



FACT SHEET: LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Local Decision Making is an initiative of *OCHRE*, the NSW Government's community focussed plan for Aboriginal Affairs, which represents fundamental change in the relationship between government and Aboriginal communities.

Local Decision Making is underpinned by the principle of self-determination and aims to ensure that Aboriginal communities have a genuine voice in determining what and how services are delivered to their communities. Local Decision Making places Aboriginal people at the centre of service design, planning and delivery, enabling the staged devolution of decision making and accountability to the local level.

How will Local Decision Making operate?

Accords (agreements) will be negotiated between the regional alliances and the NSW Government which will outline agreed priorities and projects, and the rules on how decision-making will be shared between the NSW Government and regional alliances.

These Accords will:

- re-define the relationship between government and regional alliances, including how information and decision-making power is shared;
- direct service delivery redesign and reinvestment according to the needs and priorities defined and negotiated between government and regional alliances; and
- allow government agencies to demonstrate to communities their commitment to the aims and objectives of Local Decision Making.

The NSW Government will establish strong cross-government working arrangements so that negotiations can occur between government agencies and regional alliances based on the priorities of regional alliances. Regional alliances will have a direct line of communication to government decision makers, including agency Senior Regional Coordinators and if necessary issues can be escalated directly to Secretaries of NSW Government Departments.

What does Local Decision Making mean?

For Aboriginal communities it means:

- the ability to call on government to explain where government money is being spent and on what;

- more control of services at the local and regional level based on proven capacity;
- better local management in response to identified issues;
- government investment linked to Aboriginal community aspirations; and
- responsibility shared between Aboriginal communities and government.

For Government it means:

- a formal process to work with Aboriginal communities to tailor and improve service delivery and effectiveness;
- the strengthening of agency relationships with Aboriginal communities;
- monitoring and adjusting the initiative along the way to ensure it is delivering its intended objective; and
- increasing the effectiveness of service delivery.

How is Local Decision Making different?

Local Decision Making is different because it:

- focuses on strengthening regional alliance governance, supported by Aboriginal community organisations or groups;
- is a step by step model that gives regional alliances more decision-making powers over local service delivery; as they strengthen their governance and leadership capacity;
- ensures regional alliances get training and development support to make these steps in governance and leadership capacity; and
- focuses on changing the way government agencies interact with Aboriginal communities, to make government more responsive and flexible to Aboriginal community priorities.

Will each of the regional alliances operate under the same model?

Local Decision Making is underpinned by the principle of self-determination. Regional alliances participating in Local Decision Making decide on the most suitable representative structure, membership and operating arrangements.

Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government will need to be confident that the regional alliance is representative, robust and transparent. Government will be required to put in place systems and processes to ensure accountability back to the alliances.

How many locations are currently participating in Local Decision Making?

Seven alliances consisting of Aboriginal community organisations or groups are currently participating in Local Decision Making:

- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (Far West);
- Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation (Illawarra South East);
- Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (Far North Coast);
- Tribal Wave Regional Assembly (North Coast);
- Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West);
- Barang Regional Alliance (Central Coast); and
- Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (New England North West).

How will regional alliances work with other Aboriginal organisations and groups in their region, which are not participating in Local Decision Making?

Regional alliances must operate in accordance with good governance principles so that all Aboriginal people and communities in the region can participate in decision-making in a fair, open and equitable way.

Regional alliances must also work with other Aboriginal community organisations and groups in their region and support existing relationships and affiliations with peak bodies, non-government organisations, and government.

How will regional alliances obtain increased decision-making power?

Regional alliances will be progressively delegated greater powers and budgetary control, once capacity is demonstrated. For this to occur, the NSW Government must establish processes to enable pooled and flexible funding and information sharing, and alliances must be able to demonstrate good governance.

There will be three stages of delegation: advisory, planning and implementation. Each stage will mean a greater level of decision-making. The process for transitioning from one stage to the next will be based on open and transparent criteria agreed with regional alliances.

Every regional alliance will be different and some may not progress through the different stages of delegation either by choice or by circumstance.

What accountability mechanisms will be in place as a part of Local Decision Making?

Accountability mechanisms must be flexible enough to allow regional alliances to have more control in the delivery and coordination of government services so that they can be directed towards Aboriginal community priorities.

At the same time, Aboriginal people and communities in the region will need to be sure that their regional alliances are working properly, that their needs are being looked after and that funding is being spent on regional priorities. To balance regional alliance control with accountability for public resources, each regional alliance will work with agencies to set up accountability mechanisms including service delivery priorities, and performance targets and goals.

To ensure government is accountable to regional alliances, the Premier has signed a Memorandum directing NSW Government agencies to participate in Local Decision Making. This includes requirements to participate in Accord negotiations, and implement commitments in those Accords.

These accountability mechanisms will be written into each Accord between the NSW Government and regional alliance.

What does the NSW Government hope to achieve through Local Decision Making?

Local Decision Making is a new way for Aboriginal communities and government to work together. It sets out a pathway for communities to become more self-governing. It directs the way government works with communities, and it looks at and improves the way it works along the way.

Local Decision Making aims to:

- decrease the duplication of services;
- increase the effectiveness of service delivery to better meet local needs; and
- increase the skill and capacity of regional alliances.

Are all your questions answered?

If you have further questions in relation to Local Decision Making, in the first instance refer to the Aboriginal Affairs website at www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au. If you need further assistance, please contact Aboriginal Affairs on 1800 019 998 or via email to enquiries@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au.

