

Steering Committee

Steering Committee members met for the inaugural meeting on 18 February 2016. The Committee was briefed on the implementation of the initiatives under *OCHRE* and the evaluation. The Committee considered its Terms of Reference.

Implementation status of *OCHRE* initiatives

The Committee noted that each initiative is at a different stage of implementation and that the Committee will be kept informed of developments in each initiative. The Committee also noted the range of implementation challenges and variation by initiative.

Period of the evaluation

The Committee welcomed the NSW Government's commitment to a 10 year evaluation period noting that this will enable learnings to inform implementation as well as allowing time for outcomes and impacts to emerge.

Independence of the evaluation

The Committee noted that the independence of the evaluation is being supported by having independent (non-government members) on the Steering Committee, including the Chair.

The Committee noted that a competitive procurement process was used to select the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW Australia, and that the evaluation team were engaged in December 2015.

The Committee noted that the evaluation of the Connected Communities initiative is outside the scope of the Committee's remit, with this initiative being evaluated by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education.

Participating initiatives

The Committee noted that the Industry-Based Agreements, Language and Culture Nests, Local Decision Making models and Opportunity Hubs are the subject of the evaluation. Of these, eight of the 18 initiatives are being evaluated. The Committee agreed that the evaluation would be strengthened if all initiatives were included and encouraged the NSW Government to allocate additional resources to the evaluation to enable this to occur.

Strengthening quality

The Committee agreed that an ethical and participatory approach to the evaluation was appropriate, including mixed methods and narrative based forms of enquiry. It was noted that while this approach was incorporated into the Social Policy Research Centre's planning, the ultimate decision rested with the Aboriginal communities involved.

The Committee agreed that a community-driven, participatory approach may lead to delays in the delivery of the evidence and that this issue needs to be addressed in planning and government advised of this.

Consideration of the methodological approach by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of NSW's Human Research Ethics Committee was considered essential.

Supporting Aboriginal communities to take part

The Committee noted that Aboriginal Affairs is developing its regional capacity to support Aboriginal communities to fully participate in the evaluation and to drive it. The Committee noted that this approach will promote links between the Social Policy Research Centre's team and Aboriginal communities and the free exchange of information.

Terms of Reference

The Committee discussed its draft Terms of Reference and agreed that further clarity was required on the reasons for limiting the initiatives within the scope of the evaluation, and the process for Aboriginal community members participating in the evaluation to address the Steering Committee. The Committee noted its responsibility for reviewing the work of the Social Policy Research Centre, including making recommendations to the Director, Strategy and Coordination, Aboriginal Affairs when needed.

Dr Wendy Jarvie, Independent Chair

