



OCHRE: *Three years on*

Embedding new ways of working



Education
Aboriginal Affairs



OCHRE

stands for:

Opportunity

Healing

Choice

Responsibility

Empowerment

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



The third annual report of the Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (*OCHRE*) plan shows just how much we can achieve when we work together toward agreed goals and outcomes.

The NSW Government has made a long term commitment under *OCHRE*, focussing on embedding partnerships, ensuring successful initiatives, and improving the effectiveness of government expenditure.

The impact of the initiatives will be evidenced by a 10 year commitment to ongoing evaluation that will help to guide and inform the development of future priorities.

Given the relatively young age of the Aboriginal population in New South Wales I am pleased to see significant achievement against the initiatives that support Aboriginal students to succeed – language, education and job opportunities.

During the past twelve months I have visited communities across the State and have heard more Aboriginal language being spoken by children and young adults. I have experienced the enthusiasm of young adults as they plan for their future with the support of the Opportunity Hubs. I have seen first-hand the commitment of parents in Connected Communities schools that has strengthened the focus on educational success and contributed to the health and wellbeing of the students and the broader community.

The enthusiasm of each of the Aboriginal Regional Alliance participating in Local Decision Making has been unwavering and I acknowledge each of the Chairs for their commitment to work with this Government in driving sustainable change. This will ensure we continue to understand the priorities for each community, so that together we can design service delivery that will make a real difference in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.

Committing to improved delivery of Aboriginal training and employment targets under the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Policy and growing engagement by Aboriginal enterprises in Government procurement provides a strong basis for economic prosperity.

I look forward to the next twelve months, particularly the *OCHRE* Regional Healing Forums and the continued progress of the coordinated approach to specific issues through Solution Brokerage.

While much has been achieved, there is still more to do and learn. I look forward to the next steps in our journey together.

– Leslie Williams MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS



NSW continues to demonstrate strong leadership in Aboriginal Affairs, building on the foundations that *OCHRE* provides.

Furthering *OCHRE*'s commitment to support Aboriginal people to heal their pasts and determine their futures, NSW has achieved another first: the Government's recent announcement that it will legislate to recognise and protect NSW Aboriginal languages.

The decision, which responds to feedback from Aboriginal communities, strengthens the Government's commitment under *OCHRE* to refresh the existing policy on Aboriginal languages. The legislation will follow the same principles that shape Local Decision Making, and will position Aboriginal peoples as the owners of their languages and the authorities on the action required to revitalise those languages.

Also completed this year is [Growing NSW's first economy](#), a framework for Aboriginal economic prosperity. Like other initiatives under *OCHRE*, the framework reflects a strengths-based approach. It has not been developed as a separate, stand-alone, Aboriginal-specific policy. Instead, *Growing NSW's first economy* embeds support for Aboriginal people to participate in the mainstream economy within the Premier's and the Government's priorities as set out in [Making it happen](#). The NSW Government is due to table its response to the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Aboriginal Economic Development in March 2017. Further information about the NSW Government's commitment to Aboriginal economic participation will be released then.

Evidence of *OCHRE*'s success is being gathered systematically through an independent and ethical evaluation. The increased participation in all the major initiatives over the past year shows Aboriginal people are optimistic about the opportunity *OCHRE* provides to improve their lives and communities.

I would like to thank the chairpersons of the Aboriginal regional alliances, who have been extremely generous in guiding and supporting our efforts to change the relationship between government and Aboriginal communities. Thanks also to my government colleagues who have embraced the fundamental tenets of *OCHRE* – local priorities, local solutions, local accountability. And to my Aboriginal Affairs team, thank you for your extraordinary passion, dedication and good humour. We have a long way to go before we achieve parity across a range of social and economic indicators, but *OCHRE* puts us on the right path towards that vision for NSW.

– Jason Ardler
Head of Aboriginal Affairs

THE VOICES AND STORIES OF THE REGIONAL ALLIANCE CHAIRS



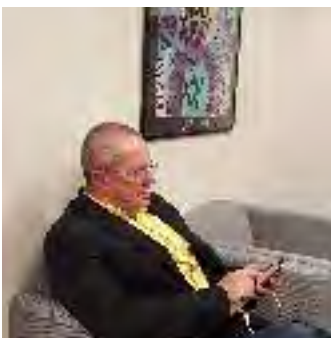
Our NSW Aboriginal leaders have generously shared their wisdom and experiences as the Chairs of the Aboriginal Regional Assemblies and Alliances in NSW. What they have to say serves to remind us that we all share the same goal – for Aboriginal people in NSW to be healthy, prosperous and determining their own futures.

You can hear about their proudest moments, dreams for local decision making in their region, what good ways of doing business look like, and their experiences and lessons learnt [here](#).



Auntie Jean Hands, a Kamilaroi woman, is the Chairperson of the Northern regional Aboriginal Alliance

“My vision and hope for my local decision making area would be that we can reach higher levels within government, get more funding for our areas, and that’s for the whole lot of them... We have five priorities that the Aboriginal community have told us that they would like to see things done in, so I would love to see more money and more resources go into the priorities that the community have selected... and I think they’re probably the main things for me ... health and justice.”



Sam Jeffries, a Murrawarri man, is the outgoing Chairperson of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

“[Aboriginal people having a greater say about government services and programs] is my real pet of things to do and things to pursue and my passion about this is to look at how we can, Blackfellers can, be part of the whole decision-making process that impacts on our lives. In my experiences at ATSIC and then in the [Murdi Paaki] Regional Assembly, the people have always said that we want to make sure that we are part of the decision-making process, where we influence it, whether we’re making those decisions ourselves, that we are providing the advice for those decisions to be made. This is something we want to continue to be part of. We want to make sure that decisions that are being made are about our development, and there is nobody better placed than us to be making those decisions.”



Michele Donovan, a Gumbaynggirr woman, is the Chairperson of Tribal Wave Regional Assembly

"[My hope is] in the very close future ... to work together as a community to actually achieve Accord ... and everyone ... will see the [Tribal Wave Regional Assembly] brand and say, 'Oh yeah, that's them'... So that everyone understands, even the non-Aboriginal people, and say, 'Wow, look at what they've done with this. The Aboriginal community's got up and they made this happen.' If we can make this work right across the state ... other states can look at this and say, 'Well, we can take that and use it in our communities.' If we can be a role model and do that for other communities, help other communities across Australia, I think that would be fantastic."



Ruth Dacey-Davys, a Wiradjuri women, is the Chairperson of the Riverina Murray Regional Alliance

"[This is only our second year.] The proud moments are when people start contacting you – when you're not actually saying, 'Hey I'm Riverina Murray, I want to talk with you about this' – the organisations are coming to you and saying, 'I want to get a spot on your agenda.' That's pretty exciting stuff... We are getting these phone calls come in and people say, 'We want to talk with you about this program.' 'We want RMRA's (Riverina Murray Regional Alliance) advice on this.' Or, 'We want you to endorse this,'"



Brett Tibbett, a Gumbaynggirr man, is the Chairperson of the North Coast Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance

"You [government] have to be honest. There's got to be a relationship that's formed at local community. It can't be a relationship that is three days a week and two days a week you forget about that relationship. It's got to be a seven-day-a-week relationship where people know each other and they know the ground they are standing on is solid. It's not about raising expectations and pulling rugs out from people and expecting people to get back off the ground again because that's the way you think things should go. Realise that this is about humanity, it's about people, it's about families. When you go home at night time, have a look at your family. That's what we do: we go home and look at our families... We have come through the dispossession, through the massacres of our people, and we are trying to get a grounding with government where we can move forward. So, I think working with integrity, honesty and being transparent and basically being fair dinkum with the people they are working with. The other thing I would say on this process is that they [all governments] have to go the distance on this one... People are really starting to notice the advantages of LDM."

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 accountability 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 on 5 April 2013 at which time implementation began. *OCHRE: Three years on* reports on activities from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 and takes stock of progress to date.

The *OCHRE* plan and previous annual reports can be found at www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au.

Aims

OCHRE aims to support strong Aboriginal communities in which Aboriginal people actively influence and participate fully 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.



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. Public servants are encouraged to broker solutions – that is, take a creative approach to solving problems that may otherwise fall between the cracks.

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 peoples in NSW through the teaching of languages in public schools. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by an Aboriginal language.

Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed

- **Four Opportunity Hubs** provide personalised support for Aboriginal young people, 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.
- **Fifteen Connected Communities** schools in eleven rural and remote 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 Prosperity Framework (AEPF) is a suite of integrated commitments to support participation by Aboriginal people in the NSW economy. The AEPF brings together interconnected actions in the areas of education, training, employment, housing, business development and land rights.
- 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.

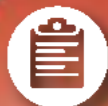
Local communities, local initiatives

- **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. Seven regional alliances represent communities within their area and negotiate with the NSW Government on issues of mutual interest and priority.

Healing

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

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

**Building the evidence**

- Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), UNSW Australia, engaged
- Ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Ethics Committee secured
- Literature review to inform the methodology published
- Evaluation plan completed and published
- On-line resources and a regional model established to support Aboriginal community participation

**Strengthening Aboriginal languages and culture**

- 60 pre-schools, primary and secondary schools engaged in the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, up from 35*
- \$156,759 granted in 2016 under *Our languages, our way* to support 6 projects
- \$197,349 granted in 2016 to 136 organisations to support NAIDOC Week cultural events and activities
- 5,166 students learning an Aboriginal language, up from 3,679

**Supporting Aboriginal students to succeed at school**

- Interim evaluation of Connected Communities strategy completed and published

**Boosting NSW Government spending on Aboriginal businesses**

- \$94.1 million spent by the NSW government on products and services provided by Aboriginal businesses since the release of OCHRE in April 2013

**Promoting Aboriginal economic prosperity**

- Aboriginal Economic Prosperity Framework finalised
- Regional Industry-Based Agreements model developed
- Negotiation framework for Aboriginal Land Agreements released
- Establishment of an Aboriginal Centre for Excellence in Western Sydney progressing

**Empowering Aboriginal communities to make decisions locally**

- 7 regional alliances operating to represent the interests of their communities
- 1 emerging regional governance structure being supported
- 1 Accord signed that directs Government and community effort on agreed priorities for the Murdi Paaki region
- Three Rivers Regional Assembly and Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation assessed as ready to negotiate an Accord

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

- 96 schools engaged with a Hub, up from 95*
- 1,690 students connected to a Hub, up from 1,102*
- Personal Learning Plans developed for 584 students, linked to Career Plans, up from 363*
- 236 employment and training opportunities banked with the Hubs, up from 120*
- 73% of school leavers transitioned to further study or employment, up from 65%*

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

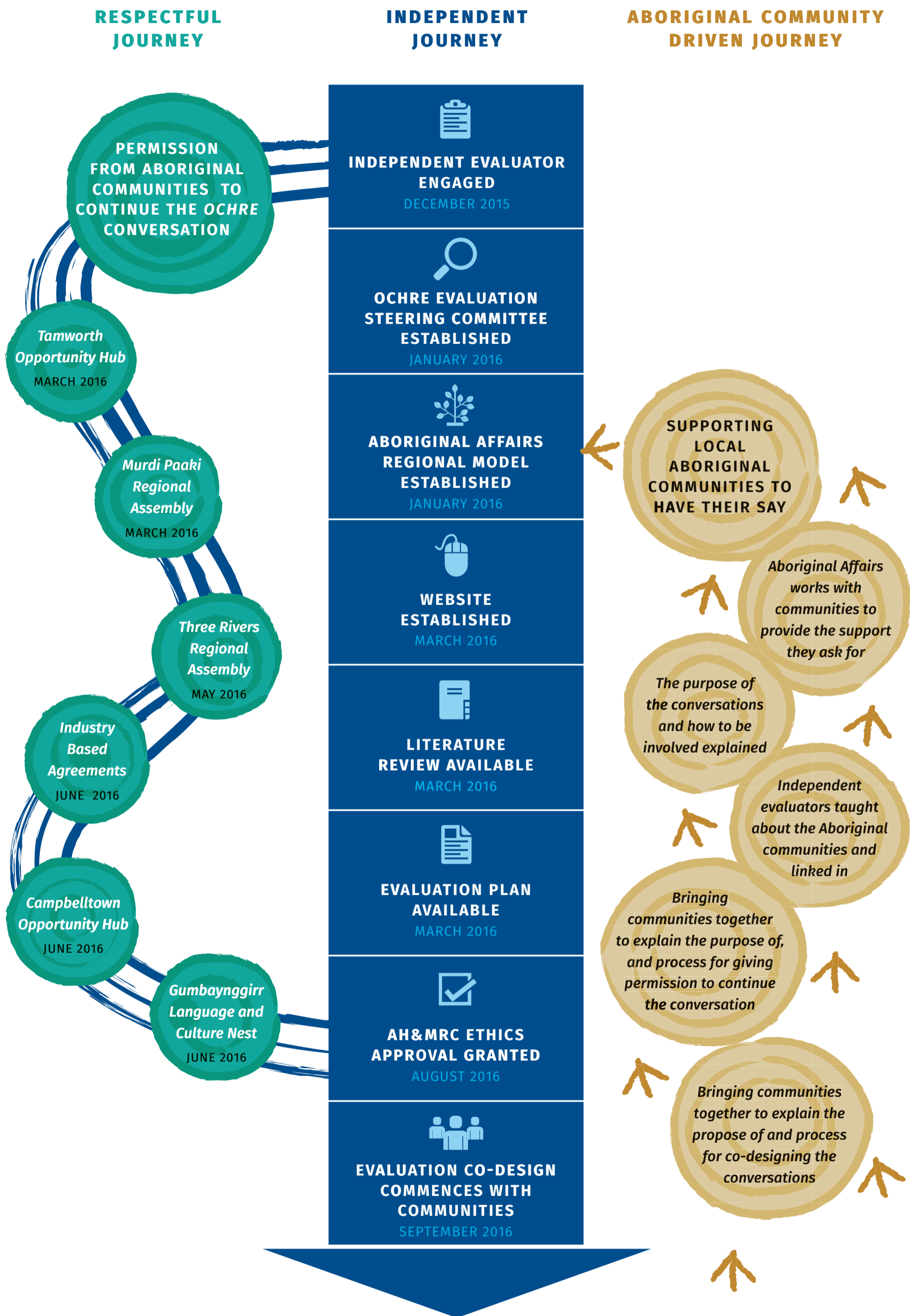
- 8,411 employees in the public sector identified as Aboriginal, some 3% of the total workforce
- 83 graduates from the Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development program, up from 44*
- 1 Aboriginal senior executive officer participating in the Leadership Academy Program for Deputy Secretaries

**Talking about healing**

- Expression of Interest released inviting Aboriginal communities to host 6 OCHRE Healing Forums

* information reported in OCHRE: Two years on

MEASURING SUCCESS – OUR JOURNEY



WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT



Moving beyond the rhetoric of partnership

The word “partnership” is heard in many conversations and appears in many documents concerned with public policy. It’s a good word – it recognises that alone, governments cannot achieve positive outcomes for communities; it recognises that Aboriginal communities have a role to play in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policy.

However, when paid senior officials sit down with volunteer community representatives to negotiate complex issues, an obvious imbalance of power emerges and a partnership can be reduced to little more than rhetoric. An evaluation of the negotiations that led to the signing of the Accord between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government in 2015 highlighted this issue. A copy of the evaluation report can be found [here](#).

Our observations in our day-to-day work with both public servants and community representatives confirm this significant and continuing power imbalance. Consequently, Aboriginal Affairs continues to invest in and support capacity building for both Aboriginal community leaders and public servants working within OCHRE’s frameworks. OCHRE commits the public sector to changing the way it interacts with Aboriginal communities by treating Aboriginal people not merely as consumers of services, but as citizens with valued social, economic and cultural aspirations.

Regional and localised approaches

As Aboriginal communities have told us that regional and localised approaches work best, we have continued our “learning by doing” approach. In the area of economic development, the NSW Government will introduce regional Industry-Based Agreements – currently, Industry Based Agreements are only state-wide. As part of OCHRE’s commitment to ensuring decision making truly rests in the hands of Aboriginal communities, these regional Industry-Based Agreements will be included initially in Accord negotiations for the Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West) and the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Corporation (South Coast).

Developing a shared language

In our conversations with Aboriginal communities, we have learnt that the word “evaluation” is often associated with past negative experiences and seen as a means of disrupting and defunding services to Aboriginal people. We understand this perception can discourage Aboriginal people from participating in our evaluation of *OCHRE*. We needed new neutral terminology to break from the past. With support from Aboriginal Affairs staff working in the regions we developed the phrase *continuing conversations*. This was done in recognition of past hurts and of the commitment we gave, after the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs had completed its work, to continue a respectful dialogue with Aboriginal communities as part of our implementation of *OCHRE*.

What the literature doesn't tell you

There is a significant body of published literature on Aboriginal communities. However, it sheds little light on the practical application of the principles that guide ethical policies and practices. We have taken time to work through the practical day-to-day complexities that arise. This has sometimes meant slowing down the pace of our work to ensure we respect and abide by Aboriginal community protocols. As a result, we have had to remain focused in the face of criticism from others for not moving quickly enough.

A good example is the need to seek permission from Aboriginal communities to have the conversations required for the evaluation. Aboriginal leadership and community structures are varied and there isn't always an obvious person or group to go to. Sometimes we have had to meet with multiple people and organisations to properly pay our respects and follow protocol. While this takes time, it is vital to our ethical approach.

The multiple roles of Aboriginal public servants

Aboriginal Affairs staff in regional offices are charged with building the capacity of local Aboriginal communities to ensure they can fully participate in and drive the evaluation of *OCHRE*. This poses challenges for Aboriginal public servants who play multiple roles. On the one hand, Aboriginal public servants working with Aboriginal Affairs need to promote the evaluation of *OCHRE* and support communities to become actively involved. On the other hand, they need to

remain independent from the evaluation process and not influence that process. In addition, our Aboriginal staff are not only public servants but also active members of their own communities. We are now exploring these complexities and will publish the results in the future.

Living in today's Australia

While *OCHRE* targets Aboriginal people, we live in a society in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interact every day through family connections, friendships, associations in the work place and, for young people, in their schools. Although Opportunity Hubs aim to support Aboriginal students, the non-government partners working to deliver Opportunity Hubs have had to consider the importance of a young person's peer group. Rather than taking a rigid approach that excludes the non-Aboriginal peers of an Aboriginal student, Hub providers are taking an inclusive approach when they have the resources to do so.

OCHRE: THREE 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 and assesses *OCHRE*. Information about the work of the Deputy Ombudsman can be found [here](#).

Evaluation

Lead agency

Aboriginal Affairs. Further information about the evaluation of *OCHRE* can be found [here](#).

Key achievements

- UNSW Australia's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) engaged in December 2015 to undertake the 10-year evaluation of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, Industry-Based Agreements, Local Decision Making and Opportunity Hubs.
- Communication and information resources produced to support Aboriginal communities to participate in the evaluation. A dedicated area of the Aboriginal Affairs website created to provide communities with all available information about the *OCHRE* evaluation, including demographic profiles for all *OCHRE* initiatives.
- A regional model resourced and implemented that supports local Aboriginal people to participate in

and drive the evaluation in their communities.

Expertise of the agency's regional staff developed to support the participation of local Aboriginal people.

- Meeting convened between UNSW's SPRC team and local Aboriginal leaders to explain the evaluation and to obtain their permission to continue the conversation about the project in their area; process assisted by regional staff from Aboriginal Affairs.
- Approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Ethics Committee secured to undertake the evaluation.
- Literature review completed to inform the *OCHRE* evaluation methodology.
- Plan for the *OCHRE* evaluation completed.
- Research commissioned from Black Swan Consulting to better understand the challenges for Aboriginal staff in building Aboriginal community capacity and confidence to participate in the evaluation.
- *OCHRE* evaluation Steering Committee constituted to provide independent and expert advice to Aboriginal Affairs.

Solution Brokerage

Lead Agency

Under the *Premier's Memorandum 2015-02 – Solution Brokerage*, administrative power is vested in the Head of Aboriginal Affairs to “declare” an issue for solution brokerage. Once an issue for solution brokerage has been declared, an Officer In Charge is appointed to manage the development and implementation of a response plan within six months.

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

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

Key achievements

Early childhood service delivery model in the Murdi Paaki region, far west

- In accordance with the Accord between the NSW Government and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, the development of an integrated and sustainable early childhood service delivery model for the region was declared a Tier Two issue in April 2015. The Officer In Charge is a Program Manager in Aboriginal Affairs. In December 2015 the process was paused to reassess the approach being taken, including the resources required. In May 2016 the project was restarted under the co-leadership of the Early Childhood and Education Care Directorate in NSW Department of Education and Aboriginal Affairs to overcome the issues of expertise, resources and accountability faced in 2015.

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

- Resolution of the long-standing issues for the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council stemming from the 1999 Eden Regional Forest Agreement was declared a Tier Two issue in July 2015. Those issues include aspects of the management of public lands, economic development opportunities and access to natural resources for cultural purposes. A Director from Aboriginal Affairs was appointed as the Officer in Charge. When the six-month mandated period was reached in January 2016 all parties agreed:
 - o Negotiations would continue beyond the allotted six months and the project team would consider how best to activate or redirect existing agency resources to align with the aspirations of the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council
 - o The Department of Primary Industries would start negotiations with the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council for the first Aboriginal Land Agreement under Section 36AA of the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*. The negotiations set priorities for determining new and existing land claims according to the economic aspirations of Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council

- o The Department of Planning and Environment would assist the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council to make strategic decisions systematically about developing its land assets
- o The Office of Environment and Heritage would work with the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council to provide access to areas of national parks for cultural tourism.

Coordination of land-use planning and municipal infrastructure, 59 discrete communities

- The development of a coordinated response to land-use planning and municipal infrastructure issues on Aboriginal lands across NSW was declared a Tier Three issue (i.e. a major policy reform integration) in September 2015. A Deputy Secretary in the Department of Planning and Environment was appointed as the Officer In Charge. The Aboriginal Community Land and Infrastructure Project (ACLIP), aims to:
 - o regularise planning and infrastructure administration in 59 discrete Aboriginal communities located on former missions and reserves
 - o facilitate greater economic, community and cultural use, by Local Aboriginal Land Councils, of Aboriginal land acquired through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.
- Due to the extent of the issues and the number of agencies involved, it was clear from early on that six months would not be enough time for the project. NSW and Commonwealth agencies agreed jointly on priorities. Options are being prepared to support the provision of infrastructure upgrades in the 59 communities, and to guide land use planning decisions on Aboriginal community lots.



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 peoples in NSW through the teaching of languages in public schools. An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language.

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

Lead agency

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

Key achievements

- The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (NSW AECG) engaged to ensure each Nest has its own Aboriginal Language and Culture Adviser/s to assist communities, including establishing community-endorsed Keeping Places. A Keeping Place can be either physical and/or virtual. Its purpose is to protect and sustain Aboriginal languages.
- Aboriginal community involvement in the Nests increased and formalised through the establishment of local reference groups in each Nest site.

Monitoring data

From 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016:

- the number of pre-schools, primary and secondary schools and school engaged in the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests increased from 35 to 60
- the number of students now learning an Aboriginal language increased from 3,679 to 5,166
- 50 tutors and teachers delivered language lessons.

Complementing OCHRE

Key achievements

The NSW Government also strengthens local languages and local cultures by:

- funding NAIDOC Week events across NSW – \$197,349 granted in 2015-2016 to 136 organisations to support cultural events and activities. The NSW Premier launched NAIDOC Week in Parramatta.
- funding language revitalisation – \$156,759 granted in 2015-2016 under the Our Languages, Our Way program to six projects to support the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages, including the development of language apps, a language dictionary and languages taught on Country by Aboriginal Elders.



PUTTING SCHOOLS AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Opportunity Hubs

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

Lead agency

Training Services NSW, Department of Industry. Further information about Opportunity Hubs can be found [here](#).

Key achievements

- All Hubs continued to expand services within their region.
- Relationships with industry bodies, employers and education and training organisations strengthened to deliver career education, work experience and further study and job opportunities.
- Relationships with Commonwealth-funded Vocational Training and Education Centres (VTECs) strengthened, supporting school leavers entering training and guaranteed jobs.
- Partnership established with the Australian Army to strengthen career education, work experience and career opportunities for Aboriginal students.
- Consortium partnerships with non-government providers delivered essential wrap-around and additional value-adding services for young people participating in the Hubs.

Monitoring data

From 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016:

- 1,690 students participated in one of the four Opportunity Hubs

- 96 government and non-government schools engaged in four Hubs
- the number of Year 9-12 students engaged with career plans linked to their Personal Learning Plans increased by 60% from 363 to 584
- 73% of school leavers who participated in the Hubs transitioned to further study or employment
- 236 job and training opportunities were banked with the four Hubs
- in 2015, 29 students attended the Army Experience First Look program in Canberra.

The Connected Communities strategy

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.

Lead agency

Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement, NSW Department of Education. Further information about Connected Communities can be found [here](#).

Key achievements

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) camps delivered in collaboration with the NSW AECG Inc. and Dr Chris Matthews, Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance. The camps are designed to encourage greater participation in STEM subjects.
- The Healing and Wellbeing model implemented to assist all Connected Communities schools to address current and historic oppression and trauma experienced in their communities. The initiative includes providing an opportunity for Aboriginal community members to participate in training in youth work.

- Aboriginal cultural education programs and Aboriginal language lessons delivered by Elders and community-based language tutors. The programs are supported by local AECGs.
- *Connecting to Country* cultural immersion program delivered to all schools by local AECGs.
- Agreement established with the NSW AECG to deliver the *Healthy culture: healthy country* program to all schools.

The Government's *Local Schools, Local Decisions* reform is designed to empower individual schools to decide themselves how to respond to their own students' learning and support needs. The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) has been developed to help them make these decisions. The RAM includes an equity loading for students from an Aboriginal background – that is, extra funding is allocated to NSW public schools to meet the additional learning needs of Aboriginal students. Every NSW public school at which Aboriginal students are enrolled receives this funding. The annual funding allocated to schools under the RAM equity loading for Aboriginal students is as follows.

2014: \$48 million for 49,000 students

2015: \$49.5 million for 52,000 students

2016: \$50 million for 55,000 students

2017: \$72 million for 57,000 students.

Funds under the Aboriginal equity loading are provided to schools to ensure Aboriginal student educational outcomes match or surpass those of the broader student population. In addition, these funds may be used to ensure that all teachers are culturally competent and schools culturally responsive. The Aboriginal Education Policy provides direction and guidance for the achievement of these objectives. Schools are obliged to ensure the Aboriginal equity loading is used to embed strategies that achieve these objectives. The three guiding elements of effective implementation are: relationships, engagement and ongoing learning. Aboriginal background equity funding should be treated as a component of the whole school budget when addressing the needs of Aboriginal students, and not considered as separate or the only source of funds.

Monitoring data

In February 2016, the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) released an interim evaluation of progress at the midpoint of the strategy. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

The evaluation found that:

- there is a greater focus on Aboriginal language and culture in Connected Communities schools
- all primary and central schools have introduced programs to increase Kindergarten enrolments and support young children to transition to school
- all 15 schools have established local school reference groups, led by the local AECG chair and comprising community, parent and school representatives
- Connected Communities schools are operating as service hubs, establishing partnerships with local services to meet the educational, health and wellbeing needs of their students. As a result, every student has had a health and dental check
- all secondary schools are running programs to encourage further learning or pathways to employment programs
- extensive capital works programs have produced physical improvements to schools.

The final evaluation report is due in 2018.



GROWING JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Growing NSW'S first economy - a framework to promote Aboriginal economic prosperity in NSW

In April 2016, the NSW Government along with all Australian governments reaffirmed its commitment to taking action to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal peoples.

In NSW, activity to support the delivery of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commitment is being coordinated under *OCHRE*. The NSW Government is committed to employing more Aboriginal people, using its purchasing power to drive Aboriginal employment and business development in the private and non-government sectors, and supporting Aboriginal people to acquire the education, skills and economic agency necessary to participate in the NSW economy and compete successfully for jobs.

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

Unlike previous approaches, the framework does not prescribe specific programs or initiatives. Instead, departments will deliver the commitments to Aboriginal participation, and will report on their own performance measured against existing government targets, including those contained in [Making it happen](#).

The implementation of the *Growing NSW's first economy* will be supervised under existing accountability and governance arrangements. This will allow future opportunities for Aboriginal participation to be identified early in the development of new government initiatives.

Progress and achievements under the framework will be reported in the *OCHRE* annual report from next year.

Lead Agency

Aboriginal Affairs.

Key achievements

- *Growing NSW's first economy* has been finalised.
- Aboriginal economic prosperity is linked to broader state priorities for economic growth in NSW.
- NSW Government agencies and clusters have agreed to targets that will contribute to the COAG target of halving the gap in employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- A roundtable on Aboriginal economic development was held to seek the views of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business leaders.
- Extensive consultation has been undertaken across all NSW Government agencies and portfolios, as has targeted consultation with key industry partners.

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.

Lead agency

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

Key achievements

- Action plans implemented under the NSW Minerals Council, Master Builders Association of NSW and NSW Civil Contractors Federation IBAs.
- Research completed by the NSW Civil Contractors Federation (CCF) into Aboriginal employment in the civil construction and maintenance industry, which included a survey of 100 civil construction companies. The research will support the development of tools to help CCF members recruit, develop and retain Aboriginal staff in the civil construction industry. The CCF has also endorsed two pilot sites – South West Sydney and Central West NSW – to bring industry-ready Aboriginal employees into the civil construction industry.
- Introduction by the NSW Government of regional IBAs in two Local Decision Making regions – Illawarra-Wingecarribee (South Coast) and Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West). IBAs have to date only been state-wide between the Government and peak industry bodies. These regional agreements will be negotiated as a part of the Local Decision Making accord process.

Aboriginal employment in the public sector

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

Lead agency

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

Key achievements

- One Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program (ACLDP) delivered. The program contributes to the Premier's priority to double the number of Aboriginal senior leaders in the NSW public sector by 2025 by providing a pipeline of Aboriginal leadership talent to fill management positions.
- Seven regional networking and development events for Aboriginal staff hosted with some 250 Aboriginal public-sector employees attending. The aim of these events is to strengthen staff retention

by building supportive professional networks across the sector. The events also provided an opportunity for the Public Service Commission to introduce its *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy* and to discuss the Premier's priorities on driving public sector diversity.

- A desktop review completed and three focus-group discussions held with members of the Aboriginal Workforce Development Community of Practice to investigate how Aboriginal cultural competency training is delivered in the public sector.

Monitoring data

From 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016:

- the NSW Public Service Commission monitoring period began with 8,411 employees having identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander during the previous 12 months (Source: 2015 Workforce Profile).
- 20 participants completed the Aboriginal Career and Leadership Development Program. A total of 64 participants have graduated since the program began in 2014.
- one Aboriginal senior executive officer commenced the Leadership Academy Program for Deputy Secretaries.

Complementing OCHRE

Key achievements

The NSW Government also supports Aboriginal economic prosperity through:

- the release of a framework to assist the negotiation of Aboriginal Land Agreements (ALAs) between the NSW Government and local Aboriginal land councils. Implemented by the Department of Industry (Crown Lands), ALAs will speed up the settlement of claims by allowing several claims to be settled together
- the strengthening of the governance capacity of local Aboriginal land councils through amendments to the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* which commenced on 1 July 2015. The amendments (Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Act 2014) are intended to improve land councils' performance by building capacity and allowing subtle interventions should governance problems emerge, rather than using a resource-intensive punitive approach.

- the delivery of water supply and sewerage services to Aboriginal communities under the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program*. A review of the program has found it is achieving its aims of delivering water supply and sewerage services to a standard equivalent to those in comparable non-Aboriginal communities.
- establishing a Western Sydney Aboriginal Centre for Excellence (ACE). The ACE aims to provide Aboriginal young people of the region with the skills and expertise to be competitive in the contemporary labour market, and will partner with industry groups and local employers to ensure training matches labour market needs and opportunities.



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 past practices and opens the books to Aboriginal people.

Through LDM, communities are progressively delegated increased decision-making powers as 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.

Lead agency

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

Key achievements

- Seven regional alliances funded to build and strengthen their governance capacity in July 2016. The Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance split into two regional alliances due to the size and complexity of the areas it covers.
- Further negotiations conducted between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government to amend the existing Accord to include plans to improve the quality and supply of housing and to streamline the management of tenancies.
- Accord negotiations commenced between the Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West) and the NSW Government. Priorities include affordable housing, health, education and economic development.
- Preparations complete for commencement of Accord negotiations between the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Corporation (South Coast) and the NSW Government.

- Work conducted with the regional alliances and government stakeholders in the four remaining LDM sites across NSW – Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance - North (North Coast), Tribal Wave Assembly (North Coast), Barang Aboriginal Regional Partnership (Central Coast) and Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (New England North West) – to prepare for Accord negotiations. Regional alliances and NSW Government agencies must show they are ready in areas including leadership and decision-making capability before negotiations can commence.
- A framework developed to support partnerships and cross-cultural collaboration between regional alliances and the NSW Government, including tools to track the strength of the arrangements.
- Good Governance Guidelines strengthened further, and a review of the guidelines commenced, supporting good governance for participating regional alliances and NSW Government agencies.
- Outcomes from evaluating the Murdi Paaki Accord negotiations incorporated into the Local Decision Making Policy and Operational Framework and the Accord Process document for Local Decision Making.
- Arrangements progressed for the first Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference to be held in November 2016.

Monitoring data

- 7 regional alliances supported under Local Decision Making.
- 1 Accord signed with the NSW Government.
- 15 NSW Government agencies participating in implementing the Accord.
- 5 priorities appear in the Accord – housing, economic development, education, early childhood, governance and capacity – with 93 deliverables.
- Work on all priorities commenced. Commitments under early childhood and governance and capacity progressing well.

- 2 regional alliances assessed as ready to begin Accord negotiations with the NSW Government.
- The Three Rivers Regional Assembly participated in pre-Accord workshops with five NSW Government agencies.
- The Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation working with the NSW Government to plan for Accord negotiations.

Complementing OCHRE

Key achievements

The NSW Government also supports Aboriginal community governance by:

- continuing to work with Community Working Parties across NSW
- providing financial and in-kind support for the newly established Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (South Western NSW).

Strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs

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

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat NSW (AbSec) and FaCS are working 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) has focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal NGOs with the capacity to deliver disability services.

Lead agency

NSW Department for Family and Community Services

Key achievements

- Capacity-building work continued to support Aboriginal NGOs to provide more out-of-home care services to Aboriginal children and young people. Some 3,500 Aboriginal children and young people are to be brought into the care of Aboriginal NGOs. The services have been co-designed to reflect the importance of keeping children connected to family, community, culture and Country and to embed Aboriginal voices and perspectives in policy and practice.
- Information and capacity-building resources developed by AbSec to support Aboriginal NGOs to enter the disability market in NSW in preparation for the roll-out of the NDIS.



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 about healing, specific healing initiatives are providing new opportunities to open up positive discussions.

Lead agency

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

Key achievements

- A formal partnership continued between Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, the lead organisation in Australia that develops and promotes knowledge about healing and works to connect Aboriginal people back to culture, philosophy and spirit.
- Two workshops held in February 2016 with key thinkers from Stolen Generations organisations, Aboriginal peak bodies and Aboriginal regional alliances to discuss the complex and sensitive issues associated with healing. Stakeholders at the workshops provided advice about guiding principles and the approach to adopt in planning for OCHRE Healing Forums.
- Aboriginal communities canvassed in June 2016 for expressions of interest in hosting OCHRE healing forums. The forums aim to continue a conversation between government agencies and Aboriginal communities about trauma-informed policy and service-delivery approaches and to work out a role for government in supporting healing. In selected sites local planning committees will be formed for communities to co-design the implementation and organisation of the forums in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs and the Healing Foundation.

Complementing OCHRE

Key achievements

The NSW Government also supports members of the Stolen Generations by:

- supporting Stolen Generations organisations in advancing healing and education. The Kinchela Boys' Home Aboriginal Corporation and the Coota Girls Corporation are receiving financial and in-kind support for their work with survivors and healing. Aboriginal Affairs is also working to support the recently formed Bomaderry Children's Home Aboriginal Corporation
- working closely with Stolen Generations survivors and their organisations to develop the NSW Government's response to the General Purpose Standing Committee 3 report into reparations for Stolen Generations tabled on 23 June 2016. At the tabling of the report, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs gave a personal apology to the Stolen Generations for past government practices that have had a profound effect on Aboriginal people
- acting as the primary support to the five families of the children murdered in Bowraville. Aboriginal Affairs continues to support the families to navigate the legal system and the multiple NSW Government agencies involved in implementing the recommendations of the 2013 parliamentary inquiry.

NEXT STEPS

To stay accountable, we will:

- determine with local Aboriginal communities the key measures of success for each project and how best to measure them
- commence collecting data on the implementation of each *OCHRE* project
- share the knowledge and wisdom gained in undertaking evaluations
- enhance governance and reporting arrangements for Solution Brokerage and prepare for evaluation.

To strengthen Aboriginal languages and cultures, we will:

- continue to develop operational guidelines for implementing Language and Culture Nests
- continue to collaborate with local reference groups, schools and teachers to determine the direction of Nests
- support the functions and operations of a Keeping Place for each Nest, in collaboration with the NSW AECG.

To support Aboriginal students to succeed, we will:

Opportunity Hubs

- deepen engagement, collaboration and partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations including industry bodies, employers, education, training and employment organisations to expand career education and supported pathways to sustainable jobs
- continue to build and expand the aspirations of Aboriginal students in the primary school years
- supply more Year 9 to 12 students with current career plans linked to personal learning pathways
- track school leavers more effectively to ensure they are assisted to make successful transitions to post-school education, training or jobs.



Connected Communities

- strengthen schools as facilitators of service hubs through closer partnerships with local agencies
 - continue to implement as planned the Healing and Wellbeing model in schools at student, staff and community level
 - strengthen teachers' capacity to teach a culturally inclusive curriculum
 - implement initiatives to improve student attendance and engagement at school, including the establishment of transition centres for students who are returning to their communities from Juvenile Justice or who are chronic non-attenders. The transition centres will link with local services to support student health and wellbeing; and engage the local Aboriginal community to work with students to build their connection to culture and Country. Personalised learning using a range of learning and teaching strategies will improve student engagement
 - strengthen students' transition into school through early-learning initiatives
 - increase parent and community participation and engagement with schools
 - increase support for school staff to personalise learning for students, through the Healing and Wellbeing initiative and the *Healthy culture, healthy country* program in each school.
- ensure *Growing NSW's first economy* is embedded within agency and department performance reporting
 - ensure the AEPF is embedded within agency and department performance reporting
 - implement the Industry-Based Agreement for Aboriginal Business Development and Support with the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, and develop an action plan with key parties
 - negotiate two regional Industry-Based Agreements in the Illawarra Wingecarribee and Central West as a part of Local Decision Making Accord negotiations
 - work in partnership with the NSW Civil Contractors Federation to implement Industry Engagement Strategy pilot programs in South West Sydney and the Central West
 - continue to work with the Minerals Council and Master Builders Association to deliver the objectives of the Industry-Based Agreements.

Aboriginal employment in the public sector

- work with the Premier's Implementation Unit and all Clusters to deliver the Premier's priority to double the number of Aboriginal senior leaders in the NSW public sector by 2025
- through the Aboriginal Employment and Development Program provide an additional entry point into the NSW public sector at grade 3/4. Entrants will complete a diploma-level qualification while working in a temporary capacity in one agency. Once they have obtained their qualification, and subject to satisfactory performance, participants will move from temporary employment into a permanent role
- use the results of research into Aboriginal cultural awareness training to develop a high-level framework for improving Aboriginal cultural competency in the public service
- continue regional networking events for Aboriginal staff in the public service.

To grow jobs and economic opportunities, we will:

Economic development

- support the growth of Aboriginal businesses
 - develop further opportunities to leverage the buying power of the NSW Government to:
 - procure goods and services directly from Aboriginal businesses; and
 - ensure that companies contracted to government employ more Aboriginal people and procure from Aboriginal businesses
 - develop Implementation Plans to deliver the commitments under *Growing NSW's first economy*, a framework to promote Aboriginal economic development
- report on category 1 and category 2 projects under the Aboriginal Participation in Construction policy. A category 1 project is a construction project that is primarily directed towards one or more Aboriginal

communities. A category 2 project is any other construction project with an estimated value of more than \$10 million. For the first time the NSW Government will be able to track the substantial amount of indirect expenditure with Aboriginal businesses as part of NSW Government infrastructure projects. There are two types of indirect expenditure. The first is expenditure by government contractors with Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal businesses. The second is a payment made by a government contractor to a project that contributes directly towards the education and employment goals in *OCHRE*. (Up to 50 per cent of the APIC expenditure for a construction project can be the second type of indirect expenditure.)

Aboriginal Land Rights Act

- commence the five-yearly review of the Act
- introduce legislation to amend the Act to allow the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) to issue Performance Improvement Orders to local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) and appoint advisors to assist LALCs in complying with the orders. These amendments will provide alternatives to the appointment of administrators when LALCs are not performing as expected and are in need of assistance to meet their statutory obligations.

To promote local communities and local initiatives, we will:

- amend the Accord between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government to implement a social housing model
- negotiate and sign Accords between the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation (IWAAC) and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRRA)
- continue working with the remaining alliances to ensure they are ready to commence Accord negotiations in 2016-17 and 2017-18
- complete the review of Good Governance Guidelines and publish the updated guidelines to allow the assessment of Phase 2 and Phase 3 readiness
- continue to update the Local Decision Making Policy and Operational Framework and the Accord Process document to incorporate lessons learnt

- host the Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference
- report the evaluation findings back to communities as soon as they are known.

To promote healing, we will:

- co-design six *OCHRE* Healing Forums with interested Aboriginal communities, to advance dialogue and build an understanding within government which supports Aboriginal healing. Discussion outcomes from the *OCHRE* Healing Forums will inform ongoing relationships and commitments formed between Aboriginal communities and government and non-government organisations to support healing approaches
- use the evidence from *OCHRE* Healing Forums as the basis for developing a healing-informed policy approach across government.

