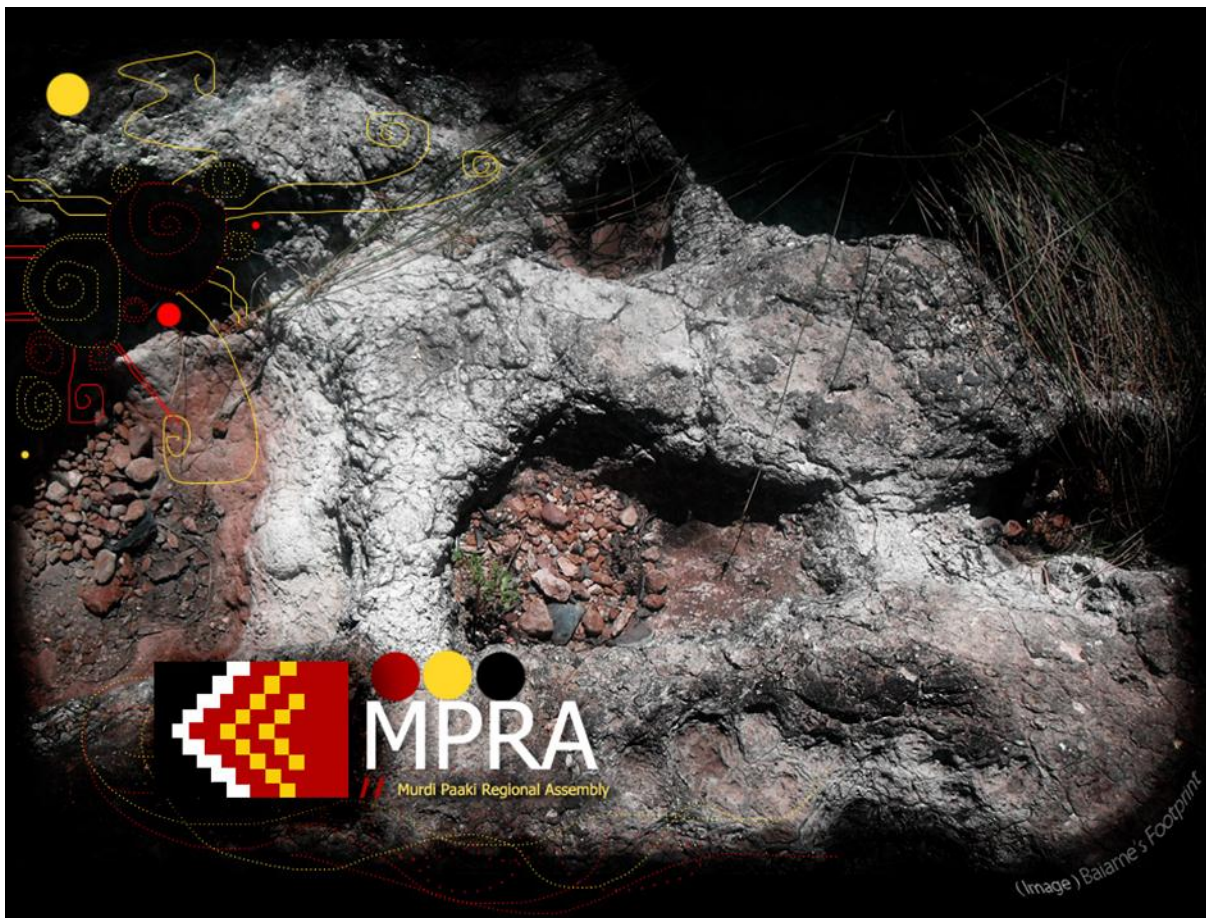# Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

Regional Plan

Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly would like to acknowledge the support of DEEWR and thanks them for their commitment to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.

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Contents

ACRONYMS

Acronym	
AA NSW	Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEO	Aboriginal Engagement Officer
AHO	Aboriginal Housing Office
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAP(s)	Community Action Plan(s)
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CWP	Community Working Party
DADHC	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEC	NSW Department of Education and Communities
DoH	Department of Housing
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Aboriginal Affairs
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LIP	Local Implementation Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
MPRA	Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
NGO	Non-government organisation
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NSW	New South Wales
RJCP	Remote Jobs and Communities Program
ROC	Regional Operations Centre
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreement
RSDC	Remote Service Delivery Co-ordinator
WATAAS	Western Aboriginal Tenant Advice Advocacy Service

Chairpersons Address

Welcome to the Murdi Paaki Regional Plan.

The plan outlines the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Murdi Paaki region, it outlines what the priorities are and emerging regional themes. This plan has been developed with, by and for Aboriginal people. This has been done through Community Working Parties internally at the community level and externally at the regional level with the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

Culture and Heritage is in every community the major priority for the region. The communities of the Murdi Paaki region have a focus to encourage the return of traditional values into how it conducts business with stakeholders and motivate to adopt these procedures when conducting business in the Murdi Paaki region. Cultural appreciation is not enough, acceptance and a will to participate in traditional ways and systems will allow for the pathway to the future to be one of prosperity.

We have worked closely with both FaHCSIA and Aboriginal Affairs NSW to build in a monitoring and evaluation framework that will capture and measure the performance of agencies, the performance and impacts of projects, this will also allow us to build evidence of what works well and what fails, to enable us to better target our resources to priority issues.

It would be remiss of me if I didn't acknowledge the high level support we've been extended, from Ms Shannon Barnes Boomalli Consulting, who has done a tremendous job in capturing the intent of the MPRA and CWP's through discussions and negotiations that have been done over the last 12 months across the region.

On behalf of the MPRA, we look forward to working with the many stakeholders in the region to implement the plan, which we believe strongly, will improve the outcomes for our people.

Sam Jeffries
Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Chairperson

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 CWP's are:

Bourke	Brewarrina	Broken Hill	Cobar
Collarenebri	Coonamble	Dareton	Enngonia
Goodooga	Gulargambone	Ivanhoe	Lightning Ridge
Menindee	Walgett	Weilmoringle	Wilcannia

MPRA and its membership of Community Working Parties, CWPs, form the governance framework that provides strategic engagement and co-ordination from Australian and NSW Governments and service providers for the delivery of services and programs against priorities determined by Aboriginal people through a comprehensive planning process.

The MPRA is not a funding body, the Regional Assembly facilitates high-level negotiations for government schemes, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of these and by also encouraging and promoting good governance, responsible leadership and empowerment.

1.2   Community Working Parties

Many of the Aboriginal communities within the Murdi Paaki region have chosen to form Community Working Party's (CWP), which are designed to represent the different demographic groups and community organisations. Each CWP is bound by a Charter and Code of Conduct under which it operates under.

Community Working Parties provide communities with the ability to respond more effectively and efficiently to the community's requirements in a holistic manner. The CWP's provide a direct link to the Regional Assembly from individuals and/or community groups and vice versa. The CWP is instrumental in the link to then offer knowledge, advice and support to the community's service providers. This relationship ensures resources are being responsibly utilised and service provision aligned with community requirements.

CWP's are not funding bodies. They work closely with government agencies and organisations to implement the strategic directions set out in their Action Plan's, through specific initiatives and projects. The following sections give a brief overview of the strategic direction desired by the individual communities. (Please refer to individual Community Action Plans for further detail).

1.3   Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Philosophy

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the peak representative structure that represents the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 16 communities across Western NSW. MPRA's governance model promotes the practice of good governance, responsible leadership and empowerment; this is a legacy of the former Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council.   The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has developed a Charter of Governance[1] and this document allows the Regional Assembly to function to its fullest capacity with transparency whilst achieving outcomes for the community's it represents.

1.4   Vision

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly's vision is to;

> *"Establish Aboriginal jurisdiction in the Murdi Paaki region based on recognition of our human rights as Aboriginal peoples, political, social and cultural respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian society, and equitable participation in the economic development of the region"*

1.5   Strategic actions

The MPRA will achieve this by:

- ➢ Exercising our rights and freedoms as Aboriginal people
- ➢ The good governance and administration of our regional governing body, its ancillary organisation, and State and Commonwealth agencies
- ➢ Working in partnership with governments at all levels
- ➢ Strengthening and preserving the living standards of our people
- ➢ Working together towards self-sufficiency in all of our activities and in each other's interest
- ➢ Improving the access of our people to services and the way they are delivered

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[1] http://www.mpra.com.au/

1.6 Values

Unity, loyalty and respect are fundamental principles of the MPRA. The members of the regional governing body are committed to carrying out duties with professionalism and integrity. Members conduct is guided by the following values:

> - Honesty
> - Integrity
> - Accountability to our communities
> - Transparency
> - Selflessness
> - Professionalism
> - Commitment
> - Leadership
> - Confidentiality

The MPRA members acknowledge their responsibilities to maintain the public trust given to the Assembly and work diligently and with integrity to ensure the use of the influence gained as office holders advance the common good for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Murdi Paaki region.

An underlying principle of the code of conduct will be the separation of advocacy and policy formulation from management and implementation of service delivery and for performance outcomes within an agreed accountability framework.

The MPRA commits to forging practical solutions and realistic measures to free Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the poverty trap and break the generational cycle that hands down a legacy of social dysfunction.

1.7 Core goals

The MPRA goals are to:

> - Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate in all decision making that affects their lives
> - Connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with all service delivery arrangements
> - Have a legislative regime which reinforces the connection between Aboriginal participation and accountable service delivery by government agencies to provide an authoritative and consistent framework of shared responsibility and accountability
> - Influence and control the way policies and services are implemented

1.8   Purpose of Plan

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan was originally developed in 2006 with the core purpose of providing Aboriginal people with the opportunity to actively participate in the development of the region. The MPRA expresses the resolve of Aboriginal people in Murdi Paaki, to provide influence and control to the way policies and services are implemented and work with steadfast determination to deliver upon this. The MPRA Chairperson and members, which is made of the Community Working Party Chairpersons have used the plan to solidify relationships with key Government agencies and non-government service providers to benefit community in a coordinated approach with partnerships and funding initiatives. The MPRA will continue to create opportunity and mechanisms to promote joint planning and improve and streamline service delivery. This is imperative so that appropriate services are accessible to Aboriginal Australians, their families and communities.

The Regional Plan will continue to be used by the Regional Assembly to influence the development of policies and programs that affect Aboriginal people within the region.

"Community governance is the tool that returns responsibility to us".

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Primary Building Block
Culture and Heritage

"The oldest civilisation in the oldest land."

Survival or revival of culture is an extremely important focus for Aboriginal communities in Australia. The impacts of early settlement has caused wide spread cultural erosion, taking not only tangible heritage but also customs, beliefs, language and values.

The effects of these impacts are still widely apparent in today's society for Aboriginal people. Issues that are faced should not be identified without connecting back to a past that determined this generational impact on Aboriginal people. Enforced policies and stereotypes that inflicted segregation and hardship which have led to loss of culture and heritage include;

- Dispossession of land – loss of assets and management of
- Stolen generation – disconnection to family, culture, community and irrevocable hurts and social disrepute from mainstream society
- Lack of access to education - leading to poor literacy and numeracy
- Introduction of foreign substances – alcohol and substance abuse
- Poor health - leading to high mortality rates
- Lack of adequate housing – attributing to health issues, social and other cultural problems
- Induced poverty – afflicting all culturally, physically, emotionally and generationally
- Segregation, racism and dissemination

Because of this the Australian Government has identified areas of priority to address the past issues and the current problems they attribute to. These are known as the "building blocks" (refer page 45 – 48).

It is important to note that in the traditional culture of Aboriginal people all of these areas are over-ridden, to one value, one core manifestation that encompasses all aspects of Aboriginal life – *Culture & Heritage*.

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly members, Community Working Parties and community members all identify that governing above the building blocks, is *Culture and Heritage*.

Culture and Heritage incorporates the environment, the tangible objects and physical attributes that are part of Aboriginal history and its future. But, more importantly to Aboriginal people it also encompasses values, kinship systems, ways of learning and teaching, communicating and decision making.

It is because of this vital importance to every part of Aboriginal life that this value sits abreast all other identified areas of priority and shows dominant in all sixteen Murdi Paaki communities as the prominent priority of focus intrinsically connecting everything.

The approach and responsibility of the MPRA to the Murdi Paaki region reflects the capacity, experience and wisdom of those engaged, as reflected at a local level with those voluntarily involved with the Community Working Parties. It has and will continue to be the focus of these two entwined governance structures to best serve Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region. This governance structure requires on-going support, engagement and participation from all levels of service to set the foundations for a strong and prosperous future for Aboriginal people in the region.

To place Culture and Heritage against the core responsibilities of the Regional Assembly (and at a local level the Community Working Parties) requires NGO's and Government agencies to acknowledge and respect the position of influence and responsibility of the MPRA and the local CWP's. All stakeholders conducting business with the region and its sixteen focus communities will be held accountable at the varying levels of engagement/process and evaluation to provide a holistic approach and substantial outcomes. Stakeholders will be encouraged to recognise the strength and capacity of the MPRA (and CWP's) and continue to develop strategies, programs and processes that reflect the requirements and expectations of the Aboriginal community based on culture and heritage core value systems.

Culture and Heritage systems will set the precedent for all stakeholders to engage, implement, monitor and report against critical areas of the Regional Plan and will underpin procedures for this to occur at a local level.

~ First Lesson ~

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[2] Local Artist - Brett Garling – "First Lesson" Bronze Statue

Overview of the Murdi Paaki Region

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 covers approximately 297,000 square kilometres of the far west of New South Wales. The region constitutes more than forty per cent of the total landmass of New South Wales. This is equal to approximately four per cent of the total Australian land mass.

The region comprises a variety of Aboriginal 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 twenty-three communities in the region which have substantial inhabitants of Aboriginal people.

The communities 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.

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. Places of significant heritage importance to Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region; 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 and the Brewarrina fisheries. Other sites which relate to Baiame the Creator, at Bora Ground in Collymongle near Collarenebri there are some remaining carved trees, The Mission site at Brewarrina , Menindee Lakes, Cuddie Springs, Narran Lake as well as some sites in the Bendigo and Warrata areas.

3.3 Aboriginal Cultural Groups of the region

Early settlement and 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.

3.4 Regional Economy

The regional economy still requires further support and individualised support to help support individuals and community in the economic development sector.

Primary Industries remain one of the largest contributors to the regional economy in the Murdi Paaki region. The Western Catchment is the largest catchment in NSW, covering some 230,000 square kilometres. It includes the Barwon-Darling, Culgoa, Paroo, Warrego, Narran, Bokhara and Birrie River catchments. It takes in significant portions of the Bourke, Brewarrina, Central Darling, Cobar and Walgett Shires and the Unincorporated Area.

The Catchment is predominantly leasehold land, administered under the Western Lands Act 1901 by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. There are more than 630 pastoral and agricultural holdings. Predominant land uses in this semi-arid zone are grazing, dryland cropping, irrigated cotton production, mining, tourism and natural conservation. Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Broken Hill are the major service centres.[3]

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[3] http://www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au/Pages/Ourcatchment.html

In the region one of the biggest employers and industries is the mining sector. The employment and training opportunities are however, limited and the percentage of Aboriginal employment low. Mining is estimated to account for 23.6per cent of the total [regional] economy, almost ten times the state average of 2.5per cent.

Projections based on industry trends and economic models show the fastest growing industries over the next 5 years are expected to be skills-intensive industries:

- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Education and training
- Health care and social assistance
- Mining
- Building and Construction

Statistics are unable to be accurately sourced pertaining how many Aboriginal owned businesses are in the Murdi Paaki region.

The National Partnership Agreement on Aboriginal Economic Participation seeks to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people to find and retain employment and connect more Aboriginal people with employment and the real economy. Its strategies and commitments are ongoing until 2013 and provide strategies that are endorsed and supported in partnership by the State of NSW and the Commonwealth of Australia.

3.5   Population

As a region, Murdi Paaki faces some difficulties in accurately displaying population statistics. The ABS advises that due to remoteness of some communities that data collection includes fictitious statistics to ensure individual confidentiality is maintained. The transient nature of the Aboriginal people in the region also cause in-efficiencies in census numbers and therefore information gathered should not be relied on for its accuracy. The Western region however has an 8.3 per cent Aboriginal population, compared to 2per cent in NSW as a whole and boasts some of the highest Aboriginal populations in the state.

The following table, sourced from 2011 Census ABS data bases[4] and community profile reports showing population in the 16 communities in the Murdi Paaki Region, except Dareton/Wentworth – Statistics datacube 2006.

Population	Aboriginal Population	Non-Aboriginal Population	Aboriginal population as a per cent
Bourke[4]	793	1672	32.20%
Brewarrina[4]	762	492	60.80%
Broken Hill[4]	1405	17372	7.50%
Cobar[4]	606	4105	12.90%
Collarenebri[4]	252	263	42.10%
Coonamble[4]	809	515	32.90%
Dareton/Wentworth[4]	344	1441	18.40%
Enngonia[3]	56	154	26.50%
Goodooga[4]	213	125	63.40%
Gulargambone[4]	186	396	32.00%
Ivanhoe	80	120	40.04%
Lightning Ridge	493	1999	19.80%
Menindee	178	271	39.70%
Walgett	1003	1264	44.20%
Weilmoringle	64	91	40.80%
Wilcannia	474	352	57.50%

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[4] http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/census?opendocument&navpos=10

3.6   Age and Sex

The Murdi Paaki region continues to display a young profile, continuing with trends outlined in 2007.[5] The Aboriginal population has a younger age structure than the non-Aboriginal population, which can make direct comparisons misleading. For instance, in 2010 only 5 per cent of the Aboriginal population aged 15 or more was 65 or older. The corresponding proportion was 17 per cent for the non-Aboriginal population.

Another reason for caution when comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal estimates are the geographical distribution of the two populations. One quarter of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over lived in Remote areas in 2010. In comparison less than 2 per cent of non-Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over lived in Remote areas in 2010. Population projections from the ABS suggest that the youth population will fall by over 25,000 over the next 10 years. The biggest growth will be in the 25-34 year age group and the 45-64 year age group.

3.7   Education

Education is a large focus of the Government and rightly so, it covers basically from birth to death and plays an integral part of the Closing the Gap priorities. The Government's vision for the early childhood sector remains simple but ambitious – that children are born healthy and have access to the support, care and education that will equip for life and learning that children start school as happy, confident learners. Research shows, "prime times" or "windows of opportunity" exist more prominently in the first three to six years of life. There is now a lot of evidence on the importance of the early years and it shows how vital the early years are for developing the skills necessary for future workforce participation, productivity and social inclusion, and for tackling intergenerational disadvantage.

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[5] http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/926F94C187EA27CACA2578BD0013E52C?opendocument

RELATIVE AVERAGE GROWTH

MURDI PAAKI AVERAGE GROWTH										
	READING - 2010						READING - 2011			
Aboriginal	State Ab	MP	Diff Ab	Diff All		Aborigina	State Ab	MP	Diff Ab	Diff All
Yr 5	81.7	74.4	-7.3	-9.4		Yr 5	75	74.8	-0.2	2.6
Yr 7	53.6	85.3	31.7	31.1		Yr 7	43.6	54.1	10.5	13.4
Yr 9	30.2	37.7	7.5	2.6		Yr 9	38	38.3	0.3	1
	NUMERACY - 2010						NUMERACY - 2011			
Aboriginal	State Ab	MP	Diff Ab	Diff All		Aborigina	State Ab	MP	Diff Ab	Diff All
Yr 5	82.4	71.1	-11.3	-18		Yr 5	93.4	99.6	6.2	5.3
Yr 7	55.9	62.5	6.6	0.6		Yr 7	39.6	45.8	6.2	-1
Yr 9	36.3	36.5	0.2	-2.6		Yr 9	37.3	34.7	-2.6	-4.9

The table supplied by NSW Department of Education and Communities - SMART Data, shows the relative average growth of students in the Murdi Paaki region. The information shows distinct areas of attention.

- Average growth in Year 5 reading show improvement, however overall results for Murdi Paaki region were low.
- Average growth in Year 7 reading has been consistently well above the average growth of Aboriginal students across the State and above average growth for all students across the State.
- Average growth in Year 9 reading is consistently above the average growth of Aboriginal students across the State and above average growth for all students across the State.
- Average growth in Year 5 numeracy was poor in 2010 but improved greatly in 2011.
- Average growth in Year 7 numeracy is consistently higher than for all Aboriginal students across the state but similar to that for all students.
- Average growth in Year 9 numeracy is low in the Murdi Paaki region

This table shows the difference in the gap between the average scores (from 2008-2010) of Aboriginal students in Murdi Paaki Schools and:

- All Aboriginal students across the State
- All students across the State

NAPLAN DIMENSION	DIFFERENCE IN AVERAGE SCORE	
	v All Aboriginal	v All Students
Year 3 Reading	2.7	4.6
Year 3 Numeracy	-7.3	-10.6
Year 5 Reading	-6.5	-10.1
Year 5 Numeracy	15.8	13.3
Year 7 Reading	-2.2	-5.4
Year 7 Numeracy	-8.1	-6.5
Year 9 Reading	8.2	3.8
Year 9 Numeracy	11.2	16.1

Scores in green indicate the narrowing of the performance gap between 2008-2011.

Scores in red indicate the widening of the performance gap between 2008-2011.

[6]The above statistics reflect areas of concern for education in the Murdi Paaki Region are Year 9 and Year 5 Numeracy. While a relative average growth in 2011 shows promise the average performance gap is still widening.

Apparent school retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander full-time students continue to increase with more students studying until Year 12. The apparent school retention rate from Year 7/8 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 47per cent in 2010, up from 36per cent in 2000.

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still less likely than non-Aboriginal students to complete their final years of schooling (47per cent compared with 79per cent in 2010), the gap between the two groups has narrowed. For Year 10, the difference between apparent retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal students decreased by 10 percentage points between 2000 and 2010. Differences in the Year 12 apparent retention rate decreased by 5 percentage points over the same period.

Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki Region are less likely to hold qualifications at Certificate III/IV or higher than non- aboriginal persons in the area. Contributing factors to this is geographical locations and availability of tertiary education; however the major contributor is early disengagement from education at a secondary level.

[6]NSW Department of Education and Communities

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were fully engaged in work and/or study in 2008. Just over half (54per cent) of those aged 15–24 years were either working full-time, studying full-time, or both working and studying; up from 47per cent in 2002.

Higher levels of education attainment are associated with improved employment outcomes.

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years, 58per cent of those who had completed Year 12 were in full-time employment in 2008, compared with 24per cent of those who had left school at Year 9 or below. Similarly, 60per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years who had completed a non-school qualification of Certificate III or above were in full-time employment compared with 29per cent of those without a non-school qualification.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE IN FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT, by highest year of school completed (a)—2008
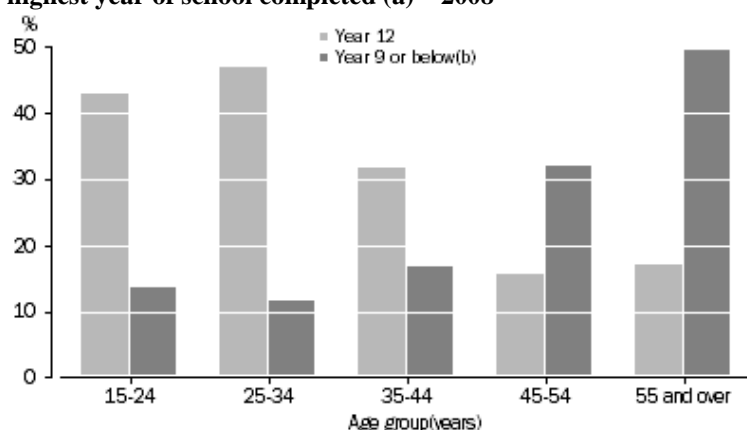
(a) Excludes persons still attending secondary school.
(b) Includes persons who never attended school. [7]

The above statistics show the importance that educational outcomes have on the future of Aboriginal communities and why education is a key focus for the Australian Government in Closing the Gap targets. As the statistics show, completing year 12 significantly increases their chance of participating in the workforce.

3.8   Employment

Over the past year the Western region has enjoyed rising employment and falling unemployment. However, employment growth hasn't been quite as strong as for NSW as a whole and the unemployment rate remains above the state average. [8]

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[7] Source: 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey .

[8] Source: ABS, Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2009. Source: ABS Education and Work Australia, May 2009, catalogue 6227.0

Employment growth by industry, ('000s) Western Region, 2 years to Feb 2011

| Industry	Value
Wholesale Trade	4.7
Education and Training	4.4
Administrative and Support	3.0
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate	2.9
Construction	2.2
Retail Trade	0.9
Professional, Scientific, Technical	0.9
Information Media and Telecomms	0.8
Health Care and Social	0.7
Financial and Insurance	0.4
Public Administration	0.3
Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste	0.0
Accommodation and Food	-0.1
Other Services	-0.1
Mining	-0.1
Manufacturing	-0.4
Transport, Postal, storage	-2.8
Arts and Recreation	-3.0
Agriculture etc.	-4.0

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal people of NSW (aged 15 years and over), is 20.9per cent compared to the non-Aboriginal rate of 4.5per cent in 2009. In 2010 there was an estimated 36,600 unemployed people over the age of 15 years and the unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population of Australia remained steady at 18per cent.

The Western region has the second highest rates of youth unemployment in regional NSW at 15.7per cent. One of the main reasons for the discrepancy in UE rates between Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal person is the gap in education. Statistics show that having a Certificate III or higher qualification more than halves the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for persons with no post-school qualification is over 8per cent. For those with a Certificate III or above it is around 4per cent. Population projections from the ABS suggest that the youth population will fall by over 25,000 over the next 10 years. The biggest growth will be in the 25-34 year age group and the 45-64 year age group. What this means is that youth will increasingly be in demand in the labour market. The combination of youth and a qualification at Certificate III or above will give Aboriginal jobseekers a strong competitive advantage in the labour market over the next decade.

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[9] Source: ABS labour Force Survey

Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal unemployment rates, NSW
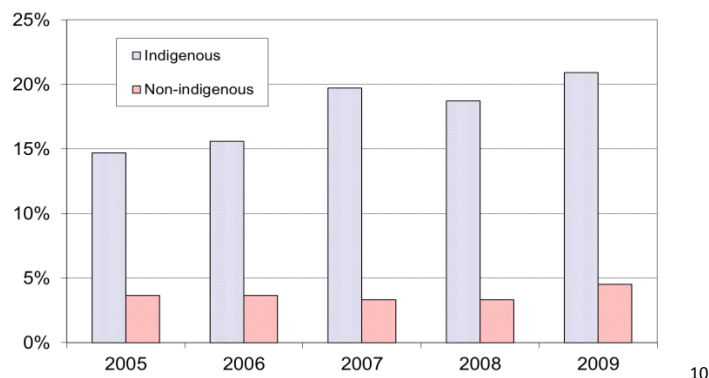
3.9   Health

In the period from 2006 to 2010 in New South Wales Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths were registered in New South Wales at 2,903. Statistics show that the Closing the Gap targets for health remain ambitious. [11]Throughout regional NSW mortality rates for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were higher than those for the non-Aboriginal population in each age group. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality rate was nearly twice the non-Aboriginal rate also, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality rate (aged 1-4 years) was more than twice the non-Aboriginal rate.

Chronic diseases, and in particular cardiovascular disease, are the biggest single killers of Aboriginal peoples and an area where the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health equality gap is most apparent.

People living in rural and remote areas generally have worse health than people living in regional or metropolitan areas. This is a result of several factors including socio-economic disadvantage, access to a limited number of health care providers, poor personal health management, greater exposure to injury risks and geographic isolation.

Mortality rates of people living in Western NSW LHD vary by LGA. Differences usually reflect the level of remoteness and the proportion of Aboriginal people living in the LGAs. Generally, people living within the LHD have significantly higher levels of potentially avoidable deaths, deaths attributed to smoking and alcohol and deaths from cardiovascular disease compared to NSW.

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[10] Source: ABS Cat. 6287.0 - Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2009

[11] 4704.0 - The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010

The leading causes for hospitalisation for residents of Western NSW LHD between 2009 and 2010 were factors influencing health – renal dialysis (13per cent), injury and poisoning (12.2per cent), digestive system diseases (9.9per cent), factors influencing health – other (9.2per cent) and symptoms, signs and abnormal findings (7.4per cent).

Western NSW LHD have significantly higher rates of hospitalisation attributable to high body mass, smoking and alcohol and hospitalisation for cardiovascular and respiratory disease. According the National Diabetes Services Scheme, the rates of diabetes are very high in the remote LGAs and high in several other LGAs.

National statistics show in 2008, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households could locally access a range of medical and hospital services when needed.

- 62per cent of households could access Aboriginal health care services
- 69per cent could access hospitals
- 83per cent could access health/medical clinics
- 82per cent could access pharmacies/chemists.

Aboriginal people continue to experience homelessness at a disproportionate level across Australia. High rates of mental health and wellbeing issues also confront Aboriginal communities in Australia. The need to improve the mental health and emotional and social well-being of Aboriginal communities is clear and research showed a need for new approaches to achieve this.

3.10 Housing and Infrastructure

Historically, home ownership for Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region sits well below the non-Aboriginal statistics. Slightly more than 28per cent of Aboriginal households either own or have purchased their own dwelling compared to 72per cent of non-Aboriginal home owners.

In the region there are approximately one thousand five hundred units of community/public housing. Adequate housing is an on-going issue for Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region and areas of concern are;

- Adequate repairs and maintenance
- House ageing
- Over-crowding
- Wait lists
- Safe and healthy homes

Currently in the Murdi Paaki region, there are currently twenty-three Aboriginal housing providers across eighteen communities with approximately one thousand five hundred units of community/ public housing.

As of June 2011 Aboriginal Housing Office Western Region has:

- 1,284 dwellings owned by Aboriginal Housing Office
- 1,014 dwellings owned by Aboriginal Housing Office managed by Housing New South Wales
- 270 dwellings owned by Aboriginal Housing Office managed by Aboriginal Community Housing Providers or Community Housing Providers
- 70 Aboriginal Community Housing Providers
- 1,723 Aboriginal Community Housing dwellings.
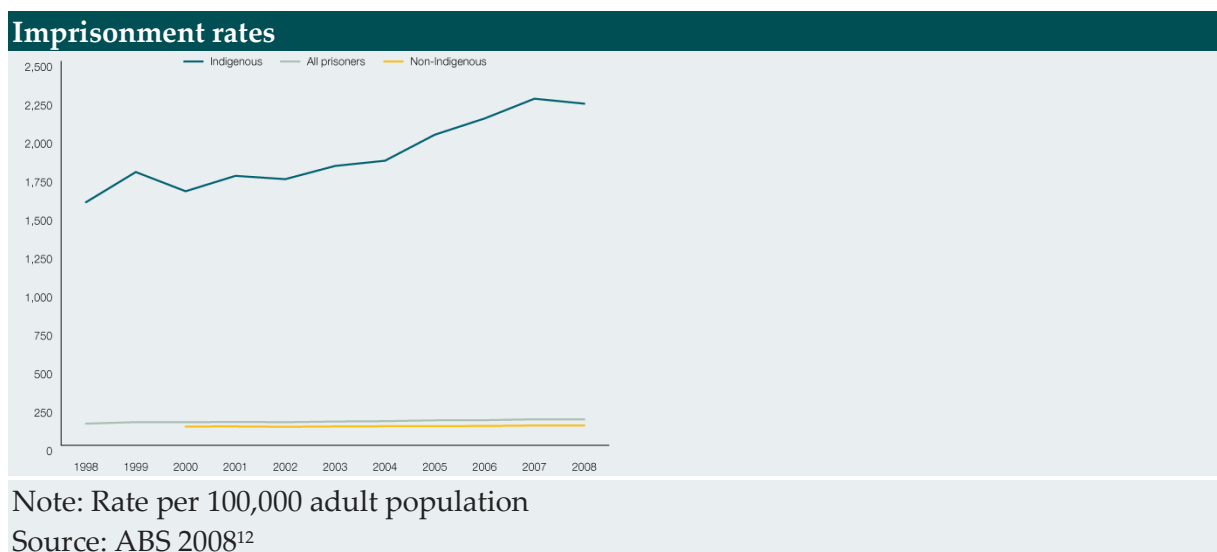
3.11   Law & Justice

According to the ABS, Murdi Paaki as a region is the most disadvantaged area in NSW and nationally. The Murdi Paaki region has much higher offending levels for Indigenous people than as measured by local court appearances, with a rate that is twice that of Sydney (Cunneen 2002:17). Similarly, victimization rates in the region are also much higher for Aboriginal people than anywhere else in the state. The victimization rate per 1000 of Indigenous population living in Murdi Paaki was 255 compared to 42 in Sydney and 45 in Queanbeyan. Thus, an Aboriginal person in Murdi Paaki is six times more likely to be a victim of crime than an Aboriginal person living in Sydney.

VICTIMS OF PHYSICAL OR THREATENED VIOLENCE

- In 2002, about one-quarter (24per cent) of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (26per cent of males and 23per cent of females), nearly double the overall rate reported in 1994 (13per cent) (ABS 2004).
- One-third (33per cent) of young Indigenous people (aged 15-24 years) were a victim of violence in 2002 (ABS 2004).
- Indigenous people who had been removed from their natural family were almost twice as likely as those who had not been removed from their natural family to have been a victim of violence (38per cent compared with 23per cent).
- Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had been a victim of violence, the most commonly reported neighbourhood/community problem was theft (51per cent) followed by illicit drugs (44per cent), alcohol (44per cent) and problems involving youths (43per cent).
- Indigenous people who reported victimisation were more likely than those who had not reported being a victim of violence to have experienced one or more life stressors (94per cent compared with 79per cent).

Between 2000 and 2008, the incarceration rate for Aboriginal Australians increased by 34.5 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008). In 2000, the incarceration rate was 1,653 prisoners per 100,000 Aboriginal adult populations, which increased to 2,223 prisoners per 100,000 Aboriginal adult populations in 2008. The increase in incarceration rates for Aboriginal people was almost seven times that of non-Aboriginal people in the same period. In 2000, Aboriginal people were 13.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Aboriginal people and this rose to 17.2 times more likely in 2008.

Imprisonment rates

Note: Rate per 100,000 adult population
Source: ABS 2008[12]

Many factors affect those entering or subject to crime. All identified building closing the gap targets can place significant changes on Law & Justice statistics if improved upon. Significant studies have been conducted to show impacts of different social constraints. These are listed below;

[13]Education Impacts

There is a large body of research showing a close relationship between poor school performance, early school leaving and self-reported/officially recorded involvement in crime (Blumstein et al. 1986; Baker 1998; Maguin & Loeber 1996; National Crime Prevention 1999). Whether this is because of poor school performance/early school leaving increases the risk of offending, or because some other factor (e.g. low academic ability) causes both, is unclear (Maguin & Loeber 1996). Measures that improve school performance and/or retention, however, have been shown to reduce the risk of juvenile involvement in crime (MacKenzie 2002).

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[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2008. Prisoners in Australia. ABS cat. no. 4517.0. Canberra: ABS.
[13] Attorney General's Department of NSW

Unemployment Impacts

Studies tracking the behaviour of individuals over time generally found a strong relationship between unemployment and crime, particularly where offenders from low socio-economic status backgrounds are concerned (Farrington et al. 1986; Good, Pirog-Good & Sickles 1986; Thornberry & Christensen 1984; Fagan & Freeman 1999). The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme was one response to the chronically high Indigenous unemployment rate. CDEP scheme participants have been found to be less likely to be arrested than Indigenous persons who are unemployed (Office of Evaluation and Audit 1997). This scheme has now ceased.

Family disruption/dissolution Impacts

Hunter (2001) found that Indigenous Australians who were taken away from their natural family were at significantly higher risk of arrest. Although no other study appears to have examined this issue, Hunter's finding is consistent with other research showing that early childhood trauma increases the risk of juvenile involvement in crime (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). A number of studies have also shown that children in sole-parent families are at heightened risk of involvement in crime, particularly where the sole caregiver is poor and/or lacks a close friend, relative or neighbour (Weatherburn & Lind 2001).

Neighbourhood problems

There is very little research into the contribution of neighbourhoods to crime, but Weatherburn and Lind (2001) found that juveniles who are poorly supervised by their parents are more likely to become involved in crime if they live in a crime prone neighbourhood than if they live in a non-crime-prone neighbourhood. This finding was attributed to the greater influence of delinquent peers in crime prone neighbourhoods. A number of studies have found that neighbourhoods with a high percentage of unsupervised peer groups generally have higher rates of involvement in crime (Pratt & Cullen 2005).

Economic stress

Low socio-economic status and poverty have long been known to be strong correlates of both juvenile and adult involvement in crime (Blumstein et al. 1986). For a while it was thought that this correlation simply reflected bias in the exercise of police discretion.

The above contributing factors result in the startling below statistics for Aboriginal people;

- 26 per cent Percentage of the prison population in Australia is Indigenous although Indigenous people make up as little as 2.5per cent of the Australian population.
- An Aboriginal person is 14 times more likely to be locked up than non-Indigenous Australians
- 56 per cent of juveniles detained in Australia are Indigenous
- 70 per cent of youth in prison have been sexually assaulted as children
- 48 per cent increase of Indigenous imprisonment rate for NSW between 2001 and 2008
- An Aboriginal person is seven times more likely to be the victim of a homicide than a non-Aboriginal person. One in 10 homicide victims is Aboriginal.
- 33 per cent of people involved in police custody incidents are Aboriginal.
- 92 per cent of Australia's Aboriginal prison population is male.
- 75 per cent of Aboriginal people return to NSW jails after 11 months.
- 50 per cent of non-Indigenous inmates return to jail after an average of 13 months.
- The average sentence length for Indigenous prisoners is 3.6 years (non-Indigenous: 5.3).
- 75 per cent of Aboriginal detainees are placed in custody before any finding of guilt, sometimes because family circumstances will not allow them to meet bail conditions. Many of the charges do not even carry a custodial penalty.
- Average number of Indigenous people being arrested and taken into custody every week in NSW is 300 minimum
- 10 per cent Percentage of Aboriginal children who have a family member who has spent time in jail.

3.12   Culture & Heritage

Aboriginal cultures today reflect both traditional elements and the influence of non-Aboriginal cultures. One of the primary sources of culture for younger generations is to spend time with Elders.

Elders are important members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and are often knowledge keepers of their people's history, stories, culture and language. In 2008, almost one-third (31per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 3–14 years spent at least one day a week with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader or Elder.

Children living in remote areas were more likely to spend time with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader or Elder, with close to half (49per cent) spending at least one day a week in their company. In comparison, 22per cent of children living in major cities and 28per cent of those living in regional areas spent at least one day a week with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader or Elder. Two-thirds (67per cent) of children living in major cities spent no time with, or did not have available, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader or Elder.

TIME SPENT WITH LEADER OR ELDER (a), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 3–14 years—2008[14]
(a) Number of days spent with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader or Elder each week.
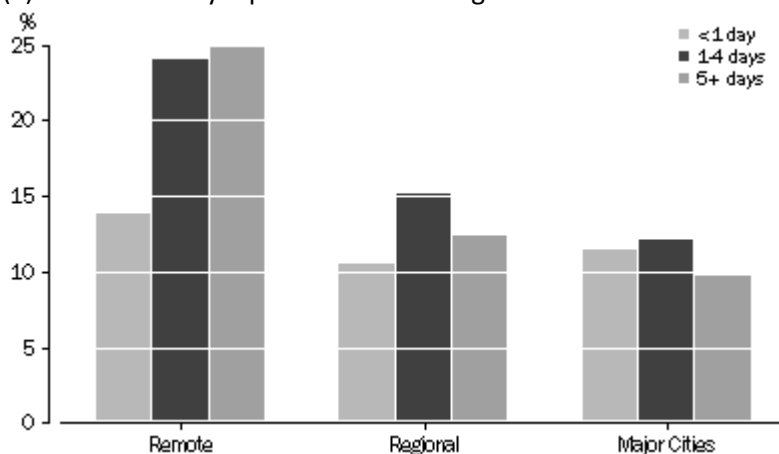
Older Aboriginal peoples (over 45 years) are more likely to speak an Aboriginal language than younger Aboriginal peoples. (Of those Aboriginal peoples aged 45 years and over, 13per cent speak an Aboriginal language, compared with 10per cent of 0-14 year olds); Aboriginal languages are more likely to be spoken in the centre and north of Australia than in the south. The 2006 Census reported:

- 86per cent of Aboriginal respondents reported speaking only English at home, which is about the same as the non-Aboriginal population (83per cent);

- 12per cent of Aboriginal respondents reported speaking an Aboriginal language at home; with three quarters of those recording they were also fluent in English;
- Many Aboriginal peoples are bilingual; however, the pattern varies with geographical location with 56per cent of respondents living in remote areas reported speaking an Aboriginal language, compared with one per cent in urban centres;

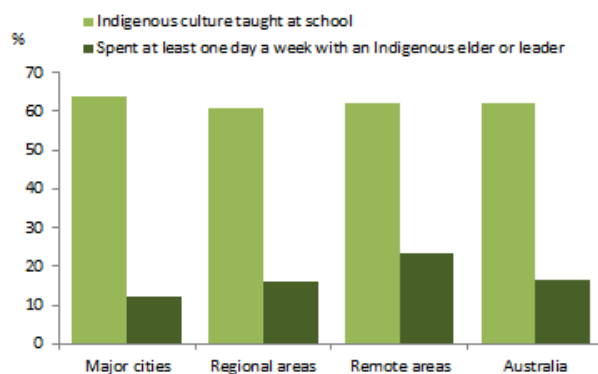[14] Source: 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

'Language is at the core of cultural identity. It links people to their land, it protects history through story and song, and it holds the key to kinship systems and to the intricacies of tribal law including spirituality, secret/sacred objects and rites. Language is a major factor in people retaining their cultural identity and many say 'if the Language is strong, then Culture is strong''. (ATSIC 2000, p.4)

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.

Many communities have a focus to encourage and provide culture and heritage learning opportunities and the below graph show the participation rates of cultural education within schools.

CULTURAL LEARNING, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 4–14 years, and remoteness areas–2008

	Major cities per cent	Regional areas per cent	Remote areas per cent	Australia per cent
Aboriginal culture taught at school	63.8	61.0	62.1	62.2
Spent at least one day a week with an Aboriginal elder or leader	12.3	16.0	23.6	16.6

Source: Table 06; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008 (cat. no. 4714.0)

Murdi Paaki Community Action Plan Summary

4.1 Bourke

The Bourke CWP has identified the following areas for attention:

- Culture & Heritage
- Education
- Economic & Employment participation and opportunity
- Governance & Leadership

The Bourke Aboriginal Community Working Party will focus on encouraging and endorsing seamless service provision for the Bourke community to establish and monitor the strategic directions of the Aboriginal people of Bourke. By encouraging a pro-active and community driven initiatives it will improve family and community safety, provide an avenue for programs focussed on victim support and streamline and improve child protection and preventative approaches for the Bourke Aboriginal community.

The Bourke Aboriginal Community Working Party see this as priority to set the foundation for the next generation and build a better future for Aboriginal people in Bourke. Government and NGO planning will be asked to improve the level of engagement of Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of activities for the Bourke community.

Another priority for the BACWP is to develop internally systems to evaluate, monitor and disseminate outcome data to the wider community.

4.2 Brewarrina (Ngemba)

The Brewarrina CWP focus will be on the following areas:

- Culture
- Youth
- Health
- Education

It is important to the Brewarrina Aboriginal community that youth are cared for and it is the vision of the community to provide a Youth Centre for children aged 12-18 year olds, similar to PCYC. This is an important step seen by the Brewarrina CWP to help reduce the amount of crime by as much as 60per cent in year 2015.

Brewarrina has the highest rate per capita in the state for renal dialysis. This unfortunate statistic brings two elements of focus for the Brewarrina community one being home assistance, for those receiving treatment, and the other education of the youth to build resistance, regarding Kidney and liver disorders.

Another focus for Brewarrina with youth is education. A focus on providing appropriate out of school training to enable more young people to obtain their higher school certificate and to increase participation (and completion) by the end of 2013.

4.3   Broken Hill

All identified areas are weighted the same in their importance to the community:

- Education
- Economic Development and Employment Opportunities
- Health
- Housing
- Law & Justice

Critical to the ability to achieve outcomes in their CAP, Broken Hill CWP identifies the need to implement a number of documents that will better support seamless and transparent services. These will allow the CWP to monitor and evaluate outcomes in the community ensuring it is driven by best practice, accountability and in-line with community needs.

The documents will include localised Cultural Training developed by CWP members, Cultural and Communication Protocols and Service Level Agreements for all Government, NGO's and other stakeholders engaging with the CWP on Aboriginal affairs.

By creating a foundation of mutual respect, transparency, accountability and appreciation through this process the environment of the CWP will provide strong family units and individuals that contribute to the progression of the CWP and the community.

The Broken Hill CWP feels this can only be achieved through nurturing all aspects of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage and creating an environment that encourages active and culturally appropriate participation from the wider community.

4.4 Cobar

The following identified areas of action have been outlined by the Cobar Aboriginal Community through the Cobar CWP for attention:

- Culture and Heritage
- Governance & Leadership
- Youth
- Employment and business development

The Cobar CWP would like to increase the wider community's awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture. This includes government, mining and private business sector. Improvement to the well-being of youth in the Aboriginal community of Cobar has been identified as a priority. Active planning for youth initiatives will see the employment of a local Youth Coordinator who will also work to reinvigorating the Murdi Paaki Young Leaders program in Cobar (when interest is generated and leaders come forward). The Cobar CWP requires a collective approach from Government, service providers and local community members to develop activities and forums that encourage healthy participation in community as well as promoting leadership and emotional well-being amongst the younger generation.

To develop a communication policy that encourages participation from local government and other established Aboriginal organisations, to ensure a better representative voice and to avoid duplication of the various bodies. It is also hoped to increase participation in identifying, planning and implementing activities and projects that address the priorities of the Cobar Aboriginal community.

4.5 Collarenebri

The Collarenebri CWP has identified the following areas as priority's:

- Culture & Heritage
- Schooling/Education
- Men & Women/Youth
- Health

Education is in the foreground to provide a foundation for future economic participation through employment after completing school. The primary focus is to support parents to become more engaged and pro-active in their children's school environment to provide a stable, supported and connected environment is provided to children. This in turn will improve retention rates of Collarenebri children attending years 11 & 12.

A focus on well-being will also further support life for the youth of Collarenebri by, building self-esteem, providing better health outcomes and build strength in local groups to work collaboratively.

To have a better life style and better health outcomes in the community for children, Elders and the wider community living in Collarenebri. Continuing to improve the delivery of health services and encouraging the community through various projects to participate in health programs. A focus will be specialist health care availability, accessibility and consistency of service provision.

4.6   Coonamble (Wungali)

Coonamble CWP has identified the following priority areas for focus in their community:

- Culture & Heritage
- Education
- Health
- Healthy Homes
- Law & Justice

The Coonamble CWP will focus on working with appropriate Government agencies to provide solutions to long waiting lists and overcrowding in the housing sector for Aboriginal people, by way of developing MOU's and partnership agreements with housing providers and work collaboratively to achieve outcomes to improve housing conditions.

The Coonamble CWP has experience and a strong commitment to providing opportunity for those in its community that are affected by crime. The Coonamble CWP will continue to develop and maintain relationships with all service providers in the Law & Justice sector to help gain positive outcomes to crime and provide the Aboriginal community with projects and localised solutions as per it's requirements.

The youth of Coonamble are a priority to the CWP who will have an emphasis on providing mentoring support programs to Aboriginal students and a focus on Aboriginal studies to learn culture and identity. Encouragement will be given to school's to provide Aboriginal studies into the curriculum and to support outcomes in school retention rates and participation to provide a pathway into employment and tertiary education. These areas will be addressed from pre-school through to secondary education.

The Coonamble CWP will continue to support the Combined Coonamble Health Service and will move towards implementing a Health Service Memorandum of Understanding and partnership agreement to better co-ordinate health services in the community. This will support localised health options and address the lack of transport facilities for Aboriginal community members to attend specialist appointments in larger hub centres.

4.7   Wentworth/Dareton

Comprises of Wentworth, Dareton, Gol Gol, Buronga and Namatjira communities.

Priorities for Dareton CWP:

- Housing
- Safe Communities
- Economic Development

The Dareton CWP has identified the following priorities within its community. Overarching these priorities is Culture and Heritage. The CWP as the community's representative body identify that individuals, families and communities require localised cultural identity support to connect back to culture as individuals, family unit and community. Ultimately this will impact on all of the identified Closing the Gap targets and provide a strong local representation that supports localised initiatives from NGO's and Government. The CWP see that a strong foundation of values and principles relating to the above increases the community's ability to move forward and lead by example in the actions required by the community.

The Dareton CWP will take on a proactive approach with housing providers to further develop a relationship with the CWP to ensure the private sector provide transparent information regarding, standards of housing and maintenance; schedule of notice on maintenance; rental prices and increase forecasts; over-crowding issues and a localised allocation of housing agreement. The CWP is committed to supporting a communication procedure with relevant stakeholders to ensure housing issues and requirements reflect the current local demographics. The collaboration of this would see the CWP and key stakeholders develop strategic actions through the Community Action Plan to "Build and Grow the Community".

Dareton CWP will encourage consistent and accountable family support from NGO's conducting business in their communities. It is noted by the members of the Dareton CWP that by helping vulnerable community members to move forward out of "survival mode" a strong and connected community can emerge. This can only be achieved by having localised services for, transport, health and substance abuse to support individuals and those in their extended family that are affected, thus providing a holistic service that focusses on the well-being of all affected. A constraint to this service provision is the ability for Dareton and surrounding communities that fall under the focus of the CWP, to reflect true local area statistics that are not impeded by State demographics (i.e. South Australia).

The CWP looks to develop a communication protocol for service providers to support local Aboriginal community members by delivering seamless and connected services. A focus will also be on community awareness projects that relate to health, substance abuse, youth and post-release services and support.

A strategy would be developed in the Community Action Plan to better support the development of youth projects and engagement opportunities and an involvement from the CWP to support a re-integration program for offenders re-entering their community's.

Dareton CWP planning will also include obtaining support to provide business skills to local groups to manage land handed over through Native Title and to develop business acumen that supports its management and financial requirements.

4.8   Enngonia

Representatives of the Aboriginal Community of Enngonia identify the following priorities:

1. Culture & Heritage
   - The establishment of a men's and youth group.
   - Identified a need for the men and youth to get back to their grass roots.
   - Identifying identity and belonging to country.
   - The group will be gathering on Buttiji Traditional Lands.

2. Economic & Employment participation and opportunity
   - Identified the restoration of pre-existing grocery store.
   - Capacity building
   - Employment opportunity
   - Healthy Choices
   - Partnership with NGO's
   - Partnership with three tiers of Government

3. Safe Communities
   - Safe play areas for the children
   - The construction of a park in the grounds of the Clara Hart Village.
   - The current play area is located adjacent to the Mitchell Hwy which is through the middle of the town.

4.9   Goodooga

The Goodooga CWP identifies three main priority areas.

- Culture & Heritage
    - Focus on our Aboriginal traditions, culture & history.
    - Teaching the next generation of our Aboriginal culture & history
    - Acknowledgement of our Aboriginal community protocol
    - Enhance the social & economic status of our Aboriginal people
- Economic Participation
    - To address the essential needs of the Goodooga community food security/access to healthy food and;
    - build economic growth and increase Aboriginal employment
- Schooling and Education
    - To achieve the best possible education outcome for our Aboriginal students from Early Childhood, Pre-school, Kinder, secondary, through to tertiary & adult education & learning.
    - Encourage and improve parental engagement and participation
    - Provide the opportunity for Elders to be able to teach language and culture in the school and;
    - Implement cultural awareness training for teaching staff.

4.10   Gulargambone

The Gulargambone CWP identifies the following three priorities as focus areas for their community.

- Culture & Heritage
- Health
- Education

The Gulargambone CWP is encouraging, supporting and participating with key Aboriginal community and/or groups to work collaboratively and seamlessly to promote cultural awareness. In the interest of the Gulargambone Aboriginal Youth the CWP will support the implementation of Aboriginal Studies back into the school and encourage the school's

relationship with the CWP to provide a good education to the children of Gulargambone from early childhood to year twelve to improve retention, increase higher school certificate outcomes, reducing expulsion rates and supporting better life outcomes and future employment opportunities.

Implement MoU's and Partnership agreements with Service Providers and Local Government that support the access to services which may inhibit the need for local community members to relocate from Gulargambone community.

4.11   Ivanhoe

Ivanhoe's main priorities are:

- Culture & Heritage
  - to secure an appropriate building for a Cultural Centre facility - this building will become a centre for all Aboriginal people to feel connected to their culture and provide a place that is culturally appropriate to obtain a diverse range of services i.e. health care by undertaking health checks/ clinics, education centre with computers and a shop to display and sell artworks, therefore becoming an economic opportunity.
- Youth
  - Improve the well-being of children and young people – secure funding for better facilities for child and young people's development and well-being i.e. oval renovation and school environmental block facilities development.
  - Secure funding for a Youth Co-ordinator and develop and maintain a more localised child and young people's support program.
- Elders
  - Improve the well-being of Ivanhoe's elderly - future housing needs to cater for aging population i.e. aged care housing modifications;
  - Aboriginal identified staffing roles (Home Care), private rental solutions and transport to regional/major centres for medical appointments etc.
  - The Ivanhoe CWP would like a needs assessment to be undertaken by relevant experts into elderly care and well-being needs i.e. Access ramps and safety handles.
- Health
  - Increased awareness of and access to the range of life-style programs available i.e. healthy eating and exercise programs along with drug and alcohol awareness programs.

4.12　Lightning Ridge

The Lightning Ridge CWP has identified priority areas of concentration as outlined below and the need to secure the resources & funding for much needed events & projects.

- Culture & Heritage
    - Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Culture & Heritage
    - Teaching the next generation of our Aboriginal history
    - Enhance the social & economic status of our Aboriginal people.
- Early Childhood/Employment
    - Secure the establishment for the Child & Family Centre that will provide the opportunity to create apprenticeship & traineeship positions
    - A focus of the child and family centre will be Cultural Awareness
- Education
    - to ensure effective working & accessible programs including the resources & funding to better equip our Aboriginal Community from early childhood, secondary, tertiary students through to adult education & learning
    - Promote awareness of the importance of education with the Aboriginal community including a view to focus on involving parents and carers
    - Provide the opportunity for more Aboriginal teachers to be engaged and that each Aboriginal student receives individualised learning opportunities
- Safe communities
    - To support and further develop areas of safe families including safe houses for minors 0-18 years.
- Law & Justice
    - Implement a Circle Sentencing Program to work with Aboriginal people, programs also to include correctional services.

4.13   Menindee

Menindee CWP proudly communicate that "no-one can service our community like its own". Overarching the priorities for the CWP in Menindee is the importance of implementing two vitally important processes; a Communication Protocol and a Cultural Awareness package for all Government and NGO service providers that conduct business in their community. It will be a commitment by the Menindee CWP to ensure immediate implementation and encourage the on-going adherence of these by all who service the Menindee community. The Menindee CWP has identified the following areas as other focal points for its community:

- Education
    o Become a successful participant in the Connecting to Community initiative with NSW Department of Education and Communities to support development of youth with education outcomes, participation and retention.
    o All components of giving Menindee Youth the best start in life to achieve including health, education and providing a foundation in the critical early years of schooling.
- Safe Families
    o Strengthening family units through accessing support services, such as health, sport and education. This is vital to the community as they see it as a way of decreasing domestic violence.
- Law and Justice
    o Improving Law & Justice relationships with local Aboriginal community and developing a Communication Protocol in the CWP for NGO's to adhere to when working in Menindee.

The soon to be developed Communication Protocol will include direction to Government Departments visiting the Menindee community and CWP. This document will allow the strength of Menindee to continue to give directions that reflect community needs by encouraging active listening by Government who have an interest and a responsibility to the community of Menindee.

4.14   Weilmoringle

The Weilmoringle CWP identifies the following areas of focus:

- Health
- Housing
- Employment

4.15   Remote Service Delivery

RSD is a commitment by governments to work with Aboriginal communities to improve the delivery of services to 29 priority remote communities across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

The aim is to improve access to government services and facilities, raise the quality of these services, and better support Aboriginal community governance and leadership.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (RSD NPA) was signed by the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory in January 2009.

The Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement requires a two-way commitment:

- From governments and their staff – to cooperate to put in place the resources and planning for better infrastructure and services and to develop the capacity of individuals, communities and local service providers
- From the community – to work with government to improve the community and to take responsibility for their own wellbeing, in particular the health, safety and education of their children.

Under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement, governments have agreed to develop Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) to guide future government investment in RSD communities. LIPs are being produced in close partnership with and in agreement by the local Aboriginal communities. NSW has two RSD communities, Walgett and Wilcannia.

The Local Implementation Plans set out agreed priorities, actions, responsibilities and commitments for each community. They detail what services are required and how they will be delivered. Government agencies commit to resources and timeframes to implement actions identified in the plans, with a particular focus on harnessing potential investment from the other COAG National Partnerships and Agreements.

The new Priority Project Framework

While the LIPs have been guiding and assisting government agencies to focus funding on community identified commitments in the RSD communities, there needs to be more collaboration and discussion between government agencies, local businesses, community members and all stakeholders in the communities.

The New South Wales State Management Committee for RSD has endorsed a priority projects framework to facilitate a more coordinated delivery of outcomes and objectives

The Priority Projects Framework has been developed for two distinct purposes. First, the framework attempts to establish a logical relationship between the activities identified in the LIP, and the broader objectives of the RSD NPA and the Closing the Gap targets.

The second purpose is to provide a mechanism through which agencies can work collaboratively to deliver broader service delivery outcomes. Specifically, this is through taking a service system view, rather than focusing on individual LIP activities, and agencies' respective services and programs. While projects are stand alone, they are also grouped under 'service clusters' and each individual project aims to contribute to the overall maintenance and improvement of the service system.

Overall, the Priority Project Framework seeks to provide a practical and delivery-oriented focus by which agencies can deliver cross-agency benefits in service delivery.

4.16   Walgett

In discussion with Aboriginal leaders in both communities, the ROC has identified those projects to be initiated first as follows:

- Early Childhood Services
- Infant and Maternal Health
- Youth Services

4.17   Wilcannia

In discussion with Aboriginal leaders in both communities, the Regional Operations Centre (RoC) has identified those projects to be initiated first as follows:

- Economic and Business Development
- Community Workforce Strategy Project
- Vocational Training And Transitions

Monitoring & Evaluation

A number of structural constraints, gaps and barriers have been identified by the MPRA, CWP's and stakeholders relating specifically to capturing outcomes for the Murdi Paaki region against the past Regional Plan and Community Action Plans. Whilst some attempts have been made to capture and evaluate past projects and priorities effectiveness a number of issues have occurred in this process.

A review by community is currently being conducted by NSW State Government – Aboriginal Affairs, however this process is on-going at the date of constructing the Regional Plan. A review of the region has been conducted by William (Smiley) Johnson - MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 18 MONTHS ON (dated September 2010) which shows a comprehensive view of actions and constraints at both a regional and local level. It is noted in this document that monitoring and evaluation faced numerous barriers as early as 2006 in the evaluation of the Murdi Paaki COAG trial. Upon re-examination in 2010 these constraints were still relevant to the present time. Primary constraints are:

• Some non-lead agencies have struggled to sufficiently respond to the needs and priorities identified by communities through CWPs and Community Action Plans. The restructure of the Murdi Paaki Regional Group was intended to generate a better response in key areas across the region. However, a comprehensive implementation plan (based on the CAPs) is required to assist governments in determining how best to respond to community priorities and how to ensure the involvement of non-lead agencies.

• Communities have identified a lack of resources as a barrier to achieving better working relationships with government. In particular, CWP's and the MPRA require administrative and professional support to operate effectively. While the lead agencies have taken steps to make such support available - most recently through the employment of eight Community Facilitators across Murdi Paaki - there is a need for ongoing and sustained investment in governance capacity at both community and regional levels. Although the issue of rewarding CWP Chairpersons and other members financially is a contentious one, some gesture acknowledging their contributions appears to be appropriate. At the very least, government and community organisations need to support employees who are regularly involved in CWP business (whether as full CWP members or attending CWP meetings on behalf of their organisation).

• There was limited capacity at many levels of bureaucracy to work in whole-of-government fashion to improve services for Indigenous people and communities. While some of these barriers are cultural or organisational, there is a need to properly resource non-lead agencies to respond adequately to their obligations under the COAG Trial and to promote better communication within and between agencies. As well, those responsible for the Trial might take note of the considerable amount of research and activity that has taken place in other contexts on the issue of achieving greater government coordination.

• There appeared to have been inconsistent messages from senior Commonwealth officials about the circumstances in which SRA's are appropriate and desirable. Those working on the ground remain uncertain about the practical application of Australian Government policy on the difference between 'core' and additional government services, and how these relate to SRAs. Discussion should occur at high level with the purpose of developing and disseminating a detailed policy on where SRAs should be developed, taking into account regional and local differences.

Additionally, it was identified that there is no central point to report and co-ordinate progress against the Regional Partnership Agreement. This makes monitoring and ongoing evaluation problematic and would prevent the Regional Engagement Group for fulfilling its responsibilities.

Critical to the MPRA is a model of monitoring and evaluation. The MPRA feel strongly to implement a two tiered process for both regional and localised outcomes, based on a range of quantitative and qualitative based indicators that considers the social, cultural and environmental factors that impact engagement and outcomes for Aboriginal people, to ensure best practice.

The NSW State Government in consultation with the MPRA is currently developing a monitoring and evaluation framework. This Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is structured to allow the partners to interrogate the implementation of initiatives arising from the Regional Strategic Plan and provide comment on the data as well as including a narrative that articulates why specific actions / initiatives have been successful, and provide scope to consider lessons learned.

The MPRA hopes to be supported by Government to obtain the resources for its future implementation.

Regional Themes and Strategies

Many building blocks and their importance are reflected in each community providing the Regional Assembly with areas across the region of focus.

Culture and Heritage is prominent in all communities. Many CWP's feel that the Aboriginal community would benefit from stronger cultural connection and identity, supported by building internal governance and participation levels as well as a greater appreciation for traditional value systems, internal decision making and traditional protocol for community engagement. The wider non-Aboriginal community seem to require cultural exposure and appreciation. Many identified that in their communities the lack of understanding and regard for traditional culture and the capacity of the Community Working Party's has caused on-going constraints to receiving a holistic approach to initiatives and programs. This also is reflected in the manner that programs and priorities are monitored/evaluated/reported against and the transparency and availability of this information for future purposes that are crucial to the Regional Plan and Community Action Plans.

Emerging as a focus of communities also encompassing culture and heritage is to develop MOU's and agreements with government and NGO's outlining engagement, business and cultural protocols when conducting business in Murdi Paaki communities. A pattern for more consistent and supplemented resources in monitoring/evaluating and reporting across the Murdi Paaki region is based on the ever demanding and changing expectations of stakeholders to obtain re-current support and/or funding. The primary focus for the Murdi Paaki region is to continue to move forward and achieve high outcomes that coincide with community requirements. This cannot be done without a consistent, seamless and transparent relationship with stakeholders that reflect the standards and approach of the MPRA and the Community Working Party's.

The most prominent that are identified under a building block are;

- Health
- Economic Participation
- Education/Schooling

Although the above building blocks or areas are identified most prominently all are inter-twined or affect another. Health across the region is encumbered by many other social issues and unless addressed in unison greatly impacts on the outcome.

Many illnesses that relate closely to poor housing conditions – such as acute respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections and skin infections – can shed light on housing standards. These are often signs of overcrowding and houses with poor sanitation systems. Aboriginal people in Murdi Paaki have by far the highest rates of acute respiratory infections of all the Remote Service regions in New South Wales. It is, nevertheless, 55per cent higher than the state average for Aboriginal people. Similarly, other infections are also exasperated by poor housing conditions and are very high amongst Aboriginal people in Murdi Paaki region. It is around twice that of non-Aboriginal people in the region during the same period, and more than three times the rate for non-Aboriginal people throughout the State.

- Lack of access or ability (i.e. transport/location of) to access specialist service treatments for chronic disease.

- Localised health options to reduce impact of isolation and relocation.

- Economic independence for ability to access health and medicine.

- Greater community awareness and participation, active planning of projects and evaluations of projects provided to communities to achieve better and consistent health outcomes.

Economic participation is supported by a strong environment that is made of many factors: education, employment, governance and leadership. All of which is reinforced by strong family/community and home. The many realms of participation cover a number of social environments in the Murdi Paaki region - cultural, private enterprise and socially. This impact on life expectancy, safe communities, education and health can therefore, be related to economic participation. For many CWP's and community's, community programs which encourage strengthening and developing priority areas are vitally important and also seen as a foundation for providing employment opportunities within their community's as well as a pathway for community to participate in education and employment pathways.

It is also a focus emerging across the Murdi Paaki region to encourage local government, government, large employers and organisations to work with their local CWP in developing an Aboriginal Employment Strategy and/or Memorandum of Understanding or the like to show a commitment to employing local Aboriginal people in their sectors.

Education and schooling are identified in the region as of vital importance and it is widely noted that an increase in this area, sees outcomes across almost all of the building blocks that are the focus and commitment of the Australian government. The requirement for localised Aboriginal education opportunity's to be developed in collaboration with Traditional Owners, Elders and prominent groups support the on-going necessity for better parental/carer engagement and participation in school. Another focus for the building block – education is for greater participation and engagement of parents and carers. Again, this is dependent on almost all other building block elements to support its success for Aboriginal parents and carers. However, coupled with this are the involvement, encouragement and development of environments within the schools themselves for greater participation.

Below outlines these themes against building blocks and addresses the regional outcome identified.

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
Culture & Heritage 	Culture & Heritage, tangible objects and the living changing environment. Two separate but intertwined elements vitally important to the survival and revival of Aboriginal culture and heritage systems and artefacts. Combined these support an understanding of the past and impact the decisions needed to pave the way to a successful future. Tangible objects, land and other physical heritage items are still a primary focus for Aboriginal communities to manage, control and protect. However also required to be developed in the Murdi Paaki region are Culture and Heritage protocols. These protocols once developed will revitalise and instil values, kinship systems, ways of learning & teaching, communicating & decision making at a regional & local level for planning & monitoring service provision to Aboriginal people in the region.	• Office for the Arts • Department. Environment and Heritage • Department Education Employment & Workplace Relations • NSW Department of Education and Communities • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs • NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs • Family & Community Services	• MPRA • CWP • NSW Aboriginal Land Council • Schools • Early Childhood Facilities • NGO'S • Aboriginal Community Members • Parents/Carers

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
	For an equal start in life, Aboriginal children need early learning, development and socialisation opportunities. Access to quality early childhood education and care services, including pre-school, child care and family support services such as parenting programs and supports, is critical. Appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure, a sustainable early childhood education and health workforce, learning frameworks and opportunities for parental engagement are also important and require attention. Action in the areas of maternal, antenatal and early childhood health is relevant to addressing the child mortality gap and to early childhood development.	• Department Education Employment & Workplace Relations • NSW Department of Education and Communities • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs • NSW Department Aboriginal Affairs • Family and Community Services	• MPRA • CWP • Schools • Early Childhood Facilities • NGO'S • Aboriginal Community Members • Parents/Carers

Building Block	Outcomes	Key Stakeholders Government	Community
Closing the Gap. SCHOOLING	Human capital development through education is key to future opportunity. Responsive schooling requires attention to infrastructure, workforce (including teacher and school leader supply and quality), curriculum, student literacy and numeracy achievement and opportunities for parental engagement and school / community partnerships. Transition pathways into schooling and into work, post school education and training are also important and attention is also needed regarding adult literacy and numeracy skills. Localised Cultural education and appropriate delivery is also a high priority for the Murdi Paaki region.	• NSW Department of Education and Communities • Department Education Employment & Workplace Relations • NSW Department Aboriginal Affairs • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	• MPRA • CWP • Schools • Early Childhood Facilities • NGO'S • Aboriginal Community Members • Parents/Carers

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
Closing the Gap. HEALTH	Aboriginal Australians' access to effective, comprehensive primary and preventative health care is essential to improving their health expectancy, and reducing excess mortality caused by chronic disease. All health services play an important role in providing Aboriginal people with access to effective health care, and being responsive to and accountable for achieving government and community health priorities. Closing the Aboriginal health gap requires a concerted effort in the prevention, management and treatment of chronic disease. Aboriginal children and their parents need to access programs and services that promote healthy lifestyles.	• NSW Health • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs • NSW Department Aboriginal Affairs • Ageing, Disability and Home Care • Department of Housing	• CWP • Aboriginal Medical Centres • Local doctors and medical facilities

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
Closing the Gap. HEALTHY HOMES	A healthy home is a fundamental precondition of a healthy population. Important contributors to the current unsatisfactory living conditions include inadequate water and sewerage systems, waste collection, electricity and housing infrastructure (design, stock and maintenance). Children need to live in accommodation with adequate infrastructure conducive to good hygiene and study, and free of overcrowding.	• Aboriginal Housing Office • Department of Housing • NSW Department Aboriginal Affairs • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	• Social Housing Contract Holders • Local Aboriginal Land Councils • Building, repairs &maintenance contractors • Local Government • Tenants • Community Members • Western Aboriginal Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
Closing the Gap. **SAFE COMMUNITIES**	Aboriginal people (men, women and children) need to be safe from violence, abuse and neglect. Fulfilling this need involves improving family and community safety through law and justice responses (including accessible and effective policing and an accessible justice system), victim support (including safe houses and counselling), child protection and also preventative approaches. Addressing related factors such as alcohol and substance abuse will be critical to improving community safety, along with the improved health benefits obtained.	• Department of Community Services • Family and Community Services • NSW Dept Aboriginal Affairs • Department Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs • Attorney General & Justice Agencies	• CWP's • NGO's • Local Police • Specialist Services Health • Community

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
	Individuals and communities should have the opportunity to benefit from the mainstream economy – real jobs, business opportunities, economic independence and wealth creation. Economic participation needs to extend to disadvantaged job seekers and those outside of the labour market. Access to land and native title assets, rights and interests can be leveraged to secure real and practical benefits for Aboriginal people. Other financial assets, capacity building, employment and training programs, incentive structures and social and physical infrastructure, including communications and transport, are needed to foster economic participation and community engagement. Through this participation, parents and other adults can become effective role models for their families and community.	- Department of Education Employment & Workplace Relations - NSW Department of Education and Communities - Industry & Investment - NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs - Regional Development Australia - Indigenous Business Australia - Catchment Management Authority	- JSA's - Local Government - Land Management Groups - Local business owners - Indigenous Community Volunteers

Building Block	Outcomes	Government	Community
Closing the Gap. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP	Strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities and organisations as well as strong engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long term sustainable outcomes. Aboriginal people need to be engaged in the development of reforms that will impact on them. Improved access to capacity building in governance and leadership is needed in or4der for Aboriginal people to play a greater role in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens.	• Department. Premier & Cabinet • DEEWR • FaHCSIA • NSW Department of Education and Communities • Local Government	• CWP's • Indigenous Community Volunteers • NGO's • Community

Government Initiatives

The Australian Government continues to develop, implement and monitor many strategies that assist Aboriginal people. The environmental change experienced in community will continue to encourage Government and community to work seamlessly to achieve desired outcomes and address issues as they arise.

Some key agreements and plans in the Murdi Paaki region are:

7.1   Closing the Gap

In 2008 the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) was agreed by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in November 2008. This agreement formed the Closing the Gap policy.

Closing the Gap is a commitment by all Australian governments to improve the lives of Aboriginal Australians, and in particular provide a better future for Aboriginal children[15].

This policy aims to develop and support a new way of working across government and focusses on engaging with Aboriginal communities to better coordinate services and allocate funding.

A national integrated Closing the Gap strategy has been agreed through the COAG, the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. COAG brings together the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association.

COAG has agreed to specific timeframes for achieving six Closing the Gap targets, relating to Aboriginal life expectancy, infant mortality, early childhood development, education and employment.

The Government is dedicated to continued engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities, to continue building on their ideas, strengths and leadership, to help find sustainable solutions to long-standing problems.

The targets set by COAG to Close the Gap in Aboriginal disadvantage are interconnected and in some circumstances address several targets. They are outlined below:

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[15] http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/Aboriginal/progserv/ctg/Pages/default.aspx

Closing the Gap.
EARLY CHILDHOOD

Young Aboriginal children need equal opportunities to learn, develop and socialise. Equal access to quality early childhood education and care services, and child care and family support services (such as parenting programs and supports) is an imperative. It is also important that young Aboriginal children have access to appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure, a sustainable early childhood education and health workforce, learning frameworks, and opportunities for parental engagement. To address the gaps in Aboriginal childhood mortality and early development, the building block includes maternal, antenatal, postnatal and early childhood health.

Closing the Gap.
SCHOOLING

Responsive and appropriate education is a key element of human development; this is why schooling is an important component of the COAG commitments. This building block implies adequate and appropriate infrastructure, workforce (including sufficient high quality teachers and school leaders), curriculum, literacy and numeracy achievement, opportunities for parents to engage, and school/community partnerships. The COAG commitments also focus on enabling transition pathways into schooling and into work, and post-school education and training. Access to schooling is not only for children; literacy and numeracy skills are relevant at all ages to best access employment opportunities. Life-long learning is promoted and adults constitute an important recipient in this second COAG building block.

Closing the Gap.
HEALTH

Aboriginal access to adequate, preventive and comprehensive primary health care is essential to reduce excess deaths and to close the gaps in early childhood mortality and life expectancy. The COAG commitments in this area recognise the importance of all parts of the health sector. A key component of the commitments is the responsiveness of, and accountability for, achieving government and community health priorities. In its health building block, COAG focuses on prevention, including the promotion of healthy lifestyles at all ages and the related management and treatment of chronic diseases.

Closing the Gap.
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

This building block forms an important component of the Closing the Gap campaign, focusing on enhancing employment opportunities, including jobs outside the Community Development Employment Project, business creation opportunities, economic independence (as opposed to welfare dependence) and wealth creation. There are many financial, structural and social incentives that can assist disadvantaged job seekers and these tools contribute to economic participation and community engagement. Coupled with policies addressing barriers to participation (such as desirability of welfare dependency, gambling, etc.), attention to this building block can contribute to establishing factors for positive social norm development. These two goals are seen to be important for adults and parents to become effective role models within the community and family spheres, and for the reform to be sustainable.

Closing the Gap.
HEALTHY HOMES

This building block, which recognises that a healthy home is fundamental to the health of a population, focuses on improving current poor living conditions, including water and sewage systems, waste collection, and electricity and housing infrastructure. Children are particularly vulnerable to disease transmission in overcrowded and unhygienic houses and form a priority group of the building block.

Closing the Gap.
SAFE COMMUNITIES

Everyone has the right to be safe from violence, abuse and neglect. It is to secure this state of safety that COAG has committed to improving the law and justice system (including an accessible and effective police and court system), victim support, child protection, and preventive approaches to violence (including perpetrator programs, anger management, alcohol and substance abuse management).

Closing the Gap.
GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Strong governance is essential for sustainable and effective outcomes for communities. In this context, Aboriginal communities need to be engaged in the development of reforms within the Closing the gap framework. This building block recognises the importance of skill development for Aboriginal people to exercise their rights and responsibilities and to take effective control over the development and implementation of policies that affect their lives.[16]

Closing the Gap is a cross-community effort

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[16] References
 1.Council of Australian Governments (2009) National Aboriginal reform agreement (Closing the Gap). Canberra: Council of Australian Governments

7.2   Murdi Paaki Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA)

The Murdi Paaki Regional Partnership Agreement was the first RPA to be signed in New South Wales (Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, 2009)[17]. This agreement sought to build on the following policy and funding commitments:

- the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Agenda on Aboriginal Reform and the Closing the Gap strategy (as expressed in the National Aboriginal Reform Agreement 2008); and
- the New South Wales State Plan;
- the 2005-2010 Overarching Agreement on Aboriginal Affairs between the Commonwealth government and the New South Wales government, which ratified the NSW Two Ways Together Framework; and
- The Charter of Governance of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

The objectives are tied to the six target outcomes set out in the COAG Closing the Gap statement and are monitored by the Murdi Paaki Regional Engagement Group. This group is supported (and monitors) by five sub-groups that were established to carry out the MPRA's action plan.

The RPA also ensured that other key stakeholders, New South Wales Government, NSW/ACT Indigenous Coordination Centres, implemented a best practice guide that was developed by the Department of Local Government (NSW) to enable local councils to engage more actively with Aboriginal communities in their government area.

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[17] http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/Aboriginal/progserv/families/murdi_paaki/Pages/default.aspx

7.3 Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations – Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011 – 2018

The Australian Government has released its long-term strategy to increase the personal and economic well-being of Aboriginal Australians. The *Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018*[18] seeks to improve the prosperity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians through strengthening foundations, education, skills development and jobs, business entrepreneurship, and financial security and independence.

7.4 National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Aboriginal Australians

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to the National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Aboriginal Australians (the Framework)[19] at the Council of Australian Governments' Meeting on 25 June 2004. The Council, comprising the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, held detailed discussions on significant areas of national interest and produced a Communique setting out the agreed outcomes of those discussions.

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[18] http://www.deewr.gov.au/Aboriginal/Employment/Pages/IEDS2011_2018.aspx
[19] http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2004-06-25/docs/attachment_b.cfm

The Framework commits all levels of government to 'achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal Australians, improving the delivery of services, building greater opportunities and helping Aboriginal families and individual's to become self-sufficient.' The Framework is structured around several main areas including:

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

The principles are intended to provide a common framework between governments to promote flexibility and facilitate partnerships with Aboriginal people. They are also intended to 'provide a framework to guide bi-lateral discussions between the Commonwealth and each State and Territory Government on the Commonwealth's new arrangements for Aboriginal affairs and on the best means of engaging with Aboriginal people at the local and regional levels. Governments will consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their efforts to achieve this.' (Council of Australian Governments' Meeting 25 June 2004, 'Communique').

The above principles also build on the progress of the whole of government trials commenced by COAG in partnership with local Aboriginal communities in eight sites across Australia subsequent to its 11th meeting in April 2002.

7.5   Remote Jobs and Communities Program

The Australian Government is introducing significant reforms to remote employment and community development services to ensure more Indigenous and other jobseekers in remote communities get the skills they need to find and keep a job and participate in meaningful community activities.

From 1 July 2013, the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program will provide a more integrated and flexible approach to participation and employment services for people living in remote areas of Australia.

The four main programs currently delivering employment and participation services and community development in remote Australia – Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services, Community Development Employment Projects and the Indigenous Employment Program – will be rolled into the new integrated service.

7.6 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) - Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations[20]

The new Federal financial framework is the culmination of extensive joint work by all levels of government. It began on 1 January 2009 and provides a solid foundation for COAG to pursue economic and social reforms to underpin growth, prosperity and social cohesion into the future.

COAG agreed to six new National Agreements – National Healthcare Agreement, National Education Agreement, National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, National Disability Agreement, National Affordable Housing Agreement, and the National Aboriginal Reform Agreement.

Central to these reforms is a substantial financial package that provides an additional $7.1 billion in SPP funding to the States over five years to improve services for all Australians.

7.7 [21]

This Agreement, aspires to halving the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians within a decade. The Agreement aims to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people to find and retain employment and connect more Aboriginal people with employment and the real economy. It will build on COAG's other five targets for addressing Aboriginal disadvantage which will enhance the capacity of Aboriginal people to participate in the economy:

(a)   Closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation;

(b)   Halving the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal children under five within a decade;

(c)   Ensuring all Aboriginal four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;

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[20] http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/
[21] National Partnership Agreement on Aboriginal Economic Participation

(d)   Halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Aboriginal children within a decade; and

(e)   At least halving the gap for Aboriginal students in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

The Agreement comprises four elements that form a combined strategy to significantly contribute to halving the Aboriginal employment gap.

Element 1: Creating real sustainable employment in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidisation through CDEP

Element 2: Strengthening current government procurement policies to maximise Aboriginal employment

Element 3: Incorporating Aboriginal workforce strategies into all new major COAG reforms contributing to the Closing the Gap targets

Element 4: Reviewing all Public Sector Aboriginal employment and career development strategies to increase employment to reflect population share by 2015.

7.8   NSW Government – Housing and Mental Health Agreement[22]

The Housing and Mental Health Agreement provides the overarching framework for planning, coordinating and delivering mental health accommodation support and social housing services for clients with mental health problems and disorders who are living in social housing or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It replaces the Joint guarantee of Service for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders Living in Public Housing, Community Housing and Aboriginal Housing (JGOS).

The Agreement is between, NSW Health, NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) – encompassing all its agencies: Housing NSW, Aboriginal Housing Office, Ageing, Disability & Home Care and Community Services.

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[22] NSW Government – Housing & Mental Health Agreement

The Departments work in partnership with the non-government sector to provide a range of housing opportunities and services to meet the needs of people with mental health problems and disorders that are linked to appropriate support when it is needed and available. These key NGO providers include: specialist homelessness and mental health services, organisations which provide support that assists people to live independently in the community, mental health, tenant and other advocacy services as well as community housing providers.

The key objectives of the Agreement are to:

- Promote good practice in service delivery when responding to people with mental health support needs
- Deliver coordinated client-focused services which are flexible and meet the diverse needs of people with mental health problems and disorders
- Implement early intervention and prevention initiatives wherever possible
- Strengthen transition planning to prevent homelessness for people moving to or from health services or other relevant facilities
- Ensure people with mental health problems and disorders receive a consistent response when they access mental health and/or housing services.

7.9 Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership [23]

The Remote Aboriginal Housing National Partnership Agreement (RIHNP) is an important commitment in improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal communities. The RIHNP is a partnership between the NSW and Australian Governments over a ten year period.

Key objectives of this partnership are to deliver upon:

- New Supply Program – 310 homes to be built in remote locations by 2018. Many of these properties will be managed by Aboriginal community housing providers which will assist them to grow their management portfolio and strengthen their organisation.
- Refurbishment Program – The refurbishment program is an important part of the RIHNP. Once providers have been registered under Provider Assessment Registration System (PARS) or head leased their houses to the AHO under Build and Grow their properties will be upgraded to AHO Asset Standard
- Employment Related Accommodation Program (ERA) – supports the aims of Build and Grow by providing housing to Aboriginal people from remote areas to work or study.

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[23] Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership

- Safe Houses Program – funding under the RINHP is supporting the renewal of Safe Houses in isolated communities in Western NSW to improve access to crisis accommodation, transitional housing and long term housing for Aboriginal women and children affected by domestic and family violence. This program is heavily influenced by community consultation to determine, design, location, environmentally efficient and cultural appropriateness.

Painting by Lorraine Brown and Artists from the Coomaditchie Artists Cooperative.

7.10 The NSW Aboriginal Housing Office – Build and Grow Implementation Plan

The Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy (Build and Grow Strategy) capitalises on existing opportunities to develop capacity, introduce financial viability and improve performance and accountability. These opportunities include the Remote Aboriginal Housing National Partnership Agreement, Commonwealth Rent Assistance and opportunities to achieve economies of scale.

The Strategy was launched in February 2010 and it is expected to take eight years to fully implement.

7.11 Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative

Aboriginal people continue to experience homelessness at a disproportionate level across Australia. High rates of mental health and wellbeing issues also confront Aboriginal communities in Australia. The need to improve the mental health and emotional and social well-being of Aboriginal communities is clear and research showed a need for new approaches to achieve this. In recognition of these needs, NSW Health, Housing NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office are working in partnership to develop a new and innovative model that will effectively target and respond to the needs of Aboriginal people. The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) is a partnership program between NSW Health, Housing NSW and the NGO sector. HASI aims to provide appropriate housing combined with clinical and accommodation support to people with a mental illness to enable them to live in the community successfully.