



**Two Ways Together
Regional Action Plan**

**Mid-Western Region
July 2007 – June 2009**



26 June 2007

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1 Purpose of the Plan

This Regional Action Plan focuses on actions to improve the well being of Aboriginal people and which are cross-agency (i.e. require the participation of more than one agency) or are genuinely new.

The Plan has been developed by the *Two Ways Together* Regional Engagement Group (REG), chaired by the Regional Manager of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Plan is a joint agreement between the key parties in the region. The REG is a sub-committee of the Regional Coordination Management Group.

The Plan identifies:

- a small number of significant goals for the region over a rolling two-year cycle, commencing 1 July, 2007 (to be reviewed and updated annually);
- the lead agency to lead the work against each goal, in collaboration with other agencies and local Aboriginal peak bodies;
- priority actions and responsible agencies to achieve progress towards the goals within the timeframe of the plan;
- the barriers to success where interagency projects or existing initiatives are not progressing as intended against the goals in the plan
- the need for new resources where there are gaps in service delivery; and
- monitoring and reporting processes to track the implementation of the priority actions and track performance against the goals. Monitoring and reporting arrangements are included in Section 7.

The Plan has a focus on goals and actions that target early intervention and prevention and also has a strong emphasis on community engagement.

2 Goals

The Regional Engagement Group has identified five goals for the next two years (July 2007 to June 2009):

- Aboriginal mothers have their first child later in life
- Aboriginal school students go on to further education, employment or training
- Aboriginal people are employed in sustainable jobs
- Improved prevention and access to treatment of high impact diseases
- Stronger partnership between communities and Government agencies

There are two targets specifically for Aboriginal people in the NSW State Plan which must be addressed in this Regional Plan:

- *Close the gap between Aboriginal and all students in primary school numeracy and literacy rates by 2016*
- *Over 5 years, reduce by 15 per cent hospital admissions for Aboriginal people who have conditions that can be appropriately treated in the home*

These two targets are largely within the core business of the Department of Education and Training and the Greater Western Area Health Service respectively. The Regional Engagement Group will be a forum for monitoring and reporting progress against these two goals and will develop any supplementary programs to support the core business activities of DET and the Area Health Service as required. Table 1 shows which goals in this Regional Action Plan link to the State Plan targets.

The State Plan goal for Aboriginal Health is to be amended to better reflect the health issues that relate to Aboriginal communities and discussions are currently underway between NSW Health the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The REG will be notified when the new goal is resolved (expected to be finalised in the

second half of 2007) and will be asked to review the health goals in this plan at that time.

Table 1 – Link between the State Plan targets and the Regional Plan goals

| State Plan targets | Relevant goals in this Plan | Comment |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Close the gap between Aboriginal and all students in primary school numeracy and literacy rates by 2016 | Aboriginal children are ready for school | The Regional Engagement Group identified getting Aboriginal children prepared for school as: an important precondition for making a difference to reading, writing and numeracy skills; a current weakness in the service system; and an area where a joint response across a number of agencies is required |
| Over 5 years, reduce by 15 per cent hospital admissions for Aboriginal people who have conditions that can be appropriately treated in the home | Improved prevention and access to treatment of high impact diseases | The Regional Engagement Group noted that this regional planning process overlaps with an existing process for planning for Aboriginal Health in the region, and with the implementation of the goals in the State Plan. This Plan will track the same indicators as the other regions (cardiovascular disease; diabetes; obesity) but actions will depend on the commitments made in the other planning processes. |

3 Context

The region covers an area of 124,350 square kilometres in the central inland region of New South Wales. The Mid-Western region commences at the intersection of the Cobar LGA boundary with the track to Tullebung and Eulendool homesteads, through Forbes and Cowra to Oberon, continues along the Great Dividing Range towards Coonabarabran and sweeps back west towards Bourke. The regional office for the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs is in Wagga Wagga, which also services the Riverina/Murray Region.

There is an estimated 13,619 Aboriginal people in the region (approximately 6% of the total regional population, 2001 Census).

Partnership Communities

The NSW Government's CEO's Group on Aboriginal Affairs has committed their agencies to work closely with Aboriginal communities in a number of locations around NSW. These locations are called Partnership Communities and they are the local level of *Two Ways Together*.

Government agencies and the community will work closely, in partnership, to identify the community's priorities, strengths and needs and jointly develop and implement an action plan. DAA will work closely with local community leadership groups and help establish groups where they don't already exist. Community leadership groups will be key partners with government agencies and jointly drive this work as it progresses.

Orange, Bathurst and Wellington are this region's three TWT Partnership Communities and work will start early in 2007/08. Implementation planning will be driven by the REG in the last quarter of 2006/07.

Job Compacts

Job Compacts are agreements developed within a location or industry to generate local job opportunities for Aboriginal people. In June 2006 the Premier of NSW announced that 12 Job Compacts would be developed across NSW and in April 2007, Dubbo was announced as one of the Job Compact sites. DAA will lead the development of these Job Compacts in collaboration with other agencies, employers, service providers and community representatives.

4 Actions to achieve the goals

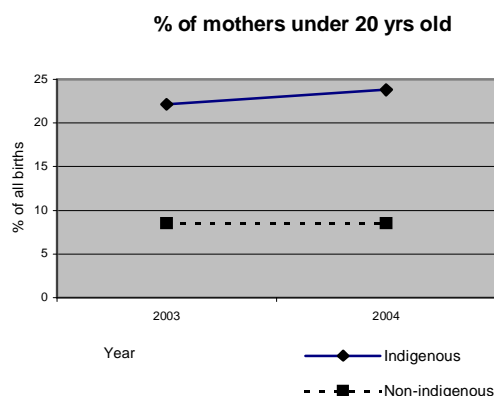
Goal 1: Mothers have their first child later in life

Population: Aboriginal mothers

Indicators

- Rate of Aboriginal mothers under 20 years old

Baselines



- Rate of young Aboriginal mothers is more than twice non-Aboriginal mothers
- Further detail needed about very young mothers (under 17)

Background to the baselines

- Having a child is perceived as a better life choice than continuing at school
- Baby bonus is perceived to provide an immediate incentive for having children
- Individuals perceive limited options in life (few job options) combined with low levels of self-esteem
- Low value placed on education within the community
- Mother's age at first child is an indicator of lifetime outcomes

Lead

Greater Western Area Health Service

Partners and roles

- Aboriginal Medical Service – awareness raising/prevention
- DET – awareness raising about long term impacts of being a young mum; systems to encourage young mums into school
- TAFE – making vocational training a more attractive option for young women
- Families First – community strengthening programs
- FACSIA – programs under 'Stronger Families and Communities'

Possible Actions

1. Review the outcomes of programs targeting young women

DET and NSW Health are currently working jointly on a program to identify girls who might be likely to fall pregnant when young and work with them in a structured program. The program focuses on building self-esteem, career counselling and support. In a pilot in Cowra (the 'Cowra Breakaway Project'), over 80% of participants went on to finish Yr 10, and when participants did become pregnant, there was a higher rate of returning to school. This program has been extended to two more sites to test whether similar results can be achieved in different locations. DET and GWAHS to report to the REG on the progress of the program and options for extending to other sites in the region, with support from the communities.

Budget: None initially

Measures: # of participants

% of participants completing Yr 10 and then Yr 12 schooling

Data development

- Source regional data on age of mothers from ABS (or perhaps the GWAHS annual report)

Links

Aboriginal Education Strategy; Aboriginal Employment Strategy;

Goal 2: Aboriginal students go on to further education, training or employment

Population: Aboriginal school students

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| Indicators | Retention rates School student exits |
| Baselines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention rate, Yrs 10 to 12 – 43.1% (cf 66.3% for all students) - 2005 No consolidated data on exits (REG to seek input from DET and TAFE) |
| Background to the baselines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low level of engagement of young people in secondary school Limited value placed on education as a step to employment (students and parents) Young women leaving school to have children and not returning Bridges to TAFE from school mixed in their effectiveness – students appear to want vocational training early than it is currently provided (in Yr 9, rather than Yr 11) Low levels of self esteem in Aboriginal students – some may not believe they are capable of doing many different jobs Limited employment pathways, so few adults are employed and young people have low expectations of employment |
| Lead | DET |
| Partners and roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AECG – links to communities ICC – link to Australian Government agencies TAFE – support for transition from school to TAFE DEWR – funding for transition programs; Job Network case management and support Australian Dept of Education, Science and Training – funding for education programs AHO – scoping of housing concerns in the region Health – awareness programs for young mums |
| Possible Actions | <p><i>1. Scope range of current services in the region</i> REG to map current services to identify opportunities and gaps (ARTD to prepare first draft) Budget: None required initially Measures: ARTD to provide report to DAA prior to next REG meeting</p> <p><i>2. Provide vocational training for students whilst enrolled at school</i> DET is currently funding the BVET program to provide part-time places in TAFE for students enrolled in school. DET to report to REG and to explore options for expanding support for the program. Budget: None in addition to existing program resources Measures: DET report to next REG meeting Action Plan</p> <p><i>3. Review housing impacts on education</i> AHO to report to the REG on status of housing for Aboriginal people in the region, incidence of overcrowding and likely impacts (education, employment). REG to consider possible action. Budget: None Measures: AHO report to next REG meeting Action Plan</p> <p><i>4. Review other options</i> REG to further scope in detail further options raised in the workshop, including: – Supporting young mothers to return to school – Programs to build self-esteem and identity – Better process for developing and promoting pathways from school to employment Budget: None (although any programs likely to require funding) Measures: Issues scoped during the next REG meeting; REG develops an Action Plan</p> |

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| Data development | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DET to provide regional data on retention of Aboriginal students• DET to provide any available consolidated data on exits |
| Links | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal Education Strategy; Job Compacts (sustainable pathways to employment; range of choices for careers and further study) |

Goal 3: Aboriginal people are employed in sustainable jobs
Population: Aboriginal people of working age

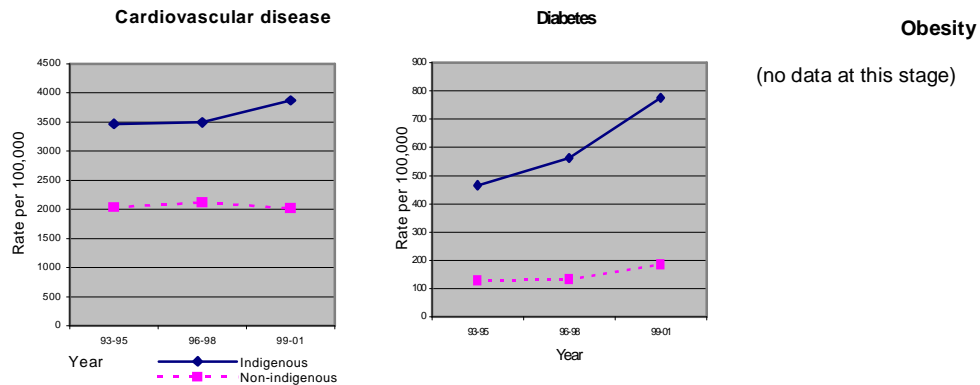
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|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rates for Aboriginal people • Number of new jobs for Aboriginal people • Number and percentage of people staying in jobs |
| Baselines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment rate of Aboriginal people – 25.2% (Binaal Billa region, 2001) compared to 6.9% for non-Aboriginal people • Wide variation in unemployment by location– Mudgee and Gilgandra, 21%; Nyngan 41% |
| Background to the baselines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively lower completion rate at school and further education means that many Aboriginal people are qualified for a limited number of manual jobs • Self esteem – individuals have a limited view of their own capacity or low expectations of their ability to learn how to do a range of jobs • Several generations in some families have not worked, leading to low expectations and limited understanding of how to work • Limited take-up of existing pathways from school to work • May be impacts from poor quality or overcrowded houses |
| Lead | DAA |
| Partners and roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premier’s Department – assist in negotiation of job compacts • Job Network members – support and case management for individuals • DET – build bridges from school to further education or employment • DEWR – funding for Job Network, enhanced employment programs, CDEP • TAFE – links to vocational training • CDEP providers |
| Possible Actions | <p><i>1. Implement the Job Compact pilot</i> Pilot Job Compact in Dubbo in 2007. Further roll out across the region in 2007/8 (Premiers, DAA) Budget: None in addition to resources already committed to the program Measures: # of people placed in jobs # of workplaces signed up to take on new employees</p> <p><i>2. Develop Aboriginal Traineeships in public sector agencies</i> Target public sector agencies in the region and develop Aboriginal traineeships (DAA to lead – team to include AHO, DET, ICC) Budget: None initially; project to scope resources Measures: # of traineeships # of agencies with traineeships</p> <p><i>3. Review housing impacts (as for Goal 2)</i> AHO to report to the REG on status of housing for Aboriginal people in the region, incidence of overcrowding and likely impacts (education, employment). REG to consider possible action. Budget: None Measures: AHO report to next REG meeting Action Plan</p> |
| Data development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop five year trends in employment for the region (DEWR) – significant lag in available data – Track the number of new jobs that result from actions in the strategy |
| Links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Families First; Regional development strategies (local councils) |

Goal 4: Improved prevention and access to treatment of high impact diseases

Population: Aboriginal people at risk

Indicators — Rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity

Baselines



- Background to the baselines
- Lifestyle factors are impacting on individual health – inadequate diet and exercise are generating population level results, expressed as higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and kidney disease
 - High rates of smoking in the Aboriginal population compared to the non-Aboriginal population
 - Cost of fresh food and limited capacity in some regional areas to access major centres (because of limited transport) may contribute to poor nutrition

Lead Greater Western AHS

- Partners and roles
- AH&MRC – link to communities and monitoring of issues relating to health needs
 - ICC – link to Australian Government agencies, including Aust Dept of Health & Ageing
 - Department of Sport & Recreation – programs to promote exercise
 - AMS – medical services – promotion of prevention activities
 - Division of GPs – promotion of prevention activities
 - DET – health promotion activities in schools
 - Home Care – support for prevention programs

Possible Actions

1. *Review outcomes of Aboriginal Health workshop (Bourke, April)*
GWAHS to report outcomes of workshop in April and explore opportunities for the REG to contribute to the agreed priorities

Budget: None

Measures: GWAHS report to next REG meeting; REG develops an Action Plan

2. *Review central policy and program directions*

GWAHS to report on processes for implementing actions under the State Plan which target reducing hospital admissions. Regional actions will be guided by the central commitments.

Budget: None

Measures: GWAHS report to next REG meeting; REG develops an Action Plan

Data development

- Significant lag in data (current to 2001 only) – needs updating
- Data is for the area of the former ATSI Binaal Billaa region, which includes both Riverina and Mid-West. Data needs to be broken down to this region.

Links Regional Aboriginal Health Strategy; AMS service agreement; Families First; Healthy for Life

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| Goal 5: Stronger partnership between communities and Government agencies | |
| Population: All Aboriginal people | |
| Indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction of community representatives with engagement processes • Participation of Aboriginal people on committees within schools, health sector, education committees etc |
| Baselines | New indicators – baselines to be collected (will be qualitative initially) |
| Background to the baselines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited structures in place to allow for representation of community views • Concern that investment in governance and representative structures in Murdi Paaki as part of the COAG trial has not been replicated in this region (concerns arise from perceived inequity and lost opportunity to build relationships) • Implications of changes over the last five years (dissolution of ATSIC; creation of ICCs; <i>Two Ways Together</i> commitments; amendments to Land Council legislation) are still being resolved within communities and Government agencies • Some of the issues are beyond the scope of the REG (e.g. if there were consideration of new representative political structures for communities), and the role of the REG in both leading some initiatives and supporting others is still evolving |
| Lead | DAA |
| Partners and roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All peak community groups in the region – AECG; AJAC; AbSec; AH&MRC; AHO Regional Advisory Committee; Land Council • Indigenous Coordination Centre – active role in engaging with communities; links to Australian Government agencies • NSW Premier’s Department – links to NSW Government agencies • NSW DoCS Communities Division (<i>Families First</i> and <i>Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family</i> strategies) |
| Options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the REG as a forum to improve communication and relationships with communities • DAA to lead consultation with Partnership Communities through Community Engagement Days |
| Action Plan and budget | <p>1. <i>Use this REG as a forum to improve communication and relationships with communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REG to provide a forum for communicating key issues with communities. This Plan and reports and updates will be publicly available. • This Regional Engagement Group will develop its role as one method for engaging appropriately with the communities in the region • REG will continuously review its role to ensure it is effectively supporting existing systems and providing a lead role where appropriate <p>Budget: None required initially – DAA to continue to provide Secretariat for the REG</p> <p>Measures: Degree of satisfaction of REG participants with the value of the group and the strength of the partnership between Government and communities</p> |
| Data development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey key community representatives to develop baselines |
| Links | COAG trials; Community Working Parties |

5 Monitoring and Reporting

- The Regional Engagement Group (REG) Chair will maintain ongoing contact with the project manager in each lead agency to informally monitor progress and provide support
- The lead agency will provide informal progress reports to the quarterly meetings of the REG
- The lead agency will provide formal progress reports to the REG each six months (30 June and 15 December), which will form part of the overall progress report to DAA Secretariat
- The REG Chair will provide an overall formal progress report to the Regional Coordination Management Group and the DAA Secretariat each six months (mid July and mid January).

6 The Regional Engagement Group and its role

The Regional Engagement Group (REG) is co-chaired by the Regional Manager of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and a community representative, and comprises:

- Manager of the Australian Government Indigenous Coordination Centre
- NSW Premier’s Department Regional Coordinator
- Chair of the NSW Regional Coordination Management Group
- Peak Aboriginal bodies:
 - Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat (AbSec) – peak community organisation which advises the NSW Government on child protection and out-of-home care issues);
 - NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group;
 - NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee;
 - NSW Aboriginal Land Council;
 - Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council; and the
 - Regional Aboriginal Housing Committee of the Aboriginal Housing Office.

Other representatives will participate in the REG according to the priorities in the Regional Plan, e.g. Department of Education and Training (literacy and numeracy) and the Area Health Services (reducing preventable hospital admissions) are currently participating in the REG.

The role of the Regional Engagement Group is to:

- improve government service provision across the region through the development of Regional Action Plans
- oversight Partnership Community work in the region, including the provision of advice on the location of Partnership Communities and oversight of the development and implementation of Partnership Community Action Plans
- respond to priorities identified by the CEO Group on Aboriginal Affairs
- provide advice on regional service delivery and policy issues to the CEO Group on Aboriginal Affairs
- consolidate six monthly reports from NSW and Australian Government agencies and report to the TWTCC and CEO Group on Aboriginal Affairs.

The REG may also act as an ‘expert adviser’ to the Regional Coordination Management Group in scoping culturally appropriate approaches to consulting with Aboriginal communities in the region.

7 Contacts

| Agency/ address | Contact person |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs 2 O'Reilly St WAGGA NSW 2650 | Donna Jeffries Regional Manager donna.jeffries@daa.nsw.gov.au 0425 233 326 Matt Rose 0425 233 326 |
| Indigenous Coordination Centre 128 Erskine St DUBBO NSW 2830 | James McCormack Manager james.mccormack@oipc.gov.au 0428 299 262 |
| GOAL 1: Mothers have their first child later in life | |
| Greater Western Area Health Service | Claire Blizard Claire.blizard@gwahs.nsw.gov.au 02 6841 2217 |
| GOAL 2: Aboriginal Students of on to further education, training or employment | |
| Department of Education and Training | Carole McDiarmid Regional Director Carole.mcdiarmid@det.nsw.edu.au 02 6841 2110 |
| GOAL 3: Aboriginal people are employed in sustainable jobs | |
| GOAL 5: Stronger partnership between communities and Government agencies | |
| Department of Aboriginal Affairs | |
| GOAL 4: Improved prevention and access to treatment of high impact diseases | |
| Greater Western Area Health Service | Claire Blizard Claire.blizard@gwahs.nsw.gov.au 02 6841 2217 |