LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Partnership and Collaboration Conference

Final Report 2017
The importance of partnerships and collaboration should not be ever underestimated or undervalued. Partnerships and collaboration give effect to the relationships between stakeholders. Both of these mediums are the high water mark or the strength of service delivery that achieves outcomes. If done right or are established properly, partnership and collaboration are the key fundamental underpinning success to achievement.

**Sam Jeffries, Moorawaari**
Former Chair of Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
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Executive Summary

Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference – The first state-wide Conference of its kind in NSW.

The Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference, referred to throughout this report as ‘the Conference’, was held on 14 and 15 November 2016 at the Cypress Lakes Resort in the Hunter Valley. Aboriginal Affairs coordinated the event in partnership with the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances. The Conference was delivered as part of the Local Decision Making initiative under OCHRE: the NSW Government’s community focused plan for Aboriginal affairs.

The Conference brought together over 130 representatives from the NSW Government, Aboriginal regional alliances and invited guests. It served to strengthen existing relationships between the NSW Government and Aboriginal regional alliances by bringing representatives together to reflect on progress so far and to consider what direction Local Decision Making should take going forward.

Participants had the opportunity to hear firsthand from national and international First Nation leaders and attend workshops facilitated by experienced Aboriginal consultants.

The Conference keynote presentations, panel discussions and workshops were focused around three themes which are discussed in this report:

- **Optimising community leadership: sharing lessons about sustainable and effective Aboriginal governance**
- **Sharing decision-making power: understanding the role of government in Local Decision Making**
- **Building better partnerships: understanding the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships.**

Conference proceedings demonstrated that both regional alliances and government representatives have a shared purpose and commitment to work together to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities in their regions. This report highlights the conversations and perspectives expressed by Conference participants.
Executive Summary

Key observations highlighted by the Conference participants were:

1. **A different conversation**
The nature of conversations between government and regional alliances is shifting. The relationship is moving from one of service provider-recipient, to a genuine partnership where Aboriginal people participate in decision-making about government services in their communities.

2. **A shared purpose**
Conference proceedings demonstrated that both regional alliances and government representatives have a shared purpose and commitment to work together to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities in their regions.

3. **The long term commitment**
Regional alliances articulated that their commitment to Local Decision Making was grounded in their ongoing commitment to their communities. They also called for long-term, bi-partisan government support for Local Decision Making, including resourcing to support an equal partnership. Legislation was proposed as a way to embed this commitment.

4. **Accountability and devolved decision-making**
Participants showed a unanimous desire for transparency and access to information and data to inform decision-making. They also acknowledged that further work is needed to shift accountability arrangements within government to enable the co-design of government services and for regional alliances to be adequately resourced to maintain their accountability back to their communities.

5. **Relationships take time**
It takes time to build relationships and trust. Participants conveyed their support for events like the Conference, which create a safe space to reflect and further strengthen relationships between regional alliances and government. Regional alliances also expressed a desire to work more closely with one another to share their experiences, lessons learned and good practice.

6. **Rebalancing the relationship**
Resourcing continues to be a challenge for the Local Decision Making process. Regional alliance members are volunteers and often take time out from paid employment to participate in Local Decision Making. Parties considered other sources of support and investment, including partnerships with the federal and local government, private sector and non-government organisations.
I wish to start by acknowledging the land on which the Conference took place, Wonnarua country and to thank the Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance for hosting us. I would also like to extend my thanks to all the attendees who committed to participating in the inaugural Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference.

The Conference provided a tangible demonstration of the strong community support for Local Decision Making because it is strength based and community centred. Participants also confirmed they are experiencing the intended shift in their relationships with the NSW Government from that of provider-recipient to a true partnership. As our international Guest Speakers, Mr Rahui Papa and Dr Allen Benson emphasised, self-governance and self-determination are a fundamental factor in generating sustained socio-economic development and wellbeing in Aboriginal communities.

Australian governments are also progressively recognising the importance of community driven decision-making and governance, and are investing in partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities to order to achieve sustained outcomes. The feedback received on the Conference has been overwhelmingly positive and it was gratifying to hear participants say they felt the event has strengthened relationships between the NSW Government and Aboriginal regional alliances, and set out a shared long-term vision for Local Decision Making.

I am excited by the prospect of government and Aboriginal communities working together to implement the recommendations in this Report and build on the future direction of Local Decision Making in NSW.
First and foremost I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Elders past, present and future of the land on which the Conference was held, Wonnarua Country.

This Conference was the first of its kind and is an acknowledgement of the hard work and commitment of the regional alliances across NSW. Local Decision Making puts Aboriginal people in the driver’s seat as we identify our own priorities and participate in decision making to address these issues. Local Decision Making is about finding better ways to work with government to achieve meaningful outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in NSW.

The Conference was an opportunity to strengthen relationships and a chance to push for change. As regional alliances we need to be on the same page, connecting with each other and presenting as a unified voice. We need to support each other and work in partnership to ensure our voices are heard and that government services meet the needs of our communities.

Personally I would like to thank all participants and dignitaries who attended the Conference for participating constructively and respectfully in the spirit of a shared purpose.
Introduction

Background
Local Decision Making is an initiative under OCHRE: the NSW Government’s community focused plan for Aboriginal affairs. OCHRE was informed by extensive community consultations undertaken by the Ministerial Taskforce and commits the NSW Government to a different way of working with Aboriginal communities by building strong working partnerships that have at their heart respect for local Aboriginal culture, leadership and decision making.

Local Decision Making responds to calls from Aboriginal people for greater recognition of their knowledge about the needs of their communities, and more control in decision-making about the services they receive. It aligns with best practice international research that shows that investment in community centred development, putting communities at the centre of the service system, produces sustained economic and social outcomes.

Research in Australia and overseas has consistently shown that disadvantaged communities can only truly overcome disadvantage and gain sustainable economic and social outcomes, when there is an investment long term, when communities are given a real and meaningful say in their future though equal partnerships with local and state governments, and when community governance and leadership is actively supported and enhanced.

Local Decision Making enables the staged devolution of decision-making and accountability to the regional level and seeks to place Aboriginal people at the centre of government service design, planning and delivery. The ultimate aim of Local Decision Making is to ensure Aboriginal communities have a genuine voice in determining what and how services are delivered to their communities. It also seeks to provide investment in governance. Through Local Decision Making, the NSW Government and regional Aboriginal governance bodies (regional alliances) enter into agreements (Accords) committing parties to jointly address agreed priorities, including timeframes, responsibilities and measures of success.

Regional alliances are progressively delegated greater powers and budgetary control once capacity is demonstrated. There are three stages of delegation; advisory, planning and implementation, and with each stage comes a greater level of decision-making.

Local Decision Making responds to calls from Aboriginal people for greater recognition of their knowledge about the needs of their communities.
The Phases of Local Decision Making

**Preliminary**
Regional alliance and the NSW Government demonstrate their readiness for Accord negotiations.

**Phase 1 (Advisory)**
Regional alliances and the NSW Government (and other relevant stakeholders) agree via an Accord on the initial priorities for action.

**Phase 2 (Planning)**
Regional alliance become Boards of Management. NSW Government establishes pooled funding mechanism.

**Phase 3 (Implementation)**
Boards of Management manage some government resources and/or services.
In 2013 an open Expression of Interest process was run to select Local Decision Making sites.

- Far West – Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA)
- Illawarra Wingecarribee – Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation (IWAAC)
- North Coast – Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (RADA)
- Central West – Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRRA)
- Central Coast – Barang Regional Alliance (Barang)
- New England North West – Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (NRAA)
- Mid North Coast – Tribal Wave Regional Assembly (TWRA)

The Local Decision Making model was designed knowing that a ‘one size fits all’ approach does not align with success in Aboriginal communities and in recognition that every regional alliance will be different. Each of the seven regional alliances the NSW Government is currently working with will progress through the Local Decision Making pathway at their own pace.

The NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA) is comprised of nominated representatives from each Aboriginal regional alliance operating in NSW. The group operates as a forum to exchange ideas, consider common issues and provide leadership and advocacy where and when necessary. The NCARA recognises the role and authority of regional alliances and does not make decisions on behalf of their constituent alliances.
About the Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference

The Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference was jointly presented by Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances and supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Conference brought together more than 130 delegates, representing 7 Aboriginal regional alliances, 1 Aboriginal regional alliance operating in a non-Local Decision Making site, 19 Government agencies and First Nations leaders to share experience and understanding.

The event was facilitated by Wiradjuri man and accomplished actor and MC, Luke Carroll and included experienced keynote speakers, Aboriginal facilitators and panel members. Dr Allen Benson from Canada and Mr Rahui Papa from New Zealand, influential First Nations leaders, delivered keynote presentations. Their presentations are discussed further in the report.

The Conference program was developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and the Conference working group to allow constructive discussion within the limited timeframe. Wonnarua Elder and historian, Uncle Jimmy Wilson-Miller delivered a powerful Welcome to Country on Day 1 of the event and the Guni Thakkun Dancers, an Aboriginal dance group from the Hunter Region performed a welcome in traditional dance. Conference participants were treated to a dinner performance by nationally renowned Indigenous musician Marcus Corowa.

The former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Leslie Williams MP, delivered the Opening Remarks alongside Sam Jeffries, former Chair of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly. Mr Jeffries’ speech reflected on the work achieved thus far in the community governance space and recognised the opportunity the Conference presented for delegates to engage in positive and constructive discussions about the future direction of Local Decision Making.

Conference proceedings demonstrated that both regional alliances and government representatives have a shared purpose and are committed to working together. The Conference also demonstrated that Local Decision Making has successfully shifted the nature of conversations between government and Aboriginal communities. The relationship is moving from one of service provider-recipient, to a genuine partnership where Aboriginal people are able to participate in decision-making about government services in their communities.

An online survey was sent to all Conference participants in January 2017 with a 33% respondent rate. The feedback captured was overwhelming positive with over 75% of those who responded agreeing that the Conference assisted in strengthening the relationship between government and regional alliances and over 85% stating they now have a better understanding of Local Decision Making. Conference participants agreed that the Local Decision Making process needs to be open and transparent and requires full commitment from both government and community in advocating and advancing outcomes. Aboriginal Affairs, through minute taking, conversations and the online survey, collected a number of recommendations from Conference participants on what they considered to be important strategies to support Local Decision Making in the future. These are set out at the end of this report.
What does Local Decision Making mean to you?

It’s about having a voice and a way forward to work with Government on programs and service delivery which is tailored to each community to have better outcomes which have been identified by them.

**Michele Donovan**  
Tribal Wave Regional Assembly

Empowering local communities and services to work together in true collaboration.

**Jennifer Smith**  
Northern NSW Local Health District
I always believed it to mean that Local Aboriginal communities would make local decisions that would have a real impact on addressing a unique local issue or problem, of course this is not possible if you don't have the tools or resources to tackle the issue.

**Robert Carroll**
Riverina-Murray Regional Alliance

Long term commitment: LDM and the framework in place to support it tells me that the Government is committed to long term changes in the way we work with Aboriginal people – beyond the next term of government and beyond the tenure of any one manager or public servant.

**Alison Morgan**
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Western NSW

Local Decision Making is a vehicle that allows Aboriginal communities to put forward issues, concerns and recommendations to Government on what they feel works best for their communities.

**Jennifer Rosser**
Tribal Wave Regional Assembly
The conversations that occurred during the Conference were focussed on the themes of Optimising community leadership, Sharing decision-making power and Building better partnerships.

A number of forums allowed for conversations focussed on the three themes to occur; Yarning workshops, panel discussions and keynote presentations.

Conference participants were placed into three groups to participate in the Yarning workshops. Three Yarning Workshops on each theme ran for one hour simultaneously across the two days. This allowed each group to participate in a workshop focussed on each theme. Facilitated by experienced Aboriginal consultants – Aden Ridgeway (Partnerships), Grant Sarra (Community) and Marcia Ella-Duncan (Sharing decision-making) – the workshops provided an opportunity for regional alliance members and government representatives to come together to share ideas of how to strengthen the relationships between government and community, scope the mechanisms needed to devolve decision making power and to help develop a shared long-term vision for Local Decision Making. Aboriginal Affairs and NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA) worked closely with each of the facilitators to develop the structure for the workshops which were linked to the partnership and collaboration principles: purpose, commitment, connection, empowerment, governance, maintenance and environment (see Appendix 1: Why is Partnership and Collaboration needed? on page 22 for more detail). Aboriginal Affairs staff attended these discussions as scribes to document the key issues and recommendations put forward by participants.

Key thinkers were invited to address the Conference in two panel discussions and keynote presentations. Day 1 saw panellists discuss the topic of Sharing decision-making power – understanding the role of government in Local Decision Making while on Day 2, panellists responded to questions related to Building better partnerships – understanding the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships. The keynote presentations delivered by Mr Rahui Papa (New Zealand) and Dr Allen Benson (Canada) focused on the theme of Building better partnerships and discussed how they have achieved this in their jurisdictions.

The following pages capture the conversations that were held throughout the Conference on each of the key themes.
Optimising community leadership

“Aboriginal business is slowly becoming everyone’s business”

Participants commitments

“Consulting community”
“Making this opportunity worthwhile”
“Open, honest and transparent engagement in community”

The conversations in these workshops focused on empowerment and the need to recognise cultural difference and differing worldviews, as well as community governance, decision making and leadership. Grant Sarra opened these workshops by focusing on the perceived and often real power differentials in relationships between government and regional alliances, and highlighted how important it was for partners to recognise these power imbalances and the issues of trauma and healing. Having an open dialogue about these issues can assist partners to identify and address potential issues, promote greater understanding and ultimately strengthen the partnership.

The discussion focused on regional alliances governance and the process they have gone through to define their governance arrangements and negotiate who they represent. Regional alliances highlighted the importance of having a fair, open and transparent governance processes to ensure that community is able to participate and have their voices heard. Like government, participants highlighted the fact that community members are not always going to agree. Some participants spoke about the lateral violence that exists in their communities. However regional alliance partners expressed their commitment to fair process and good governance. They also affirmed the principle of self-determination and the need
for community to work through these issues themselves without government intervention.

The issue of resourcing and its impact on governance was highlighted, with a number of regional alliance partners discussing how this has limited their engagement with their constituents and government partners. Both partners acknowledged the fact that most regional alliance members are volunteers and take time out of paid work to come together and work with the government to address service delivery priorities in their regions. It is recognised that without further support regional alliances may be unable to strengthen their accountability back to their constituents and to government, a requirement of progressing to the next phase of Local Decision Making.

Conversations also covered the issue of succession planning and sustainability, and how important it was to invest in young Aboriginal leaders. Murdi Paaki Young Leaders program was discussed, which aims to help young people in western NSW gain the skills and confidence they need to succeed in the workforce and have their voices heard in their communities. Participants agreed that they would like to see young Aboriginal leaders involved in Local Decision Making and future events to voice their ideas and contribute to Local Decision Making.

While regional alliances are continuing to scope their own sources of support, including practice exchanges with other regional alliances, the government can also strengthen the capacity of regional alliances through means like secondments and by sharing information and data on service delivery priorities. Further work is needed to workshop the governance requirements for the next phases of Local Decision Making and this may assist with clarifying the investment needed to build capacity and demonstrate these requirements.

Both partners acknowledge the progress that regional alliances have made to date and expressed a desire for this work to continue. A number of regional alliance partners raised the issue of long term government investment in Local Decision Making and made calls for legislation to formalise the negotiation process and relationship between the government and regional alliances in NSW.

**Key messages and outcomes:**

- Partners must acknowledge cultural differences and the different world views that they bring to the table. Effort should be made to facilitate these conversations at the regional level before Accord negotiations commence.
- Further work is needed to define the governance principles for Phase 2 and 3 of Local Decision Making including the means for demonstrating these principles and the type of investment needed to build this capacity.
- Partners must work together to identify other mechanisms for strengthening the capacity of regional alliances, including secondments, information sharing and practice exchanges.
Sharing decision-making power

“The journey is just as important as the destination”

Participants commitments

“Keeping on the Local Decision Making journey. Watch this space!“

“Partaking openly in Local Decision Making and reporting back to my board about the process“

“Working with others as equals and delivering what communities need the way they want“

The conversations on sharing decision-making power focused on the principles of environment and commitment, and the need for reciprocity whereby partners understand and respect what each side can bring to the table. Marcia Ella-Duncan opened the yarning workshops with an activity to assist government representatives to appreciate the ‘many hats’ that Aboriginal people wear, particularly Aboriginal public servants, who often juggle work life with community expectations. Participants were invited to role play scenarios which highlighted the fact that Aboriginal people do not get to switch off and instead take home a numbers of ‘burdens’, which government partners are often not aware of.

Many of these burdens can be attributed to the environment of systemic discrimination in which Aboriginal communities exist. The discussion highlighted how important it is for government partners to understand that many Aboriginal people and providers of Aboriginal services live with ‘learned helplessness’ and ‘hopelessness,’ entrenched poverty and profound familial, cultural and societal fractures. This needs to be taken into account when developing the partnership, identifying realistic goals, managing change and evaluating outcomes.

The discussion presented an alternative perspective on these ‘burdens’, and instead of always viewing these as negative or with pity, they can also be seen as assets. People carrying these loads should be viewed as ‘experts’ with an in-depth understanding of communities and this knowledge can be shared with government to inform decision making and improve outcomes at the local level.

Partners’ commitment to Local Decision Making and their partnerships at the regional level was also discussed. Partners recognised the need for influential leaders to champion successes achieved through Local Decision Making. The Premier’s Memorandum was acknowledged as a key instrument within government, which articulates the commitment of the NSW Government and the roles and responsibilities of government partners including Aboriginal Affairs, the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet and NSW Treasury in Local Decision Making.
While these high level commitments exist, the capacity of partners to change the way they work to meet the needs of partnership and to facilitate true collaboration remains a key challenge for Local Decision Making. Here it was highlighted, that even where partners are committed to their partnership, if they do not have the necessary collaborative, risks analysis, negotiation or interpersonal skills then they may fail to deliver their shared goals. It was also recognised that government partners cannot be empowered to innovate and do things differently if accountability and incentive structures are not place to support the partnership and its goals. This includes ensuring that government partners are accountable for the success of the partnership and its shared goals, but also that they are have the appropriate delegation and authority to negotiate and deliver these goals.

Sam Jeffries (former Chair of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly discussed the fact that a major issue the Assembly faced during the Accord negotiation process was the reluctance or inability of government to ‘step outside the box’ or look for innovative or flexible responses to issues. He acknowledged that this was not necessarily due to a lack of goodwill or commitment, but rather a reflection of governments’ aversion to risk and tendency to fall back on core business when faced with policy constraints.

As a part of the commitment discussion, regional alliance partners also discussed the need to ensure that their members represent their regional alliances and do not act in the interests of their community or individual needs. Both government and regional alliance representatives emphasised the need to champion and share the successes of the partnership, so that both community and government are able to see the benefit of partnering and collaborating through Local Decision Making.

Varying views were also expressed about whether Local Decision Making can influence NSW Government policy.

Key messages and outcomes:

- Partners must acknowledge the environment when developing the partnership, identifying goals, managing change and evaluating outcomes. It is recommended that government partners undertake cultural awareness training tailored to their specific region before commencing Accord negotiations to ensure they better understand the context in which they are working.

- Further investment is needed to strengthen collaboration and negotiation skills.

- Government must also work to establish the accountability and incentive structures needed to progress to the next phase of Local Decision Making and facilitate the devolution of decision making responsibility and accountability to regional alliances.

- Partners should commit to sharing and celebrating the success and achievements of the partnership.

- The extent that Local Decision Making can influence policy development needs to be further explored.
What is empowerment? What does it mean for us?
Building Relationships - Community/Govt
Shared vision
Community together as ONE
LDM one voice/contact in community
False hope within the community
Finance - how money spent in community - Where?
"Who?" - What?
Leadership Development
Building Better Partnerships

“The collective is stronger than the individual”

**Participants commitments**

“Continuing to advocate for appropriate service delivery for Aboriginal people. Challenge the status quo”

“Developing the resilience to keep the conversation rolling”

“Bring the ‘why’ back to my agency for my colleagues to identify their ‘whys’.”

The conversations on building better partnerships focused on the principles of **purpose, connection** and **maintenance**. Aden Ridgeway opened the Yarning workshops with a presentation on knowing ‘the why’ of a partnership. This presentation described the importance of knowing your partnerships purpose and goals before considering how it can best achieve these goals. Partners were asked to together define what they believed the purpose and goals of Local Decision Making were. This activity confirmed that both regional alliances and government partners have a shared purpose and are working together to address a genuine, identified need. However, partners did acknowledge the fact that the purpose and goals of Local Decision Making may not be visible or well understood by government or the community as a whole and further communication is needed to develop this understanding and knowledge.

To foster connection between partners requires trust, respect, and the sharing of risks and responsibility. Discussions reflected on the work of the partnerships to date and how this has assisted with building the connection between government and regional alliance partners. Partners have been meeting and working together to prepare for the Accord negotiation process and in doing so have taken steps to get to know each other and develop their understanding of each other’s culture. The willingness of government partners to share information and data with regional alliances has also assisted with building trust. In particular, the work that NSW Treasury has undertaken to map and share information on NSW Government expenditure in Local Decision Making regions was identified as a key opportunity for building trust and strengthening the relationship. Both NSW Treasury and regional alliances have a shared interest in understanding how NSW Government resources have been allocated and how they can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this expenditure.

While relationships between government and regional alliances have been strengthened, partnerships must be maintained and this requires the investment of time and resources. Partners must reflect also on the health of the
partnership itself. While significant resources are dedicated to the Accord negotiation process, the partnership requires ongoing investment to facilitate the implementation of initiatives. The partnership must also review how initiatives have performed. When Local Decision Making Accords are negotiated it is critical that partners define what success will look like and identify population level outcomes and performance measures so that they are able to track whether or not their initiatives are achieving mutually agreed outcomes.

Regional alliance partners discussed the need for clear mechanisms to escalate issues where government takes a business as usual approach or does not deliver the commitments and initiatives negotiated through the Accord process. While processes are in place to report on the delivery of Accord initiatives, the resolution of issues is dependent on the commitment of partners and a number of policy levers. Regional alliance representatives again made calls for legislation as a means for formalising the relationship and connection between partners and ensuring that the partnership is maintained in the long-term.

Both partners also discussed the desire and need to engage other levels of government and non-government stakeholders and service providers. While these partners can be invited to the table, there are currently no formal agreements or arrangements in place that mandate their involvement and their engagement is based upon goodwill.

Key messages and outcomes:

- Partners should promote the purpose and goals of Local Decision Making amongst their broader networks.
- Partners commit to establishing and strengthening relationships with peak bodies, non-government organisations and the private sector in their regions and where possible invite them to contribute to the implementation of the Local Decision Making process.
- Relationships between regional alliances and government have been strengthened but these partnerships require ongoing investment to deliver their purpose and goals.
- Government partners must commit to sharing service delivery data and information on priority issues to inform decision making and build trust.
- Partners are encouraged to regularly check in and assess the health of their partnership in order to identify and address any issues.
International Case Studies

Good practice from New Zealand and Canada has guided and continues to guide the design and implementation of Local Decision Making. Aboriginal Affairs invited two Aboriginal leaders; Rahui Papa, Chairman of Waikato-Tainui from New Zealand and Dr Allen Benson, Chief Executive Officer of the Native Counselling Services from Canada to share their knowledge and experience of building their governance, investing in their capacity to make their own decisions and partnering with government.

Waikato-Tainui, New Zealand
The New Zealand Government’s stated approach to improving Maori outcomes has moved to a new form of joined up, inclusive governance characterised by relationships of collaboration, trust and, above all, partnership. In 2003, a policy document by the New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet stated partnership as being at the heart of the sustainable approach.

The sustainable development approach will help us find solutions that provide the best outcomes for the environment, the economy and our increasingly diverse society. New Zealand’s success in the modern world depends on this – so too does the wellbeing of future generations. The government expects that others will recognise the partnership approach as our normal way of doing business.

(New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2003)

Mr Rahui Papa, Chairman of Waikato-Tainui, a leading tribal organisation responsible for developing outcomes for the iwi, delivered a keynote presentation on Day 1 of the Conference. Waikato-Tainui is a leading tribal organisation responsible for developing and implementing initiatives which improve iwi outcomes in the areas of education and training, employment, tribal preservation, marae development, health and well-being, and environmental and resource
management. The iwi, meaning ‘people’ or ‘nation’, is the largest of the groups that form Māori society.

Since the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand, Waikato-Tainui and Māori in general have sought to forge relationships that see the advancement of iwi aspirations. The notion of Mana Motuhake or self-determination has always been at the forefront of these relationships. Mr Papa acknowledged that the historically contentious relationships between iwi Māori and the New Zealand Government have changed from agitation, protest and court action to the forming of co-management frameworks, partnership groups and Accords.

In recent years, Waikato-Tainui have successfully formed relationships with government agencies such as the Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries and Housing New Zealand and have grown an asset base of $1.2 billion. Many of these partnerships are formalised as joint management agreements meaning in the example of fishery regulations, the Waikato-Tainui have a direct say in the management of resources in their tribal territories. The organisation also has working relationships with councils and private organisations and have agreements in place to foster internships, secondments and employment opportunities.

Mr Papa’s presentation highlighted how both iwi Māori and the New Zealand Government have reaped the benefits a collaborative partnerships which have assisted them to build lasting relationships and successful settlements.

**Links**

Waikato-Tainui website: [www.waikatotainui.com/](http://www.waikatotainui.com/)

International Case Studies

Native Counselling Services of Alberta, Canada

Dr Allen Benson, Chief Executive Officer of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) addressed the Conference in a keynote presentation on Day 2. His presentation focused on evidence from Canada which shows that increasing the governance capacity of Aboriginal communities leads to reduced dependence on government services and improve outcomes in Aboriginal communities.

NCSA’s mission is to promote the resilience of Aboriginal people and families, through programs and services which seek to reclaim their interconnectedness, reconciliation of relationships and self-determination. Its programs and services are designed and delivered for Aboriginal people, by Aboriginal people.

NCSA was established in 1970 with the objective of providing court worker assistance to Aboriginal people in conflict with the law. Since then NCSA has evolved to deliver programs and services in the areas of restorative justice, child welfare, corrections, public legal education, research based-video production and training.

Dr Benson’s presentation acknowledged that colonial policies have damaged the interconnectedness of the Aboriginal families in Canada and historic trauma continues to impact these communities. NCSA’s strategies and projects are intrinsically linked to the importance of healing.

Like OCHRE, the NSW Government’s plan for Aboriginal affairs, NCSA recognises that healing is key to achieving positive outcomes for Aboriginal people and is delivering programs and strategies to support this in Aboriginal communities.

Healing is considered a self-determined journey, though it cannot happen in isolation. Supportive relationships are needed to make it happen. As highlighted by Dr Benson, sustainable, and effective healing strategies begin with community-based people finding their own solutions to their own problems.

Dr Benson credited the success of NCSA’s projects to the ability to self-determine their own policies and the respectful working relationships Aboriginal communities have built with government and local service providers. The Water: The Sacred Relationship project explores how reconciling the relationship between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada can lead to healthier water. NCSA partnered with the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Agency and delivered a successful project using the three key principles of the NCSA model.
Healing is considered a self-determined journey, though it cannot happen in isolation.

The project allowed the reclaiming of interconnectedness through acknowledging a common ground; to protect watersheds in Alberta, reconciliation of the relationship between Indigenous and Western Science as a way to create trust between Indigenous people and Water scientists and the development of a self-determining Indigenous Science panel whose knowledge and expertise helped to shape the scientific research plan.

Conference participants communicated a strong connection to Dr Benson’s presentation which drew comparisons to their own experiences here in Australia. Government partners, particular those from NSW Justice, displayed a keen interested in using the presentation as a powerful tool for training new recruits.

**Links**
Native Counselling Services of Alberta website: www.ncsa.ca/
Recommendations

In addition to the key messages that came out of the discussions, there were a number of recommendations were echoed throughout the Conference.

Development of policy and legislation
There is a strong desire for Local Decision Making to be formally recognised through legislation. Many conference attendees believe that policy change is the only way true change in communities can occur. Without legislation, support for regional alliances is at the whim of the government of the day, and regional alliances perceive themselves as having no clear mandate to operate as a point of reference or advocacy group and to compel government to engage with them on issues affecting Aboriginal communities.

Formal recognition of Local Decision Making through legislation would enable both Government and regional alliances participating in Local Decision Making to better work together to deliver outcomes and give regional alliances a strong foundation to engage government and service providers.

Investing in self-determination
Conference discussions acknowledged that the existing level of resourcing given to the regional alliances to meet their governance requirements or come to the table as an equal partner is inadequate. Participants appealed for the regional alliances to be provided with further support to better engage their constituents, government and stakeholders.

There was a call for government partners to acknowledge that regional alliance members bring priceless insights and experiences to the negotiating table which can inform improvements to service delivery and outcomes. Aboriginal Affairs is continuing to fund the regional alliances annually to support operational costs and when able, provides non-recurrent supplementary support in the form of in-kind assistance. Further work is required to source additional support for regional alliances in the areas of secondments of personnel from government and the private sector and by facilitating access to information and data to inform decision-making at the local level.

Re-committing to the relationship
Local Decision Making in NSW has successfully strengthened the relationship between government and community, but still has a way to go. There were calls for a state-wide Local Decision Making Conference to continue to share ideas and develop relationships. Suggestions included potential future conferences to be held on country and for the event to be hosted by a regional alliance.
Lack of information sharing is an issue that has been raised again and again by community as one of the main obstacles to achieving outcomes for their regions.

An increase in communication between government and alliances is vital, though communication between the alliances themselves has also been identified as a measure to improve the future of Local Decision Making. As well as a regional alliance gathering, a monthly newsletter was recommended as an easily accessible and affordable way to communicate what is or isn’t working, inform when events or meetings are happening and to celebrate alliance successes.

**The governance of government**

While government has demonstrated its commitment to the goals of Local Decision Making, existing upwards accountability arrangements inhibit co-design and true collaboration. Lateral accountability arrangements must be established to give government representatives the authority and delegation they need to work across government silos and negotiate and implement flexible and innovative responses to regional alliances priorities. This includes mechanisms to re-prioritise funds at the regional level and enable flexible funding. Legislation to formalise Local Decision Making could set the roles and responsibilities of government, giving government representatives the mandate they need to work across government and collaborate with regional alliances in the co-design and implementation of services.
Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and elders past, present and future, of the Wonnarua nation on whose land the Conference was held.

The Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference was jointly presented by Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances. The Department of Premier and Cabinet also provided support and worked collaboratively with Aboriginal Affairs to deliver the event.

The team behind the Conference produced a unique event which enabled a safe and open space for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices to be heard. Arrangements for the Conference were designed with the assistance of key stakeholders who participated in the Conference working group. The work of CC Conferences and Corporate Events who provided support in the lead up, during and post event was critical to the event’s success. The involvement of the Conference presenters, facilitators and panel members is acknowledged and greatly appreciated. The Conference would not have been the success it was without this dedication and insight.

A number of Aboriginal suppliers also made this event possible and these contributors are listed in Appendix 2. The Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation is further acknowledged, assisting Aboriginal Affairs in selecting the names for the Yarning Workshops in Wonnarua language. Kannung (meaning eel), Makroo (meaning fish) and Barinbellong (meaning wallaby).

The Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference served to strengthen relationships between NSW Government agencies and Aboriginal communities and everyone’s willing involvement in the workshops and discussions is greatly appreciated.

Artwork: Working Together

This artwork was designed by Laura Bowen, a proud Woromi and Biripi woman from Bellinger Valley, NSW. In the centre of the image are smaller meeting places that represent the Aboriginal communities and NSW Government, they are all coming to a large meeting space where they can work together toward shared goals. The colours represent optimism, partnership and moving forward.
Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance

The purpose of the Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (NRAA) is to achieve positive and sustained outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Northern Region through committed and collaborative engagement, decision making and action between community members, organisations and government.

Communities
Armidale Dumaresq, Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Guyra, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Tamworth Regional, Tenterfield, Upper Hunter, Uralla, Walcha and Warrumbungle.

Vision
Through strong leadership, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations implement an informed and inclusive consultation process which will give a voice to whole of the Aboriginal community within the boundary of NRAA to either highlight issues or influence change in services for the betterment of the community.

Priorities
Health, education, economic development and employment, social justice, housing.

Next Steps
NRAA are currently working to finalise the Lead Negotiator in order to commence their Accord process in 2017. NRAA has also committed to lodging a statement of claim and continue to report directly their communities.

As alliances we need to be on the same page, connecting with each other and presenting as a unified voice. We need to support each other.

Aunty Jean Hands
Chair, Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance
Three Rivers Regional Assembly

About
The Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRRA) as a collective authentic Aboriginal leadership group provides the highest standard of regional governance, through mutual accountability, advocating, supporting and strengthening local communities towards sustainable long-term partnerships. The role and responsibilities of the TRRA is to work towards ensuring Aboriginal communities have a real and genuine voice in negotiation consultations in determining what services are being developed and implemented.

Vision
To foster and nurture leadership. Be acknowledged, accepted, and known as the voice of the Aboriginal peoples within the TRRA boundary. Enhance Governance and Management to strengthen cultural integrity within local and regional communities. Encourage transparency, consistency and accountability in all decision-making within local and regional communities.

Priorities
Housing, economic development, health, education.

Communities

Next Steps
TRRA are in the process of negotiating an Accord with the NSW Government. The formal negotiations commenced in March 2017 and Accord signing is expected during 2017.
Riverina-Murray Regional Alliance

About

Though not an official LDM site, Riverina-Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA) have used the LDM model to develop their alliance structure. With the reduction of Government services, in particular the Aboriginal Affairs office closure in Wagga Wagga, concerned community members organised an initial meeting in 2014 to discuss the formation of a regional governance structure for the Riverina-Murray region. The aim of the RMRA is to ensure member communities have a genuine voice in determining how and what services are delivered in their communities and to increase the capacity of each community to make decisions about their future.

Vision

Align, unify and strengthen communities to ensure effective localised responses to identified service gaps and priorities.

Communities

Albury, Cootamundra, Cummeragunja, Deniliquin, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Narrandera, Tumut & Wagga.

Next Steps

RMRA are undertaking a regional planning process to identify regional priorities through a partnership with Indigenous Community Volunteers. The identified priorities will then be discussed with government to negotiate solutions to service provision and or gaps.

We the people, the grass roots people, have a say in service delivery in our communities. Too long have we been dictated to and told this and that. We know what’s best for our people and can improve our own outcomes ourselves.

Ruth Davys
Chairperson Riverina-Murray Regional Alliance
Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation

About
The Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation (IWAAC) represents the Local Decision Making interests of Illawarra and Wingecarribee Aboriginal communities of the Illawarra South East Coast of NSW. Incorporated by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations in November 2015, IWAAC has its roots in the Illawarra Regional Partnership Agreement and Illawarra Community Based Working Group.

Priorities
Education, Police and Justice, Housing, Employment, Health

Participating groups and organisations
IWAAC is comprised of the following Aboriginal groups and corporations: Bellambi Indigenous Corporation, KEJ Tribal Elders, Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation, SACYA, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Illawarra AMS, Illawarra Koori Mens Group, Kullila, Yamanda Aboriginal Corporation, Koori Kulcha Aboriginal Corporation.

Next Steps
IWAAC are in the process of establishing a website to improve communication with their region and are developing a strategic plan. IWAAC are also in the process of negotiating an Accord with the NSW Government. The formal negotiations commenced in March 2017 and Accord signing is expected during 2017.
Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

About
The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the peak representative structure that represents the interest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 16 communities across Western NSW. MPRA is the first alliance to sign an LDM Accord with the NSW Government. This was signed at Government House on the 19 February 2015.

Vision
Establish Aboriginal jurisdiction in the Murdi Paaki region based on recognition of our human rights as Aboriginal peoples, political, social and cultural respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian society, and equitable participation in the economic development of the region.

Priorities
Housing, Economic Development, Education, Early Childhood

Communities

Next Steps
MPRA has recently elected a new Chairperson and are continuing to work with all levels of government and the non-government and community sector in the region to ensure that Aboriginal self-determination and jurisdiction is acknowledged and applied and Aboriginal people are participating in the social, cultural and economic well-being of the region. Most importantly is that Aboriginal communities, families and individuals are co-designing and exercising their right to all aspects of a development agenda.

What do you think is a major opportunity arising from Local Decision Making?

Aboriginal peoples participating in and controlling decision making of Government services and programs with authority through a legislative framework.

Sam Jeffries
Former Chair Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance and Tribal Wave Regional Assembly

About
The Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (RADA) works in partnership with communities, employees and government agencies to improve service delivery outcomes and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. RADA commits to ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes for communities by building and maintaining relationships at the local level, working together to enable Aboriginal communities to have greater decision-making powers around service delivery to communities.

RADA recently split into two regional alliances due to the extent of their geographical boundary, forming the Tribal Wave Regional Assembly (TWRA). The name signifies a people’s movement: “a wave 4 change”. Both regional alliances are currently working to resolve their governance arrangements.

Communities
RADA and TWRA cover the traditional lands of the NSW North Coast. RADA – Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed. TWRA – Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, Gloucester, Greater Taree, Kempsey, Nambucca and Port Macquarie-Hastings, Williamtown, Medowie and Karuah.

Next Steps
RADA is capitalising on the work already achieved and is working to identify key priorities for the region.

Despite TWRA being only new, they are working toward achieving better outcomes for their communities within their footprint.
Barang Regional Alliance

About
Barang is located on the Central Coast of NSW and shares a footprint with Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council. Barang aims to be a backbone organisation, speaking to government and other key stakeholders. Barang will also contribute to the retention of Aboriginal culture, create a stronger community networks, develop local Indigenous leadership and optimise investments in the Aboriginal community. Barang became incorporated in 2016 and in the same year, elected a new CEO and Chair.

Vision
Empowering Aboriginal people through a unified voice. Direct access to key government stakeholders – via the new Empowered Communities and Local Decision Making frameworks. Leadership – promoting local Indigenous led decisions, accountability and structure. Retention of Indigenous culture – for the wider community and future generations.

Priorities
Barang is looking to focus on youth, employment, homelessness, health/well-being and culture.

Participating groups and organisations
The following seven organisations are represented by this alliance: Darkinjung LALC, NAISDA Dance College, The Glen Rehabilitation Centre, Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation, Yerin Aboriginal Health Services, Bara Barang Corporation and Bungree Aboriginal Corporation.

Next Steps
Barang is currently working on enhancing community engagement and building relationships with Government and other organisations to build a common regional agenda on Local Decision Making and Empowered Communities initiatives. Barang are also taking steps to work towards statement of claim and an Accord.

LDM is...working closely with Aboriginal organisations and government with a direct line to staff who have authority to make decisions at the ‘table’. Support and clear decision making without bureaucratic barriers.

Denise Markham
Barang
Appendices

Appendix 1. Why is partnership and collaboration needed?

**Partnership:** A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship, entered into by two or more parties to achieve common goals.

**Collaboration:** The action of working with someone to produce something.

While the terms partnership and collaboration are frequently used, it is not always clear how these principles are realised in practice, particularly when they apply to relationships between government and Aboriginal communities. As is the case in New Zealand and North America, the relationship between the government and Aboriginal people in Australia has historically been characterised by tension, mistrust and stagnation. Often Aboriginal communities have been brought to the table to simply be informed or consulted on decisions that have already been made by government.

For Local Decision Making to be successful, Aboriginal communities must be involved in the decision making process from inception to implementation, and this means that government must be willing and able to change this practice. Local Decision Making aims to shift the nature of the relationship by investing in Aboriginal leadership and governance, and ensuring that government collaborates with Aboriginal communities on what and how services are delivered to their communities.

While the Conference proceedings demonstrated that government is partnering with regional alliances in aspects of decision making and the identification of solutions, further work is needed to deliver the promise of collaboration and empowerment and regional alliances are able to exercise their self-determination and progressively take on greater decision making responsibility and accountability.

- A real partnership means nothing if it is one sided. All parties must at times give a little.

Rod Towney
Three Rivers Regional Assembly

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A real partnership means nothing if it is one sided. All parties must at times give a little.

Rod Towney
Three Rivers Regional Assembly
A key component of Local Decision Making is the formal negotiation process which allows Aboriginal communities to develop an agreement or Accord with government on a range of community led outcomes and service delivery reforms. Government negotiates on a whole of government basis (not as siloed individual agencies), with an emphasis on a fair, equitable and transparent negotiation process, leading to agreed outcomes and shared accountability.

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly was the first regional alliance to sign an Accord with the NSW Government at Parliament House in 2015. A review of the Accord negotiation process in the Murdi Paaki region completed in 2015, highlighted a number of enablers and barriers to successful collaboration which affected the integrity and quality of the Accord.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner.</td>
<td>To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions.</td>
<td>To work with the public to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision making.</td>
<td>To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We will keep you informed.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decisions made.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate in decisions as much as possible&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We will implement what you decide.&quot;</td>
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Appendices

In 2015 Aboriginal Affairs, in consultation with NCARA and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, commissioned Cox Inall Ridgeway, an Indigenous consulting firm, to develop principles for cross-cultural partnership and collaboration (cross-cultural partnership project). This work involved consultation with representatives from regional alliances and government on the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships and collaboration and identified seven key principles, including purpose, commitment, connection, empowerment, governance, maintenance and environment.

Reflecting on the negotiation process in the Murdi Paaki region and the cross-cultural partnership project, it is clear that partnerships between government and regional alliances still have a way to come. While some principles are being achieved, others need to be given further attention and investment. The Local Decision Making Conference presented an opportunity for both government and regional alliances to come together to discuss the barriers and enablers to partnership and collaboration, and what could be done to address and harness these factors.

As this report highlights, the Conference proceedings demonstrated that both regional alliances and government representatives have a shared purpose underpinned by a commitment to work together to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. Participants conveyed their support for events like the Conference, which create a safe space to build trust and further strengthen relationships. However participants acknowledged that additional work is needed to shift accountability arrangements within government to enable the co-design of government services, and to build the capacity of regional alliances to progress through the phases of Local Decision Making and maintain accountability back to their communities.

Principles for effective cross-cultural partnerships and collaboration
Appendix 2. Participating alliances, agencies and suppliers

**Aboriginal Regional Alliances**
Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance
Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
Three Rivers Regional Assembly
Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance
Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation
Barang Regional Alliance
Tribal Wave Regional Assembly
Riverina Murray Regional Alliance

**Government agencies**
Aboriginal Affairs NSW
Office of Minister for Aboriginal Affairs NSW
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Department of Premier and Cabinet
NSW Treasury
NSW Environment Protection Authority
Service NSW
Aboriginal Housing Office
NSW Ombudsmen Office
Aboriginal Health NSW
Local Health Networks
Department of Family and Community Services
Office of Environment and Heritage
NSW Police Force
Training Services NSW
Public Schools NSW
NSW TAFE
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW

**Suppliers**
33 Creative
BlackaWear Promotions
CC Conferences and Corporate Events
Dreamtime Tuka
Guni Thakkun Dancers
Indigiearth
Joseph Mayers Photography
Laura Bowen
Marcus Corowa
Saretta Fielding
Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation
Appendices

Appendix 3. The Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference Program

**Day 1 – Monday 14 November**
Local Decision Making showcase presentation
– Aboriginal regional alliances representatives

Panel discussion 1 – Sharing decision-making power – understanding the role of government in Local Decision Making

Yarning workshops

Keynote presentation – 1
Title: Building better partnerships – understanding the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships
– Mr Rahui Papa, New Zealand

**Day 2 – Tuesday 15 November**
Keynote presentation – 2
Title: Partnerships through a sacred relationships lens
– Dr Allen Benson, Canada

Yarning workshops

Panel discussion 2 – Building better partnerships – understanding the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships

Appendix 4. Keynote speakers, panellists and facilitators

**Mr Rahui Papa, New Zealand**
**Keynote speaker**
Mr Rahui Papa is the Chairman of Waikato-Tainui and has represented his marae in the tribal parliament since its inception in 1999. He has a background in broadcasting and education, and currently chairs several community organisations and sits on Iwi-Government governance groups. Mr Papa has been a director and member on various tribal, local and national organisations, mainly focusing on the well-being and development of Waikato-Tainui and Maori in general.

**Dr. Allen Benson, Canada**
**Keynote speaker**
Dr. Allen Benson is a member of the Beaver Lake First Nation and has dedicated his life to advocating for the poor and disenfranchised and for the actualisation of healthy Aboriginal individuals, families and communities, both in Canada and internationally. As Chief Executive Officer of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta, Dr. Benson has spearheaded the development of many groundbreaking programs for Aboriginal people.
Panellists

PANEL 1 – Sharing decision-making power – understanding the role of government in Local Decision Making

- Sam Jeffries, Former Chair Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
- Sonja Stewart, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Rahui Papa, New Zealand (International guest)
- Vinita Deodhar, NSW Treasury
- Facilitator: Marcia Ella-Duncan

PANEL 2 – Building better partnerships – understanding the elements of successful cross-cultural partnerships

- Aden Ridgeway, Cox Inall Ridgeway
- Dr. Allen Benson, Canada (International guest)
- Jason Ardler, Head of Aboriginal Affairs
- Aunty Jean Hands, Northern Regional Aboriginal Alliance
- Facilitator: Grant Sarra

Master of Ceremonies

Luke Carroll

Luke is a proud Wirajduri man. Luke started out in acting and has had regular roles in other Australian television dramas. Luke has MC’d many Australian events which have centred around the Aboriginal community, most notably the NAIDOC Awards and The Deadlys.

Facilitators

Grant Sarra – Community

Grant has thirty years’ experience working in areas that focus exclusively on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community matters relevant to public and private sector organisations and projects throughout Australia. Grant is an experienced Indigenous executive, change agent, trainer, workshop facilitator, project manager and report writer.

Marcia Ella-Duncan – Decision-making power

Marcia is a descendant of the Yuin people of the NSW south coast. She has had 30 years’ experience in Aboriginal affairs within numerous portfolios including criminal justice, family and child wellbeing, land management, housing and community development. She has held senior positions in ATSIC and participated in various high level review committees.

Aden Ridgeway – Partnerships

Aden is of the Gumbayngirr people. He has served as a senator in the Federal Parliament and has spent 14 years in the NSW Public Service. Aden is now a partner of Cox Inall Ridegway, which specialises in Indigenous communications, policy, research and project delivery.

Marcus Corowa, Musician

Sydney-based singer/songwriter Marcus Corowa draws on his Aboriginal and South Sea Islander roots, mixing in the sounds of classic RnB to create a soulful, soothing sound distinctly his own. Marcus grew up in Bowen, a small coastal town in Queensland, before moving to Brisbane to pursue a career in music.
LOCAL DECISION MAKING
Partnership and Collaboration Conference
14 – 15 November 2016
Want to know more?

Visit our website:  
www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Give us a call and have a yarn with our friendly staff:  
1800 019 998

Send us an email:  
enquiries@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au