



Education  
Aboriginal Affairs



# Aboriginal Affairs Strategic Plan

Year One Progress Report  
2016

## Message from the Head of Aboriginal Affairs



Twelve months ago we launched the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Strategic Plan, which links the work of our Agency with the NSW Government's commitment to promoting economic, social and cultural development opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW. This report outlines our progress against the priorities and initiatives in our Strategic Plan, as well as our broader work.

Over the last 12 months, our primary focus has been on building a stronger relationship between Aboriginal people and NSW Government. The principle of "partnership" has underpinned all of our efforts in delivering on our five Strategic Priorities; Culture & Healing, Leadership in government, Growing New South Wales' first economy, Strengthening governance and capacity, and Strengthening our foundations.

At the Aboriginal Affairs All-Staff meeting in November 2016, we took time to reflect on the impacts of our work this year. All staff – from administrative support through to project & regional staff and directors – were able to connect the work they are doing to the achievements of the agency. In doing this, staff contributed to a huge wall of hands, a visual representation of the positive impact that Aboriginal Affairs is having on the lives of Aboriginal people and their communities, NSW parliament, our colleagues across NSW Government and each other. I am pleased to say that we have a lot to be proud of.

In this report we celebrate our achievements from across 2016. While some, like our work on Stolen Generations' reparations and Aboriginal languages protection, have been well publicised in national media, the impact of others has been more local. All, however, are significant in terms of their contribution to our overarching commitment to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal communities.

I would like to thank everyone who has joined us on this journey over the last 12 months – the communities we work with every day, our government, research and industry partners, Minister Williams (the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) and her office, and of course, my dedicated Aboriginal Affairs team. I look forward to working with you throughout 2017 as we continue to build our reimagined Aboriginal NSW where our First Peoples prosper and thrive.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Jason Ardler". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Jason Ardler  
Head of Aboriginal Affairs  
8 March 2017

## Our Vision

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Aboriginal people in NSW are determining their own futures.

Aboriginal Affairs works with Aboriginal communities to promote social, economic and cultural wellbeing through opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility and empowerment.

We implement *OCHRE*, the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs, establish partnerships for economic prosperity, support effective Aboriginal community governance and strengthen cultural identity and language.

## Our Values

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Aboriginal Affairs has a unique role in government. Our difference is described in our agency's core value.

### Our Core Value – Truth and Recognition:

- We value Aboriginal cultures.
- We embed Aboriginal voices into our work.
- We promote Aboriginal people's rights and interests.
- We promote healing and respect.
- We recognise Aboriginal leadership and empowerment.

### Values of the NSW Public Service

As part of the NSW Public Service, Aboriginal Affairs also adopts the values of:

- Integrity
- Trust
- Service
- Accountability

Aboriginal languages have been spoken for a millennia and Aboriginal philosophies and Aboriginal ethics are deeply embedded into their meaning.

**YINDYAMARRRA** is a Wiradjuri word that means respect, honour, be polite, be gentle and to go slow.

**WINANGALI** is a Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay word that means to hear, to listen, to know, to remember.

These words speak broadly to the English words of Truth and Recognition and are at the heart of the work we do every day to realise our vision of Aboriginal people in NSW determining their own futures.

## Introduction

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This report will focus on key priority areas:

1. Culture and healing
2. Leadership in government
3. Growing New South Wales' first economy
4. Strengthening governance and capacity
5. Strengthening our foundations.

The following information will demonstrate these key areas through their actions, achievements and outcomes.

# Strategic Priority 1

## Culture and Healing

The outcomes we are seeking are:

- Aboriginal peoples' knowledge and expertise in language, culture and identity are strengthened
- Members of the Stolen Generations are supported
- Healing is supported through government and community collaboration
- Aboriginal Welfare Board records are accessible



*“The Aboriginal languages bill will bring cultural pride and connection to future generations”*

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**1.1** Support an Aboriginal community led agenda to reclaim and revitalise Aboriginal cultural expression in NSW

**1.2** Work to strengthen Aboriginal identity, cultural connections and languages

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- commenced development of landmark legislation to recognise and protect NSW Aboriginal languages, including the establishment of a centre for Aboriginal languages and the development of a five-year strategic plan
- consulted with community language leaders and government agencies on the draft legislation and the strategic plan

### **Our next steps are to**

- hold regional workshops to consult key knowledge holders and other stakeholders on the draft legislation, centre for Aboriginal languages and five-year strategic plan
- finalise the development of the legislation and the strategic plan
- establish a centre for Aboriginal languages

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- supported Aboriginal language revival in six communities with *Our Languages, Our Way* grants

### **Our next step is to**

- continue to engage Aboriginal communities in the revival of their languages, including administration of the *Our Languages, Our Way* grants to support community-led activities

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**1.3** Promote healing and respectful dealings with Aboriginal people across government by translating dialogue into practice

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- sought expressions of interest from Aboriginal communities to engage in *OCHRE* Healing Forums
- formed a partnership with the Healing Foundation to co-design six *OCHRE* Healing Forums in conjunction with interested Aboriginal communities
- led the development of the NSW Government's response to the Legislative Council inquiry into reparations for Stolen Generations, which included \$73 million in reparations for survivors
- provided funding to Cootamundra Girls Association and Kinchela Boys Corporation to deliver priority projects and support services
- led the implementation of recommendations 13 and 15 of the NSW Government response to the 2014 Law and Justice Standing Committee report *The family response to the murders in Bowraville*, completing three out of four memorial sites, and facilitating the assessment of the healing needs of the families

### Our next steps are to

- in partnership with the Healing Foundation, work with community planning committees to develop and deliver *OCHRE* Healing Forums
- collaborate with Stolen Generations organisations to implement the NSW Government's response to *Unfinished business – Reparations for the Stolen Generations*
- complete the fourth memorial and continue to support the Bowraville community

**1.4** Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events in regional areas

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- supported 121 NAIDOC Week community cultural events and activities across NSW with \$200,000 in grants
- hosted the NSW Minister of Aboriginal Affairs' and NSW Premier's launch of NAIDOC Week in Parramatta
- awarded \$80,000 in cultural grants to support:
  - NSW men's and family cultural gathering (Muswellbrook)
  - Aboriginal cultural fishing gatherings (South Coast)
  - Elders' tent at Koori Knockout
  - Yakka Day (Newcastle)
  - Central West men's and women's group gatherings

### Our next steps are to

- review the Aboriginal Affairs grants policy and implement recommendations to ensure it aligns our Culture and Healing strategic objectives
- continue to support Aboriginal men's and women's groups across NSW, including those on the North Coast, Greater West and South Coast, to meet regularly, build their capacity, define their purpose and establish networks across the regions so that communities can connect with culture and progress healing

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**1.5** Ensure Aboriginal people have access to information held by the former Aboriginal Welfare Board

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- through the Family Records Service, helped approx. 160 people gain access to personal and family records held in Government archives
- promoted access to the Family Records Service at major cultural events such as the Koori Knockout and the Gunnu Thakun gathering

### Our next steps are to

- develop and implement strategic improvements to enable better access to personal records and historical searches in consultation with NSW Stolen Generations organisations
- manage family records so that the NSW Government's response to *Unfinished business – Reparations for the Stolen Generations* can be implemented efficiently and with minimal evidentiary burden on claimants

# Strategic Priority 2

## Leadership in Government

The outcomes we are seeking are:

- Aboriginal perspectives are reflected in policies affecting Aboriginal well-being
- policy reforms that address complex cross government issues
- evidence-based policy and strategy
- practical solutions built on collaboration between NSW Government agencies, Aboriginal communities, NGOs and other tiers of government
- productive local and national partnerships across governments and the non-government sector and corporate sectors



*“ Our impact is that Aboriginal communities are determining their own futures and influencing government policy and programs ”*



## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**2.1** Lead or influence strategic policy reforms to support the goals and aspirations of Aboriginal people

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- released *Growing NSW's first economy*, the NSW Government's framework for promoting Aboriginal economic prosperity
- worked with NSW Government agencies to strengthen accountability arrangements under Local Decision Making in response to findings from the independent evaluation of the Murdi Paaki Accord negotiation
- developed principles and indicators to assess cross-cultural partnerships and collaboration, which will be used to determine the strength of government-community partnerships under Local Decision Making
- participated in place-based service delivery reform to ensure their design and implementation reflect the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people
- executed an accord between three levels of government and the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council – the first of its kind – which will help the Land Council to deliver its priorities for land and economic development
- improved the coordination of government reform efforts which affect Aboriginal people, through the operation of the Senior Executive Committee for Aboriginal Affairs Reform
- implemented processes and systems which improve significantly the quality of Aboriginal Affairs advice to government, and achieved the target of 90% timeliness

### Our next step is to

- Continue to participate in priority reform processes across Government that align with the strategic priorities of Aboriginal Affairs and support the Minister to influence for these future policy reforms in Cabinet and Parliament

**2.2** Develop and promote evidence to inform effective policy and strategy

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- supported the evaluation of *OCHRE* by securing ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, publishing a literature review and an evaluation plan, establishing a steering committee to guide the evaluation and securing approval from Aboriginal communities to come onto Country and work on the evaluation
- published multiple research reports including two reports on Aboriginal identification, a NSW Aboriginal policy scan, policy options and challenges for the NSW Aboriginal population, and income management
- dedicated two sections of the Aboriginal Affairs website to sharing knowledge – the first on the agency's research and evaluation work; the second on the progress of the *OCHRE* evaluation

### Our next steps are to

- publish Aboriginal Affairs' forward research agenda
- co-design the evaluation of *OCHRE* with Aboriginal communities that are participating in key initiatives
- publish a literature review on best practice for Aboriginal public servants who play multiple roles
- evaluate specifications for *OCHRE* Solution Brokerage initiatives

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**2.3** Share lessons learnt in the implementation of the NSW Government's Aboriginal Affairs plan (*OCHRE*)

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- published *OCHRE: Three years on*, complemented by oral stories from the chairpersons of the Regional Alliances about participation in Local Decision Making
- gained agreement on an independent audit of the governance arrangements for *OCHRE*

### **Our next step is to**

- work with Aboriginal communities to develop and agree to measures of success for the *OCHRE* evaluation

**2.4** Bring Aboriginal voices into government decision making

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- established a regional (rather than state-based) approach to the *OCHRE* evaluation that helps Aboriginal communities to participate
- developed partnership principles for Aboriginal Local Government Network to promote Aboriginal community interests at a local government level
- contributed to cross-agency forums such as regional leadership groups and regional managers' networks

### **Our next steps are to**

- implement the regional approach to the *OCHRE* evaluation that supports Aboriginal community participation
- put into effect the partnership principles for Aboriginal Local Government Network to promote Aboriginal community interests at a local government level
- continue to participate in regional forums and cross-agency meetings, and to work with local councils where appropriate

**2.5** Deliver Solution Brokerage, which requires NSW Government agencies to work together to find practical solutions on issues that might otherwise fall between the cracks

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- delivered two progress reports on Solution Brokerage including the findings of an internal review to strengthen the operation of Solution Brokerage
- declared a Solution Brokerage matter for Bowraville and appointed an officer in charge
- declared and contributed to the Aboriginal Community Land and Infrastructure Solution Brokerage project (ACLIP), led by the Department of Planning and Environment

### **Our next steps are to**

- start to evaluate Solution Brokerage and use the findings to strengthen its operation
- establish a Bowraville Community Reference Group
- work with the Department of Planning and Environment to complete ACLIP Solution Brokerage

# Strategic Priority 3

## Growing NSW's First Economy

The outcomes we are seeking are:

- increased Aboriginal participation in the economy through jobs and business ownership
- the realisation of Aboriginal aspirations for employment and wealth creation
- sustainability achieved for existing community infrastructure, including water and sewerage, in discreet Aboriginal communities
- resolution of land claims to support the social, cultural and economic goals of Aboriginal land councils



*“The negotiation framework for Aboriginal Land Agreements will see more land claims approved”*

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**3.1** Develop and implement the Aboriginal Economic Prosperity Framework for NSW

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- had approval on the *Growing NSW's first economy – A framework for Aboriginal economic prosperity* proposal

### Our next step is to

- Monitor the implementation of the *Growing NSW's first economy – A framework for Aboriginal economic prosperity*

**3.2** Support Aboriginal communities to participate in regional economies

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- developed a prospectus for regional Industry Based Agreements
- held an economic development forum in Tamworth

### Our next steps are to

- establish two regional Industry Based Agreements
- facilitate economic development workshops in the Murdi Paaki region
- help Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council to finalise governance and reporting structures for the Bundian Way Advisory Committee

**3.3** Facilitate economic opportunities by connecting Aboriginal communities, industry and government

### Aboriginal Affairs has

- negotiated the Aboriginal Business Development and Support Industry Based Agreement with the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce

### Our next steps are to

- work with the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and other NSW Government agencies to implement the Aboriginal Business Development and Support Industry Based Agreement
- continue to develop partnerships with local government, private sector bodies and other relevant stakeholders to improve economic development opportunities for Aboriginal communities such as at the Bourke Abattoir, Dubbo Hospital and the North Coast Coffs Harbour to Ballina Highway Upgrade
- work with relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils to support the development of Aboriginal tourism opportunities such as Bourke Aboriginal cultural tours, Opal Cove Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and a variety of experiences in the Broken Hill area including cultural tours at Mutawinji
- develop an internal tracking system to report progress against Aboriginal Affairs' procurement policy, which commits the agency to source goods and services, where possible, from Aboriginal-owned businesses

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**3.4** Remove land use planning, management and infrastructure barriers to help realise the economic potential of Aboriginal land

**3.5** Administer the NSW *Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983* to support the capacity of Aboriginal Land Councils to deliver tangible economic, social and cultural benefits to Aboriginal communities

**3.6** Establish an Aboriginal Centre for Excellence in Western Sydney

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- developed, with the Department of Industry (Lands), the Aboriginal Land Agreement Negotiation Framework
- brokered relationships between Local Aboriginal Land Councils and local and state planning authorities
- supported the Eden Land Management project to access relevant expertise in order to develop economic opportunities on existing land holdings
- implemented internal audit findings for the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program
- worked with Department of Planning and Environment to identify appropriate planning instruments to better support Local Aboriginal Land Councils to realise the economic opportunity in the lands

### **Our next steps are to**

- participate in the Aboriginal Land Agreement Governance Committee to manage the implementation of Aboriginal Land Agreements across the state
- ensure enough staffing resources to help develop and implement the Eden Land Management Project
- establish a municipal services strategy to co-ordinate infrastructure and services in discrete Aboriginal communities
- complete the independent review of the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program, informed by the internal audit findings

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- developed, in conjunction with NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the Local Aboriginal Land Council Improvement and Intervention Framework
- finalised a Bill of Aboriginal Land Rights Act amendments to introduce the Local Aboriginal Land Council Improvement and Early Intervention Framework, which is expected to be passed by Parliament early in 2017

### **Our next step is to**

- work with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the Registrar, Aboriginal Land Rights Act, to coordinate implementation of the Framework

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- consulted with local communities to ensure the scope and aims of the Aboriginal Centre for Excellence reflect local needs and aspirations
- completed an expression of interest process to gauge the market's capacity and interest in establishing and operating the Aboriginal Centre for Excellence
- advertised seeking formal proposals from suitable organisations willing to establish and operate the Aboriginal Centre for Excellence

### **Our next step is to**

- Select the lead organisation, and begin contract negotiations

# Strategic Priority 4

## Strengthening Governance and Capacity

The outcomes we are seeking are:

- Aboriginal jurisdictional views are evident in government decisions
- improved service delivery through Aboriginal community leadership and management
- better targeted government investments that reflect community priorities
- a sustainable Aboriginal Land Council network

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a black top and a beaded necklace, is performing a traditional smoking ceremony. She is holding a wooden bowl filled with green leaves and a small fire, with smoke rising from it. She has white body paint on her arms and a feather earring. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a fence and trees.

*“ Supporting the Accord negotiation process has brought government and community together and started to change the relationship ”*

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**4.1** Build the legitimacy of the Aboriginal jurisdictional view in Government

**4.2** Strengthen Aboriginal community governance and leadership to drive improved service delivery and local accountability

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- created a plan for the *OCHRE* evaluation which puts decision-making into the hands of Aboriginal communities
- revised the governance arrangements for *OCHRE* to make it simpler for Regional Alliances to contribute directly to the design, implementation and evaluation of *OCHRE*
- maintained support for all Regional Alliances participating in Local Decision Making
- held the Local Decision Making Partnership and Collaboration Conference, which brought together more than 130 representatives from NSW Government, Regional Alliances and invited guests
- provided the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA) with executive, administrative and operational support to come together, plan and advocate on strategic policy issues at the state level

### **Our next steps are to**

- implement recommendations from the review of *OCHRE* governance arrangements
- update Local Decision Making good governance guidelines in partnership with Regional Alliances and government stakeholders
- develop a business case for Local Decision Making enhancement and legislation

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- provided resources for seven Regional Alliances to strengthen their governance and to better enable them to take part in decision making
- begun Accord negotiations with the Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly
- begun negotiations to amend the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Accord to establish a new regional housing model
- supported the establishment and activities of the Aboriginal Youth Mentors and Young Leaders governance structures in the Shoalhaven and Murdi Paaki regions
- held the Greater West Regional Alliance Local Decision Making Forum
- supported the establishment of the Riverina Murray Regional Assembly

### **Our next steps are to**

- Finalise Accord negotiations with Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation
- Finalise Accord negotiations with Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance
- refine the Accord monitoring and reporting system
- continue to support emerging regional governance structures
- work with the Public Service Commission and private sector organisations to find new ways to use secondments to improve the skills available in Regional Alliances

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

**4.3** Work collaboratively with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the Local Aboriginal Land Council network to build governance capability and improve the councils' sustainability

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

### **Aboriginal Affairs has**

- supported the Minister in her administration of the *Aboriginal Lands Rights Act 1983*

### **Our next step is to**

- support the Minister's statutory review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*



# Strategic Priority 5

## Strengthening Our Foundations

The outcomes we are seeking are:

- a demonstrated commitment to inclusive practice
- a workforce that can respond to changes in the community, the Agency and in government expectations
- the Agency as an employer of choice for young Aboriginal professionals



*“Providing accurate and timely financial advice helps the Aboriginal Affairs Executives make the right financial decisions”*

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

### 5.1 Uphold Public Service values

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

#### Aboriginal Affairs has

- strengthened the agency's internal governance including: developing terms of reference and business rules to support the Aboriginal Affairs Executive; regularly publishing the decisions of the executive; establishing the Program Control Group to monitor the agency's major projects and to support cross-directorate collaboration; implementing systems to provide key forums such as the Department of Education Executive and Minister-Secretary meetings with timely and accurate information
- achieved a 2015-16 budget result within 1% of forecast for a second year in a row
- begun a review of corporate functions across the Regional Coordination Directorate to improve accountability and compliance

#### Our next steps are to

- develop a business process manual to ensure procedures within Aboriginal Affairs are consistent and continuous
- develop and implement procedures specific to the Regional Coordination Directorate

### 5.2 Promote practices that foster collaboration within Aboriginal Affairs

#### Aboriginal Affairs has

- held two Regional Gathering workshops
- held the Aboriginal Affairs All-Staff meeting

#### Our next steps are to

- roll out the new Aboriginal Affairs intranet and training for support staff
- continue to engage NSW Government agencies with advice on the activities and functions of Aboriginal Affairs

### 5.3 Encourage and support continuous learning for our employees

#### Aboriginal Affairs has

- helped 19 staff to complete a Certificate IV in Business Governance
- created an induction pack and one-day induction seminar for all new starters
- trained all staff in the records management system
- enabled staff to participate in key conferences and seminars

#### Our next step is to

- continue to build finance capability in managers and staff

## WHAT WE AIM TO DO

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

**5.4** Develop a long-term workforce planning framework

**Aboriginal Affairs has**

- developed the Aboriginal Affairs Workforce Development Plan

**Our next steps are to**

- implement the Aboriginal Affairs Workforce Strategy
- employ school-based Aboriginal trainees in the Dubbo and Batemans Bay offices

**5.5** Build leadership capabilities

**Aboriginal Affairs has**

- established the Aboriginal Affairs Leadership Forum
- established the Regional Leadership Team
- delivered the Emerging Leaders Program

**Our next step is to**

- continue to build the leadership capabilities of Aboriginal Affairs staff through forums and targeted development programs

**5.6** Recognise and reward achievement

**Aboriginal Affairs has**

- implemented the Staff Rewards and Recognition Program Phase 1 to recognise staff who have reached significant milestones in public-sector employment

**Our next step is to**

- implement the Staff Rewards and Recognition Program Phase 2 to recognise staff contributions and achievements within Aboriginal Affairs

**5.7** Cultivate a culturally competent and safe workplace

**Aboriginal Affairs has**

- delivered vicarious trauma training and counselling to all staff in recognition of the issues that the Aboriginal Affairs' workforce confronts in supporting Aboriginal communities in NSW
- added a cultural component to the new starter induction program

**Our next step is to**

- continue to build the cultural competency of staff to ensure a safe and inclusive workplace



**For all enquiries, please contact:**

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*Artwork and Illustration by Dennis Golding*



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