



MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Meeting Number: 56/2015

Held: 14 – 17 September 2015, Cobar NSW

Welcome

Chairperson Sam Jeffries opened and welcomed the members to the 56th Regional Assembly Meeting.

Charter of Governance

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Charter of Governance was first endorsed in 2006. At this Assembly the members spent an afternoon workshopping the document. The Charter of Governance will be updated and endorsed at the meeting in December before being uploaded onto the Murdi Paaki website.

NSW Aboriginal Affairs

Julie Blackhall and Stephen Gal attending the Regional Assembly provided an update to the members. Julie informed members that Chloe Bennett had taken 12 months leave without pay and that NSW AA would be advertising her position to work alongside Tegan Hinchey in the Broken Hill Office. Both the Bourke and Dubbo office, had 3 full time employees.

Aboriginal Affairs were working on an economic development framework that would be relevant to individual communities. Julie stated that the department was interested in how they could deliver information to the Assembly that would be relevant to each Community Working Party.

Stephen Gal stated that all NSW Aboriginal Affairs employees would be attending their Strategic Development Forum at the end of September.

Accord Response: Early Childhood

Angela Langdon from NSW Aboriginal Affairs acknowledged that progress had been a challenge and was not quite as far as long as had hope. Working across government agencies to establish a model that will be accessible and affordable to ensure children are ready to attend school. Federal, State Government and NGO's all worked in this area. FACS are key players. In disadvantaged communities up to two years would be offered for pre-school. Angela stated that they are seeking local knowledge for working groups for Government to work with working groups. Angela stated that all 16 communities in the Region have an early childhood service.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Alison Morgan from the Department of Premier and Cabinet provided the members with an update on the Accord Progress Report. Alison stated that Governance Groups have been created to oversee what government agencies are doing within the region. The first meeting of the Local Decision Making Implementation Group was held on 3 September. Representation of the meeting included the following agencies: Department of Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Education, Public Works, Tafe NSW, Department of Family and Community Services and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

Alison provided a snapshot of the progress of the Accord Priority Objectives:

Accordable and Appropriate Housing

Indigenous Business Australia are conducting home ownership workshops in Bourke, Coonamble, Walgett, Brewarrina and Lightning Ridge. FACS have confirmed that MPRA representatives are unable to participate on panels for building tender process, however they may be able to participate

on other tender panels for other services. FACS are on track to conduct a research project on the 'Rent To Buy' scheme.

The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) commenced discussions with the LAHC to explore further options regarding climate change and new material/designs to be used in new builds.

The ACHP's will have access to the Housing Pathways waiting list by the end of August.

Economic Development

DPC met with the Department of Planning and Environment staff to scope a work plan for a workshop in September that looked at the feasibility of an Indigenous Tourism Strategy. DPC had requested 3 Assembly representative to attend the workshop.

Work with the Rural Fire Service had commenced to develop a volunteer training program and recruitment schemes.

The Far West Aboriginal Mining Steering Committee was established and it is chaired by Aboriginal Affairs.

Education

School attendance data has been provided from schools in the Murdi Paaki Region from 2010 – 2014 this included Connected Communities Schools.

A Healing and Wellbeing Framework model for Connected Communities Schools is being developed over the next 4 years.

Tafe Western NSW working groups have met with MPRA to commence course planning for Adult literacy courses, participants are being sought from communities for the course.

Early Childhood

A report on early childhood models and initiatives was presented to the Assembly members. FACS are on track with their commitment in developing a sustainable model for early childhood services and transitioned to land owners.

Scoping of a contract commenced to get external expertise and advice of current research, best practice and innovations in deliver of intergraded early childhood services to ensure a wide range of options are considered in the region.

Governance Capacity & Support

Aboriginal Affairs staff are working with the Assembly to identify funding opportunities to support the development of a Strategic Plan.

The Murdi Paaki Young Leaders Forum was being held this month with participants who registered their interest, Boomali Consultants facilitated the forum.

Information packages from NSW Department of Treasury were prepared and presented to the Assembly.

Connected Communities

Kylie Pennell, the Principal of Bourke Public School attending the Assembly on behalf Michelle Hall, Executive Director of Connected Communities who was unable to attend the meeting. Kylie stated that Connect Communities projected commenced in late 2012 and is currently in 15 schools located in 10 communities within the Murdi Paaki Region.

Connected Communities strategy is to have Aboriginal people have access to education and training, cultural awareness and programs that are implemented in schools.

The program evaluation collects baseline data from the schools, and compiles the data every 6 months. Kylie stated that the program is planned to be completed in June 2018.

NSW Department of Treasury

Karl Eaves and Vinita Deodhar from NSW Department of Treasury provided an overview of the Department to the members. NSW Treasury spend \$60 billion annually and are responsible for the wellbeing of people in NSW. They noted that as part of the Accord, Treasury would engage and participate with the Assembly. A circle of conversation was had regarding how Local Decision making groups would work in the future and how effective spending had been at a local level.

Treasury has built a system of data sourced from other agencies that would assist answering questions that the assembly members would have. It was noted that compressive data was set out in 36 categories that NSW Government use.

A snapshot from the presentation showed that \$180 million is spent on Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki Region which worked out to be roughly \$22 k per person.

Tenant Support and Education Project

Danika Tonna provided an update to the members on the progress Tenant Support and Education Project over the past 12 months. The project has produced bi-monthly newsletters, co-ordinated Community Kick-off Events, provided Tennant Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy Workshops and Tenant Case Management for tenants at risk of eviction. Danika stated that the Project has 59 clients utilising the case management and of 43% of the tenants have reduced their rental arrears.

The Tenant Support and Education Project is funded until 30 June 2016.

Murdi Paaki Young Leaders Forum

In late July, Aboriginal Affairs sent out expression of interests throughout the Murdi Paaki Region seeking young adults to attend the Murdi Paaki Young Leaders Forum in September. Approximately 40 Young Leaders from the Region attending the Forum in Cobar which coincided with the Regional Assembly. On their first day, the Young Leaders and Regional Assembly members spent the day together which was facilitated by Boomali's Shannon Barnes.

Burns Aldis

Judith & Cliff from Burns Aldis acknowledged the 25th year of the Governance structures existing in the Murdi Paaki Region.

Burns Aldis had been engaged to develop an en engagement model as part of the University of Sydney MoU. The document included lessons that had been learnt from Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly experience and a detailed list of services and projects that could be undertaken as part of the University of Sydney project.

MPREC

MPREC was working with the Commonwealth Government to grow administrative support of local Community Working Parties and that MPREC were still working out working hours and where office space would be made available.

Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

Positions in Bourke and Broken Hill were being established. The positions would work closely with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Chairperson.

The Commonwealth Government is working with MPREC to grow administrative support for each Community Working Party.

The contract between both parties would mean that Government own the policy in the relationship around cultural business however would negotiate a certain amount of leave that participants could take when meeting cultural obligations.

Participants would have available to them the soft activities such as AOD counselling; Chronic Disease appointments; other activities that assists participants who may have health issues and or long term unemployment issues. Induction will be had with participants to ensure they are aware of protocol.

MPREC would have a check system for when participants who do not attend activity including an emergency contact person.

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Strategy Framework

William 'Smiley' Johnstone has been engaged to develop the MPRA Strategy Framework which will underpin the relationship between the Assembly and the Commonwealth Government.

NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

CEO of NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, Shane Hamilton stated that the AHO owns approximately 5600 properties throughout NSW. Around 800 houses are managed by Aboriginal housing providers, 1000 houses are managed by non-Aboriginal housing providers and the remainder of managed by Housing NSW.

AHO was developing a strategic direction plan that outlined three priority areas. By 2022 the AHO would like to transfer management of 4500 properties to Aboriginal Housing Providers.

The Assembly members informed Shane that promises had previously been made to the Aboriginal Communities with little results to show. Shane stated that the AHO would like to conduct research to determine what the actual needs of housing are.

Shane Hamilton will attend the MPRA meeting in December to discuss further with the Assembly.

Indigenous Disability Support Service

Andrew Fernando from the Indigenous Disability Support Service provided an overview an overview of the Disability Justice Project; the organisation works with other organisations within the state with the aim to work with Aboriginal people with cognitive/intellectual disability and keep them out of the justice system. The Support Service provides training to people on how to engage with troubled youth who may be at risk.

Wasteaid

Mark Conlon provided an update on the program Wasteaid that had previously been completed in Bourke and Enngonia to the Regional Assembly members. Mark said that there is a 'state-wide strategy' for waste management in Aboriginal Communities. The Wasteaid program is being funded by the Environmental Protection Authority.

The next Regional Assembly Meeting will take place on 8 – 10 December 2015 in Cobar NSW.