

The Western Sydney Aboriginal Centre for Excellence

Community Consultation Summary Report



Executive Summary

This Community Consultation Summary Report outlines the findings of the series of community consultations relating to the proposed Western Sydney Aboriginal Centre for Excellence (ACE). For the purpose of the report *Aboriginal* has been used to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A Western Sydney ACE presents an opportunity to create healthier and stronger futures for local Aboriginal people and ensure they receive economic benefits from the region's growth. The ACE has the potential to harness the aspirations of young, local Aboriginal people to create the thinkers of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

The NSW Government engaged Cox Inall Ridgeway, a specialist Indigenous consultancy service, to undertake a series of consultations with the Western Sydney Aboriginal community and other key stakeholders throughout October - December 2015.

These consultations facilitated discussion about the concept and purpose of an ACE and were matched against the needs and expectations of a broad set of stakeholders that live and work in, or provide services in Western Sydney.

The outcomes from the consultations will help inform what a Western Sydney ACE looks like, what types of opportunities it might provide, how the model should be developed, logistical considerations of location, design and other infrastructure support. Further, it identified critical factors for the success of such a place, including the formation of key partnerships and collaborative approaches with and between government, community and industry.

Consultation Methodology

The consultation process was multi-pronged and the various consultation activities were tailored to the relevant stakeholder groups ensuring a diverse range of interest groups and ages were able to provide input into the development of the core requirements for the ACE.

Approaches included:

- one-on-one interview / questionnaires with Project Steering Committee (PSC) members,
- a roundtable discussion with the PSC
- a full-day community forum
- small group workshops with different youth groups,
- social media campaign using short vision videos by youth, and an online survey
- general feedback was accepted through email and telephone.

Key Themes

Through the consultation process, key themes were identified which define the purpose of an ACE for Western Sydney and are grouped as follows:

- Build **Strong Resilient Families** and **Communities** through immersion in Aboriginal **Culture**.
- Increase **Educational Attainment**;
- **Employment Opportunities** and **Career Development** and;
- **Nurture and Support** Aboriginal People to Achieve their Aspirations and Dreams.

Guiding Principles

Based on the feedback from the consultations a broad set of guiding principles was developed to assist the project to progress and to set the context and tone of ongoing dialogue and conversations with and between the Aboriginal community, government, business/industry and other key stakeholders.



Key Insights

According to the various stakeholder consultations, to ensure its success, the ACE should:

- Take a **holistic** approach encompassing the whole family with a strong emphasis on **education** and **culture**.
- Immerse young people in Aboriginal culture to foster and nurture pride and identity and continue generating high quality cultural activities.
- Be unique in its functions and operations in providing a place of 'Excellence' where young Aboriginal people can have access to high quality facilities and educators.
- Support more Aboriginal students to complete school, go onto further education and achieve employment into jobs that are fulfilling and sustainable.
- Establish itself as a nationally recognised and innovative institution that supports and grows young Aboriginal people in their chosen fields.

- Focus on creating opportunities for economic development for the local community.

From these consultations, a number of project-specific principles were identified. These principles will guide and shape the further development of an ACE.

Project Principles

Project-specific principles were identified as follows:

- A place where culture is at the core
- Inclusive of whole family
- A place of excellence
- 'Supports' interwoven within and outside of the ACE
- Transition to education, training and employment
- Provides a safe place
- A place of celebration
- Networked model and service.

Critical Factors for Success

In the context of the substantial infrastructure changes expected to take place in Western Sydney in the near future, and learning from the previous experiences of similar programs, it is recommended that the ACE begin as a small, targeted model with clear priorities and desired outcomes. With this in mind, the following six critical factors for the success of ACE have been developed.

The six critical factors are:

1. Values, principles, characteristics & attributes - These refer to commitment to Aboriginal culture, a positive and supportive place to build up young people, a place committed to excellence in education, training, mentoring and employment initiatives.

2. Assets - We have measured assets in terms of anything tangible or intangible that can be owned.

3. Programs and services - These refer to Commonwealth, State, Local government or corporate funds that directly assist organisations or individuals in the areas of education, training, employment, youth and community engagement, culture, health and wellbeing and physical activity.

4. Location -Where and how are programs and services delivered?

5. Governance - Effective and legitimate governance means having rules, structures and processes that are capable of achieving objectives and getting things done. Good governance reflects the capabilities of the organisation to set its directions, adopt and implement best practice governance standards, and the ability to motivate and lead people and the organisation.

6. Part of a broader network – This refers to connectivity and partnerships with other stakeholders.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The series of consultations suggested the consultation report offer a critical starting point for a process of transformation that will not only support Western Sydney to better provide for the future aspirations and career developments of the Aboriginal community, but also align with industry and business needs in this part of the city to generate mutually beneficial outcomes.

The findings of the report are preliminary and only the first step in the consultation and development of a Western Sydney ACE. It is important that effective communication is maintained with all stakeholders and partners to ensure that the process is transparent and the community is involved in all stages of development.

Decisions around the vision and purpose of the ACE are important first steps in making progress as these will assist in deciding other factors such as models of design and other aspects of development including how the concept would work and costs involved in establishment and ongoing operations.