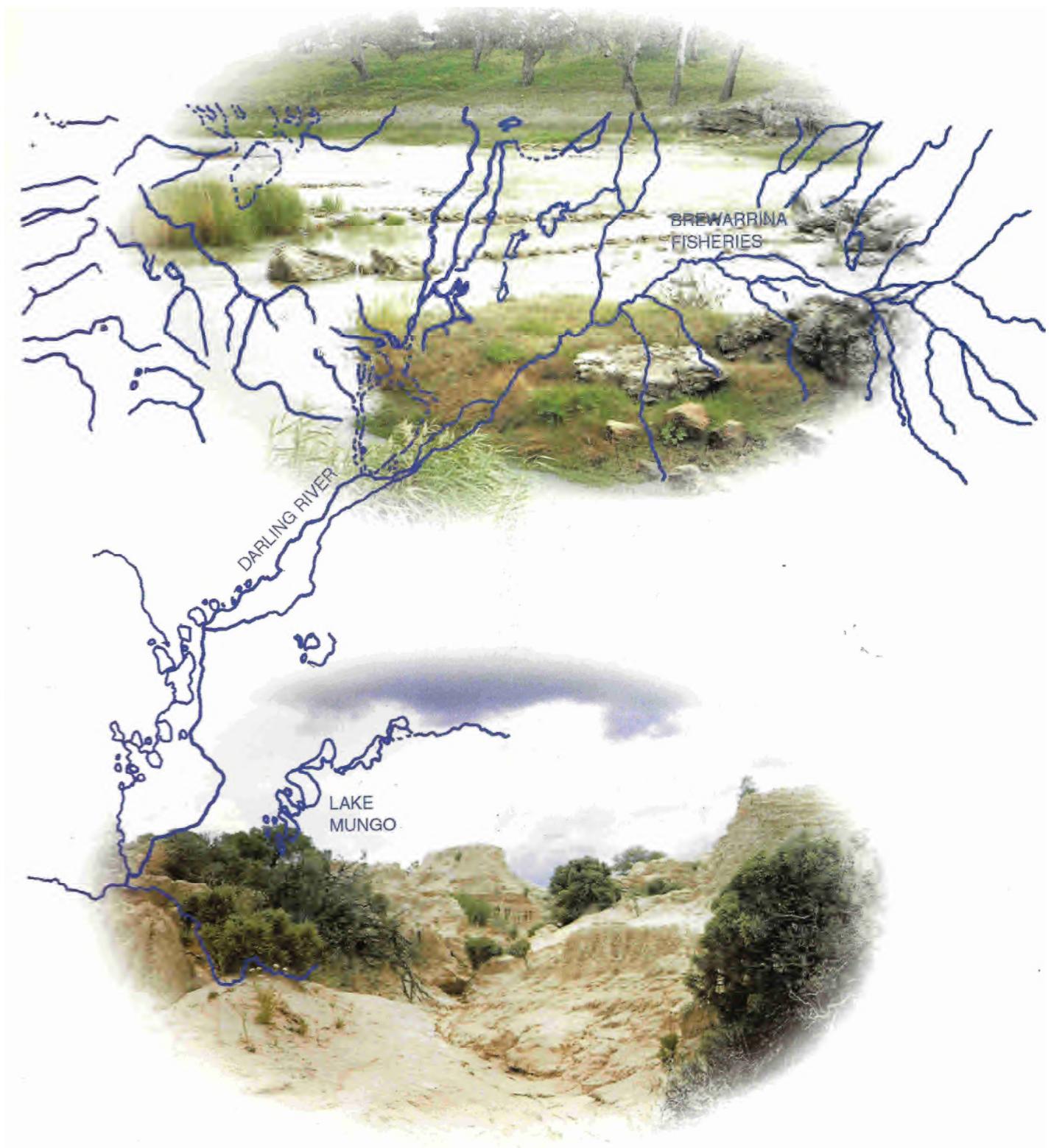




MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
**REGIONAL PLAN**  
for the Murdi Paaki Region

JULY 2016







MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
**REGIONAL PLAN**  
for the Murdi Paaki Region

JULY 2016

*Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly acknowledges with respect the roles of the Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Native Title holders and claims groups in asserting our people's rights to Country through the Native Title and Land Rights regimes, and affirms that MPRA's agenda does not cut across these roles in any way.*

*For the purposes of this Regional Plan, an Aboriginal person is a person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (person) and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.*



**MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL PLAN, 2016  
PLAN SUMMARY**

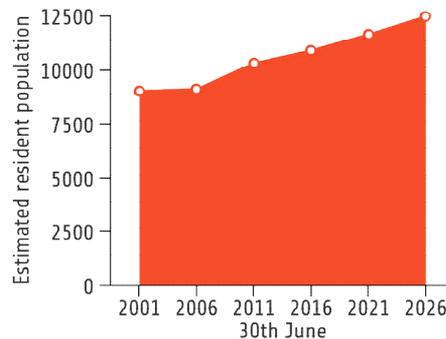
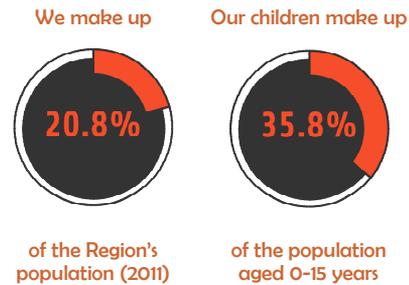


# MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL PLAN

## SUMMARY

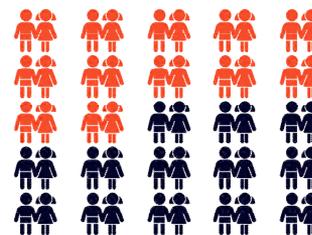
### Changing times

Our population is growing, the number of non-Indigenous people is going down, so we are preparing to take a greater role in the political, cultural, social and economic life to make sure our communities stay sustainable. The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan, 2016 sets out the actions we see as necessary to get us ready for this task. The Plan brings together the needs, aspirations and priorities of all Aboriginal communities across the Region taken from Community Action Plans so the Assembly has a strategic focus to work to over the next period. It is our ultimate goal 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 socio-economic development of the region

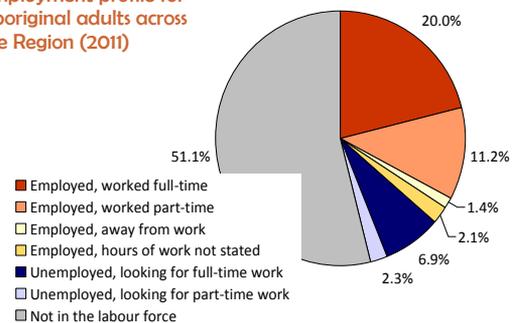


We estimate that our population will reach close to 12,500 by 2026. The population in the 0-14 age group is projected to rise from 2016 between 9% and 22%, while structural ageing could see the proportion of our elderly double by 2026. Projected rise in the working age population is between 18% and 20%

### Issues which communities are telling us are important



Employment profile for Aboriginal adults across the Region (2011)



Communities are consistently highlighting threats to the wellbeing of our children and the need to lift participation in economic activity as two priorities. The evidence shows clearly that our young children are developmentally vulnerable, that our school aged children are not receiving an adequate education despite a huge investment by Governments, and that there is little work for them post-education or their parents across the Region

Objective: To value our role as stewards of Country and custodians of Aboriginal language, heritage and culture



## Heritage and Culture

Principal actions:

- Reflect cultural values in day-to-day life
- Record oral histories
- Repatriate cultural objects
- Develop cultural and eco-tourism ventures
- Teach Aboriginal languages in all schools, K-12
- Conserve and protect landscapes, rivers and ecosystems
- Promote traditional knowledges

Objective: To establish and sustain a resource base to enable MPRA to play an effective role as leaders in transforming Aboriginal affairs administration in the region



## Regional Resourcing and Capability

Principal actions:

- Establish Murdi Paaki Services
- Employ community development and liaison personnel
- Rethink existing models of service delivery
- Rethink governance of Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation and Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation
- Intercept existing funding streams
- Eliminate funding leakage

Objective: To secure autonomy for the sovereign Aboriginal people of the region



## Democracy, Leadership and Citizenship

Principal actions:

- Advocate for recognition of our institutions
- Review CWP representation and capacity
- Plan for leadership succession
- Demand accountable process frameworks
- Engage opportunistically to influence policy

Objective: To grow an Aboriginal-owned economic base through Aboriginal-owned business start-ups and acquisitions and through expanding Aboriginal workforce participation and employment as joint pathways to financial independence

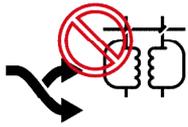


## Economic Development

Principal actions:

- Create an Aboriginal business base
- Improve tertiary and vocational education outcomes
- Influence labour market policies and strategies

Objective: To reduce the number of Aboriginal people interacting with the criminal justice system



## Law and Justice

Principal actions:

- Advocate for equality under the law
- Increase participation in legal structures
- Advocate for the needs of mentally ill people
- Pursue Justice Reinvestment and diversion initiatives

Objective: To transform the academic achievement of our children and young people across pre-primary, primary and secondary education



## Early Childhood and School Education

Principal actions:

- Examine opportunities for structural reform
- Increase availability of early childhood services (first 2,000 days)
- Encourage participation in education for all children
- Support relationship-building
- Advocate for educational support and enrichment programmes
- Advocate for student support and wellbeing initiatives
- Build adult literacy and numeracy

Objective: To ensure that Aboriginal people in western NSW have access to appropriate social housing and infrastructure



## Housing and Infrastructure

Principal actions:

- Demand accountability of housing agencies
- Implement a new Regional Housing model
- Satisfy housing need
- Promote access to affordable essential services

Objective: To value and keep sound the physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing of all members of our communities

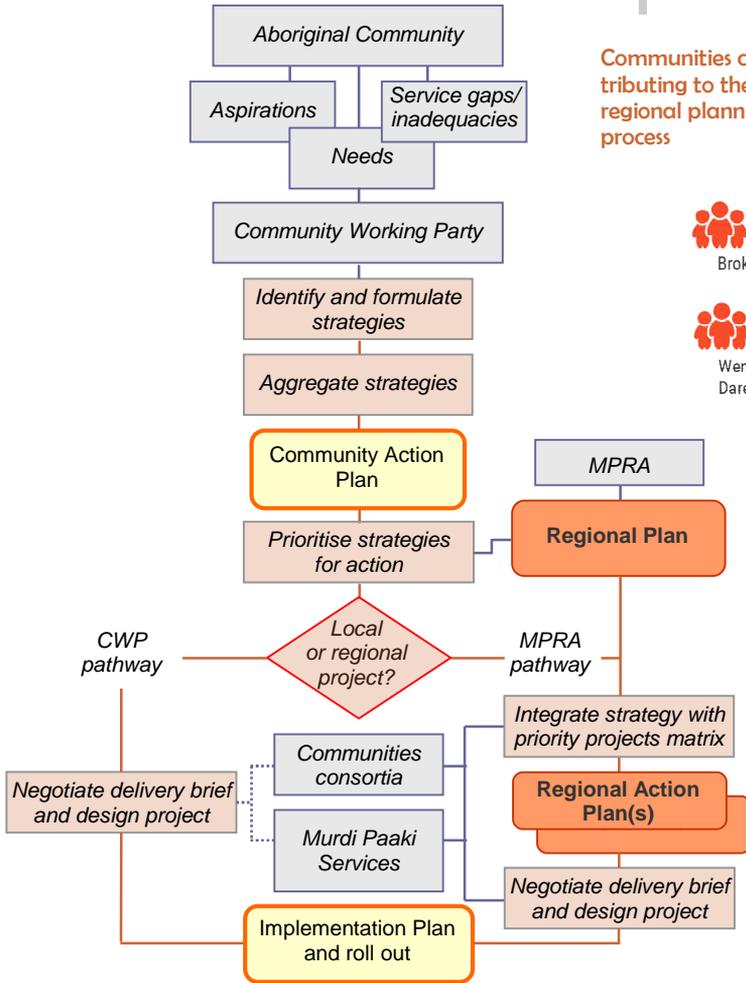


## Wellbeing

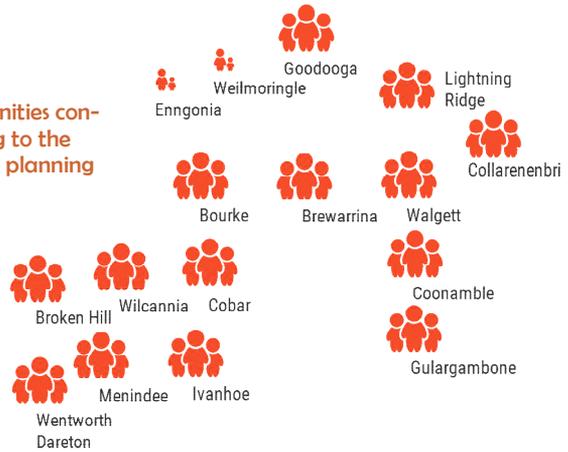
Principal actions:

- Advocate for primary health and wellness services
- Support needs of older people and people with disabilities
- Support needs of people affected by past removal policies
- Advocate for child and family support services
- Deliver youth leadership initiatives
- Support community safety
- Pursue innovative service delivery models
- Influence co-ordination in service delivery
- Require service provider cross-cultural competency

**IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**



Communities contributing to the regional planning process



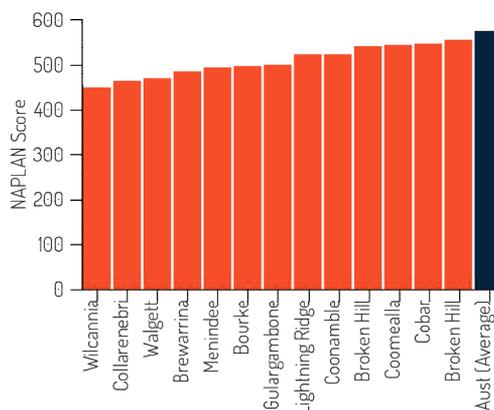
The Murdi Paaki Region occupies greater than forty per cent of the land mass of New South Wales, from the Queensland border in the north to the Victorian border in the south, from Collarenebri in the east to the South Australian border in the west

**Special points of interest:**

- The Assembly will be assisted in its work by a new regional organisation, Murdi Paaki Services;
- A major project aimed at providing the foundation for improved social housing management will start shortly; and
- PhD and honours students from Sydney University will be helping communities with development work on strategic projects of mutual benefit

**Investment in education**

In 2013, between \$10,962 (Gol Gol Public) and \$69,224 (Goolooga Central) was invested in the education of each child, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, across all schools in the Region. This means that the life cost of educating one child could be up to \$500,000. Yet the system is failing to provide our children with a good grounding in basic skills: literacy and numeracy. Despite this huge commitment, the level of achievement in reading at Year 9, for example, for all High and Central schools across the Region is below the Australian average as shown above.



In 2015,



of all Aboriginal students were awaiting assessment for unmet support needs. 95 Aboriginal school children had waited more than 12 months for a Counsellor assessment

Raising capacity is critical for us so we must lead the reforms which see our young leaders equipped with the skills to take on the challenges which our people will face in the years to come. This starts with supporting infants for their first 2,000 days





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# Chapter 1 The Murdi Paaki Region

## 1.1 Introduction

The Murdi Paaki Region occupies greater than forty per cent of the land mass of New South Wales, extending from the Queensland border in the north to the Victorian border in the south and from Collarenebri in the east to the South Australian border in the west. The region encompasses seven complete Local Government Areas, portions of two more, and the Unincorporated Far West. Broken Hill is the only settlement with a population exceeding 5,000. Most towns and villages are much smaller.

Nations and language groups of the Region are numerous and diverse. Many of our people have, despite a history of forced and coerced resettlement under the genocidal policies of the Aborigines Protection Board and the Aborigines Welfare Board, retained a profound connection to country, culture and language. Our identity has endured.

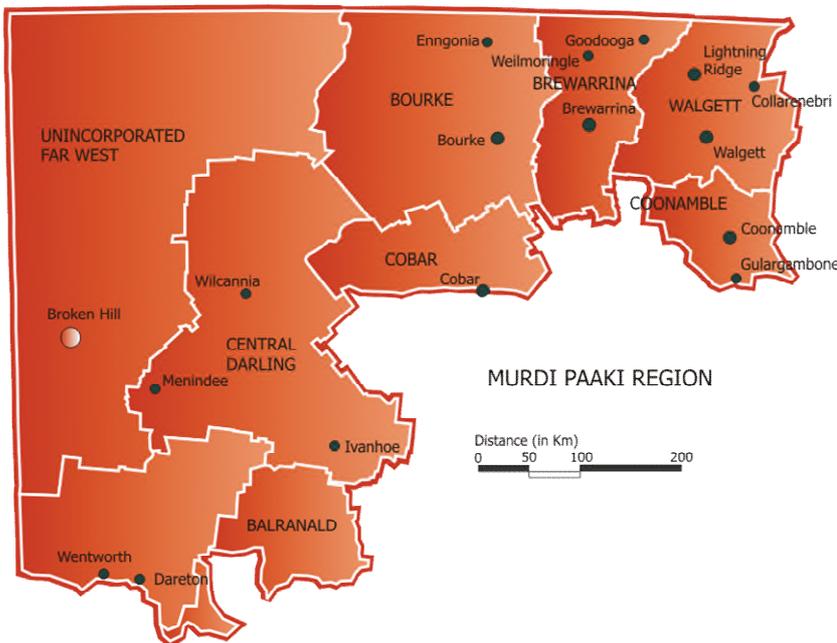
## 1.2 Governance

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the peak Aboriginal governance body for the Murdi Paaki Region representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples throughout western NSW. Membership of MPRA comprises Chairpersons or nominees from the sixteen Community Working Parties (CWPs) representing the communities shown opposite, representatives of the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Young and Emerging Leaders (MPAY&ELP), three NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) Councillors, and an independent Chairperson.

MPRA abides by accepted principles of good governance and functions in accordance with cultural practices and traditions of the people and Nations of the region with the objectives of:

- ❖ Prosecuting a strategic agenda focused on regional autonomy, Aboriginal jurisdiction and self-determination;
- ❖ Fostering the continuing evolution of rigorous, culturally relevant structures and processes for governance and leadership in our communities;
- ❖ Promoting intergenerational skills transfer and increased youth leadership;
- ❖ Asserting a broadly accepted structure and practices for strategic



engagement, planning and coordination which gives primacy to the collective voice of our people, enabling potential partners to connect with MPRA and with communities;

- ❖ Influencing governments, NGOs, institutional and private providers to shape an effective, responsive, co-ordinated services sector, fully focussed and committed to on working to the priorities of Aboriginal communities in the region and consistently and transparently meeting mutually agreed service outcomes;
- ❖ Providing a strong and representative governance structure for Aboriginal communities to raise issues with tiers of government, NGOs, the institutional and private sectors and other providers; and
- ❖ Acting as a catalyst and driver of regional initiatives important to MPRA member communities.

### 1.3 Statement of Intent

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has a long and proud history of prosecuting a visionary agenda for regional autonomy and self-determination in the Murdi Paaki Region. Through a succession of regional planning instruments, and our ever-evolving relationships with governments, NGOs and other partners, we have sought to assert our sovereign rights as First Nations peoples of Australia and to have our aspirations for jurisdiction within our own country recognised, respected and resourced.

Our Statement of Intent 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 socio-economic development of the region”.

*In articulating our intent, we emphasise the centrality of economic participation to ameliorating all other aspects of disadvantage in our communities. Participation in business and employment is fundamental to reducing the impact of ill health, compromised social and emotional wellbeing, crime, imprisonment, poor rates of engagement in education, and other negative impacts. The need for investment in enterprise is a vital theme which flows through this Regional Plan in its entirety.*

This Regional Plan continues the tradition of setting a framework for strategic development first documented twenty years ago in July 1995. Some significant advances have been made since that time in governance and advocacy and in asserting our political identity. This Regional Plan defines the next phase of community-initiated actions directed at raising our political, cultural, social and economic status. It is intended to inform not only Governments in their dealings with communities across the region, but also the increasing number of NGOs, private sector enterprises and other institutions wishing to engage with our communities.

## **Chapter 2 Regional Resourcing and Capability**

### **2.1 The new paradigm**

Efforts to set in train a transformational process across the Murdi Paaki Region will inevitably question norms of policy and practice. As this Regional Plan identifies, areas in which progress is being made in improving the wellbeing of our communities are few and far between. It is the view of MPRA that we must advocate for major reform in the way that 'business' is conducted in the Region and that as well as fostering new models of engagement, a reappraisal of our own structures, concepts and practices is warranted to allow room for innovation and greater accountability in our Aboriginal institutions and organisations.

Two principal actions for MPRA are, first, the establishment of an internal capability to drive forward the strategic agenda set out in this Regional Plan and, second, an expectation that our regional organisations will equip themselves to meet the challenges of achieving higher levels of performance in the services they deliver to our communities.

### **2.2 Murdi Paaki Services**

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is a formal affiliation of Aboriginal communities and, as such, purposely does not have legal standing. MPRA is thus not able to enter into binding agreements with governments and others. To enable a greater level of participation in operational matters associated with the implementation of this Regional Plan, and to provide governments with improved opportunities to innovate and invest in Aboriginal people of the Region, MPRA proposes to establish Murdi Paaki Services (MPS) as an independent professional legal entity under sole ownership and governance of MPRA.

It is intended by MPRA that MPS have a clear strategic focus, defined through its Business Plan, of supporting the political, cultural, economic and social initiatives promoted by this Regional Plan. The organisation will be structured with a regional perspective and with such authority to act on behalf of MPRA as is delegated.

Primary functions proposed for MPS are:

- ❖ Undertake strategic activities that provide the foundation for, promote and progress political, cultural, economic and social wellbeing of Aboriginal communities within the Region;
- ❖ Facilitate development and progressive delivery of the regional strategic agenda as articulated by this Regional Plan and any supplementary strategic planning instruments;
- ❖ Foster relationships with the Commonwealth, NSW and Local Governments with a view to contributing knowledge and guidance in the planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services with emphasis on sustainable, innovative and evidence-based integrated models of service;
- ❖ Take responsibility for driving change at a regional level;
- ❖ Apply for, negotiate and receive funding for priority projects of regional significance, including taking responsibility for managing flexible funding pools;

- ❖ Act in liaison and co-ordination capacities with CWPs, including engaging and supporting a cohort of Community Co-ordinators. Verify that providers policies and programmes in delivery are targeted to local needs;
- ❖ Source, collate and interrogate information in relation to allocation of resources to the Region and identify gaps, inefficiencies and inequities;
- ❖ Conduct ongoing research and evaluation relating to socio-demographic and economic issues of interest or concern to the Murdi Paaki Region, prepare associated regional policy and planning documents, and build the evidence-base;
- ❖ Corral and co-ordinate disconnected external projects which have objectives consistent with this Regional Plan to add value to such projects and enhance prospects of achieving the aspirations of our Region and communities; and
- ❖ Research, evaluate and report achievements.

Additional spheres of operation for MPS will be identified as conditions change. It is anticipated, for example, that further roles and functions could emerge from a revised model of local government across the Western Division.

The organisation would operate with an equivalent staff complement of 5-6 highly skilled and competent individuals, experienced in planning, designing, implementing and evaluating major, multi-faceted service, programmes and projects, to fulfil the aspirations summarised above with access to adequate technological resources and forms of mobility.

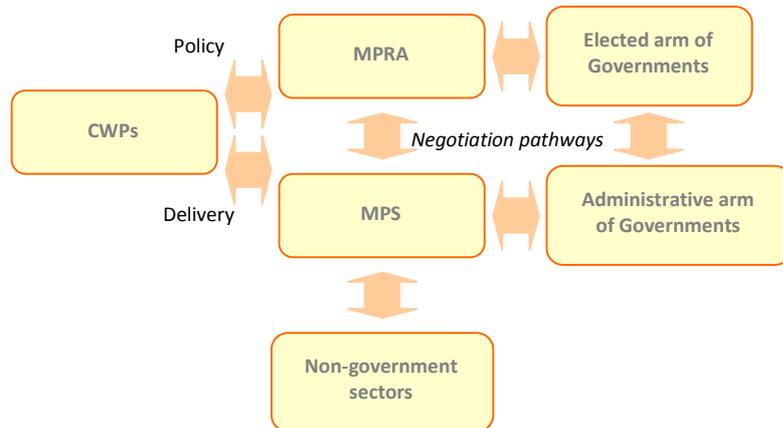
The central staff complement is intended to be supported by a cohort of eight Community Co-ordinators. There is an historical precedent for this arrangement: Community Facilitator positions were established in the region at the time of the COAG Trial in the mid-2000s, with each position supporting two CWPs. This arrangement brought about substantial benefit in terms of the level of community engagement achieved, and the period during which the Facilitators were active is viewed as the high water mark for engagement across all communities. A measure of the success of this initiative was that smaller communities felt that their voices were as important as those of larger, better resourced communities. After the positions were discontinued, larger communities with strong leadership, such as Bourke and Walgett, have tended to become dominant. MPRA aspires to all communities being equally engaged; thus it is proposed to create similar positions within the auspice of MPS to work with CWPs, community organisations and communities, and in the space between community, MPRA, governments and NGOs, and other service providers. As well as bringing about significant benefits for community development, the liaison role these positions will undertake will be invaluable.

The *Logic Model – Murdi Paaki Services* which follows encapsulates the concept for Murdi Paaki Services as proposed by MPRA.

### **2.3 Equalising the balance of power**

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of partnership which has been at the forefront of Government-initiated discourse over the 26 years of Aboriginal representation in the Murdi Paaki Region, true partnership has rarely been a reality. Lack of resourcing to Aboriginal representative bodies has ensured that MPRA has never had the ability to negotiate with governments as an equal partner. The power imbalance which results from unequal resource capacity has constrained Aboriginal agency and has frustrated our ability to prosecute a transformative agenda. It is thus seen as fundamental that MPRA be

provided with the economic means necessary to equalise the balance of power in our interactions with Governments. A revised power structure will carry with it Government respect for Aboriginal agency; increasing autonomy for our institutions; and clear and parallel pathways for negotiation: elected arm with elected arm, and operational arm with operational arm:



## 2.4 Internal structural barriers to improved performance

In the 1990s, the then Murdi Paaki Regional Council established organisations for the delivery of services in the health, economic development and housing sectors on a regional scale. These organisations had vital roles to play as strategic elements in Regional Council's agenda for regional autonomy.

As time has passed, the ability of each of these organisations to adapt to meet current expectations around governance and accountability has varied. Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC) and Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation (MPRHC) both have small boards comprising an overlapping cohort of directors who have a lengthy history of governance of these two organisations. Neither of these organisations has a membership base at a community level. The boards of MPREC and MPRHC are viewed by MPRA as having become increasingly unrepresentative and somewhat dysfunctional in recent times, such that governance is no longer seen as reflecting contemporary norms of practice. MPREC is no longer headquartered in the region, and this physical disconnection adds to the problem of representation. In particular, MPRA is concerned that the organisations are frustrated by their governance arrangements in their ability to target strategic opportunities to the benefit of communities as a whole.

With the emergence of new opportunities for Aboriginal organisations in the region to play a critical role in shaping more autonomous models for service delivery, MPRA, as originator of the organisations and as the entity responsible for strategic leadership within the region, has resolved to urge these two regional organisations to review and re-draft their constitutions with a view to democratising the organisations and updating board structures and practices to reflect current approaches to directorship. In this process, MPRA is advocating for:

- ❖ A broadly-based membership structure with representation at a membership level from each community across the region and from MPRA;

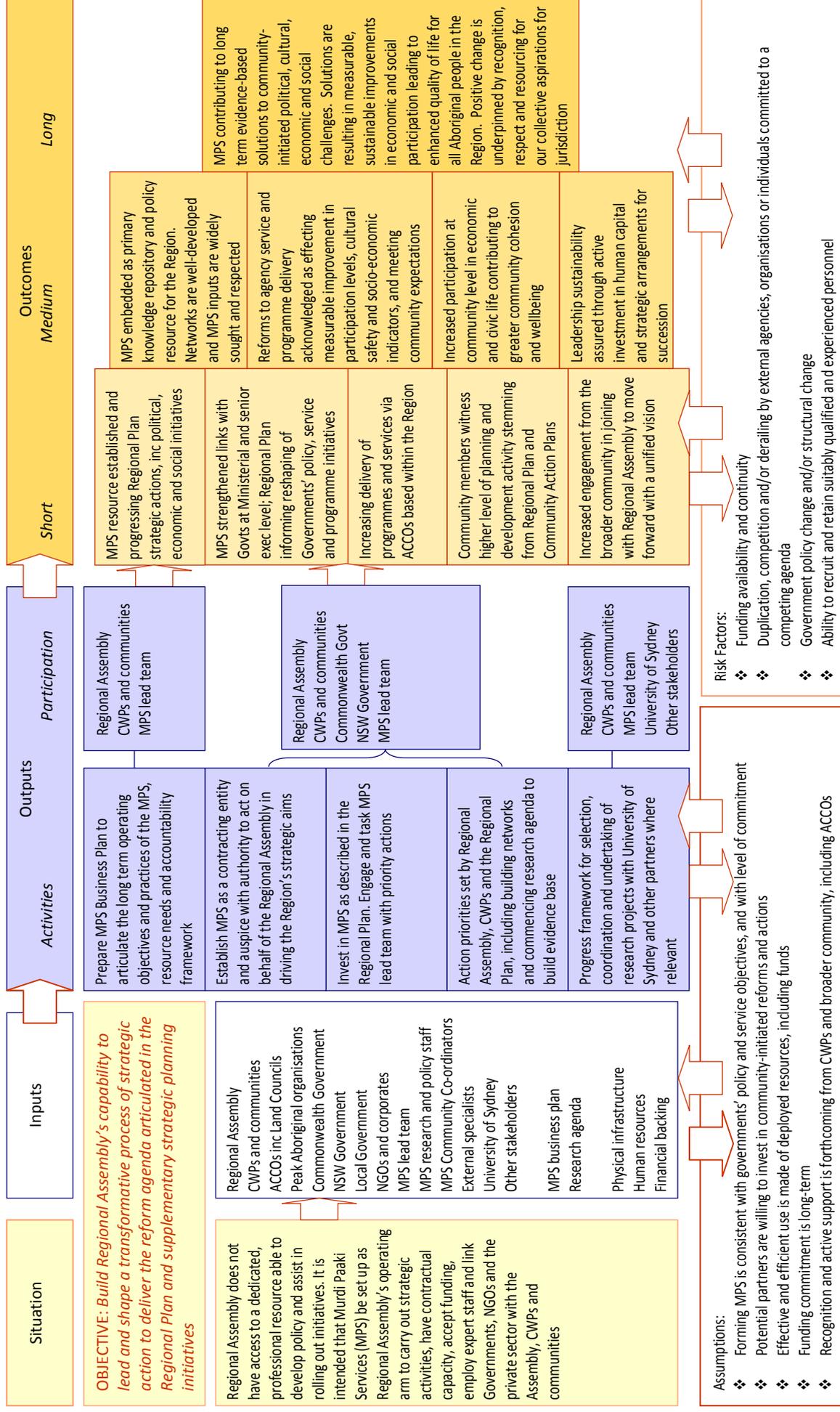
- ❖ Skills-based boards appointed in accordance with a skills matrix prepared to reflect factors specific to the sectors in which each of the organisations is operating and to maximise prospects for each organisation to attract new funding streams;
- ❖ A more proactive approach to fundamental aspects of directorship such as governance of strategy, performance and risk, and evaluation of management and director performance;
- ❖ Documented restrictions on the time any person may serve as a director, in line with research findings which identify the optimum length of service as three by three year terms, to introduce new thinking into governance structures on a regular basis; and
- ❖ Enhanced capacity to respond strategically to opportunities arising under programmes such as the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) and the Community Development Programme (CDP), and new models for delivery of Commonwealth and NSW Government funding to the region, such as through the creation of funding pools.

MPRA reserves the right to investigate other arrangements for responsive, representative, community controlled structures for the region should the existing regional organisations be unwilling to reform.

## **2.5 Utilising our resources and capacities to better effect**

With MPS functional, MPREC and MPRHC revitalised, and interest in seeing the scope of services provided by performance-driven Aboriginal organisations extended, MPRA proposes to investigate further prospects for existing services to be contracted in whole or part to competent, effective Aboriginal entities at regional and local scales, and to target new opportunities created by our government, NGO and private sector partners for innovative models of service planning, design and delivery.

As described in Chapter 5, current arrangements for executive management of service planning, design and delivery external to our region are considered unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons including lack of accountability, poor cultural and geographical fit, and more symbolic issues related to erosion of our hard-won regional autonomy. The transition will require a carefully co-ordinated response by our organisations acting in concert and, likely, the creation of new organisations which anticipate and respond to opportunities as they emerge, such that channelling of service contracts through our own organisations will become normative practice among funding bodies.



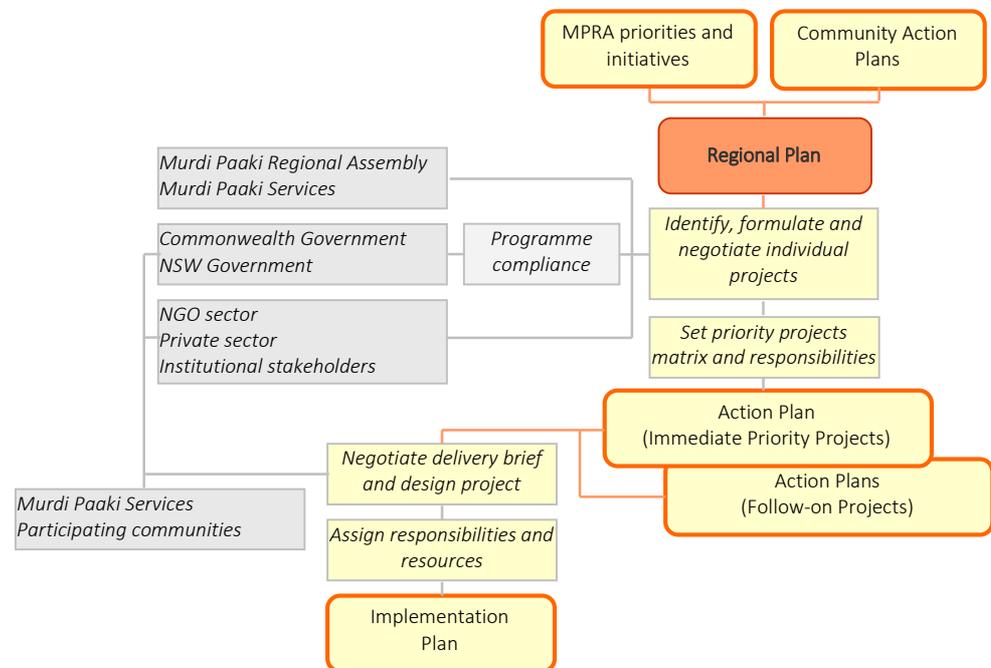
## Chapter 3 Strategic Development

### 3.1 Foundation for this Regional Plan

This Chapter sets out our agenda for strategic development at Regional level. It is informed by the aspirations of our communities as recorded by sixteen Community Action Plans, and by MPRA priorities derived through our consultations with communities and stakeholders. We have not omitted to recognise the need to amplify and reinforce strategic and operational capacity of Aboriginal institutions internal to our region and, as discussed in Chapter 2.5, we are committed to honouring our obligations to the reform agenda by reinforcing our own capabilities to the extent that resourcing permits. MPRA strongly emphasises the importance of pursuing the structural change needed to facilitate the effective delivery of this our third Regional Plan and will not relent in challenging the processes by which funding and resources are allocated to the Region. We will utilise the relationships established with the NSW Government through the Local Decision Making Accord (LDM) and with the Commonwealth Government to prosecute the case for reform.

### 3.2 Implementation process

We recognise that the initiatives proposed by this Regional Plan need to be implementable, achievable and beneficial. For this reason, MPRA propose a staged process of identification, negotiation, design and implementation of individual projects which contribute to improving the political, cultural, economic and social wellbeing of Aboriginal communities within the Region. The process is represented in the flowchart below:



### 3.3 Action areas

Themes are consolidated into a number of common action areas which provide the focus for MPRA's activities over the life of this Plan:

Strategic cultural focus	
Action Area 1	Heritage and Culture
Strategic community development focus	
Action Area 2	Regional Resourcing and Capability
Action Area 3	Democracy, Leadership and Citizenship
Action Area 4	Economic Development
Action Area 5	Law and Justice
Action Area 6	Early Childhood and School Education
Action Area 7	Housing and Infrastructure
Action Area 8	Wellbeing

### 3.4 Strategic cultural focus

Action Area 1: Heritage and Culture	
Goal: To value our role as stewards of Country and custodians of Aboriginal language, heritage and culture.	
Actions	
Objective: Strengthen the role of Aboriginal culture in our society.	
1.1	<b>Promote cultural engagement</b> Reflect the values and practices of Aboriginal culture within the Aboriginal community to build a positive identity and community unity. Safeguard and transmit cultural knowledge and practice by fostering positive teaching and learning relationships between Elders and young people. Promote traditional cultural practice as a way to heal our communities.
1.2	<b>Recognise the impact of past practices on our cultural affiliations</b> Recognise, accept and acknowledge the legacy of historical Aboriginal Affairs policy which has led to communities being composed of a mix of traditional owners of country and people with historical associations who were forcibly removed from their own country. Work to ensure that dispossession and marginalisation resulting from past policy are not perpetuated by conflict within communities, or by service provider practices.
1.3	<b>Safeguard history and heritage</b> Capture the history of our peoples and their places through a comprehensive, structured programme of oral history recording among older members of our communities and through advocating for the repatriation of cultural objects stolen from the region.
1.4	<b>Develop cultural and eco-tourism</b> Use the natural and cultural attributes of the Murdi Paaki Region to underpin greater involvement in cultural and eco-tourism.

*Objective: Preserve and build a wider competence in talking our languages.*

**1.5 Future-proof our languages**

Continue to expand the teaching of Aboriginal languages in all schools as a means of engaging children with education and reinforcing the positive value of cultural identity. Support language revival initiatives which engage the broader Aboriginal community and promote teaching of languages which reflect the language group affiliations of the communities where they are taught.

*Objective: Safeguard natural ecosystems to ensure their sustainability as an expression of our spiritual and cultural links to and responsibilities for land and waterways.*

**1.6 Care for country**

Advocate for the conservation and protection of landscapes, rivers and ecosystems and culturally sound natural resource management. Develop initiatives whereby communities take an active role in protecting biodiversity and remediating land and river degradation, including developing further skills and permanent employment in cultural heritage and land management. Obtain free access to and secure the protection of culturally significant places and landscapes. Ensure that local Elders are represented on governance bodies established to care for culturally significant places.

**1.7 Promote traditional knowledges**

Work towards recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal environmental science, including traditional knowledges about and methodologies for ecosystem management, traditional foods and medicines.

### **3.5 Strategic community development focus**

#### **Action Area 2: Regional Resourcing and Capability**

Goal: Establish and sustain a resource base to enable MPRA to play an effective role as leaders in transforming Aboriginal affairs administration in the region.

##### *Actions*

*Objective: Build MPRA's capability to lead and shape a transformative process of strategic action to deliver the reform agenda articulated in this Regional Plan and supplementary strategic planning initiatives.*

**2.1 Establish Murdi Paaki Services as the operational arm of MPRA**

Establish a dedicated, independent professional executive team comprising five to six skilled personnel to undertake a programme of research, policy and programme development, advocacy and negotiation, liaison, and related higher-order strategic business on behalf of MPRA. Ensure Murdi Paaki Services, as an incorporated entity, has the capacity to contract on behalf of MPRA and CWP and to hold funds on behalf of both.

**2.2 Community development and liaison**

Establish a cohort of eight positions at community level (one per two CWPs) within Murdi Paaki Services to resource CWPs to undertake a programme of progressive community development, further development of governance capability, engagement and liaison, including delivery on Regional Plan priorities and associated strategic initiatives at a local level, as well as progressing CWP priorities and development of local-based models for service planning, design and delivery.

**2.3 Strategically engage governments**

Facilitate dialogue with governments with a view to supporting the efficient, effective and equitable delivery of government services, including advocating the concept of funds pooling to support attainment of mutual priorities through culturally and geographically specific regional service planning, design and delivery. Assist governments to rethink existing models of service delivery, including through alternatives to one-off grant funding for short-term projects.

*Objective: Tackle structural issues within regional Aboriginal NGOs, revitalise their governance capacity and position organisations to respond successfully to funding opportunities.*

**2.4 Support a process of reflection, reform and restructuring within our key Aboriginal service providers**

Require Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC) and Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation (MPRHC) to review and re-draft their constitutions with a view to democratisation of the organisations and, more broadly, to best-practice governance processes reflective of modern thinking on directorship, innovation and performance. If organisations are unwilling to do so, investigate alternative arrangements.

**2.5 Establish new regional organisations to respond to emerging opportunities**

Respond to opportunities identified in strategic planning processes, where relevant, by creating new structures and/or models of delivery at a regional scale to implement the Regional Plan and associated strategic initiatives.

**2.6 Identify and target funding opportunities**

Utilise the capacity within Murdi Paaki Services to identify opportunities for allocation of Commonwealth, NSW Government, NGO and private sector funding to Murdi Paaki regional organisations and to support organisations to seek and acquire contracts to deliver services and infrastructure across the region. In particular, advocate for funding and delivery of services under CDP and NPARIH, respectively, to be allocated to the revitalised MPREC and MPRHC, or through other regionally based, Aboriginal-owned organisations as mutually agreed.

**2.7 Transition to autonomous programme and service delivery**

Advocate for Aboriginal NGOs based within the Region to take over existing Aboriginal-identified funding streams and responsibility for Aboriginal-specific programmes and services currently managed by major, centralised NGOs. MPRA aspires to secure commitment of 100% of funding through Region-based Aboriginal organisations with a view to securing sustainability of small population centres, and will drive this through MPS.

*Objective: Resource CWP through eliminating funding leakage*

**2.8 Resource CWP ability to implement community decisions through eliminating funding leakage**

Sequester departmental underspend in the Region, including savings on salaries and on-costs generated through retaining unfilled vacancies, to create the nucleus for a flexible funding pool for allocation by MPRA to support CWPs to implement local initiatives.

**Action Area 3: Democracy, Leadership and Citizenship**

Goal: To secure autonomy for the sovereign Aboriginal people of the region.

*Actions*

*Objective: Ensure the sustainable and progressive evolution of MPRA and the CWPs as the legitimate framework for political leadership and governance at regional and community levels.*

**3.1 Advocate for recognition of our institutions**

Honour and promote the Community Working Party framework as the legitimate representative voice of our communities, and assert the principle that our communities have the wisdom, experience and knowledge to advocate the aspiration of our people to manage the path to our own destinies.

**3.2 Governance framework**

Reflect on our governance framework at a community level to ensure that the CWPs can respond to evolving community aspirations, remain energetic and progressive, and can secure human capital and resource needs for CWP effectiveness and sustainability.

### 3.3 Plan for leadership succession

Foster leadership aspirations in men and women of all age groups in our communities, and equip potential leaders with the skills and attributes needed to bring about generational transition in community and regional leadership. Continue to resource and strengthen the MPAY&ELP, and develop strategies to engage others with leadership potential.

*Objective: Plan strategically for the advancement of Aboriginal people of the region.*

### 3.4 Insist on adoption of rigorous and accountable process frameworks

Advocate for a rigorous framework of evidence-based decision-making, planning, delivery, measurement and evaluation of progress as a means of asserting the principles of transparency, accountability and achievement around delivery against this Regional Plan and Community Action Plan objectives.

### 3.5 Engage opportunistically to influence policy

Continue to seek further opportunities to engage at a policy level with external authorities and organisations where it is in the strategic interests of the region to do so.

## Action Area 4: Economic Development

**Goal:** To grow an Aboriginal-owned economic base through Aboriginal-owned business start-ups and acquisitions and through expanding Aboriginal workforce participation and employment as joint pathways to financial independence.

### Actions

*Objective: Pursue a progressive programme of sustainable business creation and acquisition.*

#### 4.1 Create a business base

Focus on economic development as the vehicle to progressively build a presence in the mainstream regional economy through new business creation, business acquisition and joint venturing founded in innovation and diversification, allied to a major initiative to raise skill levels in business administration and operation. Look to the timely acquisition of established businesses and consolidation and expansion of existing Aboriginal enterprise ventures to sustain local economies and secure the long-term future of communities.

*Objective: Increase the level and range of professional and vocational skills across the region.*

#### 4.2 Strengthen tertiary and vocational education outcomes

Expand the knowledge base in our communities as the catalyst for greatly increased levels of activity in business, employment and resulting improvement in health and human services to communities. Match education and training to areas of skills deficit and industry requirements for multiple skills to increase capacity for innovation in business and for employability. Address the lack of opportunity for young people to gain work experience.

*Objective: Raise workforce participation and employment through relevant labour market strategies.*

#### 4.3 Refresh labour market strategies and grow opportunities

Advocate for, and influence, targeted labour market policies and strategies to increase the rate of workforce participation for those who face barriers due to lack of opportunity in the regional mainstream economy, inadequate numeracy, literacy, life skills and health-related barriers. Negotiate and develop sustainable, meaningful employment for young people and adults in communities across the region.

### Action Area 5: Law and Justice

Goal: To reduce the number of Aboriginal people interacting with the criminal justice system.

#### Actions

*Objective: Advocate for the principle that Aboriginal people are treated with justice, fairness, equality and respect before the law.*

#### 5.1 Advocate equality under the law

Work towards legal systems and processes which achieve non-discriminatory outcomes. Advocate for the continuation of culturally appropriate legal services, and for assistance to Aboriginal victims and survivors of crime.

#### 5.2 Support increased participation in legal structures

Support increased participation by Aboriginal people in law and justice institutions through advocating for greater local deployment of suitably qualified people with strong cultural affiliations in police and justice-related services.

#### 5.3 Advocate for the needs of mentally ill people

Advocate for accessible full-time mental health services to be available to assist people with mental health issues to avoid contact with the criminal justice system.

*Objective: Lead a process aimed at reducing the incidence of offending and reoffending, and the numbers of Aboriginal people in custody.*

#### 5.4 Pursue Justice Reinvestment and diversion initiatives

Vigorously prosecute a regional Justice Reinvestment strategy, developing and advocating for culturally-relevant crime prevention and diversion initiatives. Support initiatives directed at reducing re-offending. Develop a business case as the basis for community-led options for rehabilitation of offenders and diversion of those at risk of offending.

### Action Area 6: Early Childhood and School Education

Goal: To transform the academic achievement of our children and young people across pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

#### Actions

*Objective: Promote continuous improvement in academic achievement, underpinned and enriched by culturally relevant curriculum development and delivery.*

#### 6.1 Structural reform

In view of the major investment in the education of Aboriginal children in the Murdi Paaki Region, and the inconsistent and often poor outcomes achieved, commence a rigorous and searching examination of prospects and framework for structural reform at all levels of the education system. Look to the relationships, structures and practices that existed during the COAG Trial to inform the reform process.

#### 6.2 Early childhood services

Ensure that all children of pre-school age have access to early childhood socialisation and education; that early childhood services in each community are adequately resourced and well integrated, with a coherent focus on seamlessly meeting the needs of children continuously from infancy to years K and 1 of school; that parental engagement is a consistent feature of programme design and delivery; and that a holistic approach to early intervention is consistently delivered to support the transition to school.

#### 6.3 Encourage participation in education for all children of school age to HSC

Ensure that all children of school age are enrolled in and are regularly attending school; and that senior students have access to evidence-based career development options including TVET, VET in Schools and tertiary preparation programmes. Require that MPRA is provided with meaningful quantitative data to enable regular measurement of individual school performance.

6.4	<b>Support relationship-building to underpin education outcomes</b>
Support constructive working relationships between MPRA and schools, CWP and schools, and between parents and schools. In Connected Communities schools, resolve the policy anomaly which denies the status of the CWPs and MPRA as the peak representative body for the community and the region, respectively, and ensure Connected Communities is subordinated to the LDM Accord. In other schools, seek regular reporting to and consultation with the CWPs through the LDM process.	
6.5	<b>Advocate for educational support and enrichment programmes</b>
Advocate for region-wide delivery of allied programmes and strategies proven to improve educational attainment by children: literacy and numeracy programmes, structured after-school programmes (homework centres), improved access to reliable technology to support delivery of distance education in a wide range of subjects; improved cultural literacy of teachers; a much greater presence of Aboriginal adults in teaching, support and governance roles; and greater engagement of Elders in delivery of cultural education, language education and supporting excursions and field trips.	
6.6	<b>Advocate for student support and wellbeing initiatives</b>
Advocate for initiatives to support Aboriginal students' attainment and wellbeing. Initiatives will include consistent early access to assessment and intervention for students with physical health, disability, psychological and learning support needs; responses to dietary and nutritional needs; timely delivery of allied health services including speech pathology and occupational therapy services; efforts towards a better understanding of factors leading to alienation and poor outcomes; more consistent identification of and delivery of support to children with special needs around various functional aspects of learning; identification of more effective ways of responding to children with behavioural problems (other than conventional disciplinary approaches such as suspension and expulsion); and approaches to social inclusion and reduction of the impact of racism in schools.	
6.7	<b>Support initiatives which build the capacity of families, parents and carers of children to improve educational outcomes</b>
Encourage delivery of adult literacy and numeracy programmes, and programmes which expand understanding of and ability to respond to the learning and developmental needs of children through all stages of development.	

### Action Area 7: Housing and Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure that Aboriginal people in western NSW have access to appropriate social housing and infrastructure.

#### Actions

*Objective: Secure accountability from social housing funding bodies for resourcing of social housing provision within the Region.*

#### 7.1 Address lack of accountability on the part of housing agencies

Audit housing-related economic inputs to the region to identify funding committed to social housing, the sources of this funding, and allocation and management processes. Focus on the roll-out of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), Aboriginal Housing Office engagement with communities, and related accountability issues; and explore equity in the manner in which funds have been allocated to the Region.

*Objective: Advance new solutions to secure affordable shelter and physical infrastructure services required for living in rural and remote environments.*

**7.2 Develop and implement a new Regional Housing model**

Develop a sustainable and affordable housing strategy for the Region, focussing on rationalising the number of social housing providers operating across the Region and streamlining management processes.

**7.3 Identify and advocate for satisfaction of housing needs**

Identify housing needs in each community across the region, taking into account homelessness; crowding; housing needs of older people; access to emergency housing; needs of young people and those in the phase of family formation; and hostel accommodation for specific groups such as those requiring health care, offenders seeking re-integration into the community, and other special needs categories. Seek to increase the stock of social housing across the region to respond to the findings of the housing needs analysis.

**7.4 Promote access to affordable essential services**

Support projects which increase tenants' access to affordable, renewable energy to mitigate the cost burden of essential services on household budgets.

**Action Area 8: Wellbeing**

Goal: To value and keep sound the physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing of all members of our communities.

*Actions*

*Objective: Innovate to ensure the ready access of each community to stable, co-ordinated, responsive, targeted health care services to address the health gap experienced by Aboriginal people living in the Murdi Paaki Region.*

**8.1 Advocate for primary health and wellness services**

Ensure adequate, accessible, comprehensive primary health care services and wellness programmes are available to all members of each community, including access to immunisation, early childhood development, screening programmes, chronic disease management, oral health, mental health/social and emotional wellbeing/trauma, grief and loss, allied health and pharmacy services. Advocate for targeted, age- and gender-specific health and SEWB services for men, women, older people and young people in our communities.

**8.2 Support the needs of older people and people with disabilities**

Advocate for culturally safe services and facilities for older people and people with disabilities in our communities, including carer support, purpose-designed and built accommodation, improved access to home modifications, centre-based and community-based care including through greater Aboriginal engagement in designing and delivering home and community care services. Engage with NDIS processes.

**8.3 Support the needs of people affected by past removal policies**

Support the provision of services to those affected by past removal policies, and/or impacted by dispossession, separation from family, ongoing social disadvantage, racism and other historical, societal or cultural causes.

*Objective: Strengthen families' ability to make culturally-informed choices which have the effect of reducing stress, the incidence of domestic and family violence, and the number of children at risk of harm.*

**8.4 Advocate for child and family support services**

Ensure that children and their families have access to, and utilise, a comprehensive range of support services so that all children can be reared in a protected, nurturing environment. Advocate for services to decrease the incidence of children at risk; and for facilities to provide early childhood education, development and recreational opportunities, and that allow children, particularly those in out of home care, to stay engaged with their culture.

**8.5 Deliver youth leadership initiatives**

Continue to develop the leadership skills and attributes of young people within our communities, including through provision of a forum to develop projects to give young people (especially those in the 10 to 18 year cohort) a sense of positive engagement in society through cultural connection, recreational and sporting opportunities; and through facilitating young people to play a valued role in community-building. Advocate for youth centres to be reinstated where they have been discontinued to support young people's health and development.

**8.6 Support community safety**

Support measures to make our communities safer through preventing the risks of harm posed by unsafe living conditions; high-risk activities such as alcohol and other drug use and dangerous driving; anti-social behaviour; physical, sexual and psychological violence; abuse and neglect of children and older people; and preventable accidents. Support men's groups (and resource the introduction of men's groups where none exist) to deliver advocacy programmes against family violence.

*Objective: To collaborate with responsible agencies as equal partners to achieve higher order outcomes from core health and human services.*

**8.7 Pursue innovative service delivery models**

Continue to work with governments, the NGO and private sectors as equal partners in seamlessly meeting community need for health and human services through coordinated, effective and efficient service delivery. Broker innovative multi-sectoral partnering arrangements where these would advance MPRA's development agenda and bring a measurable improvement to the lives of Aboriginal people living in our communities.

**8.8 Influence co-ordination in service delivery**

Continue to exert pressure, through political means, to engage those agencies which have not, to date, participated in initiatives aimed at co-ordination in service delivery.

**8.9 Require service provider cross-cultural competency**

Require all service providers to ensure cross-cultural competency of personnel through provision of locally relevant cultural awareness training and to observe MPRA engagement protocols.

### **3.6 Evidence base**

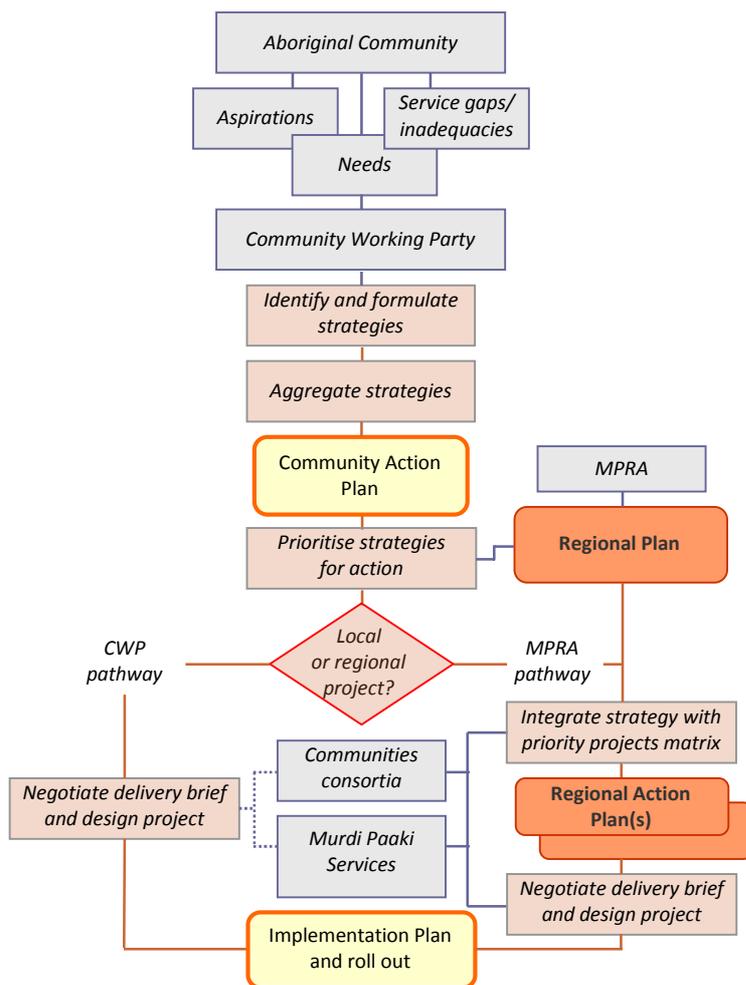
Where data availability permits, an evidence base has been developed in subsequent Chapters in support of selected initiatives. This is not exhaustive nor can it be given the continuing barriers to access to current, geographically specific, policy relevant information. Changes in data collecting methodologies, geographic coverage, data ageing, commercialisation and barriers to access constrain our capacity to compile a comprehensive evidence base as the foundation for informed decision-making but the data presented may aid as a starting point in good-faith negotiations to bring about change, and in key areas a transformation, in the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in western NSW.

# Chapter 4 Community Participation

## 4.1 Community participation in implementation

MPRA’s role has always been to negotiate around regional priorities; the role of the CWPs, around local issues, aspirations and priorities. Action areas in this Regional Plan have been identified largely by documenting strategic priorities at a regional scale, but also derive from a close examination of community issues, aspirations and priorities documented in Community Action Plans (CAPs). CAPs consulted for this Regional Plan were the most recent available.

While this Regional Plan forms the umbrella strategic framework within which development and implementation of regionally-focussed initiatives occurs, our Community Working Parties have identified and will plan parallel local initiatives which complement the regional actions described above. Some communities, individually or collectively, will pilot or collaborate on projects on behalf of the region as a whole. All or the majority of communities with common local needs or aspirations may join in working with other stakeholders to a regional objective as shown by the flowcharts in Chapter 3.2 and below.



To assist in developing a consistent and coherent regional action agenda, strategic priorities identified by each community which may be adopted to guide implementation of this Regional Plan and, subject to community consent, Community Action Plans, are given in Chapter 4.2.

Priorities are not stated in any particular order and the position in which they occur does not confer any preference for one over another. All are equally important. In some instances, further planning or feasibility work, or resources, may be needed to fully describe a strategy.

## 4.2 Community priorities

The word clouds below present a summary of the principal strategic content of each CAP. Overarching priority areas for each CWP were identified and are denoted in each word cloud by a larger font size. The smaller font represents a summary of selected other strategies in each of the CAPs, in abridged form.



#### Bourke Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Support, encourage and reinforce our cultural identity, particularly through collection and documentation of oral histories;
- Nurture and protect our children, teach them about the value of life, and immerse them in cultural practices and language;
- Assist our people to lead long, healthy and rewarding lives;
- Improve the governance of our local organisations and community groups and aspire to fair, open, transparent, equitable and honest dealings with the community; and
- Create enterprises capable of bringing wealth to the community.



#### Broken Hill Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Support our children to continuously improve their academic achievements enriched by strong cultural values;
- Provide opportunities for our people to engage in meaningful work and enjoy improved economic wellbeing;
- Require service providers to commit to and observe CWP engagement protocols when conducting business;
- Continue to support and maintain a safe, healthy and resilient Aboriginal community in Broken Hill;
- Work to ensure our people are treated with justice, fairness, equality and respect before the law; and
- Advocate for improved access to and availability of safe, affordable and quality housing.



#### Cobar Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Improve the well-being of Aboriginal children and young people in Cobar;
- Provide a cultural and spiritual environment for our people, including raising the wider community's awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture and creating opportunities for families to be connected to Country and identity;
- Raise our capacity to participate in identifying, planning and implementing activities and projects that address CWP priorities and community needs, including developing a stakeholder/CWP engagement protocol;
- Actively encourage increased activity in business creation and acquisition and greater participation of local Aboriginal people in the workforce; and
- Work in partnership with housing providers to increase the stock of housing to meet all the needs of our community.



#### Collarenebri Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Acknowledge, maintain and enhance the value of Aboriginal heritage in Collarenebri, including recovering artefacts removed from the community and upgrading sites of cultural significance;
- Facilitate formation of separate Elders’ men’s, women’s and youth groups as a means of improving community resilience, harmony and fostering leadership;
- Create a Secretariat Coordinating position to assist in improving CWP governance and administration;
- Lift the educational achievements of our children from Preschool to Year 12, including providing literacy and numeracy support and after-hours tuition; and
- Improve health services available to the community.



#### Coonamble Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Lead a process of cultural renewal focussing on Aboriginal language, heritage and cultural traditions and practices;
- Work with stakeholders to find solutions to long housing waiting lists and overcrowding and work collaboratively to bring about improvements in the quality, safety and condition of housing stock;
- Implement community-developed initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of engagement of young people with the justice system;
- Encourage the introduction of more intensive support measures for children attending local schools, including enabling higher rates of retention, positive participation in class, mentoring, teaching of Aboriginal studies as a means of reinforcing culture and identity, and providing pathways into employment and tertiary education; and
- Continue to support the Combined Coonamble Health Service but advocate for improved co-ordination and range of health services with a specific focus on AoD detox, counselling and support services.



#### Dareton/Wentworth Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Develop and deliver a cultural renewal programme which strengthens Aboriginal identity and allows our people to reconnect with culture;
- Take a proactive approach to developing a respectful relationship with housing providers to ensure improvement across all aspects of social housing management and alignment with community values;
- Foster delivery of consistent, accountable health and human services which address the many factors affecting the safety of our community members;
- Pursue initiatives which provide and foster growth of a sustainable economic base for our community, including building the capacity of our community members to enter and remain in the workforce; and
- Advocate for increased opportunities in the classroom for our children to strengthen cultural identity and be supported to higher levels of academic achievement.



### Enngonia Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Engage in partnership with vision and values-aligned stakeholders to advance the wellbeing of our community;
- Reunite families separated by lack of local opportunities, resources and services;
- Negotiate for improved facilities, services and programmes to a standard enjoyed by larger communities;
- Create jobs and work opportunities for our people so that we can have normal family lives free of poverty; and
- Improve our levels of learning and skills so that we can manage our own affairs.



### Goodooga Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Observe and value our Aboriginal traditions, culture and history and ensure this knowledge is passed to the next generations;
- Enhance our social and economic status by preparing and implementing an economic development strategy which sees essential services return to the community through, in the first instance, the re-opening of the local store;
- Advocate for and participate in initiatives which greatly enhance the engagement of our infants and children with quality learning and raise their level of academic achievement at all stages from early childhood to adulthood;
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our residents through ensuring all houses are adequately maintained, cooled and heated and are suitable to allow our Elders and those with a disability to live independently.



### Gulargambone Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- As custodians of our land, voice of the first inhabitants and residents of Gulargambone, work towards greater recognition of Gulargambone Aboriginal Community members as citizens wishing to take a genuine place in society and contribute leadership to the wellbeing of our community;
- Strive to create a caring environment to safeguard the emotional health of our children to give them every chance of a life free from harmful influences;
- Invest in the education of our children so that our children and our children's children may have every opportunity to know a better life; and
- Take it upon ourselves to keep ourselves safe and in good shape by living a healthy lifestyle in a caring social environment.



#### Ivanhoe Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Develop a community cultural keeping place and knowledge and visitor centre as the focal point for researching, displaying and honouring our cultural heritage, and to create a culturally safe hub for delivery of health and human services;
- Advocate for the provision of the physical infrastructure and resources needed to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people;
- Advocate for the infrastructure, resources and services necessary for the respectful care for our Elders;
- Enhance community awareness of, and access to, a greater range of primary health prevention and intervention services; and
- Ensure our people have access to safe, well maintained housing free from overcrowding and provided with the means to lessen the impacts of the Ivanhoe climate and environment.



#### Lightning Ridge Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Observe and value our Aboriginal traditions, culture and history, including building a community cultural keeping place and knowledge centre as the focus for researching and displaying our cultural heritage, and which creates a resource for knowledge transfer;
- Foster the on-going role of the Lightning Ridge Aboriginal Child and Family Centre as the focal point for childcare, early childhood and family support services and continue to work to achieve service sustainability;
- In partnership with education sector stakeholders, develop and implement strategies which improve the educational attainment of our children and young people, and safeguard their wellbeing while at school;
- Advocate for improved safety in the home and community, including measures which reduce the adverse impacts of AoD use and domestic and family violence, and which introduce culturally appropriate diversionary processes; and
- Improve access to affordable housing and increase awareness of, and access to, home ownership.



#### Menindee Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Negotiate a oral history and action research training programme, and record the stories of our Elders;
- Advocate for improved access to SEWB services, for a strategy to assist those who may want to change their drinking habits and for a more effective dental service;
- Improve availability, quality, and sustainability of our housing and environmental health infrastructure;
- Ensure that all school age Aboriginal children are enrolled in an education system that is culturally affirming and intellectually enriching; and
- Prepare and implement a crime prevention strategy, focussing on AoD issues, to facilitate a safe and harmonious community environment.



### Ngemba Brewarrina Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Develop and implement a strategy which enhances the Cultural and Spiritual environment in which we live;
- Actively work to increase employment opportunities for the people of Brewarrina, including building capacity, growing Aboriginal enterprises, and using our assets;
- Increase awareness of factors impacting on health through emphasis on health education and promotion;
- Improve school attendance and educational attainment, including raising levels of literacy and numeracy and achieving greater levels of completion of HSC or equivalent TAFE courses;
- Reduce the shortfall in affordable housing; and
- Lift the level of assistance provided to the community to foster family wellbeing, including providing effective and accessible services for women and children at risk.



### Walgett Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Establish a local housing r&m business to reduce wait times for urgent repairs, prevent deterioration of housing stock and create employment;
- Provide for the sustainability of our valued cultural learning hub, keeping place and cultural exhibition centre and resource the centre's Elders support programmes;
- Enhance the range and condition of the physical infrastructure which underpins our ability to deliver health and human services to the community, with particular reference to early childhood services.
- Advocate for the means to build the capacity of local young people to succeed to governance and management positions within our organisations; and
- Develop a new youth centre and youth organisation to facilitate and deliver youth activities, including integrating and/or coordinating existing youth services.



### Weilmoringle Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Advocate for an improvement in access to, and consistency of, health and human services provided into the community with particular reference to those requiring care for chronic disease;
- Advocate for initiatives and resources which allow the residents of Weilmoringle to enjoy the same quality and reliability of essential services as the broad community;
- Strengthen our capacity to create sustainable employment opportunities for ourselves and be skilled to take advantage of these opportunities; and
- Build stronger relationships with Weilmoringle Primary School with a view to encouraging the introduction of a greater range of support initiatives aimed at improving the quality of, and engagement of young children with, education.

Housing  
Offender re-integration programme  
 Community safety  
Connections to country and culture Youth strategy  
 Culture and heritage  
Accessible local ACD services Cultural competence  
Affordable housing Link training to employment  
 Vocational training and transitions  
Cultural identity  
 Economic and business development  
 Employment participation  
 Education

#### Wilcannia Community Priorities and Priority Actions

- Advocate for resources to strengthen cultural identity and assist community members to reconnect with their culture as the means of re-asserting the influence of traditional values in the community;
- Negotiate greatly enhanced service delivery in the social housing sector to ensure access to adequate, affordable and defect-free housing. Assist community members to transition to home ownership where there is interest;
- Foster access to locally-based culturally safe health and human services which address the many factors affecting the wellbeing of our community members;
- Pursue initiatives which create a sustainable economic base for our community, including increasing paid employment opportunities; and
- Facilitate initiatives which tackle poor early childhood development outcomes and support children to reach higher levels of educational achievement.

## **Chapter 5 Democracy, Leadership and Citizenship**

### **5.1 Historical context**

MPRA is the incarnation of an innovative project which commenced in the Murdi Paaki Region over twenty years ago with the establishment of the first Community Working Parties. The CWPs were initially envisaged as broadly representative bodies which would guide and govern the delivery of major capital works projects in selected communities. As time passed, and as more CWPs came into being across the region, their sphere of interest expanded and, with it, their role as the peak representative body in each community. Of critical importance is the fact that the CWPs were spontaneous outgrowths of community aspirations for governance and self-determination, and have never been available for co-option to serve sectional interests or external agendas.

MPRA itself is unique among Aboriginal representative structures in that it represents a logical, orderly evolution of representation following the abolition of the ATSI Council Murdi Paaki Regional Council. The planning forum established by Regional Council and comprising the chairpersons of each of the sixteen CWPs was reconstituted as Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly in 2004 and, in 2005, transitioned seamlessly into the roles formerly undertaken by Regional Council. Thus, the Indigenous representative institutions of the Murdi Paaki Region bring to their current roles collective experience accumulated over an unbroken period of over twenty years of stable, principled and legitimate democratic leadership. MPRA has evolved to a culturally and geographically specific model representative of community aspirations for participation, representation and jurisdiction. We do not represent community members merely as passive consumers of services but as active citizens seizing every possible opportunity to participate in civic society.

At the time of writing, MPRA is signatory to a Local Decision Making Accord (LDM) with the NSW Government, but has no current, formal instrument of agreement with the Australian Government. Negotiations are continuing with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with a view to execution of a Regional Framework Agreement in the near future. These instruments are the most recent in a succession of agreements with governments executed over a twenty year timeframe. Throughout this period, MPRA and the CWPs have proven over and over again our capacity to identify and articulate the issues our communities contend with and to devise and advocate for specific initiatives to address these issues. We will continue to do so and, in the process, will advance the cause of our people in our aspiration to shape our own collective destiny.

### **5.2 Leadership succession**

For several years, MPRA has planned for an orderly succession of leadership through the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Young and Emerging Leaders Programme (MPAY&ELP). MPAY&ELP provides structured training and personal development to young Aboriginal people, and emerging leaders aged in their 20s and 30s who are involved in community but have not undertaken governance roles, from communities across the region with an intense focus on leadership and democracy. MPRA relies on the Young and Emerging Leaders to undertake deliberative processes on behalf of the Aboriginal Youth of the region and to provide youth representation in decision-making and policy setting. The Young and Emerging Leaders are well integrated within the CWPs and MPRA itself, with four

positions at the table. The contribution of the MPAY&ELP to continuity and adaptability of CWP's and MPRA is fundamental to the future of democracy and citizenship in our region.

### **5.3 Rigour and accountability**

Accountability has been a continuing source of frustration for MPRA over time. Even though partnerships with government have been characterised by a focus on service delivery, it has been difficult at best to measure outcomes because of an unwillingness or inability to establish a quantitative evidence base and to agree performance measures. The only means available to us to determine whether measurable improvement has taken place is to interrogate five-yearly census data – a manifestly unsuitable method of evaluating the performance of programmes as they are being delivered. Executive staff of our major Aboriginal community controlled NGOs; in particular, Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, have fostered a culture of evaluation, and rigorously assess the impact of programmes and services on an ongoing basis. In order to foster a rigorous approach to benchmarking and evaluation, we seek access to the programme and service data we need to be able to measure the performance of service providers in our region, particularly those working in the strategic areas identified for action in this Regional Plan.

One critical element of accountability requires that service providers hear and act on the advice of our communities in identifying and defining issues and devising and implementing solutions. The rhetoric from governments acknowledges that Aboriginal people are best placed to identify the problems facing our communities and to propose solutions; the reality has not always reflected the rhetoric. Generic solutions to poorly understood problems produce, at best, little change and, at worst, unintended adverse consequences for which blame is then ascribed to communities. Our democratic structures harness the broad range of views from across our communities and represent an indispensable resource for policy-makers and service providers.

### **5.4 Our region, our decision-making, our services**

It is of concern to MPRA that governments have moved to centralise key regional functions outside of the region. This trend is exemplified by the withdrawal of Regional Managers in the Aboriginal Affairs sector from Bourke to Dubbo, with consequent consolidation of government decision-making external to our region. This signals to us the perception, rightly or wrongly, that the work of MPRA and the aspirations of our people are not of sufficient significance to justify a senior presence on the ground. It also results in impaired ability to co-ordinate service delivery.

Centralisation of bureaucracy is mirrored by devolution to NGOs of services traditionally provided by governments. These tend to be major NGOs with governance and senior management functions based in metropolitan areas. MPRA aims to achieve a progressive transition of programmes and services currently provided by mainstream agencies and NGOs to regional delivery by appropriately resourced Aboriginal community controlled services centralised within our region.

## Chapter 6 Population Geography

### 6.1 To a more reliable basis for population estimation

The conventional approach to resource allocation has relied upon use of census data to establish relative population numbers as a surrogate for need. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) takes a detailed Census of Population and Housing every five years but the number of persons enumerated represents a net undercount. The undercount is proportionally higher for the Aboriginal population of the Murdi Paaki Region than for other populations and other geographies in NSW; thus, this basis for resource allocation has historically been inequitable. Following each census, the ABS conducts a Post Enumeration Survey. Using data from this and from other sources (see Appendix 1 for further detail), Estimated Resident Populations (ERPs) are backcast to 30<sup>th</sup> June in the census year. These ERPs are the best available estimate of population and are the most equitable measure for use in allocating funding and resources to populations. For these reasons, and in the interests of promoting a more rigorous and more equitable basis for resource allocation in the Murdi Paaki Region, Chapters 6 and 7 establish alternative approaches to quantifying Aboriginal population to the satisfaction of MPRA.

The region has been divided into three discrete and geographically consistent sub-regions: North West (Coonamble, Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke and Cobar LGAs), Far West (Central Darling, Unincorporated Far West, Wentworth and Balranald LGAs) and Broken Hill LGA. In the few instances where it is of advantage to do so, details are shown for each LGA.

### 6.2 Census geography

The boundaries of the Murdi Paaki Region do not concord precisely with the ABS Census geography. The Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Walgett, Coonamble, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Central Darling and Wentworth and the Statistical Local Area (SLA) of Unincorporated Far West are all contained completely in the region; the northern part of Cobar LGA (including Cobar) and the northern and western parts of Balranald LGA (including Euston but excluding Balranald) also form part of the region.

In this Chapter, two different geographies have been adopted:

- ❖ Geography 1: all eight LGAs/SLAs contained entirely within the region plus an approximation based upon Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s) for the parts of Cobar and Balranald in the region, representing as closely as possible the actual area within the boundaries of the Murdi Paaki Region – this geography has been used for calculations related to the age-sex structure of the Aboriginal population; and
- ❖ Geography 2: nine LGAs/SLAs, with Cobar included and Balranald excluded (so Murrin Bridge in, Euston out; 2011 Census counts 99 and 39 Aboriginal people respectively). This approximation enables access to datasets not available using the hybrid geography above.

The implications of these two approaches are canvassed further in Appendix 1. If, in future, the ABS ceases to publish data for the current LGA geography, a list of SA1s which provide the closest concordance possible at this scale with the Murdi Paaki Region is also presented in Appendix 1.

### 6.3 Enumerated population

Table 6.1 sets out the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations for the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole as recorded on the night of the census: 9th August 2011 using both geographies. The difference in census counts between the two geographies is small – about 1.3%.

Table 6.1 – Enumerated total population, Murdi Paaki Region, as at 9th August 2011, TableBuilder Online

	Population			Total
	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Not stated	
Geography 1	8,265	36,598	3,107	47,970
Geography 2	8,372	36,200	3,070	47,642

Aboriginal people who responded to the Indigenous status question formed either 18.4% or 18.8% of the enumerated population, depending on geography.

It should be noted that, in instances, aggregated populations quoted in this summary may differ very slightly. This is an artefact of the manner in which the ABS calculates and presents data and is not a miscalculation.

### 6.4 Population estimate

Table 6.2 sets out the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations for the Murdi Paaki Region (Geography 2: nine LGAs/SLAs) as a whole), and for each of the constituent LGAs, on the basis of the ERPs.

Table 6.2 – Population estimates, Murdi Paaki Region, 9 LGAs/SLAs, ERPs as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011

LGA	Population			Aboriginal population as % of total
	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Total	
Bourke	1,150	1,903	3,053	37.7%
Brewarrina	1,253	621	1,874	66.9%
Cobar	743	4,140	4,883	15.2%
Coonamble	1,448	2,778	4,226	34.3%
Walgett	2,257	4,540	6,797	33.2%
<i>North West Subtotal</i>	<i>6,851</i>	<i>13,982</i>	<i>20,833</i>	<i>32.9%</i>
Central Darling	877	1,182	2,059	42.6%
Wentworth	809	6,028	6,837	11.8%
Unincorporated FW	59	668	727	8.1%
<i>Far West Subtotal</i>	<i>1,745</i>	<i>7,878</i>	<i>9,623</i>	<i>18.1%</i>
Broken Hill	1,705	17,446	19,151	8.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,301</b>	<b>39,306</b>	<b>49,607</b>	<b>20.8%</b>

The importance of using ERPs for this purpose when considering the needs of the Aboriginal population cannot be overstated, particularly given a disproportionate tendency among the Aboriginal population fraction to fail to complete the census form, and a differentially higher representation in the 'not stated' response category in relation to the Indigenous identification question.

When compared with the 2011 Census count, the ABS Aboriginal ERP for the region as a whole was 23% higher than the census count (range: 15% higher in Central Darling Shire

to 64% higher in Unincorporated Far West); the non-Indigenous ERP was 9% higher than the census count (range: equal in Brewarrina Shire to 16% higher in Bourke Shire).

Table 6.3 shows ERPs calculated by ABS for the total population of each of the nine LGAs/SLAs at 30<sup>th</sup> June in 2011 to 2014. The ERP for Unincorporated FW was calculated by subtracting the Central Darling ERP from the Far West SA2 ERP.

LGA/SLA	Estimated Resident Population			
	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2012	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
Bourke	3,053	3,029	2,995	2,973
Brewarrina	1,874	1,874	1,940	1,931
Cobar	4,883	4,902	5,023	5,111
Coonamble	4,226	4,238	4,278	4,292
Walgett	6,797	6,813	6,784	6,840
<i>North West Subtotal</i>	<i>20,833</i>	<i>20,856</i>	<i>21,020</i>	<i>21,147</i>
Central Darling	2,059	2,083	2,070	2,065
Wentworth	6,837	6,838	6,831	6,884
Unincorporated FW	727	733	728	726
<i>Far West Subtotal</i>	<i>9,623</i>	<i>9,654</i>	<i>9,629</i>	<i>9,675</i>
Broken Hill	19,151	19,123	19,045	19,048
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,607</b>	<b>49,633</b>	<b>49,694</b>	<b>49,870</b>

If the ABS Series B Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projected growth rates (see Chapter 7) for the North-western NSW Indigenous Region are applied to the nine Murdi Paaki Region LGAs/SLAs, the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 Aboriginal population projection for the region would be 10,637, or 21.3% of the total ERP estimated by the ABS. The projected change 2011 to 2014 represents an average annual growth in population of 1.07% (cf. NSW growth of 1.95% in the Aboriginal population).

## 6.5 Demographic indicators

The analysis in this section is based on the ABS 2011 Census, and the geography used represents the closest possible concordance at this scale to the Murdi Paaki Region: Geography 1: the eight LGAs plus the relevant SA1s from Balranald and Cobar LGAs. Table 6.4 shows some key indicators derived from the age-sex structure of the population.

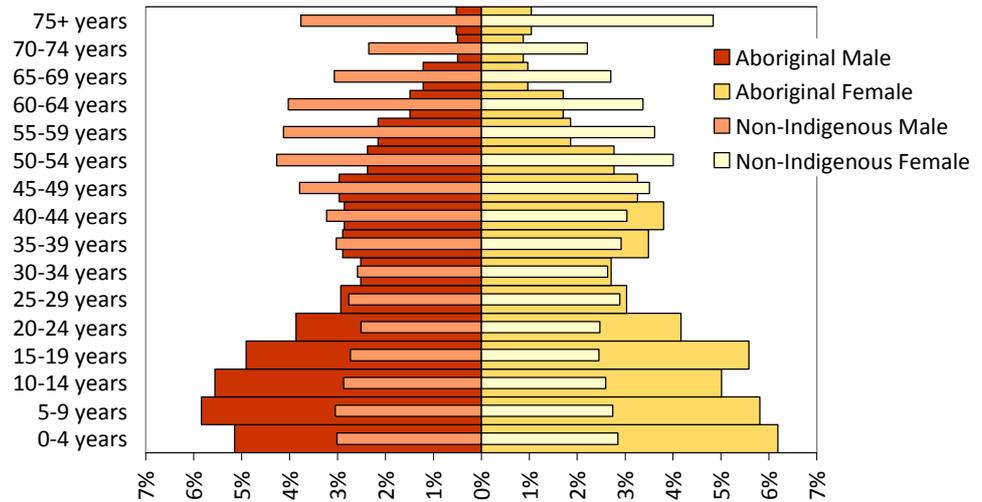
Indicator	North West		Far West		Broken Hill		Murdi Paaki	
	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Median age	24	43	23	43	20	45	23	44
Sex ratio	93.1	113.1	88.6	112.1	90.4	95.4	91.8	104.8
Child to woman ratio	436.9	326.4	393.2	320.3	461.1	256.7	432.9	294.3
Dependency ratio	63.5	54.7	55.0	53.5	67.5	59.3	62.6	56.4

Broken Hill has the youngest age structure of the three sub-regions, and the highest dependency ratio, which reflects the larger population proportions both of children and of

older people. It may be that Aboriginal families with young children, and older Aboriginal people, are migrating to Broken Hill for access to a wider range of services.

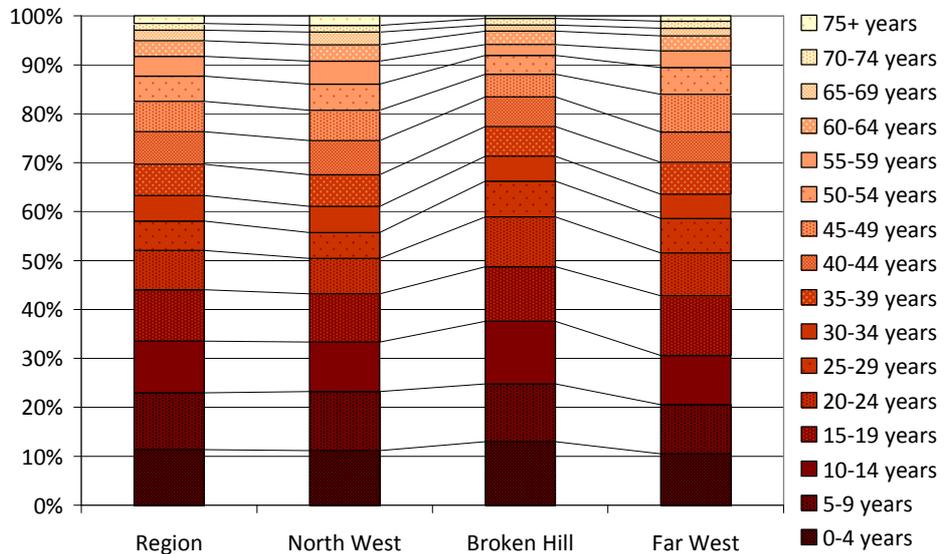
A population pyramid for the region as a whole is shown in Figure 6.1, and Figure 6.2 shows a comparison of age structure across the three sub-regions.

Figure 6.1 – Population pyramid, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations, Murdi Paaki Region



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 6.2 – Age structure comparison, Aboriginal population, Murdi Paaki Region and sub-regions



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

## Chapter 7 Population Change

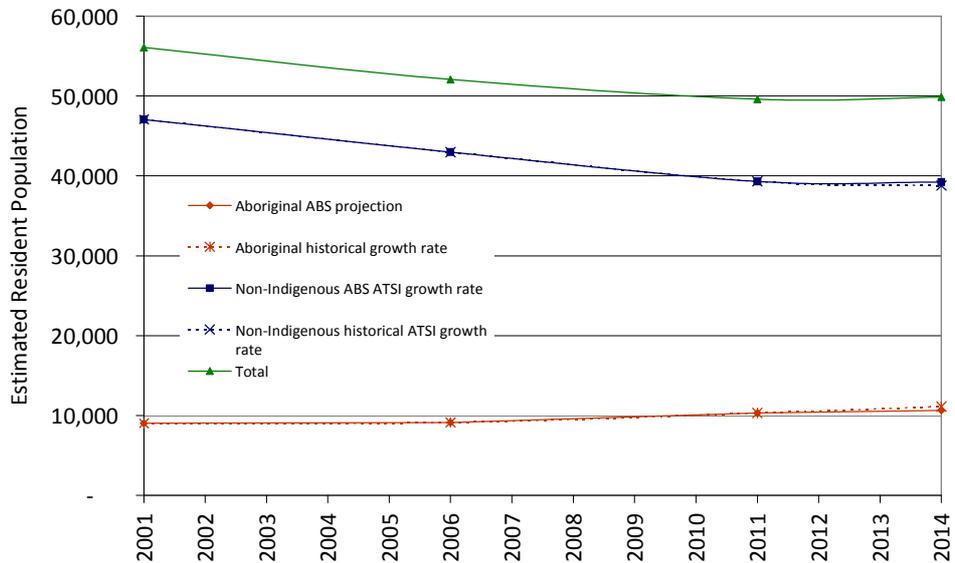
### 7.1 Source data for population projections

The ABS publishes ERPs for each year between censuses. Populations are derived at local government area (LGA) scale and are stated as absolute population numbers. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander proportion of the population is not estimated separately at this time interval. Two sources of population projections have been used in this analysis: the ABS *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Projections by Indigenous Regions* and the *New South Wales State and Local Government Area Population, Household and Dwelling Projections: 2014 Final*, prepared by NSW Department of Planning and Environment (NSW DP&E). The ABS source provides projections to 2026 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons for the Indigenous Regions incorporated in the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS); the NSW DP&E projections are for total populations by local government area. Both sets can be broken down by age cohort.

### 7.2 Change over time

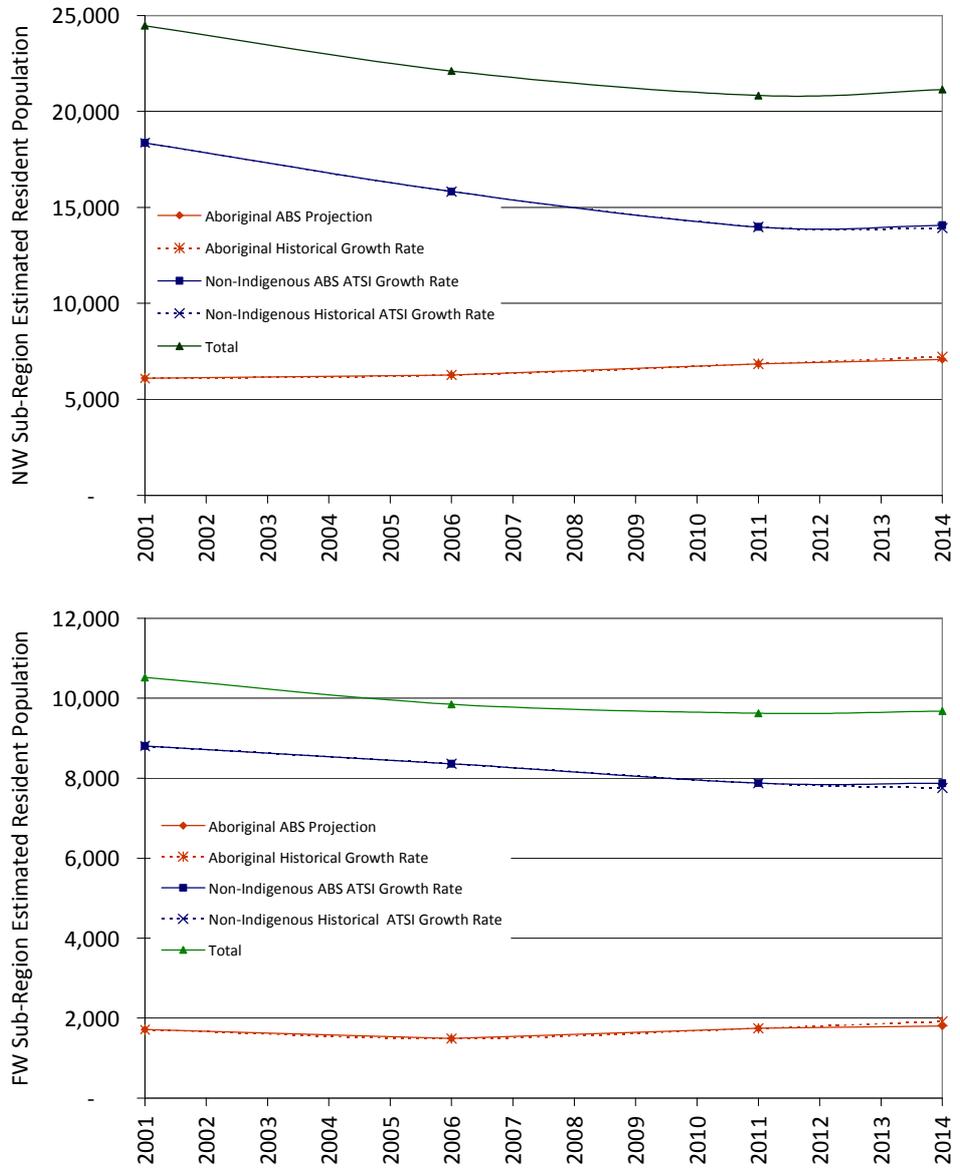
ERPs for LGAs/SLAs have been used to plot the historical population change shown in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. Two scenarios have been plotted representing population change from 2011 to 2014, with total population remaining as per the ERP, and the two versions of the notional Aboriginal population (based on ABS projections and based on historical growth rates) subtracted from the total ERP to estimate the residual non-Indigenous population.

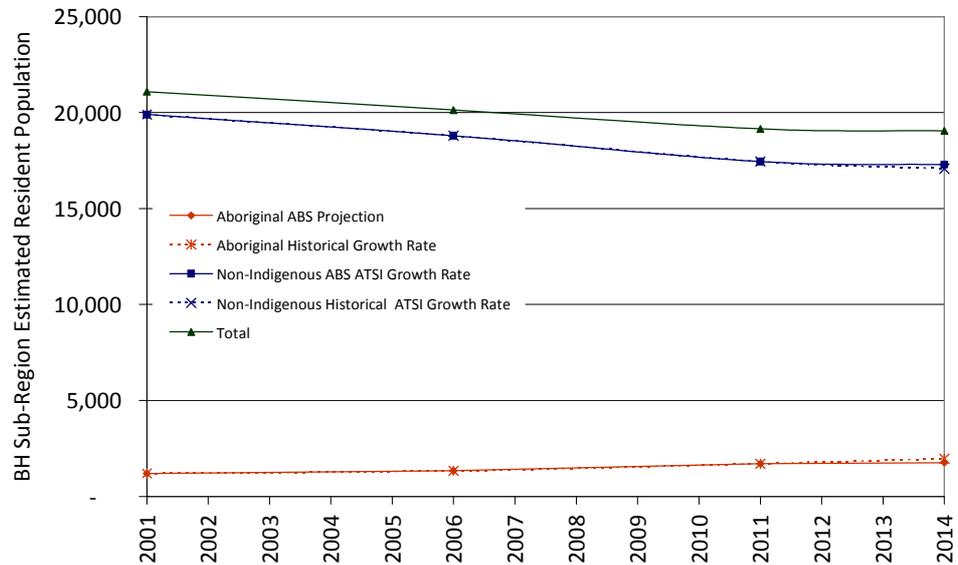
Figure 7.1 – Historical change in Aboriginal and non-Indigenous ERPs, Murdi Paaki Region, 2001 to 2014



Source: ABS ERPs and Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Figure 7.2 – Historical change in Aboriginal and non-Indigenous ERPs, sub-regions, 2001 to 2014





Source: ABS ERPs and Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

### 7.3 Population projections

ABS has adopted three geographies for the Aboriginal projections: State/Territory, Remoteness Areas, and Indigenous Region. The Indigenous Region geography has been adopted for the purposes of calculating projections because of its scale and geographical specificity. Wentworth is not in the North-Western NSW Indigenous Region (it is in the Riverina-Orange Region) but the growth rates for the North-Western NSW Region has been applied because Wentworth is more similar in geographical character to the other LGAs in the North-Western Region than to LGAs such as Orange, Bathurst and Albury, which are in the Riverina-Orange Region.

Table 7.1 provides projections of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population for each of the nine LGAs/SLAs in the Murdi Paaki Region, as well as sub-regions and the region as a whole, on the basis of the ABS *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Growth rates calculated from the projections for the North-Western NSW Indigenous Region have been applied to the 2011 ERPs for each LGA/SLA. The projections are based on three different sets of assumptions (Series A, B and C – high, medium and low respectively) about trends in demographic characteristics (for example, fertility rates, paternity rates and mortality rates) over time. The Series A and Series C figures could be considered, respectively, to be upper and lower bound projections.

Table 7.1 – Population projection, Aboriginal population, Murdi Paaki Region, 9 LGAs/SLAs, ERPs 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and ABS population projections

LGA/SLA	ERP 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Population projection		
		2016	2021	2026
Bourke	1,150			
Series A		1,219	1,315	1,430
Series B		1,216	1,298	1,391
Series C		1,212	1,285	1,359

Table 7.1 – Population projection, Aboriginal population, Murdi Paaki Region, 9 LGAs/SLAs, ERPs 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and ABS population projections

LGA/SLA	ERP 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Population projection		
		2016	2021	2026
Brewarrina	1,253			
Series A		1,329	1,433	1,558
Series B		1,325	1,415	1,515
Series C		1,321	1,400	1,480
Cobar	743			
Series A		788	850	924
Series B		786	839	899
Series C		783	830	878
Coonamble	1,448			
Series A		1,535	1,656	1,801
Series B		1,531	1,635	1,751
Series C		1,526	1,617	1,711
Walgett	2,257			
Series A		2,393	2,581	2,807
Series B		2,386	2,548	2,729
Series C		2,379	2,521	2,667
<i>North West Subtotal</i>	<i>6,851</i>			
Series A		7,264	7,833	8,520
Series B		7,243	7,734	8,285
Series C		7,222	7,653	8,095
Central Darling	877			
Series A		930	1,003	1,091
Series B		927	990	1,061
Series C		924	980	1,036
Wentworth	809			
Series A		858	925	1,006
Series B		855	913	978
Series C		853	904	956
Unincorporated FW	59			
Series A		63	67	73
Series B		62	67	71
Series C		62	66	70
<i>Far West Subtotal</i>	<i>1,745</i>			
Series A		1,850	1,995	2,170
Series B		1,845	1,970	2,110
Series C		1,839	1,949	2,062
Broken Hill	1,705			
Series A		1,808	1,949	2,120
Series B		1,803	1,925	2,062
Series C		1,797	1,905	2,014
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,301</b>			
Series A		10,922	11,778	12,810
Series B		10,890	11,629	12,457
Series C		10,859	11,507	12,171

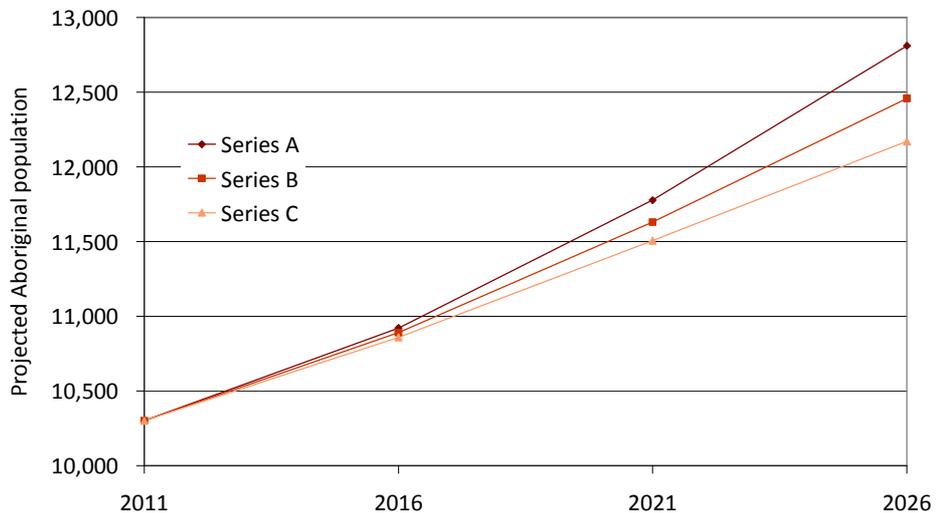
The projected Aboriginal population at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 (the year of writing) for the region as a whole ranges from a low of 10,741 to a high of 10,779 with the mid-range projection at 10,762. These numbers are derived by applying the ABS percentage increase for the NSW North West Indigenous Region to the 2011 ERP for the Murdi Paaki Region.

Projected values are not derived using the higher actual rate of growth observed for the period 2006 to 2011.

Figure 7.3 shows projected Aboriginal population change, under the three scenarios, for the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole.

By 2026, the Aboriginal population of the region is projected to have increased to a figure within a range from 12,171 and 12,810. By contrast, during the period from 2011 to 2026, NSW DP&E projects that the total population of the region (if it is assumed the Unincorporated Far West population, for which a projection was not available, remains static) will decline from 49,607 to 45,977. If the ABS’s mid-range (Series B) Aboriginal population projection is subtracted from the NSW DP&E projection for 2026, the projected residual non-Indigenous population of the region at 2026 would be 33,520; a decline from the ERP of 39,326 in 2011. If this scenario is accurate, the Aboriginal population fraction at this point would have increased to 27%.

Figure 7.3 – Population projections, Aboriginal population, Murdi Paaki Region



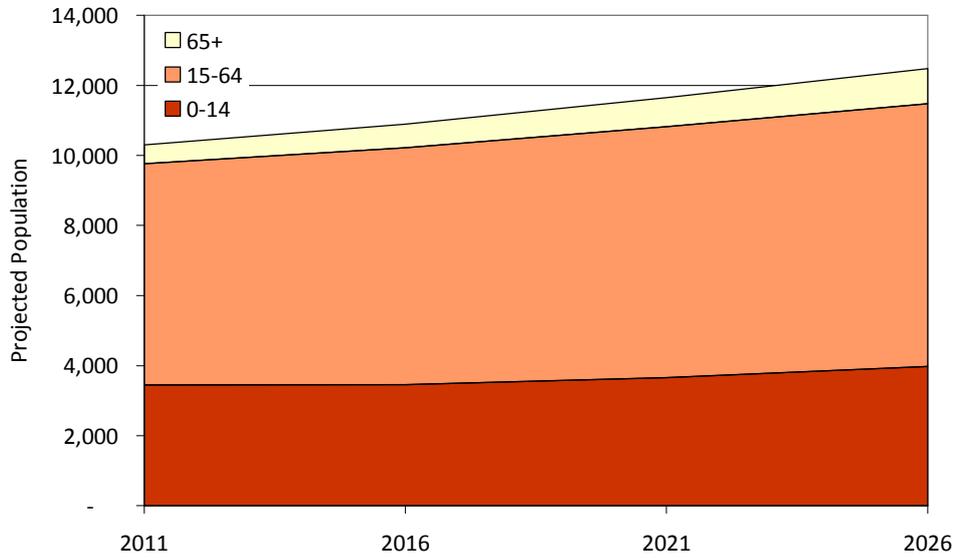
Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

#### 7.4 Population age structure

The ABS *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Projections by Indigenous Regions* are able to be analysed by age. In this section, the age structure of the population of the Murdi Paaki Region and the three sub-regions has been projected to allow future needs for economic initiatives, children’s services and services and facilities for older people to be canvassed.

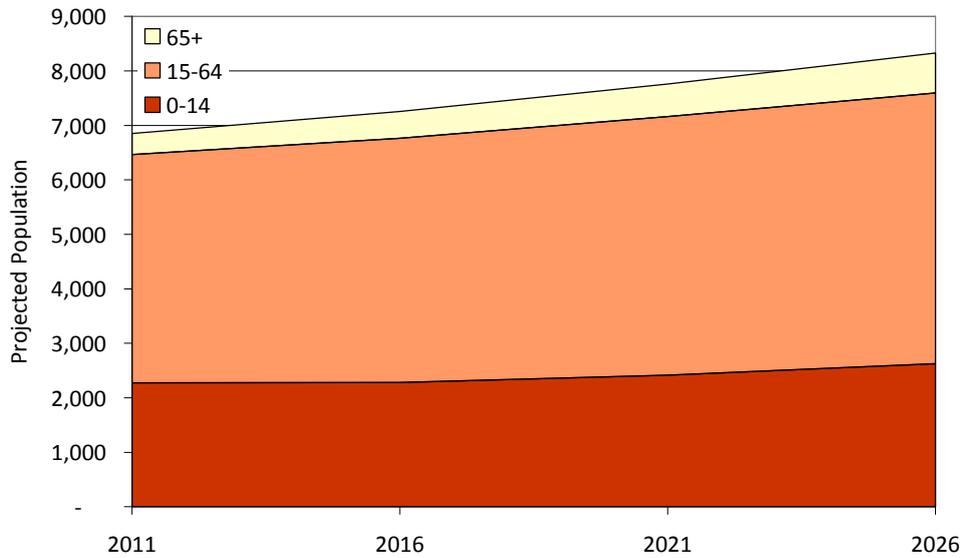
Figures 7.4 to 7.7 show population projections by age, based upon the Series B (mid-range) assumptions, for the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole, and for the three sub-regions.

Figure 7.4 – Population projection by age, Aboriginal population, Murdi Paaki Region



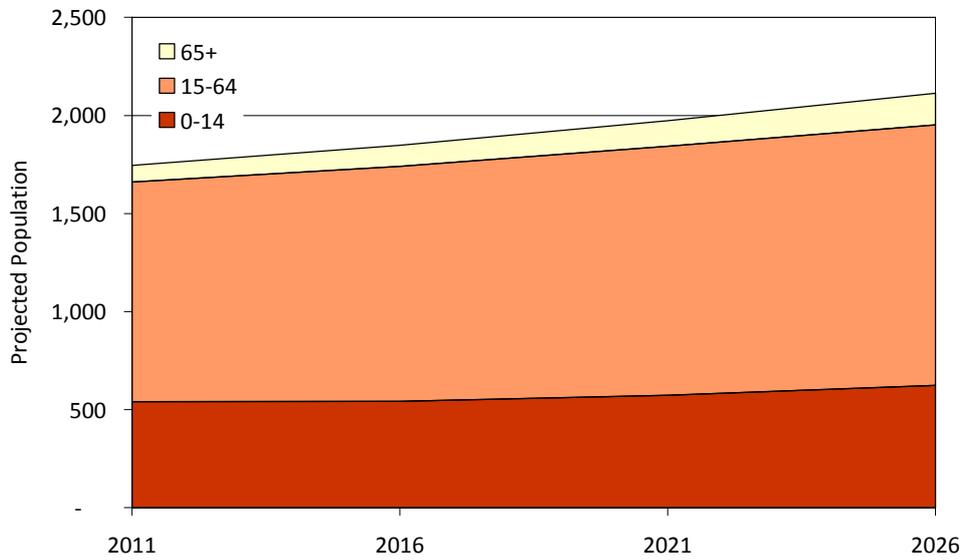
Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Figure 7.5 – Population projection by age, Aboriginal population, North West sub-region



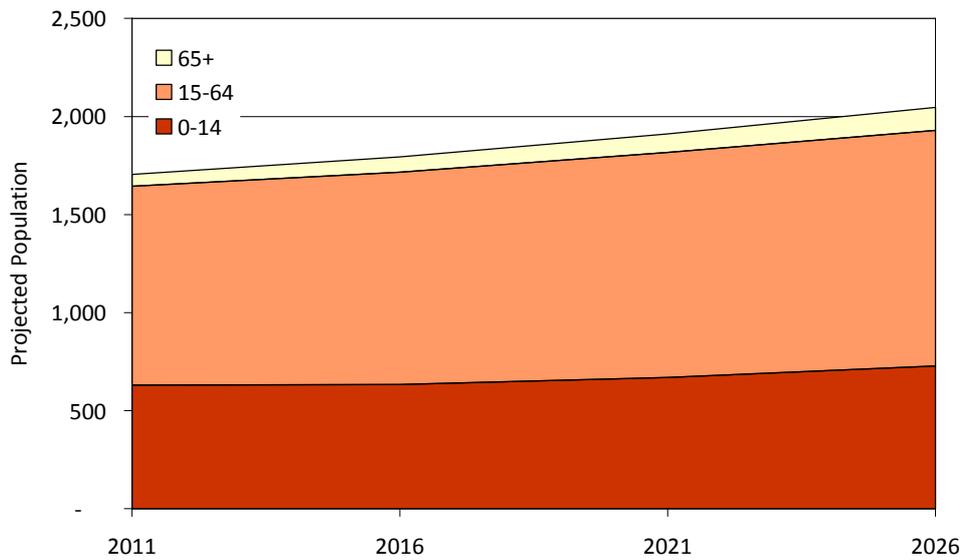
Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Figure 7.6 – Population projection by age, Aboriginal population, Far West sub-region



Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Figure 7.7 – Population projection by age, Aboriginal population, Broken Hill sub-region



Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Change in total population is accompanied by change in population age structure. This is best illustrated by exploring how the dependency ratio is projected to change over time (Table 7.2).

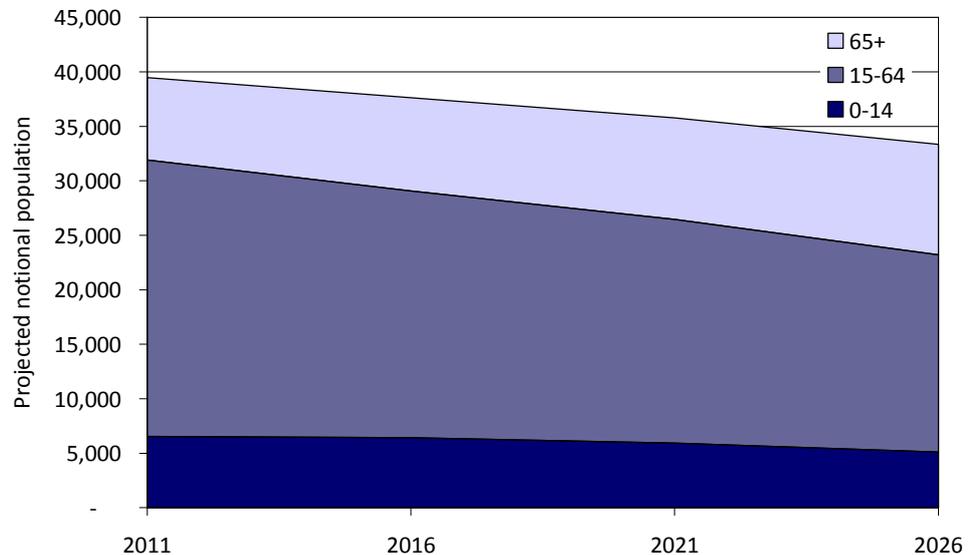
	2011 ERP	2016	2021	2026
Murdi Paaki Region	63.0	61.1	62.5	66.5
North West	63.6	61.9	63.4	67.7
Far West	55.9	54.3	55.5	59.1
Broken Hill	68.4	65.6	66.5	70.2

In summary, for each geography:

- ❖ Population growth is projected for the Aboriginal population in all age cohorts: children, working age population and the retired age cohort;
- ❖ The rate of increase in the 0-14 age cohort is projected to rise from 2016, with overall growth in this age cohort of between 9% (Series C) and 22% (Series A) from 2011 to 2026, resulting in an increased need for early childhood services, school education and child and adolescent health services;
- ❖ Structural ageing is projected to result in the population in the 65 years and over cohort increasing by between 86% (Series C) and 98% (Series A) (that is, almost doubling, although from a small initial population) over the period from 2011 to 2026, resulting in increased need for already undersupplied aged care and older people's accommodation;
- ❖ The rate of increase in the population of working age (18% to 20% overall) will be outstripped by the growth rate in the older age cohort and, if the high-growth assumptions in Series A hold, by the child and adolescent cohort. There are two implications here which must be considered: as Table 7.2 shows, this will result in higher dependency ratios which translates to a smaller proportion of the population carrying a larger economic burden and also to increased vulnerability to the impacts of economic change; and, thus, the even greater importance of co-ordinated, targeted, innovative initiatives to identify and exploit economic opportunities.

It is also worthwhile to consider projections for the non-Indigenous population. The indicative projections shown in Figure 7.8 were derived by subtracting the Aboriginal Series B population in each cohort projected by ABS from the total population in each age cohort projected by NSW DP&E. Both sets of figures commence from 2011 ABS ERPs.

Figure 7.8 – Population projection by age, notional non-Indigenous population, Murdi Paaki Region



Source: ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and NSW DP&E Population Projections for LGAs

In contrast with the Aboriginal population, the notional non-Indigenous population is projected to decline across all except the 65 years and older cohort. In summary:

- ❖ The projected rate of decline in the 0-14 age cohort is 22% from 2011 to 2026, resulting in decreased need for early childhood services, school education and child and adolescent health services, and it could be expected that the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Indigenous children using services would rise, with targeting of services to the needs of Aboriginal children increasingly imperative;
- ❖ The impact of structural ageing in the non-Indigenous population is projected to be far greater than in the Aboriginal population. The population in the non-Indigenous 65 years and over cohort is projected to increase by between 34% over the period from 2011 to 2026, with consequent increased need for services for older people, both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous;
- ❖ The non-Indigenous population of working age is projected to decrease by 29% over the fifteen year period;
- ❖ The dependency ratio is projected to increase from 55.5 to 84.1 over the fifteen year period because of the decline in the working age population and the growth in the older age cohort.

These projections hold serious implications for the economic sustainability of the region. The stark reality appears to be that, unless economic intervention is undertaken, it is to be expected that the region will continue in a spiral of progressive population loss, accompanied by ongoing withdrawal of services, particularly in smaller communities but also in sub-regional population centres such as Bourke and Brewarrina, for example.

## 7.5 Population basis for resource and service allocation

Estimated resident populations for NSW as a whole are stated at Table 7.3 for 2011 and 2015.

Table 7.3 – Estimated resident populations, NSW, as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and 2015

	Population		
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous	Total
2011	208,476	7,010,053	7,218,529
2015	225,349 <sup>(1)</sup>	7,392,892 <sup>(1)</sup>	7,618,241

(1) Based on ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Comparison of Table 7.3 figures for NSW as a whole suggests that, if the ABS's Series B assumptions are realistic, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population fraction would have grown, on average, by 1.95% per annum during

the four year period to 2015, and the residual non-Indigenous population by 1.33% per annum on average during the same timeframe.

Adopting the estimated populations stated in Table 7.3, Tables 7.4 and 7.5 propose the populations and population proportions respectively which MPRA propose be used as the basis for equitable funding and resource allocation across the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole.

Table 7.4 – Resident population estimates and projections, NSW and Murdi Paaki Region, 9 LGAs/SLAs, 2011 and 2015

State/Region	Population		Persons
2011			
NSW	Total	ERP	7,218,529
NSW	Aboriginal	ERP	208,476
Murdi Paaki	Total	ERP	49,607
Murdi Paaki	Aboriginal	ERP	10,301
2015			
NSW	Total	ERP	7,618,241
NSW	Aboriginal	Projection	225,349
Murdi Paaki	Total	ERP	49,957
Murdi Paaki	Aboriginal	Projection	10,762

Proportions are provided for 2011 and 2015 in the event that there is a preference for using accessible estimates of resident population described by the ABS-published 2011 ERP data or current 2015 projections of population calculated on assumptions of growth and movement in other

demographic factors (Series B).

Table 7.5 – Resident population proportions, NSW and Murdi Paaki Region, 9 LGAs/SLAs, 2011 and 2015

	Murdi Paaki Region Aboriginal population as a % of		
	MPR total population	NSW Aboriginal population	NSW total population
2011 ERPs	20.76	4.94	0.143
2015 projections	21.55	4.78 <sup>(1)</sup>	0.141 <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) ABS projected growth below historic levels and percentage may be an underestimate

(2) Uses 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 NSW ERP for NSW total population

Other values and ratios will apply to individual communities and to discrete age cohorts within the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations.

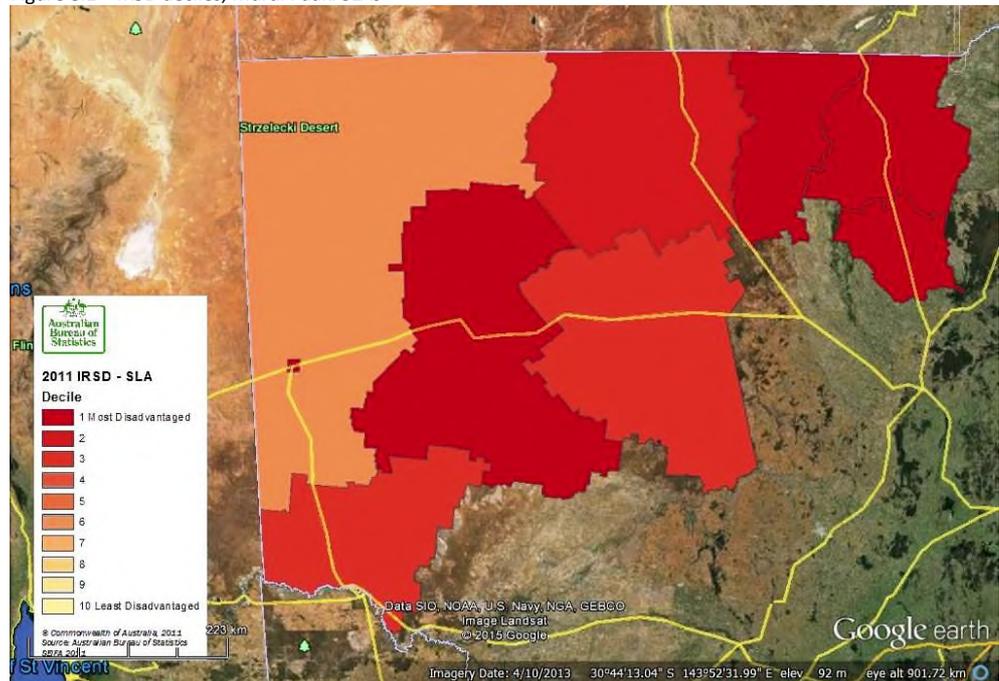
## Chapter 8 Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage

### 8.1 SEIFA

From each census, the ABS produces a number of indices which provide an overview of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. These permit geographical areas within Australia to be ranked. The 2011 Socio-economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) comprised four such indices; the one of interest for this Regional Plan is the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD). The IRSD is a weighted index which summarises a number of social and economic indicators for individuals, families and households within an area. Indicators included in the index relate to: competence in English, educational attainment, occupation, crowding in households, family structure, disability, transport, labour force status, income, and access to the internet. The lower the SEIFA IRSD score, the greater the level of relative disadvantage. Scores are an ordinal measure, and do not represent some absolute quantity of disadvantage. Consequently, they are not comparable from census to census. Scores are calculated for Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1), the smallest geographical area in the ASGS for which data are reported. For larger areas (such as local government areas), the scores are a population weighted average of the SA1 scores that correspond to the larger area. SEIFA IRSD scores are standardised to a distribution where the average for the reference geography (in this case, either Australia, with a total of 1,367 SLAs, or NSW, with 199) is 1,000, and the standard deviation is 100. A lower score indicates that the area is relatively disadvantaged, and all scores are ranked in order from the lowest to highest score, with the area with the lowest score given a rank of 1 and so on, up to the area with the highest score which is given the highest rank. Table 8.1 shows SEIFA IRSD scores, rankings and percentiles for SLAs within the catchment, in order of relative disadvantage, and SEIFA IRSD deciles (reference geography: Australia) are also shown graphically in Figure 8.1.

SLA	SEIFA IRSD Score	Ranking within Australia		Ranking within NSW	
		Rank	Percentile band	Rank	Percentile band
Brewarrina	788	55	5	1	1
Central Darling	824	66	5	3	2
Walgett	856	74	6	4	3
Coonamble	880	94	7	7	4
Broken Hill	900	128	10	13	7
Bourke	933	221	17	40	21
Cobar	957	359	22	77	39
Wentworth	957	363	27	79	40
Unincorporated FW	1014	774	57	144	73

Figure 8.1 – IRSD deciles, Murdi Paaki SLAs



Source: ABS SEIFA 2011

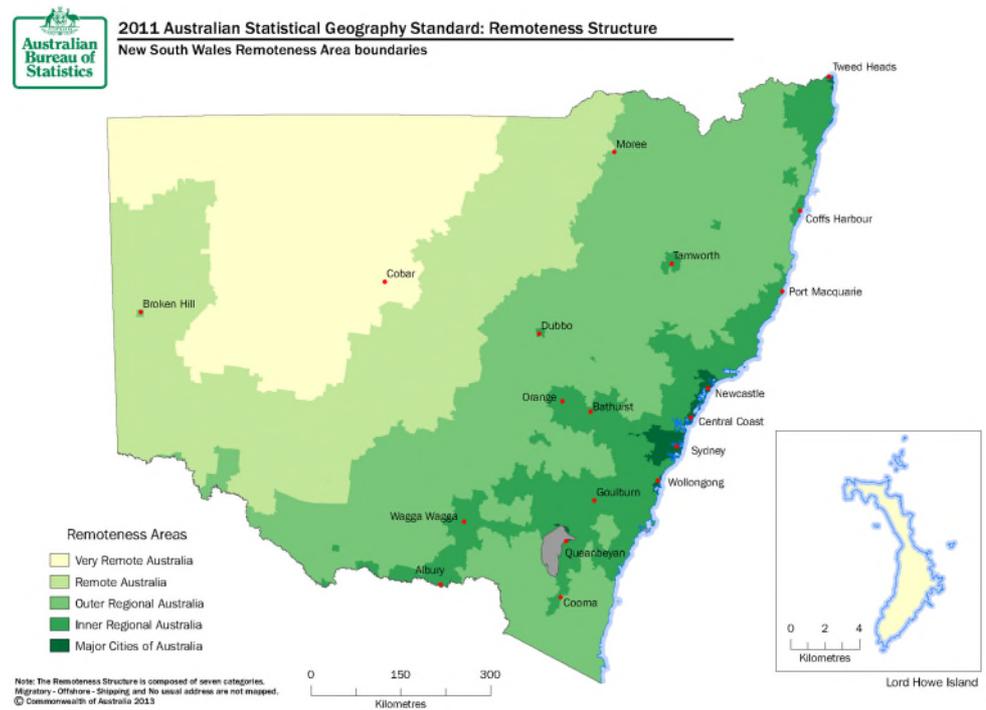
In summary:

- ❖ the four most disadvantaged SLAs in NSW are located within the Murdi Paaki Region;
- ❖ five Murdi Paaki Region SLAs are in the most disadvantaged 10% of SLAs in both Australia and NSW; and
- ❖ eight of the nine Murdi Paaki Region SLAs (excluding the Unincorporated Far West) are in the most disadvantaged 30% of SLAs in Australia and the most disadvantaged 40% of SLAs in NSW.

## 8.2 Remoteness

The ABS has adopted a new Remoteness Structure for the 2011 Census, as an element of the ASGS. This structure, which comprises six classes, has been designed on the same basis as the 2006 Remoteness Structure, using the ARIA+ methodology, but using ASGS Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) regions as the basic building block, rather than Census Collection Districts. The ABS releases data by the Remoteness Structure geography to permit the development of policy, programmes and services to respond to the common characteristics shared by regions of similar remoteness. The map in Figure 8.2 shows the remoteness structure as it applies to NSW, and Table 8.2 indicates the proportion of the population of each of the SLAs in the Murdi Paaki Region which is assigned to each of the Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote remoteness classifications.

Figure 8.2 – 2011 ASCS Remoteness Structure



Source: ABS

SLA	% of SLA total population in each Remoteness Area		
	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
Bourke	-	-	100.0
Brewarrina	-	1.0	99.0
Cobar	-	91.1	8.9
Coonamble	9.1	90.9	-
Walgett	-	94.5	5.5
Central Darling	-	-	100.0
Wentworth	87.3	12.7	-
Unincorporated FW	-	62.4	37.6
Broken Hill	100.0	-	-
<b>MPR incl. Broken Hill</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>16.2</b>
<b>MPR excl. Broken Hill</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>26.4</b>

Of the Aboriginal ERP, 83.4% lived in SLAs other than Broken Hill. For the non-Indigenous population, the corresponding figure was 55.6%. It is not possible to calculate the percentage of the Aboriginal population living in each Remoteness Area because the concordances (SLA to Remoteness Area) provided by the ABS are not broken down by Indigeneity, but it can be stated with certainty that a far higher percentage of the Aboriginal population of the Murdi Paaki Region than the non-Indigenous population will be resident in a remote or very remote location.

## Chapter 9 Aboriginal Participation in the Economy

### 9.1 Aboriginal employment

The 2011 Census enumerated a total of 18,394 persons employed in the regional economy. Of these, 1,831 persons, or 10% of the total, were Aboriginal employees. A further 507 Aboriginal people, or 20.8% of the Aboriginal workforce, were unemployed and looking for either part-time or full-time work as indicated by Table 9.1.

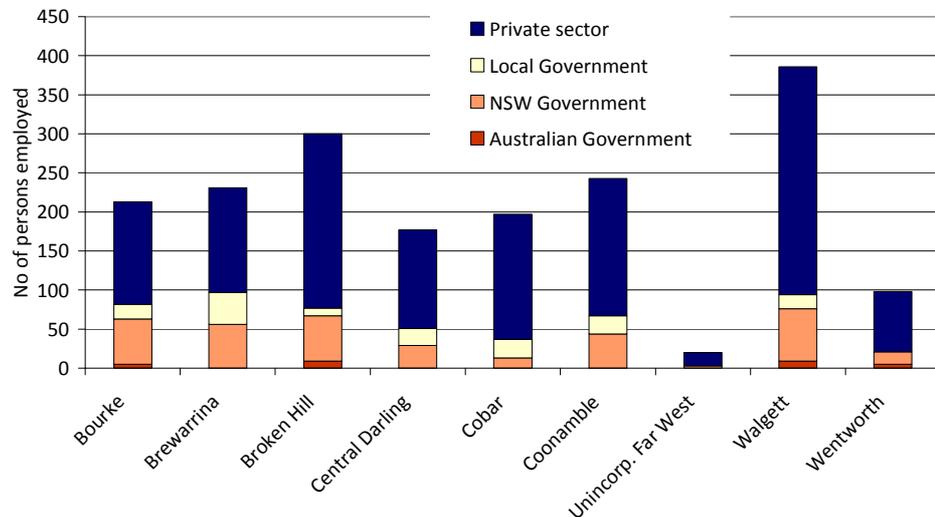
Industry Sector	Non-Indigenous		Aboriginal		Ratio of % Aboriginal persons in workforce to % non-Indigenous persons
	No of persons employed	% of persons in workforce	No of persons employed	% of persons workforce	
Administrative and Support Services	427	2.4	92	3.8	1.59
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,951	10.8	410	16.8	1.55
Public Administration and Safety	1,257	7.0	250	10.2	1.47
Other Services	513	2.9	90	3.7	1.29
Education and Training	1,432	8.0	244	10.0	1.26
Arts and Recreation Services	177	1.0	25	1.0	1.04
Construction	871	4.8	88	3.6	0.74
Accommodation and Food Services	1,270	7.1	126	5.2	0.73
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	315	1.8	27	1.1	0.63
Manufacturing	553	3.1	42	1.7	0.56
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	603	3.4	44	1.8	0.54
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	367	2.0	25	1.0	0.50
Mining	1,508	8.4	96	3.9	0.47
Retail Trade	1,681	9.3	106	4.3	0.46
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	114	0.6	7	0.3	0.45
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	2,811	15.6	130	5.3	0.34
Wholesale Trade	402	2.2	18	0.7	0.33
Financial and Insurance Services	196	1.1	7	0.3	0.26
Information Media and Telecoms	115	0.6	4	0.2	0.26
No of persons identified as employed	16,563	92.1	1,831	74.9	
Not stated or inadequately described	426		103		
Unemployed, looking for work	995	5.5	507	20.8	
Total no of persons in the workforce	17,984		2,441		

Table 9.1 identifies the sectors of employment for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous workers. Aboriginal workers were much more likely than non-Indigenous employees to be working in the service sector, in Administrative and Support Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, Public Administration and Safety, and Education and Training, for example. In contrast, non-Indigenous workers were more prominent (as a proportion of the workforce) in Mining, Retail Trade and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. This illustrates a reliance of the Aboriginal communities on direct and indirect government funding for frontline services for continued employment and sustainability of social wellbeing. In

particular, the important contribution of the Aboriginal Community Controlled health services to the employment landscape of the larger towns should be highlighted.

At the time of the census, the Australian Government maintained a staff complement of 28 persons (about 0.14% of the workforce), predominantly in Broken Hill and Walgett while the NSW Government supported a strong presence in all communities except Cobar and Wentworth. Each Local Government employed eighteen Aboriginal workers or more except for Broken Hill City Council (n=10) and Wentworth LGA. According to the ABS 2011 Census, Wentworth Shire did not have any Aboriginal employees. Although greater levels of Aboriginal people are employed in the private sector, including the NGO sector, the criticality of the public sector to underpinning Aboriginal employment across the region, and particularly in the small communities, is demonstrated by Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1 – Sector of employment for Aboriginal employees, ABS, 2011



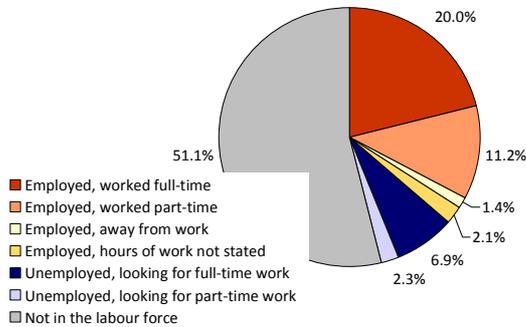
Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

As Chapter 5 notes, it is of concern to MPRA that governments have moved to centralise key regional functions outside of the region but, apart from the symbolic displacement of decision-making and accountability, this also has resulted in a consequent loss of income, higher order skills and employment.

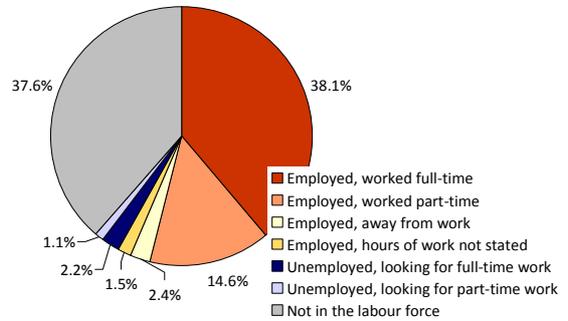
A comparative profile of labour force status is provided at Figures 9.2 and 9.3. The proportion of the adult (aged 15 years and over) Aboriginal population available to work, in work or looking for work is lower than for the non-Indigenous population, reflecting a reduced proportion of the female population in the labour force and available to contribute to the regional economy. For those employees at work, non-Indigenous employees are more likely to be in full-time work (72%) than Aboriginal employees (64%) so, conversely, a greater proportion of Aboriginal employees are working part-time. In percentage terms, over three times as many Aboriginal men and women are seeking work as their non-Indigenous counterparts so there exists an untapped pool of labour in Aboriginal communities.

Figure 9.2 – Employment profile for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous adults, Murdi Paaki Region

Aboriginal population



Non-Indigenous population

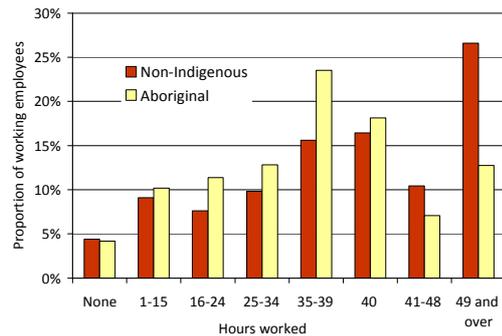


Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

In terms of hours worked, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people working in the region on a part time basis (up to 34 hrs/week) do so on a proportionate basis with non-Indigenous employees as shown by Figure 9.3.

The preponderance of Aboriginal men and women employed within the service sectors would perhaps account for the higher percentage of Aboriginal employees working regular hours of 35 to 40 hours per week while the greater proportion of non-Indigenous employees working full-time, largely in private sector industries, are working extended periods of 40 hours and more.

Figure 9.3 – Hours worked, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous workers, Murdi Paaki Region



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

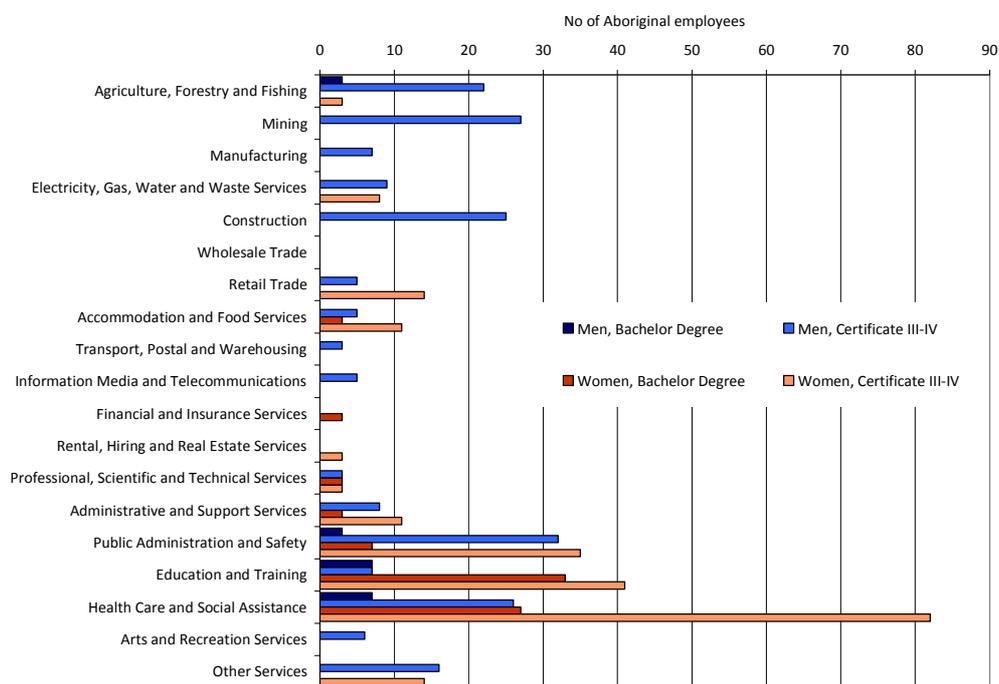
Level of qualification	Men	Women
Postgraduate Degree	3	7
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Cert	8	14
Bachelor Degree	28	87
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	37	86
Certificate	332	337

The knowledge base within the community rests firmly with the female half of the Aboriginal population as illustrated by Table 9.2. Women hold higher qualifications, diploma level and above, at two to three times the number of men. It is at the level of Certificate I to IV

that equivalence is achieved.

It is unsurprising then that many of the degree qualified women have found employment in the services sectors: primarily health care, social welfare and education, which boasts the highest number of tertiary qualified individuals of any industry sector as is evident from Figure 9.4.

Figure 9.4 – Industry of employment of skilled Aboriginal employees



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

The 2011 Census enumerated a total of 3,796 persons aged 15 years and over without qualifications so this cohort constitutes a significant proportion of the potential Aboriginal workforce. Of this number, 1,121 were recorded as being in employment. Table 9.3 defines the areas of occupation (other than Managers, Professionals (n=127) and the not adequately described/not stated categories (n=64) of those in work.

Table 9.3 – Non-professional employment, Aboriginal employees, ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Murdi Paaki Region

Occupation	Employment				Employed, away from work	
	Full-time		Part-time		Male	Female
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Technicians and Trades Workers	49	5	16	6	3	0
Community/Personal Service Workers	35	65	25	83	3	13
Clerical and Administrative Workers	13	45	9	38	0	3
Sales Workers	3	23	3	23	4	0
Machinery Operators and Drivers	100	5	9	5	10	0
Labourers	129	28	76	68	24	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>

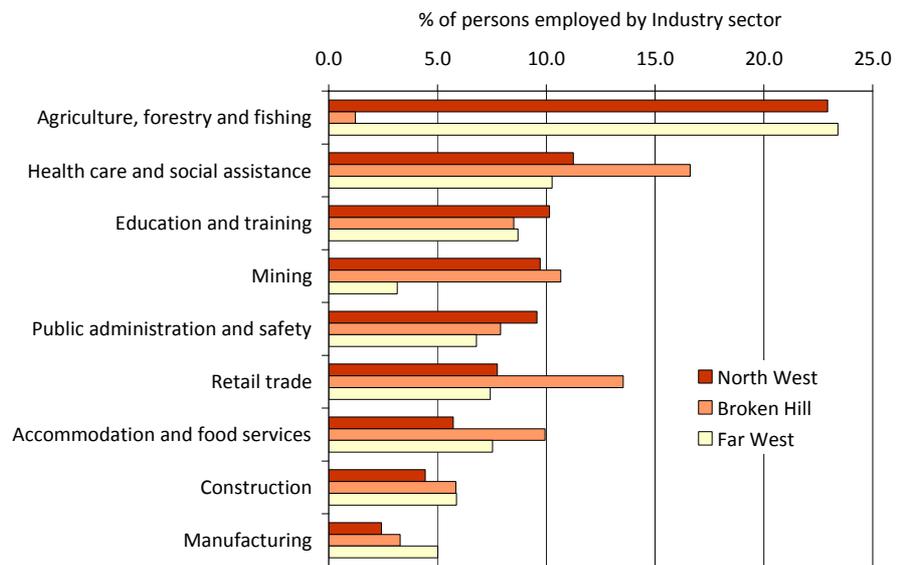
## 9.2 Character of regional employment

The percentage of the total working population employed in the leading industry sectors is shown in Figure 9.5. About 23% of all employed persons resident in the North West and Far West sub-regions were working in agriculture at the time of the census while about 10% were employed by the mining industry at and around Cobar and Broken Hill. Not

surprisingly, Government services underpinned much of the employment base, whether public administration or delivery of frontline health and social services, school and vocational education and police and emergency services. For reasons of cultural appropriateness and safety, Aboriginal employment in these sectors has been advantaged.

The importance of Broken Hill as a regional centre is evident from the relatively higher levels of employment in the service industries: retail and accommodation and food supporting the local tourism industry, while the construction and manufacturing sectors have a necessary but smaller footprint.

Figure 9.5 – Industry sector of employment, All employees, 2011

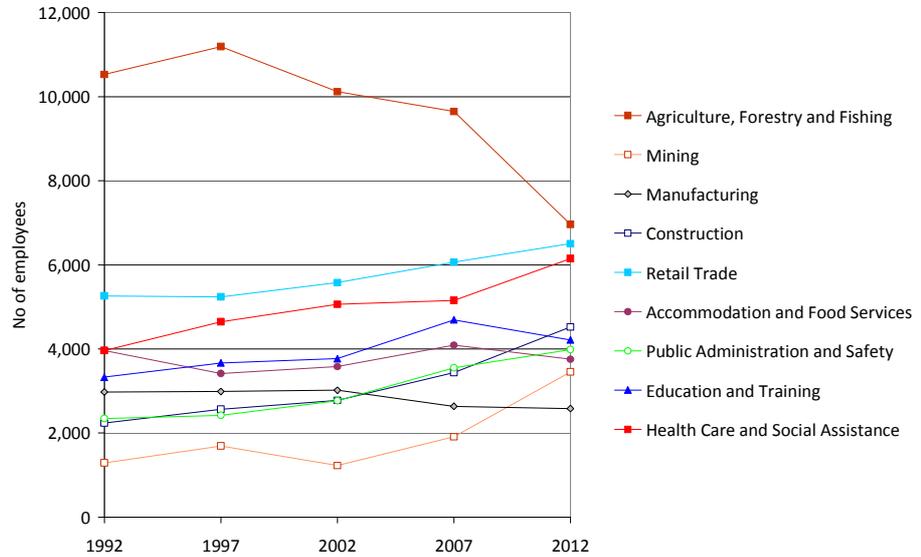


Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Trends in employment, based on place of residence data, are shown in Figure 9.6 for the twenty years to 2012. The graph is for all employees in the NSW Orana region which includes Dubbo and adjacent local government areas. Industry sectors with employment levels below 3,000 are omitted for clarity. Growth areas in the Murdi Paaki North West sub-region up to 2012 are identifiable but few, and may be unduly influenced by economic activity in and around Dubbo.

Of particular note is the marked contraction of opportunities in agriculture, forestry and fishing. This sector employed 130 Aboriginal workers as at the 2011 Census, 5.3% of the Aboriginal workforce (n=2,441) (cf. 15.6% of the non-Indigenous workforce). Opportunities for revitalising this traditional blue collar segment of the workforce are likely to be limited in view of industry consolidation, mechanisation and contracting out.

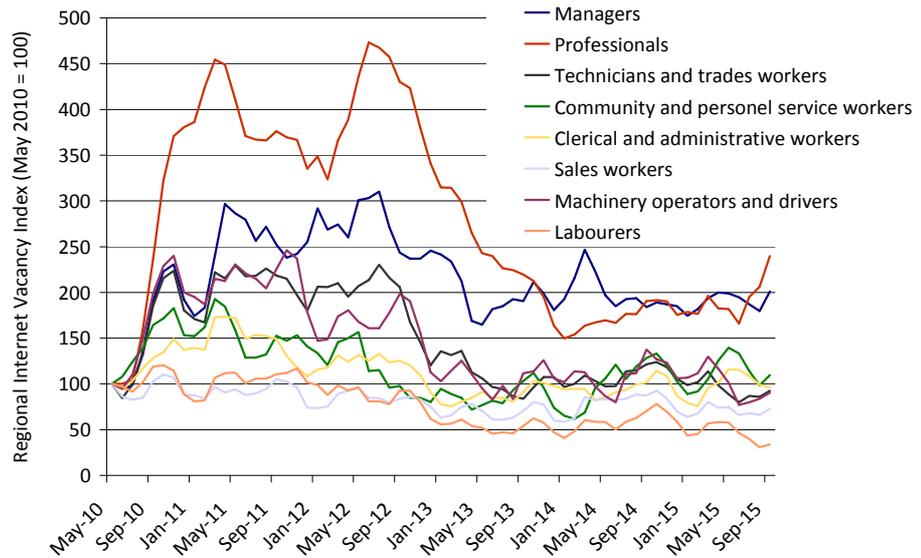
Figure 9.6 – Trends in employment by Industry sector, Orana region, 1992-2012



Source: State of the Regions 2012-13

The mining sector, operating in the established mining towns of Cobar and Broken Hill, and at Pooncarie south of Menindee, employed 96 Aboriginal workers as at the census, 3.9% of the Aboriginal workforce (cf. 8.4% of the non-Indigenous workforce). While Figure 9.6 indicates mining to be a growth area for employment, the collapse of the resources sector since 2012 will have stabilised or reversed the upward trend such that opportunities for employment are expected to be few. Recent vacancy data shown graphically at Figure 9.7 lends weight to this proposition in that openings for technicians and trades, machine operators and drivers, and labourers are all at pre-2010 levels.

Figure 9.7 – Regional IVI for Dubbo and Western NSW, 2015



Source: Department of Employment

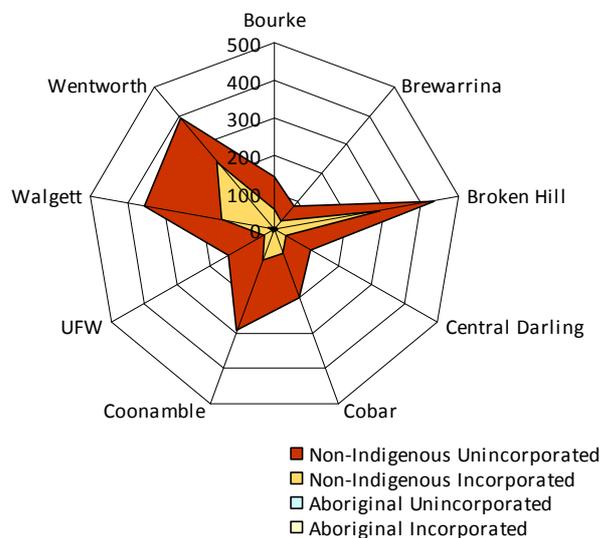
The data suggests that current demand is for Managers and Professionals. Other classifications are stagnant or in decline when compared to the labour market situation in 2010. In its report on labour market conditions in the Far West and Orana, the Department of Employment noted that the unemployment rate across the region has been very volatile over the last five years and may not be a reliable measure of labour market conditions. Nevertheless, prospects for employment of young people were still showing contraction, leading to the unemployment rate for the total labour force being significantly above the national rate, and further elevated for Aboriginal people in the labour force. Those 'green shoots' which are emerging are to be found in Dubbo.

A disturbing statistic to emerge from an analysis of the ABS 2011 Census data is the percentage of Aboriginal adolescents aged 16 and 17 years who are neither in education nor employment. Effectively, these individuals have already dropped out of the labour market and, being unskilled, will require special measures to re-engage. This issue is presented in more detail in Chapter 11.

### 9.3 Aboriginal businesses

As a measure of the involvement of Aboriginal individuals in wholly owned commercial enterprises, the number of Aboriginal owner managers has been interrogated to produce Figure 9.8. Comparatively, the contribution of Aboriginal enterprises to the total mix is minuscule such that it is barely visible on the graph. Communities are almost entirely dependent upon non-Indigenous businesses for employment creation outside of governments and non-government organisations.

Figure 9.8 – Owner Managers of incorporated and unincorporated businesses, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Walgett is recorded with the highest number, with eight Aboriginal persons working in owned/managed incorporated enterprises and sixteen in unincorporated enterprises. Drilling deeper, there would appear to be six individuals operating in Arts and Recreation Services, but none in either Heritage Activities or Creative and Performing Arts. This is surprising given the strength of Aboriginal culture and heritage in most communities. Only eight individuals were recorded as owners/managers of unincorporated Aboriginal enterprises related to Accommodation and Food Services, four each in Central

Darling and Broken Hill.

Doing business in the region is hard: remoteness, travel distance, small resident populations are serious constraints on economic development in the Murdi Paaki Region.

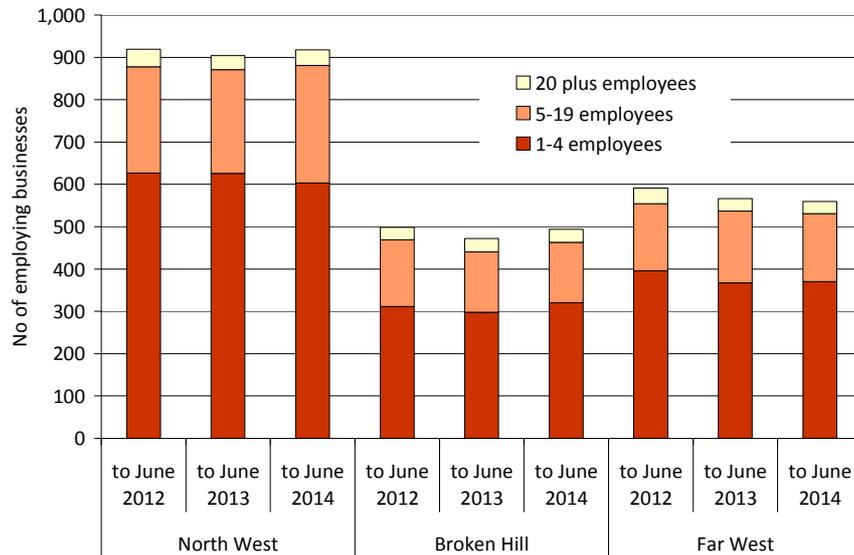
Economic activity is dominated by agriculture which is itself subject to the challenges of highly variable climate characterised by low and unreliable rainfall and elevated summer temperatures. Table 9.4 lists prominent industry sectors, in addition to Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, as reflected by the number of operating businesses across the region.

	North West	Broken Hill	Far West
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	49.8	14.3	51.5
Construction	8.1	14.5	10.5
Retail trade	5.8	10.9	4.1
Accommodation and food services	3.9	7.9	4.6
Transport, postal and warehousing	5.2	5.2	4.9
Financial and insurance services	2.1	5.8	3.7
Rental, hiring and real estate services	5.2	8.7	6.1
Professional scientific and technical services	2.7	5.3	3.3
Other services	2.6	7.6	2.0

About 90% of the area of farm holdings ( $27.64 \times 10^6$  ha) is directed to pastoral pursuits, mainly grazing sheep for wool, with 78% of the area of holdings being mainly used for grazing on unimproved pastures. Land utilised for cropping accounts for 5.1% of the total area of holdings, principally in the north-western sub-region where the interest is in broadacre cropping of cereals. Broadacre cropping of cereals is evident in the western part of the region although to a reduced scale. Orchard fruit and nut trees, grapevines for wine production and vegetables for human consumption are almost exclusively confined to the south west corner of the region which forms part of the Sunraysia district.

A great many of the businesses in the agricultural sector are recorded by ABS as non-employing and so are likely to be family concerns. Of those businesses which do employ, the largest proportion of employing businesses located in the region employ between 1 and 4 people as indicated by Figure 9.9. Businesses employing 20 people or more are consistently few, even in Broken Hill. Despite difficult times on the land, the level of business activity remained relatively stable over the period 2012 to 2014 with start ups matching exits. This period was marked by high resource prices and a strong Australian dollar which would have sustained economic activity in the larger centres.

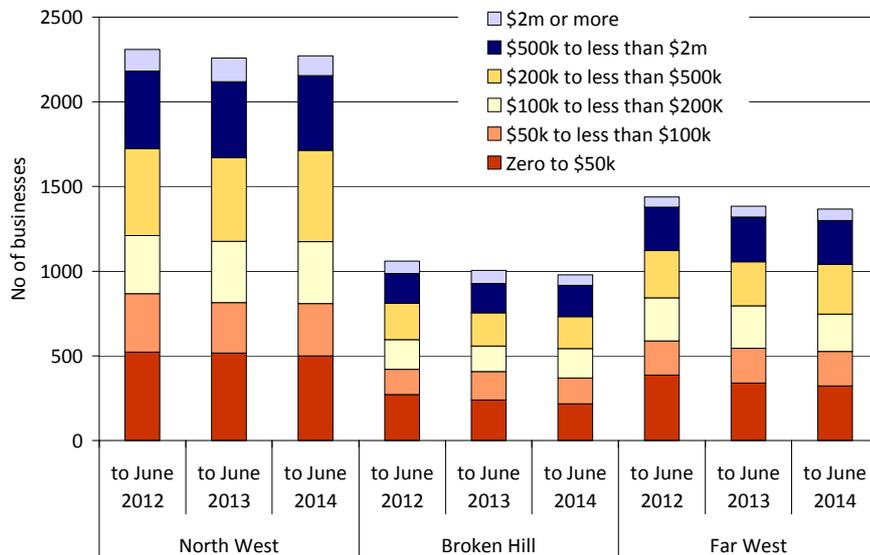
Figure 9.9 – Number of employing businesses, 2012 - 2014



Source: ABS, 81650 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, Jun 2010 to Jun 2014

Similarly, as shown by Figure 9.10, business size has also remained stable across the three years of interest except for a decline of 16% in small businesses earning up to \$50,000/year in the Far West. Much of this decline is attributable to the closing of agricultural and agribusiness operations in Wentworth-Buronga coupled with closing of service businesses in the same location.

Figure 9.10 – Number of businesses by annual income, 2012 - 2014



Source: ABS, 81650 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, Jun 2010 to Jun 2014

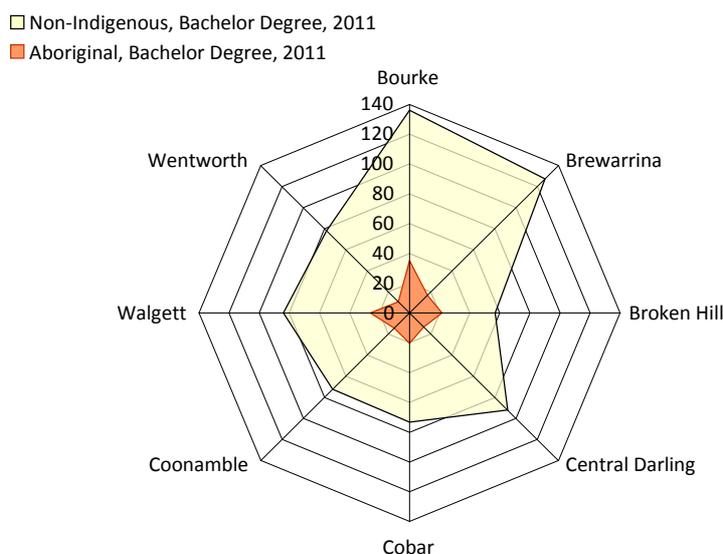
It might be inferred from Figure 9.10 that over 50% of business were not generating sufficient turnover to employ workers.

## 9.4 Skills base

Higher order resident skills, local jobs, knowledge of community dynamics and social cohesion are critical factors in sustaining the wellbeing of local communities. It is well established that diversity in a regional economy provides the basis for stability and improved resilience to the effects of volatile external influences so this is an objective for MPRA to consider in further developing and implementing strategies relating to employment and enterprise development. It further reinforces the urgent need for MPRA to take a leadership role in promoting the creation of Aboriginal-owned enterprises across the region.

The task of building capacity must be viewed as long term since there is much work to do. Figure 9.11 highlights a reduced complement of skilled people in the region generally. This weakness is accentuated in the Aboriginal community where higher order skills, as reflected by the number of people aged over 15 years and over educated with a Bachelor degree qualification, are comparatively few. For comparison, the proportion of the NSW population educated to bachelor degree level is 172 per 1,000 of the population aged over 15 years and under 65 years.

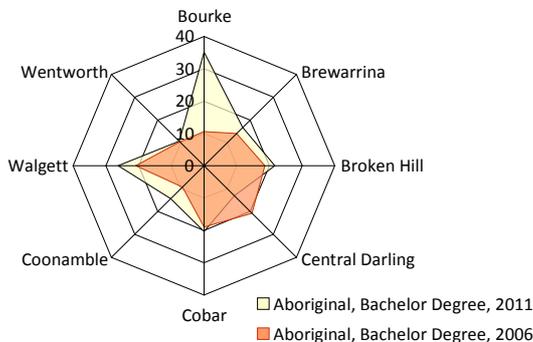
Figure 9.11 – Number of people with a higher qualification, per 1,000 of population aged 15 years and over, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

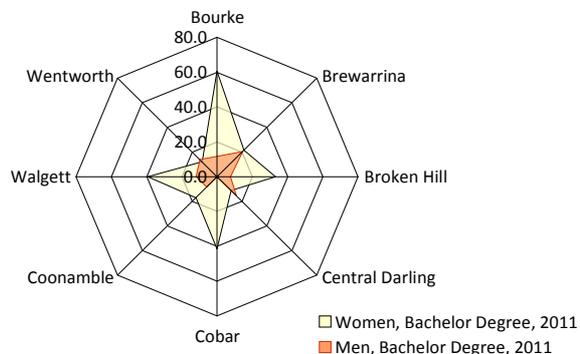
There has been an improvement in the number of Aboriginal people completing a Bachelor Degree in the period 2006-2011 as shown by Figure 9.12, particularly in Bourke, but the increase is not startling. It is women who are treading the pathway to higher educational achievement as indicated by Figure 9.13. As a general statement, Aboriginal men appear to be either shying away from or under-achieving at university which is a situation in need of attention because, as noted previously, men tend to gravitate to private sector employment while women are more likely to be employed in the 'caring' professions in the public sector.

Figure 9.12 – Number of Aboriginal men and women with a Bachelor degree, per 1,000 of the Aboriginal population aged 15 years and above, 2011



Source: ABS 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing

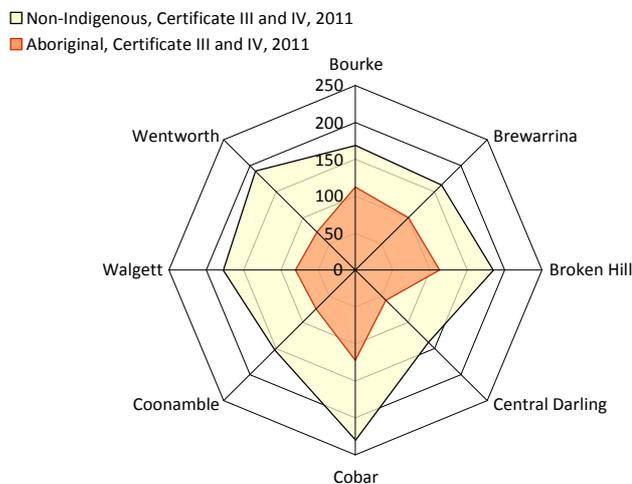
Figure 9.13 – Number of Aboriginal men and women with a Bachelor degree, per 1,000 of Aboriginal population aged 15 years and above, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

As comparison of Figures 9.14 and 9.11 shows, the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Indigenous population fraction with a Certificate III or IV level qualification is higher than the corresponding ratio for those with a Bachelor degree, reflecting the emphasis and take up of locally based training opportunities. Achievements by LGA are clearly defined.

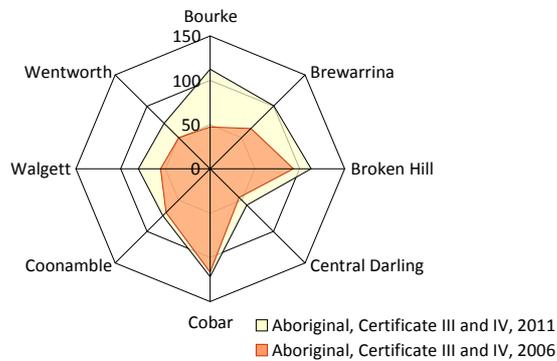
Figure 9.14 – Number of Aboriginal men and women with a vocational qualification, per 1,000 of Aboriginal population aged 15 years and above, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

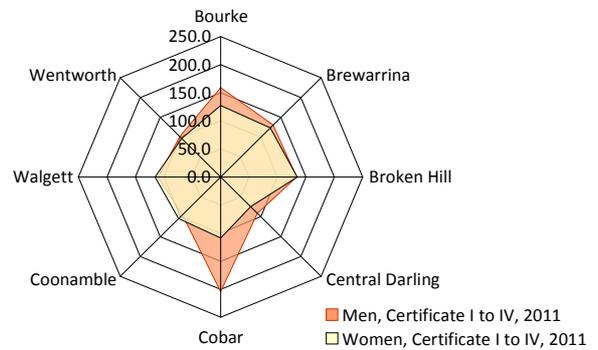
There has been an improvement in the number of Aboriginal people completing at Certificate III and IV level in the period 2006-2011 as shown by Figure 9.15, particularly in Bourke and Brewarrina. The number of women completing education at this level is comparable with their male counterparts as indicated by Figure 9.16 except in Cobar.

Figure 9.15 – Number of Aboriginal men and women with a vocational qualification, per 1,000 of Aboriginal population aged 15 years and above , 2006-2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

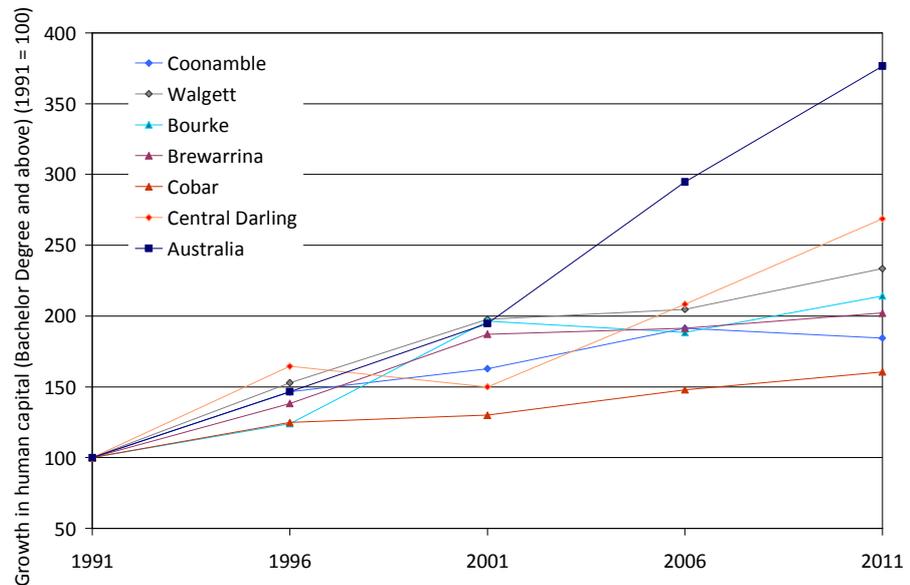
Figure 9.16 – Number of Aboriginal men and women with a vocational qualification, per 1,000 of Aboriginal population aged 15 years and above, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

While the number of individuals recorded on the day of the census as holding a Bachelor Degree or higher in NSW and Australia more than tripled in the period 1991-2011, the rate of increase in the total population in the Murdi Paaki Region was only half of this increase as indicated by Figure 9.17.

Figure 9.17 – Growth in the number of people of working age with tertiary qualifications, 1991-2011



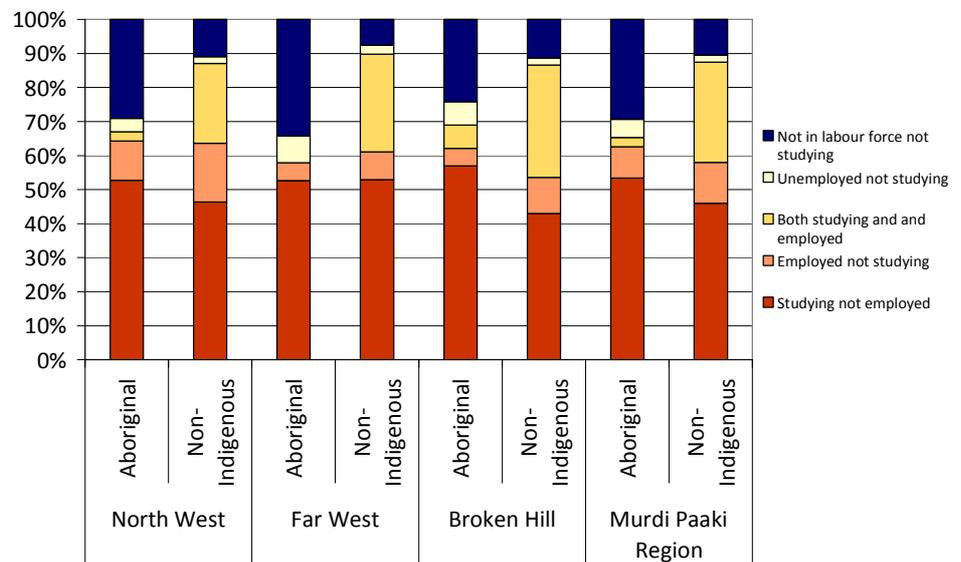
Source: BTRE Education, Skills and Qualifications Database and ABS 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing

This can be taken as an indicator of slower regional growth when compared with Australia as a whole and of lower productivity levels. It is interesting to note that the structural shift which can be seen to have taken place in the skills base of the region between 1996 and 2001 is coincident with changes to HECS which served to create a three-tier higher education fee structure. Fees, levied on the basis of the perceived value of courses to the student, increased by an average of 40%, thereby introducing a major barrier to potential students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

It would be worthwhile for MPRA, using the Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Sydney, to explore ways in which the financial and cultural deterrents to tertiary education could be tackled.

Table 11.2, shown later in this Plan, summarises data regarding family characteristics. It is of note that over half of all Aboriginal children in the region are living in single parent families and just under half are living in families in which neither parent is employed. With such high percentage of children living in jobless families, it is unsurprising that the percentage of 16 and 17 year olds not in education or employment is also disturbingly elevated as indicated by Figure 9.18.

Figure 9.18 – 16 and 17 year olds earning, learning, both or neither



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Also of concern is the fact that the number of Aboriginal people in this age cohort who are both studying and working is very small relative to the non-Indigenous population. This indicates that very few Aboriginal students have after-school or weekend work. These factors, taken together, indicate that many young Aboriginal people in the Region have little if any exposure to the world of work prior to adulthood. Inculcation of the values and cultures of the workplace is therefore missing and, consequently, young Aboriginal people are less likely to develop the skills needed to identify and exploit economic opportunities.

## 9.5 Productive effort

The economic productive effort of the region as a whole contributes about 0.72% of the NSW economy from a working labour force which comprises 0.55% of the NSW population but data suggests that much of the value is derived from mining activities. Figure 9.19 illustrates the relative contribution of each LGA in terms of productivity per capita compared with the NSW average. Outside of the mining towns and the Sunraysia district, the market value of all final goods and services produced by all firms within the region

(Gross Regional Product or GRP) is considerably lower on a per capita basis and is an indicator of weak economic activity.

Figure 9.19 – GRP per capita, 2013-14

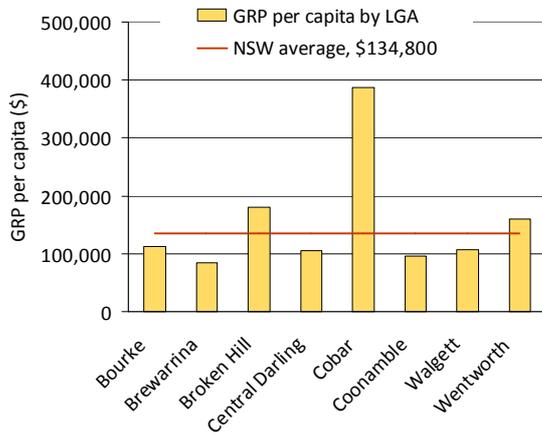
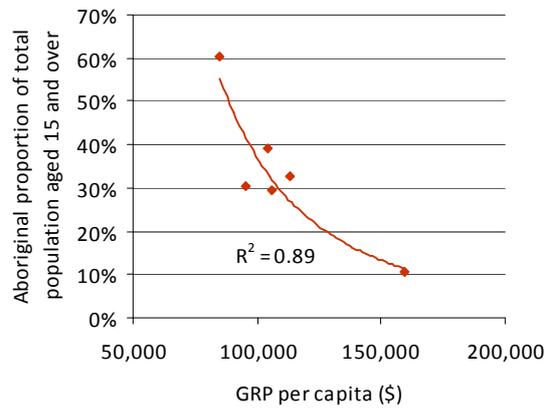


Figure 9.20 – Relationship between GRP per capita (2013-14) and Aboriginal proportion of the total population aged 15 years and above, 2011



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR)

Source: ABS 2011 Census and .id/National Economics indicator series

Figure 9.20, which uses data relating to the non-mining towns, shows a possible scenario which could be experienced by Murdi Paaki Region communities as the Aboriginal proportion of the population increases. Correlation does not imply causality, and there may be a number of possible explanations for the relationship, but it is conceivable that for smaller-population LGAs without investment in mining a spiral of economic decline is already being witnessed. Factors such as economic pressures on local business, centralisation of services outside of the region, delivery of services to lower standards (eg school education and secondary and tertiary health care), ageing of the non-Indigenous population and lack of employment have conspired to start and perhaps sustain a progressive process of outmigration by those with the resources and motivation to move. Economic circumstances of those that remain, which certainly will include Aboriginal people living on Country, will become increasingly challenging in the face of dwindling capacity so, as the Aboriginal proportion of the population increases as projected, it becomes increasingly imperative to create and support structures which underpin gainful employment to ensure that all communities can anticipate a sustainable future.

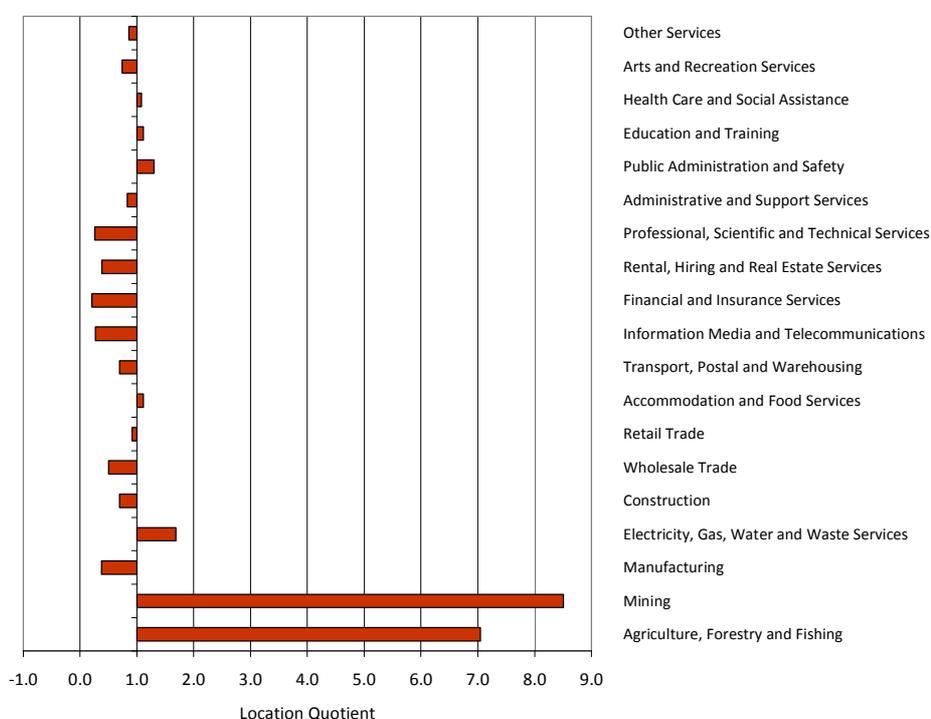
MPRA recognises that this transformation will not be achieved easily but it is in the interests of all parties to ensure the region is able to make a positive contribution to the NSW economy. It is the view of MPRA then that investment into a region should be targeted as part of a evidence-based strategic response to:

- ❖ Strengthening and expanding the skills base within our communities;
- ❖ Establishing an environment for development and acquisition of Aboriginal-owned businesses;
- ❖ Fostering our entrepreneurial abilities;
- ❖ Growing our business and social networks;
- ❖ Productively employing our community assets; and
- ❖ Developing our creative abilities.

## 9.6 Opportunities

A location quotient analysis, Figure 9.21, demonstrated the clustering of employment around agricultural activities (LQ=7.046)<sup>1</sup> and mining (LQ=8.506) providing the region with its unique identity within the NSW economy. In all other industries, employment was at or below the State average. Those sectors which have a low profile in the region and are relevant to this Regional Plan are Manufacturing (LQ=0.375) and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (LQ=0.261). Interestingly, although Figure 9.5 shows a heavy reliance on the health and education sectors for employment, the analysis indicates that servicing levels are similar to or only slightly higher than the State generally suggesting that these sectors have little potential for expansion. Arts and Recreation Services (LQ=0.738) has opportunities in heritage and culture services within the context of a Regional Tourism Strategy.

Figure 9.21 – Location quotient, Murdi Paaki Region,



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR)

A shift share analysis, using change in employment by industry sector between 2006 and 2011, suggests that the regional economy could best be characterised as being in a slow and gradual transition from local goods producing and support enterprises to government health and welfare services. While overall growth in employment at a State level was in the order of 8.1%, changes in employment within the mix of industries tended to balance out. Most noticeable was a general decline in employment in agriculture across NSW of

<sup>1</sup> An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates the region has a higher than average concentration of employees in that industry, and vice versa.

nearly 20% set against an increase in employment in mining of 45.5%. Within the region, all industry sectors except agriculture experienced a decline in employment levels pointing to there being no regional competitive factors which could sustain economic growth.

## **9.7 Socio-economic sustainability**

A quick search of the geographical literature indicated that little has been published within the last fifteen years or so about the social ecology of remote and very remote NSW. The meagre pickings available tend to be based upon quantitative analysis of census data, with no ground-truthing in a social geography sense; hence, the conclusions range from naïve to glib to implausible. In particular, it appears that nobody has attempted to identify an approach which would define a human carrying capacity for social and economic sustainability; however, this is the nature of research which would be of most value to MPRA as input to shaping a population policy. As Chapter 1 made plain, we see investment in enterprise as fundamental to securing the sustainability of our region; but this must be informed by a realistic understanding of population impacts. Regardless of the lack of serious study, it is clear that Aboriginal communities will play an increasing greater role in shaping the socio-economic fabric of the Region.

## **Chapter 10 Law and Justice**

### **10.1 Introduction**

It would be reasonable to conclude that the Australian and New South Wales Governments have failed to respond adequately in a policy sense to the distressing findings of the 1987 *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. Aboriginal people are still grossly over-represented nearly thirty years later at every stage in the criminal justice system. The Commissioner was of the opinion that the fundamental and underlying causes for over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody were not to be found in the criminal justice system *per se* but in the determinants of disadvantage and inequality which brought Aboriginal people, adult, adolescent or juvenile, into conflict with the criminal justice system in the first place. Disempowerment was seen as an inevitable consequence of dispossession, disruption of kinship structures, loss of economic resources and dilution of social wellbeing. Included among the many recommendations were a number which sought to construct diversionary pathways for Aboriginal people, and particularly juveniles, away from court processes.

Alcohol and illicit drug use were viewed as significant factors which greatly increased the risk of engagement with the criminal justice system and our communities still struggle with the adverse impacts today but these issues are symptoms as much as they are causes of marginalisation. It is known that effective prevention, intervention and treatment initiatives delivered by Aboriginal community controlled organisations do offer an alternative pathway but services and programmes are poorly resourced and of insufficient capacity to meet service demand. This applies too to mental health services which are grossly undersupplied across the region. Lack of access to appropriate health care coupled with a disrespect experienced by Aboriginal people reinforces the view that broader society is not interested in righting wrongs. A consequence is the further alienation of our peoples from non-Aboriginal society and exacerbation of the underlying causes of disadvantage. MPRA aspires to bring the resources to redress the social and economic needs of the community within our reach and control as a deliberate strategy to take a dominant leadership role in restoring social wellbeing in our communities.

### **10.2 Justice reinvestment**

In its investigation of the merits of an alternative diversionary pathway to community residential treatment rather than incarceration, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) demonstrated considerable benefits exist in terms of financial savings and improvement in health and mortality. The analysis also established lower rates of recidivism when compared with prison. For this reason, MPRA strongly promotes the development of a business case to flesh out a suitable concept which will reduce the contact of Aboriginal people with the police, create a specialist Aboriginal community-controlled service together with resulting employment, and improve general health and wellbeing in our communities.

### **10.3 Data sources**

The data used in this Chapter were obtained from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BCSR), the data collection and research arm of the NSW Attorney General's

Department; NSW Corrective Services; and NSW Juvenile Justice and the willing assistance of each is acknowledged. Four datasets were obtained:

- ❖ The number of persons of interest (POIs) proceeded against by the NSW Police Force for alcohol, drug or domestic violence-related offences, by Indigenous status, age and sex, for each of the nine LGAs/SLAs for the years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15;
- ❖ Court data for the Higher Criminal Courts, the Local Courts and the Children's Court, for trials of residents of each of the local government areas approximating the Murdi Paaki Region, by Indigenous status, age and sex, for the years 2012-13 to 2014-15;
- ❖ Inmates in full-time custody by LGA of last known address; and
- ❖ Juveniles under supervision or under control orders by LGA of last known address.

It should be noted that the Murrin Bridge community, not part of the Murdi Paaki Region, is included in Cobar LGA data.

In this Chapter, wherever BCSR data are presented per thousand population, the 2013-2014 data have been used because of the availability of ERPs for comparison purposes at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. It has not been possible to obtain ERPs for 2015 at the time of writing. The population age structure derived from the 2011 Census has been applied to the ERPs and population projections to derive a representative notional age structure for comparison purposes.

#### **10.4 Drug and alcohol and domestic violence-related Incidents**

According to BCSR, 'persons of interest (POIs) are suspected offenders recorded by police in connection with a criminal incident. Some POIs are formally proceeded against to court and some are proceeded against other than to court whilst others are not proceeded against. The POIs included *[in the dataset]* have all been proceeded against. POIs are not a count of unique offenders. Where an individual is involved in multiple criminal incidents throughout the year they will appear as a POI multiple times. Correspondingly, no person of interest information will be recorded for criminal incidents in which there is no known suspect. This is very common among incidents of property crime which have a low clear up rate. 'Proceeded against' implies 'proceeded against to court by way of Court Attendance Notice or proceeded against other than to court by way of Youth Justice Conference, Caution Young Offenders Act, Cannabis Caution, Other Drug Caution, Criminal Infringement Notice, Infringement Notice or Warning.' BCSR indicates that alcohol-related incidents are selected offences flagged as such by the NSW Police Force; the offences for which this flag is available comprise 'assault, sexual offences, robbery, murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, harassment/threatening behaviour, abduction/kidnapping, offensive conduct and offensive language.' Similarly, domestic violence-related incidents are selected offences against the person flagged as such by Police; the list of offences for which this flag is available includes assault, murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, murder accessory/conspiracy, sexual offences, harassment/threatening behaviour, abduction/kidnapping and malicious damage to property. Drug offences relate directly to manufacture, supply and/or consumption of illicit substances.

Tables 10.1 and 10.2 show, respectively, the number of alcohol and other drug-related POI incidents and domestic violence-related POI incidents carried out by offenders whose place of residence was in the region, obtained from Police data for the years 2012-13 to

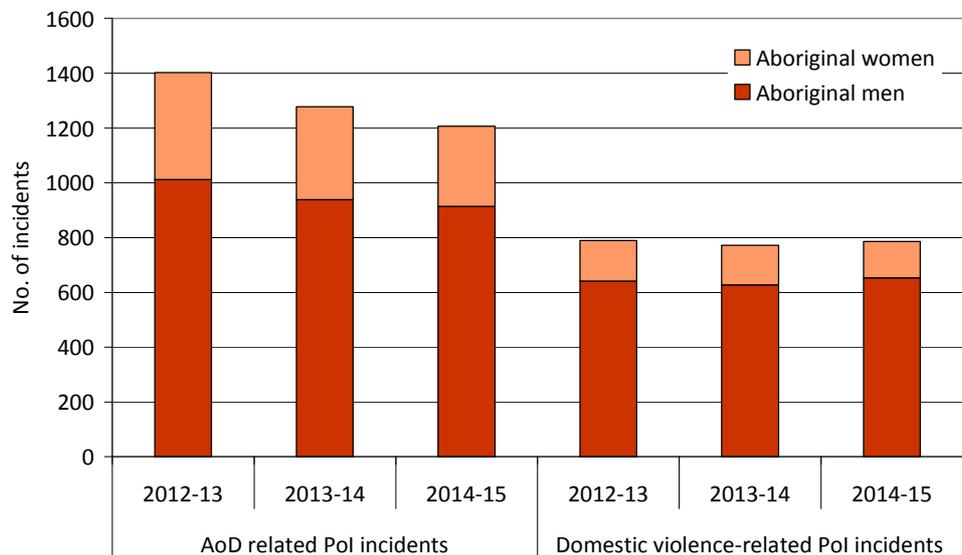
2014-15. This does not necessarily imply that the offence took place within the region, and the table may not necessarily give the complete picture.

Age cohort	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
10-17	155	117	94	25	23	7
18-24	342	360	311	154	154	137
25+	904	801	801	304	316	314
Not stated	1	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1,402	1,278	1,206	483	494	459

Age cohort	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
10-17	61	45	50	15	17	6
18-24	213	224	223	65	53	30
25+	515	503	513	120	132	153
Total	789	772	786	200	202	189

Figures 10.1 and 10.2 show graphically the trend in AoD-related and domestic violence-related POI incidents over the three year period for Aboriginal offenders, by sex and by age cohort, respectively.

Figure 10.1 – AoD and domestic violence POI incidents, Aboriginal persons proceeded against by sex, 2012-2015

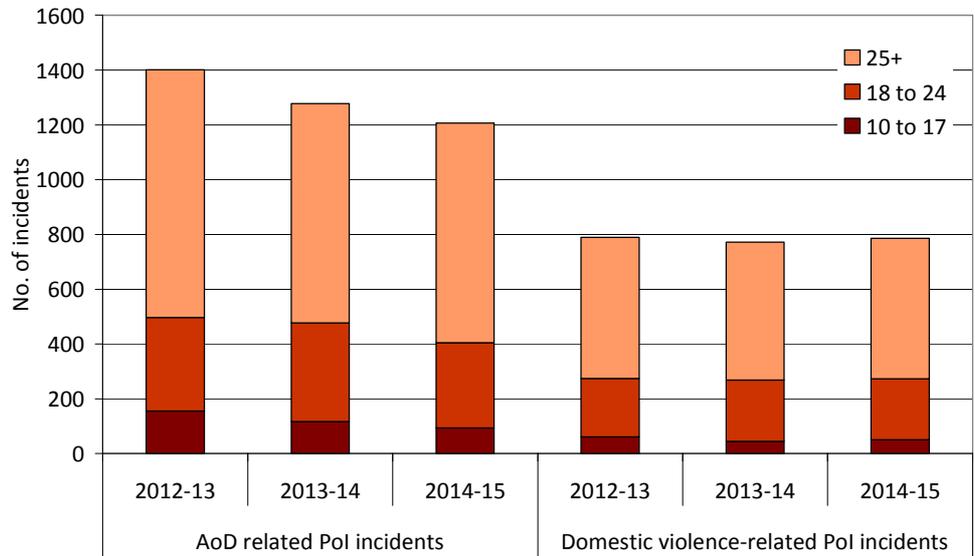


Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

AOD-related POI incidents show a downward trend, while domestic violence-related incidents have remained more or less constant over time. Of interest is the fact that, while the public discourse produces domestic violence as almost exclusively a women's

issue, a substantial minority (on average, 18% over the three year period) of incidents involved women as offenders. It is not possible to determine from the data whether men or other women were victims in these incidents.

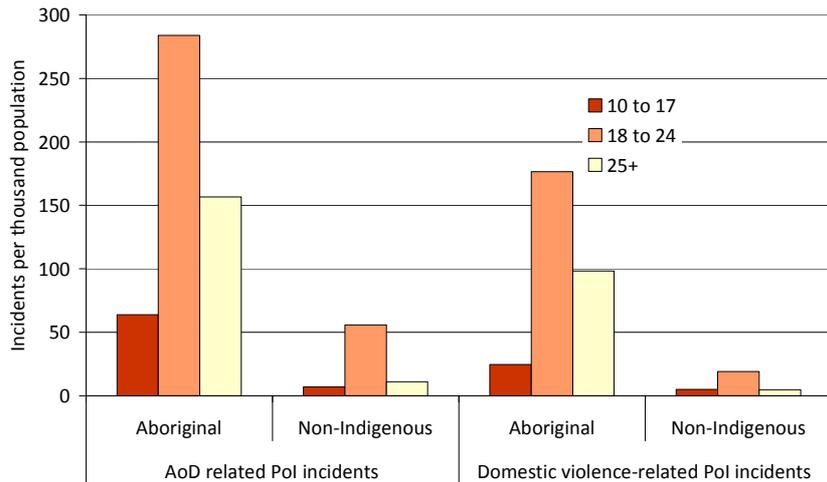
Figure 10.2 – AoD and domestic violence POI incidents, Aboriginal persons proceeded against by age cohort, 2012-2015



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

The results of analysis by age cohort of data for the 2013-2014 year are presented in Figure 10.3.

Figure 10.3 –POI incidents per 1,000 population by age cohort, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations, Murdi Paaki Region, 2013-2014 BCSR data and 2014 ERPs and Aboriginal population projections



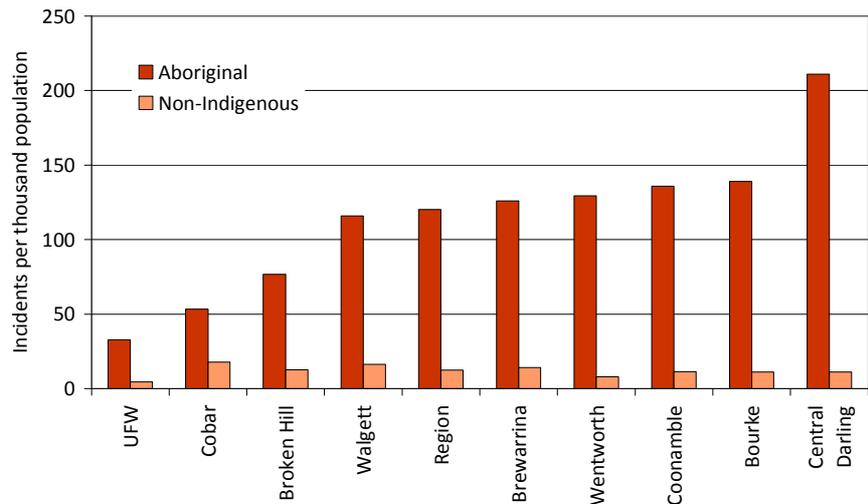
Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

The highest incidence of offending in both the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations is in the 18-24 age cohort. In contrast, though, the rate of POI incidents for the non-

Indigenous population in the 25 years and older cohort drops markedly, whereas for the Aboriginal population, the incidence in the 25 years and older cohort remains relatively high for both types of incident.

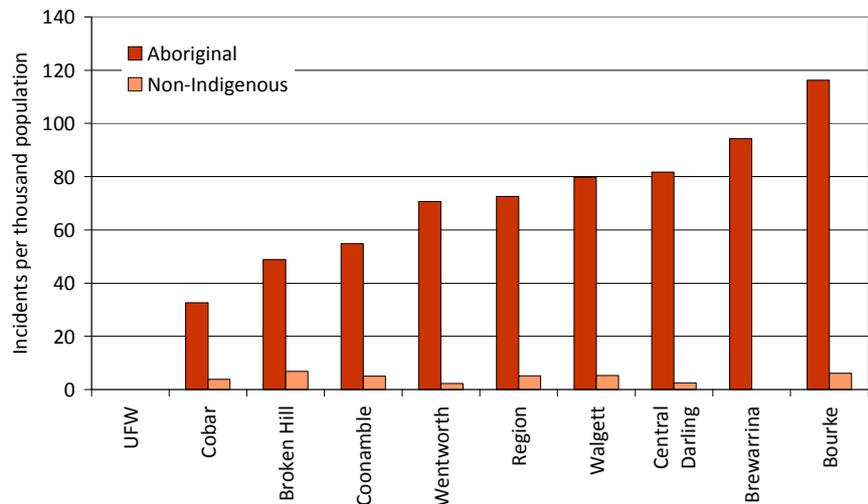
Figures 10.4 and 10.5 compare the incidence of AoD-related and DV-related POI incidents, respectively, per thousand population, by Aboriginal identification, with data arranged in increasing order of incidence by LGA/SLA.

Figure 10.4 – AoD-related POI incidents per 1,000 population, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations by LGA/SLA, 2013-2014 BCSR data and 2014 ERPs and Aboriginal population projections



Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

Figure 10.5 – Domestic violence-related POI incidents per 1,000 population, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations by LGA/SLA, 2013-2014 BCSR data and 2014 ERPs and Aboriginal population projections



Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

The relatively high levels in Central Darling (for AoD-related incidents), Bourke and Brewarrina (for domestic violence-related incidents) are worthy of further investigation.

From this point onwards, the localities discussed are the places of residence of the persons involved, not the places at which offences took place or the courthouses where the persons attended.

## 10.5 Court data

### *Persons charged appearing in court*

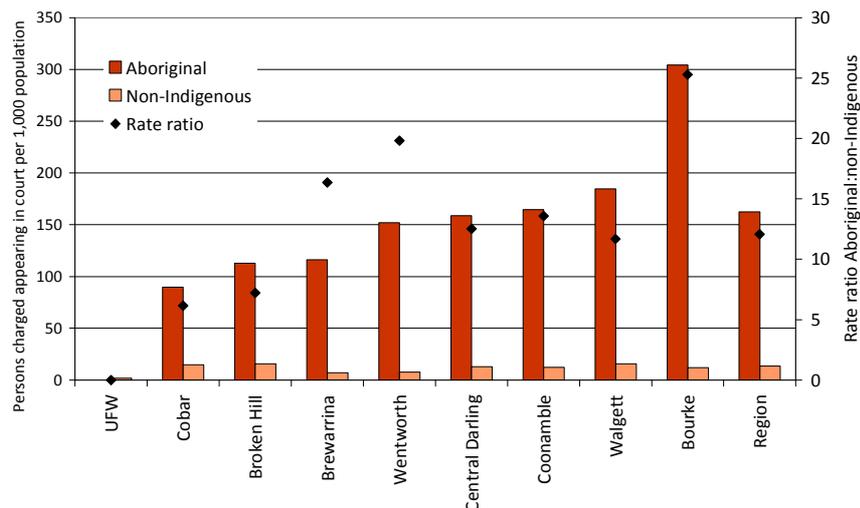
The incidence of Aboriginal persons charged and appearing in court is geographically highly variable, as Table 10.3 shows.

**Table 10.3 – Aboriginal persons charged and appearing in court, matters finalised 2013-2014**  
(Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections)

LGA	Persons charged and appearing	
	Individuals	Incidence per 1,000 aged 10yrs and over
Bourke	279	304
Brewarrina	116	116
Broken Hill	153	113
Central Darling	111	159
Cobar	53	89
Coonamble	190	165
Walgett	332	185
Wentworth	98	152
UFW	0	0
Murdi Paaki Region	1,332	162

The incidence per thousand population of persons charged and appearing in court for the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population are compared for each LGA/SLA in Figure 10.6.

Figure 10.6 – Aboriginal and non-Indigenous persons charged and appearing in court per 1,000 population, including rate ratios, by LGA/SLA, matters finalised 2013-2014



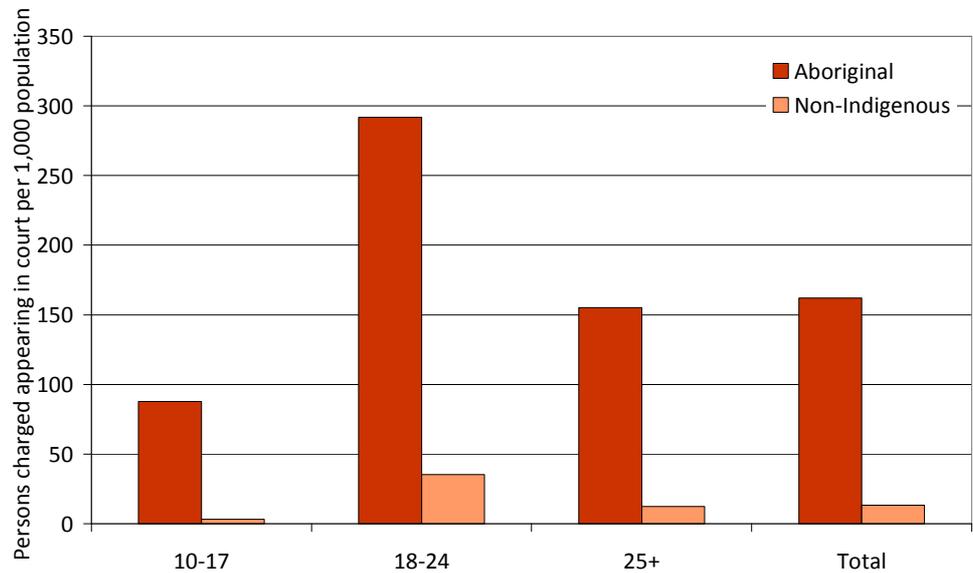
Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

This graph also shows geographical variation in the rate ratio (incidence of Aboriginal persons charged and appearing compared with incidence of non-Indigenous persons

charged and appearing). Aboriginal people living in the Murdi Paaki Region had, on average, 12.1 times the incidence of persons charged appearing in court as non-Indigenous people for all criminal matters finalised in the twelve months to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, if numbers of persons charged and appearing in court are compared with populations aged 10 years and over. The rate ratio is highest in the LGAs of Bourke (at 25.3) and Wentworth (at 19.8).

Figure 10.7 compares the incidence of persons charged appearing in court for matters finalised in this twelve month period for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous persons, by age cohort, at a regional scale.

Figure 10.7 – Aboriginal and non-Indigenous persons per thousand charged and appearing in court, by age, matters finalised 2013-2014



Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

It is worth noting that, at a regional scale, there is not a high degree of variability from year to year, nor does a consistent trend show in the data. It is also worth noting that the age structure of persons charged differs markedly between the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations, with Aboriginal juveniles over-represented compared to non-Indigenous persons aged 10 to 17 years.

#### *Refusals of bail by the court*

Numbers of people charged with a criminal offence but refused bail by the court are shown in Table 10.4, and percentages, in Table 10.5 and Figure 10.8.

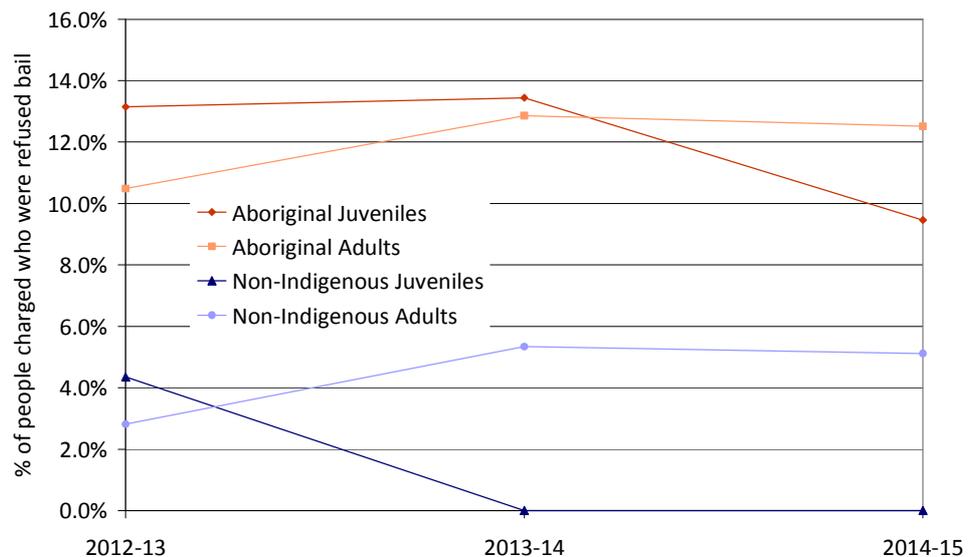
Table 10.4 – Number of people charged who were refused bail by the court, Murdi Paaki Region, Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Age cohort	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
10-17	23	25	14	1	0	0
18-24	44	51	43	1	6	11
25+	73	106	99	12	20	18
Total	140	182	156	14	26	29

Table 10.5 – Percentage of people charged who were refused bail by the court, Murdi Paaki Region, Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Age cohort	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
10-17	13.1%	13.4%	9.5%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%
18-24	11.3%	12.7%	11.4%	0.7%	5.0%	7.0%
25+	10.1%	12.9%	13.1%	3.9%	5.5%	4.4%
Total	12.0%	14.6%	13.7%	3.2%	6.1%	5.8%

Figure 10.8 – Aboriginal and non-Indigenous persons per thousand charged and appearing in court, by age, matters finalised 2013-2014



Sources: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and ABS ERPs and population projections

Overall, during the three year period, Aboriginal persons charged had 2.7 times the incidence of being refused bail by the court as non-Indigenous persons charged. For young Aboriginal people aged 10 to 17 years, the average refusal rate was 12.2%; this is 7.3 times the rate for non-Indigenous young people; however, the rate of bail refusals for young Aboriginal people decreased slightly in the final year of the three year period. It is not known whether this was because of a change in policy; further investigation would be needed to identify the reason.

#### Method of disposal

BCSR data obtained included an indication of the method of disposal of each matter – whether the defendant entered a guilty plea and was sentenced, whether the matter

proceeded to a defended hearing on the basis that the defendant pled not guilty, or whether another method of disposal was involved. Table 10.6 summarises the percentage of matters disposed of in each of these three manners.

Table 10.6 – Method of disposal, % of matters, Murdi Paaki Region, Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Method	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Guilty plea	26%	24%	30%	62%	65%	66%
Defended hearing	51%	53%	53%	15%	16%	11%
Other	23%	23%	18%	23%	20%	23%

The data indicate that fewer than half as many Aboriginal as non-Indigenous persons charged entered a guilty plea; about three times as many matters involving an Aboriginal defendant proceeded to a defended hearing. It cannot be determined without further investigation whether the entering or otherwise of a guilty plea influences the decision to grant bail.

#### *Legal representation*

A greater percentage of Aboriginal defendants than non-Indigenous defendants had legal representation. For Aboriginal defendants, the rate of representation ranged from 91% to 94% over the three-year period whereas, for non-Indigenous defendants, it ranged from 77% to 79%. On average over the three year period, the rate ratio indicates that Aboriginal people charged and appearing in court were about 18% more likely than non-Indigenous defendants to have legal representation. For Aboriginal defendants, the rate of representation was higher for those appearing in the Children’s Court than the Local Courts; all those appearing in the higher jurisdictions were represented.

#### *Delays from first court appearance to outcome*

The number of Aboriginal people charged and appearing in higher courts (District and Supreme Courts) was quite small, averaging 14 per year for this three-year period across the whole region. The median delay from first court appearance to determination for Aboriginal people in these jurisdictions charged varied from 197 days to 638 days across the time period and the various sitting locations. The average number of Aboriginal people with defended hearings in the Local Court was 1,073 per year across the same period. It is possible that this number includes individuals charged and appearing multiple times. For Aboriginal people with defended hearings in the Local Court, median delays from first court appearance to outcome ranged from 35 days to 550 days across the time period and the various sitting locations. For the Children’s Court, median delays ranged from 42 days to 435 days. An average of 625 Aboriginal people per year across the region were charged and appeared in the Children’s Court. Length of delays are highly variable by jurisdiction and by geography, so it would be very difficult to discern with any degree of confidence whether the duration of proceedings against Aboriginal people consistently vary from those experienced by non-Indigenous persons.

Given the rate at which Aboriginal persons charged are refused bail, lengthy delays have the potential to remove people from opportunities for a considerable time. For people

who are working when charged with a criminal offence, the likely outcome of refusal of bail is loss of employment, even before court action has resulted in a conviction.

#### *Guilty verdicts*

As with persons appearing in court charged with an offence, Aboriginal people aged 10 years or over on average are 11.4 times as likely to have been found guilty of a criminal offence as non-Indigenous people per thousand population, on the basis of 2013-2014 court data and 2014 population projections and ERPs (for the notional population fraction aged 10 years and over). Again, the rate ratio is geographically highly variable, ranging from 0 for offenders from Unincorporated Far West and 6.2 for offenders from Cobar to 19.4 and 25.2 for offenders from Wentworth and Bourke LGAs, respectively. Overall, juveniles were 24.8 times as likely to have been found guilty of a criminal offence. Table 10.7 shows the number of people resident in any of the LGAs in the region who were found guilty of a criminal offence in a court from July 2012 to June 2015.

**Table 10.7 – Number of people found guilty of a criminal offence, Murdi Paaki Region, Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research**

Jurisdiction	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Higher courts	11	10	12	3	2	8
Local Court	854	960	886	391	406	465
Children's Court	158	157	116	19	10	14
All courts	1,023	1,127	1,014	413	418	487

The percentage of persons found guilty as a proportion of persons charged of an offence differs between the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population, with 88% to 90% of Aboriginal persons charged being found guilty, compared with 95% to 98% of non-Indigenous persons charged. On average over the three year period, the rate ratio indicates that non-Indigenous people charged were about 8% more likely than Aboriginal persons charged to be found guilty.

#### *Custodial sentences*

Numbers of people convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment or, for juvenile offenders, to a Control Order (a custodial sentence served in a Juvenile Justice Centre) are shown in Table 10.8.

**Table 10.8 – Number of people sentenced to a term of imprisonment, Murdi Paaki Region, Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research**

Jurisdiction	Aboriginal			Non-Indigenous		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Higher courts	8	7	8	1	0	4
Local Court	88	129	102	14	22	26
Children's Court	21	17	9	1	0	0
All courts	117	153	119	16	22	30

Aboriginal people aged 10 years or over on average across the region are 29.4 times as likely to have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment as non-Indigenous people, on the basis of 2013-2014 court data and 2014 population projections and ERPs (for the population fraction aged 10 years and over). About 1.9% of the 10 years plus Aboriginal

population received a custodial sentence during the 2013-2014 year, and about 0.9% of young Aboriginal people aged 10 to 17 years received a control order.

The rate of imprisonment was far higher for Aboriginal people found guilty of a criminal offence than for non-Indigenous offenders. For Aboriginal offenders, the imprisonment rate ranged from 11% to 14% over the three-year period whereas, for non-Indigenous offenders, it ranged from 4% to 6%. On average over the three year period, the rate ratio indicates that Aboriginal people found guilty were about 2.4 times as likely as non-Indigenous persons found guilty to receive a custodial sentence.

Prison terms, of course, varied depending upon the offence committed. For Aboriginal offenders convicted in the higher courts, the average minimum or fixed term of imprisonment imposed across the three year period for which data were obtained varied by location of offender residence from six months to 16 years; in the Local Court, the range was one month to 24 months and, in the Children's Court, the duration of Control Orders ranged from 1.4 to eight months.

## 10.6 Persons in custody or under supervision

Data were obtained from NSW Corrective Services and NSW Juvenile Justice which provide an indication of the number of persons whose most recent known address was in the Murdi Paaki Region who were in full-time custody and/or, in the case of juveniles, under supervision orders in the community. Table 10.9 shows the NSW Corrective Services data and Table 10.10, the NSW Juvenile Justice data.

Table 10.9 – Adults serving full-time custodial sentences as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 – Source: NSW Corrective Services

LGA of last known address	Indigenous offenders	Non-Indigenous offenders	All offenders
Bourke/Brewarrina	55	0	55
Broken Hill	28	30	58
Central Darling/UFW	22	1	23
Cobar	3	5	8
Coonamble	14	4	18
Walgett	29	8	37
Wentworth	11	5	16
Murdi Paaki Region	162	53	215

Table 10.10 – Number of supervision periods for young Aboriginal people from Murdi Paaki Region LGAs, 2014-2015 – Source: NSW Juvenile Justice

LGA of last known address	Community-based supervision order	In custody on control order	In custody on remand
Bourke	8	5	9
Brewarrina	6	0	<5
Broken Hill	<5	<5	<5
Central Darling	<5	0	<5
Cobar	6	0	<5
Coonamble	10	<5	<5
Walgett	15	<5	5
Wentworth	<5	0	8
Murdi Paaki Region	56	13	33

Corrective Services data represent a snapshot in time whereas the Juvenile Justice data are for a twelve-month period.

These figures count periods of supervision by legal status. A young person can have more than one supervision order in the counting period. Cells of less than five have not been reported for privacy and confidentiality. A total of 77 young people (Aboriginal and non-Indigenous) are represented by the figures in the dataset. By way of comparison, seven young people who were non-Indigenous or whose Indigenous status was not known were on a community-based supervision order, two were in custody on a control order, and eight were in custody on remand.

## 10.7 Reflections

The differences in incidence of engagement with the criminal justice system between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people are stark, but they are well-known, and have been the subject of much investigation and many initiatives commencing with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in the late 1980s. The shame of it is that so many of the Royal Commission's recommendations have not been actioned, that lip service has been a common response and that other initiatives required to divert Aboriginal people from the justice system have been so slow to develop.

The less obvious differences relating to such matters as disposal methods, refusal of bail, incidence of guilty verdicts and application of custodial sentences invite a number of speculative questions. For example:

- ❖ Is there a relationship between the number of arrests per thousand population for POI incidents and Police operational capacity in individual communities?
- ❖ Why do so many more Aboriginal defendants opt for a defended hearing? Are arrangements for legal representation influential here? Could this tendency be an expression of resistance to colonisation? Are there any other possible cultural or historical dimensions to this?
- ❖ Why the differences in sentencing? Is the reduced tendency to enter a guilty plea a factor? Is recidivism relevant?
- ❖ How is it that conviction rates for Aboriginal persons charged are consistently lower than for non-Indigenous persons charged? Could this indicate a greater incidence of unsafe arrests? Is the impact of higher rates of representation relevant, perhaps in combination with the greater proportion of persons charged opting for a defended trial?

What is clear is that these questions provide potentially fertile ground for research, and could usefully be the subject for further discussions with both BCSR and the University of Sydney.

## **Chapter 11 Early Childhood and School Education**

### **11.1 Investment in school education**

A total recurrent investment of \$140.1M underpinned school education across the region in 2013 (the latest year for which financial data is available) derived variously from the Australian and NSW Governments, from fees, charges and parent contributions, and from other private sources. This funding was spread across 47 schools, of which seven were government funded secondary schools and a further eight government funded K-12 Central schools. The number of children enrolled was 7,353 of whom 2,583, or 35%, identified as Aboriginal. Estimated contributions to the education of Aboriginal children by the Australian and NSW governments were \$18.94M and \$40.63M respectively for the 2013 school year, excluding capital works funding.

Ignoring Louth Public School with three students and thus unable to achieve any economy of scale, net annual recurrent income for (or investment in) each student from all sources ranged from \$10,962 for Gol Gol Public School to \$69,224 for Goodooga Central School. Of 47 schools, 43 recorded a net annual recurrent income per student of less than \$40,000. Remoteness was a factor in influencing the level of funding. Of the schools classified as “Very Remote”, Bourke schools consistently received lower levels of funding per student than other schools in the region with the same classification. A higher ratio of Aboriginal students did not appear to attract higher levels of funding as a rule.

The ratio of students to teaching staff varied widely around a median figure of 10.3 FTE. This figure reduced to 7.7 FTE teaching staff in secondary schools.

### **11.2 Relative levels of educational achievement**

To assess the level of achievement, 2013 NAPLAN results were compared with other schools of a similar socio-economic character across Australia at Years 5 and 9 and then with the average score for schools nationally. The purpose was to assess the average level of competency in literacy and numeracy that children had reached in both years and draw a broad conclusion as to the standards of education being delivered to children in the region. The conclusion could only be indicative since the level of participation of students in sitting NAPLAN tests is known to be variable. Smaller primary schools did not participate and so have been excluded from the comparison. Year 9 scores are not available for Goodooga and Ivanhoe Central Schools and these too have been excluded from the comparison.

At Year 5, Wilcannia underperformed (in 5 of 5 tests), as did Menindee (4 of 5 tests), Goodooga (4 of 5 tests), Dareton (2 of 5 tests) and Walgett (2 of 5 tests) when compared with schools of similar socio-economic character. Schools to exceeding the average score of schools nationally were St Brigid’s Primary Coonamble (5 of 5 tests), Sacred Heart Primary Broken Hill (5 of 5 tests) and St John’s Primary Cobar (2 of 5 tests) - all three non-government schools - and the School of the Air at Broken Hill (4 of 5 tests).

At Year 9 level, Wilcannia underperformed (in 5 of 5 tests), as did Collarenebri (4 of 5 tests), Walgett (3 of 5 tests), Brewarrina, Gulargambone and Menindee (2 of 5 tests) when compared with schools of similar socio-economic character. No schools equalled or

exceeded the average score of schools nationally. A sampling of Year 9 NAPLAN results for reading and numeracy for the period 2008 to 2014 indicates no consistent trend: results are volatile and this is compounded by null results in some schools.

Of 976 students enrolled in VET in Schools in 2012, only 165 achieved Cert II or Cert III in 2013, a success rate of less than 17%. Thirty two students enrolled in 2012 in either a school based apprenticeship or traineeship, but it is not clear how many completed.

Of 278 students completing Year 12 in 2013, 267 were awarded the HSC but it is not known how many of these identified as Aboriginal nor how many students enrolled.

A more comprehensive benchmarking of student characteristics, enrolment, attendance and attainment would be possible with access to a tailored school education dataset which, if made available on a regular basis, would facilitate longitudinal monitoring and evaluation. School education is a critical weakness in the knowledge-building process across the region and demands urgent and incisive attention.

A number of factors relating to achievement were investigated on the basis of data available on the My School website, particularly attendance, but associations with other potentially causal influences, such as socio-economic status or proportion of Aboriginal students, were weak. A higher proportion of Aboriginal students in a school population did not appear to result in higher levels of non-attendance in general although this was not the case for High and Central schools in Wilcannia, Walgett, Bourke, Collarenebri and Coonamble which had below 80% attendance rates, as did Dareton Primary School. Poor attendance, as well as lower levels of participation in NAPLAN testing, may have contributed to the lower than desirable Year 9 NAPLAN results.

### **11.3 Connected Communities Strategy**

At the start of the 2013 school year, the NSW Government introduced the Connected Communities Strategy, an initiative led through schools in the region and elsewhere intended to address the educational and social aspirations of young Aboriginal people through the creation of 'community hubs' in schools. Eight schools in the Murdi Paaki Region are part of this initiative. To date, there has been no effective engagement between Connected Communities and MPRA so it has thus not been possible for MPRA to articulate expectations in relation to accountability and performance of this initiative.

A mid-strategy mixed methods formative evaluation of Connected Communities was conducted in 2015, and findings published in the *Connected Communities Strategy – Interim Evaluation Report*. The evaluation is problematic for MPRA and CWPs in that in only one Murdi Paaki community was a CWP member included in the list of stakeholders consulted. As this person was identified as also playing a role in the School Reference Group (SRG) and the Local Aboriginal Land Council, it is not known whether or not she was formally delegated to participate on behalf of the CWP. Lack of engagement with CWPs generally is of concern to MPRA in relation to Connected Communities. According to the *Evaluation Report*, only three SRG members across the fifteen school communities are delegates of CWPs. It is not known whether any of these are in the Murdi Paaki Region; the narrative in the evaluation refers only to links between the Toomelah and Boggabilla CWPs and Connected Communities schools.

Eight of the Senior Leaders Community Engagement (SLCE) and Leaders Community Engagement (LCE) in Connected Communities schools were reported as attending interagency meetings **including CWPs** but it is not known how many of these were CWPs and, of these, whether any were in Murdi Paaki communities. The *Evaluation Report* indicates that all SRGs are chaired by the local AECG president, and that, at a local level, the AECGs are intended to 'represent the entire community'. This is clearly problematic for the CWPs and for MPRA in that the Connected Communities hubs are intended to fulfil an integrative function in relation to human services for Aboriginal children and their families and that schools are seen as taking 'a leading role in working together with other agencies around community and social development. In communities where the current level of interagency co-ordination is ineffective and accountability for outcomes poor, Connected Communities schools can play a leading role in improving the effectiveness of interagency co-ordination.' MPRA is of the view that the AECGs (whose core business is strictly school education-related), as taking a lead role in governance of the Connected Communities initiative, do not have the breadth of interest and experience of the CWPs in functioning as the peak representative body in relation to service co-ordination initiatives. The *Evaluation Report* indicates that only in Bourke has interagency participation in the 'hub' involved the CWP. Furthermore, the structures adopted for Connected Communities has the potential to cut across the work to be undertaken under the Local Decision Making Accord, which MPRA (and presumably the NSW Government lead agencies) understand to be a higher order co-ordination initiative. MPRA requires that the Connected Communities initiative in Murdi Paaki schools be subordinated to the LDM Accord and that formal arrangements be put in place for Connected Communities school SLCEs and LCEs to report at each CWP meeting, and the Team Leader Community Engagement, to each MPRA meeting.

The *Evaluation Report* raises serious cause for concern in relation to outputs and outcomes vis à vis expectations. It is worth noting in relation to this that all Murdi Paaki Connected Communities schools had employed executive principals by July 2013 and LCEs and SLCEs by January 2014, so the earliest round of evaluation fieldwork commenced less than a year after human resources were in place. Reporting of geographically specific data for Murdi Paaki communities is patchy at best. Information in relation to outputs (investment in infrastructure and initiatives) indicates, among other things, that:

- ❖ Formal language teaching is taking place in all schools except Brewarrina Central School but in several schools, this predates Connected Communities. In Walgett, the extent of language teaching appears to have been curtailed from Stage 5 to Stage 1 following the introduction of Connected Communities. There was reported to be little evidence for collaboration between Language and Culture Nests and Connected Communities schools;
- ❖ All primary schools and central schools have transition to school programmes in place but, again, these were generally established prior to Connected Communities. These programmes provide for two hours per week of transition activities in the term prior to children entering kindergarten (although Bourke has an expanded programme). Infrastructure has been provided at Menindee CS, Bourke PS, Wilcannia CS and Brewarrina CS;
- ❖ Cultural awareness training ('Connecting to Country') has been provided at least once to staff in all schools; however, in five of the eight Murdi Paaki schools, this was not delivered until term 1 or term 2 of 2015, and one-off delivery does not account for churn in school staffing; and

- ❖ Of the eight Murdi Paaki schools, only Coonamble HS and Walgett HS have a partnership with a university and only Bourke HS, with a TAFE, with a view to progressing the 'further education and employment focus'.

Early evidence in relation to outcomes is, again, geographically patchy, with much of the data presented in aggregate for all Connected Communities schools. There is little insight to be gained from interrogating aggregate data given that seven schools are not in the Region so only brief summaries are presented below. More detailed information is available, though in relation to school attendance. Attendance rates are highly variable. In aggregate, data indicate that in the primary years, there has been an overall improvement from 2009 onwards and that the attendance gap between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous children is closing (although this is partly because non-Indigenous children's attendance has declined). The data, though are spatially variable: for Aboriginal children, attendance rate improvements from 2012 to 2014 were recorded at all Murdi Paaki schools except for Bourke Primary School, and there were no data presented for Brewarrina Central School. For students in the secondary years, the attendance rate has remained more or less static overall from 2009 to 2014, as has the gap. Again, school-specific data are spatially variable: for Aboriginal children, attendance rates were higher in 2014 than in 2012 in Wilcannia, Bourke and Brewarrina but lower in Walgett, Coonamble and Menindee to varying extents. In all Murdi Paaki Connected Communities schools, Aboriginal children's attendance rates in 2014 were below the NSW average. Attendance data were the only quantitative data presented per school. The aggregate data indicate, across all fifteen Connected Communities schools, that:

- ❖ Improvements were obtained in early literacy but early numeracy rates declined (but it is not possible to infer trends from these early measurements). AEDC results discussed later in this Chapter were reinforced by surveys of teacher perception included in the *Evaluation Report*;
- ❖ Participation rates for Connected Communities schools in NAPLAN appeared to be generally trending downwards except for Year 9 for both reading and numeracy, but Year 9 participation rates overall were generally lower than for all other cohorts. The gap in participation rates for Connected Communities versus non-Connected Communities schools appeared to be widening;
- ❖ Trends relating to the number of students achieving at or above the national minimum standards for NAPLAN were unclear because of volatility from year to year; however, the *Evaluation Report* indicates that there are no clear signs of Connected Communities having any impact;
- ❖ Apparent retention rates Year 10 to Year 12 from 2012 to 2014 for Aboriginal students at Connected Communities schools appeared to decline by 8.3 percentage points. It is not known whether this is the beginning of a trend.

MPRA is frustrated by the non-presentation of school-specific data relating to most of the indicators of interest and requests that, in the interests of accountability, these data are made available for review by CWPs and by MPRA. In relation to the recommendations made in the *Evaluation Report*, particularly those which relate to interagency relationships and the 'hub' model, we reiterate the critical importance of MPRA's and the CWPs' central role as peak representative bodies.

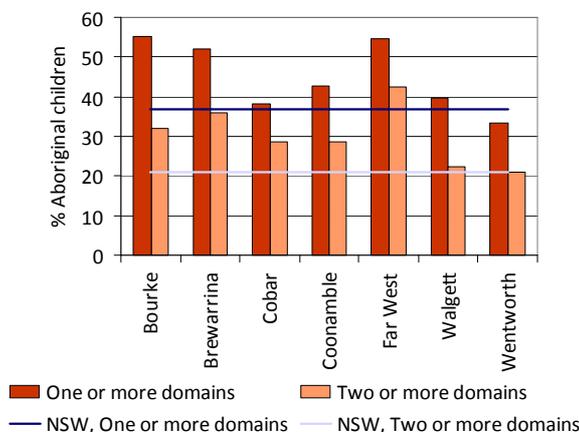
The findings of MPRA's recent facilitated, survey-based research initiative, undertaken in response to MPRA's and the CWPs' frustration around education funding and outcomes more generally, reinforced concerns expressed above in relation to Connected

Communities and identified a number of issues of critical significance for Aboriginal students and their families in our region across the education sector as a whole:

- ❖ CWP's reported that Aboriginal families are unaware of support programmes, and programme funding, to foster their children's learning in schools across the region. This results in reduced opportunities for family and community to engage positively in supporting their children's educational attainment;
- ❖ There is little or no understanding among school leadership of the existence and role of MPRA and the CWP's as peak bodies in the community. Schools recognise the local AECG as the responsible community representative body for liaison and consultation;
- ❖ Aboriginal education funds are being used almost exclusively for the employment resource staff: aides, Aboriginal Education Officers, Student Support Learning Officers, or for teacher relief to cover Personal Learning Plan development;
- ❖ Schools are generally not aware of what programme specific funding is available. There is a sense that competition for funding is a forlorn exercise because of the one-off nature of grant allocation outside of Resource Allocation Model (RAM) funding;
- ❖ Of greatest concern, 16% of Aboriginal students in the schools surveyed (a total of 219 of the Aboriginal school population surveyed) are on wait lists for special services or assessment and, for many of these students, waiting times exceed twelve months. Over 150 students were awaiting assessment at the time of the survey; ninety-five had waited over twelve months for Counsellor assessments, and substantial numbers have been awaiting speech pathology (47), occupational therapy (32) and paediatric (10) assessment and/or intervention for lengthy periods. Access issues are a manifestation of the severe shortage of qualified educational psychologists and allied health professionals across the region. This is compounded by shifting of responsibility for support for students with special health or learning needs by some schools to the Aboriginal community controlled health sector.

## 11.4 Early childhood development

Figure 11.1 – Early childhood development, Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains, Aboriginal children, 2012



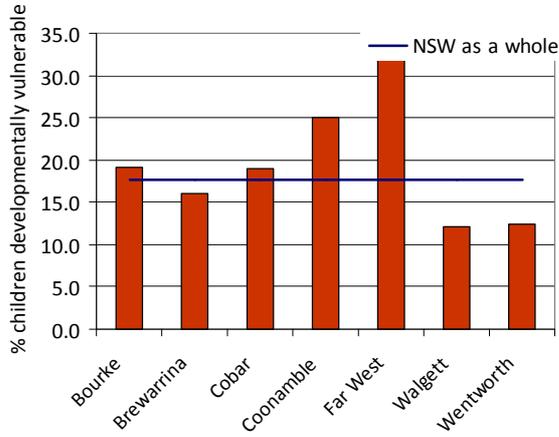
Source: PHIDU, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia, IARE, 2015

All communities have voiced grave concern for many years about the health and welfare of young children in an effort to pressure Government(s) to improve the level and quality of service provision. That urgent action is needed is amply illustrated by Figure 11.1 which highlights the level of developmental vulnerability of children during their first year of school as determined by the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

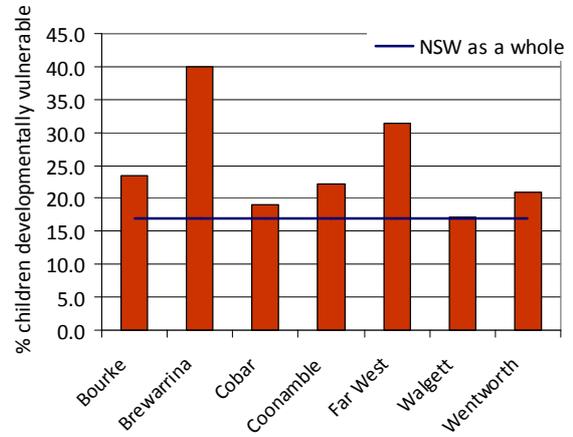
The AEDC examines developmental vulnerability across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. The findings, presented at Figure 11.2, are benchmarked with Aboriginal children of the same age in NSW generally.

Figure 11.2 – Early childhood development, developmentally vulnerable, by domain, Aboriginal children, 2012

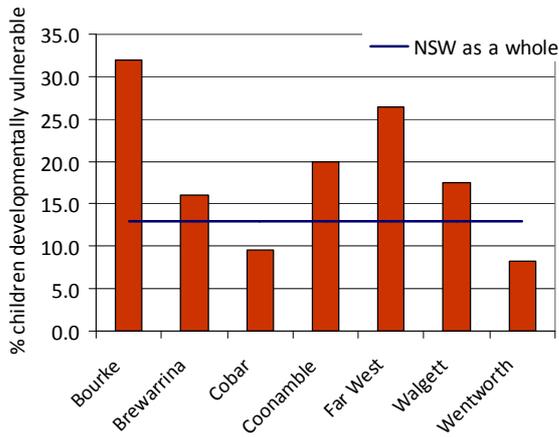
Physical health and wellbeing



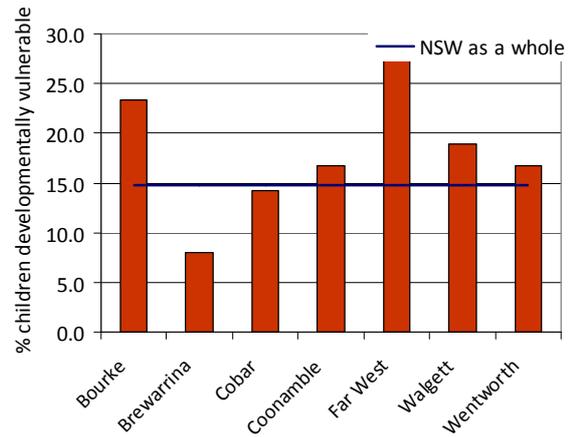
Social competence



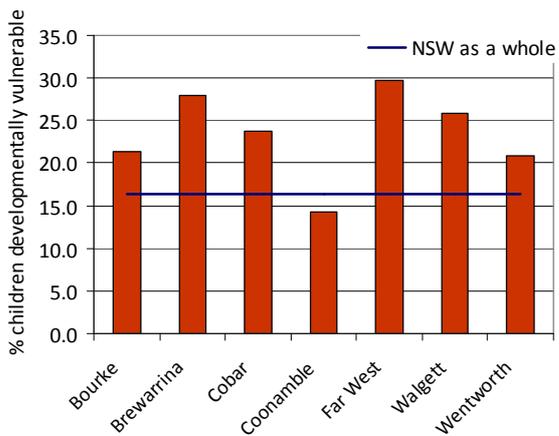
Emotional maturity



Language and cognitive skills



Communications skills and general knowledge



Data regarding early childhood development are available from PHIDU, but the geography is by Indigenous Area, not by LGA/SLA. The effect of this is that only combined Broken Hill and Far West data are available, and that all of Balranald LGA is included in the dataset.

Children classified as developmentally vulnerable score in the lowest 10 per cent of the national AEDC population for an AEDC domain so the clear message from Figure 11.2 is that the wellbeing of Aboriginal children living in the region is compromised from the earliest age. At a regional level, of children tested, 46.4% of Aboriginal children were assessed as vulnerable in one or more domains compared with 22.9% of non-Indigenous children while 30.7% of Aboriginal children were assessed as vulnerable in two

Source: PHIDU, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia, IARE, 2015

or more domains compared with 12.2% of non-Indigenous children.

ABS census data included at Table 11.1 indicate that, as at 2011, four year old Aboriginal children were attending pre-school at rates below their non-Indigenous counterparts. This is undoubtedly a contributory factor to developmental vulnerability at commencement of school. Universal access to early childhood education during the year before school commencement is a policy priority of Australian and State Governments, and is seen as fundamental to educational attainment later on. Children in Wentworth, Broken Hill and Coonamble LGAs are particularly disadvantaged in this regard, with attendance rates below 50% in each of these areas.

Area	% of four year old children attending pre-school	
	Aboriginal children	Non-Indigenous children
North West	62.8	78.7
Far West	50.0	74.8
Broken Hill	50.0	71.8
Murdi Paaki Region	59.4	75.1

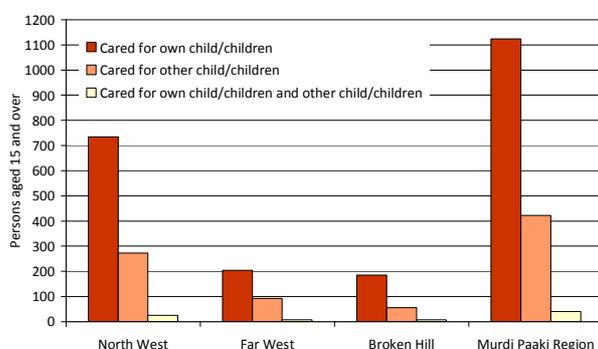
Ability to access effective, evidence-based ‘Early Years’ programmes and services is fundamental to attainment by our children once they enter the school system. The data presented above reinforce MPRA’s concerns about our children’s preparedness to learn, and the perceptions of teachers in this regard documented in the Connected Communities *Evaluation Report* further support our position. In particular, MPRA argues the need for better integration between services designated ‘early childhood’ and the first years of school education. Demonstrated areas of need which MPRA prioritises for action through better coordination and increased investment include:

- ❖ A coherent focus on the **first 2,000 days or more of a child’s life**. The artificial boundary for early childhood works against the interests of our children. Early childhood education and support services must extend into years K and 1 of each child’s schooling;
- ❖ Better co-ordination and communication and, preferably, integration across early childhood services in our communities. Some of our communities have three or more early childhood services which do not communicate, with the result that gaps and overlaps frustrate our children’s access to services and, therefore, their progress. A particular need in this regard is to corral stray NGOs which may be providing services to a very limited geographical extent in one community into an integrated children’s service sector. The emphasis on integration should guide financial investment into the sector;
- ❖ A consistently holistic focus within an integrated sector which provides seamlessly for sound early childhood and pre-school education, infant and early childhood health services including timely provision of specialist paediatric and allied health support, strong family connections, and effective and accessible disability services;
- ❖ Extended capacity within schools to support ‘transition to school’ programmes beyond the current provision of two hours per week in the term prior to school commencement.

## 11.5 Caring for children

Of the 5,013 adults in the region who responded to the Unpaid Child Care question in the 2011 Census, 1,586 had undertaken unpaid child care during the two weeks prior to the Census. Of these, 422 had cared for children not their own, such as grandchildren, the children of other relatives, or the children of friends or neighbours. While some of these carers will have been assisting friends or family by providing casual child minding for short periods, the burden on older people of rearing grandchildren when their own children are unable to do so is a significant social issue. This ready alternative to centre-based care may account for the reduced percentage of 4 year old Aboriginal children attending pre-school but it may not necessarily offer the best supportive home learning environment for shared learning activities between carer and child needed to achieve school readiness.

Figure 11.3 – Unpaid child care, Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over, ABS 2011 Census



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 11.3 summarises the unpaid child care data.

## 11.6 Family characteristics

Data regarding family characteristics are available from PHIDU, but the geography is by Indigenous Area, not by LGA/SLA, the effect being as previously mentioned. Table 11.2 summarises this data.

It is of note that over half of all Aboriginal children in the region are living in single parent families.

Area	Single parent families		Low income families		Jobless families		Children in jobless families	
	No of families	% of all families	No of families	% of all families	No of families	% of all families	No of children	% of all children
North West	455	51.0	223	16.1	406	45.5	840	46.2
Far West + BH	308	56.4	127	15.7	274	50.2	514	49.8
Murdi Paaki	763	53.1	350	16.0	680	47.3	1354	47.5

## 11.7 Role of culture and language

MPRA supports initiatives of Governments directed at strengthening our identity as First Australians, our spirituality and connection to Country. Establishing language and culture nests in two selected locations in the region as a means of recovering and reclaiming our languages, customs, beliefs and values is recognised, cautiously at this time given the non-availability of accountability measures, as a contribution to this process although the Connected Communities *Evaluation Report*, as noted above, is not encouraging in this regard. Clearly, in view of under-achievement in education at all levels, measures which assist Aboriginal students and families through the stages of learning from preschool to Year 12 and into VET and tertiary education are welcome. It is to be hoped that the theoretical foundation: that a relationship exists between the teaching and learning of Aboriginal language and culture and the advancement of student performance and attainment, is reliable.

Notwithstanding evidence of activity in Connected Communities schools, very little quantitative information relating to language and culture is available against which to benchmark progress, and the little which can be obtained is generally dated and geographically non-specific. Data from two sources: the ABS 2011 Census and the 2008 ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSISS), have been used to produce Tables 11.3 and 11.4.

Table 11.3, based on ABS 2011 Census data for the Murdi Paaki Region, indicates the number of Aboriginal people speaking an Australian Indigenous language at home, by age cohort.

Variable	Age cohort			Total population
	0-14 years	15-64 years	65 years and over	
Speaks one or more Australian Indigenous language(s)	24	48	3	75

Data were available from NATSISS by state, and by remoteness area. The data in Table 11.4 were derived for remote and very remote NSW. This geography excludes Broken Hill and the Murray River communities, which are classified as Outer Regional, and includes on its eastern fringe several population centres outside the Murdi Paaki Region, such as Mungindi, Nyngan, Hillston and Condobolin. If language and identification data for the 4-14 year cohort are compared with the adult population fraction, it seems that ‘green shoots’ are becoming evident, and this is encouraging; however, there is much scope for continuing progress.

Variable	4-14 year age cohort		15 years and older age cohort	
	Number	% of population	Number	% of population
Does not speak an Indigenous language	1,300	70.2	4,400	82.5
Identifies with clan, tribal or language group	1,000	50.6	2,600	47.3
Involved in events, ceremonies or organisations over last 12 months	1,700	91.0	3,700	69.3
Indigenous culture taught at school	1,600	81.8		

It seems likely that, owing to the wording of the question, respondents who learn an Australian Indigenous language at school but do not speak it at home have not been enumerated. Given the punishment for speaking Aboriginal languages meted out to Aboriginal people who lived on government stations prior to the abolition of the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1969, it would not be surprising if older people were still circumspect about admitting knowledge of language in their Census responses. Even so, a positive response rate to the language question by less than one per cent of the Aboriginal population is surprising and alarming. The 2006 Census identified that 42 Aboriginal people resident in the region spoke at least one Australian Indigenous language at home, so the number of speakers appears to have increased, but from a very small base.

## **Chapter 12 Housing**

### **12.1 Housing management**

A general consensus exists that the current framework for managing social housing across the region is sub-optimal, resulting in duplication of effort, inadequate services to tenants, elevated cost structures, inconsistencies in tenancy policy, reduction in recurrent investment and loss of opportunity to reinstate and expand the reach of our long-standing regional housing manager, Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation. Further, gaps exist within the current fragmented Australian and NSW Governments' funding programmes and management models.

MPRA is of the view that it is impossible to achieve sustainability in the Region with twenty three different housing providers supported by the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office. In response, MPRA is developing an alternative regional strategy and operational management model which addresses structural and policy issues that impact service delivery, and works to overcome fragmentation in service provision consequent upon the multiple service-provider delivery arrangements that are now to be found across the region. Importantly, the model will reintroduce a needs-based approach to decision-making that will include MPRA and Community Working Parties as key stakeholders. The model will also account for the anomaly in allocation of housing funding arising from the use of a flawed remoteness geography as the basis for policy.

Cost efficiencies and value are at the heart of the proposal so the model will necessarily promote measures and initiatives which improve sustainability across the sector.

### **12.2 Towards rational housing provision: a strategic approach**

MPRA have secured funding from Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to conduct a thorough Region-wide review of housing delivery policy and practice. The review will audit housing-related economic inputs to the region to identify definitively funding committed to social housing, the sources of this funding and the way it is committed. At the same time, capacity to deliver housing in the region is to be investigated, and training needs identified. A rational process of change management will be developed and initiated, and this is to include the important aspect of governance reform needed in the housing sector in our region. Capacity and capability development of the remodelled service provider structure will take place, to secure long-term sustainability and improve service to tenants. As an element of this process, opportunities will be explored to maximise flow-on benefits through putting in place programmes to train and employ healthy housing workers in the communities. It is anticipated that Murdi Paaki Housing may be able to deploy up to 50 people, employed through the CDP, to undertake environmentally-focussed repair and maintenance work. This would have positive impacts on tenant satisfaction and environmental health. A further element of the review will be the development of a rigorous evidence base for housing need, based on survey methodology in the communities to capture need unidentified through waiting lists and census counts. The evidence base will then be used as the basis for identification and negotiation of opportunities to secure capital works funding for construction and refurbishment to meet housing need. Finally, a protocol for formative evaluation will be

developed and implemented, to ensure accountability of the system and to facilitate further evidence-based development.

At this point (May 2016), \$15M of the remaining National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) funding has been allocated to the Region. MPRA has concerns about previous expenditure by AHO of NPARIH funding, and is anxious that the audit discussed above interrogate and document where these funds have been committed. Previously, AHO has argued erroneously, on the basis of Housing NSW waiting lists, that no demand for social housing exists in the Region and has relied on this uncontested argument to obtain agreement for NPARIH funds to be allocated to non-remote geographies. MPRA will, under the LDM process, seek to implement accountability measures to monitor AHO's expenditure of the \$15M allocation. A total of \$48M still exists in the NSW share of NPARIH. Of this, \$33M has not been allocated to the Region. MPRA intends to maintain a watching brief as to allocation of this amount.

### 12.3 Social housing

MPRA has identified as a policy priority the need to increase affordable, suitable housing stock to abate crowding in Aboriginal households. Table 12.1 provides an indication, based upon data from the Indigenous Profiles and on TableBuilder cross-tabulations, of some indicators suggestive of crowding in dwellings.

Area	% of dwellings needing 1 or more extra bedroom(s)	No of dwellings needing 1 or more extra bedroom(s)	No of multiple-family households	No of family households with non-family members present	No of group households
North West	10.3	198	86	89	63
Far West	15.7	75	31	16	19
Broken Hill	10.8	59	25	27	14
Murdi Paaki Region	11.3	332	142	132	96

It is not possible using census data freely accessible to calculate an average household size or an average number of persons per bedroom for the region as a whole, but Indigenous Profiles for LGAs indicate that average household size ranges from 2.9 persons in the Unincorporated Far West to 3.3 persons in Central Darling. Average number of persons per bedroom varies from 1.0 in the Unincorporated Far West to 1.3 in Bourke, Brewarrina, Wentworth and Central Darling (assuming a value of 1.0 for dwellings where there are more bedrooms than people).

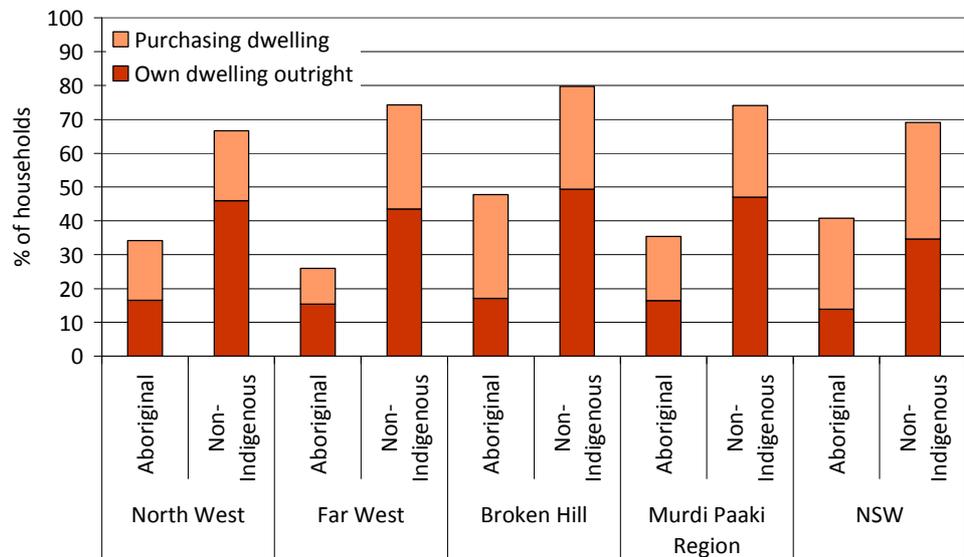
The data indicate that 4.7% of the 2,936 households in the region identified by the ABS as Indigenous households (on the basis that the household has at least one Indigenous person who is usually resident) have two or more families living in them. No judgment can be made as to whether this is desirable or undesirable from the perspective of the individual household. The actual number of additional bedrooms (and additional dwellings) required cannot be discerned from census data, and would need to be the subject of a household survey.

One further indicator which can be considered is housing-related stress. No data are available specifically for the Murdi Paaki Region or its constituent LGAs, but the 2012-2013 *Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Health Survey*, conducted by ABS and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, found that 14.1% of Aboriginal persons aged 15 and over living in remote geographies experienced crowding at home as a problematic stressor during the twelve months prior to the survey.

## 12.4 Home ownership

MPRA is cautious about promoting the benefits of home ownership as a means to improve the economic and social circumstances of Aboriginal people in the region since there is strong evidence that the residential housing market is regressing in some communities. The scale of ownership, based on analysis of 2011 Census data, is shown in Figure 12.1 which compares rates of home ownership and purchase for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous households in the region and for NSW as a whole.

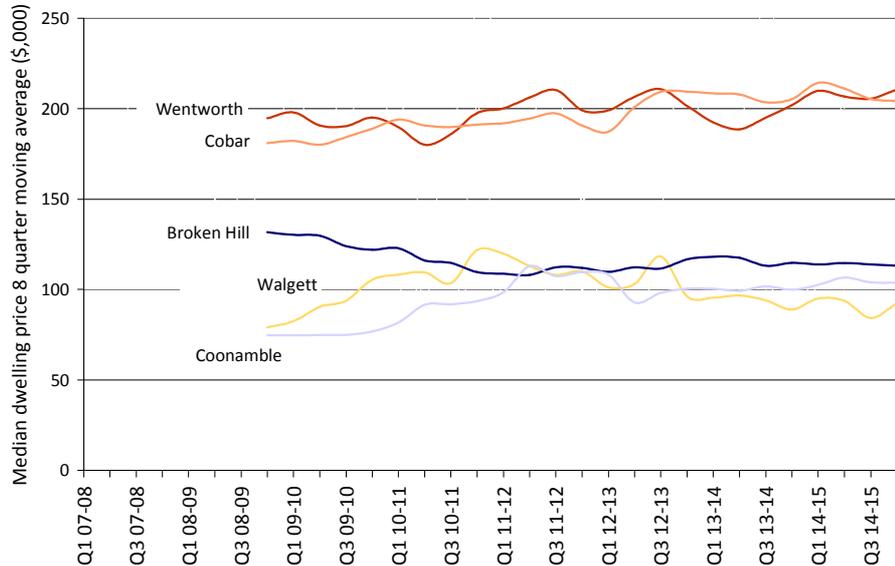
Figure 12.1 – Rates of home ownership and purchase



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

It can be seen that about one-third of Aboriginal households owned or were purchasing a dwelling at the time of the 2011 Census and rates of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous home ownership vary markedly across the region. Rationalisation of the case to purchase is a complex process and depends on many factors, including geographic location. The prospect of capital gain, one of the positive factors, is moderated by Figure 12.2 which indicates change in median dwelling price, as an eight quarter moving average, in communities with quarterly sales of over 10 properties for the period 2007 to 2015.

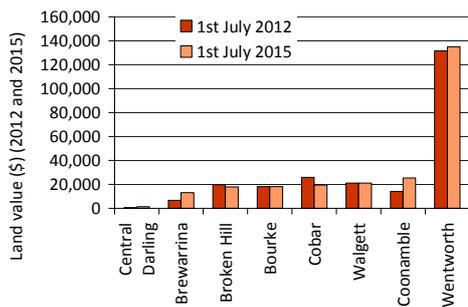
Figure 12.2 – Change in median dwelling price, 2007-2015



Source: Family & Community Services, Housing NSW, Rent & Sales, Median Sale Prices - Rural Local Government Areas - All Dwellings

The fall in median house prices is also reflected in residential land values as determined by the NSW Valuer General. Figure 12.3 highlights the range of valuations across the region, and the change in values that has occurred in the three years to 2015. Most notable is the fall in median residential land values in the two major mining centres of Broken Hill and Cobar. Only Coonamble experienced an increase, from \$14,000 in 2012 to \$25,200 in 2015.

Figure 12.3 – Change in land values, 2012-2015



Source: NSW Valuer General, Residential median land values by LGA

Residential land in Central Darling LGA has little value; nor do dwellings. The Housing NSW, Rent & Sales, Sales Supplement 101-12q2 records just one entry, a median sale price of \$50,000, for the ten quarters to June 2015.

## 12.5 Environmental impacts

Communities are routinely critical of the quality of aspects of the natural and built environment. Adverse environmental conditions influence health and wellbeing yet measures which create health-supportive environments are routinely discounted as

secondary. Table 12.2 summarises the incidence of the most pressing environmental issues affecting communities within Murdi Paaki Region, as identified by the eight Local Government Councils in their State of the Environment (SoE) Reports.

	Bourke <sup>(1)</sup>	Brewarrina	Cobar	Coonamble <sup>(1)</sup>	Walgett	Central Darling	Wentworth <sup>(1)</sup>	Broken Hill
Most recent reporting available	2012, 2014	2011	2013	2012, 2014	2013	2010	2012	2012
Contaminated land	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Urban waste disposal/ illegal rubbish dumping	✓	✓			✓			
Flooding	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Potable water quality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Water restrictions	✓			✓	✓			✓
Riparian water quality		✓	✓			✓		
Air pollution/dust		✓	✓	✓				✓
Bushfire impacts						✓	✓	

(1) Three Councils undertake their reporting at a regional scale in combination with other Councils in a Regional Organisation of Councils framework

The SoE reporting framework is varied and, while supported by some data, discussion is qualitative and does not place great emphasis on the environment as an asset to be valued and managed. Some assessments are quite subjective and reporting in relation to some aspects, appears to be selective. It rests with MPRA to continue to advocate for effective environmental policy- and decision-making with the objective of managing the region’s natural resources efficiently and sustainably for the benefit of the cultural, physical and emotional wellbeing of future generations.

In this regard, MPRA flags two issues on on-going importance. In its 1993-1994 Annual Report, the then Murdi Paaki Regional Council articulated its *Manifesto of Concern: Our Land and Water*. Although some of the specific issues mentioned in the *Manifesto* have been overtaken by history, the fundamental concerns remain: land acquisition for cultural, heritage and economic purposes, including for people who have been dispossessed of traditional country, and the condition of watercourses, especially the Barwon/Darling River, as a result of mismanagement of riparian flows. The State of the Environment Reports neither recognise nor articulate the impact of environmental degradation on the Aboriginal people of the region in an ontological sense, but MPRA asserts that these issues must be taken into account in framing policy for the management of the fragile ecology of the region.

# Chapter 13 Wellbeing Across the Life Course

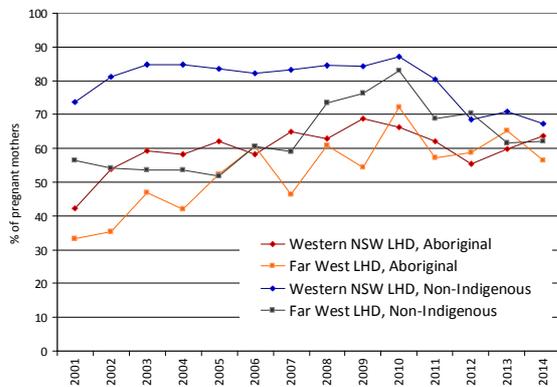
## 13.1 Introduction

Data relating to health and wellbeing are drawn from a number of disparate sources but, as with other datasets, information is not uniformly available and, for those data sources which are accessible, information is generally neither geographically specific nor particularly current. It has thus not been possible to compile a comprehensive health and wellbeing dataset for the Region, nor perhaps is it necessary in view of the robust primary health care services which our Aboriginal community controlled health services plan for and provide. A neglected area is that of care of our ageing Elders.

## 13.2 Infants and mothers

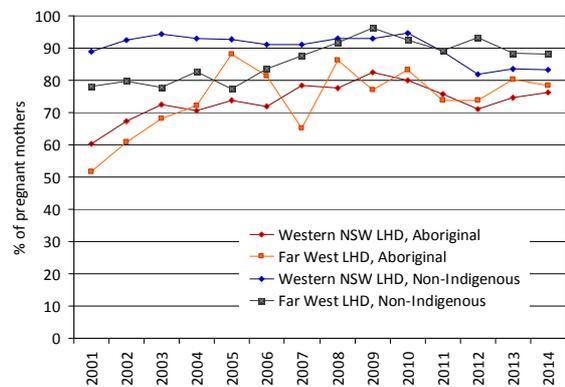
The child-woman ratio, a combined measure of fertility and infant survival, is higher for Aboriginal than for non-Indigenous populations in the Murdi Paaki Region. Aboriginal women of child-bearing age have higher numbers of young children aged 0 to 4, proportionally, than non-Indigenous women. Data indicate that rates of early access to antenatal services for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous women have been converging, but as much because non-Indigenous women’s rate of early access has been declining as because Aboriginal women’s rate of access has improved. Figures 13.1 and 13.2 show a noticeable improvement in the proportion of pregnant women attending their first antenatal visit before 14 weeks and 20 weeks since 2001.

Figure 13.1 – First antenatal visit among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers, before 14 weeks, 2001 to 2014



Source: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Health Statistics New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health

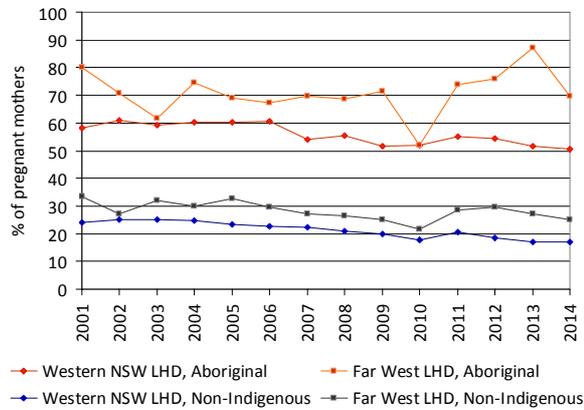
Figure 13.2 – First antenatal visit among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers, before 20 weeks, 2001 to 2014



Source: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Health Statistics New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health

Of concern is the number of Aboriginal women who continue to smoke during pregnancy. Rates are consistently much higher than for non-Indigenous women, and this contributes to low birth weight and other complications in pregnancy and infancy. Figure 13.3 refers. No data are available for women who consume alcohol during pregnancy, even though foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is of concern to health service providers so this may be an area requiring further investigation.

Figure 13.3 – Smoking at all during pregnancy among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers, 2001 to 2014



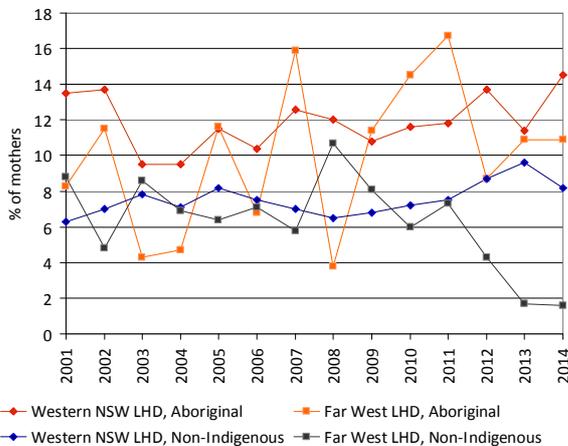
Source: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Health Statistics New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health

Information on the number of GP pregnancy support counselling services and early intervention services for children is suppressed as confidential.

Data indicate that Aboriginal women living in the Western NSW Local Health District have consistently higher rates of pre-term births than non-Indigenous women as indicated by Figure 13.4. Corresponding data for Far West LHD are inconclusive. Lifestyle factors: smoking; consumption of alcohol during

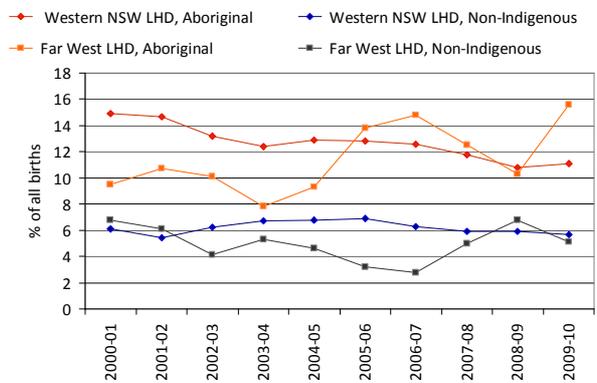
pregnancy; poor nutrition; and quality (and quantum) of ante-natal care may all be contributing factors and are areas for active service programmes. Also of concern is the incidence of low birth weight babies, which is consistently elevated for Aboriginal mothers as shown by Figure 13.5. Similar contributing factors would be relevant.

Figure 13.4 – Preterm births among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers, 2001 to 2014



Source: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Health Statistics New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health

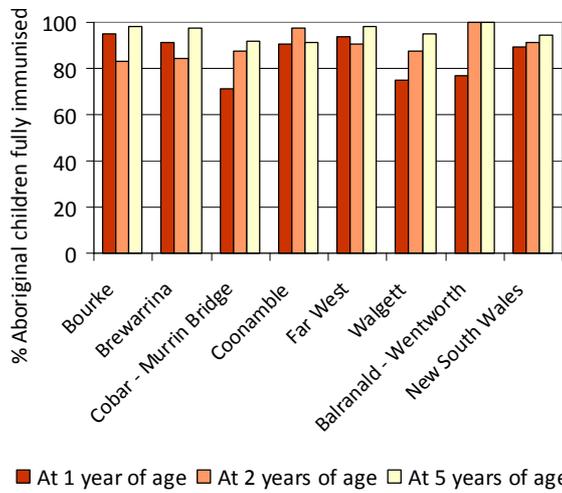
Figure 13.5 – Low birth weight babies, by mother's Aboriginality



Source: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Health Statistics New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health

Comparative rates of immunisation for all children up to 5 years of age across the region are shown in Figure 13.6. Immunisation rates for children aged 1 year vary between communities but any differential is largely eliminated by age 5.

Figure 13.6 – Child immunisation, 2014



Source: PHIDU, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia, 2015

### 13.3 Health and wellbeing

Aboriginal people across the Murdi Paaki Region confront a range of negative influences which impact adversely on individual and community health, including low socioeconomic status, remote geography, a relatively large population proportion dealing with isolation, and compromised life skills. Individually, our community members are unlikely to be able to directly control many of these determinants of health. Comparison of epidemiological data for the region with data for standard populations indicates that MPRA is right to be concerned about the poorer health status of Aboriginal constituents. Specific health care needs identified by delegates to MPRA include, in summary:

- ❖ Access to a basic and accessible range of core primary health care services, with emphasis on the enhanced deployment of permanent GP and oral health services;
- ❖ Stronger focus on children’s and young people’s health and development, including in relation to nutrition, screening and intervention related to behavioural and developmental needs, access to general practice, and parental engagement;
- ❖ Improved services and service co-ordination for acute and chronic disease management, prevention and intervention;
- ❖ Urgent provision of crucial mental health, social and emotional wellbeing services, especially for children and adolescents;
- ❖ Urgent provision of alcohol and other drug services, including residential services;
- ❖ Better, more consistent access to allied health services, particularly physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, speech pathologists and social workers;
- ❖ Services for the ageing.

MPRA acknowledges the major contributions of our Aboriginal community controlled health services to improving the health of Aboriginal peoples in the region, and will assist our Aboriginal community controlled health sector in all ways possible to respond to the need for improved, culturally safe services which measurably raise the health status of our community members.

### 13.4 Ageing

As Chapter 7 indicates, the Aboriginal population of the Murdi Paaki Region is experiencing structural ageing, with the population aged 50 years and over projected to increase from the 2011 estimate (census population fraction x ERP) of 1,800 to 2,662 in 2026. Population ageing poses complex challenges which must be surmounted to ensure that older people’s needs are met in a responsive, culturally safe way. To date, service provision for older Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki Region has proven inadequate.

Eligibility for aged care services commences at age 50 for Aboriginal people, and age 65 for non-Indigenous people, subject to assessment of need. Table 13.1 identifies the

number of residential aged care beds and Home Care packages provided in the Murdi Paaki Region in 2015 for the whole population.

Area	Residential aged care places	Home Care Level 1 and 2 (low care) places	Home Care Level 3 and 4 (high care) places	Transition Care places
North West	168	28	0	0
Far West	57	30	0	0
Broken Hill	219	97	24	8
Murdi Paaki Region	444	155	24	8

Notes:

Home Care Levels 1 and 2 correspond with the old Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) to support clients with basic care needs

Home Care Levels 3 and 4 correspond with the former Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH and EACH-Dementia) to support clients with high care needs

Transition Care packages provide time-limited, goal oriented support to eligible people on discharge from hospital

Of the residential aged care places, none are Aboriginal-identified. Aboriginal-identified packaged aged care places are listed in Table 13.2. The North West and Far West sub-regions appear particularly poorly served in relation to domiciliary packaged aged care provision. It is not known how many mainstream packaged aged care clients are Aboriginal.

Area	Home Care Level 1 and 2 (low care) places	Home Care Level 3 and 4 (high care) places
Broken Hill	47	5
Dareton	25	0
Wilcannia	5	0
Murdi Paaki Region	82	

Providers:

Broken Hill: Uniting Care Miraga

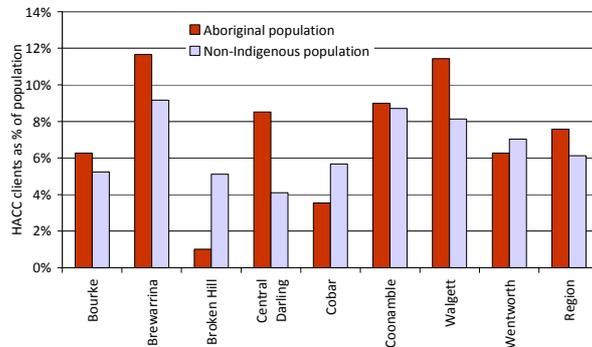
Dareton: Wiradjuri Aboriginal Home Care Branch

Wilcannia: Far West LHD

Home and Community Care (HACC) Services provide a basic level of support to Aboriginal people aged over fifty years who are assessed as needing assistance for no more than ten hours across a four-week period, although additional services may be available in crisis situations. HACC services are promoted as a means of allowing older people to stay in their communities; however, they do not equate to the level of service provided in a residential setting or by a packaged aged care service.

HACC services are provided across the region by two Aboriginal Home Care Branches: Ngangana to most of the Region (including Wentworth), and Wiradjuri to Dareton and Buronga. Aboriginal people are also able to access mainstream HACC services. Figure 13.7 compares the level of use of these services by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population fractions. The proportion of Aboriginal clients tends to be higher in localities where Aboriginal Home Care Branch offices are located. Overall, across the Region, Aboriginal people are clients of HACC services at a higher rate than non-Indigenous people. It is likely that higher use of this basic service by Aboriginal people is mirrored by lower levels of use of the more comprehensive packaged aged care services which are accessible only through Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment. A total of 787 Aboriginal clients in the Region (less the unincorporated area for which data were unavailable) used HACC services in 2012-2013. As HACC services are provided both to older people and to people with a disability, it is likely that not all of these clients were aged 50 years or over.

Figure 13.7 – HACC service use, Aboriginal and Non-Indigenous population percentage, 2012-2013



Source: PHIDU, Social Health Atlas of Australia: New South Wales and ACT, 2015  
Total number of clients = 787

Analysis of 2011 ABS Census data indicate that use of residential aged care facilities by Aboriginal people is very low: only seven Aboriginal people aged 50 years or over were enumerated as resident in either a nursing home or in accommodation for the retired or aged (not self-contained) on census night; all were in the North West sub-region. This equates to 0.5% of Aboriginal people aged 50 years and over across the Region. By comparison, 5.0% of non-Aboriginal people aged 65 and over were enumerated as resident in an aged care service on census night, with the largest proportion in Broken Hill. The Census indicated that, across the Region, 242 Aboriginal people aged 50 years and over experienced a core activity need for assistance as at 2011.

Research undertaken in Wilcannia, Menindee and Ivanhoe in 2008-2009 on behalf of Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, and subsequent research in the Sydney metropolitan area, identified culturally specific aged care needs and preferences. Findings can be summarised as follows:

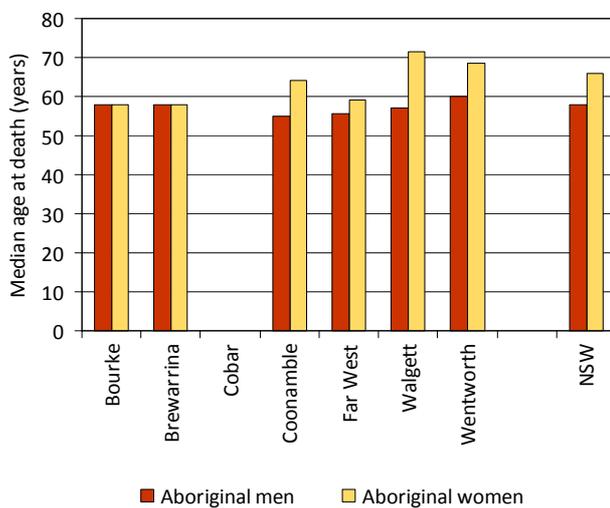
- ❖ Needs for aged care services are often conflated with needs for purpose-designed, secure and affordable accommodation for older Aboriginal people. Suitable accommodation is in short supply in the Murdi Paaki Region.
- ❖ Residential aged care is generally not preferred either by older people or by their families. A more suitable model would involve the provision of purpose designed social housing units located centrally, with good access to medical facilities, supported by Aboriginal-identified packaged domiciliary aged care delivered by qualified Aboriginal workers.
- ❖ Assessment processes administered by the ACAT may be culturally unsafe and this may be a barrier to older Aboriginal people and their families seeking support. ACAT assessments should involve Aboriginal worker(s) in the assessment process and, at the very least, team members should complete cross-cultural competence training.
- ❖ For Aboriginal people, particularly those living in smaller, more isolated communities, access to home modification services which would enable them to stay at home independently for longer is often beset by lengthy delays, both for Occupational Therapist assessments and for prescribed work to be carried out. Access to subsidised modification and maintenance services for those living in community-controlled social housing presents particular barriers.
- ❖ Aboriginal families, for cultural reasons relating to the critical importance of caring for family, often delay seeking assistance to care for older family members. This is particularly problematic where older people have dementia, and the literature indicates that the incidence of dementia in Aboriginal communities is expected to rise sharply as life expectancy increases. The development of culturally safe ways to support families in caring for older relatives, and in making pragmatic decisions, is important.
- ❖ It is important to older people to be able to age in place in their own country and, when the time comes, to pass away and be buried in places which are significant to them because of cultural and family connections. Aged care provision must recognise and respond to this. The least desirable outcome for an older person, particularly if

that person grew up on a government station or, worse, was removed from family, is to end his or her life away from home in yet another alien institution.

### 13.5 Mortality

In its report *Mortality and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians, 2008 to 2012*, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare stated that, for the period 2010–2012, the estimated life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men was 69.1 years and 73.7 years for women. In comparison, life expectancy for non-Indigenous Australians was 79.7 years for men and 83.2 years for women, a gap of 10.6 years and 9.5 years respectively. Allowing for differences in age structure, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mortality rate was 1.6 times greater than for non-Indigenous Australians.

Figure 13.8 – Median age at death, Aboriginal men and women, 2009-2012



Source: PHIDU, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia, 2015  
 Benchmark: NSW  
 Non-Indigenous men: 78 years  
 Non-Indigenous women: 84 years

Set against this backdrop, the median age at death for Aboriginal men for the period 2009-2012 was 60 years or less in all Murdi Paaki communities while, for women, the median age at death ranged from 58 years (Bourke and Brewarrina) to 71 years (Walgett). Figure 13.8 refers.

Circulatory diseases were identified as the leading category of deaths (26%) for the period 2008–2012 Australia-wide, followed by cancer (20%), external causes (15%), endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders (9%) and respiratory diseases (8%). There is little geographically-specific data available for communities in the Murdi Paaki Region but the Chief Health Officer in her report *The health of Aboriginal people of NSW: 2012* recorded the leading causes of death for Aboriginal people living in NSW in the period 2003 to 2007 as cardiovascular disease (31%), cancers (21%), and injury and poisoning (12%).

From the little information that is publicly available, the standardised rates for the leading causes of death by Murdi Paaki community extracted from the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia* are shown in Table 13.3.

Table 13.3 – Leading causes of death, Aboriginal persons aged 0 to 74 years, SDR, per 100,000, 2009-2012

IARE	Deaths from			
	Cancer	Circulatory system diseases	Respiratory system diseases	External causes
Bourke	224	194	..	..
Brewarrina	199	176	..	..
Cobar	..	..	0	..
Coonamble	124	..	..	194
Far West	133	103	..	117
Walgett	106	118	..	113
Wentworth	..	215	..	..
NSW	116	108	187	112

Entries denoted .. are labelled as 'not applicable'

## Appendix 1 – Census Geography

### Census geography

#### *ASGS*

A new geographical standard, the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), was introduced in July 2011 and used for the first time for the 2011 Census. The geography represents a complete departure from the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) used in previous censuses. For the 2011 Census, a parallel system of data reporting was adopted (using the new ASGS framework and the old Statistical Local Areas - SLAs) but it is expected that reporting by SLA will be discontinued. For the Murdi Paaki Region, SLAs have the same boundaries as LGAs. The ABS has indicated its intention to continue making data available by LGA but it is not known what impact the current moves towards amalgamation of LGAs will have.

The ASGS geographical subdivision most similar in scale to the old SLA geography is the Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2). The main differences in the Murdi Paaki Region are that Bourke and Brewarrina LGAs have been combined into a single SA2; as have Central Darling LGA with the Unincorporated Far West, and the rural section of Wentworth LGA with Balranald LGA. There are also other, smaller differences. Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) areas are much smaller than SLAs but larger than the old Census Collection Districts. SA1s are the smallest subdivision for which data are released. The table which concludes this appendix contains the list of SA1s which most closely approximate the Murdi Paaki Region.

#### *Indigenous geography*

The Indigenous geography has changed over time: at the time of the 2001 Census it was possible to obtain data for the Murdi Paaki Region (designated by ABS the Bourke Region), as defined by the ATSI boundary. By 2006, ABS had revised the boundaries, and the Bourke Region incorporated all of the region except for Wentworth LGA and the portion which lies in Balranald LGA. Cobar LGA was included in its entirety. Wentworth was incorporated in the Wagga Wagga Region, which extended east as far as Lithgow and included Bathurst, Orange and Albury. By the time of the 2011 Census, when a completely new Census geography had been introduced, the boundaries had changed again. The North-Western NSW Region was as for the 2006 Bourke Region but with boundary changes to incorporate small sections of Warren and Bogan LGAs. The Wagga Wagga Region was re-badged as the Riverina-Orange Region, but had boundaries similar to the 2006 ones.

#### *Assumptions adopted for the Regional Plan*

In general, for the purposes of the Regional Plan, a simplifying geographical assumption has been made, involving the approximation of the Murdi Paaki Region as comprising the nine Local Government Areas/Statistical Local Areas of Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Coonamble, Walgett, Wentworth and Unincorporated Far West. For this geography, the 2011 Census count was 8,372. It is possible to pin down the region more closely (in a geographical sense) by including the Statistical Area Level 1 areas which

approximate the fraction of Balranald Shire which is in the Murdi Paaki Region and excluding the Cobar SA1s which are not, in which case the Census count is 8,265. The difference is trivial – about 1.3%, so the simplified geography has been adopted. Thus the Murrin Bridge population is included in the notional Murdi Paaki Region, but the Euston population is excluded. The rest of this discussion relates to the ‘nine LGAs/SLAs’ geography.

## **Population counts and estimates**

The ABS undertakes the Census of Population and Housing every five years, with the most recent census having been carried out on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2011. At each census, the number of persons enumerated represents a net undercount of the population. After the Census, the ABS conducts a post-enumeration survey (PES) to establish the extent of the net undercount. The results of the PES are further refined on the basis of demographic adjustments, then used, together with counts of overseas visitors, residents temporarily overseas, births, deaths and overseas migration, to develop an Estimated Resident Population (ERP) which is backcast to 30<sup>th</sup> June in the census year. The ERPs are the best available demographic estimate of the resident population, and are the preferred measure for use in allocating funding and resources to populations. The importance of using ERPs for this purpose when considering the needs of the Aboriginal population cannot be overstated, particularly given an increased tendency among the Aboriginal population fraction to fail to complete the census form, and differentially higher representation in the ‘not stated’ response category in relation to the Indigenous identification question. Further information about the process of deriving ERPs is available here:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/87FEC025DBA74C28CA2578C4001651F0?opendocument>.

The ABS have produced ERPs by LGA and SLA by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous population fractions as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 (the ABS catalogue number is 3238.0.55.001; available here: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3238.0.55.001June%202011?OpenDocument>) and these ERPs have been used to derive the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous ERPs for the region. The ABS also calculates ERPs for LGAs as at 30<sup>th</sup> June each year between censuses but does not produce intermediate ERPs for the Indigenous population fraction (presumably because the data necessary to do so are available only in the form of the response to the Indigenous identification question in the census, every five years).

The Indigenous ERP calculated by the ABS as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 for the notional Murdi Paaki Region was 10,301. This more realistic estimate is 23% higher than the Census count, and represents a higher Aboriginal population fraction than the Census (20.8% as opposed to 18.8%). This is because a higher proportion of Aboriginal people failed to respond to the Indigenous identification question than non-Indigenous people (and also to the Census itself).

The ERPs are useful for deriving a reliable estimate of total population, broken down by Indigeneity, but they cannot be used directly for any other purpose. To construct a picture of the socio-economic status of the population, it is necessary to have recourse to the census data. ERPs for LGAs/SLAs are not broken down by age and sex, although the

ABS's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projection tables (see below) can be used to impute the age-sex structure of the Aboriginal population at Indigenous Region scale. Given that population structure varies by LGA, though, it makes more sense to use census data for this purpose.

## Population projections

The population projections in the Regional Plan are based on projections prepared by ABS (for the Indigenous population, based on Indigenous geography) and NSW Department of Planning and Environment (for the total population, based on LGAs). These data are available here: <http://stat.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?QueryId=1114> and here: <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/projections>, respectively. Both ABS and NSW DP&E have used ERPs as the starting point for their projections, as is the usual practice.

ABS has adopted three geographies for the Aboriginal projections: State/Territory, Remoteness Areas, and Indigenous Region. The Indigenous Region geography has been adopted for the purposes of calculating projections for this Regional Plan because of its scale and geographical specificity. The growth rates the ABS has used for their North-Western NSW region have been applied to the 2011 Aboriginal ERPs of the nine Murdi Paaki Region LGAs/SLAs in the region. Wentworth and Balranald LGAs are not in the North-Western NSW region (they are in the Riverina-Orange Region) but the growth rates for the North-Western NSW Region have been used because these LGAs are more similar in geographical character to the other LGAs in the North-Western Region than they are to LGAs such as Orange, Bathurst and Albury, which are in the Riverina-Orange Region.

ABS prepares three series of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections, based on three sets of assumptions about demographic characteristics (fertility, paternity, mortality and migration rates): Series A (high), Series B (medium) and Series C (low). The three projected 2015 populations for the region would be 10,741 (low), 10,762 (medium) and 10,779 (high).

ABS does not publish similar population projections for the non-Indigenous population fraction (or for the total population other than by Section of State). Notional residual non-Indigenous populations have been calculated by subtracting the ABS-derived Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections (using Series B – mid-range demographic assumptions) from the NSW DP&E-derived total projections. This approach was reasoned to be justifiable given that both sets of projections used the same start point (the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 ERPs); the projections, when plotted, appeared realistic; and no other, more consistent approach was available. An alternative approach was trialled for comparison purposes: applying the actual rate of change in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population from 2006 to 2011 (calculated from ERPs) to the 2011 ERP, then subtracting the resulting projected populations from the NSW DP&E total projected populations to derive a notional non-Indigenous population projection. This approach produced a more dramatic increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and a correspondingly more marked decline in the projected non-Indigenous population. It will be interesting, in due course, to review the ERPs which will be derived on the basis of the 2016 Census counts, to establish which approach provides a closer match to actual population.

## Population estimates and projections to date

To derive population estimates to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 is no simple matter.

At the time of writing, ABS has only released preliminary ERPs by state as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015, so no ERPs by LGA are available. If the mid-range Aboriginal population projections to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 are subtracted from the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 ERPs for the total population, then Aboriginal people would have formed 21.3% of the population of the region. The projected mid-range Aboriginal population for the Murdi Paaki Region as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 formed 4.8% of the projected NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at the same date and, if compared with the preliminary ERP for NSW for 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015, formed 0.14% of the total population of NSW.

## Possible courses of action

To produce population projections specific to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous population fractions for the nine LGAs/SLAs in the Murdi Paaki Region may be possible, but would also be time consuming, technically complex and data intensive. If there is sufficient interest among MPRA's Government partners in preparing specific projections, a first step would be to discuss with ABS the parameters for, and costs of, a data consultancy.

## An approximate concordance

The SA1s listed in the table below form as close a concordance as possible at this scale with the boundaries of the Murdi Paaki Region. This information is provided for future reference, and may be useful should ABS cease to provide census data by SLA or by current LGAs.

LGA	SA1s	LGA	SA1s	LGA	SA1s
Bourke	1109201	Broken Hill	1109701	Wentworth	1117801
	1109202		1109702		1117802
	1109203		1109703		1117803
	1109204		1109704		1117804
	1109205		1109705		1117805
Brewarrina	1109206	Broken Hill	1109706	Wentworth	1117806
	1109207		1109707		1117807
	1109208		1109708		1117808
	1109209		1109709		1117809
	1109210		1109710		1117810
	1109211		1109711		1117811
	1109212		1109712		1117812
	1109213		1109713		1117813
Cobar	1109302	Broken Hill	1109714	Wentworth	1117814
	1109303		1109715		1117815
	1109304		1109716		1117816
	1109305		1109717		1117817
	1109306		1109718		1117818

LGA	SA1s	LGA	SA1s	LGA	SA1s
	1109307		1109719		1117819
	1109308		1109720		1117820
Cobar	1109309	Broken Hill	1109721	Wentworth	1117821
(continued)	1109310	(continued)	1109722	(continued)	1117822
	1109311		1109723	Central Darling	1109801
	1109312		1109724		1109802
	1109314		1109725		1109803
Coonamble	1109401		1109726	UFW	1109804
	1109402		1109727		1109805
	1109403		1109728		1109806
	1109404		1109729		1109807
	1109405		1109730		1109808
	1109406		1109731		1109809
	1109407		1109732		1109810
	1109409		1109733		1109811
	1109410		1109734	Balranald	1117901
	1109411		1109735		1117902
	1109412		1109736		1117903
	1109413		1109737		1117904
	1109414		1109738		1117906
Walgett	1109601		1109739		
	1109602		1109740		
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