

**Submission
No 9**

**FOLLOW UP OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S
PERFORMANCE AUDITS APRIL 2011 - SEPTEMBER
2011**

Organisation: Department of Aboriginal Affairs
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Date Received: 26/11/2012



Our Ref: AAD12/4573

Mr Jonathan O'Dea MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr O'Dea

I refer to your letter of 28 September 2012, in relation to the Auditor-Generals Report on Two Ways Together. In particular you sought submissions from Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Premier and Cabinet outlining actions taken in relation to the recommendations of the Auditor-General.

Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Premier and Cabinet have prepared a joint response to your request. The following information outlines action taken since the release of the Report.

In response to the Auditor-General's Report the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs was established to produce a new Aboriginal affairs strategy in 2012. The Strategy will include concrete reforms around the following Terms of Reference:

- to improve service delivery and accountability in Aboriginal affairs across NSW, with particular consideration of the recommendations of the Auditor General's report on Two Ways Together, and other arising reports;
- to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW; and
- to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW.

The Ministerial Taskforce Progress Report was released in August 2012. The Report outlines the proposed directions identified through the Taskforce's community consultations:

- Strengthening the connection between education, training and employment;
- Strengthening support for language and culture;
- Strengthening accountability; and
- Strengthening the capacity of communities and service delivery.

Dharawal

Njunaliin ngaralanga dharawalwulawala nguradhanhay ngaliya

We respect Aboriginal peoples as the first peoples and custodians of NSW

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The Progress Report outlines thinking in a number of key areas that align with the recommendations of the Auditor-General, in particular strengthening accountability and the capacity of communities and service delivery.

The Taskforce is currently considering the outcomes of the community consultations on the initiatives discussed in the Progress Report and will shortly provide recommendations to Government. It is expected that Government will release a new Aboriginal affairs strategy in response to these recommendations by the end of the year. The strategy will also provide the platform for responding to the recommendations of the Auditor General.

A copy of the Progress Report is attached for your information. I will provide an update on the response to the Auditor-General's recommendations following the endorsement of the Aboriginal affairs strategy by Cabinet.

Yours sincerely


Jason Ardler
General Manager



Ministerial Taskforce on
Aboriginal Affairs

August 2012

Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs

Progress Report



Foreword by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



I would like to thank everyone who has made a contribution to the work of the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs. Visiting a number of Aboriginal communities across NSW earlier this year has been a highlight in my role as Minister. It was an opportunity for me and other Taskforce members to hear directly about what is important to you, which is critical in guiding our decisions in the development of a strategy on Aboriginal affairs.

Whether you were one of the 1,700 who attended the forums or whether you were one of the 200 submission writers who provided feedback, thank you for your contribution.

This report outlines proposed directions based upon the following:

- Strengthening the connection between education, training and employment;
- Strengthening support for language and culture;

- Strengthening accountability; and
- Strengthening the capacity of communities and service delivery.

I fully recognise the need to take a long-term approach. To find out whether our proposals are the right ones and to make sure we are working with communities to create success, many of the changes will begin in a select number of communities. The Taskforce recognises that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work and that every community has different needs and different aspirations. Staged reform will allow community and government to work together, to ensure that implementation occurs with the community's support and at the community's pace.

The proposed approaches seek to achieve success that other communities can build on in the future. Each community will be able to benefit from the experience of other communities and will be able to tailor the approach to fit *its own* needs. The strategy will also include some universal reforms

that will benefit Aboriginal communities across the State.

We are committed to listening and learning from communities, so a second round of community consultations will take place in August to seek your feedback on these proposed approaches for possible inclusion in the final strategy. Please stay involved by attending a forum or filling out the survey, which is available at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforcelyoursay.html

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Victor Dominello', written in a cursive style.

The Hon. Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Introduction

The Premier and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs established the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs (the Taskforce) in August 2011 to support the development of a new Aboriginal affairs strategy for NSW.

The Taskforce was established following the NSW Auditor General's performance audit report into *Two Ways Together* that found the plan did not deliver the intended improvements for Aboriginal people. This report and the NSW Ombudsman's report *Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage: the need to do things differently*, released shortly after, highlighted many ongoing problems including an apparent disconnection between government and Aboriginal communities, the failure to coordinate between government agencies and the failure to measure government performance. The NSW Ombudsman also identified education and employment as priorities in addressing disadvantage.

The purpose of the Taskforce is to recommend concrete reforms to improve service delivery and accountability in Aboriginal affairs across NSW and to improve employment and educational outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW.

In establishing the Taskforce, the Government made clear its commitment to bringing the voice of Aboriginal people to the core of government decision-making. The Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) and specialist Aboriginal advisers are represented on the Taskforce along with seven key Ministers (Taskforce membership is detailed at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/who.html).

What we heard

A number of clear themes emerged from the Taskforce's public consultations, particularly regarding the way government works with Aboriginal communities. These include the need to:

- Enable greater Aboriginal control in decision making, service design and delivery;
- Ensure greater accountability for delivery of services to (and by) Aboriginal communities;
- Create connections between training, employment and careers to support transition to real jobs;
- Enable greater flexibility and local responses;
- Embed Aboriginal culture and understanding in government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs);
- Better support and celebrate Aboriginal language and culture;
- Give young people access to culturally appropriate mentoring and support systems;
- Support greater employment and retention of Aboriginal staff across all sectors;
- Recognise the importance of Aboriginal identity;
- Recognise the impacts of and address trans-generational trauma;
- Provide longer-term funding and programs to address complex and intergenerational issues; and
- Improve service delivery in general, including in areas outside the Taskforce terms of reference.

A summary of key messages on improving service delivery developed in response to community feedback was circulated to government agencies for their use. These key messages are located at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/yoursay.html.

Reports on issues raised at the 14 community consultations across the State are also available at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/yoursay.html.

Progress report

The Taskforce was overwhelmed by the level of community interest and feedback. The Taskforce response will not address every issue raised, but instead will focus on reforms that aim to ensure that future generations of Aboriginal people will stay at school and perform to the best of their ability. Obtaining a relevant education and acquiring skills leads people to having a more fulfilling and healthier working experience and enables full participation in economic, cultural and social life. To achieve this, the Taskforce recognises that Aboriginal communities and people need to be at the centre of decisions.

Reform directions

1. Strengthening the connection between education, training and employment

1.1 Opportunity Hubs

The need for complete pathways and supported transitions for children and families from early years through to tertiary education and employment was widely expressed. The Taskforce also heard that there is a need for culturally appropriate mentoring and support systems to encourage learning and aspiration.

Communities want there to be opportunities for young people to become work ready while at school. It was suggested that students need opportunities to interact regularly with employers in meaningful activities, to develop confidence and knowledge

about work. The need for stronger links between schools and TAFEs, universities and Aboriginal communities was also highlighted.

It is proposed that an 'Opportunity Hub' be developed, trialled and evaluated initially in targeted locations to coordinate employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal young people. Opportunity Hubs would broker partnerships with local businesses, industry leaders, NGOs and local government to coordinate training and employment opportunities to create career pathways for young Aboriginal people. If the right support is provided, mapping out clear pathways that lead to real jobs will provide incentives for students to stay at school, perform well at school, and go on to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

1.2 Industry agreements

High levels of frustration were expressed about training being provided for

training's sake, and not resulting in real job opportunities. The need to better target training and skills development to job and career opportunities was frequently highlighted. In addition, many Aboriginal people highlighted the desire to access job opportunities through government procurement of goods and services.

Consultation is underway with key industry bodies about how government can best collaborate with the private sector to improve employment and retention of Aboriginal employees. Opportunities to encourage the corporate sector to purchase services from Aboriginal businesses are also being explored. Through this work the feasibility of establishing industry-specific agreements and related strategies to increase Aboriginal employment in growth and priority sectors is being investigated. In addition, the Taskforce recognises the need to examine how government policies encouraging greater



employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people in government construction projects and the purchasing of goods and services could be utilised.

1.3 Aboriginal employment in the public sector

Increasing Aboriginal employment within government and government funded NGOs was seen as important to improving both culturally appropriate service delivery and improved employment outcomes. It was said that improvements are needed in the way that Aboriginal staff are attracted and retained, as well as how Aboriginal people can access career progression across the public service and within NGOs funded by government to deliver services to Aboriginal people. The Taskforce also heard that it is important for Aboriginal people to have support to train and remain in their communities.

The Taskforce has requested that the Public Service Commission incorporate a focus on strengthening Aboriginal employment at both entry level and through supported progression to senior positions. This also relates to work around Aboriginal cultural awareness training.

2. Strengthening support for language and culture

2.1 Aboriginal Language and Culture Lighthouse

The importance of Aboriginal languages in connecting identity, wellbeing and understanding of culture for Aboriginal people was widely acknowledged. The message was also clear that teaching Aboriginal culture and language will better engage Aboriginal students and families at school. It is also recognised that Elders, as knowledge

holders and teachers, are central to strengthening and supporting a bottom-up approach to revitalising culture. This means that there must be greater recognition in the education system for teaching Aboriginal languages and greater support for all Aboriginal people to access language education.

It is proposed that a community-led model to enhance access to language and cultural knowledge – the Aboriginal Language and Culture Lighthouse – be developed in partnership with the Centre for Aboriginal Language Coordination and Development (CALCD). The project would establish clear pathways for learning language in communities, schools and higher education institutions so that language is used and preserved. The project would build on existing knowledge and work, and would operate through schools in partnership with community organisations.

Initially, the Lighthouse approach would focus on languages currently spoken in NSW that are able to be documented with a full language catalogue and strong enough to build a community of speakers. This will ensure that effort is first concentrated where there is the strongest foundation. It is intended that they initially be implemented in select language groups and over time be used as an example and adopted by other communities. Further consultation with communities and stakeholders will be undertaken to determine the locations.

2.2 Refocusing the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy

The NSW Aboriginal Language Policy has been in place since 2004 and was ground breaking as the first government

Aboriginal language policy introduced in Australia. In its current form, the policy is not sufficiently focused to recognise the unique requirements of each language and it contains no monitoring or evaluation mechanism to measure its success. It is proposed that the policy be updated, in partnership with the CALCD and communities, so that it is focused strategically to better target support for language revitalisation.

2.3 Healing

It was widely acknowledged that the extent and impact of trans-generational trauma, the importance of healing and wellbeing, and what can be done at an individual and family level needs to be better understood. Many Aboriginal people during the consultations also expressed the need for communities to reconcile with each other and heal differences and divisions at the community level for the benefit of current and future generations.

The Taskforce recognises the issue of healing and trans-generational trauma needs to be better understood by working in partnership with Aboriginal communities. It is recognised that Aboriginal people must identify, drive and own action in this arena. Initially, it is proposed that a forum be held to progress the dialogue on healing and develop responses in a NSW context (such a forum could include individuals, Aboriginal community representatives and organisations and Aboriginal healing practitioners).

2.4 Recognition of cultural identity

The importance of recognising Aboriginal cultural identity and celebrating Aboriginal culture is acknowledged, along with the need to respond to the widely expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which Aboriginality is confirmed. It is acknowledged that the role of Elders in increasing respect for culture and identity is critical. Government will work with Aboriginal community organisations to determine what role government should take in this sphere, specifically regarding the issues raised in the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group's *Aboriginality and Identity Report*.

2.5 Improved Aboriginal cultural understanding in government

The Taskforce heard that building cultural sensitivity and understanding is an essential need across government in order to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of programs. It is proposed that minimum standards for Aboriginal cross-cultural training be developed with more specific standards for roles with more Aboriginal community engagement.

3. Strengthening accountability

The Auditor General, NSW Ombudsman and Aboriginal communities have all called for greater accountability and transparency within programs and services provided to Aboriginal people.

During consultation, people were concerned that there are "too many programs for too few results". To get better results from Aboriginal-related initiatives and to avoid duplication, it was stated that there needs to be

a) more cooperation and planning between government agencies and

between government and Aboriginal NGOs, and;

b) more oversight of the performance of those delivering services. It was also made clear that this needs to fully involve Aboriginal communities themselves.

The Taskforce will therefore develop specific recommendations for a new accountability approach for Aboriginal affairs across the whole of government. These recommendations are likely to address:

- Making accountability occur at both the State-wide and local levels;
- Ensuring regular and independent performance auditing of Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government and the NGOs that government funds;
- Involving Aboriginal people in performance auditing of initiatives that affect their lives;
- Regularly providing public reports about performance that are accessible to all stakeholders;
- Collecting and utilising evidence of performance on an on-going basis to continually improve programs and service delivery;
- Strengthening partnership arrangements between government agencies and between government and Aboriginal peaks to deliver on accountability; and
- Making clear promises in the final Aboriginal affairs strategy and showing how government will honour them.

4. Strengthening the capacity of communities and better coordinating services

4.1 Local decision making model

There was widely expressed dissatisfaction about top down decision-making that does not take account of Aboriginal knowledge or community aspirations. The need for greater Aboriginal control in decision-making and service delivery was emphasised. The need to recognise that each community is different was also consistently reinforced, including the needs of Aboriginal communities within urban and regional locations, as well as remote Aboriginal communities.

The Taskforce also understands that there is a need for real and honest collaboration between communities, government and industry that involves genuine two-way partnership and responsibility.

It is proposed that a new community-led approach to guide and coordinate service delivery at the local level be established. It will enable local Aboriginal communities to better influence and control a bundle of services being delivered at the local level, build local capacity, link investment to community goals, establish accountability with both government and local communities, and monitor outcomes. Government will be more accountable to the Aboriginal community, and through continued investment in building the capacity of participating Aboriginal communities, in time Aboriginal communities will be more involved in and accountable for local service delivery.

The model will initially be trialled in targeted locations across NSW (an urban, a regional and a remote location) that

volunteer to participate. The model is intended to build on the strengths of existing Aboriginal community networks including Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups. It will also build on the work of other community governance structures, including community working parties established under the Partnership Community Program. The model is different from the Partnership Community Program because it is proposed to be underpinned by legislation, compelling government agency participation, and involves staged devolution of decision making and authority to communities around local service delivery, based on community capacity. Training and community development support will be available to participating communities to build governance and leadership capacity.

4.2 Connected Communities

The consultation highlighted the need to embed and celebrate Aboriginal culture and language in schools. Also highlighted was the need to better engage parents and communities in the learning outcomes for Aboriginal students. Opportunities identified included engaging Aboriginal leaders and employing Elders and Aboriginal staff. The importance of building cultural understanding amongst teachers and of linking Aboriginal education outcomes to teacher performance was also emphasised. It was widely expressed that greater supports are required for Aboriginal children, including mentoring,

tutoring and homework support. The need to improve the management of non-attendance, including considering alternative options to address high suspension rates, was also raised. The importance of getting a good start to life through early childhood education and supporting the continuity of learning for Aboriginal children from pre-school to primary school, to secondary school and then tertiary education and training was also highlighted.

The Taskforce is keen to pursue an Aboriginal Languages lighthouse concept (in conjunction with the CALCD) and Opportunity Hubs and their potential links to *Connected Communities*. *Connected Communities* is a new and innovative approach to deliver education and training to drive improved education outcomes for Aboriginal students, and all students.

Connected Communities will initially be rolled out in 15 regional and remote based *Connected Communities* schools¹ across the State.

Connected Communities will allow individual schools to work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders in the local community to help improve education outcomes for young Aboriginal people. There will be an emphasis on teaching Aboriginal languages and culture, relevant curriculum and providing cultural awareness training for all staff. *Connected Communities* schools will be given unprecedented authority

to tailor education to students' needs. The schools will become community hubs to deliver a range of services from birth, through school, to further training and employment. There will also be an emphasis on providing personalised support to students, including where appropriate, coaches and mentors to support the transition from school into jobs.

A model for applying the *Connected Communities* approach to urban locations is being developed.

4.3 Building the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs

The Taskforce understands the need to support a greater role for Aboriginal NGOs in providing services to Aboriginal people. In addition there is recognition of the need to improve the coordination and governance of NGOs providing services to Aboriginal people and communities, including the need to promote greater NGO engagement with and accountability to the communities they serve.

The Taskforce will be recommending that the NSW Government – through the Department of Family and Community Services – develop a strategy that seeks to build Aboriginal NGOs' capacity, grow their workforces and improve their service delivery results and accountability. Such an approach should build on work undertaken and recommendations made through *Keep Them Safe, Stronger Together 2* and the Legislative Assembly

¹ Schools include Toomelah Public School, Boggabilla Central School, Wilcannia Central School, Walgett Central School, Bourke Public and High Schools, Moree East Public School and Secondary College, Coonamble Public and High Schools, Taree Public and High Schools, Brewarrina Central School, Menindee Central School and Hillvue Public School (Tamworth).

For more information go to www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/news-at-det/announcements/yr2012/connected-communities-strategy.pdf.

Committee on Community Services' Inquiry into Outsourcing Service Delivery.

4.4 Youth leadership and mentoring

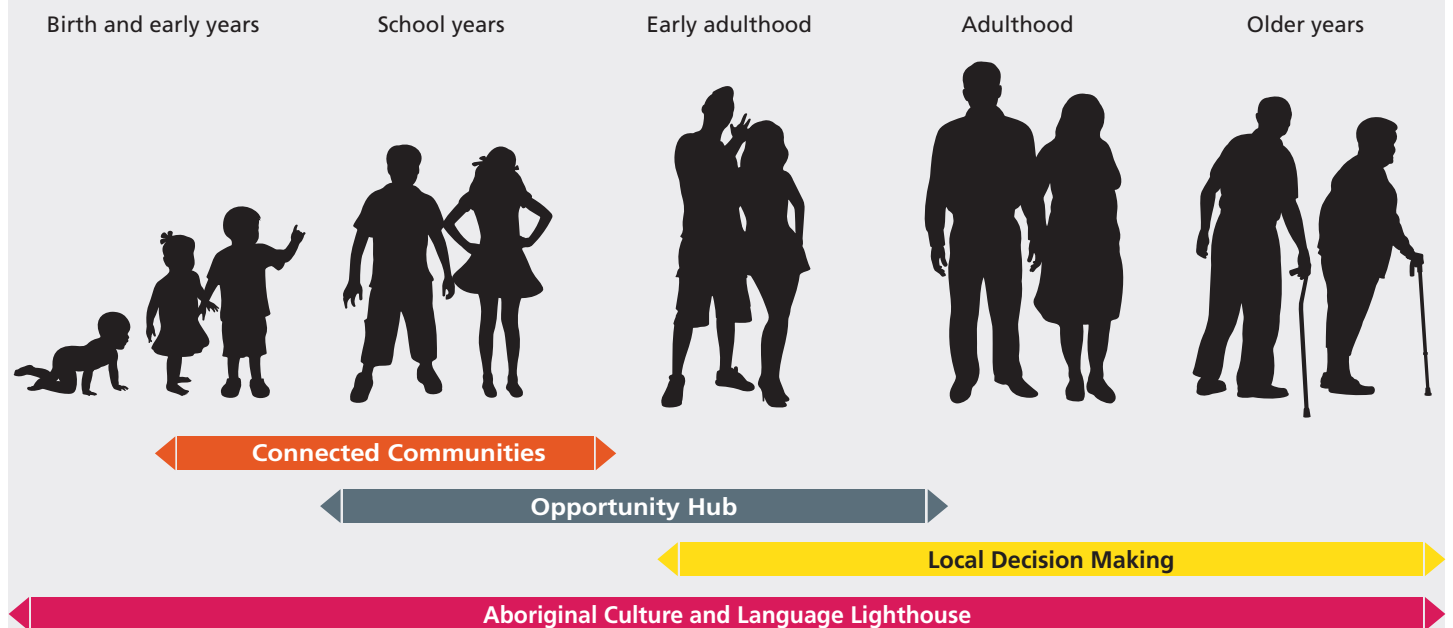
The Taskforce heard that there was a great need for young people to be able to access culturally appropriate mentoring and support systems (such as role models) to develop life skills, establish education and employment goals and develop leadership skills. The importance of mentoring across all school years, by mentors who young Aboriginal people feel comfortable with, was repeatedly highlighted to support and encourage learning.

The Taskforce recognises the importance of mentoring, and the significant role

of Elders and role models in supporting young people. Accordingly, a number of Taskforce proposals facilitate mentoring and engagement by community leaders and Elders, such as the Opportunity Hub, the Aboriginal Language and Culture Lighthouse and *Connected Communities*.

Opportunities to increase young people's access to mentoring will be explored. A Youth Forum, convened by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and CAPO on 25 July 2012, engaged young Aboriginal people in outlining priorities and opportunities, particularly in relation to language and culture, and the transition from school to work.

Change Over a Generation



This diagram shows how the approaches outlined in this report are integrated and seek to achieve change over a generation.

5. Links to broader NSW Government reforms

During the Taskforce consultations many specific service issues were raised that fell outside the Taskforce terms of reference. The Taskforce has referred these issues to relevant portfolio Ministers for consideration. These issues include:

5.1 Justice

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice system was highlighted, including the need to reduce the amount of time young people are held on remand and ensure that they are not held away from their communities. Concerns were raised that Aboriginal people are not accessing diversionary programs at the same rate as non-Aboriginal people as a result of geography or other factors. The need for holistic responses to address family violence, including improved support for Aboriginal women and children who were victims of family violence was also raised. Many of these issues are being considered through current justice reforms, including bail reforms through proposed amendments to the Bail Act.

5.2 Health

Communities expressed the need for improved access to health services, especially paediatricians, occupational therapists, eye and hearing specialists and mental health workers across the State. Communities also highlighted the need for basic health services and dental care in regional and remote areas. Health services need to be provided in culturally appropriate ways and incorporate holistic approaches to Aboriginal health. These issues are being considered within the context of the development of the NSW Government 10 year Aboriginal Health Plan.

5.3 Child protection and out of home care

Communities expressed ongoing concerns about the high number of Aboriginal children in care and reinforced the need for Aboriginal children to be cared for by Aboriginal families. The need to strengthen the role of Aboriginal controlled services managing care for Aboriginal children was also raised. The need for holistic and intensive family and

support services was also highlighted. Mentoring, advocacy and housing were identified as imperative to support young people transitioning from out-of-home care and school. Government is working closely with AbSec on a range of reforms including the transfer of out-of-home services to non-government organisations, capacity building for Aboriginal NGOs, and increasing the number of Aboriginal people employed in NGOs. Government is improving out-of-home care to better sustain families through the transfer to NGOs. This includes a goal for all Aboriginal children and young people in statutory out-of-home care to be placed with Aboriginal carers, and placements of all Aboriginal children to be supported by Aboriginal agencies.

5.4 Disability services

The need for early identification of disabilities in children, reduced service fragmentation for Aboriginal people with a disability and improved accountability of service providers to the community was highlighted. Developing the Aboriginal disability workforce and improving coordination between disability and transport services were suggested. A range of reforms are underway through *Stronger Together 2*, which includes work with Aboriginal communities to build the capacity and resilience of Aboriginal people with a disability and their families. For example, *Services Our Way* provides intensive individualised support packages to plan and prepare current and future living and care arrangements. Other reforms underway include increased Aboriginal flexible respite care across NSW, provision of Ability Links coordinators, and sector design to build capacity to deliver culturally inclusive services.

5.5 Ageing

Concern was expressed about a growing need among the elderly for culturally appropriate respite care, and nursing and home care that is run for Aboriginal people, by Aboriginal people. These concerns will be communicated to the Commonwealth Government given its core responsibility for aged care. There was a call for the age criteria for the Seniors Card to be lowered so that it is consistent with the life expectancy of

Aboriginal people. Seniors Card eligibility criteria, including lowering the age of eligibility for Aboriginal people in line with Commonwealth aged care programs and interstate seniors programs, is being examined. Issues affecting older Aboriginal people, including the unique position and leadership of Elders, have been acknowledged in the NSW Ageing Strategy.

5.6 Housing

The Taskforce heard that access to affordable and well-maintained housing is a precursor to improvements in education and employment, especially in rural and regional areas. The need for assistance schemes to support home ownership was also raised. The link between homelessness and the disproportionate number of young people in detention was highlighted as a concern. The need for increased crisis accommodation in regional areas was also raised. The Government is working to reform and improve homelessness services through the NSW Homelessness Action Plan and the National Partnership on Homelessness to reduce the number of Aboriginal people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Similarly, the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing and the *Build and Grow* Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy reform agenda focuses on improved access to quality, affordable and appropriate housing for Aboriginal people including support for Aboriginal people to sustain their tenancies.

5.7 Transport

Improving access to affordable transport is fundamental for ensuring access to services, a key enabler for participating in further education and gaining employment. Many Aboriginal people face difficulties in obtaining driver's licenses, largely due to lack of access to a car or instructor, which further limits access to services and opportunities. Transport for NSW is investigating options to assist learner license holders in Aboriginal communities. As part of this work Roads and Maritime Services released an Aboriginal Driver Knowledge Test *Listen and Learn* toolkit to assist people obtain driver licenses. Regional Transport Coordinators consult with Aboriginal communities to facilitate local

transport solutions. Additionally, the Aboriginal Transport Network, which considers transport issues affecting Aboriginal communities across NSW, will have a conference in 2012 to examine key transport issues. Transport for NSW is trialling a project to coordinate transport arrangements for Aboriginal people in NSW to travel to funerals of family or community members if they are unable to use private or available public transport.

5.8 Sport and recreation

Sport and recreation can play a significant role in building self-esteem and confidence, and can create pathways to education and employment. It also creates a better sense of community and develops social skills (such as teamwork and approaches to winning and losing). Investment in sport and recreational infrastructure, such as skate parks and ovals, was raised during consultations as a way to engage with Aboriginal young people. Sponsorship for major sporting entities to play in regional and remote sporting venues was also suggested. Sport and Recreation (Department of Education and Communities) is currently examining ways to improve the impact of existing investment in sport and recreation activities.

5.9 Land, culture and heritage

Respecting, valuing and maintaining Aboriginal culture, heritage and connection to Country was highlighted throughout the consultations as important to Aboriginal identity and wellbeing, as well as to creating economic opportunities and choices for current and future generations.

Our State's Aboriginal culture and heritage is acknowledged as being important to both the Aboriginal

and non-Aboriginal people of NSW. Improving how government laws and policies work to provide better outcomes for Aboriginal people in relation to access to Country, and cultural and heritage conservation is being pursued through several current reform processes. Government is currently working to improve outcomes in these connected areas through the reform of the NSW Aboriginal cultural and heritage legislation, the review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*, the Government's response to the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW, and the Crown lands review.

Next steps

The Taskforce now seeks input from Aboriginal communities and other key stakeholders about the directions proposed in this report. This is a critical step in continuing our dialogue with Aboriginal communities about key reforms required to bring about sustained improvement in education, employment, and service delivery.

The Taskforce will convene a second round of community consultation forums in late August 2012 and will also invite feedback via a survey. This feedback will be incorporated into the Taskforce's final recommendations to Government to inform a new Aboriginal affairs strategy for NSW.

Some proposals involve significant reform in the way that government and communities work together – for example the Local Decision Making Model – and substantial development work would need to occur with stakeholders, especially CAPO and the local communities involved.

The Taskforce recognises that there are a number of consultations taking place around significant NSW reforms in the areas of Aboriginal Health, Aboriginal Culture and Heritage and the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. The Taskforce will consider feedback from those forums that refers to its Terms of Reference.

How can you have your say?

The Taskforce invites feedback on the initiatives proposed to date via open community forums and surveys.

Open community meetings will be held:	
Friday 24 August	Batemans Bay
Monday 27 August	Newcastle
Tuesday 28 August	Kempsey
Wednesday 29 August	Lismore
	Griffith
Thursday 30 August	Tamworth
Friday 31 August	Dubbo
	Cobar
Monday 3 September	Campbelltown

Details with times and venues of the forums can be found at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/yoursay.html.

Surveys will be available during August at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/yoursay.html or by contacting the Taskforce Secretariat at 02 9219 0702.

Feedback is required no later than 4 September 2012.



www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/

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Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs



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