Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Regional Plan

February 2007





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Executive Summary

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Regional Plan 2006 has been developed by the Chairperson and members of the Regional Assembly, and their respective communities through involvement in the Community Working Parties.

This plan has used as its foundation the sixteen Community Action Plans, and previous planning documents developed by the Murdi Paaki Regional Council.

The Plan identifies ten key areas where the Regional Assembly can enable initiatives, through its influence and representation of the Murdi Paaki region. They are:

- Community Governance
- ▶ Economic Development
- Employment and Enterprise Development
- Housing and Infrastructure
- Young People
- Health
- Law and Justice
- Families
- Education
- Culture and Wellbeing

This is a dynamic document. The Regional Assembly will continue to work with government and non-government agencies to develop initiatives that will assist the region as a whole, and provide governance, leadership and engagement for Indigenous communities.



Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

1.1 Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Structure

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the regional governance and engagement forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Murdi Paaki Region. It comprises representatives of the Community Working Parties (CWP) from sixteen communities within the region. The sixteen CWPs are:

- Bourke
- Brewarrina (Ngemba)
- Broken Hill
- Cobar

- Collarenebri
- Coonamble (Wungali)
- Dareton
- Enngonia
- Goodooga
- Gulargambone
- IvanhoeLightning Ridge
- Menindee
- Walgett
- Weilmoringle
- Wilcannia

The MPRA is not a funding body. Its primary role is to influence government and private sectors to engage and form partnerships, and to identify and structure initiatives and programs to be implemented by the individual communities.

The Regional Assembly also facilitates high-level negotiations for government schemes, with the view of monitoring implementation and effectiveness.

1.2 Community Working Parties

Many of the Indigenous communities within the Murdi Paaki region have chosen to form Community Working Parties (CWP), which are designed to represent the different demographic groups and community organisations. A Charter and Code of Conduct have been established for the operation of the CWP.

The formation of Community Working Parties has ensured that a mechanism is in place to respond more directly to the needs expressed by the communities. The CWPs provide a direct link from individuals to Regional Assembly and vice versa. The CWP can offer knowledge, advice and support to service providers.

Each community has developed a Community Action Plan, which identifies specific initiatives, projects and actions, and work towards improving the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people.

CWPs are not funding bodies. They work closely with government agencies and organisations to implement the strategic directions set out in their Action Plan, through specific initiatives and projects.

The following sections give a brief overview of the strategic direction desired by the individual communities. (Please refer to the Community Action Plans for further detail).

1.2.1 **Bourke**

The Burke CWP has identified the following areas for improving their community:

- Body
- Mind



- Heart
- Soul
- Spirit

1.2.2 Brewarrina (Ngemba)

The Brewarrina CWP has identified the following themes for action:

- Our Culture
- Our Lifestyle
- Our Wellbeing
- Our self Determination

1.2.3 Broken Hill

The Broken Hill CWP has identified the following areas for projects and initiatives:

- Corporate Relationships/Community Infrastructure
- Education
- ▶ Economic Development/Employment
- Land and Culture
- Health
- Supporting Families
- Justice
- Housing

1.2.4 Cobar

The Cobar CWP has identified the following themes and age groups for action:

- Our culture and identity
- Our basic human needs
- Our children
- Our youth
- Our adults
- Our mature adults
- The elderly

1.2.5 Collarenebri

The Collarenebri CWP has identified the following areas where they wish to concentrate their efforts:

Local Decision-Making and Autonomy



- Participation in Community Affairs
- Working out of Welfare
- Learning
- Spiritual Wellbeing
- Physical and Emotional Wellbeing
- Community Services Centrally
- Housing and Roads
- Transport
- Sport and Recreation
- Policing

1.2.6 Coonamble (Wungali)

The Coonamble CWP has identified the following primary areas for their resources:

- Education
- Culture
- Drug and Alcohol
- Sport and Recreation

1.2.7 Dareton

The Dareton CWP has identified the following areas for action;

- Spiritual, social, emotional and physical wellbeing
- Citizenship and political engagement
- A culture of success
- Economic independence and sustainability
- Integrated service delivery
- Devolved community decision making and autonomy

1.2.8 Enngonia

The Enngonia CWP has identified the following areas for resource allocation:

- Community Decision-Making
- Finding ourselves work
- Learning
- Keeping well
- Housing
- Roads, pipes and wires



- Things to do
- Community services generally

1.2.9 Goodooga

The Goodooga CWP has identified the following areas for focus:

- Local Decision-Making
- Taking Part in Community Affairs
- Working out of welfare
- Learning
- Spiritual wellbeing
- Physical and emotional wellbeing
- Community services generally
- Housing
- Town infrastructure works

1.2.10 Gulargambone

The Gulargambone CWP has identified the following key areas:

- Citizenship and our place in society
- Caring for the emotional health of our children
- Investing in the education of our children
- Creating opportunities to work
- Keeping ourselves in good shape

1.2.11 Ivanhoe

The Ivanhoe CWP has identified the following priority action areas:

- Localised decision-making and self management
- Housing
- Environment
- Learning
- Meaningful employment
- Sustainable enterprise development
- Health of mind and body
- Spiritual health
- Elders
- Young people



- Wellbeing Families
- Wellbeing Community services or partnerships

1.2.12 Lightning Ridge

The Lightning Ridge CWP has identified the following key goals:

- Our culture and traditions
- Education, skills and work for all
- Housing and environment
- Our wellbeing (Health and community services)
- Sports and recreation
- A safe place (justice and law order)
- Partnerships

1.2.13 Menindee

The Menindee CWP has identified the following key areas for action;

- Health and wellbeing
- Housing and infrastructure
- Education and training
- Drug and alcohol
- Safe community initiative

1.2.14 Walgett

The Walgett CWP has identified the following focus areas for action:

- Whole Community
- Culture and Identity
- Children
- Youth
- Young Adults
- Mature Adults
- Elderly

1.2.15 Weilmoringle

The Weilmoringle CWP has identified the following key action areas:

- Localised decision-making and autonomy
- Citizenship and respect for our contribution to society



- Spiritual and physical wellbeing
- ▶ Economic independence through endeavour
- Easing our minds

1.2.16 Wilcannia

The Wilcannia CWP has identified the following areas for action:

- Strengthening our policy-setting and decision-making
- Getting the message out
- Playing our part in community affairs
- Finding work
- Restoring our culture
- Learning all our lives
- Keeping ourselves well
- Services and programmes

1.3 Government Initiatives

The Australian Government is developing and implementing a number of strategies designed to assist Indigenous people. These initiatives are being developed at all levels of government. Some of the key agreements and plans are outlined below.

1.3.1 The Commonwealth of Australia and The State of New South Wales 2005 – 2010

The Overarching Agreement on Aboriginal Affairs between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of New South Wales (also referred to as the Bilateral Agreement on Service Delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in New South Wales) was signed between the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments on the 17 April 2006.

The five-year agreement aims to improve Indigenous access to services. It is part of the implementation of Two Ways Together: the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012.

This is the fourth bilateral agreement to result from the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) 'National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians' endorsed in June 2004. The principles of this Bilateral Agreement include:

- Sharing responsibility
- Harnessing the mainstream
- Streamline service delivery
- Establishing transparency and accountability
- Developing a learning framework and
- Focusing on priority areas



1.3.2 **Department of Aboriginal Affairs (NSW)**

The Aboriginal Affairs Plan, Two Ways Together, is a 10-year plan (2003-2012) which is a whole-ofgovernment policy aimed at tackling the social and economic problems facing Aboriginal people of New South

The Two Ways Together Policy objectives are to:

- Develop committed partnerships between Aboriginal people and Government
- Improve the social, economic and cultural and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

At the State level Aboriginal communities and government agencies have identified seven priority areas

- Health
- Education
- **Economic Development**
- **Justice**
- Families and Young People
- Culture and Heritage
- Housing and infrastructure

At the regional level, Regional Engagement Groups (REG's) have been established to ensure that government agencies are meeting community needs in the regions. In the Murdi Paaki region, Two Ways Together is building on the work of the GOAG Trail and as such all sixteen communities participating in the Trial have been identified as Partnership Communities.

1.3.3 **Council of Australian Governments**

In November 2000 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that all governments would work together to improve the social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous people in a number of communities and regions. As a result a number of COAG Whole of Government Indigenous Trials were announced in April 2002, including in the Murdi Paaki Region of NSW.

The main objective of the trials is to provide programs and services in a more coordinated and flexible way, based on priorities agreed upon with the communities. The new approach is based on a shared responsibility between government and communities that supports the restoration of responsibility to the people in communities across the Murdi Paaki region.

An important part of the process has been that government and Indigenous communities have clearly identified expectations and the outcomes they are seeking and how they measure progress towards these outcomes. Achievements include:

- The development of Community Action Plans by each Community Working Party (CWP) that clearly express what their priorities are and how government can help them to achieve these.
- The provision of administrative support to each CWP through the employment of a trainee to assist with secretariat services.



The negotiation of 19 Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA's). SRA's are the principal means by which governments and each community agree to work together to progress specific community identified priorities.

There are currently six regional agreements in place. These include:

- The provision of Secretariat support for CWP's
- IT equipment and support to help the Secretariats fulfil their duties;
- The Murdi Paaki Partnership Project, which puts in place community facilitators to provide technical and professional support to the 16 CWP's to implement their Community Action Plans
- The provision of evaporative coolers for community owned homes in selected communities across the region
- Recognition of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) as the principal Regional Indigenous governance body

1.3.4 **Shared Responsibility Agreements**

There have been twelve local SRA's in the Murdi Paaki region signed to date, these include:

- Bourke (3)
 - Community Assistance Patrol (CAP);
 - Education and Training Project; and
 - Support for the Yaamma Cultural Festival in 2005 and 2006.
- Brewarrina (Ngemba) (5)
 - Disengaged Youth Project;
 - Homemakers initiative;
 - Community Bus; and
 - Maintaining Community Parks SRA; and
 - Brewarrina Business Centre
- Enngonia (1) Distance Education Project
- Air-cooling SRA's (building on the regional agreement at Ivanhoe, Collarenebri, Lightning Ridge and Goodooga).
- ▶ The holding of 6 successful Community Governance Workshops, where communities and government representatives have come together to discuss a whole range of pertinent issues.
- The engagement of 10 Community Facilitators to support the implementation of the CWP Community Action Plans as well as build partnerships between the local Aboriginal community, Local Government and the business sector.
- The development of partnerships between the Aboriginal community and governments as well as within government. Personal and professional relationships built have allowed positive dialogue as well as open and frank discussions on issues relevant to the trial.



1.4 Purpose of the Plan

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan has been developed to enable the Indigenous people of the Murdi Paaki region to have direct engagement with the development of the region.

The Regional Assembly Chairperson and members (CWP Chairpersons) will use the Plan to convey Community priorities as gathered and developed from the sixteen CWPs Community Action Plans at the regional level. This plan will be used to coordinate partnerships and funding initiatives from Government agencies and non-government service providers that will benefit all communities. The Regional Plan will also be used by the Regional Assembly to influence the development of policies and programs that affect Indigenous people within the region.

The Regional Plan contains not only very specific initiatives for implementation, but is a strategic document that provides direction for the actions of the whole region. For this reason there are some objectives and actions that are clearly achievable in the short term and others that form part of the continuing agenda for action.

The MPRA will continue to work towards implementing the objectives and the actions of the Regional Plan. A number of these have already been achieved, a further number initiated, and others are ongoing as part of the continuing effort to improve the social and economic situation of Aboriginal people.





Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Philosophy 2.

The following sections have been developed by the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly as representing their vision, strategic actions, values and core goals for all Indigenous people in the region.

2.1 Vision

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly's Vision is:

"That the Murdi Paaki people are respected and recognised for their culture, and their social and political ambitions."

2.2 Strategic Actions

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is actively involved in delivering this vision through;

- Establishing Aboriginal jurisdiction in all of our activities
- Maintaining good governance principles of Community Working Parties and the Regional Assembly
- Strengthening relationships with Local, State and Commonwealth government
- Strengthening and preserving our culture and our lifestyles
- Enhance and increase the living standards of our people
- Increase the access of our people to mainstream service provision

2.3 **Values**

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is motivated by certain Values in preparing its Vision Statement. MPRA sees these key Values as important to Indigenous people. They inspire the Vision and shape the Goals that the MPRA has adopted for the development of the Murdi Paaki region. These Key Values are:

- Respect for Elders
- Respect between partners in family relationships
- Mutual respect between families and within the Indigenous community
- Respect for the role of women in our society
- Respect for the role of men in our society
- Respect for the role of youth as participants in our current communities, and as our future
- Aboriginal people are the traditional owners of land, rivers, waterways, and billabongs in the region
- Recognition of, and respect for, connection to our traditional country
- Respect for Aboriginal identity and aspirations

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2.4 Core Goals

The Regional Assembly have identified 4 Core Goals that will orient the approach to realising the Vision for the region. These Core Goals are:

- Governance and rights To promote the right and proper governance of the Murdi Paaki region for the benefit of Indigenous people.
- ▶ **Economic** To maximise community input to, and ownership of, economic development in the Murdi Paaki region.
- ▶ **Social** To maintain and improve the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of the people in the Murdi Paaki region.
- ▶ Cultural To preserve and promote cultural heritage and environment in the Murdi Paaki region.









Overview of the Murdi Paaki Region 3.

3.1 The Murdi Paaki Region

The Murdi Paaki region extends from the Queensland border to the Victorian border in a north-south direction, and from Collarenebri in the east to Euston in the south-west.

The region comprises a variety of Indigenous language and cultural groups and takes its name from the Darling River: Murdi Paaki means Black Men's River in Paakantji, and the Paakantji people themselves are called after their river, Paaka - the Darling River.

3.2 Communities of the Murdi Paaki Region

There are 23 communities in the region which have appreciable populations of Indigenous people. These are Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Buronga, Cobar, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Dareton, Enngonia, Euston, Gol Gol, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Quambone, Walgett, Wanaaring, Weilmoringle, Wentworth, Wilcannia and Tibooburra.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics considers some of these communities too small for the release of population data. Some centres have very few Indigenous residents but are important for historical and cultural reasons. For example Pooncarie, which has only one Indigenous resident, and Angledool, where Bohda Station is located.

3.2.1 **Cultural Resources**

There are several National Parks within the region, most of which are of great significance to the Aboriginal people. These are Mutawintji (Mootwingee National Park), Sturt National Park, Willandra National Park, Mungo National Park, Mt Grenfell Historic Site, Kinchega National Park and Mallee Cliffs National Park. The region contains many places of significant heritage importance to Aboriginal people. Notably Mutawintji, Lake Mungo, Lake Victoria, Mt Manara, Mt Grenfell, Neckarboo, Menindee Mission, tribal grounds and cemetery at Angledool, the old Pooncarie Mission and Carowra Tank Reserve sites, the Mt Gunderbooka gallery, the Brewarrina fisheries and other sites which are associated with Baiame the Creator, the remaining carved trees at the Bora Ground at Collymongle Farms near Collarenebri, the Brewarrina Mission site, Cuddie Springs, Narran Lake, and some sites in the vicinity of Tibooburra including Bendigo and Warratta.

3.3 **Indigenous Cultural Groups of the Region**

Many Aboriginal people today have difficulty tracing their descent to particular language groups because of the disruption brought about by European settlement. However many people in the Murdi Paaki region can trace their ancestry to the Paakantji/Baakandji, Ngiyampaa, Wangaaybuwan, Ngemba, Wayilwan, Murrawari, Wangkumara, Muti Muti, Ularai, Baranbinja, Malyangapa, Gamilaroi, Kuja, Budbadjui and Gunu nations. European influence came relatively late to far western and north western NSW and it has been possible for Aboriginal people of the Murdi Paaki region to conserve and pass on more of their culture and language than many of the Aboriginal peoples of coastal areas. Numbers of Paakantji/Baakandji, Ngiyampaa, Murrawari, Ularai/Yuwaalaray, Gamilaroi and Wangkumara speakers learned their language from Elders, and a resurgence of language is currently taking place. Aboriginal people of the region are reclaiming and revitalising their language and culture.

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3.4 **Heritage and Culture**

The 2001 ABS Census documented only limited information about Indigenous heritage and culture.

Only 65 Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region were recorded as being able to speak an Indigenous language. A total of 7070 persons among the Indigenous population spoke English only. This language data may be a significant under-estimate however. A previous study of the region, based upon the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, reported that 420 of the 6413 people surveyed could speak an Indigenous language well enough to hold a conversation.

Only six individuals among the total Indigenous population was reported as being affiliated with a traditional Australian Aboriginal religion. The data suggests that more than 82% of the Murdi Paaki population is associated with a Christian religion.

3.5 The Regional Economy

Indigenous people are not encouraged by the existing economy. Few Indigenous people are employed in the mines at Broken Hill. Local government provides limited employment strategies and opportunities. From time to time the Local government contracts Indigenous organisations (mainly CDEPs) to provide certain services. Government agencies such as the Department of Community Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Police Service and the Department of School Education provide employment, both in identified positions and in some locations, in the broader workforce.

There is few Indigenous-owned enterprises, building and tourism are the key objectives of existing organisations. The National Parks and Wildlife Service also provides valuable opportunities for Indigenous people to gain employment. Indigenous organisations are generally the most consistent employers of Indigenous people in the region.

3.6 **Population**

The ABS advises that the information collected from Australia's Indigenous population should be treated with some degree of caution as data quality and comparability between some data collections is often poor. A number of collection issues including high levels of mobility, the fact that English may not be the first language spoken and the oral based communication heritage of Indigenous people mean that the data collected from Aboriginal communities may not be precise.

In the 2001 ABS Census, 7,298 Indigenous people resided in the Murdi Paaki Region. At least 14 per cent of the population in the Region are Indigenous Australians representing 6% of the NSW Indigenous population (121,584) and 1.83% of the total Indigenous population of Australia (410,003).

The regions with the largest numbers of Indigenous Australians include Broken Hill (983), Bourke (806), Brewarrina (741), Coonamble (703), Walgett (732) and Wilcannia (426).

3.7 Age and Sex

The Indigenous population of the Murdi Paaki region continues to show a very young profile. The community has a correspondingly low proportion of older people. Only 5% (384) of the Indigenous population is aged 60 years or older compared to almost 21% of the non-Indigenous population. Trends indicate that the age structure of the Indigenous population in the Murdi Paaki region is very similar to that of the Indigenous population for NSW as a whole. The non-Indigenous population for the region has shown the opposite with far fewer children and a higher proportion of older people. In comparison to the

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1991 ABS Census data, the age/sex profile of the Murdi Paaki region has changed little over the past decade. There are almost equal proportions of male and female persons in the Murdi Paaki region. The median age of the Indigenous population is 21 years compared to 40 for the non-Indigenous.

3.8 Education

The Health & Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2005 noted that the participation in education by Indigenous Australians continues to slowly increase across all sectors (Schools, universities, and vocational education and training) yet despite this, educational participation and attainment by Indigenous Australians still remain below that of the non-Indigenous population. Factors influencing the lower participation by Indigenous in education include chronic ill health problems, lack of access to educational institutions, financial constraints and social, cultural and language barriers.

The NSW Government is focusing on the following action areas under the *Two Ways Together*; literacy and numeracy; school attendance and retention, years 10 and 12 attainments; post secondary education and training; transition from school to work and Aboriginal cultural studies in schools and TAFE:

- Apparent retention rates for Indigenous students, years 7-12 shows lower rates in the regions of Murdi Paaki and Kamilaroi compared with NSW overall.
- Government school candidates who attain a year 10 certificate show lower rates in the Many Rivers and Murdi Paaki regions compared to NSW overall.
- In 2002 Murdi Paaki had the lowest proportion of TAFE enrolments (14 per cent) in comparison with other ATSIC regions.

3.9 Employment

The unemployment rate among Indigenous people who live in the Murdi Paaki region is particularly high: 24% compared to 8% among the non-Indigenous population. Unemployment among Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 years stands at 34% compared to less than 15% for non-Indigenous youth in the region.

Nearly 30% (486) of the Murdi Paaki workforce is employed as labourers and related workers, with approximately 21% (343) in management, administration and the professions. Men are particularly concentrated in the labouring occupations while most women are employed as clerical, sales and service workers. This occupational pattern is very similar to that reported by the 1991 Census. The only significant difference appears to be an increase in the proportion of Indigenous people working in management, administration and the professions: up from 14% in 1991 to 21% in 2001.

3.10 Health

The poor state of health of the Indigenous population throughout Australia is well documented. Indigenous Australians rate poorly on almost every health measure and die 15 – 20 years younger than the general Australian population.

In the Far West of NSW more babies are born prematurely and with a low birth weight, there are higher proportions of deaths due to injury and respiratory diseases and higher rates of arboviral illness (infections are caused by viruses spread by arthropods such as mosquitoes and ticks) and Q fever among (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) residents than other parts of the State. The Area Health Plan 'Strategic Directions 1998 – 2003' prepared by the Far West Area Health Service, NSW Health



Department highlights key indicators of the health status of the Indigenous people within its area (which includes the Balranald, Wentworth, Central Darling, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett and Unincorporated Areas). This reports that:

- ▶ The average age at death of males in Central Darling Shire is 33 years
- Perinatal death rate among Walgett babies is seven times the NSW rate
- Alcohol related deaths for Far West males is eight times that of Australian males
- Tobacco related deaths for Far West females is 64 times that of Australian females
- Births among Bourke teenagers is 16 times greater than that of NSW

In the Far West, the percentage of Indigenous babies born with a low birth weight is twice that of non-Indigenous babies; in the Central Darling Shire those born with a low birth weight is more than three times that of non-Indigenous babies. Murdi Paaki region recorded the highest number of Indigenous babies born with a low birth weight during 1997 –1999 compared with other Indigenous regions.

3.11 Housing and Infrastructure

The occupancy rate of dwellings occupied by Indigenous households is of the order of 3.74 (i.e. the average number of people per dwelling). This compares to an occupancy rate of 4.75 based on data from the 1991 Census. Comparison of Census data suggests there has been some improvement in the level of overcrowding among Indigenous households in the region. In 1991 approximately 47% of all Indigenous occupied dwellings contained households of above average size (defined as five or more people). By 2001 this had fallen to around 30% of all Indigenous dwellings. In 1991 approximately 31% of all Indigenous-occupied dwellings contained six or more persons. By 2001 this had dropped to 17%. However the level of over-crowding among Indigenous households remains relatively high compared to other occupied dwellings in the Murdi Paaki region where less than 3% of dwellings house six persons or more.

More than 28% of all Indigenous households in the Murdi Paaki region either own or are purchasing their own dwelling compared to nearly 36% of Indigenous households in NSW as a whole. Both figures are significantly less than the 72% of non-Indigenous households in the Murdi Paaki region (table 2.6.1). In 1991, only 22% of Indigenous households in the region owned or were purchasing their dwellings.

More than 60% of all Indigenous households in the Murdi Paaki region are renting their dwelling according to the 2001 Census.

3.12 Law and Justice

Statistics provided by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) show that Indigenous people are far more likely to be detained in a juvenile correctional facility compared to non-Indigenous people (a 'juvenile' being defined as a person aged between 10 and 17 years).

As at 30 June 2001 the national rate of detention among Indigenous juvenile offenders was 284.0 per 100 000 relevant population compared to 16.3 per 100 000 relevant population for non-Indigenous offenders. This means that Indigenous people were 17 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to be detained in a juvenile detention facility. The rate of detention for Indigenous people has actually declined from 413.9 per 100 000 as at 30 June 1994. The figure for non-Indigenous offenders has also declined from 24.3 per 100 000 as at 30 June 1994.

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The Two Ways Together report stated the following;

- Murdi Paaki has the highest rate of hospital separations for assault related injuries in the State for both Indigenous people and the NSW population as a whole
- ▶ The Aboriginal victimisation rate for assault in Murdi Paaki is more than double the Aboriginal victimisation rate anywhere else in NSW
- Aboriginal rates of imprisonment are highest in Sydney and Murdi Paaki regions. In these regions at 30 June 2002, more than one per cent of the Indigenous population were in prison





Planning Process 4.

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan has been developed by the Regional Assembly, which represents the majority of communities of the Murdi Paaki region.

The content of this plan builds on the foundation of the sixteen Community Action Plans, direct input from Regional Assembly members and the previous plan developed by the Murdi Paaki Regional Council (Murdi Paaki Regional Action Plan 2003 - 2005).

It should be emphasised that the Regional Plan is not intended to be a static document but a progressive working document. It is a document that can be added to as new issues and actions arise, and it can be amended to reflect the achievement of actions and objectives.

4.1 Objectives of the Plan

The approach and content of the consultation process adopted for the development of the Regional Plan was designed in direct cooperation with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

The key objective of the consultation process was to incorporate the priorities of the Community Action Plans to identify the direction by which the Regional Assembly can use its resources and influence most effectively.

The audience for the actions encompassed in the plan is a broad group including Local, State and Commonwealth Government and other non-government agencies that may have interest in entering into partnership with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly in the future development of the region.

4.2 Methodology

There are/were five stages to developing the Murdi Paaki Regional Plan. It has relied on the participation of the Regional Assembly members for their participation.

- Stage 1 Initiation and Framework Regional Assembly Session 1 (4th Oct 06)
- Stage 2 Preparation of Draft Framework and Research
- Stage 3 Development of Regional Approach– Regional Assembly Session 2 (14th Nov 06)
- Stage 4 Refine Regional Strategies and Actions Regional Assembly Session 3
- Stage 5 Final Report

4.3 The Stakeholders

A number of parties contributed to the development of this Plan. These were:

- Chairperson of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, Mr Sam Jefferies
- 16 members of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assemblies (Community Working Party Chairpersons), including:
 - Mr Alister Ferguson Chair Bourke CWP
 - Ms Jenny Barker Chair Brewarrina CWP
 - Tony Kickett and Richard Weston Chair Broken Hill CWP

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- Ms Joan Evans Chair Cobar CWP
- Mr Norman Hall Chair Collarenebri CWP
- Mr John Gordon Chair Coonamble CWP
- Mr Rudolph Kirby Chair Dareton / Wentworth CWP
- Mr Max Sullivan Chair Enngonia CWP
- Mr Tom Stanton Chair Goodooga CWP
- Ms Leanne McEwen Chair Gulargambone CWP
- Ms Fay Johnstone Chair Ivanhoe CWP
- Allan Cobb and Ms Kerry McBride Chair Lightning Ridge CWP
- Ms Jan Fennell Chair Menindee CWP
- Mr George Fernando Chair Walgett CWP
- Mr George Hart Chair Weilmoringle CWP
- William Bates Chair Wilcannia CWP
- Department of Education, Science and Training
- ▶ The staff of Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation

Their contribution is much appreciated.









Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Action Items

These Action items have been summarised from the sixteen Community Action Plans. The Assembly has developed the initiatives and support required. They are intended to guide the direction of the activities for the Regional Assembly.

5.1 Community Governance

5.1.1 Key Action Areas

A strong Community Governance structure will ensure that everyone is working together for the best outcomes for all. The key is to draw strength and direction from our cultural heritage. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Community Governance:

- Governance Structure Developing and operating within a community governance framework, including policies and procedures that are understood and implemented;
- ▶ Good Communications A structure and process that coordinates the initiatives of the agencies;
- Planning Mainstream services recognise the Regional Assembly Plan and develops the plan into initiatives:
- Community participation Encourage involvement in community affairs and awareness of Regional Assembly's role;
- Strong partnerships and co-ordination are developed and established between Regional Assembly and government, non-government organisations;
- ▶ **Promote** Awareness, Respect and Understanding of Indigenous culture, Respect cultural diversity and different values. Cultural awareness training for service providers; and
- Resource Local Indigenous organizations (eg, Local Land Council and CDEP) are adequately skilled and resourced to manage.

5.1.2 Initiatives

- Funding for the CWP Chairpersons position;
- Process and practices to ensure that the CWP remain effective and legitimate;
- Process and practices that support transparency and encourage public confidence of CWP
- Career development for CWP Secretaries, so they can maintain and develop their leadership roles in the communities
- Process and practices for effective and sustainable governance for Aboriginal Organisations
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes for participation and performance (positive and negatives) by government agencies.
- Engagement and focus of government agencies, including regular attendance at CWP meetings

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5.1.3 Support

- Legitimacy comes from Aboriginal ownership and authority;
- Community Working Party (CWP);
- Whole of Community input and
- All Government and non-government agencies and organisations

5.2 **Economic Development**

5.2.1 **Key Action Areas**

A strong Economic Development structure will enable Communities to be independent and selfsustaining. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Economic Development:

- Sustainable Develop and implement sustainable economic enterprises that are appropriate for Indigenous people with the governments and private sector mentoring;
- **Education and Training** Encourage and enhance economic sustainability through education and training of Indigenous people to obtain skills to manage and administer businesses and organisations;
- Cultural Enterprise Strengthen the role of cultural and tourism enterprises (eg, tradition, arts and crafts, song and dance, education, language, storytelling) and
- Community Participation Develop and implement a strategy to improve the participation and involvement in community affairs.

5.2.2 Initiatives

- Project handovers that include a period of mentoring;
- Transfer of management skills and not just operational skills;
- Centralised support for financial management and planning and evaluation;
- Longer term funding for current initiatives (e.g., traineeships);
- Understanding commercial financial sustainability;
- Review of the policy for Indigenous Organisations borrowing against assets
- Further development of Business Enterprise Centres.

5.2.3 **Support**

- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DGWR);
- NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD);
- Area Consultative Committees (e.g., Brewarrina Business Centre);
- Indigenous Business Australia (IBA);
- Local Business partnerships and
- CWP / whole of community input.



5.3 Employment and Enterprise Development

A strong Employment and Enterprise Development structure will provide the skills and leadership necessary for future development of the community. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Employment and Enterprise Development:

5.3.1 Key Action Areas

- ▶ **Purposeful employment -** Develop a strategic approach with government and non-government organisations that is effective and relevant for Indigenous people;
- ▶ **Partnerships** Develop strong strategic partnerships with mainstream services, job networks, education and training, work experience, traineeships and host employment;
- Professional technical support Resource technical support to assist the community in researching, developing, planning and implementing local initiates with emphasis on management and governance training;
- Business Planning Develop business planning skills and mentoring for community enterprises and establish a process to measure success of enterprise development in matching community objectives;
- Community participation Develop and implement a strategy to improve participation in community affairs and organisations and encourage youth leadership and
- ▶ **Cultural Significance** Identify employment opportunities that focus on maintaining/retaining cultural significance within and around the community (eg National Park and Wildlife field officers).

5.3.2 Initiatives

- Career development plan and mentoring for CWP, Secretary and Chairperson Support;
- Aboriginal Employment Strategy with local government
- ▶ Barwon Darling Alliance partnership(socio-economic zone), lessening the risk for business for potential to create 400 jobs agree and implement across Murdi Paaki region;
- Coordination of existing programs for employment;
- A more flexible approach to employment programs e.g. Performance –based subsidies for individuals and businesses
- Lessen the 'red tape' for businesses to employ Indigenous people.

5.3.3 Support

- Ministerial intervention and Local government;
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DGWR);
- Department of Transport and Regional Services (DTRS);
- NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) and
- Department of Community Services (DoCS)

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5.4 Housing and Infrastructure

Consultation for Housing and Infrastructure will ensure that an appropriate and effective approach is achieved and the needs of the Indigenous people are met. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Housing and Infrastructure Development:

5.4.1 Key Action Areas

- Provision of Appropriate Housing To have accommodation that meets 'housing for health' guideline, State health standards, funding for new housing and refurbishment of existing housing eg installing air conditioning to meet climate needs;
- Accessibility Ensure modifications required to homes of aged people and those with disabilities are carried out to improve safety and accessibility. Housing is affordable and home ownership is maximised;
- Transport accessible transportation (frequency, affordability) especially for regional services;
- Housing Management Develop and implement innovative strategies relating to housing management, construction and maintenance, including a regional accommodation policy, plan and housing needs survey;
- ▶ Maintenance Training for tenants in understanding how to manage a home, maintenance and responsibilities. Workshops to assist tenants in understanding their obligations with landlords;
- Community Facilities access to sporting facilities and community centres, parks and other infrastructure and sites of cultural significance;
- ▶ Communications Provide/upgrade public phones, internet access, more TV channels and
- ▶ **Traffic** Enforcing the 50 km/h speed limit through town.

5.4.2 Initiatives

- Integrated Housing Strategy that can be (currently being developed);
 - Applied by anyone
 - Delivered
 - Maintained
 - Implemented
- Focus on community facilities for infrastructure projects, not just housing;
- Partnership with local government to support community centres;
- "Safe" public areas (off the streets) and meeting places for different groups that are Culturally appropriate
- Simplified approach to funding

5.4.3 Support

- Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA);
- Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA);
- Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO);



- Department of Education Science and Training (DEST);
- Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTAHS)
- Police
- Local government.

5.5 **Young People**

A region where young people are valued, developed and mentored will ensure strong Indigenous leadership into the future. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Young People:

5.5.1 **Key Action Areas**

- Youth Action Plan To focus on youth initiatives in areas of most interest and need. Involve young people in communities decision making process;
- Demonstrating Value for Young People Young people raised to become healthy, respectful and independent;
- Parenting Programs Programmes and support services developed to help parents with children, especially at risk;
- **Sports -** Encourage and support for all ages for regional competitive sports;
- Youth Activities Accessibility to recreation centre or programs, availability after school hours, Educational camps, Youth festival, Night patrol/safer places programs;
- Education Focus on provision of attending school, appropriate pre-school, childcare facilities and work experience;
- Culture Learning culture and identity as part of everyday education and
- Educational awareness programs improve awareness and reduce substance misuse and domestic violence through educational programs.

5.5.2 **Initiatives**

- Youth Action Plan that are driven by the Youth, with appropriate mentoring and support;
- Youth leadership program (DEST and DET) at high schools;
- Youth meeting place (facility, transport and mentoring)
- Encouragement/funding for volunteers and sporting bodies to supervise events and activities
- Regular inter-town sporting competitions;
- Subsidise school pool operating costs for holidays & after school hours use;
- School attendance incentive scheme (reward);
- Safe driving practices education programs;

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5.5.3 Support

Department of Education Science and Training - DEST



- Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Sporting bodies.

5.6 Health

A coordinated and integrated approach to improving Indigenous health will benefit all. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Health:

5.6.1 Key Action Areas

- ▶ Health Checks All people to have annual health checks. School children to have regular ear and eye examinations;
- Coordination Between all service providers, improve mainstream health services in quality and quantity;
- Promotion of Primary care and prevention programs Programs that are culturally appropriate and effective;
- Culturally appropriate services home care and respite support services, gender specific councillors, provision of more Indigenous health workers;
- Holistic Services Health services to be adequately resourced to provide environmental, sexual, mental, emotional, preventative and clinical health care;
- Access/Transport Provide improved access to services (transport to specialist services, access for all to health services). Provide regional dental van;
- Food Education Programs school canteens and home encouragement of healthy eating habits and
- ▶ **Substance misuse** Reduced through educational programs, dedicated wet and dry areas and crisis accommodation.

5.6.2 Initiatives

- Develop a regional health strategy (currently being worked on);
- Promotion and implementation of education programs focused on need for annual health checks and follow-up programs;
- Local and regional specialist services;
- Integrated information health strategy;
- Transport and accommodation for long term support to and from health services;
- Regional Assembly to coordinate political considerations and look at not for profit health provision;
- Dental van with particular focus on young people;
- Health care workers to go to the people;
- Leadership from health care professionals.



5.6.3 Support

- Commonwealth Health;
- NSW Department of Health;
- Aboriginal Medical Service;
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS);
- General Division of General Practitioners (GP);
- Hospitals;
- Greater Western Health Services
- Ambulance.

5.7 Law and Justice

A culturally appropriate Law and Justice structure that is understood and accepted will ensure that everyone is working together for the best outcomes. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Law and Justice:

5.7.1 Key Action Areas

- ▶ **Police** Increase the number of Aboriginal Police Officers and Community Liaison Officers. Male and female officers for appropriate services;
- ▶ **Communications** Policing issues talked through face to face and where possible diversionary sentences used instead of custodial sentences:
- ▶ **Legal Systems** Effective legal systems that are responsive and accountable to communities, minimise numbers in custody/justice system and include effective crime prevention measures and
- Community Involvement Encourage the greater involvement of Indigenous people in roles within the legal system, e.g., Community Justice Groups and Circle Sentencing

5.7.2 Initiatives

- Education programs to get young people to understand implications of offences;
- Programs that 'break the cycle' (mentoring from Elders ongoing and not just one off);
- Community Justice groups and Circle Sentencing
 - Encourage Elders to participate
 - Funded programs;
- Deterrents / preventive programs driven by community;
- Study and evaluate:
 - Why incarceration rates are so high
 - Why recommendations not implemented by government (fully, consistently)
- CWP / Community support for:
 - Zero tolerance



- Initiatives to ban take away alcohol sales
- Look at family support to prevent offence especially in young people
- Alcohol
- Night patrols evaluate and promote
- Look at reasons for offence
- Build a more resilient community to resist substance misuse.
- Be supported by services, e.g., police

5.7.3 Support

- Police:
- Legal services;
- Aboriginal Legal Services;
- NSW Prisoner and family Support Services;
- Schools
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

5.8 **Families**

A strong family unit is the foundation for a stable community, where people understand and respect each other. Our culture and heritage is an integral part of our families. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Families:

5.8.1 **Key Action Areas**

- Family Support Programs that strengthen the family unit and operate in a holistic and integrated manner aimed at improving family wellbeing;
- Family violence is acknowledged and counselling, preventive programs and support are available;
- Family Services Families (women, men and children) have access to all services;
- Drug and alcohol misuse Develop effective programs that focus on reducing abuse and misuse;
- Sports Encourage and support sports in the community (transport, access and supervision);
- Recreational centres to be build or re-establishing existing facilities and
- Childcare Establish appropriate Aboriginal Childcare Services

5.8.2 **Initiatives**

- Family support programs;
- Respite care, especially for those dealing with disabilities;
- Building strong families by establishing and maintaining
 - Employment prospects
 - Healthy Housing;



- Aboriginal Councillor for each school;
- Program to address home life with particular on health and safety;
- Rekindling of the family unit and family activities that are affordable;
- "Places" where parents and children can come together as a family unit, e.g., social and emotional wellbeing centre outside community;
- Founding for volunteers to encourage community participation and
- Education programs with a focus on follow-up

5.8.3 Support

- Department of Community Services (DoCS);
- Department of Education and Training (DET);
- ▶ Health Agencies;
- Community participation;
- ▶ CWP.

5.9 Education

A focus on relevant education is a key driver in improving Indigenous quality of life. This includes cultural heritage as well as mainstream programs. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Education Development:

5.9.1 Key Action Areas

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- **Educational Attainment** Continually improve the educational outcomes and attainment at each level (including preschool) with quality and relevant education for children.
- Educational Agreements Establish agreements to provide appropriate education to continually improve the educational and training outcomes for youths and adults, through work experience or training opportunities.
- Continuing Involvement Establish effective initiatives to keep children in school. Support for students to attend boarding schools/higher education (TAFE/UNI), Establish and encouragement of initiatives and disciplines to maintain school attendance driven and supported by families and the community.
- Culturally relevant education School curriculum to include Aboriginal studies, greater emphasis on teaching living skills and cultural awareness programs for teachers updated regularly to embrace cultural diversity.
- Access to Activities Supervised access to educational and sporting facilities outside of school hours and establish and maintain resourced homework centre (yr 7-12). Upgrade and maintenance of educational resources.
- ▶ **Community Participation** encourage parents and community members to be involved in educational programs and institutions.

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- Physical Education Encourage greater level of physical education and participation in sporting activities;
- Vocational Training TAFE and/or other Registered Training Organisations to deliver vocational training in communities. TAFE criterion relating to course numbers removed so that specialist training can be delivered selectively to smaller groups and
- Focus on Combating Drug and Alcohol Form partnerships with school for Initiatives to reduce and educate community on drugs and alcohol abuse

5.9.2 Initiatives

- Provide breakfast, transportation, and counselling services to retain students in school;
- Regional strategy (regional partnership agreement);
- Focus on rewarding the youth who are doing the right thing
- Bringing sporting role models into schools to promote supplement school environment, e.g. for expelled and suspended students

5.9.3 Support

- Department of Education Science and Training (DEST)
- Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Department of Community Services (DoCS)
- ▶ TAFE
- Schools

5.10 Culture and Wellbeing

A focus on sustaining our culture is the foundation for improving and maintaining our wellbeing. The following points summarise the themes of the Community Action Plans with respect to Culture and Wellbeing:

5.10.1 Key Action Areas

- Respect and Recognition All people to have an improved understanding, knowledge and respect for Indigenous culture. Cultural Awareness training is a must for local service providers.
- Cultural Significance Sites of cultural, spiritual and environmental significance are protected from inappropriate development and are maintained. Documentation of oral histories are developed and maintained. Access to pastoral lands to practice and maintain Aboriginal cultural traditions are negotiated.
- Cultural Centre Establishment of cultural centre and cultural festival, celebrations, A place of song, dance, story, poems and laughter, establishing camps with view to healing spiritual and emotional wounds.
- Support Aboriginal artists have local support to market their work and Aboriginal arts authenticity labelling system is used in all retail outlets in the region.

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- Maintaining Culture Continue involving Elders in organised supported activities aimed at maintaining the Aboriginal value of respect in young people and connecting young people to the spirit of the land.
- Responsible Living Educate community members in responsible living.

5.10.2 Initiatives

- Clearly define what traditional ownership is and promote this;
- Officially acknowledge the traditional owners;
- Promote "Journey to Respect" Elders to run programs for specific groups to encourage cultural awareness;
- Identify specific community initiatives and promote them across the region; and
- Identify the resources necessary to achieve them.

5.10.3 Support

- CWP
- Elders
- Local Court and
- Juvenile Justice



6. Conclusion and Strategic Direction

The following are areas that have been identified as recurring themes across each of the Action Items.

- ▶ Long term focus for funding and outcomes (extend to 5 years);
- Evaluation and monitoring of involvement/performance/success of government and non-government organisations and programs;
- Mentoring for long term management, and not just day-to-day operations;
- Follow-up of initiatives and programs;
- Appropriate funding for Community and Community Working Party participants, matched to involvement and expectations.

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly will continue to work at regional level through coordination and partnerships with government and non-government organisations, to initiate and develop the items in this plan, centred by these guiding themes.

It will use the initiatives explored and developed in this document as a framework to drive actions and projects, to be implemented by the sixteen Community Working Parties, in line with the priorities outlined in their individual Action Plans.



7. References

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Department of Aboriginal Affairs www.daa.nsw.gov.au

Department of Education Science and Training, NSW, www.dest.gov.au

Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2003-2005

Two Ways Together Report 2005: the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012



Appendix A Community Action Plans



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