

Steering Committee

Steering Committee members met on 26 April 2016. Professor Ilan Katz briefed the Committee on work undertaken to date including challenges identified. Professor Katz is the Chief Investigator from the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW Australia team working on the *OCHRE* evaluation.

Evaluation focus and approach

The Committee noted that the plan for the first phase for the evaluation is being developed. The phase will focus on implementation, specifically how each Opportunity Hub, Language and Culture Nest, Local Decision Making process or Industry Based Agreement has been set up and how each is working.

The Committee agreed that the plan should be a living document responding to changes.

The Committee noted that the Opportunity Hubs, Language and Culture Nests, Local Decision Making processes and Industry Based Agreements are different and require a specific methodology:

- Opportunity Hubs are relatively 'traditional', aiming to produce a specific range of outcomes for a particular population.
- Outcomes for Language and Culture Nests are less easy to identify and the two sites will likely require quite different approaches.
- Local Decision Making Processes do not create particular outcomes for individuals. The processes of decision making are important, as are contextual issues.
- Industry Based Agreements have limited impacts on communities (at this stage) and little direct involvement of Aboriginal people.

The Committee supported the case study approach and recognised that methods developed to date could not be finalised prior to input of the Aboriginal communities involved.

The Committee agreed that the evaluation focus should include examining the recalibration of the relationship between the NSW Government and Aboriginal communities.

The Committee noted the challenges in undertaking the evaluation including:

- Balancing 'Evaluation' with 'Ongoing Conversation' approaches.
- Maintaining independence while working closely with Aboriginal Affairs.
- Limited resourcing allowing only two site visits a year.
- Given the significance of local context, providing a simple summary of the strengths and weaknesses of *OCHRE* may not be possible.
- Attributing changes in community outcomes to each Opportunity Hub, Language and Culture Nest, Local Decision Making process or Industry Based Agreement.

- Potential overlaps in the monitoring, quality assurance, public reporting, the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs), and independent evaluation accountability functions.
- Managing government expectations that information on outcomes may not be available from the first phase with its focus on implementation.
- The evolving nature of each Opportunity Hub, Language and Culture Nest, Local Decision Making process and Industry-Based Agreement.
- Inevitable changes in *OCHRE* over time.
- Providing the assistance Aboriginal communities identify so that they can take part.

Ethics

The Committee supported the five NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) principles that underpin the evaluation: Net Benefits for Aboriginal people and communities, Aboriginal community control of research, cultural sensitivity, reimbursement of costs, and enhancing Aboriginal skills and knowledge.

The Committee noted that ethics approval will be sought from the NSW AH&MRC Ethics Committee and that the application for the first phase will be submitted in May 2016.

The Committee agreed that a staged approach to seeking ethics approval should be undertaken so that the evaluation can commence without delay in Aboriginal communities where permission has been granted.

The Committee noted that two sites have been engaged to date and one has provided written approval for the evaluation.

Engaging Aboriginal communities

The Committee noted that members of the Social Policy Research Centre's team have met with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, and the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council about the Tamworth Opportunity Hub to talk about their role and seek approval for the evaluation.

The Committee noted that further meetings are planned in the coming weeks including the Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and the Chairs of the Local Decision Making process.

The Committee noted that Aboriginal Affairs is continuing to develop its regional capacity to assist Aboriginal communities to fully participate in the evaluation. The Committee also noted the important role that Aboriginal communities will play in the ongoing collection of data and information to support the evaluation.

Sharing knowledge

The Committee discussed the importance of sharing the learnings from the evaluation as it proceeds to inform government and community action.

With the permission of the Aboriginal communities involved, the committee strongly supports the sharing of information as it becomes available to key stakeholders.

The Committee noted the role and function of the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) and will invite the Deputy Ombudsman to attend its June 2016 meeting. The meeting will provide an opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the common goals of the evaluation and the Deputy Ombudsman's reporting.

Industry Based Agreements

The Committee noted that the action plans of the Industry Based Agreements which are the subject of the evaluation focus on state level operations. The Committee recommends that opportunities to include an Industry Based Agreement where actions target regional operations be added to the evaluation.

Terms of Reference

The Committee finalised its Terms of Reference.

Dr Wendy Jarvie, Independent Chair

