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# *OCHRE LDM EVALUATION STAGE 2: EVALUATION BLUEPRINT*

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE PRODUCTION OF  
LOCAL EVALUATION PLANS 2019–2021.  
DEVELOPED BY THE CENTRE FOR  
ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC POLICY RESEARCH  
AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
2019

THE STATE OF LOCAL  
DECISION MAKING IN  
NSW

## CONTENTS OF THIS BLUEPRINT

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<b><i>What are OCHRE and Local Decision Making?</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
Description of <i>OCHRE</i> , its initiatives and goals.....	3
Overview of LDM model .....	3
<b><i>ABOUT THE EVALUATION: BACKGROUND CONTEXT</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
The policy and political context .....	5
Findings from Stage 1 of the <i>OCHRE</i> evaluation.....	5
Knowledge about evaluation practice gained in Stage 1 of the <i>OCHRE</i> evaluation ...	6
<b><i>THE STAGE 2 EVALUATION SCOPE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS</i></b> .....	<b>8</b>
Stage 2 Evaluation scope and purpose.....	8
Purpose of this document.....	9
Parties to co-design.....	9
<b><i>THEORY OF CHANGE</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b><i>METHODOLOGY</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
General approach.....	13
Principles .....	16
Methods.....	17
Processes for the initial 12 months .....	19
Data Governance and Data Sovereignty .....	21
Adapting to a changing policy environment .....	22
Use of administrative data .....	22
<b><i>COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCHERS</i></b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b><i>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</i></b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b><i>AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR MEASURING CHANGE IN THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP</i></b> .....	<b>26</b>
Key concepts.....	26
Scope.....	26
Considerations and approach .....	27
Developing an instrument to measure change .....	27
<b><i>REPORTING</i></b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b><i>ABOUT CAEPR AND THE EVALUATION TEAM</i></b> .....	<b>30</b>

**KEY ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS..... 37**

**ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS..... 40**

**RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN ..... 41**

**TIMEFRAME FOR THE FIRST 12 MONTHS..... 45**

**CONTACT ..... 46**

## What are OCHRE and Local Decision Making?

### Description of OCHRE, its initiatives and goals

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In 2013, OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment), a community focused plan for Aboriginal Affairs was introduced by the NSW Government to support Aboriginal self-determination and priorities through an ongoing commitment to transfer control of program design and delivery to Aboriginal communities.

There are a number of initiatives operating through OCHRE including Connected Communities, Opportunity Hubs, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, Industry-Based Agreements, an Aboriginal Economic Prosperity Framework, a Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs), and the Local Decision Making (LDM) program.

### Overview of LDM model

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Local Decision Making is one of the key OCHRE initiatives. It is a program where Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government agree to give communities a progressively bigger say in what services are delivered in their communities, and how they are delivered. Through transferring power to make decisions about service delivery, it aims to transform the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government to one of partnership. LDM operates on the principle of self-determination ensuring that Aboriginal communities are at the centre of government service design, planning, delivery and evaluation.

The policy and practice of the LDM is currently under review in response to the Stage 1 OCHRE Evaluation which was led by Ilan Katz at the University of New South Wales and the New South Wales Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs)'s OCHRE Review Report. Between these two reports, a total of 242 recommendations have been made, although not all are applicable to the LDM.

The social and political environment in which the LDM program operates is changing rapidly. At the time of writing, the LDM program is at different stages of implementation across eight regions or 'sites' in NSW. In each of the LDM regions, the Aboriginal community have formed an Aboriginal regional alliance to negotiate with the NSW Government about the design and delivery of services to their communities. These regions became LDM sites through an Expression of Interest process open to any existing or newly formed Regional Alliance. LDM program participation is growing very rapidly. In the next twelve months, up to seven new Regional Alliances may join the program.

The first Regional Alliances joined the LDM program in 2013. Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA), Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation (IWAAC) and Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (RADA) were the first three sites to participate in the LDM. In 2014, the LDM program was expanded to Barang Central Coast (BCC) and to Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRRA). In 2015, Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (NRAA) was included, and Tribal Wave Assembly (TWA) split from RADA to become its own LDM site. In 2018, Riverina-Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA) formed and joined the LDM program.

The form that Regional Alliances take varies between LDM sites. The internal governance of Regional Alliances is a matter for each of the Aboriginal communities

to determine, and different communities have developed different governance models.

There are several stages of development to the LDM including establishing the LDM, implementing the IDM and making subsequent accords (Figure 1). Alliance's decision-making powers will increase over time in the journey toward self-determination. The various stages of LDM has implications for the state of relationship building, the extent of trust and confidence in the relationship as well as the resulting outcomes of community wellbeing and self-determination.

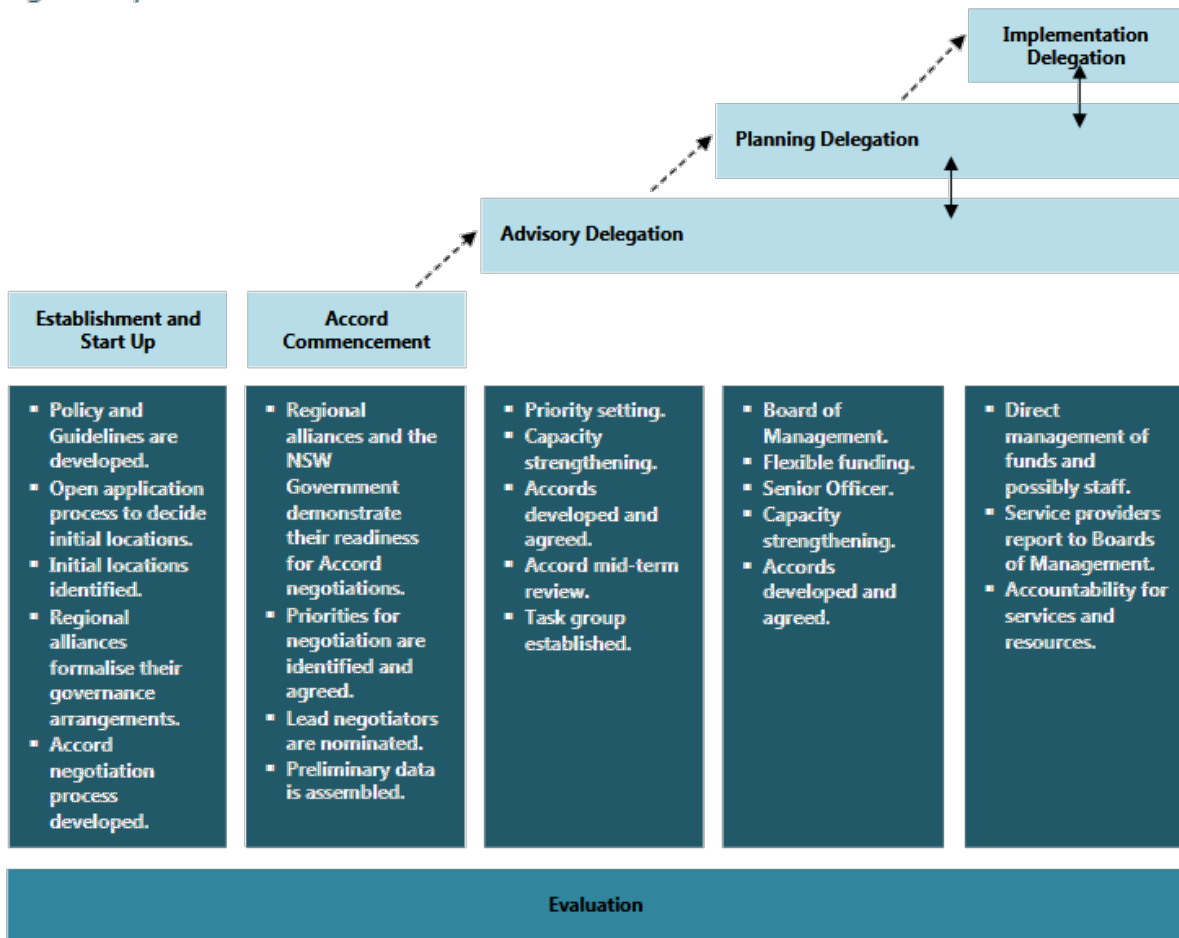


Figure 1: Steps on the path to Local Decision Making for Regional Alliances. Source: LDM Policy and Operational Framework, 2017.

## ABOUT THE EVALUATION: BACKGROUND CONTEXT

### The policy and political context

The *OCHRE* LDM Initiative is a pioneering program in its approach to devolving power to regional Aboriginal communities through an agreement-making model. Its aims and approach are characteristic of a new emphasis on partnerships, agreements and accountability structures in Indigenous public policy in Australia. Its approach is already inspiring policy change in other Australian jurisdictions, while its principles may inform Indigenous public policy developments more generally. For example, the adoption of Local Decision Making program in the Northern Territory is based upon the NSW model. Other examples include the process used in the refresh of the Closing the Gap framework, and the Commonwealth process to co-design an Indigenous Voice.

As such, LDM has a broader strategic significance in Indigenous public policy within and beyond NSW. The LDM stands as an exemplar and testing ground for how Indigenous policy development and implementation can be done differently.

### Findings from Stage 1 of the *OCHRE* evaluation

In 2015, the NSW government committed to evaluate *OCHRE* over 10 years. Stage 1 of the evaluation were undertaken between 2016 and 2018 and covered three of the *OCHRE* initiatives across 7 sites. As shown in Table 1, the evaluation of the LDM component of Stage 1 involved IWAAC and MPRA, with TRRA also participating in a less detailed evaluation of the Accord making process.

Table 1: Stage 1 evaluation of *OCHRE* Initiatives

<b><i>OCHRE</i> Initiative</b>	<b>Site</b>
Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gumbaynggirr</li> <li>▪ North West Wiradjuri</li> </ul>
Opportunity Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Campbelltown Opportunity Hub</li> <li>▪ Tamworth Opportunity Hub</li> </ul>
Local Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation</li> <li>▪ Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly</li> <li>▪ Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Accord making process only)</li> </ul>

Source: Katz et al 2018

The previous evaluation undertaken noted several strengths of *OCHRE* in general, and the LDM specifically. It highlighted the success of the initiative in building relationships, creating an on-going and open dialogue thereby representing progress furthest along in terms of facilitating self-determination. However, the evaluation identified challenges that remain. These include the alignment between the regional alliances and other Aboriginal governance structures, the parameters for negotiation and discussion which is often imbued by power relationships, the under resourcing of the initiatives and the responsibility of and actual service delivery on the ground. All these challenges raise questions of trust and create barriers of meaningful change.

Key findings of the Stage 1 Evaluation can be clustered into seven themes:

- Resourcing

- Communication
- Planning
- Service integration
- Policy
- Accountability
- Cultural competence

The NSW government has welcomed the recommendations and is currently formulating its response. It has committed to taking a co-design approach to responding to recommendations. This will see the Aboriginal community representatives who hold the knowledge of the intent of each recommendation, and the knowledge of public officials who hold knowledge of public service structures, budget, processes and government priorities woven together. This approach is intended to deliver action that will not only address the findings but also continue the transformation of the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government.

One key issue that emerged from the Stage 1 evaluation related to the relationship between Regional Alliances and local Aboriginal communities in LDM Regions. Three particular elements of this complex relationship emerged from the evaluation. First, there is a potential for conflict between the LDM governance structure and other regional Aboriginal governance structures. Second, a spatial mismatch was also identified in some LDM sites between the regional structure of the LDM and desires for truly local – rather than regional – decision making. Third, it was noted that community support for the LDM program may require changes to outcomes for Aboriginal communities over-and-above changes to the relationship between the NSW Government and Regional Alliances.

#### [Knowledge about evaluation practice gained in Stage 1 of the OCHRE evaluation](#)

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In addition to findings about *OCHRE* itself, the evaluation reflected on the process of doing participatory evaluation. Key learnings for evaluation practice from the previous evaluation (Katz et al. 2018) of the LDM include:

- Community controlled research requires time and resources for communities, researchers and government to fully engage
- Need to recognise the different roles of stakeholders in the evaluation
- Need for flexibility to ensure communities are engaged throughout the evaluation
- Need for Aboriginal researchers to lead the evaluation
- Need for clear governance processes in communities to provide community consent
- Recognise community consent is an ongoing process and includes collective and multiple opportunities for communities to consent (or not)
- Need to identify processes, such as how to get feedback and validation of reports, with community, as early as possible
- Need an approach that works for both communities and government
- Need to respect community business and priorities
- Need to be inclusive of diverse community voices

- Importance of the community researcher mode
- Method of communication
- Importance of stakeholder engagement (in this research, government) at start and end of fieldwork period
- Importance of building relationships and accountability in the evaluation process
- Need to recognise other priorities in the community, as well as research/consultation fatigue



## THE STAGE 2 EVALUATION SCOPE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Stage 2 Evaluation scope and purpose

The 10 year evaluation has the primary goal of understanding the operation of the LDM in order to improve its processes and outcomes. It will also inform the NSW Government about prospects and strategies to strengthen and expand of LDM in future. Additional work analysing process of agreeing a state-level Accord between NCARA and the NSW Government is also part of the Stage 2 evaluation, but will be considered in a separate document. The evaluations will primarily evaluate outcomes, although they will include elements of process evaluation. No economic evaluation is planned.

The Stage 2 evaluation builds on the work undertaken in Stage 1. While the Stage 1 evaluation covered three of the *OCHRE* initiatives, the focus of this evaluation is on the LDM, building on the evaluation already undertaken on the LDM across two sites, Illawarra-Wingecarribee and Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

While there are eight LDM sites in the *OCHRE* Initiative, this evaluation covers only five LDM sites, each of which are at different stages of development (see Table 2). This selection of sites will provide important context for insights into critical processes, challenges and associated outcomes desired and necessary for progressing through the LDM phases shown in Figure 2.

*Table 2: LDM sites participating in the Stage 2 evaluation*

Establishing LDM and early operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance</li> <li>▪ Tribal Wave Assembly</li> </ul>
Implementing the LDM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation</li> <li>▪ Three Rivers Regional Assembly</li> </ul>
Making subsequent Accords
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly</li> </ul>

Aboriginal Affairs NSW outlined four key research questions which are to be addressed in the Stage 2 evaluation:

1. To what extent have public officials implemented the recommendations from the first three years of the evaluation of LDM according to community wishes and expectations, and co-designed required changes to policies and practices? What has enabled and impeded this?
2. To what extent has the objective of LDM and the state Accord making process, to positively transform the relationship between Alliance members and the NSW Government and its officials, been achieved? What enables and impedes this transformation? How deep and durable are the changes?
3. To what extent does LDM and the state Accord operate as a mechanism for self-determination? What enables and impedes?

4. Which aspects of LDM and the state Accord work well, and which could be improved to better meet aspirations of the Aboriginal community for the future development of the LDM and the LDM initiative, including acceptance by local Aboriginal polity and NSW Government and its officials?

These research questions will be further specified in each LDM site through the co-design process outlined in the Methodology section below.

### Purpose of this document

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The Evaluation Team will undertake Stage 2 of the evaluation of the LDM using a weaving approach, and is committed to co-design throughout the process. For this reason, key decisions that are required to produce an evaluation plan must be made with Aboriginal communities in LDM sites. These decisions include producing a number of more detailed research questions or sub-questions, choosing appropriate research methods, identifying what evidence can answer those research questions, identifying measures or indicators that may validly provide such evidence, and documenting existing or new data sources that will be used to provide such measures.

Consequently, this document should not be considered to be an evaluation plan. *Instead, its purpose is to provide a blueprint for the production of local evaluation plans in the five LDM sites.* This document gives a description of the methodology and principles that will be brought to the production of those local evaluation plans, but it is not an evaluation plan itself. This is a deliberate decision of the Evaluation Team. Following the usual conventions of evaluation planning by providing detailed specifications of research questions, methods and data sources at this early stage would contravene the spirit and practice of co-design and partnership to which the Evaluation Team are committed.

Ultimately, the research team will conduct Evaluations in each of the five LDM sites and for a 'State' Accord between the NSW Government and NCARA. These Evaluations will be reported on separately, and their findings brought together in a final Synthesis Report to give an overall picture of the operation of LDM in NSW.

### Parties to co-design

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The Stage 1 evaluation raised several questions about who should be party to co-design processes. Two particular issues have emerged. First, the Stage 1 evaluation identified the potential for conflicts between the LDM governance structure and other local or regional Aboriginal governance structures to impeded co-design processes. In the context of evaluation, this raises important questions about who should be included as parties to co-design. Second, it was identified that the co-design process may benefit from the inclusion of independent subject matter experts to provide particular advice and expertise at crucial junctures in co-design processes.

The Evaluation Team will identify co-design parties, primarily drawing on the local knowledge of community-based researchers. Potential co-design parties include

Regional Alliances, other local Aboriginal organisations or governance structures, local Aboriginal community members, Aboriginal Affairs NSW Head Office staff, Aboriginal Affairs NSW Regional Office staff, other relevant NSW Government agency staff, NCARA and subject matter experts. Different co-design parties will be relevant in each co-design context.

We will work to undertake co-design and identify co-design parties using Community-based researchers (described later in this document). We will adopt the following strategies to minimise potential conflict between parties within Aboriginal communities:

- Identification of all key community and organisational stakeholders;
- Awareness of local contextual complexities (e.g., are key organisations led by Traditional Custodians or other *interested* parties, e.g., off Country).
- Transparency of consultation processes to identify potential points of conflict;
- Transparent refusal to participate in or perpetuate community conflicts;
- Ongoing transparency of processes with all interested parties. This may include using separate safe meeting places for key community groups to avoid conflict.

Parties to co-design will be supported through the process with an appropriate level of preparation and training about what co-design is, and basic principles of evaluation design.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

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A Theory of Change (TOC) provides a framework to identify the necessary change and pathway to enable the achievement of a set of outcomes and goals. It allows parties to a policy or program to identify how the resources, actions and outcomes involved in a program come together to produce the changes the policy is intended to create.

The TOC provides a useful backdrop for evaluating the LDM as both a means of Indigenous self-determination but also an outcome of self-determination for the LDM initiative. While the LDM aims to change the relationship between Aboriginal communities and NSW Government, a critical goal in itself, the necessary change in the relationship will potentially lead to some better outcomes for the communities through increased decision making in program delivery.

In this we view self-determination not as something provided by LDM. Rather we see the LDM as a mechanism through which community self-determination might be exercised. We also recognise that self-determination means different things for different Aboriginal individuals and for Aboriginal collectivities, and that different Aboriginal polities may view collective self-determination differently. As Hunt notes, Aboriginal peoples' aspirations with regard to collective self-determination include "long-term strategic planning, cultural integrity, equality and non-discrimination, identity, economic development, and partnerships with government and the private sector."<sup>1</sup> Dreise points out that collective self-determination is often advanced through Aboriginal governance structures such as Regional Alliances. Collective action by such bodies "...goes to the heart of age-old Aboriginal governance models and decision making practices. To illustrate this point in a simple way, Aboriginal societies have never had kings, queens or chiefs (which is not to ignore the special place that Elders have always had in educational and decision making processes in societies)."<sup>2</sup>

The theory of change should also set boundaries around a programs scope. This should help in establishing what changes in outcomes may be attributable directly or indirectly to the LDM initiative. A theory of change is not static, however. Working with a theory of change requires on-going reflection, both looking forwards and backwards, so that learning within and between the stages of LDM implementation and operation can be incorporated.

In developing the shared vision and roadmap of change, the different views and assumptions among stakeholders are outlined to enable all involved to better understand what they bring to the process and how those knowledge and expertise can be better recognised and valued. As a result, the perspectives and roles of all parties in either contributing to or further challenging the achievement of better outcomes for communities and stronger relationships will be made visible on all sides.

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt, J. 2017. 'Self-determination' in Transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the NSW Government: Aboriginal Affairs NSW Research Agenda 2018-2023. Sydney: Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Dreise, T. 2019. *Are we mates yet? Agreement making between States and First Nations*. Black Swan Consulting. <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/new-knowledge/Agreement-making-Are-we-mates-yet.pdf>

Figure 2 outlines a provisional theory of change for the LDM in diagrammatic form. The key hypothesis that underlies the LDM is that as LDM progresses, self-determination progresses and relationships between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government will be transformed over time. It is envisaged that as the LDM program matures in each LDM site, self-determination will be enhanced and the relationship with government will improve. These two outcomes – self-determination and an improved relationship – are visualised as intertwined lines, showing their interconnection. Self-determination and relationship transformation are not expected to take place in isolation from each other. Both are envisaged as increasing together.

The transformation of the relationship and increased levels of self-determination are to be facilitated through the establishment of Regional Alliances and a series of three-year Accord making and implementation cycles.

The establishment of Regional Alliances includes activities such as creation of an Expression of Interest, the creation of a governance structure and consultation on community priorities. These processes are undertaken in dialog with Aboriginal Affairs NSW, and will build the Alliances and Government's capacity to work together. They will also build trust between the Alliances and Government, give the community resourcing and provide a forum through which to be heard by Government. The development of a Regional Alliance governance structure will provide the Aboriginal community a vehicle through which to exercise their collective self-determination.

In each of the Accord making and implementation cycles, the NSW Government and a Regional Alliance will negotiate an Accord, come to an agreement, and then implement that agreement. Due to the cyclical nature of this process, these Accords are visualised as loops in the theory of change diagram. Over time, Accords are expected to have increased levels of ambition, devolve greater decision-making powers to Regional Alliances, and increase in scope and strength in each cycle. For that reason, the diagram shows the size of the Accords increasing over time.

Each Accord includes agreed outcomes that will be sought during the Accord period, and related activities that seek to achieve those outcomes. Outcomes may be measured using specific indicators, by which progress towards implementation can be monitored. These are identified within each Accord cycle in the diagram.

Accords have their own implicit theory of change. They are intended to lead to direct changes to community outcomes and wellbeing through altering the provision of Government services at the regional level. To give a hypothetical example, an Accord relating to school suspensions might aim to reduce the number of suspensions through changes to departmental policies or processes, and this may also have other 'flow-on' benefits as a consequence.

In addition to this, the Accord-making and implementation process will also contribute toward the LDMs underlying goals of enhanced self-determination and the transformation of the relationship with government. It is through the activities of According negotiation, agreement making and implementation that the institutions of self-determination will be built and strengthened. This same process will facilitate the envisaged transformation of the relationship with government. Key to these broader changes are the resourcing of Regional Alliances and the delegation of decision-making power to them regarding service delivery. For the relationship between government and Aboriginal communities to change, the Accord making process

requires mutual accountability between Government and Regional Alliances, the development of relationships of trust and respect, the improved ability for Government to hear and take seriously the voices of Aboriginal communities, mutual capacity building among the Regional Alliances and Government to work together, and the creation of new mechanisms for controlling government-held information and data. These “levers of change” are visualised as arrows flowing from the Accord making and implementation cycles to the transforming relationship and self-determination.

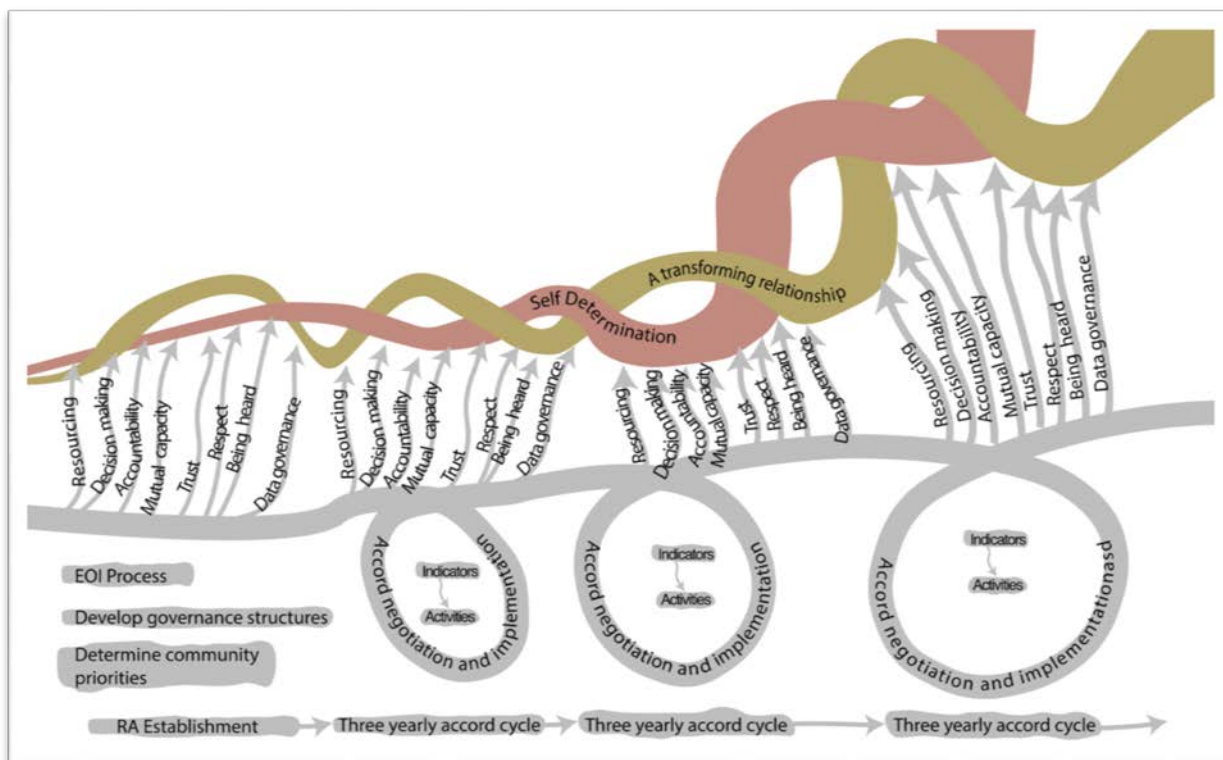


Figure 2: Visualisation of a Theory of Change for Local Decision Making

## METHODOLOGY

### General approach

The Local Decision Making program and the state Accord are underpinned by the principle of self-determination and aims to ensure that, among other goals, Aboriginal people have a genuine voice in determining how government operates in their communities. Our methodology is developed with the spirit of self-determination at the forefront of our minds. In that spirit, we will co-design and co-produce the evaluation with the various co-design parties described above.

We adopt the ‘Weaving Knowledges’ approach outlined by Dreise and Mazurski (2018) and by NCARA (2018) to integrate Aboriginal knowledges and ways of doing business together with those of the public sector and academia. See Figure 3 below. Our evaluation approach partly draws on the academic research on participatory evaluation methods. Participatory evaluation takes a partnership approach, in which

groups (such as program beneficiaries, funders, and government and key decision makers) play active roles in the evaluation process. Participation takes place throughout the evaluation process, going far beyond an advisory role to include participation in identifying research questions, planning evaluation design, selecting appropriate measures and data collection methods, gathering and analysing data, interpreting findings, and developing conclusions and recommendations.

Co-design, data collection and evaluation will be undertaken with a view to balancing between competing imperatives of local adaptability and cross-site comparison. While ensuring that evaluation plans are localised, the Evaluation Team will endeavour to make the local evaluations comparable where appropriate. This will be undertaken through the co-design process, and also through the research processes adopted by the Evaluation Team.



Figure 3: Peta-Joy Williams, 2019. *Ngumbaay-dyil (All are one) Waybarra (weave)*.

Peta-Joy Williams is a Wiradjuri woman, born in Sydney with her feet firmly in both cultures, the inland and the salt water. Peta Joy finds an affinity with both and inspiration from the unique elements of the two nations. This work was created to enhance collaboration between Aboriginal people, the government and other Australians living in NSW. Using traditional weaving knowledges taught to Peta-Joy by her Wiradjuri Elder, Aunty Lorraine Ty the work weaves together different types of plants. The inner basket was created with commercially imported raffia grass. The strong and beautiful exterior was created with native Australian Lamandra reeds collected by Peta-Joy, and the feathers of Dinawan or the emu representing the many years of accumulated Aboriginal traditional knowledges. The result is a vessel that holds traditional Aboriginal and imported knowledges combined, together they nurture a strength of unity to face future challenges.



## Principles

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Four key principles will underpin our methodological approach, derived both from the literature on Indigenist research and from lessons from the Stage 1 evaluation.

First and most fundamentally, we are committed to employing a methodology that works with Aboriginal communities in NSW as experts and partners, rather than conducting an evaluation that treats Aboriginal communities as passive and uninformed objects of research. Co-design and co-production of research will be undertaken to redress power imbalances that have otherwise occurred between the professional academic research teams and Aboriginal community members who have limited time and resources to spend on an evaluation, and between community members and public officials. Decision-making power about research design and implementation will be shared between these three groups of participants in the evaluation. This partnership will not just weave together different knowledges, but also respectfully integrate different ways of being in the world and different ways of doing business.

We will endeavour to achieve a balance between community, government and academic ways of knowing, doing and being in order to produce an evaluation that is co-owned by community and by government. It is crucial to the evaluation's impact that its findings are credible to the Aboriginal community, to the public sector, and to independent academics. Credibility among these diverse groups will be sought both by integrating differing research methods and by incorporating a diversity of perspectives.

Consequently, while the evaluation will centre Aboriginal voices, public sector agencies and employees have crucial roles within the evaluation. Understanding public sector perspectives, knowledge and ways of doing business are vital in identifying the ways in which the LDM program is operating, and how it is affecting relationships between Aboriginal people, communities, organisations and government agencies. Indeed, it is impossible to form a comprehensive understanding of the LDM program's operation, the drivers of its successes and the barriers to its advancement without a close engagement with the public sector. Analysis of areas where Aboriginal community views and public sector perspectives align or are mismatched is likely to be revelatory of the effectiveness of LDM in transforming the relationship between the community and government. Accordingly, in addition to its focus on the Aboriginal community, the evaluation will be seeking out views from the public sector at both an individual and an agency level.

Second, we are committed to developing research capacity. This will not be an 'add-on' to the evaluation process, but a core part of how we co-produce research. Community researchers will be empowered to do their own 'evaluation'. This will involve Evaluation Team members, led by an Aboriginal academic, investing substantial time and resources in developing the capacity of community-based researchers to undertake peer research as part of the evaluation.

Our view of capacity building is not limited to the transfer of skills and knowledge from academic researchers to Aboriginal community members, although this is a core part of our methodology. Rather, capacity building will be mutual. We recognise that the process of undertaking the evaluation will develop academic models of co-

research and enhance the body of skills and knowledge required to undertake such work. It is critical that the academic researchers will also increase their knowledge of community context, history, politics, institutions and aspirations through the course of the research. While this academic capacity building will initially take place among the Evaluation Team, it is expected to have flow-on effects beyond the Evaluation Team to colleagues and students through research dissemination and teaching. Capacity will also be built among public officials, as they will gain experience and learnings from their participation in the co-design process. In this way, the project will contribute toward the institutionalisation of the co-design and co-production of research as the 'new normal' manner of doing research in government and academia.

Third, we commit to valuing the time of our co-researchers and other research parties. We will spend substantial time building reciprocal relationships of mutual trust among research parties in the community and public sector. Investment of significant researcher time in relationship building is crucial to the success of the project: co-design and co-research cannot work without mutual trust first being established. This initial investment of time is small relative to the long-term nature of the relationships we envisage, which we hope will continue well beyond this initial three-year project. We will ensure that all participants are paid for their time, either directly by the evaluation project or by their employer. We will also work to ensure that community members have ample time to prepare for upcoming meetings, that we hold meetings at times that suit community participants, and that we provide our project outputs to research participants in a manner that suits their timetables and in an accessible format.

Fourth, we are committed to taking an iterative, adaptable approach to evaluation. We believe that research co-design and co-production require joint reflection and reciprocal learning. As such, while we have outlined a proposed project staging below, we expect a process of constant adaptation to changing circumstances or successes or failures throughout the project. Further, we recognise that we have to work around the business of community and the business of government, each of whom may have competing and changing priorities. Such adaptation will be undertaken while maintaining an awareness of the objectives of the evaluation, and changes to the process or schedule will be undertaken in order to achieve the evaluation objectives.

## Methods

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Recognising that a significant amount of time and resources have already been expended to arrive at this point of evaluation to date, an iterative approach will be taken, building on the existing lessons and recommendations. The Theory of Change sets the backdrop, providing a framework for considering the learnings from the first three years and having a conversation about whether a path-resetting is needed to achieve the long term goals of the LDM, particularly around the big picture goals of self-determination and transforming the relationship between NSW government and Aboriginal communities. The methods employed will draw on the existing data and information from NCARA, the Regional Alliances and the NSW Government and

complemented by the collection of primary data to provide a more comprehensive picture of the LDM initiatives.

The weaving of Aboriginal and Western knowledges and practice approach allows for different standpoints and knowledge systems to be brought together in a space of mutual respect, reciprocity, accountability and transparency. The weaving of different knowledges and worldviews can result in an agreed set of principles, measures, outcomes giving the evaluation process both public and community credibility and acceptance.

Through the process of weaving Aboriginal and Western knowledges and practices, a 'journey mapping' exercise will be undertaken with co-design parties at each site. This is an essential first step for establishing a shared starting point bringing together the conversations to date and the continuing conversation moving forward for all involved in the current evaluation. The journey mapping will involve looking back to the start of the LDM initiative and validating or determining the respective short, medium and long term requirements of the initiative for deep and durable change to occur. A substantial part of the backwards-looking journey mapping process is to identify whether the expected change has been observed including indicators and measures which represent that change. Where appropriate and helpful, 'truth tested indicators'<sup>3</sup> identified by the respective communities as representing evidence of change may be adopted the starting point for analysing change attributable to the LDM and State accords, either directly or indirectly. Understanding and documenting the reasons why change has or hasn't occurred is a crucial part of this process.

The second step of the journey mapping is to look forward to what the LDM outcomes could and should look like the objectives of the LDM were met taking into consideration all the learnings, success and challenges identified in looking backwards. A key aspect of 'futuring' the LDM will be to conceptualise and understand what self-determination and the transformed relationship might look like in the various sites and different stages of implementation. This is particularly important for establishing how the LDM and the State Accord operates as a mechanism for self-determination and what are the associated indicators to signify self-determination in practice.

The methods that are used in the journey mapping process will be decided through the co-design process with parties at each site and are likely to vary from place to place taking into account the diversity and context as well as the stage of the LDM initiative in the different sites. The range of methods that could be drawn on include methods from Aboriginal or Indigenist and Western research paradigms such as narrative enquiry (Indigenous storywork, yarning), Dadirri, community surveys, face-to-face interviews, and photo and video recording. Research with the public sector is likely to rely on more traditional Western research methods. These will be tailored according to circumstances but are likely to include face-to-face interviews, focus

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<sup>3</sup> Here we refer to the 'truth tested indicators' identified by ThinkImpact in their unpublished consultancy reports, for example their 28 September 2018 report titled *Results Framework: Supporting Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation* and in the unpublished reports developed by ThinkImpact with TRRA on Economic Development Indicators, Housing Indicators, Health Indicators and Education Indicators.

groups, and workshops. Finally, we will draw on administrative data sources wherever possible to inform the evaluation. The appropriate administrative data will be identified through co-design processes. Descriptive and – where possible – analytical approaches will be used with these key quantitative data sources to monitor the progress of the LDM program on more readily quantifiable outcomes.

### Processes for the initial 12 months

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The main goal for the first 12 months is to develop relationships between the Evaluation Team and Regional Alliances and other co-design parties, and to co-design local evaluation plans and fieldwork schedules for the remaining two years of the evaluation.

The evaluation planning will take place in three phases, although these phases may overlap somewhat in time.

The first phase is the development of this Blueprint document. It outlines the scope of the evaluation, the methodology and methods proposed for undertaking evaluation and the key principles which guide the evaluation process, weaving together different knowledge systems and practices.

The second phase is the co-design of the local evaluation plans in each of the five LDM sites. This co-design process will take the Blueprint as its starting point, and develop concrete plans to tailor the evaluation to the needs, aspirations and circumstances of the different LDM sites. Local evaluation plans will provide an agreed results logic, fieldwork design, measures of success under each core evaluation question, data collection and mapping of these data to evaluation questions, data collection methods, and an approach to data analysis validation and publication. The content of each of these matters will be determined jointly by the Evaluation Team and co-design parties in each LDM site. We do not wish to preempt these co-design processes by determining them in this document.

In addition to these standard evaluation issues, in this phase we will agree on an initial set of protocols to govern how the Evaluation Team operate. These protocols will be co-developed by Evaluation Team and co-design parties in each LDM site, and will be subject to renegotiation over the course of the project. They will cover the following issues:

- How community consent/approval to undertake the rest of the evaluation will be gained, and procedures to ensure that consent is continuing
- How meetings and workshops will be organised and facilitated, with attention paid to maintaining cultural integrity and minimising the time burden of research participants
- How research participants and community researchers will be paid
- How research methods can be adapted to suit the needs of community
- The kinds of things we consider to be ‘data’ in this project, and how they will be collected

- How data will be governed and how the research will respect principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty
- How data will be analysed and interpreted
- How findings will be presented, reported, revised and disseminated
- Who will determine recommendations, and how this will take place
- How urgent or early findings will be shared with relevant parties (e.g. AANSW, NCARA or the OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee)
- How communication take place between co-design parties and the Evaluation Team
- How communication within the co-design and co-production process will take place
- How communication with the regional Aboriginal community will be undertaken to ensure that the community is informed
- How communication with the broader public will be undertaken to promote public confidence in the evaluation process

Protocols governing data will be designed with consideration that different sorts of data will require different protocols. For example, administrative data will require different governance arrangements to interview data.

The *second phase* also involves the Evaluation Team beginning to spend time with co-design parties including Regional Alliances and Aboriginal Affairs NSW regional office staff, to get to know each other and to begin to form shared understandings of the evaluation. This relationship building is crucial to the success of the evaluation.

In *phase three*, detailed fieldwork plans will be developed to implement the local evaluation plans agreed in phase two. Each fieldwork plan will include detailed fieldwork budgets and schedules to operationalise the evaluation plans developed in phase two. In particular, fieldwork plans will detail tasks and timeframes for their completion, anticipated travel and other fieldwork costs such as venue hire, non-monetary resources required from the Evaluation Team, Aboriginal Affairs NSW (both in Head Office and in Regional Offices), and the Regional Alliances, and data requirements from the NSW Government. Fieldwork plans will be developed by the Evaluation Team, working closely with co-design parties.

At this time, we will also plan our fieldwork with the public sector. Fieldwork with the public sector will be heavily reliant on Aboriginal Affairs NSW. Aboriginal Affairs NSW have primary responsibility for the LDM program and as such are a key subject of the evaluation. We will be seeking to undertake fieldwork throughout Aboriginal Affairs, including with the executive as well as with operations and policy officers, and regional office staff. We will also be relying on Aboriginal Affairs to make introduction to staff in other government agencies involved in Accord negotiations and implementation. We will seek to undertake fieldwork with other agency staff at a range of levels, from senior executives, through middle management roles and including those undertaking service delivery.

While we will plan our fieldwork with the public sector in this phase of the evaluation, we anticipate that during the course of the evaluation additional information needs may arise requiring further fieldwork. Consequently, we plan to have an adaptive approach to fieldwork with the public sector, and may require multiple interviews or focus groups with the same agencies or individuals over the course of the evaluation.

### Data Governance and Data Sovereignty

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Our approach to Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty will be guided by the principles laid out in the June 2018 communique of The *Maia m nayri Wingara* Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective.<sup>4</sup> These are well aligned with the evaluation's aims and principles. Specifically, the communique describes five Indigenous data governance rights:

1. The right to exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.
2. The right to data that is contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
3. The right to data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
4. The right to data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
5. The right to data that is protective and respects our individual and collective interests

The evaluation will uphold these rights wherever possible.

We commit to Aboriginal community ownership of our project reports. This means that each of the local evaluation reports will be owned by Regional Alliances, who will determine whether or not these reports should be published, and if not, the extent to which it will be confidentially distributed. The final synthesis report will similarly be owned, and its dissemination controlled, by NCARA.

Detailed approaches to data governance will be determined through the co-design process and described in local evaluation plans. Through this co-design process, we will develop an approach to the 'data ecosystem' that gives Aboriginal communities control over data creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure decisions (principle 1). Mechanisms for accountability will be developed through this process (principle 4). Given the limited organisational infrastructure for data storage and management available to local Aboriginal communities, it is likely that third parties (e.g. AIATSIS) may need to be enlisted to

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org/key-principles>

assist in providing appropriate long-term data management infrastructure that is compatible community needs.

The evaluation aims to focus its data collection efforts on data that is contextual and appropriately disaggregated (principle 2), that is relevant and supports Aboriginal self-determination (principle 3), and that is protective of and respects Aboriginal community interests (principle 5).

The privacy of those involved in the research is also of paramount concern. We will uphold principles of research confidentiality as a primary concern, noting that this may complicate the implementation of data governance principles.

We acknowledge that there may be some limits to the Evaluation Team's ability to uphold these five data governance principles. These may be due to third-party control of important data sources, or due to the lack of appropriate infrastructures to support ongoing data stewardship. An approach to working within these constraints will be determined during the co-design processes with local Aboriginal communities. We expect to develop different data governance protocols for different types of data (e.g. administrative data vs interview data vs survey data).

#### [Adapting to a changing policy environment](#)

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The LDM program has been changing since its commencement and is likely continue to be revised over the course of the evaluation. In particular, the LDM policy, processes and resourcing will change with *OCHRE Stronger*, the NSW Government response to the recommendations of the Stage 1 Evaluation and the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs)'s *OCHRE Review Report*. The Evaluation Team will respond to these changing circumstances in four ways. First, where feasible, we will discuss the changes to the LDM program with the parties to co-design and determine if any changes need to be made to the local evaluation plans to adapt to changes to the policy environment, without jeopardising the timely delivery of the evaluation. Second, we will aim to focus the evaluation on the LDM program as it is delivered toward the end of the evaluation period, in order to make the report as relevant as possible to the future of the program. Where this is not possible, we will draw relevant lessons from the evaluation to inform the implementation of new changes to LDM policy, processes and resourcing. Third, the Evaluation Team will, where appropriate, discuss the potential impact of program disruption and changing policies on the ability of the LDM to meet its goals. Changes to policy can introduce new challenges to successful policy implementation. Consequently, there may be lessons to be learnt from the introduction of changes the LDM program that can inform future reform processes. Finally, if and where it is deemed imperative, we will negotiate with Aboriginal Affairs NSW to produce short additional reports that can be delivered throughout the evaluation period to provide timely input to the policy reform process. This may involve contractual variations.

#### [Use of administrative data](#)

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Administrative data, both from Aboriginal Affairs NSW and other government agencies, will form part of the evaluation. The sets of administrative data to be collected and analysed will be determined through the co-design processes, both with local Aboriginal communities and NCARA for state-wide concerns. We

anticipate requesting access to three sorts of administrative data. First, the minimum data set that relates to the processes of the LDM program itself will be requested from Aboriginal Affairs NSW. Second, we will request access to certain minutes and briefing notes relevant to the LDM from Aboriginal Affairs NSW in order to remain up-to-date on changes to the program. Third, administrative data that relate to specific Accords may be requested in order to inform the analysis of their implementation and outcomes. The inclusion of subject matter experts and government officials in co-design processes will assist in identifying appropriate administrative datasets that are able to inform the evaluation. We may request the assistance of Aboriginal Affairs NSW to broker access to the third set of data from other government agencies. The use of these kinds of data has the particular advantage that in some cases, historical data will be available which enables the retrospective production of 'baseline' or timeseries datasets.

In addition to these administrative data, we will utilise official statistical collections from the Australian Bureau of Statistics where that is useful to inform the evaluation. We anticipate that for local evaluations, the Census of Population and Housing will be the primary source of official statistics given its ability to provide results at small geographical areas such as LDM footprints. However, recent administrative data collections that are held and processed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics may also yield insights at geographical scales that are useful for the evaluation.

Wherever possible, quantitative administrative data will be analysed using quasi-experimental statistical designs to maximise the robustness of the evidence presented in the evaluation. At other times, descriptive analyses will be undertaken.

We aim to undertake an iterative process of administrative data analysis, in which research questions are posed and early results are interpreted with the aid of community researchers and other community groups. This will assist in making sense of the data, ensuring that the Aboriginal community voice is centred in discussions of quantitative data, and in translating results to key community bodies such as Regional Alliances.



## COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCHERS

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The Evaluation Team will employ young Aboriginal people aged 18-35 years in each of the five LDM evaluation sites that will be involved in the evaluation. Building on the findings of the Stage 1 Evaluation, these community-based researcher groups have been designed to have around 3 - 6 Aboriginal members with a connection to the LDM region. Community-based researchers will be trained and mentored by an Aboriginal member of the Evaluation Team. They will begin by facilitating the co-design process. They will continue to work as community co-researchers for the evaluation beyond the co-design process.

Research with the community in LDM sites beyond the Regional Alliances will be undertaken by and with community-based researchers. The community-based researchers will help to develop key questions to ask in their communities about what works, what doesn't and what can be done better. After they have decided what questions are the right ones to ask, they will lead the discussions in their communities before coming together and discussing what they have heard. By recruiting, training and working with community-based researchers, the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples, as well as key community networks, will be at the forefront of the evaluation process. It will bring local voices into the evaluation of government programs.

Capacity building and mentoring is a key part of the plan to work with community-based researchers. Community-based researchers will be required to attend and participate in multi-day workshops twice a year. Community-based researchers will be expected to help design the right questions to ask about whether the LDM is achieving good things for the community, as well as talk to community members about the programs delivered by the NSW Government.

Community-based researchers will either live in the footprint of the LDM region, or be from that area but currently live elsewhere. Their connection to the region will be independently verified.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The methodology described above lays out our general approach to ethical considerations throughout the evaluation project. In addition to our commitment to these principles, we will gain formal ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of NSW and from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Australian National University. We believe that our research approach embodies the five ethical principles outlined by the AH&MRC, namely (a) net benefits for Aboriginal people and communities, (b) Aboriginal Community control of research, (c) cultural sensitivity, (d) reimbursement of costs, and (e) enhancing Aboriginal skills and knowledge. We will gain formal approval from the ANU HREC over the period of the production of local evaluation plans, and will ensure approval of project from the AH&MRC prior to undertaking our evaluation proper (i.e. before beginning to implement the local evaluation plans). We will also consider other ethical considerations around consent (collective and individual) and accountability which may be specific to the five sites and to particular co-design parties. Where appropriate, these will be codified in the local evaluation plans.

The AH&MRC is the most appropriate body for providing ethics clearance due to their involvement with the Stage 1 Evaluation and considerable 'corporate knowledge'

## AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR MEASURING CHANGE IN THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP

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A key part of the quantitative methodology for the evaluation is the co-design, development and implementation of an Assessment Tool ('the instrument') to measure the change in the working relationship between AANSW and Regional Alliances. This will enable the monitoring of the LDM's success in changing the relationship between the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities.

Specifically, an instrument will be developed that can answer the following two questions:

1. What proportion of Aboriginal peoples who have been engaged in developing or implementing an Accord, developed through the *OCHRE* Local Decision Making mechanism, report a positive change in their working relationship with the government as a result of the process?
2. What proportion of public servants who have been engaged in developing or implementing an Accord, developed through the *OCHRE* Local Decision Making mechanism, report a positive change in their working relationship with Aboriginal peoples as a result of the process?

### Key concepts

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Working relationship: The relationship that develops between public servants and Aboriginal community members through the Accord making process and subsequent implementation of Accord actions.

Public servants engaged in developing or implementing an Accord: Any person who has been party to the Accord making process at any stage including pre-Accord negotiation or has been engaged in implementing actions identified in the Accord, as a public servant. This includes all individuals regardless of the period of their involvement, and may include Aboriginal people working in their capacity as a public servant with regards to the Accord process.

Aboriginal person engaged in developing or implementing an Accord: Any Aboriginal person who has been party to the Accord making process at any stage including pre-Accord negotiation or has been engaged in implementing actions identified in the Accord, as an Aboriginal community member. This includes all individuals regardless of the period of their involvement.

### Scope

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The instrument will enable the measurement of change in the working relationship for individuals, both at a single point in time and longitudinally. Different elements of the relationship will be measured separately. It will support the measurement of relationship change relating to individual Accords, and in total across Accords. It will be generally applicable to individuals involved in developing or implementing an Accord, regardless of the length or intensity of their involvement and will be applicable to Accords at all stages of negotiation and implementation. The validity of the Instrument will be assessed through a peer review process, and through piloting and testing.

Furthermore, a process for administering the instrument to survey respondents will be developed. Aboriginal data sovereignty will be addressed in this process.

### Considerations and approach

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In order to develop an instrument to measure the change in the relationship, there needs to be a shared understanding of the following:

1. *What does 'positive change' look like?*
2. *What are the elements of a working relationship?*
3. *How can they be measured over time?*

Having a shared understanding to address these questions in turn requires us to consider and clarify which concepts and frameworks are used based on which knowledge systems and perspectives, through what process to ensure that the intended outcomes are credible, instilling public confidence yet relevant in capturing the diversity in perspectives (Figure 4) .

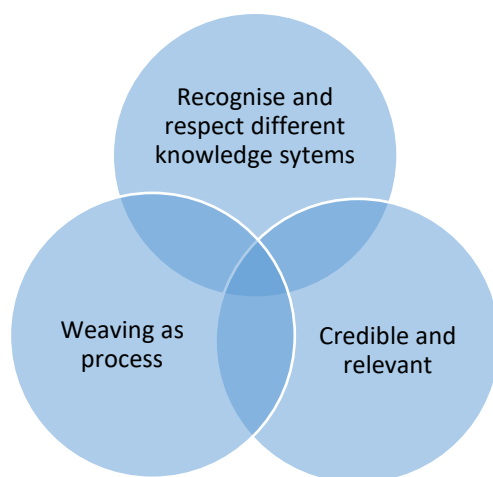


Figure 4: Approach to developing the instrument

### Developing an instrument to measure change

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**Task 1** – This task will primarily consist of a desktop review consolidating existing reports, websites of AANSW, NCARA and the regional alliances (where relevant) to elicit the aims, objectives, outcomes and key principles negotiated. If primary data collection is necessary (e.g. semi-structured interviews), they will be carried out during Task 1.

**Task 2** - The set of potential outcomes arising from the Task 1 review will be workshopped, discussed and validated through a process of co-design to finalise the set of indicators for the tool.

Once the indicators are finalised, the mechanisms for data collection for these outcomes will be co-developed with NCARA and AANSW. The instrument will be

peer-reviewed. The proposed instrument will most likely be a survey for ease of administration and collection but also due to time constraints. The survey design and data governance issues will be discussed and agreed between NCARA, AANSW and the Evaluation Team.

**Task 3** - The instrument will be piloted and tested before data collection is implemented. The main data collection will also take place during this stage.

**Task 4** – This stage will involve data analysis and presenting of preliminary results and sense making with partners and writing up. Further adaptations to the tool for use beyond NCARA and AANSW will then be discussed subject to resources available.

There is the potential to expand upon this instrument as part of a larger research project. This would involve building a more detailed instrument from the ground up, based upon new qualitative research about the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the AANSW and how deep and durable changes are to be conceptualised. This requires a much broader examination of ‘what constitutes an ideal working relationship or partnership’ and what factors are critical for particular stages of accord making process compared to which are necessary throughout the whole relationship for deep and durable change to occur. Importantly, this requires a deeper understanding of the power relationships, the recognition and acknowledgement of the skills, strengths and capabilities each partner brings to the relationship and barriers or enablers to improved relationships. Such further research would require a contractual variation with Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

## REPORTING

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We will co-produce final local evaluation reports for each of the five LDM sites that are participating in the evaluation. These reports will be owned by the Regional Alliances, and their publication will be subject to approval by the Regional Alliances. A further report will be co-produced evaluating the NCARA – State Government Accord, which will be owned by NCARA. A final synthesis report will also be delivered that brings together the key findings across the six reports, as well as any other state-wide information that is not appropriate for inclusion within any of the local evaluation reports.

If and where it is deemed imperative, we will negotiate with Aboriginal Affairs NSW to produce short additional reports that can be delivered throughout the evaluation period to provide timely input to the policy reform process. This may involve a contractual variation.

## ABOUT CAEPR AND THE EVALUATION TEAM

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The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) is leading the evaluation. CAEPR is Australia's foremost social science research body focusing on Indigenous economic and social policy from a national perspective. CAEPR aims to undertake social science research on Indigenous policy and development which is excellent by the best international and disciplinary standards and that informs intellectual understanding, public debate, policy formation and community action.

The principal objective of CAEPR is to undertake high-quality, independent research that will assist in furthering the social and economic development and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia. It aims to combine academic and teaching excellence on Indigenous economic and social development and public policy with realism, objectivity and relevance.



**Chief Investigator** Tony Dreise will lead the evaluation. He will be part of the initial visits to each of the Local Decision Making communities, particularly during co-design stages.

Tony is a proud descendent of the Guumilaroi and Euahlayi peoples of north-west New South Wales and south-west Queensland. Tony is the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) and Professor of Indigenous Policy at the Australian National University. Tony undertook his PhD at CAEPR where he explored the relationship between Australian philanthropy and Indigenous education.

Over the past twenty-five years, Tony has served in a number of professional capacities including as a senior executive in government, a regional director in Indigenous education, and a national executive in Indigenous adult education and youth training connected to the then Australian National Training Authority. In more recent years, he served as the former Hub Leader and Principal Research Fellow for Indigenous Education at the Australian Council for Educational Research. Tony has also worked with the OECD in identifying promising practices in Indigenous education internationally.



**Strategic Advisor and Reviewer** Heidi Norman will work closely with Tony, particularly on innovative co-design processes and with the personal and professional development of community based researchers.

Heidi is a Gomeri woman based in the School of Communication at the University of Technology Sydney, and is the Convenor of the Indigenous Land and Justice Research Hub.

Heidi is a leading researcher in the field of Australian Aboriginal political history. Her research sits in the field of history and draws on the cognate disciplines anthropology, political-economy, cultural studies and political theory. She has made significant contributions to understanding of Aboriginal social, cultural, economic and political history where she addresses questions of power in relation to Aboriginal citizens, the state and settler society and Aboriginal land justice.



**Project Research Coordinator** Francis Markham will work closely with Tony across all facets of the evaluation. He will be in charge of day to day management of the project. Francis will be involved in all the initial visits and will be responsible for coordination.

Francis is a geographer and Research Fellow in the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University. He has worked on policy research for several years, and is currently working on several research projects examining public policies that affect First Nations peoples. Most recently, he has contributed research using statistical methods to examine the linkages between cultural, social and economic outcomes and the use of Indigenous languages. He also works on the Indigenous Population Project, an on-going research project at CAEPR that involves detailed regional analysis of relative and absolute change in Indigenous social indicators.





**Field Researcher & Data Analyst** Mandy Yap will play roving roles across sites, continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to written reports. With Yonatan Dinku, she will be responsible for the quantitative data aspects of the project, including analysing program administrative data and collating and analysing quantitative data from other sources.

Mandy is a Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the ANU. Prior to joining the ANU, Mandy worked the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling.

Since 2013, Mandy has worked in partnership with the Yawuru community in Broome to co-develop culturally-relevant indicators of Indigenous wellbeing. Her wellbeing research has involved Yawuru decision-making throughout the entire process of the research, including developing a long-term research partnership with community researcher Eunice Yu. The Yawuru community have co-designed and co-produced the research throughout the process, from research content to survey design and data collection.



**Field Researcher & Reviewer** Janet Hunt will be involved in continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to and reviewing written reports.

Janet is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the ANU. She joined CAEPR in 2004 to manage the Indigenous Community Governance Project. Her research focuses on governance, community development, successful Indigenous organisations and government engagement with Indigenous people. She is currently a Chief Investigator on two ARC Projects, the first, researching Aboriginal organisations in the Kimberley and the creation of public value, and the

second, urban Aboriginal organisations in NSW and new public management. She is Indigenous Engagement Project Convenor for the ANU Grand Challenge on Zero Carbon Energy for Asia Pacific. She undertakes many consultancies for Aboriginal Affairs NSW, most recently in relation to self-determination.



**Field Researcher** Deirdre Howard-Wagner will be involved in continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to and reviewing written reports.

Deirdre is a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). She is a sociologist and socio-legal scholar, who is making an important contribution to knowledge about race relations, Indigenous disadvantage, Indigenous justice, Indigenous policy practices, community development, and neoliberalism in urban contexts. This work which began with her PhD continued in her ARC DECRA, which took her work in innovative and new directions. It did so through a collaborative in-depth place-based

study of Indigenous ‘success’ in addressing disadvantage and promoting wellbeing in Newcastle. She currently holds an ARCDP18 examining the effects of New Public Management on urban First Nations organisations in NSW and is partnering with six First Nations organisations in conducting this research. She has ANU Futures funding to establish urban Indigenous development as a new sub-field of Indigenous development and governance research in CAEPR and at the ANU.



**Field Researcher** Kath Butler will be involved in continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to and reviewing written reports.

Kath is an Aboriginal woman, belonging to the Bundjalung and Worimi peoples of coastal New South Wales. She is the Head of the Wollotuka Institute of Indigenous Research and Education at the University of Newcastle.

Kath has been an active member of Aboriginal organisations, holding executive positions on the Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), Local Aboriginal Land Council and Aboriginal Corporation. She is the past President of Itji Maru AECG and delegate to the Hunter Regional AECG. Her contribution to the community has been recognised with several awards, including the Hunter Region Equity Champion.



**Field Researcher** Kirrily Jordan will be involved in continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to written reports.

Kirrily is a political economist, visual artist and Research Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). She is committed to research methodologies that emphasise collaboration with First Nations peoples, including Participatory Action Research and Art as Social Practice. Her research interests lie at the intersections of politics, community development and art, including in the potential of visual, participatory and community arts to draw attention to policy problems and point the way to a more just future.

Her research at CAEPR over 10 years has included policy analysis and evaluation focussed on the Australian Government's approach to 'work,' 'welfare' and 'community development' for Australia's First Nations, including the CDEP and CDP schemes and new forms of welfare conditionality. Informed by this research, Kirrily is also interested in the ways in which First Nations peoples are working towards social, political and economic change on their own terms, including through self-determined development and the use of visual and performing arts to raise awareness and advocate for improved policy-making.



**Field Researcher** Seán Kerins will be involved in continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to written reports.

Seán is a Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). He has a background in applied anthropology and Indigenous policy. Seán has worked with Indigenous peoples and local communities for over 25 years on cultural and natural resource management issues. He previously undertook research on community-based management of whales in the Faroe Islands. Seán's research interests include community-based management of natural resources, common property rights, common property resource institutions, subsistence, political

ecology, and community-based development.

Prior to joining the Australian National University, Seán managed the Northern Land Council's Caring for Country Unit in Darwin. He has also worked as a policy advisor with Te Ohu Kai Moana (The Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission) in Aotearoa/New Zealand.



**Field Researcher & Data Analyst** Yonatan Dinku will play roving roles across sites, particularly where gender balance is important, continuing the conversations with communities and contributing to written reports. With Mandy Yap, he will be responsible for the quantitative data aspects of the project, including analysing program administrative data and collating and analysing quantitative data from other sources.

Yonatan has worked as a researcher at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) since obtaining a PhD in Economics from the University of Otago in 2018. Prior to that, he completed a Masters in International and Development Economics at the Australian National University. Yonatan worked as a teaching fellow for seven years at the Department of Economics, Bahir Dar University, serving as the head of the department from 2009 to 2011. During his tenure, Yonatan oversaw all aspects of academic and administrative activities in the department, including research and teaching strategy, curriculum development, budgeting and recruitment. At the University of Otago, Yonatan taught Introductory Econometrics among other economics courses. Yonatan's research interests lie in the areas of human development, development economics and applied microeconomics.



**Field Researcher** Annie Vanderwyk will be involved in one of the sites (potentially Tribal Wave Assembly) in conjunction with undertaking fieldwork and contributing to and reviewing written reports.

Annie is a Ngarrindjeri woman and level B Lecturer in Indigenous Enterprise Development at the Wollotuka Institute of Indigenous Research and Education, University of Newcastle. She has a Bachelor of Arts with honours 1 (Sociology/Law) from the University of Newcastle, and is currently a PhD candidate in Wollotuka Institute of Indigenous Research and Education, University of Newcastle on Ethnobotanical Metaphor – The role of traditional weaving practices in healing and business development.

As a result of her research, Annie has spoken at United Nations and international conferences on Indigenous governance. She has previously worked as Coordinator of Stanford University's Centre on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development in Washington DC.



**Project Administration Manager** Tracy Deasey will be responsible for the management of project administration, planning, budgeting, and reporting.

Tracy is the Centre Manager of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). She has extensive experience in university administration, finance and human resources.

## KEY ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

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There are several key parties that will be involved in the evaluation. These include the Evaluation Team, Regional Alliances at the five LDM sites, NCARA (the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances), the broader Aboriginal community in LDM sites, the NSW Government, and the OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee. The NSW Government includes AANSW, particularly the LDM staff, and other government departments involved in Accord negotiation and implementation. In terms of Aboriginal communities, the definition of this will vary from site to site and will depend on discussions with the local LDM staff as well as the regional alliances.

### OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee

The evaluation will be a standing item on the Steering Committee meeting agenda. The Evaluation Team plan to use the Steering Committee as a sounding board and a source of advice, and a line of accountability. There will be a degree of separation in terms of strategic decision-making regarding the evaluation insofar as their advice will not be formally binding.

### Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Aboriginal Affairs NSW has multiple complex roles in the evaluation. The relationship between AANSW and the evaluation will be collaborative, but is underpinned by a *principle of independence*. Aboriginal Affairs NSW has three primary roles:

#### *i) A practical role*

Aboriginal Affairs NSW provides much of the practical and logistical support for the project. The Evaluation Team and AANSW are ensuring that we align our project plans with AANSW so that our diaries remain synchronized, and that both Aboriginal Affairs NSW Head Office and Regional Offices are made aware of the Evaluation Team's movements and activities in their regions. Aboriginal Affairs will also be facilitating introductions for the Evaluation Team. This is both regionally (with AANSW Regional Offices introducing the Evaluation Team to key Aboriginal community organisations including Regional Alliances) and in Sydney (with AANSW Head Office providing introductions to staff in other parts of the NSW Government). However, the Evaluation Team will transition to a direct relationship with Aboriginal communities and Regional Alliances wherever feasible, while still keeping AANSW aware of the Evaluation Team's activities.

#### *ii) A funding role*

Aboriginal Affairs NSW is the evaluation funder. They have set some of the terms of the evaluation in terms of scope, budget, timeline and deliverables and other matters. The Evaluation Team are accountable to AANSW to fulfill their contracted agreement.

#### *iii) A partner*

At key points in the evaluation, staff from Aboriginal Affairs NSW will be involved as a partner. For example, they will assist in co-designing the Tool for monitoring changes in the relationship in order to capture public sector perspectives on the relationship and relationship change.

#### *iv) A research subject*

Aboriginal Affairs NSW is also a key subject of the evaluation, given their role in administering the OCHRE LDM program. AANSW will supply administrative data about the operations of the LDM program to the Evaluation Team. Staff at AANSW will also be research informants, and will participate in the research in that manner.

Should these roles come into conflict, the Evaluation Team will consult the OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee for advice on approaches to resolve or mitigate these potential conflicts.

### Regional Alliances

Much like Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the Regional Alliances also have multiple roles in the evaluation.

#### *i) Partners*

The Regional Alliances are key partners in the research. Using the weaving methodology outlined above, Regional Alliances will be heavily involved in the co-design of project. They will co-design the terms governing how the research will take place (through agreed protocols with the Evaluation Team).

#### *ii) Research owners*

The Regional Alliances will own the research that is produced by the evaluation, including data and local evaluation reports. Regional Alliances involvement and on-going consent is crucial to the success of the evaluation.

#### *iii) Research subjects*

The evaluation may, among other topics, involve a discussion of the operations and governance of Regional Alliances. To the limited extent that this is the subject of the evaluation, Regional Alliances play a role as research subjects.

Should these roles come into conflict, the Evaluation Team will consult the OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee for advice on approaches to resolve or mitigate these potential conflicts.

### Community-based researchers

Community-based researchers will play a key role in the Evaluation. They will assist in the co-design of the research, and will act as key conduits to the broader Aboriginal community beyond the formal structures of the Regional Alliances, as well as conducting research activities as part of the Evaluation.

## NCARA

NCARA is a key stakeholder in the evaluation. It will be involved in co-design of various elements of the research (e.g. the Tool). Furthermore, it has a specific role as the Research owner of the Synthesis Report that will be produced at the conclusion of the project. Finally, it is likely that NCARA may be involved as a research subject given the role it plays in the LDM as the body comprised of representatives from all Regional Alliances.

## Local communities

Working with community-based researchers and the Evaluation Team, local communities will be involved in the evaluation, primarily as research participants and informants. Local communities members will be involved in the co-design process.

## Non-government organisations communities

Non-government organisations are an important part of the service delivery landscape in NSW. They will be involved in the research as research subjects. A potential further role in the research as a party to co-design will be determined locally during the co-design preparation process.



## ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

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Our communications strategy has three goals: to engage Aboriginal communities who wish to be involved in the project; to update Aboriginal communities about the progress and findings of the evaluation; and to build public confidence in the evaluation. Because of these different goals and audiences, a diversity of communications strategies are being used.

In LDM sites, our initial engagement strategy at this stage has involved face-to-face meetings. We are working with Aboriginal Affairs NSW regional offices to meet with Regional Alliances in the first instances. These meetings have led to opportunities for wider community engagement: for instance, our meeting with IWAAC has led to us planning to have a presence at a Community Open Day in December 2019. Regular site visits are being undertaken to build connections in LDM regions.

We will use the networks of the community-based researchers to spread word about the evaluation to other networks within Aboriginal communities, especially to engage community members in co-design.

In addition, our engagement with Regional Alliances will also take place in written form. The Evaluation Plans, fieldwork schedules and final reports will form durable written records of the evaluation, although these documents will be co-produced in person and introduced and explained in person during Regional Alliance meetings.

We will produce a range of resources to aid communications, including fact sheets/briefing notes, flyers/online advertisements, and research summaries to aid communications with Regional Alliances and Aboriginal communities.

Our communications with the OCHRE Steering Committee will be structured through regular committee meetings, and the circulation of documents prior to those meetings. Communications with NCARA will take a similar approach, structured by the NCARA meeting schedule.

Engagement with the NSW Government, including Aboriginal Affairs NSW, will take place primarily through key contacts in Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

Dissemination of the evaluation findings – in the form of evaluation reports and fact sheet style summaries – will take place through these same avenues. These materials will be site specific as necessary. A more standard dissemination strategy (via the CAEPR and AANSW websites and conferences/symposia) will take place once they are approved for public release by the Regional Alliances who own them.

We are currently producing a project website to support all of these communications.

Finally, we will produce short accounts of the evaluation findings for public sector and academic audiences at key times. We anticipate that these will be published in accessible outlets such as *The Mandarin* and *The Conversation*.

Due to the number of parties involved in the research and the volume and diversity of communications required to keep them all informed, we are currently working with Aboriginal Affairs NSW to recruit a Communications Office to the Evaluation Team.

## RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

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The OCHRE initiative, including the LDM program, is the flagship initiative of the Government in Aboriginal Affairs. It bears a great weight of expectation among the Aboriginal community, especially given the expectation that the LDM has the ambitious goal of producing deep and durable changes to the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government. Consequently, there are high expectations of the Stage 2 Evaluation which aims to improve the operation of the LDM program.

The Stage 2 Evaluation is taking an innovative approach to co-designing and co-producing research. Consequently, there are a number of risks which require mitigation or monitoring. Most of these risks are identified on the basis of the practice learnings in the Stage 1 Evaluation synthesis report.

1. Risk: Communities controlling the research require additional time or resourcing beyond what has been scheduled and budgeted.

Seriousness: High. Likelihood: Low.

Mitigation: Progress against schedule and budget will be monitored to identify any potential issues early. Local evaluation schedules will be developed with Regional Alliances. The Evaluation Team will liaise with Aboriginal Affairs NSW to ensure that any issues are addressed in a timely way.

2. Risk: Communities do not grant on-going consent to participate in the research.

Seriousness: Very High. Likelihood: Low.

Mitigation: Only Regional Alliances which have opted-in to the evaluation will participate in the first instance. Co-design and co-production of the research, as well as the early negotiation of protocols governing the research, will reduce the chance that communities will no longer see any benefit in participating in the evaluation.

3. Risk: Other community priorities mean that reduced time is available to participate in research.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: The evaluation will be flexible in terms of its scheduling so that if other community business arises which take precedence over participation in the evaluation then fieldwork schedules can be adjusted. The size of the Evaluation Team creates additional flexibility to adjust to changing community schedules.

4. Risk: Individuals or groups feel excluded from the research or that their voices are not heard.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: The Evaluation Team will provide multiple points of engagement for different members of Aboriginal communities to participate in the research. These include working directly with Regional Alliances, and working indirectly with community-based researchers. Additional strategies for inclusion will be adopted where feasible. For example, the Evaluation Team will maintain a presence at community events when practical.

5. Risk: Community-based researcher capacity is insufficient.

Seriousness: Low. Likelihood: Low.

Mitigation: In the event that community-based researcher recruitment or training is unsuccessful or insufficient at an LDM site, further candidates for positions will be sought. As a last resort, alternative means of working with the local community will be considered in consultation with Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the Regional Alliance.

6. Risk: Key research participants disengage from evaluation.

Seriousness: High. Likelihood: Low.

Mitigation: Researchers will spend time building relationships with Regional Alliances from early in the project to build mutual trust. Researchers will provide accountability mechanisms so any dissatisfaction with the research conduct can be addressed rather than building up and leading to disengagement.

7. Risk: Evaluation Team members leave the project temporarily or permanently for personal or other reasons.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: A large Evaluation Team has been assembled to build in slack capacity should any Evaluation Team members leave the project. In the event of a temporary absence, other team members will cover their role, while in the event of a permanent departure, the extra capacity will cover a period of the recruitment or reallocation of staff resources. Aboriginal Affairs NSW and Regional Alliances will be kept informed of any impending personnel changes.

8. Risk: Project delays due to fires, floods and smoke.

Delays in attending Regional Alliance meetings may occur due to natural disasters such as fires, floods and hazardous smoke. This has caused delays in starting the localisation process for the evaluation plan.

Seriousness: High. Likelihood: High.

Mitigation: We will accelerate the co-design process, and seek deviations from the original milestones where necessary.

9. Risk: Delays that risk delivery according to the contract timeframe

We will keep Aboriginal Affairs and the Steering Committee informed of our progress and any risks to delivery according to the contract timeframe.

Seriousness: High. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: actions include changes to project sequencing, reallocating workload among the Research Team staff, and seeking deviations to the research contract.

10. Risk: Efficient transfer of information between Project Managers.

Coordination in project management is required between AANSW and the Evaluation Team. Efficient transfer of information is required to ensure that this takes place.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: Changes to meeting and communication practices will be implemented.

10. Risk: Availability of Regional Alliances.

The Evaluation Team will rely on Regional Alliance holding meetings to schedule initial visits to regions in the first instance, and further meetings where practical. Cancellations of scheduled meetings (and the scheduling of meetings with little notice) may make difficult.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: High.

Mitigation: Alternative plans outside of the Regional Alliance meeting schedule will need to be made, despite our intentions to 'piggyback' on existing meeting schedules. This will be communicated to Regional Alliance chairs and secretariats, and to AANSW.

11. Risk: Lack of suitable administrative data.

The Evaluation Team will be relying on access to administrative data to undertake key elements of the evaluation. It is possible that such data will be non-existent, of poor quality or inaccessible in a timely manner.

Seriousness: Medium. Likelihood: Medium.

Mitigation: Where possible, we will seek alternative data sources to answer research questions. These may not always be administrative data sources. If a custom collection of quantitative data is required, this may have resourcing implications which will be negotiated with AANSW. Qualitative data may be needed to answer research questions in a different manner.

## TIMEFRAME FOR THE FIRST 12 MONTHS

This revised timeframe for the first twelve months is currently under negotiation with Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

Deliverable	Due date
Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Evaluation Plan Part A, provided to Department</li> <li>• Evaluation Plan Part A, approved by Department</li> <li>• Evaluation Plan NCARA and NSW Government Accord, approved by Department</li> </ul>	March 2020
Report on progress to 30 December 2019, indicating progress against Contractor work plan, a summary of work undertaken over the period, practice learnings, and emerging risks and mitigation strategies.	17 January 2020
Local Aboriginal community consent, operating protocols and formal ethics approval	June 2020
Report – First tranche of localised evaluation plans (Part B), approved by Department	June 2020
Report – Second tranche of localised evaluation plans (Part B), approved by Department	August 2020
Report – Tool to measure relationship change between Aboriginal peoples and communities, and the NSW Government and its public officials approved by the Department	June 2020
Report – 30 June 2020 progress – indicating progress against plans, a summary of work undertaken over the period, practice learnings, and emerging risks and mitigation.	30 June 2020
Report – Evaluation Plan Part C, including costings of data collection approach, approved by Department	November 2020

## CONTACT

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