

Steering Committee

Steering Committee held its sixth meeting on 6 November 2017. At this meeting, Dr. Lyn Riley was welcomed as a new independent member of the committee, bringing with her many years of experience in Aboriginal affairs, regional development and research. The focus of the meeting was on the progress of the evaluation and updates from key stakeholders.

Evaluation progress

The Committee noted that fieldwork is expected to be completed for the Gumbaynggirr and North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nests, the Tamworth and Campbelltown Opportunity Hubs and LDM in the Murdi Paaki region by the end of 2017.

The Committee reiterated the importance of the evaluation being supported by local Aboriginal communities and accepts that this creates challenges to established approaches. The Committee noted the presence of some of these challenges in progressing the evaluation in three *OCHRE* projects including competing priorities, available time over the fieldwork period, and the impact of previous negative experiences of engagement in programs, research and advocacy. The Committee is hopeful that these challenges are overcome and that the communities will participate in the future.

The Committee was pleased that employing local community members as part of the evaluation team has, to date, been a positive experience for all involved and supports such local Aboriginal community participation.

Program monitoring data for Language and Culture Nests

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to discuss monitoring data for the Language and Culture Nests with the program manager, but remains concerned that quantitative monitoring data essential for the evaluation remains unavailable for each Language and Culture Nest including Stage of Learning and learning outcomes. The absence of these data prevents the triangulation proposed in the Evaluation Plan (Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW Australia, updated Oct 2017).

The Committee has asked for the Director, Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement to provide an update on progress in achieving improvements at their next meeting.

Activities of the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs)

The Committee noted the activities of the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) and his observations on the operation of *OCHRE* and its evaluation. The Committee is encouraged by the NSW Deputy Ombudsman's observation that *OCHRE* is having an impact outside of the *OCHRE* initiatives and his support for the approach to the evaluation.

The Committee noted that the NSW Ombudsman's special report on *OCHRE* will be released in August 2018, following the Phase 1 report from this evaluation and the evaluation report for Connected Communities. The Committee considers that this approach will ensure that the NSW Ombudsman's special report is fully informed.



Dr Wendy Jarvie, Independent Chair