

# OCHRE: Two years on

*Learning together, working together, walking together...*



Setting up and running  
OCHRE initiatives with  
Aboriginal communities



Education  
Aboriginal Affairs

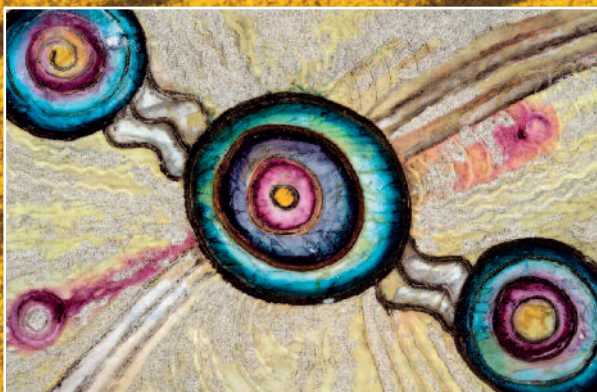




# OCHRE *stands for:*



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



## ARTIST RECOGNITION

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

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

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## MINISTER'S FOREWORD



I am pleased to release the second annual report of the Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (*OCHRE*) plan. The NSW Government is as committed today to listening to, partnering with, and delivering with, the Aboriginal communities as it was in 2011 when this journey began.

Working together as partners to design, deliver and evaluate is critical.

Aboriginal communities told us that improved outcomes would come from program design and delivery. Two years on the successes of the *OCHRE* initiatives rely on government listening to, and working in partnership, with local communities.

Sustainable change takes time. I am pleased to see solid progress in expanding delivery and achieving outcomes through Industry Based Agreements, Connected Communities, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, and Opportunity Hubs operating across the State.

I am heartened by the strong commitment of Aboriginal leaders across six regional alliances to progress Local Decision Making. The NSW Government particularly recognises the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly who are leading this work in Western NSW to ensure that Government services are fit for purpose.

Over the next 12 months I look forward to a greater focus on Healing. NSW leads the country in recognising the impact of the past and working with the community to build confidence and respect. Healing is central to every *OCHRE* initiative.

*OCHRE* will also be pivotal in achieving the Government's State Priorities for education, to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30 per cent.

*OCHRE* is the NSW Government's commitment to Aboriginal communities and I look forward to continuing to work in partnership to progress achievements over the next 12 months.

– Leslie Williams MP  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS



As *OCHRE* enters its third year, I continue to be amazed by how strongly it resonates with Aboriginal communities. No matter where I travel in NSW, Aboriginal people speak with great enthusiasm about Opportunity Hubs, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests and Local Decision Making.

In other states and territories people are paying attention to what we are doing and commenting positively to me about what they are seeing and hearing.

For me, the key to *OCHRE*'s success is that we haven't lost sight of the words behind the acronym, – opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, empowerment – these are powerful concepts that are brought to life by our determination to stay true to the commitments we have made to Aboriginal people:

- to ask and seek agreement before we act
- to open our books to Aboriginal communities and let them see what we are doing and how much we are spending
- to support local leadership to make local decisions about local issues
- to measure and report on things that are important to Aboriginal communities.

Over the past 12 months we have achieved a number of significant milestones – the signing of the first Local Decision Making Accord, more than 1,000 students being supported by Opportunity Hubs, more than 3,500 students studying an Aboriginal language and the first ever State-wide Healing Forum.

These and the many other achievements highlighted in this report have only been possible with the support of our valued partners – our industry and tertiary sector partners, our government partners and of course, our community partners. Thank you for your ongoing support, commitment and openness to new ideas and new ways of working.

Finally to my Aboriginal Affairs team. My thanks and admiration for your hard work and ongoing dedication to improving the lives of the Aboriginal communities we serve.

– Jason Ardler  
Head of Aboriginal Affairs



# ABOUT OCHRE



## History

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

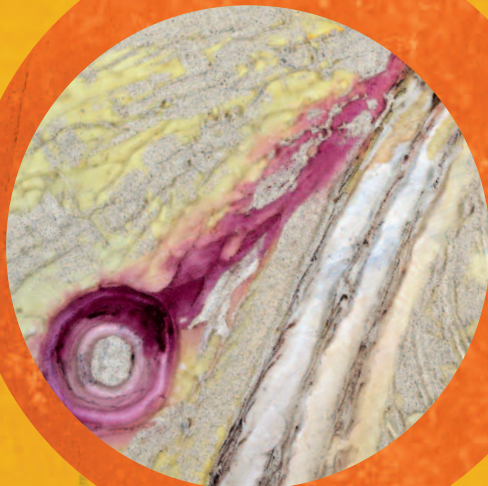
Extensive consultations with Aboriginal communities, stakeholders and industry gave some 2,700 people the opportunity to contribute to the Taskforce's work. *OCHRE* was released by the NSW Government in Parliament on 5 April 2013 enabling implementation to begin. *OCHRE's* first reporting period – outlined in *OCHRE: one year on* – covered activities from April 2013 to 30 June 2014. *OCHRE: two years on* reports on activities from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 and takes stock of progress to date.

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

## Aims

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

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





## Rationale

OCHRE represents a new approach based on:

- *genuine partnerships, devolution of power*
- *local focus, local outcomes*
- *long-term outcomes, evidence of success – no short cuts.*

## Key initiatives

### Staying accountable

- A robust accountability framework includes independent monitoring and assessment, program evaluation and a commitment to working with Aboriginal communities to set the measures of success – as well as regular public reporting on progress and lessons learnt.

### Local languages, local cultures

- Five **Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests** address the loss of Aboriginal languages and culture and the resulting impact on the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in NSW. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language. That is, the local communities collectively form a language nest.

### Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed

- **Opportunity Hubs** provide personalised support for Aboriginal young people in their local area, particularly those at risk of leaving school. By working with the community, businesses and other stakeholders, Opportunity Hubs match the needs of individuals to the local services, agencies or mentors best placed to help them. The Hubs are run by experienced organisations with strong links to Aboriginal community organisations, local businesses, regional industries and services for young people at risk, and with a deep knowledge of local conditions and issues.

- **Connected Communities** put local schools at the heart of the community. By using schools as community hubs to provide support from birth into early childhood, across the school years and on into further training and employment, the Connected Communities strategy works in partnership with local Aboriginal leaders and communities to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for young Aboriginal people.

### Growing jobs and economic opportunities

- The **NSW Aboriginal Economic Development Framework (AEDF)** will co-ordinate activities across government to ensure stakeholders work together effectively to achieve genuine improvements in Aboriginal economic development in NSW. As part of the AEDF, the NSW Government and industry partners are working together through **Industry-Based Agreements (IBAs)** to identify and develop more jobs and business opportunities for Aboriginal people and are supporting Aboriginal people to stay engaged in private sector jobs over the long term.
- Changes to land rights legislation, through the **Aboriginal Land Rights Amendments Act (2014)**, not only make the land claims process faster, more flexible and more efficient but help deliver social, economic and cultural benefits.

### Local communities, local initiatives

- **Local Decision Making** transforms the way the NSW Government does business with Aboriginal communities by opening the books to Aboriginal people to show what we are doing and what we are spending.

### Healing

- By acknowledging that healing and intergenerational trauma and loss are real, significant and ongoing issues for Aboriginal people, OCHRE initiatives advance the dialogue in NSW to promote healing.



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



## Building the evidence

- *OCHRE, An approach to evaluation* published, committing government to ethical and participatory practice
- A framework to monitor, evaluate report and improve *OCHRE* initiatives completed, with draft measures of success described
- Evaluation of the Accord negotiation between the NSW Government and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly published to support future negotiations
- Monitoring data collected from initiatives with sufficient maturity to produce the information



## Strengthening Aboriginal languages and culture

- A Teacher, Aboriginal Language and Culture, appointed to each Nest
- Aboriginal language programs implemented in 35 schools
- 3,679 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students studying an Aboriginal language



## Working with industry to create opportunity and jobs

- Three Industry-Based Agreements signed and operational
- The first cohort of 16 Aboriginal apprentices and trainees engaged with the support of the Master Builders Association of NSW



## Boosting NSW Government spending on Aboriginal businesses

- The NSW Government has spent \$58.3 million over the past two years on products and services provided by Aboriginal businesses



## Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed at school

- Results for primary school children are improving and primary school attendance is increasing
- Every school has a Local School Reference Group
- Every school has a Senior Leader, Community Engagement, and a Leader, Community Engagement
- Connected Communities staff participate in *Connecting to Country* professional development, delivered locally by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG)



## Empowering Aboriginal communities to make decisions locally

- Six Local Decision Making regions established
- First Accord signed between the NSW Government and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly to set priorities for the region
- Leadership group of Regional Alliance chairs formed – representing each LDM region – to guide the implementation of Local Decision Making



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

- 95 schools engaged with a Hub
- 1,102 students connected to a Hub (excludes Dubbo where a new service provider was in the early stages of establishing the Hub)
  - Year 5-8 (625 students)
  - Year 9-10 (298 students)
  - Year 11-12 (179 students)
- Personal Learning Plans developed for 363 Year 9-12 students, linked to Career Plans
- 54 local and national employers partnered with the Hubs
- 120 jobs and training opportunities banked with the Hubs
- 65% of school leavers connected to a Hub transitioned into further education, training and/or employment



## Building opportunities for Aboriginal people in the public sector

- National (COAG) target for Aboriginal public-sector employment exceeded in NSW – 2.9% of NSW public-sector employees were Aboriginal as at June 2014, against a target of 2.6%
- First ever target (1.8%) set for salary bands with few Aboriginal employees, to challenge the pyramid effect whereby Aboriginal employees are over-represented in lower grades
- 44 Aboriginal employees graduated from the Public Service Commission's *Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Programs* – 20% of these employees offered career development opportunities including acting opportunities and promotions into more senior roles

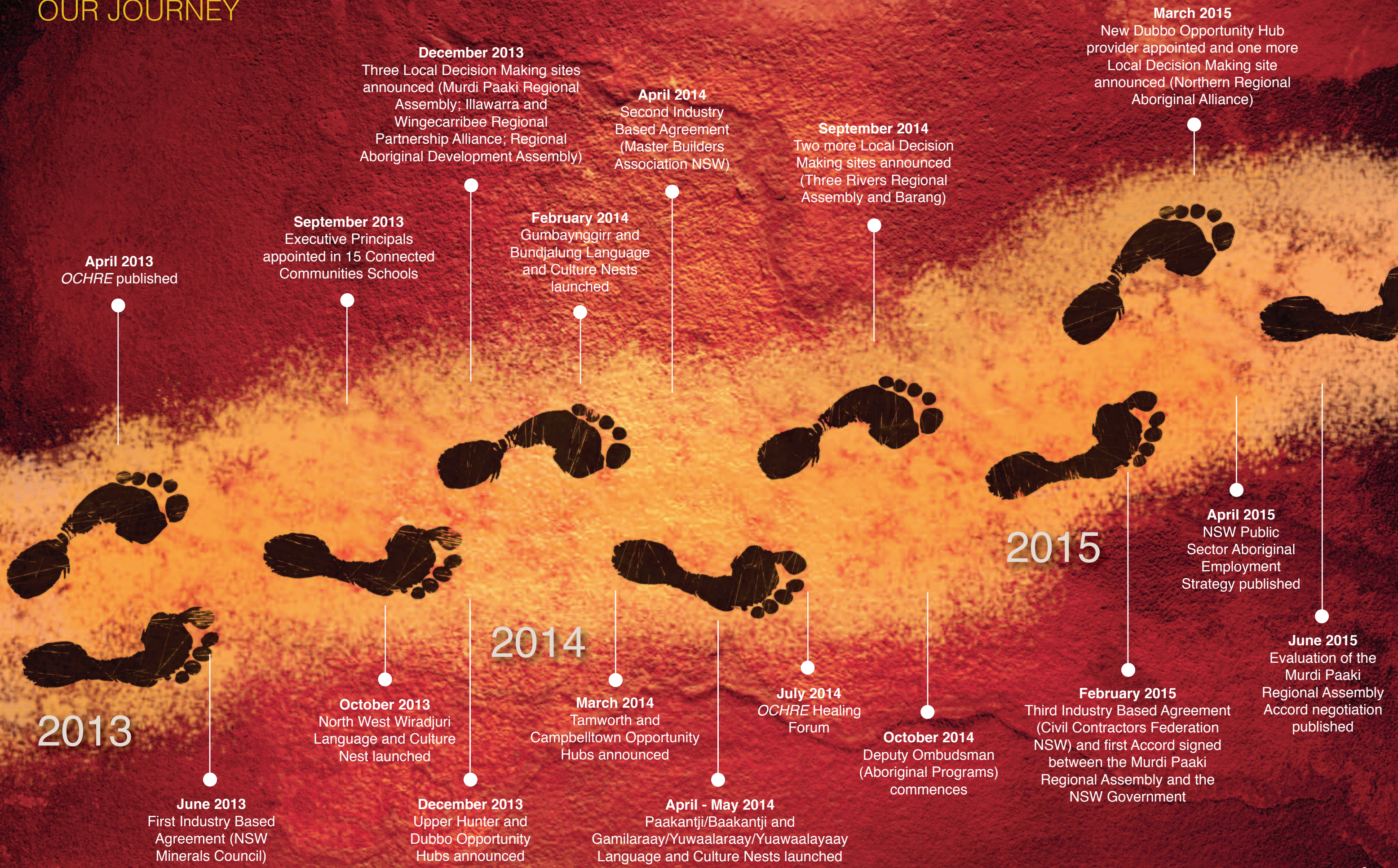


## Talking about healing

- Delegates from over 80 organisations attended State's first *OCHRE* Healing Forum



# OUR JOURNEY



2013

2015

2014

**June 2013**  
First Industry Based Agreement (NSW Minerals Council)

**April 2013**  
OCHRE published

**September 2013**  
Executive Principals appointed in 15 Connected Communities Schools

**October 2013**  
North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest launched

**December 2013**  
Three Local Decision Making sites announced (Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly; Illawarra and Wingecarribee Regional Partnership Alliance; Regional Aboriginal Development Assembly)

**December 2013**  
Upper Hunter and Dubbo Opportunity Hubs announced

**February 2014**  
Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung Language and Culture Nests launched

**March 2014**  
Tamworth and Campbelltown Opportunity Hubs announced

**April 2014**  
Second Industry Based Agreement (Master Builders Association NSW)

**April - May 2014**  
Paakantji/Baakantji and Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nests launched

**July 2014**  
OCHRE Healing Forum

**September 2014**  
Two more Local Decision Making sites announced (Three Rivers Regional Assembly and Barang)

**October 2014**  
Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) commences

**February 2015**  
Third Industry Based Agreement (Civil Contractors Federation NSW) and first Accord signed between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government

**March 2015**  
New Dubbo Opportunity Hub provider appointed and one more Local Decision Making site announced (Northern Regional Aboriginal Alliance)

**April 2015**  
NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy published

**June 2015**  
Evaluation of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Accord negotiation published





# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

## Aboriginal aspirations

Meaningful self-determination for Aboriginal people in NSW is at the heart of *OCHRE*. The NSW Government is committed to going beyond the familiar rhetoric about partnerships to work every day towards devolving power from government to Aboriginal communities.

Those of us working on *OCHRE* from within government have been challenged to unlearn previous approaches, to continually check our assumptions and to be prepared to work within community timeframes.

Although the principle of self-determination is most explicitly expressed in Local Decision Making, it cuts across all *OCHRE* initiatives.

## Aboriginal knowledge

The many new initiatives that make up *OCHRE* are built on knowledge held by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities. Working closely with Aboriginal people to support their aspirations facilitates the transfer of Aboriginal knowledge to the benefit of *OCHRE* partners – government, non-government, industry and tertiary sector.

The revitalisation of Aboriginal languages has been described to *OCHRE* partners as a “people’s movement” and is a powerful example of where Aboriginal knowledge resides – in individuals, families and communities. It is only with such knowledge that Aboriginal languages can be revived and *OCHRE*’s Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests can succeed.

## Aboriginal leadership

To realise a future in which Aboriginal aspirations guide and shape policy and practice in NSW, the support of Aboriginal leaders, and ongoing investment to build Aboriginal leadership, are vital.

Regional alliances participating in the Local Decision Making initiative, with support from government, are investing in current and future Aboriginal leadership. The NSW Public Service Commission, too, is investing in Aboriginal leadership within the public sector.

And initiatives like Connected Communities and Opportunity Hubs pay particular attention to supporting Aboriginal kids to succeed at school and to transition to meaningful futures in which their leadership potential can be fully realised.

## Aboriginal governance

Aboriginal communities are not homogenous – the many Aboriginal Nations across Australia make up one of the most diverse Indigenous cultures in the world.

Consequently, Aboriginal community structures and dynamics can vary significantly across the State. For *OCHRE* initiatives such as Opportunity Hubs, external providers play a crucial role in establishing and sustaining inclusive governance arrangements that fit distinct local communities and enable local Aboriginal voices to be heard.

## Aboriginal healing

Healing cannot be “done to” Aboriginal people. It is a deeply personal journey led by Aboriginal people to overcome more than 200 years of dispossession, paternalistic policy and trauma that have diminished Aboriginal people’s motivation, confidence and sense of control over their own lives.

Healing underpins every *OCHRE* initiative. By revitalising an Aboriginal language, by working to strengthen the Aboriginal economy in NSW, or by engaging with Aboriginal students to build positive experiences at school and into early adulthood, *OCHRE* is providing new opportunities for Aboriginal people to address the past.





*OCHRE: TWO YEARS ON*  
REPORTING BY INITIATIVE







## STAYING ACCOUNTABLE

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

Solution Brokerage requires NSW Government agencies to work with each other, and to collaborate with NGOs, to find practical solutions to issues that might otherwise fall between the cracks. This includes issues that no agency has a clear mandate to resolve, that have whole-of-government implications, or that have been identified for attention by Secretaries – the heads of NSW Government agencies.

### Independent oversight

*OCHRE* Project Managers provide information to the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) who independently monitors *OCHRE*. The Deputy Ombudsman's first assessment of *OCHRE* can be found at [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au).

### Evaluation

#### Key achievements

- A framework to monitor, evaluate, report and improve *OCHRE* initiatives completed by the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) in June 2015. The framework, known as MERI (Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement), includes the measures of success negotiated to date with Aboriginal leaders, industry and NGO partners. MERI applies to Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, Industry Based Agreements, Local Decision Making and Opportunity Hubs – Connected Communities will be evaluated separately. As part of MERI the measures of success will be revisited to ensure they reflect the views of communities over the 10 years of evaluation.
- *OCHRE: An approach to evaluation*, published in February 2015, committing the NSW Government to an ethical and participatory practice. The publication can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).

- Monitoring data collected from mature initiatives and reported in this document. Early outcomes expected across the *OCHRE* initiatives from 2017. The NSW Government recognises that it will take time before any medium- or long-term outcomes are evident and even longer for impacts to be apparent.
- Evaluation of Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Accord negotiation (Local Decision Making) published in June 2015. The findings will inform future Accord negotiations. The publication can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).
- The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales engaged to develop a research practice guide to support government and non-government individuals and agencies to undertake ethical and culturally appropriate research with Aboriginal communities. A guide is expected to be ready to test with Aboriginal communities in early 2016.

### Solution Brokerage

#### Key achievements

- *Solution Brokerage Policy and Operational Framework, Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions* published in March 2015. They can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).
- A Premier's Memorandum on Solution Brokerage published in March 2015, vesting authority to invoke the Solution Brokerage function in the Head of Aboriginal Affairs and placing a positive obligation on NSW Government agencies to participate and support the resolution of local, regional and State-wide issues. The Memorandum can be found at [www.dpc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au).
- Two Solution Brokerage issues declared:
  - Resolution of long-standing land and economic participation issues with the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council area
  - Development of an integrated early childhood service model for the Murdi Paaki region.





## LOCAL LANGUAGES, LOCAL CULTURES

Five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are revitalising and maintaining Aboriginal languages as an integral part of culture and identity. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language. That is, the local communities collectively form a Language and Culture Nest.

### Key achievements

- Teacher, Aboriginal Language and Culture, appointed to each Nest.
- Negotiations initiated for the appointment of Community Coordinators to each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest.
- Aboriginal language programs expanded to 35 schools. Units of work and lesson plans developed by teachers, schools and communities for the revised K-10 Aboriginal Languages Scope and Sequence.
- Wide-ranging initiatives to help increase the number of Aboriginal language tutors, including:
  - Teachers mentoring Aboriginal people to support them to work in the classroom.
  - TAFE Institutes (Western, North Coast) offering Certificates I, II, III and IV in Aboriginal Language learning to enable community members to work as tutors.
  - Negotiations held with universities to offer:
    - Bachelor of Education, Secondary History/Aboriginal Language/Aboriginal Studies
    - Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri language
    - A degree in Aboriginal Languages.
  - Department of Education scholarships offered for Aboriginal teachers wanting to further their career in Aboriginal languages.
- Stage 6 Content Endorsed Course for Aboriginal languages completed following consultations between the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) and all relevant stakeholders. Publication expected in November 2015.
- Language resources developed in every Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest.
- Extensive consultations – 27 meetings across five sites – held within the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest areas to identify a suitable permanent Keeping Place for each site.

### Comments from community

#### Uncle Roger Duroux, Gumbaynggirr Elder

*“As an Elder I've found it's been great for me to learn some language as it fits in well with the rest of our culture. Knowing and hearing the language being spoken by the younger generation fills me with great pride.*

*It's been a challenge for me sometimes to try and pronounce some of the words. I used to write down the words how I would pronounce them and it was easy for me to understand.”*

#### Aunty Vicky Filewood, Gumbaynggirr Elder

*“Gumbaynggirr language is great to have in the classroom and it needs to keep going. We need to have more community people trained so they teach more language. I can see the growth, self-esteem and pride in our Aboriginal kids from learning language and culture.*

*Even the non-Aboriginal students are excited. I felt lost before the teaching of Gumbaynggirr language. Now I feel connected to my Country and very proud of who I am – and I have ownership.”*

## CASE STUDY:

**Revitalising the Bundjalung Language**

Led by active community members, the Bundjalung language is undergoing a revival. Whereas past government policies sought to ban or discourage Aboriginal people from speaking their own languages, the NSW Government is now seeking to bring languages like Bundjalung back to life as a central element of the *OCHRE* strategy.

For many languages across Australia, the change in approach has come too late, but Bundjalung, which is now being taught in NSW primary schools, is one of the survivors.

Revitalising an ancient language so it can be taught to school children poses many complex challenges for the community which speaks and conserves it. Some big questions had to be worked through. Bundjalung has several dialects. Which dialect – which specific words and phrases – should be taught as mainstream Bundjalung? How should Bundjalung be taught? Through stories? Through songs? Using grammar and dictionaries? Perhaps most sensitive of all, who can teach the language – and who cannot?

For Aboriginal people decisions like these are for the whole community to make. Consensus had to be achieved before Bundjalung could be taught.

Before the conversation could start, all the people

and organisations affected had to be invited to take part. The Bundjalung Aboriginal Elders Council and the regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) had the job of bringing people together.

Once they were all around the table, they had to be given time to talk the issues through – as many conversations as were necessary to reach consensus. In the end, it took 12 community meetings.

To lead the discussion a facilitator was chosen who could ensure everybody had a say and could help resolve disputes and identify when agreement had been reached. The facilitator also had to steer the discussion to keep the focus on the goal everybody agreed to. That was to hear the language spoken on the street. The facilitator had both to understand the issues and to be familiar with the networks and relationships of those taking part. Most important, the community had to accept the facilitator and feel confident that they would conduct the process by chipping away patiently to make progress rather than by forcing decisions through.

It worked. Consensus was achieved. Bundjalung is now being taught to NSW primary school children.

**Complementing *OCHRE***

The NSW Government, through Aboriginal Affairs, also strengthens local languages and local cultures by:

- Funding NAIDOC Week events across NSW – in 2015, \$125,000 was granted to 101 organisations to support cultural events and activities.
- Funding language revitalisation – in 2015, \$163,560 was granted under *Our languages, our way* to six organisations to support Aboriginal languages.





# SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL STUDENTS TO SUCCEED AT SCHOOL

## Opportunity Hubs

Opportunity Hubs are providing young Aboriginal people with clear pathways and incentives to stay at school and transition into employment, training or further education. Opportunity Hub providers work with Aboriginal young people, families and communities to help build expectations for success.

There are four providers: MTC Australia in Campbelltown; TAFE Western in Dubbo; Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) in Tamworth; and Aboriginal Employment Strategy in the Upper Hunter.

## Key achievements

- The Campbelltown, Tamworth and the Upper Hunter providers expanded services within their regions. Following an open tender, TAFE Western was appointed for Dubbo in March 2015.
- All Hubs developed strong governance structures with advisory boards made up of key local Aboriginal community representatives, education and training providers, industry, government agencies and non-government service organisations.
- All Hubs delivered tailored, effective career education and inspiration programs relevant to their regions – for example:
  - In Tamworth, the *Aspirations* program fosters the knowledge, expectations and aspirations of Aboriginal students. The program promotes self-esteem and cultural identity before focusing on education, goal setting, opportunities for employment and career pathways.
  - In Campbelltown, the *Deadly Goals* program works with high school students to build goals, choices, motivation, team work and success, in partnership with facilitator Paul Wade (ex-Socceroo captain). The *Sista Speak* and *Bro Speak* programs aim to inspire and motivate Aboriginal primary and high school students by promoting the importance of education, diverse career paths, self-esteem,

culture, leadership and economic independence.

- All Hubs prioritised the linking of career plans to student learning plans.
- All Hubs worked with local industry partners to develop career opportunities for local Aboriginal students supported by Memorandums of Understanding with Vocational Training and Education Centres (VTECs) operating in their regions and the Australian Army. The agreements expand the career education, experience and employment pathways available to Aboriginal young people.

## Comments from community

Fiona Richie, Campbelltown Hub, community member and parent

*“The support and dedication of the Youth Advisers at the Opportunity Hub are always positive. The staff follow up with young people and provide various types of support and referral options.*

*It's been great for young people to be given the opportunity to build confidence and leadership through working with the Hub. Young people are provided with great opportunities and given an advantage for a successful future.”*

Adam Johnstone, Upper Hunter Hub, Deputy Principal, Merriwa Central School

*“It's been fantastic for our school to be involved with the OCHRE Opportunity Hub. It has supported our students and also their parents to look at opportunities through school and also beyond school, and target what they are really interested in.*

*By doing that they are able to find meaningful pathways beyond school and have those long-term goals.*

*We are very grateful for the support the OCHRE Opportunity Hub has presented to us and our students, and we look forward to keeping that relationship as an ongoing one for a long time to come.”*

## CASE STUDY:

**Supporting a young Aboriginal person at risk of disengaging from school**

Terry was in Year 11 at school – but he didn't want to be, and he was letting it show. He often acted up in class. Some days he didn't come to school at all.

His teacher had seen the same behaviour in other young people, and was worried that Terry (not his real name) might drop out of school altogether. She knew people at the local Opportunity Hub who might be able to help, and when a representative visited the school, she referred Terry to them.

A youth adviser from the Opportunity Hub spent time talking to Terry about his goals, and the education and training options that might help him reach them. Terry told the adviser he didn't really want to be at school. He wanted an apprenticeship or traineeship: he liked the idea of working better than studying.

The adviser helped Terry prepare a resume and developed his interview skills so he would gain enough confidence to start applying for positions. When Terry was ready to take the next step, his youth adviser contacted a local Vocational Training and Education Centre (VTEC). VTEC providers work with Opportunity Hubs to help Aboriginal job seekers find work. The VTEC provider had experience working with both employers and with specialist Aboriginal mentors who would continue supporting Terry once he

secured his apprenticeship or traineeship.

Together, the Opportunity Hub and VTEC provider helped Terry prepare – including buying some clothes that he could wear to interviews. At first, Terry received some knockbacks, but both providers worked hard to motivate him and keep him optimistic so he would keep looking for opportunities.

Eventually Terry succeeded. He was offered, and accepted, a full-time apprenticeship with a construction company. He has started his apprenticeship, and the Opportunity Hub and mentors from VTEC are helping him with this next phase of his life.

Terry's story shows how programs are most effective when they bring a cooperative and holistic approach to the cases being managed. Terry's school had to know where to look for help for him. His youth adviser had to be able to spend time with him to gain his trust so Terry could talk comfortably about why he didn't want to be at school and what his options were. The Opportunity Hub's partnership with VTEC was critical in connecting Terry to employers. With both programs working in tandem Terry was receiving both emotional and practical support as well as advice about how to put himself forward to an employer. Their commitment to support Terry as his apprenticeship proceeds will maximise his chances for success.



## CASE STUDY:

**Supporting a local Aboriginal health organisation to build a future workforce**

A health centre supporting Aboriginal mums, bubs and Elders wants to find Aboriginal women interested in working in health care to help it provide a culturally appropriate service. Whom does it contact? How does it start? That was the puzzle that recently faced one centre located on the campus of a NSW university.

Some staff at the centre knew of an Opportunity Hub nearby. The centre approached the Hub to arrange work experience for students attending local high schools. Before the Hub contacted the schools, Hub staff spent time at the health centre to understand what work experience would be available and hence which students might be interested. Once the Hub and the centre agreed on which types of student would suit the centre best, the Opportunity Hub contacted its participating high schools.

One school put forward Jenny (not her real name), a student interested in working in health. Jenny spent a week at the centre helping out and finding out about what went on there. The experience gave her a good insight into what was involved and she received plenty of encouragement from the centre staff. They helped her to think about the subjects she should study at school and the courses she might enrol in once she had finished.

A doctor at the centre said: "This student was exemplary and we are hopeful we can provide her with further educational opportunities and guidance in the future".

When the health centre decided it wanted more Aboriginal women in its workforce it needed help and advice. By building a partnership with the Opportunity Hub the centre was not only able to find students for work experience but also to understand what it should do to make those students feel comfortable and supported.

## Connected Communities

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

More information about the strategy can be found at [www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/connected-communities](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/connected-communities).

### Key achievements

- Primary attendance rates at Connected Communities schools as a group increased by 1.8 percentage points from 2012 to 2014.
- The gap in primary attendance at Connected Communities schools compared with all NSW schools narrowed slightly from 8.9 percentage points in 2012 to 7.7 percentage points in 2014.
- Eight of the 11 schools with primary students reported improved attendance rates from 2012 to 2014.
- Attendance rates for Aboriginal Year 7 to 10 students improved by 2.3 percentage points at Connected Communities schools as a group, compared with an increase of 1.2 percentage points at all NSW non-metropolitan schools.
- All schools are facilitating health and dental checks for their students.
- Nine schools are offering the opportunity to learn Aboriginal languages.
- All schools are coordinating Aboriginal cultural studies or cultural activities in the schools.
- All central and high schools are operating programs to encourage further learning and pathways to employment, by partnering with universities and TAFE.
- All schools have established Local School Reference Groups. The President of the local AECG is the chair. The President of the Parents and Citizens Association is the vice chair and members include Elders, parents, other key Community members and the Executive Principal. The Senior Leader: Community Engagement or Leader: Community Engagement provides executive support to the chair.
- Capital works projects are under way in consultation with school staff, Local School Reference Groups and local community members. Minor capital works were undertaken at all Connected Communities schools and major projects have commenced at Walgett Community College, Brewarrina Central School and Moree East Public School.
- The majority of staff across Connected Communities schools have participated in the *Connecting to Country* program and plans are in place to update all new staff.
- A senior officers' inter-agency working group has been established to strengthen the involvement of NSW Government agencies in realising cross-agency service delivery to the 15 schools. Locally, all schools have partnered with relevant service providers in areas such as health, wellbeing and transport.



## CASE STUDY:

**Hillvue Public School**

Hillvue Public School has an enrolment of 287 students, (with 78% being Aboriginal students) and is located in Tamworth. The school has a strong focus on student wellbeing, community engagement and quality teaching and learning. The development and implementation of innovative programs to cater for the needs of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low socio-economic backgrounds is a high priority.

Led by Executive Principal Chris Shaw, the school has a genuine focus on the provision of a diverse and exciting curriculum supported by two Instructional Leaders and quality classroom teaching.

Mr Shaw says: 'At Hillvue Public School the focus is on Innovation, Opportunity and Success. The Hillvue School belief is that all students can learn and all students will learn because what the school does is fundamental to the ultimate goal of achieving improved outcomes for students and families'. The school has a committed staff, with a balance of experienced and early career teachers that collaborate with students and parents to elevate expectations and address core values and social needs.

The staff have participated in the AECG facilitated Connecting to Country Program, and have an impressive knowledge and understanding of the local Aboriginal community and its values, with great respect for Aboriginal culture and student identity. The school's Senior Leader Community Engagement has ensured that the school's relationship with the community is constantly improving.

The input of the Local School Reference Group, led by the Chair of the local NSW AECG, is one of the big contributors to success for Hillvue students.

Hillvue has strengthened cultural understandings through Personalised Learning and experiences such as Harmony Day/NAIDOC Week/Girls Group/Boys Group and Breakfast Club.

One of the most positive outcomes of the focus on personal learning is that teachers have higher expectations of themselves and their students.

'Teachers, students and families are supported and recognised as important members of the school community' said Mr Shaw.

This immersion in learning and culture has had positive outcomes for Hillvue students. The 2015 NAPLAN results demonstrate:

- Improved NAPLAN trends in all areas - highlights of the latest NAPLAN results for Hillvue include:
  - 60% of all Year 3 students in bands 4 and 5 for writing compared to 5.7% last year
  - significant reductions of Year 3 students in the bottom two bands for writing and numeracy.\*

During a visit to the school in September 2015 to personally congratulate Executive Principal Mr Shaw, the staff and students on their continuing achievements, Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli said:

***'Hillvue Public has declared they are reinventing their school to be a better learning environment where every child can do their best.'***

***And that's just what the school and its Community is doing – together....'***

\* Changes in NAPLAN outcomes from one year to the next should be interpreted cautiously when the sample of students is small because averages can be strongly influenced by the performance of just one or two students.





## GROWING JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

### Aboriginal Economic Development

A new direction and approach are needed to support Aboriginal economic development across NSW, built on the strengths of the State's Aboriginal communities and their long history of successful enterprise and trade as part of their own economic systems. The reforms will make up part of the wider strategy for economic growth and prosperity in NSW and aim to improve the coordination of activities across government to reduce duplication and identify gaps in social, economic, and cultural investment. The framework for Aboriginal economic development is being built around the three key areas of improved governance, strategic partnerships and investment in human capital.

#### Key achievements

- A draft Aboriginal economic development framework developed in 2014. A strengthened framework is being progressed.
- The NSW Aboriginal Business Portal launched in February 2015 and can be accessed at [www.nswicc.com.au](http://www.nswicc.com.au).
- An updated NSW Aboriginal Participation in Construction (APIC) policy commenced in May 2015, requiring government construction projects to allocate a percentage of their spending to Aboriginal business, employment and training opportunities. The policy can be found at [www.procurepoint.nsw.gov.au](http://www.procurepoint.nsw.gov.au).

### Industry-Based Agreements

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

#### Key achievements

- Three major agreements in place to promote Aboriginal employment and enterprise development.
  - Agreement with the NSW Minerals Council was extended. Achievements for 2014 can be found at [www.nswmining.com.au](http://www.nswmining.com.au). Further information is also provided in the case study below.
  - Agreement with the Master Builders Association of NSW – achievements include: the recruitment and retention of 16 Aboriginal apprentices and trainees, the publication of the *Leg up to Employment* kit, a survey of all members to help them understand the barriers to Aboriginal employment and procurement and the promotion of cultural awareness training.
  - Agreement with the Civil Contractors Federation of NSW was signed in February 2015 to take advantage of the enterprise development opportunities arising from the Government's significant infrastructure investment.

## Comments from community

Deb Barwick, NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce

*“The NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce fully supports the approach taken by government and industry to partner in the delivery of real economic opportunities to Aboriginal communities and we could see a great benefit in being positioned to facilitate the development of relationships between industry, Aboriginal businesses and a ready Aboriginal workforce.”*

Greg Sullivan, Director Policy, Minerals Council

*“We have to get better at what we are doing. The Minerals Council supports an Industry Based Agreement approach, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because the flow-on benefits from employment and economic development for communities and families cannot be underestimated.”*

## CASE STUDY:

### The importance of leadership in industry

Mining may have come down from the highs it hit during the recent boom, but the industry's peak body in NSW has lost none of its enthusiasm for promoting Aboriginal employment.

The NSW Minerals Council was the first peak industry body to enter an Industry-Based Agreement (IBA) with the NSW Government, and it is standing by its commitments. After the first two years of implementation, it has signed up to an open-ended partnership to boost employment in mining for Aboriginal people.

There is no precedent for how an IBA should operate. The Minerals Council's approach was to bring a diverse group of partners together to develop an action plan. Those partners included the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce – the peak body for Aboriginal-owned businesses. To put control into Aboriginal hands, the Minerals Council has funded the chamber to deliver core components of the plan.

Taking a pragmatic view of the less affluent times facing the industry, the council's policy director, Greg Sullivan, says: “The first agreement delivered a number of foundation benefits, building the relationships and networks that will

underpin future success. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we are connecting people and programs to complement the fantastic work organisations are doing in this sector.”

The IBA Steering Committee provides a forum to discuss mining's experience of Aboriginal employment. A powerful example comes from one of its members, Whitehaven Coal, which has undertaken to ensure one in ten new employees at its Maules Creek project will be local Aboriginal people – a ratio which reflects the local population.

“This voluntary goal highlights our view that employment is an essential basis for improving Aboriginal people's lives,” said Whitehaven Coal's Bob Sutherland. “This will mean that once Maules Creek becomes fully operational over the next five years, 40 to 50 local Aboriginal people will be working on site.”

In fact early recruitment at Maules Creek saw the target exceeded. Aboriginal people make up 15% of new employees at the mine, setting a precedent both for the mine and the industry itself.

The Minerals Council has used this example to encourage and motivate the sector.



## NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–17

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

### Key achievements

- The *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–2017* was published in April 2015 and can be accessed at [www.psc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au). The strategy focuses on developing careers and leadership to increase the representation of Aboriginal people in a broader range of roles, particularly senior positions.
- Aspirational target of 1.8% set for salary bands in which Aboriginal people are under-represented, to challenge the pyramid effect – which sees Aboriginal employees over-represented in lower grades. If the target is achieved, it is estimated the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the public sector will be 3.3%.
- The *Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program* delivered to Aboriginal people in the public sector who aspire to leadership roles on two occasions – in 2014 and 2015. It will continue to be offered.

- Professional development and networking events, including one regional event in the Hunter in June 2015, held to help increase retention rates of Aboriginal employees in the public sector.
- An *Aboriginal Employment Strategy Workshop* held in June 2015 to support individual agencies, and to identify the tools and resources required to deliver Aboriginal recruitment and career development opportunities.
- The Public Service Commission will continue to work closely with NSW Government agencies with few Aboriginal employees to improve their recruitment outcomes.

### Comments from community

Famey Williams, Senior Project Officer, Service System Commissioning, Department of Family and Community Services, Graduate of the 2015 Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program

*“I desired a move into the strategic commissioning space, however I lacked the confidence to step into it. The Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program taught me to value my ability and transformed how I view myself. I'm now in a commissioning role that aligns with my postgraduate studies and I have a clear-cut path for how I am going to achieve the career I want.”*

### CASE STUDY:

#### Going the extra mile to grow Aboriginal leadership

The NSW public sector has already exceeded the COAG target of a 2.6% share for Aboriginal people in its workforce. And instead of stopping there, it has gone further. The NSW Public Service Commission is working actively to increase the representation of Aboriginal people in a broader range of roles, particularly senior leadership.

The Public Service Commission engaged the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) in 2014 to design and deliver the *NSW public sector Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program* to develop the management and leadership capabilities of

Aboriginal employees and to provide guidance, support and structure for career planning.

The program aims to create a pipeline of Aboriginal talent which can be fed into more senior roles in the public sector. Aboriginal people with extensive experience in the NSW public sector collaborated in developing and delivering the program.

From the two schemes delivered since September 2014, 44 Aboriginal employees have graduated from across the NSW public sector. Although it has only been operating a short time, the program is working: nine participants have taken up career development opportunities including promotions and appointments to act in more senior roles.

## Complementing OCHRE

### Changes to the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act

Amendments in 2014 to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* improve the land rights claims process and offer Aboriginal communities in NSW more opportunities to benefit from their land.

The *Act* established a network of Aboriginal Land Councils and provided a mechanism for them to claim and manage land as an economic base for Aboriginal communities. The NSW legislation is recognised as one of the strongest in the world. Land claimed by Aboriginal Land Councils, if granted, is transferred as freehold title. The objectives of Aboriginal Land Councils are to use their land and other resources to *“improve, protect and foster the best interests of all Aboriginal persons within the Council’s area and other persons who are members of the Council”*.

### Key achievements

- Amendments to the Act passed through Parliament in November 2014 and commenced operation on 1 July 2015 offering Aboriginal communities in NSW:
  - Faster and more flexible ways to obtain land, including the option for Aboriginal Land Councils and the NSW Government to negotiate agreements to settle multiple land claims simultaneously, by entering into a written agreement called an ‘Aboriginal Land Agreement’
  - More flexibility in the management and operation of Aboriginal Land Councils and social housing schemes, along with more accountability
  - More clarity about how business enterprises can be set up and run.
- Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Planning and Environment commenced work to remove barriers in the planning system affecting the management of Aboriginal lands, to help unlock the economic potential of Aboriginal land assets.





## LOCAL COMMUNITIES, LOCAL INITIATIVES

### Local Decision Making

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

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

### Key achievements

- Three additional LDM sites announced in response to high levels of community interest bringing the total number of LDM sites to six. Each LDM site is represented by an Aboriginal Regional Alliance.
  - Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West) and Barang-Central Coast Aboriginal Community Organisations Network (Central Coast) announced in September 2014.
  - Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (New England North West) announced in March 2015.
- The Chairs of the six Regional Alliances formed the Regional Chairs Group to share information and lessons learnt and to provide advice to the NSW Government.
- The NSW Government signed the first Accord with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly in March 2015 with a focus on economic development, educational attainment and housing affordability. The Accord can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).

- The five remaining Regional Alliances formalised their governance arrangements and defined their priorities in consultation with communities in their region.
- Premier's Memorandum published February 2015 promoting the intent of LDM and outlining the roles and responsibilities of NSW Government agencies in supporting its success. The memorandum can be found at [www.dpc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au).
- Aboriginal Affairs continued to raise awareness about LDM and worked with communities without access to the LDM initiatives to strengthen their decision-making structures.

### Comments from community

Sam Jefferies, Chairperson,  
Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and Interim  
Chairperson, LDM Regional Chairs

*“LDM is the most exciting initiative ever to enter the government services and program areas that impact on Aboriginal people. The level of openness and transparency is unprecedented, setting the high water mark in government accountability to Aboriginal people. These traits coupled with the decision-making capabilities for Aboriginal people are creating an environment for change – change in the way government does business, change in government’s priority setting, and significant change in responsibility for the Aboriginal leadership in communities and across the region. While it’s early days, we are confident that the LDM process, if it survives the political ideology, will have a lasting effect on Aboriginal people.”*

Aunty Jean Hands, Chairperson,  
Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance

*“The establishment of LDM is seen as a foundation for an improved partnership between the NSW Government and all Aboriginal people and communities in NSW. It is a positive step forward and is based on guiding principles that*

*provide a high level of transparency and openness in the process; works from the bottom up and not top down; and sets a high standard in Government accountability to all Aboriginal peoples in NSW.*

*While it does cater for increased decision-making capabilities for Aboriginal people, this change will create a positive environment for how business is done at a local, regional and state level.*

*Aboriginal people and communities have always confirmed they want local solutions for local problems. To have this significant change in responsibility for Aboriginal leadership in communities and regions can only help to provide sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal people across NSW."*

**Sean Gordon, Chairperson, Barang Central Coast Aboriginal Organisations Network NSW**

*“Barang Regional Alliance is the backbone organisation of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations here on the Central Coast of NSW.*

*Barang has been an active participant in LDM since OCHRE's inception in 2013. By working with the other five LDM regions across NSW, in particular through the regional chairs forum, we are able to collaborate on a broader and common-cause platform. Locally here on the Central Coast, LDM has evolved in unison with our lead role in Empowered Communities nationally and is seen as a key element to the future prosperity of our people and communities.”*

## CASE STUDY:

### **The Murdi Paaki show self-determination takes time and commitment**

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly was the first Aboriginal regional alliance to negotiate and sign an Accord with the NSW Government. The Assembly was formed in 1997 and has refined its governance arrangements and processes over the 18 years since. The experience it gained from “doing” has enabled it to set a clear strategic direction for its region, and to engage and collaborate with all levels of government in order to make progress in the direction it had set. While government policies have changed over its 18-year lifetime, the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has remained committed to its communities, and has been able to speak to government with a strong and united voice.

The Assembly thus had the necessary capacity and experience to negotiate an Accord with the NSW Government soon after being announced as a Local Decision Making (LDM) site.

LDM recognises that Aboriginal communities have the right to decide for themselves as far as possible about the issues that affect them – who represents them, how they operate and what they think is important.

To achieve greater self-determination, which is the goal of LDM, consistent, long-term policy and investment, and respectful and genuine engagement are needed. Aboriginal regional alliances and other governance bodies need the NSW Government to be committed over the long term to help them build governance capacity and gain confidence in decision making so that they are ready to negotiate Accords with the Government.

Other Aboriginal regional alliances now participating in LDM have been formed more recently, and have been focusing on establishing and strengthening their governance arrangements, and consulting their member organisations and constituents to set priorities which suit their regions. For their part, NSW Government Departments have supported the efforts of regional alliances to adhere to good governance principles, and have respected their decision to focus on self-governance first.

This investment in self-governance will, with time and commitment, build the capacity of other regional alliances to negotiate their own Accord with the NSW Government as the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has done.



## Strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs

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

### Key achievements

- The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat NSW (AbSec) and FaCS worked together to build the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs to provide out-of-home care services to Aboriginal children and young people. A co-design approach has been agreed with AbSec to effectively engage the Aboriginal NGO sector.
- The FaCS Aboriginal Sector Capacity Building Project for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal NGOs with the capacity to deliver disability services.
- Internal audit of the governance and operation and Aboriginal out-of-home care capacity-building initiatives completed and work undertaken to address its five recommendations, namely developing a common understanding of objectives and approaches, implementing risk management, defining roles and responsibilities, developing communication protocols and enhancing reporting.



## PROMOTING HEALING

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

### Key achievements

- The first NSW Healing Forum held in July 2014. It was well attended and well received. The report from the forum can be found at [www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au).
- Memorandum of understanding and funding agreement signed by Aboriginal Affairs and the Healing Foundation (a national hub) to promote healing and to facilitate six regional healing forums across NSW in 2016 and 2017. Local communities across NSW will be engaged to develop these forums.

### Comments from community

Grant Sarra, Healing Forum Facilitator

*“Healing is changing the way we think, feel and behave towards each other as people to become better human beings but to also make sure we have the integrity and dignity to know what this means.”*

Mick Gooda, Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission

*“Whatever we do with healing it’s got to be driven by the community. Not a blanket approach that’s developed in Sydney then dropped into every community across NSW but the community actually driving it all!”*

Uncle Paul McLeod, Shoalhaven Men’s Health and HELL (Healing, Empowerment, Leadership, Lore)

*“Families are the healing of each community – through song, dance, language and through the Mother – lore.”*

Richard Weston, CEO Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

*“Healing is a way of overcoming the tendency to default to focusing on things that can’t be changed. Instead, healing enables individuals to get control over their lives and look for positive pathways.”*



## CASE STUDY:

**Doing no more harm**

For Aboriginal people, healing has a special cultural meaning and importance. When healing is discussed, great care must be taken to ensure those taking part feel able to be candid about the deeply personal and sensitive issues it raises.

The *Mapu yaan gurri, mapu marrunggirr: Healing our way* forum at the University of NSW on 23 July 2014 was a successful starting point for a discussion about healing because of the approach taken by participants and the meticulous way it was organised. It was planned from the outset as a discussion led by Aboriginal people at which government and non-government delegates could hear Aboriginal perspectives on healing.

A reference group planned the event with due consideration for the individual healing journeys of the participants. A culturally safe space was created to ensure participants could speak and listen without shame or blame, to advance the dialogue on healing including sensitive issues surrounding the Stolen Generations.

The stories of the Stolen Generations are best told by the survivors themselves. Members of the Stolen Generations, including former residents of Cootamundra Girls' Home and Kinchela Boys' Home, participated both in the planning and in the forum itself as discussion leaders.

The forum gave government and non-government organisations the opportunity to listen and understand the survivors' experience, including their trauma and healing journey. Participants highlighted the unfinished business that remains from the *Bringing Them Home* report – the long-lasting and unresolved traumas that are still passing on their effects from one generation to those that follow. As one survivor said: "It has taken away our land, took us away from our people, and diminished and ridiculed our culture and values."

The forum discussion was not only a success in itself. It also showed NSW is leading the way in partnering with Aboriginal communities to develop a way forward in the healing process.

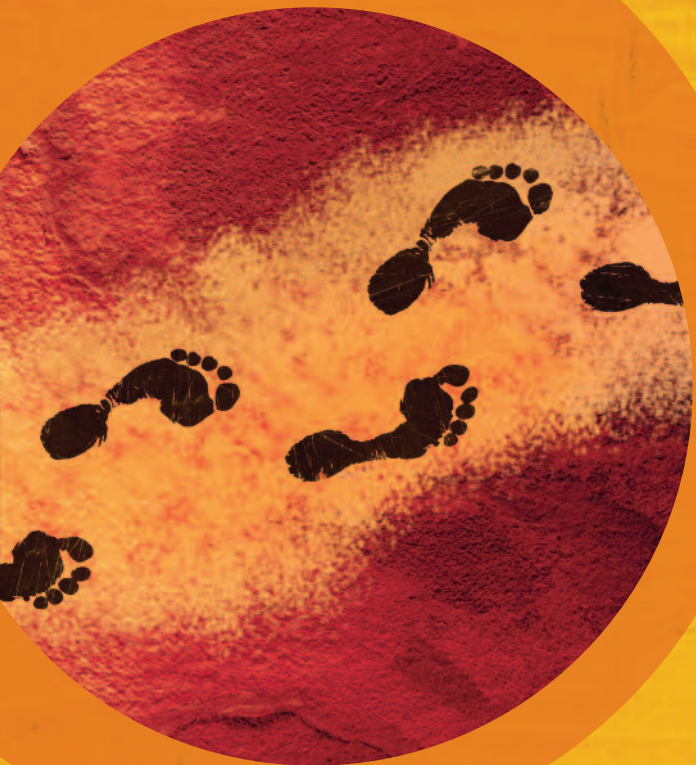
# NEXT STEPS

To stay accountable, we will:

- Contract the independent evaluation of four *OCHRE* initiatives and localise evaluation strategies to suit different communities.
- Publish research practice guidelines to assist communities, government and non-government organisations to undertake research with Aboriginal people and communities.

To strengthen Aboriginal languages and cultures, we will:

- Ensure community coordination for every Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest.
- Support Aboriginal communities to identify and establish a permanent Keeping Place for every Nest.
- Continue working to increase the number of Aboriginal language tutors.
- Continue working to increase the number of TAFE courses available for Aboriginal people to learn language and to be certified to teach in schools.
- Increase the number of schools teaching Aboriginal languages.





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

### Opportunity Hubs

- Deepen our engagement with industry bodies, employers, and education, training and employment organisations to expand career education and supported pathways to sustainable jobs.
- Continue to develop partnerships with the Army, Vocational Training Employment Centres and NGOs working with young people to promote career aspirations, to deliver career education and to identify sustainable career pathways.
- Expand career planning linked to student Personal Learning Plans for all intensively engaged students.
- Ensure school leavers are tracked and supported to make successful transitions to post-school education, training or jobs.

### Connected Communities

- Build on the improved NAPLAN results and focus sharply on refining gap areas.
- Emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in all Connected Communities schools.
- Consult on and implement the Connected Communities Healing and Wellbeing Model, a component of the Wellbeing Framework, across all Connected Communities schools. The model supports students and their families, school staff and the local community. Its staged implementation will focus first on the wellbeing of school staff.
- Engage more Aboriginal community members to teach local Aboriginal languages and culture to students and school staff. The teaching of languages complements the *Connecting to Country* training provided by the NSW AECG.
- Introduce the *Healthy Culture: Healthy Country* program. Delivered by the NSW AECG, the program promotes the importance of maintaining Aboriginal languages and cultures through education and emphasises the synthesis between the health of culture, the health of Country, and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians.

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

### Economic development

- Finalise the Aboriginal Economic Development Framework (AEDF) to drive long-term and sustainable economic prosperity of Aboriginal people and their communities across NSW. A new direction will be built around three key areas of improved governance, strategic partnerships and investment in human capital.
- Sign two new Industry-Based Agreements to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal employment and enterprise in NSW.

### Aboriginal employment in the public sector

- Continue to deliver the *Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program*.
- Develop tools and resources to support all departments and agencies to recruit Aboriginal people.
- Establish an additional entry point for Aboriginal applicants through the NSW Government Aboriginal Employment and Development Program, focusing initially on departments and agencies with few Aboriginal staff.
- Host a series of Regional Aboriginal Network events aimed at improving the retention rates of Aboriginal staff in the public sector by building personal connections and providing development opportunities.
- Review the effectiveness of various approaches to developing Aboriginal cultural competency across the sector. This includes promoting good practice.

### Aboriginal Land Rights Act

- Ensure a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to developing and implementing a negotiation framework for Aboriginal Land Agreements.

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

- Support Regional Alliances participating in Local Decision Making to negotiate and sign Accords with the NSW Government.
- Support new and emerging regional governance bodies.

**To promote healing, we will:**

- Continue to support Aboriginal communities to develop their own healing approaches and advocate the importance of healing.
- Develop the design and delivery models for six regional healing forums scheduled for 2016 and 2017 to build an understanding in government to support Aboriginal healing.



