



Education
Aboriginal Affairs



OCHRE

Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment

CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

DECEMBER 2016



LOCAL DECISION MAKING

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION CONFERENCE
14-15 NOVEMBER 2016



The inaugural Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference was held on 14 and 15 November 2016 at the Cypress Lakes Resort in the Hunter Valley. Hosted by Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances, the Conference was delivered as part of the Local Decision Making initiative under OCHRE: the NSW Governments community focused plan for Aboriginal affairs.

Aims

The Conference intended 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.

Attendees

The Conference brought together over 130 representatives from the NSW Government, Aboriginal regional alliances and invited guests.

Program

Participants had the opportunity to hear firsthand from national and international First Nation leaders and attend workshops focused on the themes of **optimising community leadership, sharing decision-making power** and **building better partnerships**.

Facilitated by experienced Aboriginal consultants, the 1 hour yarning workshops involved Aboriginal regional alliance members and government representatives sharing ideas about how they could strengthen partnerships between government and regional alliances, scope the mechanisms needed to devolve decision making power, and strengthen the capacity of regional alliances in an effort to rebalance the relationship.

Each Aboriginal regional alliance presented on their journey to date. This highlighted the diversity across the sites, and gave Conference participants the opportunity to hear about the challenges regional alliances have faced, but more importantly their successes and plans for the future.

The insights shared by the international guests, Mr Rahui Papa from New Zealand and Dr Allen Benson from Canada, highlighted the significant opportunity that Local Decision Making presents, while the panel discussions allowed key thinkers to share their experiences and explore the ways in which both the NSW Government and Aboriginal regional alliances can better support the objectives of Local Decision Making.



KEY THEMES

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



Post-Conference Survey

To ensure future events better meet your need, a post-event survey will be sent to all participants in January 2017.

Post-Conference Follow-Up

Aboriginal Affairs is now working on transcribing the plenary and workshop notes and will publish a Final Report in early 2017.

If you wish to view the program, presentations and photos from the event please visit the conference page at www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/local-decision-making-conference-november-2016.

