for Aboriginal families to ensure they are engaged in the career development processes.

The 2011 Census highlights the disparities between Aboriginal people in NSW and the wider community; the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people aged 15-64 years in NSW was 17 per cent, compared with 5.8 per cent for their non-Aboriginal counterparts; the average income for Aboriginal adults was \$530 per week compared with a state-wide average of \$801.

Professor Nicholas Biddle in his 2011 *Report on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap targets* found that without substantial improvements in Aboriginal employment outcomes, substantive improvements in areas such as life expectancy and education are unlikely to be achieved.

In 2011, the Allen Consulting Group's report into the *NSW Government Employment and Economic Development Programs for Aboriginal People – Review of programs and broader considerations* found that despite a long record of seeking to

improve the economic circumstances of Aboriginal people in NSW, economic and employment programs in this state have, to date, been opportunistic and uncoordinated.

## *What are we doing?*

### 5.1.1 Connected Communities

The Taskforce endorsed *Connected Communities* which is being implemented by the Department of Education and Communities in 15 schools to improve Aboriginal student educational outcomes.

*Connected Communities* is changing the way educational services are delivered in some Aboriginal communities. In the past a school's ability to provide a quality education for its students was often hampered by factors that are beyond the control and scope of the school Principal. Under *Connected Communities* school principals in collaboration with parents, local governance groups and school communities are free to make decisions to align resources to meet the needs of the students in their school and break down barriers to student learning.

*Connected Communities* complements and builds on a number of key reforms in education including:

- *Local Schools Local Decisions* which enables greater authority and flexibility for principals to make decisions about the best use of school resources to improve teaching and learning outcomes
- *Early Action for Success* which focuses on improving literacy and numeracy
- *Every Student Every School* which strengthens learning and support in all public schools, including for students with disability and learning difficulties.

*Connected Communities* schools will not all be the same, because the communities they serve are different. The key features of *Connected Communities* include:

- Cultural awareness (*Connecting to Country*) delivered locally for all staff
- Teaching Aboriginal language and culture

- Additional school executive positions (Leader, Community Engagement)
- Early-years focus through to further learning and employment
- Personalised learning plans for all students
- Schools as a hub for service delivery, such as health and community services
- Targeted student support and mentoring
- Partnership and co-leadership with the Aboriginal community
- Partnership with universities and TAFE institutes.

Each *Connected Communities* school has an Executive Principal appointed for 5 years who reports to the Director-General of the Department of Education and Communities. Each Executive Principal will appoint a Community Engagement Leader, an additional executive position for an Aboriginal person to assist with facilitating links between the school and the community. This position will also act as a cultural mentor to the Executive Principal and school staff.

The Executive Principal will appoint a community member, endorsed by the community, to teach Aboriginal culture and language. Each school will also establish a School Advisory Council to provide advice to support the delivery of quality education and training.

The following schools and communities are participating in the *Connected Communities* initiative:

- Boggabilla Central School
- Toomelah Public School
- Wilcannia Central School
- Walgett Community School
- Bourke Public School
- Bourke High School
- Moree East Public School
- Moree Secondary College
- Coonamble High School
- Coonamble Public School

- Taree Public School
- Taree High School
- Brewarrina Central School
- Menindee Central School
- Hillvue Public School (Tamworth).

### 5.1.2 Opportunity Hubs

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that an *Opportunity Hub model* be developed, trialled and evaluated within selected locations in NSW to coordinate employment and training opportunities between schools, local businesses and the community.

The *Opportunity Hubs* initiative responds to feedback from Aboriginal communities emphasising the need for pathways to assist Aboriginal young people in the transition from school into tertiary education, training and/or employment. The initiative aims to better coordinate and utilise existing resources and to improve accessibility to appropriate services – not to create new programs.

NSW is a state of opportunity and the NSW Government recognises that it has a role to ensure that these opportunities are made more accessible to Aboriginal young people. It is important that Aboriginal students are supported to nurture genuine career aspirations, not trapped in a cycle of training that does not lead to meaningful employment.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal young people are aware of career options and supported to develop and pursue these opportunities. By highlighting real opportunities that lead to a real job, and engaging with students' families, Aboriginal young people will be more likely to stay at school and do well. By identifying such opportunities locally, we are investing in young Aboriginal people to become future leaders.

There is an enormous amount of goodwill and potential in the private sector to open up training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. The NSW Government is committed to increasing employment opportunities for Aboriginal young people through private-sector partnerships and to



making it easier for employers to access future Aboriginal employees.

The *Hubs* will:

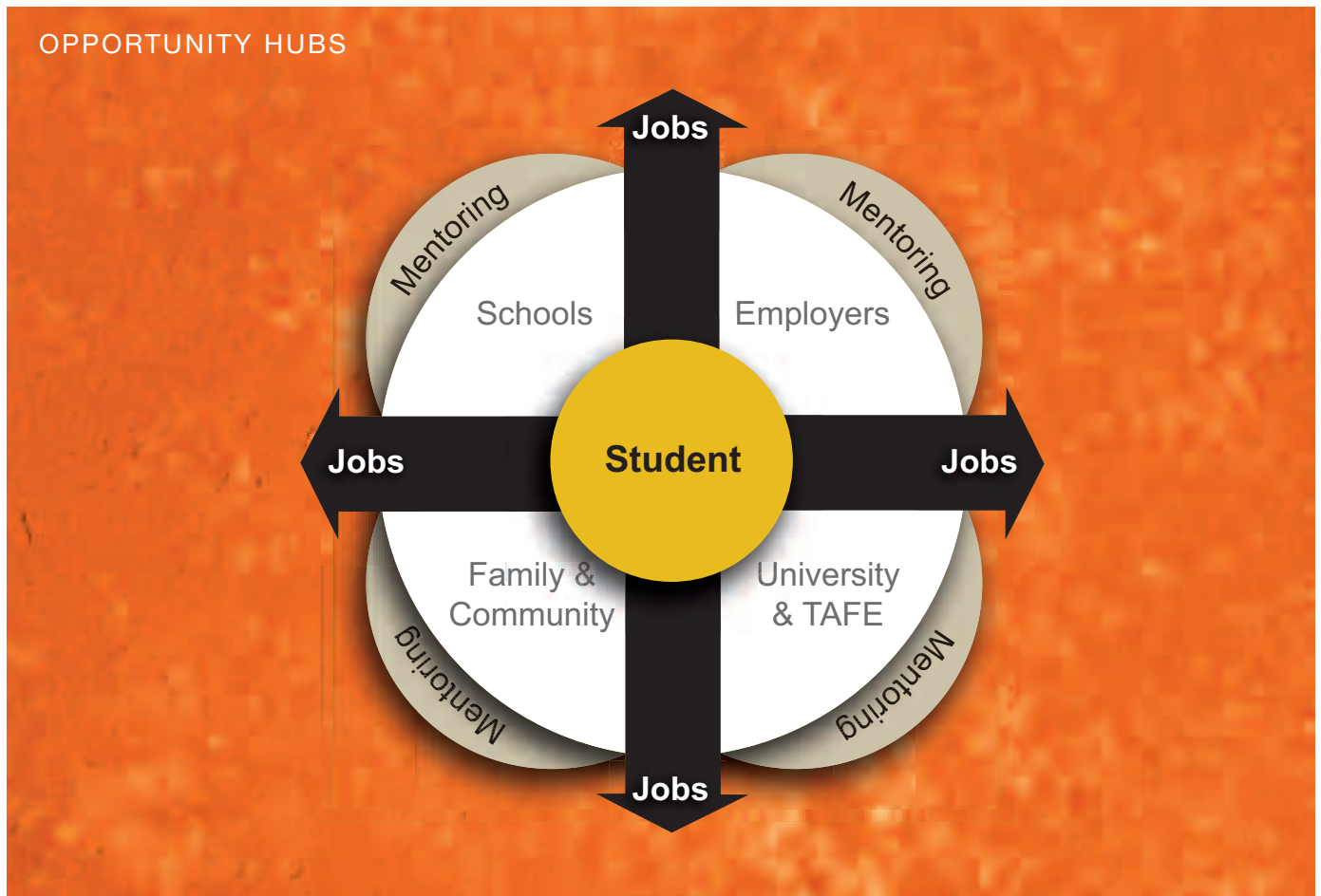
- Provide Aboriginal young people with clear pathways and incentives to stay at school and transition to real jobs or tertiary education
- Coordinate local opportunities, mentoring programs and resources to identify secure job placements and match opportunities to Aboriginal students' career aspirations
- Build skills and capacity within the local Aboriginal community and drive employment and leadership expectations among Aboriginal young people
- Build local *Hub* partnerships with businesses, tertiary education and training providers and NGOs
- Connect Aboriginal students and their families to tertiary education, training and potential employers early on

- Support students through individualised career planning, mentoring and support services and the engagement of family and community members
- Monitor and track Aboriginal students and their transition pathways following the completion of secondary school.

Four *Opportunity Hubs* will be initially rolled out in selected locations offering employment and training opportunities. *Opportunity Hubs* will not be imposed on communities and, while responsibility for the operation of each *Hub* may vary across communities, local Aboriginal leadership and ownership of the *Hub* will be critical to its success.

During the community consultations, of the 427 people who completed a survey:

- Some 97% thought the *Opportunity Hub* initiative was 'a really good idea' or 'worth a go'
- Some 94% agreed that design flexibility was important



- Some 96% agreed that each *Opportunity Hub* should adapt to the circumstances of the local community.

### 5.1.3 Economic Participation

There are significant, untapped opportunities to build wealth and strengthen economic independence in Aboriginal communities. These opportunities stem from a range of sources including land granted under the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, Government investment in goods and services, and from the enterprise and innovation already evident in Aboriginal communities.

The NSW Government will work with Aboriginal communities and key government stakeholders, including Australian and local governments, to develop an *Aboriginal Economic Development Framework* that:

- Sets the strategic direction for NSW
- Coordinates the activities across government to improve alignment, address duplication issues and identify gaps for future investment.

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended a combination of strategic direction setting, coordination and concrete reforms be implemented to improve economic development outcomes for Aboriginal people including:

- Agreements with key industry groups to support industry specific strategies and partnerships to create training, employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people and develop education and training pathways
- *Opportunity Hubs* (once established) to include business and entrepreneurial skills development
- Partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and its Economic Development Committee to support Aboriginal land councils in developing their land and business holdings
- Employment opportunities created through public sector procurement.

In NSW, opportunities have been identified for:

#### Industry-Based Agreements

The NSW Government will develop *Industry-Based Agreements* with key industry groups and implement initiatives to improve employment and job retention outcomes for Aboriginal people. Agreements may incorporate mentoring, training, employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people. *Opportunity Hubs* may link industry groups to local schools to ensure school leavers are job-ready. Opportunities have been identified in growth sectors and areas of skill shortages such as: community, health and aged care, retail, manufacturing, automotive, engineering and construction, hospitality, mining, finance and insurance, professional services and scientific and technical services.

#### Aboriginal land and natural resources

The NSW Government will work with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council network and other key stakeholders to explore and pursue opportunities to improve the management and economic potential of Aboriginal owned land and natural resources to generate employment on Country.

The NSW Government will also work with a new NSW Aboriginal Land Council Economic Development Committee, which is to be established to help identify, develop and support economic opportunities for Aboriginal land councils.

#### Public sector employment

The NSW public service is a major employer and has a role to play in demonstrating good practice in Aboriginal employment. The NSW Public Service Commission will focus on Aboriginal employment and career development to boost both the number of Aboriginal people in employment and their representation in decision making roles. In 2014, the Public Service Commission is expected to release a new Aboriginal employment strategy, which will include action to strengthen Aboriginal cultural competence and understanding in the NSW public sector.

## Procurement

The *NSW Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Procurement of Goods and Services) Act 2012* streamlined Government procurement processes. Together with the recommendations of the Taskforce, the Act presents an opportunity to increase Aboriginal employment through Government social procurement and provides a new legislative framework for supportive policy measures.

Social procurement is purchasing that accounts for the social outcomes of buying goods and services from a given supplier. Social procurement acknowledges the public value of positive social outcomes that are generated or supported through procurement processes.

### *What we hope to achieve*

By addressing the key challenges which currently present barriers to meaningful economic participation for some Aboriginal communities, OCHRE aims to:

- Contribute to an increase in school attendance and retention
- Increase student transitions from school to employment or tertiary education
- Increase the number of Aboriginal people employed
- Increase the number of Aboriginal owned businesses.

## 5.2 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

In his report, *Addressing Aboriginal Disadvantage: the need to do things differently*, the NSW Ombudsman recommended that the NSW Government explore innovative approaches to help keep Aboriginal children and young people engaged with education.

Aboriginal people have a fundamental right to revitalise and maintain traditional languages as an integral part of their culture and identity.

The teaching of Aboriginal languages and culture can help increase school participation and retention, better engage parents and families and improve community relationships between generations.

Teaching languages and culture in schools can also contribute to improved interactions between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students, reducing racism and promoting reconciliation.

### *What the evidence tells us*

The UNESCO Endangered Languages Atlas and the National Indigenous Language Survey have identified all remaining Aboriginal languages in NSW as critically endangered. Action is urgent as most remaining speakers are Elders and there is little or no transmission of Aboriginal languages to younger generations.

A tangible connection between language learning and psychological wellbeing, increased self esteem, reductions in youth suicide and self harm, and improved physical health is highlighted by Dr Shayne Williams in his 2011 report, *The importance of teaching and learning Aboriginal languages and cultures: the triangularity between language and culture, educational engagement and community cultural health and wellbeing*.

‘Where cultural perspectives are incorporated into the school curriculum, Indigenous students’ performances have been found to be comparatively better than those of Indigenous students in other schools,’ the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report for 2011* notes.





In the consultations with Aboriginal communities which informed this plan, of the 427 people surveyed:

- Some 96% said they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Aboriginal languages should be offered in schools
- Some 94% said ‘flexible and locally driven designs’ are the key to successful culture and language initiatives.

*What are we doing?*

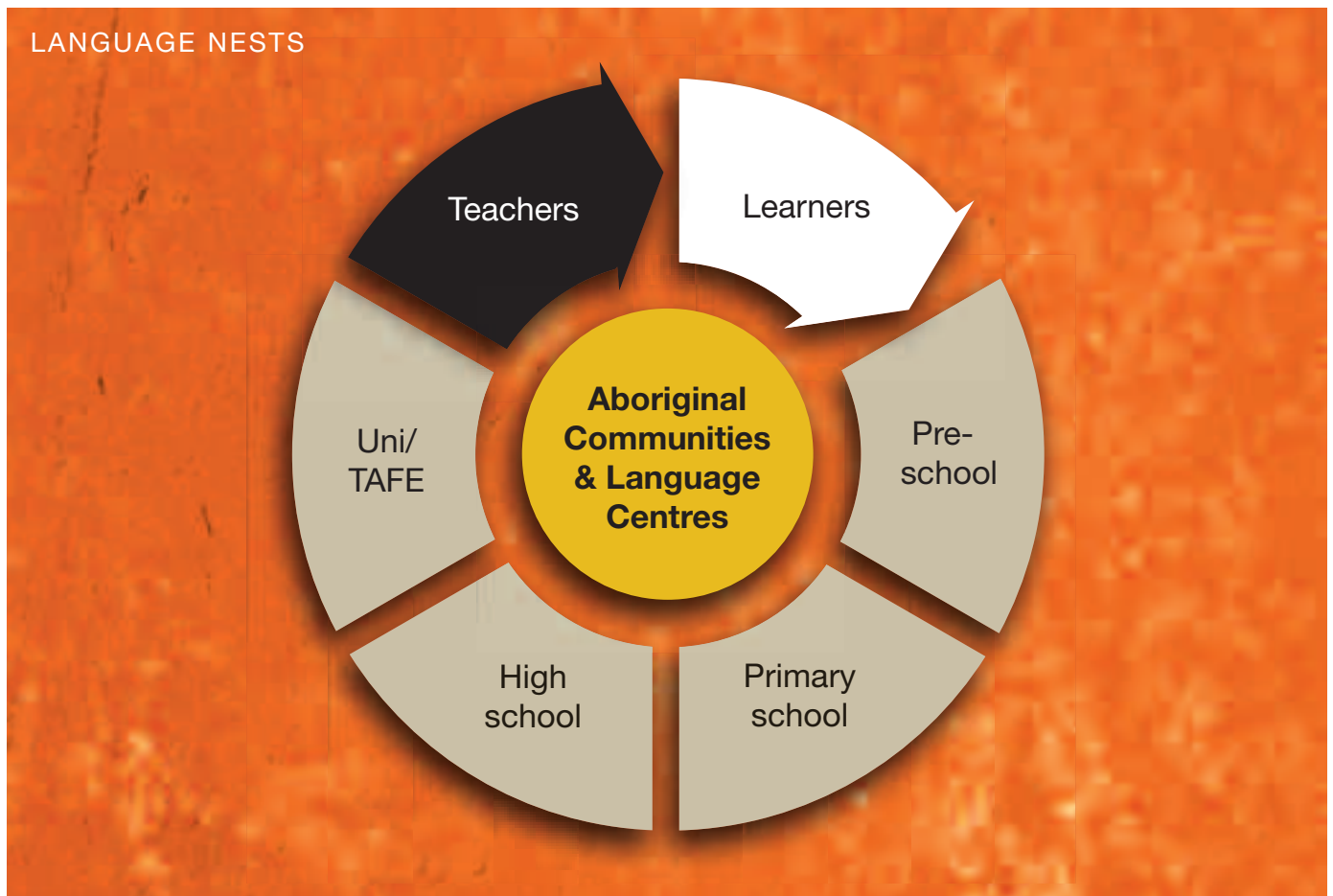
The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that *Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests* be trialled initially in one location each from five Aboriginal language groups: Gamilaraay; Gumbaynggirr; Bundjalung; Paarkintji/Barkindji; and Wiradjuri.

In partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and the Centre for

Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development (CALCD), the NSW Government has selected five Aboriginal language groups to initially roll out the *Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests (Language Nests)* at one location each, based on various pre-conditions for success, including:

- The number of language speakers
- The availability of language teachers
- The availability of language resources
- The level of commitment and activity around language revitalisation within local schools
- Proximity to the resources, infrastructure and support available through local communities and regional AECG networks, TAFEs, universities and schools.

Lessons learned will then be shared with other Aboriginal language groups to support communities aspiring to rejuvenate and revitalise their local Aboriginal language.



**A community based approach** aims to provide a continuous pathway for learning for Aboriginal people in communities and recognises the existing language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal community members.

- Each language group community will develop an Aboriginal Language Agreement that commits government and non-government partners to supporting local learning needs
- Each Aboriginal Language Agreement will reflect a commitment to share the lessons learned so that other Aboriginal language groups can benefit from this knowledge
- Regional Aboriginal Language Centres will be established by CALCD to:
  - Offer Aboriginal communities an opportunity to learn an Aboriginal language
  - Help document and catalogue Aboriginal languages to preserve them into the future
  - Support local projects to restore and revitalise Aboriginal languages.
- The NSW Government recognises that many Aboriginal people and organisations are already working hard to revitalise local Aboriginal languages. The current *Aboriginal Languages Policy* will be refocused in partnership with CALCD to coordinate language revitalisation efforts across NSW.

**Language Nests in Schools** aim to provide Aboriginal students and their families with a continuous pathway for learning from pre-school to Year 12 and into tertiary education (TAFE and universities) and to offer Aboriginal students a new opportunity to consider language teaching as a vocation.

- Relevant Aboriginal communities will work in partnership with the Board of Studies to develop curricula including a scope and sequence for teaching and learning Aboriginal languages.
- Participating local schools will implement the new curricula.
- Principals and teachers who work in schools with *Language Nests* will participate in the *Connecting to Country* cultural immersion program facilitated by the local AECG.

- Teachers will be endorsed by the local community and will be either a local Aboriginal language speaker (supervised by a qualified teacher) or a qualified Aboriginal language teacher.
- Family members of Aboriginal students will be invited to participate in language classes with their children or encouraged to enrol in after-hours community classes held at schools or local TAFEs.
- An effective remuneration package for Elders and Aboriginal community members who share their knowledge will be developed.

### *What we hope to achieve*

The *Language Nests* initiative will serve as a springboard for both school students and community members to access language learning pathways, beginning as early as pre-school and continuing into high school and further education.

To achieve this, we need to grow the number of teachers of language – both in the community, at home, in the classroom and at TAFE or university. The NSW Government believes that if we invest in both people and the development of resources we can increase the number of language teachers and speakers.

That is why *Language Nests* aim to build a coordinated and strategic approach to Aboriginal language revitalisation by providing links between Aboriginal communities, schools, TAFEs and universities in language regions.

*Language Nests* aim to:

- Improve knowledge of, and competency in, local Aboriginal languages
- Strengthen Aboriginal identity, pride and community resilience
- Increase the number of language learners
- Increase the number of language teachers
- Contribute to increased school attendance and retention.



### 5.3 LOCAL DECISION MAKING

In his Performance Audit of *Two Ways Together* the NSW Auditor-General noted that Aboriginal communities were best placed to make decisions about their day-to-day lives and recommended continued support for community governance bodies.

The NSW Government recognises that Aboriginal communities are best placed to understand local needs and that service delivery can be compromised if distinct local conditions are overlooked in favour of a 'one size fits all' approach. Aboriginal people have expressed a strong desire for a greater role in decision making, so that the design and delivery of services can be shaped by a genuine understanding of local communities and their aspirations for the future.

The NSW Government appreciates that there are many service providers, both government and non-government, working hard to deliver positive outcomes for Aboriginal communities. However, such services are generally not well coordinated or are unresponsive.

NSW Government agencies need to invest in and commit to building sustainable, informed, localised and culturally appropriate services. However, to strengthen service delivery we also need to simultaneously strengthen accountability to ensure that what is happening on the ground is well aligned with local needs. The NSW Government is committed to:

- Systematically monitoring and evaluating service delivery outcomes within communities
- Ensuring the community is well informed about what is working and what is not
- Greater flexibility in spending, balanced by accountability for outcomes.

#### *What the evidence tells us*

Working together through partnerships, networks and shared leadership is fundamental in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage, according to Dr Fadwa

Al-Yaman and Dr Daryl Higgins, authors of the 2011 report for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, *What Works to Overcome Indigenous Disadvantage*.

In addition, by comparing research from New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Australia it is evident that:

- The relationship between Aboriginal people and Government agencies in NSW is unclear and lacks well defined and clearly identified points of contact for Aboriginal communities
- Investment at the community level is inadequate to sustain staffing, funding or leadership development
- Governance structures currently in place lack pathways of progression, programs to strengthen self-management and a Government agency as a champion.

International best practice (see section 7 of this plan for references) identifies six key elements to support local decision making:

1. Building capacity within communities to work in partnership with government
2. Building capacity within government to work in partnership with communities
3. Enabling communities to define the issues and priorities which drive negotiated local responses
4. Integrating and coordinating service delivery across all levels of government
5. Building strong partnerships between government and non-government sectors to deliver effective localised responses
6. Localising accountability, reflection and review.

Some 2,700 people attended the community consultations which informs this plan. Responses which reflect the communities' views included:

*‘Communities are over-serviced yet under-delivered.’*

*‘Governments need to work together to avoid duplication.’*

*‘Aboriginal communities need to have more say in how their community is run.’*

Of the 427 people who completed a survey:

- Some 89% said *Local Decision Making* was 'a really good idea' or 'worth a go'
- Some 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the way *Local Decision Making* should work within local Aboriginal communities must be decided by local communities and that a one-size-fits-all model would not work.

### What are we doing?

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended the initial implementation of an Aboriginal *Local Decision Making* model in three communities (preferably one urban, one regional and one remote) to improve service delivery outcomes and accountability.

The ultimate aim of the *Local Decision Making* model is to ensure Aboriginal communities have a genuine voice in determining what services are delivered and how they are delivered, growing the capacity of communities to make decisions about their future.

The *Local Decision Making* model will be informed by research into successful place-based programs operating in Australia, North America and New Zealand.

#### 1. A staged process of power-sharing

Aboriginal communities will be given increased decision making powers through local management committees that will progressively be delegated greater powers and budgetary control, once capacity is proven and pre-determined conditions are met.

## LOCAL DECISION MAKING









There will be three stages of delegation; advisory, planning and implementation. Each stage will mean a greater level of decision making. The process for transitioning from one stage to the next will be based on open and transparent criteria, evidence of success and increased capacity. Every Aboriginal community is different and communities may not progress through the different stages of delegation either by choice or by circumstance.

For instance, implementation delegation is unlikely in urban areas given that Aboriginal communities in urban areas represent only a small percentage of the total population and services are largely mainstreamed.

## 2. A commitment to building community leadership, skills and capacity

A progressively greater role in decision making will serve as an incentive for management committees to increase their skills and capabilities. Skills in which progressively greater capacity will be required include probity and ethics, leadership, facilitation, financial accountability and management. Effective local training programs will be developed to ensure local management committees have access to the skills development they need.

To enable government and its Aboriginal community partners to build on successes and learn from experience, and so ensure genuine change, the model will be:

- Initially rolled out in three communities so that implementation can be evaluated ahead of wider adoption
- Implemented in partnership with communities and by the invitation of communities only. Interested communities will be selected through an open and transparent Expression of Interest (EOI) process and chosen via an open and transparent selection process
- Built on existing strengths and local governance structures, ensuring that management committees represent the whole community

- Flexibly implemented to take into account the range of needs and aspirations within different communities.

### Working with Aboriginal NGOs

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs also recommended an Aboriginal NGO capacity building strategy.

The NSW Department of Family and Community Services will explore opportunities to:

- Build the capacity of Aboriginal peak bodies to take a leadership role in capacity building across the Aboriginal NGO sector
- Assess the transferability of specialist strategies across sectors, testing what works, and how it might apply more broadly in NSW
- Improve the targeting of generalist capacity and workforce development strategies to Aboriginal NGOs.

### *What we hope to achieve*

The *Local Decision Making* model represents a significant change in the way Aboriginal communities and government agencies interact and the way agencies identify, plan and implement services and programs. By staging the introduction of power-sharing mechanisms while simultaneously building community leadership skills and capacity, the model aims to:

- Decrease the duplication of services
- Increase the effectiveness of service delivery to better meet local needs
- Increase the skill and capacity of local governance bodies.

## 5.4 ACCOUNTABILITY

The Auditor-General and NSW Ombudsman have both called for greater transparency and accountability in the design and delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal people. In addition, both the Auditor-General and NSW Ombudsman have made a number of recommendations in the following key areas:

- The appointment of independent advisors to Government.
- Development of a solution broker role within Government.
- A strengthened evidence base including improved data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting.
- Strengthened reporting of Aboriginal specific funding.
- Establishing a new accountability framework for Aboriginal affairs.

Taken together, these reports confirm the concerns raised by Aboriginal communities about the absence of genuinely shared decision making, duplication of services, lack of coordination, unclear accountability and, despite significant investment, limited demonstrable improvement to the lives of Aboriginal people.

The NSW Government's new partnership with Aboriginal people will both respond to the call for a greater say for Aboriginal communities in measures affecting their lives, and will strengthen and clarify policies and programs for the communities they are designed to support. Those closest to where the policies operate – in Aboriginal communities – are best placed to see how they are working, and how they can be improved.

At the same time, stronger accountability, in line with recommendations from the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman, with a refocused role for Aboriginal Affairs across all the activities of Government, will ensure OCHRE initiatives are coordinated and implemented successfully within other government programs, and that resources are used efficiently.

### *What the evidence tells us*

Effective oversight of Government provides an important mechanism to drive change across the state and sends a strong signal to Aboriginal communities about the commitment to real reform and focusing effort on what works. It also provides an important mechanism to drive change within agencies, particularly when combined with public reporting on outcomes and expenditure. This oversight is often provided by integrity agencies such as the Ombudsman and Auditor-General offices.

Professor Chris Aulich in his paper *Integrity Agencies as One Pillar of Integrity and Good Governance* for the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) Institute for Governance states that the independent work of integrity agencies in corruption investigation, audit review and public sector ethics has increasingly been commended as essential for good governance.

### *What the community told us*

207 submissions were received in the first round of consultations held by the Taskforce and some 2,700 people attended the community consultations. Here is what a few people had to say:

‘The issue of governance and accountability is closely related leadership, representation and guidance.’

‘[There is a] fundamental lack of accountability to how we allocate and spend Aboriginal monies.’

#### 5.4.1 Strong Aboriginal voice in design and delivery

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that a key element of the accountability framework is a strong Aboriginal voice in design and delivery, including the establishment of an *independent Aboriginal Council*.

The NSW Government will establish an *independent Aboriginal Council* that will:

- Monitor and report on Government progress to the NSW Parliament
- Advise the Minister on issues relating to the implementation of initiatives in this plan
- Report on progress made by the Senior Management Council, which is a forum made up of Directors General
- Advise the Minister on other strategic issues that relate to Aboriginal affairs and advise on future reform proposals
- Have a core membership of five Aboriginal non-government people chosen largely for their skills and expertise, rather than as representatives of particular organisations or geographic regions
- Co-opt or commission experts for support and advice where required.
- Setting whole-of-government priorities and policies
- Adopting a solution broker role to coordinate whole-of-government solutions
- Driving the performance of service provision agencies
- Providing oversight for the implementation of this plan
- Opening up and developing economic opportunities
- Implementing the Aboriginal *Local Decision Making* model
- Providing secretariat support to the newly created *independent Aboriginal Council* and the Coordinator General (the chair of the Council).

In his *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities* report the NSW Ombudsman recommended the creation of a statutory Aboriginal advisory body to ensure that Government is achieving real progress.

The *independent Aboriginal Council* will be established and governed by legislation and the NSW Government will work with Aboriginal people and peak bodies on the drafting of a Bill to put before the NSW Parliament.

The Council's role will be enshrined in legislation to ensure its longevity and to ensure that its functions are clearly set out.

#### 5.4.2 Refocusing the role of Aboriginal Affairs

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that a key element of the accountability framework is clearer roles and responsibilities for Aboriginal Affairs (the agency) which includes a focus on whole-of-government priorities and economic development opportunities.

The NSW Government will realign its Aboriginal Affairs agency to fulfil the following functions:

Aboriginal Affairs will be repositioned as a strengths-based agency, focusing on opening up economic opportunities, capacity building and whole-of-government policy. This change of function will mean that Aboriginal Affairs will not deliver direct services (with the exception of its current role in maintaining family records) and service delivery work will continue to be the business of core service delivery agencies.

Provision of high-level strategic advice will allow Aboriginal Affairs to take on a helicopter view of government supporting agencies to increase their performance and avoid duplication.

A Memorandum issued by the Premier to all Ministers will communicate the new functions of Aboriginal Affairs and will be binding on all NSW Government departments.

#### 5.4.3 Improved Coordination and Oversight

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that a key element of the accountability framework is improved coordination and oversight which includes a solution broker mandate to work across agencies.

The implementation of this plan will take a cross-government approach, with various agencies leading the implementation of specific initiatives.



It will require a solution broker role be mandated to engage across Government on systemic issues and areas requiring cross-government coordination, and to identify emerging issues relating to Aboriginal communities. It will include breaking down silos between government agencies by engaging with them on issues that require whole-of-government coordination, and identifying problems early on and brokering solutions at the local, regional and state level.

### Improved coordination and oversight

To ensure that the response is truly whole-of-government:

- A new *Coordinator General* for Aboriginal Affairs (who would also act as the Chairperson of the *independent Aboriginal Council*) will be established by statute to:
  - work in collaboration with relevant Government agencies to broker cross-agency solutions
  - obtain information from agencies to assist the *independent Aboriginal Council* in assessing the Government's performance
  - report periodically to the Minister on activities and outcomes achieved by the Council
- The Senior Management Council, which comprises the Directors General of all NSW Government departments, will have oversight of the reforms
- The performance agreements of Directors General of NSW Government departments will include implementation of the specific initiatives in *OCHRE*, as well embedding the new partnership approach with Aboriginal people including changing agency practices
- Relevant targets in the *NSW 2021* plan will be reviewed in light of the priorities identified in this document and included in the performance agreements of Directors General
- Aboriginal Affairs will also be authorised to call on the Government's Regional Leadership Groups to troubleshoot and escalate issues as required to the Senior Management Council

- Treasury will take on a strengthened role in coordinating data on a program basis across government as part of the NSW Government's new financial management framework. Over time agencies will work with Treasury to link program evaluations within financial reporting to increase understanding of the effectiveness of Government investment.

### 5.4.4 Meaningful and Measurable Reporting and Evaluation

The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that a key element of the accountability framework is meaningful and measurable reporting which includes:

- periodic reporting by the *independent Aboriginal Council* and by Government
- Treasury coordination of expenditure data.

Through *OCHRE*, the NSW Government aims to ensure investment of resources in programs and initiatives which have the greatest effect on Aboriginal communities and deliver improved outcomes on the ground. To do this *OCHRE* will be accompanied by:

- A process to publicly report and monitor actions
- A robust evaluation framework that will provide data and evidence to support decisions so that programs are based on what is shown to work
- Ensuring communities help set the targets for reporting on progress.

Once the initiatives in *OCHRE* have been operational for three years, the results will be examined before implementation is considered at a state-wide level. Evaluation of *OCHRE* overall will also consider the effectiveness of supporting reforms and possible broader roll out of the initiatives.

Research recognises that it can be difficult to measure the real effect of government programs and activities aimed at social and economic change as socio-economic outcomes are influenced by a range of factors and real change can only be achieved in the long term.

Based on best practice and experience it is proposed that the evaluation of the three key programs (*Opportunity Hubs*, *Language Nests* and *Local Decision Making*) will focus on measuring their effect on program participants and communities at the trial locations. This will include direct involvement of the Aboriginal communities at the trial sites in designing the evaluation methodology and the evaluation process (e.g. participant surveys or community assessment processes). The program evaluations will be publicly available.

### *What we hope to achieve*

The NSW Government recognises the need to strengthen accountability arrangements to:

- Embed a new partnership with Aboriginal people across Government
- Ensure that all the initiatives in *OCHRE* are implemented successfully
- Improve the effectiveness of government expenditure in Aboriginal affairs.



## 6. APPENDICES

### ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NESTS

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Department of Education and Communities
<b>Key partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal language speakers and Elders</li> <li>NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group</li> <li>NSW Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development</li> <li>Regional Aboriginal Language Centres</li> <li>NSW Board of Studies</li> <li>TAFE NSW institutes</li> <li>Universities</li> </ul>

### CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Department of Education and Communities
<b>Key partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal students and their families</li> <li>Local Aboriginal Elders and/or key community members</li> <li>Local NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group</li> <li>Key government agencies</li> <li>Partner non-government organisations, such as the Aboriginal Medical Services Chamber of Commerce or local business representatives</li> </ul>

### OPPORTUNITY HUBS

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Department of Education and Communities (State Training Services)
<b>Key partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal students and their families</li> <li>Aboriginal communities</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>TAFE</li> <li>Local business and other employer groups</li> <li>Peak industry bodies</li> <li>Employment support programs</li> <li>Australian Government</li> <li>NGOs</li> </ul>



**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Aboriginal Affairs
<b>Key partners</b>	<p>NSW Aboriginal Land Council</p> <p>NSWALC Economic Development Committee</p> <p>Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Industry</p> <p>Key NSW and Australian Government agencies</p> <p>Local government</p> <p>Education institutions</p>

**LOCAL DECISION MAKING**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Aboriginal Affairs
<b>Key partners</b>	<p>Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Existing Aboriginal governance bodies</p> <p>Government agencies delivering services (with the exception of statutory services such as child protection and police) at the trial locations</p> <p>Department of Premier and Cabinet</p> <p>Local government</p> <p>Australian Government</p>

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	Aboriginal Affairs
<b>Key partners</b>	<p>Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Independent Aboriginal Council</p> <p>Senior Management Council</p> <p>Department of Premier and Cabinet</p> <p>NSW Treasury</p>

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