

## **INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Wollondilly Shire Council

**Date received:** 5/11/2015

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*Our Reference: TR:DG TRIM 7924#281*

The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

5 November 2015

Dear Sir / Madam

**RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

Further to your request for information regarding your inquiry into economic development in Aboriginal communities, Wollondilly is pleased to provide the attached submission. It is hoped that the information contained in this response assists you in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully

Luke Johnson  
**General Manager**

ENCL.

## **Response to the Inquiry into Economic Development in Aboriginal Communities**

### **Wollondilly Shire Council**

The Wollondilly Shire is located adjacent to the Southern Highlands. It is an hour from Sydney CBD, thirty minutes from Wollongong and just over a two hour drive away from Canberra. This puts the Wollondilly Shire in a unique location within New South Wales. There is an Indigenous population of 1,036 people within the Wollondilly Shire; of that 1,036 people, the Australian Bureau of Statistics identified that there were 41 people unemployed and a further 204 that are not in the labour force. This accounts for 23.6% of the overall indigenous population.

Wollondilly's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) population has a higher level of economic engagement and security when compared to the NSW average for ATSI population, but a slightly lower level when compared to our general community. This is based on three key indicators: unemployment rate, income and educational qualifications

Unemployment rate for our ATSI population is 9.7% compared to 17% for NSW ATSI, but still worse when compared to Wollondilly total population (4.2%) (*ID Profile 2015*)

Similarly ATSI incomes in Wollondilly are also much better than NSW ATSI average, but slightly worse when compared to Wollondilly total population

Similarly ATSI educational qualifications in Wollondilly are better than NSW ATSI average but worse when compared to Wollondilly total population

### **Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)**

Within the Wollondilly Shire, the local Aboriginal Community are represented by the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC). The Council's key function and business is as a Land Council. Its role includes the provision of assistance to improve and foster the social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing of its members and all Aboriginal people within the Tharawal LALC boundaries.

Tharawal LALC offers a range of services, projects and facilities for utilisation by members of the broader community. These projects and services are targeted to assist Tharawal LALC members and the Aboriginal community. Tharawal LALC strives to address the unmet needs through an extensive range of projects and ensures that access to the available services and programs is offered to all aboriginal people living within the Tharawal LALC boundaries. The Tharawal LALC has a number of land holdings within Wollondilly Shire however the land is constrained in various ways that limit its potential to be developed into income generating assets.

There are two main assets that the Tharawal LALC currently operate; these are GibberGunyah (Stonequarry Lodge) and Couridjah House.

**GibberGunyah (Stonequarry Lodge)** is a conference/wedding function centre that comprises a meeting space for aprox 100 people and associated kitchen facilities to cater for group and conference needs. There is individual and group accommodation to cater for up to 78 people. The accommodation lends itself to accommodate for people who have a disability however upgrading of bathroom amenities will enable the facility to comply with universal accessibility standards. Currently the facility is only operating on request and is not being actively promoted.



**Couridjah House** is Tharawal's administration centre and provides various facilities and activities including an 'Elders Respite Day Centre' that is tailored to meet the needs of the elders within the community. It allows the elders with an opportunity to leave the house and meet new people, as well as relax and enjoy time with friendly company. The centre is open to the Aboriginal elders within Campbelltown, Camden, and Wollondilly or within the Tharawal LALC boundaries. The centre also offers and delivers school programs in which students stay overnight and learn and experience aboriginal cultural.

Tharawal is pursuing various opportunities at the Couridjah site such as a TAFE Screen Printing course to be run (in current discussions with TAFE).

Tharawal has traditionally made use of programs like the Community Development Program (CDP) and the Work for the Dole program to assist with the burden and challenge of maintenance and operation of their centres. These programs historically have enabled them to meet the work force requirements needed to manage and maintain the assets properly.

The CDP is a program implemented by the Australian Government, aimed at increasing the employment and breaking the cycle of welfare dependency in remote areas of Australia. It supports 37,000 Australians, of which more than 80% of the people are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander decent.

The current Work for the Dole program has not been as effective for the requirements of the LALC. The former accessible CDP program was a program that was identified as of great benefit to the Tharawal LALC, allowing them to employ around 300 people at various times to help manage the assets. It provided the workers with stable working hours, and the LALC with the stability required to run the assets as needed. Since the Wollondilly shire is no longer identified as a 'remote community' they can no longer access the CDP.

### **Summary of Key Challenges**

The Tharawal LALC identified a number of challenges that they face when it comes to the economic development of their community. These include:

**Financial** - An inability to utilise various landholdings for income generating purposes due to constraints on the land i.e. environmental zoning, bushfire zones and infrastructure for access.

High maintenance and investment funds required to manage current assets leave little scope for improvement of the assets and their operational performance.

The Tharawal LALC identified the two main assets that they currently hold. Securing the financial resources required to maintain these assets is clearly challenging due to the various restrictions on land and resources that they have access to. It is likely that there is limited financial resources required maintain them. It was also identified that because of the current restrictions the facilities are located in, they are unable to expand the activities that may promote sound economic outcomes. The Environmental zoning and bushfire hazards and access issues on some of the lands that they currently hold have been identified the main restrictions that they have when it comes to expanding the financial income that they receive.

**Marketing and attraction expertise** – Limited resources are available to the Tharawal LALC for initiatives such as hiring marketing and promotion specialists.

**Business expertise** -There is potential to build upon current business acumen within Tharawal and its current business plan. Limited access to resources impacts upon the ability to implement strategies and actions to enhance current capabilities.



**Educational assistance** - Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are currently accessing a range of programs provided by State and Federal initiatives which is assisting young people to complete their education and move into associated employment opportunities. Access to education for the broader community has been impacted upon by the cut backs in TAFE opportunities particularly in regional areas such as Wollondilly. This is also further impacted by limited public transport options and tyranny of distance issues.

#### **Potential Actions to assist Economic Outcomes**

**Land Grants** – The Tharawal LALC currently have a number of land claims lodged with Office of the Registrar. It is hopeful that these claims will be successful for the benefit of the economic development of the Tharawal LALC.

The Northern Territory White Paper Package outlined that Indigenous Australians do not have the same opportunities to make their land more economically viable when compared to other Australians. A recent \$20 million funding increase is aimed at helping the economic development of land held by Aboriginal communities. It is suggested that a similar scheme be implemented in NSW. This scheme provides these communities with the opportunity to make their land more self-sufficient and sustainable.

Such a scheme would allow the Tharawal LALC to become more financially secure, allowing them to gain access to the economic development opportunities that are available.

**Support to outsource or employ Marketing and visitor program specialists** - Ability to access such specialists (preferably in full time roles) would provide additional expertise, guidance and focus required to market the LALC assets and programs more effectively and attract the investment required to increase income and opportunity for the community.

**Access Business Expertise and experience within other LALC's** - Facilitate sharing of knowledge, expertise and guidance from prominent LALCs such as Darkinjung (Hunter Valley/ Nelson Bay). This is one suggested method in which Tharawal could greatly benefit in learning and would have the ability to make more informed and reliable decisions.

Such advice, guidance and inspiration may encourage and enable Tharawal to expand and develop new and innovative projects and programs.

## Employment status in comparison to NSW ATSI

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Wollondilly Shire	2011			2006			Change
Employment status	Number	%	New South Wales - ATSI %	Number	%	New South Wales - ATSI %	2006 to 2011
Employed	374	90.3	83.0	269	91.5	80.5	+105
Employed full-time	230	55.6	49.0	155	52.7	45.0	+75
Employed part-time or hours not stated	144	34.8	34.0	114	38.8	35.5	+30
Unemployed	40	9.7	17.0	25	8.5	19.5	+15
Looking for full-time work	24	5.8	11.9	16	5.4	13.6	+8
Looking for part-time work	16	3.9	5.1	9	3.1	5.9	+7
<b>Total labour force</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+120</b>

## Employment status in comparison to Wollondilly Total Population

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Wollondilly Shire	2011			2006			Change
Employment status	Number	%	Wollondilly Shire - Total population %	Number	%	Wollondilly Shire - Total population %	2006 to 2011
Employed	374	90.3	95.8	269	91.5	95.7	+105
Employed full-time	230	55.6	62.5	155	52.7	62.3	+75
Employed part-time or hours not stated	144	34.8	33.3	114	38.8	33.3	+30
Unemployed	40	9.7	4.2	25	8.5	4.3	+15
Looking for full-time work	24	5.8	2.5	16	5.4	2.8	+8
Looking for part-time work	16	3.9	1.7	9	3.1	1.6	+7
<b>Total labour force</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+120</b>

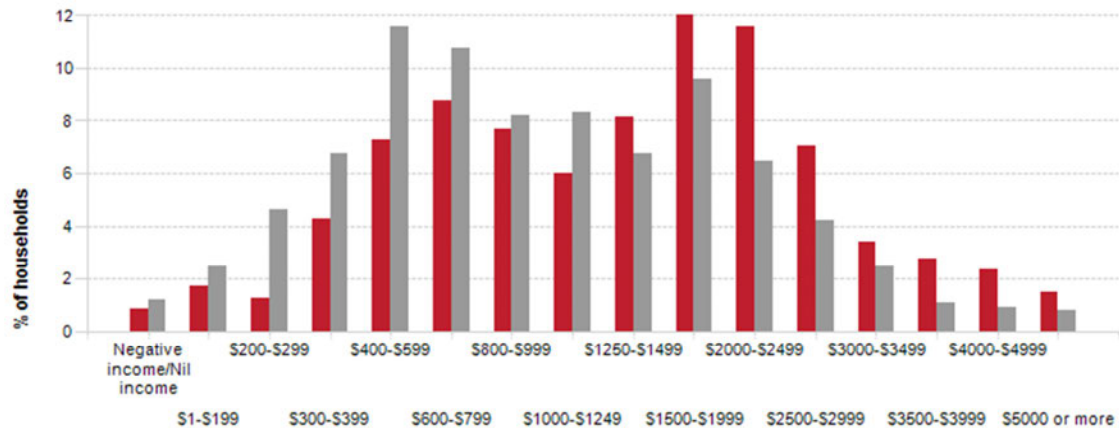
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2006 and 2011 (Usual residence). Compiled and presented in profile.id by [.id](#), the population experts.  
(Usual residence data)

## Income compared to NSW ATSI

### Weekly household income, 2011

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Wollondilly Shire - ATSI New South Wales - ATSI



#### Weekly income

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)  
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

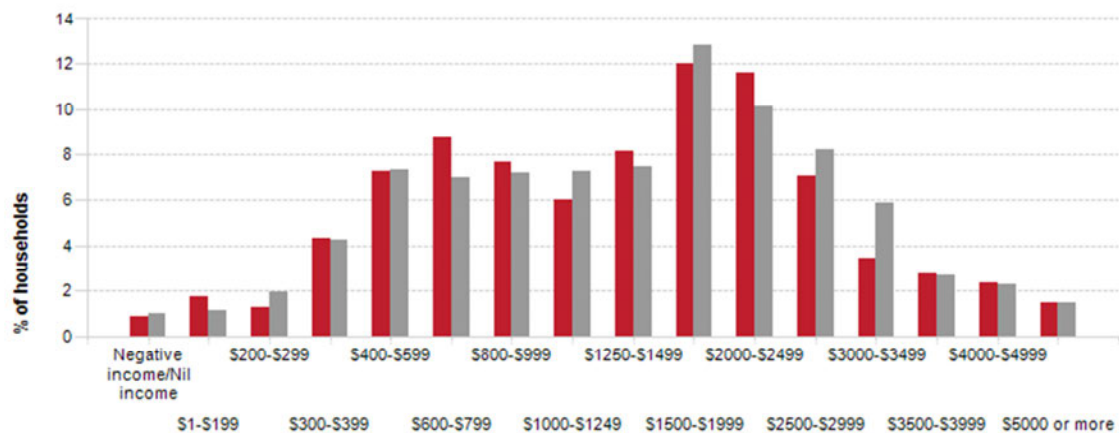
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the population experts

## Income compared to Wollondilly Total Population

### Weekly household income, 2011

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Wollondilly Shire - ATSI Wollondilly Shire - Total population



#### Weekly income

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)  
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## Qualification achieved compared to NSW ATSI

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Wollondilly Shire	2011			2006			Change
Qualification level	Number	%	New South Wales - ATSI %	Number	%	New South Wales - ATSI %	2006 to 2011
Bachelor degree level or higher	54	8.6	5.2	38	8.7	4.3	+16
Advanced diploma or diploma	34	5.4	4.3	19	4.4	3.4	+15
Vocational (certificate)	137	21.9	15.0	89	20.4	12.6	+48
Year 11 or 12	111	17.8	17.8	77	17.7	16.3	+34
Year 10 or below	221	35.4	42.6	167	38.3	45.3	+54
No educational attainment	3	0.5	0.7	3	0.7	0.8	0
Not stated/inadequately described	65	10.4	14.5	43	9.9	17.3	+22
<b>Total people aged 15+</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+189</b>

## Qualification achieved compared to Wollondilly Total Population

Wollondilly Shire - 15 to 17 years	2011			2006			Change
Qualification level	Number	%	Wollondilly Shire - Total population	Number	%	Wollondilly Shire - Total population	2006 to 2011
Bachelor or Higher degree	0	0.0	11.1	0	0.0	9.4	0
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	8	0.4	7.4	7	0.3	6.7	+1
Vocational	42	2.1	26.1	33	1.6	23.9	+9
No qualification	1,692	85.8	45.5	1,688	83.1	48.1	+4
Not stated	230	11.7	9.9	304	15.0	11.9	-74
<b>Total people</b>	<b>1,972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,032</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-60</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2006 and 2011 (Usual residence data). Compiled and presented in profile.id by [.id](#), the population experts.