

OCHRE Evaluation | Stage 1: Implementation and early outcomes

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly – Local Decision Making

Evaluation Plan

November 2017

The research team from the Social Policy Research Centre acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.

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The Social Policy Research Centre is based in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney. This report is an output of the *OCHRE* Evaluation, funded by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

1 Introduction

The Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia (the research team) have been contracted by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Education, to conduct an evaluation of *OCHRE* including the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly – Local Decision Making (LDM). *OCHRE* is the community-focused plan for Aboriginal affairs in NSW.

The evaluation will be based on the principles of decolonising research, consistent with the underlying philosophy of *OCHRE* to facilitate the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples in NSW. For more information on the approach see Section 3.1 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

This plan sets out how the first stage of the evaluation of the Murdi Paaki LDM will be conducted. This is an abridged version of the detailed data collection plan developed and approved by the community. For more information on this stage of the evaluation, see Section 5 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*. This plan identifies key stakeholders, what local community view as success and how it might be measured (where identified), method and timing of data collection.

2 About the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is the regional Aboriginal governance body for the Murdi Paaki Region, representing the interests of Aboriginal people across the communities of Gulargambone, Coonamble, Walgett, Collarenebri, Lightning Ridge, Goodooga, Weilmoringle, Brewarrina, Enngonia, Bourke, Cobar, Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Menindee, Ivanhoe, and Dareton/Wentworth. There are close to 8,400 Aboriginal people living in these communities with an estimated 11% under 5 years of age.

In December 2013, the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly became part of the *OCHRE* Local Decision Making program and in February 2015 signed a binding Accord with the NSW Government. The Accord sets out agreed priorities and projects, and the rules on how decision-making will be shared between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and NSW Government agencies. The Accord is transforming the way Aboriginal communities and government work together by giving Aboriginal communities a progressively bigger say in what services are delivered in their communities, and how they are delivered.

Accord priorities include affordable and appropriate housing, economic development, education, childhood services, and governance capacity and support. The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government have also deferred priorities for future negotiation, including domestic, family and lateral violence, child safety, Aboriginal incarceration rates, and culture and language development. More information about *OCHRE* Local Decision Making can be found here <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/ochre-a-continuing-conversation/about-the-communities-involved>.

3 Ethics and permissions

On 9 August 2016, ethics approval was received from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee (AH&MRC HREC). For further information, see Section 5.3.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

In September 2016, the research team received approval from the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly to continue the conversation with the community about Local Decision Making.

4 Gathering information

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly represents 16 communities across Western New South Wales. During the co-design process in 2016, the research team visited the communities of Wilcannia, Ivanhoe, Dareton, Menindee and Broken Hill. In this field work stage, the communities of Enngonia, Bourke, Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge, Collarenebri and Coonamble will be visited.

4.1 Focusing the evaluation through co-design

This plan is built from co-design conversations that occurred with Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly members in December 2016. For further information on co-design see Section 5.4.1 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

During the co-design process the criteria against which the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly would assess success of Local Decision Making focused on whether priorities in local Community Action Plans are being addressed and outcomes achieved, and whether services are implemented in a way that communities want and need – communities feel heard by the NSW Government.

The core evaluation questions are outlined in Section 4.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

4.2 Stakeholder groups

There are many different people and organisations who have been or are involved in implementing Local Decision Making in the Murdi Paaki region. The research team will approach two key groups of stakeholders:

- The local Aboriginal community, made up of Community Working Party chairs and members, Young and Emerging Leaders, Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs), Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs) and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs)
- Government agencies involved in developing and implementing the Accords, including central and regional officers of Aboriginal Affairs NSW, central and regional offices of Department of Premier and Cabinet, Departmental staff involved in developing and implementing the Accord.

4.2.1 Who will participate in the conversation?

The table below indicates the range of people we hope to have conversations with and how they may be approached. This excludes those communities who the research team met with in December 2016 – Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Dareton and Menindee. Distance will directly influence the number of people who participate. Priority is given to individuals who were likely to have greater knowledge of the LDM. We aim to have conversations with around 60 people in total (including those consulted met in December 2016).

Community	Approach
Bourke	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair, Young and Emerging Leaders
Enngonia	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair, Young and Emerging Leaders
Brewarrina	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair
Lightning Ridge	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair
Collarenebri	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair, and other community members
Coonamble	Interview/yarn with CWP Chair,
All MPRA communities	Interview/yarn with CWP Chairs and Young and Emerging Leaders attending the December MPRA meeting

4.3 Collecting data

During the period 27 November to 7 December 2017, data will be collected by an Aboriginal researcher engaged by the SPRC. Where one-to-one conversations are sought, but not feasible within this time, these will be organised after the end of the fieldwork period and completed by phone or Skype.

Further information on data collection can be found in Section 5.4.2 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

4.3.1 Data collection methods

The methods used were developed by the research team together with community members (co-design) and have been further developed to maximise opportunities for participation and engagement.

Interviews and group discussions will be the means for obtaining information from NSW Government agency staff. Interviews can be face-to-face or by phone and are being organised by Aboriginal Affairs NSW. The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly will be meeting from 5-7 December in Cobar. The research team will be available during this time to talk with the Chairs of Community Working Parties and the Young Leader delegates who have not had an opportunity to participate in the evaluation.

One-to-one or group yarns will be used to have conversations with the community.

An online survey will be available for anyone who would like to provide information anonymously, for those who are unable to talk to the researcher while they are in community, or for those who would like to provide additional feedback. The survey will be open until 31 January 2018, or longer as needed.

Conversation guides have been developed to help answer the evaluation questions and assess the measures identified in co-design. The cultural appropriateness of the questions in the guides will be checked with local Aboriginal peoples.

4.3.2 Identifying and recruiting participants

Potential participants were identified using a range of methods to reduce the risk that some stakeholder groups would not be represented. These included consulting Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the Murdi Paaki Regional.

Participants will be approached by Aboriginal Affairs NSW or the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly on behalf of SPRC and offered an opportunity to participate.

The participant information statement and consent forms will be provided to all interested persons to inform their decision to take part. Each participant will be provided a voucher as reimbursement for their time. Community members participating as part of their paid or official positions will not be reimbursed.

4.4 Analysis of data collected and validation of findings

The overall analysis approach is detailed in Section 5.4.3 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*. Data that will be analysed include data collected in the community (through conversations), *OCHRE* policy, procedures and guidelines, program monitoring data, and other administrative data. Analysis will be undertaken over the period January to February 2018.

Once findings are available, the SPRC researcher will meet with local community researchers and interested Aboriginal community members to validate findings and discuss any recommendations that the Aboriginal community consider appropriate. This is expected to occur in March/April 2018.

4.5 Reporting findings

The overall reporting approach is detailed in Section 5.5 of the *OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1*.

The research team will return to meet with the local Aboriginal communities to deliver the final report and seek their permission to share their report with government (to be complete by June 2018). Note that SPRC must provide an embargoed copy of the report to Aboriginal Affairs NSW to meet the terms of their contract.