

INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

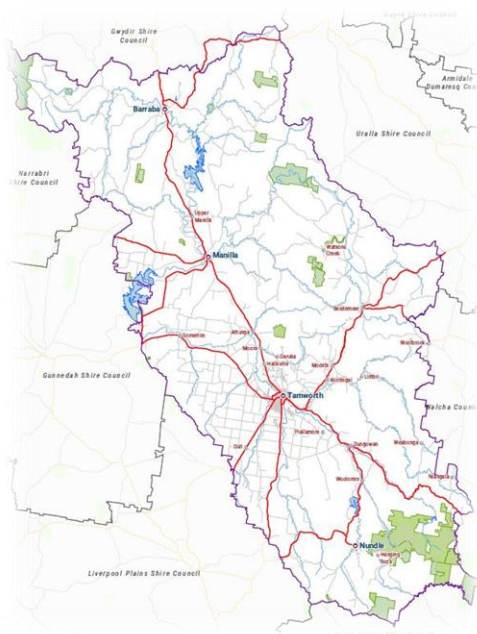
Organisation: Tamworth Regional Council

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Submission

Inquiry into Economic Development in Aboriginal Communities



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1 Terms of Reference

That the Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on strategies to support economic development in Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, including but not limited to:

- options for sustainability and capacity building of NSW Aboriginal communities into the future, utilising existing community networks and structures;
- leveraging economic development support, including provided by the Commonwealth Government and the private sector; and
- establishment and sustainability of Aboriginal owned enterprises.

That the committee report by 30 September 2016.

2 Executive Summary

Tamworth Regional Council (TRC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on strategies to support economic development in Aboriginal Communities and understands the need for innovation in this area. Implementation of these strategies could assist Aboriginal communities to realise their economic, social and cultural aspirations.

TRC has a high number of Aboriginal people within the Local Government Area (LGA) compared to the rest of NSW. As such there is an opportunity for the Tamworth LGA to become a regional centre for Aboriginal economic development.

There are many existing networks and structures that could be utilised in order to improve economic development outcomes for Aboriginal Communities within the TRC area. Organisations such as Indigenous Business Australia, Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service, Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council and Opportunity Hub, Warra – Li Resource Unit, Business Enterprise Centre, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, TAFE New England Aboriginal Learning Circle and the Gomeroi Dance Company, among others could be better supported in order to improve sustainability and capacity building in the region.

There are many existing programs, events and activities that could also be grown to achieve sustainability and positive economic outcomes including Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, the Aboriginal Cultural Showcase as part of the Country Music Festival, the Gomeroi Gaaynggal Arts Health Program and the Tamworth Regional Gallery Art Program.

In order to improve economic development activities in Aboriginal Communities, the Commonwealth Government should commit to providing greater partnerships with Aboriginal communities to support capacity building initiatives. There needs to be improvements to Aboriginal Service Delivery and participation in local decision making at all tiers of Government to foster genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities.

Improvements to Aboriginal employment could be assisted with incentives, improvements to traineeships and apprenticeships or placing obligations on mainstream employers such as mining companies or government departments.

The Commonwealth Government needs to improve mentoring, training and educational opportunities specifically for Aboriginal communities, encourage procurement from Aboriginal businesses, improve program continuity and improve the way in which Federal funding is disseminated.

There are many challenges to sustainable economic development in Aboriginal communities, but a holistic community orientated approach is required. This includes improvements in the areas of health, affordable housing, transport and community development, whilst also supporting private enterprise in arts and cultural activities.

3 About us

Tamworth is acknowledged as the Australian Country Music Capital and home to the largest Country Music Festival in the Southern Hemisphere. However, there's much more to the city. In December, Tamworth was awarded the title of best country town by Traveller magazine (part of Fairfax media) as one of their chosen perfect towns in Australia.

Tamworth is a vibrant regional inland city, situated halfway between Sydney and Brisbane on the inland corridor. There are over 60,000 people who live in the city or in the towns of Barraba, Manilla and Nundle.

It is a beautiful, vibrant and prosperous regional city covering 184 square kilometres, or about three times the size of the Sydney basin.

Tamworth is the "capital city" of the New England North West region of NSW, with a population pool of almost 200,000 people within a two hour drive. It is a natural hub for the broader region and the services and facilities available in Tamworth represent this hub.

While the annual Tamworth Country Music Festival attracts some 50,000 visitors to the city over 10 days in January, the region plays host to large scale events and conferences all year round, an example of which is the 10 day Taste Tamworth Festival in April which celebrates the region's gourmet local produce.

With its year round event calendar and authentic country based experiences, the destination is a prime tourist region, attracting over 1.1m visitors in 2014, who spend an estimated \$239m per annum.

As testament to the city's growth, the city now hosts three airlines flying in and out of Tamworth, which only a handful of regional cities in NSW can state. These three carriers include Qantas (which includes its regional maintenance service), Virgin Australia and Jetgo. These three airlines service the Tamworth – Sydney and Tamworth – Brisbane markets.



FIGURE 1: TRC DEPUTY MAYOR RUSSELL WEBB AND TACCC CHAIR HARRY CUTMORE

4 Background

TRC's activities are identified in a number of corporate plans. These plans include priority areas relating specifically to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community.

The table below outlines Council's commitments to this demographic as outlined in its Annual Operational Plan 2015/2016, Delivery Program 2013-2017 and Community Strategic Plan 2023:

Annual Operational Plan 2015/2016		
Program	Action Description	Performance Indicator
C1.2.6 Cultural Development	Gallery Services Deliver Art Gallery services	Number of exhibition opportunities provided to the Aboriginal community
C1.3.2 Aboriginal Liaison	Progress action against agreed outcomes sought from the Tamworth Aboriginal Community Consultative Committee (TACCC)	Number of projects/initiatives progressed Satisfaction of (TACCC) Members and Aboriginal Community Agenda, business papers and minutes provided for committee
C2.4.2 Community Care	Provide and support Home and Community Care Services (HACC) in Tamworth, Barraba, Kootingal and Nundle	Number of ATSI (Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander) carers assisted through the ATSI Carer Support Program
Tamworth Regional Council Delivery Program 2013-2017		
Strategy	Program	Measure of success
C.1.3 Value and protect our heritage	Aboriginal Liaison	(TACCC) established and active Council activity supporting Aboriginal culture and development reported
C.3.1 Provide inclusive opportunities for the community to get actively involved in decision making	Community Engagement	Community participation and attendance levels in committee meetings and events Community satisfaction with support provided
Keychange 2023 Community Strategic Plan		
Objective	Strategy	Measure of success
C.1 Unique character, identity and culture within localities, villages, towns and city	C.1.2 Value and support our culture	Number and diversity of cultural events, services and facilities Participation rate at events Community satisfaction rates
	C.1.3 Value and protect our heritage	Number of sites/areas of Aboriginal significance protected Number sites/buildings of cultural significance protected
Objective	NSW State Plan goal	
C3. Resilient, empowered communities	26. Fostering opportunity and partnership with Aboriginal people	

'The Regional Action Plan for the New England North West focuses on growing and diversifying the economy, investing in regional and local infrastructure and improving education pathways for young people to provide a skilled workforce to support the growing economy. The communities of the region identified a vision which includes....A highly skilled and competitive workforce, with educational opportunities for local communities, Aboriginal people, young people and the disadvantaged to increase job prospects'

(Keychange 2023 – Community Strategic Plan).



FIGURE 2: GOMEROI DANCE PERFORMANCE

5 Aboriginal Demographics in the Tamworth Region

TRC have a large percentage of Indigenous people with 4,722 residents who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or 8.4% of the population compared to the state average of 2.5%.

The table below outlines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by locality:

5.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population by Locality

Locality	2011		2006		Change
	Number	%	Number	%	2006 to 2011
TRC - ATSI	4,722	8.4	3,710	6.9	1,012
Regional NSW - ATSI		4.7		3.9	
Tamworth Urban Area	3,837	9	3,039	7.7	797
West Tamworth (Coledale) – ATSI	943	31	881	28.6	62
South Tamworth – ATSI	826	12.4	619	9.2	207
Oxleyvale – ATSI	410	12.2	298	9.8	112
Westdale/Taminda – ATSI	296	13	140	8.2	156
North Tamworth – ATSI	257	6.4	256	7.1	1
CBD & East Tamworth - ATSI	223	4.1	162	2.9	61
West Tamworth (Central) – ATSI	130	5.5	114	4.5	16
Calala - ATSI	124	4.8	103	4.6	21
Hillvue- ATSI	110	4.3	79	3	31
Manilla & District- ATSI	307	9.6	230	7.2	77
Warrall/Kingswood/Nemingha/Calala(rural) - ATSI	110	4.3	79	3	31
Moore Creek/Daruka/Tintinhull- ATSI	102	3.1	59	2.3	43
Western Rural- ATSI	102	3.1	102	3.4	0
Barraba Rural North- ATSI	98	5.5	57	3.2	41
Nundle/Rural South	98	8.3	77	6.4	21

6 Options for Sustainability and Capacity Building of Aboriginal Communities into the Future, Utilising Existing Community Networks and Structures

6.1 Our Industries

There are over 5,700 businesses in the Tamworth region and the key to Tamworth's successful growth lies in its diversity of industry. What was once an Agriculture based economy is now diversified into a broader range of services and products, with total exports exceeding \$1.1billion, including:

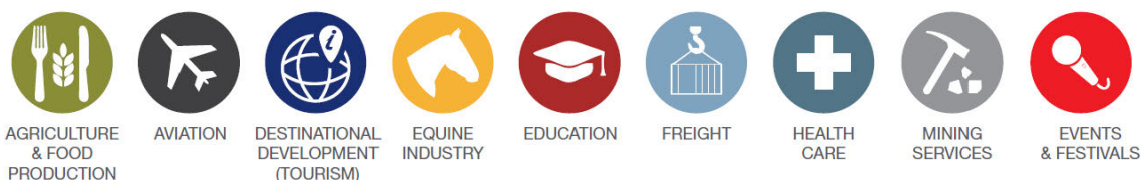
Selection of Exports by industry sector (2012/13)	\$m	%	NSW %
Manufacturing & Food Processing	529.8	47.6	24.8
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	138.5	12.5	3.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	88.6	8.0	4.0
Education and Training	65.2	5.9	2.5
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	57.8	5.2	5.8
Other Services	46.6	4.2	1.1
Administrative and Support Services	41.7	3.7	2.9
Accommodation and Food Services	38.7	3.5	2.5
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	32.8	3.0	3.2

SOURCE: TAMWORTH ID PROFILE

Tamworth is also a thriving equine centre for the broader region, boasting three major equine association headquarters; NCHA, ABCRA and AQHA making way for some of Australia's most glamorous and action packed equine events. Tamworth hosts many of the region's signature Equine events, thanks in principle to its state of the art, Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre (AELEC) which hosts more than 50 events per year.

There are various international, national and state equine championships regularly held in the district along with Australia's richest sporting horse event, the NCHA Futurity (annually in May/June) as well as the ABCRA National Finals Rodeo showcased during the Country Music Festival.

Tamworth Regional Council concentrates on nine key areas as part of its economic development:



7 Existing Community Networks and Structures

There are a number of existing community networks and structures which could provide an avenue for sustainability and capacity building within the TRC LGA, including:

7.1 Tamworth Aboriginal Community Consultative Committee for TRC (TACCC)

In 2013, Tamworth Regional Council agreed to set up the Aboriginal Community Consultative Committee for Tamworth Regional Council. Council provide secretarial services to the group and bi-monthly meetings held at the Local Aboriginal Land Council office. The purpose of the Committee is:

- to develop and implement strategies which reflect mutual respect, awareness and dignity in services for and to Aboriginal people residing within the Tamworth Local Government Area (LGA); and
- to promote the status of Aboriginal people in the Tamworth Regional Council Local Government Area.

Membership of the TACCC includes Birrillee MACS Child Care Centre, Gabba Binaal Elders Group, KADS Elders Group, Mara Mara Housing Corporation, Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service, Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council, Yaamanhaa Aboriginal Men's Group, Yinarr Women's Group and the Chair is Harry Cutmore of the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Objectives of the Committee:

- to facilitate positive relationships between Tamworth Regional Council and the local Aboriginal Community;
- to provide an information exchange forum;
- to advise Council on issues related to Aboriginal Community Development;
- to promote mutual awareness and respect for the cultures of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Communities; and
- to increase Council and public awareness of the needs of the Aboriginal Community.

Role of the Committee:

- the Committee shall advise Council on issues relating to the provision and development of strategies and services aimed at enhancing and improving community awareness of the status of Aboriginal people in the Tamworth LGA. This includes the active participation in and promotion of significant events.

In particular, the Committee shall:

- identify information needs in relation to cultural awareness, achievements of and opportunities for the Aboriginal Community, and utilise Council's media outlets to disseminate such information;
- provide a forum for discussion and Community input on community initiatives and issues;
- recommend priorities for action by Council in relation to promoting positive relationships within the Tamworth Regional Council;
- implement, monitor and evaluate a Tamworth Regional Council Aboriginal Action Plan.
- identify any other relevant matters; and
- the Committee will from time to time, enable representation to be heard from across the Community on issues of concern.

7.2 Indigenous Business Australia

Economic independence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is at the heart of IBA's vision and programs. IBA's programs assist Indigenous Australians to buy their own homes, own their own businesses and invest in commercial ventures that provide strong financial returns.

7.3 Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service

The Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service (TAMS) provides a range of visiting specialist services and community programs.

TAMS offer the following services:

- vaccinations and immunizations;
- antenatal and baby care;
- optometrist (eye tests and prescription glasses);
- paediatric service;
- gynaecological care;
- general medicine specialist;
- exercise physiologist; and
- diabetes education and management.

TAMS is a member of the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of New South Wales.

7.4 Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council

The Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council has operated for over thirty years. During this time the land council has acquired fifteen residential properties, the LALC office, and thirteen parcels of land. The land is generally of unknown Aboriginal cultural significance, but one particular parcel is of substantial cultural significance. The activities of the Land Council in the past have mostly focussed on providing benefit to certain members in the form of housing, access to transport, emergency funds, community programs and administrative support.

The staff numbers grew considerably in 2014. The current CEO was appointed in November 2009 and works on a full time basis along with an administration assistant who commenced in August 2009 on a part time basis and upgraded to full time in July 2014. A Trainee Administration Assistant was engaged in April 2014.

Tamworth LALC won the tender to establish the Opportunity Hub Tamworth as part of the NSW Governments OCHRE, this has seen a Project Coordinator and 2 Case Workers join the team in May and June 2014.

The Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council boundary includes Tamworth, Manilla, Barraba and Bendemeer.

The Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council has a range of economic development projects underway. The Tamworth LALC auspices the Tamworth Opportunity Hub and has employment partnerships in a range of industry sectors, most prominently retail and hospitality, health and Defence.

7.5 Aboriginal Education Consultancy Group (Opportunity Hub)

Opportunity Hubs are a state government initiative, funded by the Department of Education and Communities. They have been developed as a result of the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs community consultations, and their identification of the need for supported

pathways to assist young Aboriginal people to gain the confidence and knowledge to transition into tertiary education, training and/or employment.

The program caters for Aboriginal young people in years 5 – 8. They are educated in building career aspirations and strengthening understanding of career pathways. In addition, young Aboriginal people in years 9 – 12 have access to personalised career and transition planning, as well as training, work experience, traineeships, internships and job opportunities through jobs listings.

The Opportunity Hub works with a network of partners to:

- partner with schools, local employers and training providers;
- coordinate local opportunities including employment, mentoring, scholarships, internships and volunteer work;
- match local opportunities to young Aboriginal people's career aspirations that lead to jobs;
- mentor and support young Aboriginal people each step of the way;
- engage young Aboriginal people and their families early on at school; and
- track young Aboriginal people's progress including once they have transitioned to employment.

7.6 Warra – Li Resource Unit

Warra-li Resource Unit is the business arm representing the 14 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) of the Northern Region of NSW and is charged with leading economic development and employment opportunities for our constituent LALCs. Warra-li Resource Unit exists under the Northern Region Regional Partnership Agreement (NRRPA) signed by:

- The Australian Government;
- The NSW Government;
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council; and
- The 14 Northern Region NSW Local Aboriginal Land Councils – Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Guyra, Dorrigo, Walcha, Armidale, Tamworth, Muswellbrook, Coonabarabran, Gunnedah, Walhallow, Quirindi, Tingha (Inverell) and Ashford

Warra-li has a not-for-profit, registered charity, public benevolent institution status and provides a number of culturally appropriate services to the Aboriginal communities it serves including:

- a) Project Management;
- b) Business Development – Social Enterprises;
- c) Tender Writing;
- d) Commercial Acquisitions;
- e) Grant Research and Writing; and
- f) Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) services as a partner to TAFE.

Warra-li is based in Tamworth and was established under the Northern Region Regional Partnership Agreement (NRRPA) for the purpose of assisting Northern Region LALCs with economic development. Warra-li, during the course of the past 18 months has identified and provided business case/financial modelling to a number of NR LALCs for economic developments.

Warra-li is currently well advanced in planning, funding, MOUs for a major social enterprise that includes no less than six Local Aboriginal Land Council areas in the north of NSW as well as seven Regional Councils.

7.7 Business Enterprise Centre

The Business Enterprise Centre networks help Aboriginal people with NEIS grants and small business advice. The NCAP program runs in the TRC region.

7.8 Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES)

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) is a 100% Indigenous managed, national, not -for-profit Recruitment Company.

As the AES is completely Indigenous it easily allows them to match the right career seekers to the right opportunities, to achieve great retention rates. No other recruitment organisation offers this kind of expertise, commitment and value.

The AES achieve great results through the following Key Business Drivers:

- Recruitment Services;
- Traineeship Services; and
- Business Development.

The AES started in Moree in 1997 by cotton farmer, Dick Estens AO, with the support of the Cotton Industry through the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association. The AES grew out of recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody to establish promotion committees nationwide for Aboriginal employment.

Since 1997 the AES has transformed over 12,000 lives through providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with career opportunities.

The AES is seen as an innovator and leader in Aboriginal employment and training.

7.9 TAFE New England (Aboriginal Learning Circle)

The Aboriginal Learning Circle (ALC) is an alliance of five NSW TAFE Institutes who have agreed to collaborate in order to achieve culturally appropriate solutions for Aboriginal people, communities, organisations and employers. The aim of the ALC is to develop courses appropriate for Aboriginal people and to provide support services for Aboriginal students. The ALC aims to pursue successful outcomes for Aboriginal students both personally and through education.

Aboriginal Student Support Officers are able to assist Aboriginal students in a number of ways. Initially, they can provide advice and guidance about courses that suit individual needs. They will then support Aboriginal people throughout their studies at TAFE New England.

7.10 Gomeroi Dance Company

The Gomeroi Dance Company is a company that promotes Aboriginal culture, awareness and understanding and is based in Tamworth, North-West New South Wales.

The group started dancing together in high school as the Peel High School Dancers. They have been dancing together for over seven years and dance Traditional Gomeroi dances that tell stories with meaning. They also speak Gomeroi lingo (language) as part of the performance.

The Gomeroi Dance Company aims to improve understanding and promote Aboriginal culture throughout Australia.



FIGURE 3: TRADITIONAL GOMEROI DANCING BY ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

7.11 Additional Aboriginal Organisations within the Region

There are a range of other organisation in the region providing important services, information, community assistance, including:

- Birrelee MACS Childcare Centre;
- Gaba Binaal Elders Group;
- KADS Elders Group;
- Yaamanhaa Aboriginal Men's Group;
- Yinarr Women's Health and Wellbeing Group; and
- Mara Mara Housing Corporation.

7.12 Aboriginal Specific Activities, Events and Programs:

There are a range of existing activities, events and programs in the Tamworth Region which could be built upon through sustainability and capacity building to improve economic development in Aboriginal Communities, including:

7.12.1 Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June.

At a national level the week marks two important dates. May 27 is the anniversary of the 1967 referendum when Australians voted to remove clauses in the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. June 3 marks the 1992 Mabo decision in which the High Court of Australia recognised native title.

TRC organises an annual National Reconciliation Week event in Tamworth. The event aims to build stronger ties between Indigenous and non Indigenous communities.

The event often includes entertainment and performances. In 2015 there was a performance from Westdale Public School students and a representative from the Gomeroi Dance Company was Master of Ceremonies. It also included a formal Flag Raising Ceremony and Smoking Ceremony performed by Aboriginal Elder Len Waters (pictured below).

In 2015, the theme was It's Time to Change It Up, which encouraged people to take some fresh action to spark a change in their school, workplace or community – no matter how big or small.

In 2015 TRC also held two cross cultural yarn events. The Cross Cultural Conversations were a chance for Indigenous and non Indigenous people to come together and reflect on Reconciliation. For participants it was an opportunity to discuss what reconciliation means to them. The discussions led to talks about issues effecting aboriginal people and experiences that Aboriginal people have faced in the past and how to move forward in a positive way. .

The event promotes shared culture, connecting with community, stopping racism and celebrating Indigenous success at every opportunity. As this event grows, there are increased opportunities for economic development through partnerships, procurement, mentoring, training and employment.



FIGURE 4: TRADITIONAL SMOKING CEREMONY BY ELDER LEN WATERS

7.12.2 NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the culture, history and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NAIDOC Week is a time to consider how to celebrate the rich culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Tamworth community, in particular our local Gomeroi culture.

NAIDOC Week is organised by the NAIDOC Week Sub Committee to the Tamworth Aboriginal Community Consultative Committee to Tamworth Regional Council (TACCC for TRC).

Events organised for the 2015 NAIDOC Week included:

- An Opening Ceremony held at Coledale Community Centre on Sunday 5 July;
- A Cultural Tour following the Tamworth Base Hospital event on Monday 6 July;
- A Lawn Bowls Barbeque held at West Tamworth Bowling Club on Thursday 9 July; and
- NAIDOC Street Parade and Family Fun Day held at Viaduct Park on Saturday 11 July.

All of these activities were provided at no charge to the community.

NAIDOC Week receives a large number of sponsors and in 2015 the NAIDOC Week Sub Committee partnered with numerous organisations, including:

NSW Family and Community Services	Tamworth Discount Drug Store
JetGo Australia	Quality Hotel Powerhouse
Wests	Coles
Tamworth Family Support Service	Coledale Community Centre
92.9 / 2TM	West Tamworth Bowling Club
A1 Hire	Tamworth Local Aboriginal Lands Council
NSW Aboriginal Affairs	Rotary Club of West Tamworth
Joblink Plus	Oxley Local Area Command
Northcott Disability Services	Gomeroi Dance Company
Headspace Tamworth	TAFE New England
Buttercup Bakeries	Yaamanhaa Mens Group

Numerous agencies contributed to the week, some organisations provided in kind donations of time, activities and awareness or outreach to the community. The events were promoted to the broader community through media, community groups, targeted advertising and word of mouth.

NAIDOC week events in Tamworth are built on a platform of fun and wellbeing with a strong focus on children, young people and families. It highlighted to the broader community the meaning and significance of NAIDOC Week. This project strengthened ties within the community through a partnership approach focused on the objectives of learning, respecting, celebrating and connecting:

- **LEARNING** – To improve the understanding of local culture and foster a sense of belonging and local pride.
- **RESPECTING** – To increase respect and understanding of the Gomeroi culture and elders past and present.
- **CELEBRATING** – To celebrate National Aboriginal and Indigenous culture whilst specifically acknowledging the rich culture and history of the local Gomeroi people.
- **CONNECTING** – To strengthen ties in the community through collaboration, connection and understanding.

NAIDOC is an opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate culture through a collaborative planning approach.

NAIDOC Week has opportunities for growth and economic development in the following ways:

- supporting/hiring musical talent for the events;
- opportunities to showcase Aboriginal food and products and sell them at events;
- supporting local artist by purchasing cultural gifts; and
- supporting local suppliers including t-shirt design and development organisations, catering, hire, Aboriginal Tour Guide, Children's rides and entertainment.



FIGURE 5: PARTICIPANTS AT NAIDOC FAMILY DAY 2013

7.12.3 Aboriginal Cultural Showcase

The Aboriginal Cultural Showcase is a weeklong annual event held during the Tamworth Country Music Festival, which ran for its eighth year in 2015. The Showcase has been developed to expose and develop the talent of emerging Aboriginal musicians and to create a variety of opportunities for Aboriginal musicians, performers and craftspeople to celebrate and promote their talents and culture throughout the Tamworth Country Music Festival program.

Musicians and performers of any level of talent, from young to old, brand new to seasoned performers are invited to participate and obtain some on stage experience.

In addition to the music program, the Aboriginal Cultural Showcase has a cultural workshop program which has proved very popular with visitors. This has included didgeridoo playing, dance and weaving. The Showcase is looking to expand on these cultural activities by finding practitioners with a range of skills and knowledge about Aboriginal culture.



FIGURE 6: DIDGERIDOO PERFORMANCE

7.12.4 Gomeri gaaynggal Arts Health Program

The Gomeri gaaynggal ('Babies from Gomeri lands') program in Tamworth and Walgett is a community ArtsHealth Program that has been operating since 2009. The aims of the program include:

- Improve the health outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal women and their children;
- Create health change;
- Develop creative skills of participants;
- Exhibit works and generate an income from artwork;
- Allow students and health professionals to work collaboratively on art pieces for joint exhibitions; and
- Create educational opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Gomeri gaaynggal Centre in Tamworth offers clinical and office space for research, a crèche, working art studio, art gallery and outdoor space, including a fresh vegie patch. It is open to the public and hosts events within the premises.

Indigenous Elder and Artist Aunty Pearl Slater has been employed as the Art Coordinator and many Indigenous people have been employed since. Aunty Pearl is a wonderful mentor and support person in the Arts Health program. Her role is to encourage young women to develop their art skills, and help build their confidence. She manages the art program, exhibitions, and organises the Tamworth arts facility.

An Indigenous Research Coordinator at the Centre is responsible for training and supporting new staff. She recruits new participants for the science research program. She organises ultrasound clinics, collects blood and supervises Allied Health students, visiting school students and staff members within both programs. She presents at conferences to highlight the importance of art studies. She is passionate about improving the health of her community and sees that the Gomeri gaaynggal program has many positives for improving health in the local community.

A Community Project Officer works in both the ArtsHealth Program assisting Aunty Pearl as well as in the Research Study Program. She assists with organising ultrasounds, recruits new participants for the programs and has learnt how to collect blood.

An Indigenous Artist mentors participants in the Arts Health Program in Walgett. Her role is to encourage young women to develop their art skills, and help build their confidence. She works managing the art program, exhibitions, and organising the Walgett facility. She works alongside the staff from the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service.

A Community Project Officer has been working hard with the Aboriginal Medical Service in Walgett to recruit pregnant women for the pregnancy research study. She collects blood, assists in organising ultrasounds and works alongside the antenatal programs. She ensures that the ArtsHealth program is also attended by health professionals.

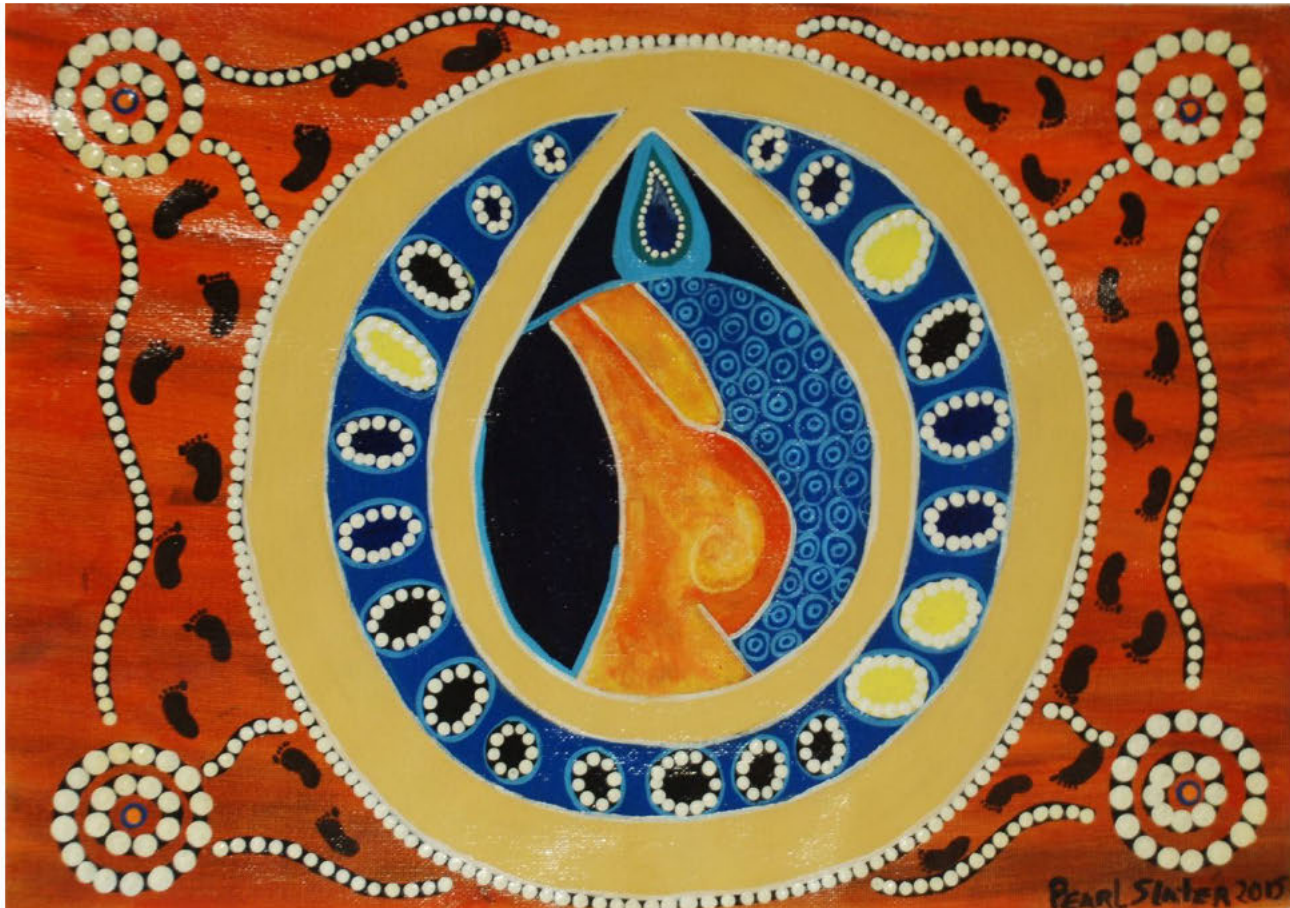


FIGURE 7: ARTWORK FROM THE GOMEROI GAAYNGGAL ARTS HEALTH PROGRAM

7.12.5 Tamworth Regional Gallery Art Program

TRC provides support to local Indigenous artists by placing an Aboriginal exhibition on display at least once per annum at the Tamworth Regional Gallery or Ray Walsh House exhibition space, typically during NAIDOC week or covering Sorry Day. In addition, the Gallery partners with a nationally touring Indigenous exhibition at least once per year to ensure there is a wide cross section of Indigenous representation in the exhibition content.

The Tamworth Regional Gallery works in partnership with a number of local Indigenous organisations and committees to promote Aboriginal art and culture and create better community understanding. The gallery has a on-going partnership with local Aboriginal mentor, Len Waters and TAFE NSW to develop cultural sites tours plus artist workshops based relationships with, TAFE NSW Arts North West, the Gomeroi gaaynggal Centre Arts Health Program and the Galala River Care Group to advance all Indigenous art, including public art.

The Gallery sells books about Indigenous art and artists and there are a number of Aboriginal art prints for sale. In addition, the Gallery has a number of Indigenous works which were purchased through Friends of the Gallery and include various mediums. The Utopia series (a bequest) is also in the Visual Arts Collection and in total there are 75 Aboriginal artworks in the Gallery Collection.

TRC engaged World renowned Aboriginal Artist Reko Rennie to develop an artistic design for the proposed Tamworth Regional Skate Park. The design for this art strategy gives the place a unique and recognisable identity in the landscape. If the Skatepark is developed it will represent the only Aboriginal designed park in Australia.

8 Leveraging Economic Development Support

8.1 Existing Economic Development Profile

The Tamworth region is in a strong economic position with a Gross Regional Product (GRP) estimated at \$2.71 billion, representing 0.5% of the state's Gross State Product (GSP). Annual GRP has shown continued steady growth for the past 10 years.

The region plays host to over 26,000 jobs with an 8.02% unemployment rate.

Growing annually at a steady rate of 1.3%, the Tamworth region has a population of over 60,000 people (85% of which is based in Tamworth itself) that has made the region an attractive destination for business and investment. The region has a significant population catchment with over 200,000 people living within two hours of Tamworth.

The region has significant capital investment on the cards and currently underway. Based on reported 'intention' to develop, there was over \$700m in Capital Projects being talked about and in development for the Tamworth region within the public sphere (registered DA's, media announcements and other) as at June 2014.

What has been traditionally dominated by agriculture, the economy is starting to transition to other industries, with retail trade now being the region's largest industry employer (14.8%) of the region's employment, followed by manufacturing (12%), health care and social assistance (11.9%) and most recently, construction (8.7%) due to the region's economic development.

TRC is proactive in facilitating business and industry to take advantage of any opportunities that exist within the region, both today and in the future. Building on existing business, taking advantage of opportunities and attracting new investment and facilities will create employment and other opportunities for the region, driving the cycle of more businesses and individuals relocating, living and investing in the region.

9 Leveraging Economic Development Support Provided by Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Government needs to create greater opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in the economy. This can be achieved through the following strategies:

9.1 Partnership

- The Commonwealth Government needs to ensure that any specific economic development plans will be developed in partnership with Aboriginal people because Aboriginal stakeholders have the opportunity to influence better policy making and service design.
- Economic development needs to be built on self determination and effective participation in decision-making. The success of the inquiry will depend on the Standing Committee's ability to effectively engage, respect and acknowledge Aboriginal people in all aspects of decision-making relating to their economic development. It is fundamental that the Standing Committee provides economic development strategies that are based on community decision making and control. Aboriginal people have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them.
- There needs to be improvements to Aboriginal Service Delivery and participation in local decision making at all tiers of Government to foster genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities. This could include the development of local engagement arrangements with Aboriginal Communities to inform priorities and strategic actions around economic development including Aboriginal employment and career development.

9.2 Procurement

- Investment in Aboriginal non-government organisations, businesses and / or contractors by procurement of services.
- Utilise the Supply Nation and the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines to procure the services of Aboriginal suppliers and contractors.
- Procure Aboriginal venues and services for specific Aboriginal events, consultation forums and meetings.
- Encourage all tiers of government to utilise Aboriginal owned and operated businesses for relevant works.
- Build on the work of the National Minority Supplier Development Council.

9.3 Cultural Inclusion and Community Development

- Build the capacity of service providers to deliver culturally inclusive services. The Commonwealth Government should embed Aboriginal Cultural inclusion, accountability and monitoring processes to deliver better economic outcomes for Aboriginal people and their families.
- Build on community development initiatives in the areas of education, employment and creating safe communities.
- Support Aboriginal staff to participate in forums such as cultural camps, gatherings, networks, focus groups and reference groups.

9.4 Mentoring

- Mentorship and guidance is crucial to sustainable economic development in Aboriginal communities. There should be dedicated Aboriginal business mentors and coaches on business enterprise planning and operation.
- Increased opportunities for training and mentoring Aboriginal people who are interested in setting up or growing a business venture.
- Deliver location based employment initiatives which include structured mentoring and skills development.

9.5 Training and Education

- Not unlike many regional cities, Tamworth has a shortage of health care professionals as identified by the Tamworth Business Chamber, and this continues to represent a challenge. Programs which support Aboriginal people studying healthcare to move to regional centres will assist with this issue.
- Similarly, programs which support Aboriginal people studying aged care to move to regional centres will assist this skills shortage. This is likely to be a growing concern for regional capital cities like Tamworth which have the advanced health care and broader community facilities that make them an attractive retirement location.
- Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their representatives, and other organisations to identify and develop capacity building opportunities at the individual, organisational and community levels. Consideration should be given to skills deficits including financial and technical assistance in addition to resourcing constraints.
- Develop innovative strategies for building work readiness skills for Aboriginal people.
- Through discussions with Aboriginal people in the Tamworth Regional LGA, a key finding was that economic development was welcomed by members of the community, though many lacked the capacity to develop ideas into enterprise. Therefore, in order to improve economic development activities in Aboriginal Communities, the Commonwealth Government must commit to providing greater support for capacity building initiatives such as resourcing and skill deficits, including basic administrative and financial skills. Without access to adequate financial resources and expert advice, Aboriginal people are unlikely to be able to enter into sustainable economic development activities.
- Ensuring a focus on literacy and numeracy levels at the earliest stages can contribute to the creation of future employment and development opportunities. Education is also critical in terms of development with culture and identity. There should also be a focus on preserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
- Build the capacity of Aboriginal people to establish small businesses to provide disability and community care services.
- Funding to provide additional traineeships and apprenticeships within the networks and structures listed in part 6.2 of this report would improve skill development to enhance the services provided and improve capacity building and sustainability.

9.6 Program Continuity

- There needs to be program continuity – many programs change regularly just as they are starting to gain traction. The extended length of programs is vital to success.

9.7 Transport

- A primary challenge for TRC is the transport infrastructure within the region and this connection to our Capital Cities. Investments could be determined by access to and or adequate infrastructure to support the growth.
- The increase of two carriers on the Tamworth to Sydney route will benefit the local industry. Competitive fares make the destination more affordable, this allows businesses to travel more to conduct business and makes Tamworth more appealing to investment.
- Improve rail services to reduce the impact of heavy vehicles on the road networks (or provide more funding for roads so they can be built to a higher standard).

9.8 Employment

- Consult with Aboriginal communities to develop employment programs appropriate to their respective circumstances to improve Aboriginal employment outcomes and workforce capability.
- Increase communications about possible incentives for larger businesses within the TRC area to employ Aboriginal people including increased opportunities for Aboriginal traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Place obligations on and provide support to mainstream employers such as mining companies and government departments to employ local Aboriginal people.
- Generate employment opportunities for young Aboriginal People participating in Opportunity Hubs.
- Increase the number of staff with understanding of Aboriginal cultural practices and obligations and how this effects business practices.

9.9 Commonwealth Funding

- Commonwealth Funding is distributed on a range of factors including population and the relative disadvantage within a Council's demographic. However, it does not take into account that Regional Centres provide a range of infrastructure, facilities and services to surrounding Councils where their ratepayers do not make any contribution. For example, sporting fields, regional playgrounds, swimming pools are all paid for and subsidised by local ratepayers, but a visitor from a surrounding area does not make any substantial contribution toward the cost of providing that facility.
- Adjusting funding models from State and Commonwealth Government to recognise the catchment that regional centres service. People expect Regional Centres to provide services and facilities that are on par (or at least comparable) with those found in larger metropolitan cities. However, the Commonwealth Government should be aware that regional centres have a much smaller population base to generate the required revenues. The infrastructure is much more expensive because of a lack of density in the population. For example a 500m water main in Sydney might service several thousand residents and in regional areas it could service less than a hundred, but there are similar costs to build and maintain the facility.
- Provide dedicated and long-term funding for an Aboriginal economic development team within each region of NSW, with the knowledge to assist Aboriginal businesses start up and support them through the first few years of business.

- Commonwealth government business assistance is very limited, and specialised. It is difficult to gain support for any general start-up because the Commonwealth government is looking for point of difference and niche markets.
- Remove the constraints provided by funding due diligence processes. Some funding requirements include a feasibility study, detailed business plan, financial projections, and marketing plan which are often an inhibitor to success. Aboriginal people need to be supported to make the shift into business and be better supported once they have done so, rather than precluding them taking the first step.
- Support the Warra-li organisation, which is directly funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and has a comprehensive knowledge of the funding and support available under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding streams. Warra-li also has a substantial network of contacts throughout Federal and NSW Governments to leverage economic development and support.

9.10 Health

It is important the Commonwealth Government health portfolio budget provides increased Government investment in Aboriginal health and work with the Closing the Gap Health Policy to facilitate better outcomes because health and economic development are intrinsically linked. Good health is an essential foundation for the capacity of a person to access employment and the full benefits of participation in the economy. Therefore any plan for economic development within Aboriginal communities also needs to address the long-standing health issues in those communities.

10 Leveraging Economic Development Support Provided by the Private Sector

The following strategies can assist with leveraging economic development provided by the Private sector:

- Business and services buying and trading locally;
- User led, co produced or locally owned services;
- Attracting money, wages and investment into the Tamworth Region while increasing local earnings and spending;
- Building social capital, networks, volunteering, community activities and culture;
- Increasing knowledge, skills and leadership held in community;
- Supporting local employment and enterprise;
- Promoting and supporting innovation in business and in public services; and
- Replacing imports with local products – and externally delivered services with locally designed activity.

11 Establishment and Sustainability of Aboriginal Owned Enterprises

The surge of online use represents a large opportunity for regional communities, where with greater technology and connectivity, big business can operate outside of capital cities, which reduce capital city congestion and benefit rural and regional Australia. Innovation in this online space, assisted by government help to entice companies out of capital cities will change the way in which business is done.

In addition to online opportunities, as shown in this report there are many opportunities for arts and cultural activities within the region. Support to Aboriginal owned enterprises in the arts and cultural sector would assist with supporting the existing activities within the region.

12 Conclusion

Tamworth Regional Council (TRC) understands the need for innovative strategies within the area of Aboriginal economic development. Implementation of these strategies could assist Aboriginal communities to realise their economic, social and cultural aspirations.

Due to the high number of Aboriginal people within the Local Government Area (LGA) compared to the rest of NSW there is an opportunity for long term Aboriginal economic development in the region.

There are many existing networks and structures that could be utilised in order to improve economic development outcomes for Aboriginal Communities within the TRC area. These organisations could be better supported in order to improve sustainability and capacity building in the region.

Similarly, there are many existing programs, events and activities that could be grown to achieve sustainability and positive economic outcomes and many of these relate to the areas of arts and cultural activities.

There are many ways in which the Commonwealth Government could support capacity building initiatives in this area. There needs to be greater participation in local decision making to foster genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities. Improvements to Aboriginal employment, mentoring, training and educational opportunities specifically for Aboriginal communities would also assist in this area.

In addition, incentives to encourage procurement from Aboriginal businesses, improvements in program continuity and the way in which Federal funding is disseminated would all help to increase economic development in Aboriginal communities.

There should be a holistic community orientated approach to economic development in Aboriginal Communities such as the Tamworth LGA.

13 Contact Information

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