



**Two Ways Together
Regional Action Plan**

**New England – North West 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, 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 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.

2 Goals

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

- Increased employment and household income
- Improved prevention and access to early treatment of high impact diseases
- Improved performance at school and schools provide a meaningful educational experience
- Safer communities

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 Hunter New England 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	Improved performance at school and schools provide a meaningful educational experience	<p>The REG identified that action is required at several levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured early learning activities to ensure that Aboriginal children are more prepared for school when they start • Better access to regular, fresh meals (closely linked to the Health goal) • Providing educational experiences that are culturally meaningful for Aboriginal children. <p>These actions will contribute directly to the goal in the State Plan, and are also intended to have longer term impacts (especially on retention to later years of school).</p>
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 early treatment of high impact diseases	<p>The Regional Engagement Group noted that the Area Health Services has programs and systems in place to address many of the State goals. The REG will have a role in overseeing the implementation of those programs. The areas where the REG can assist the programs include supporting the expansion of programs relating to nutrition and improved identification of possible clients and referral.</p>

3 Context

The New England/North-West region covers 105,534 square kilometres in the northern inland region of New South Wales. The region reaches from the upper Hunter Valley, north to the Queensland border and west to Mungindi. It include the major towns of Narrabri, Tamworth, Inverell, Gunnedah, Moree and Armidale, and comprises 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs): Armidale – Dumaresq; Glen Innes Severn; Gunnedah; Guyra; Gwydir; Inverell; Liverpool Plains; Moree Plains; Narrabri;; Tamworth Regional; Tenterfield; Uralla; and Walcha.

There are 12,047 Aboriginal people in the region, which represents 7.3% of the total population for the region (2001 Census) and around 9% of the Aboriginal population in all of NSW. Between 1996 and 2001 the Aboriginal population grew by approximately 20%. The DAA office for the region is in Tamworth.

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.

Toomelah/Boggabilla, Moree (Mehi Crescent) and Coledale-Tamworth 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.

4 Actions to achieve the goals

Goal 1: Increased employment and household income Population: Working age Aboriginal people	
Indicators (and source)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal unemployment rate for the region (DEWR) • Disposable income (Census) • Household income (Census) • Aboriginal home ownership (Census) • Exits from school (DET, TAFE, University entrance rates) • Indigenous business ownership (DSRD, Business Advisory Service, IBA, Fair Trading) • Number of agencies with Aboriginal employment strategies/% meeting targets • Number of private sector jobs (Census)
Baselines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment rate for Aboriginal people - 30% compared to 8.6% for non-Aboriginal people (2001)
Background to the baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% benchmark for the public sector does not reflect level of Aboriginal population in the region • Getting a drivers license is a barrier for many people • Burnout because of small number of Aboriginal employees who get referred all Aboriginal issues • Perception of low skill level • Training (e.g. Job Network support) does not result in work availability • Individuals not accessing systems for recognition of prior learning
Lead	NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (including Job Compacts)
Partners and roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICC – link to Australian Government agencies • Department of Commerce/RTA – Are implementing the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines • DET – school advisors; vocational education and training in schools • TAFE – pathways from school to work • Universities – pathways from school to work • Indigenous Business Australia – support to establish new businesses • NSW Department of State & Regional Development – support for small business • NSW RTA – support for training for driver’s licences
Possible Actions	<p><i>1. Roll out ‘License to work’ program across the region</i> REG to support RTA in expanding program across the region and explore sources of recurrent funding (e.g. Job Seeker training budget from Job Network Providers). Budget: None yet committed, estimated \$100,000 required Measures: # and pattern (location and frequency) of programs # of people attending training</p> <p><i>2. Increase Aboriginal employment in Government agencies in the region</i> REG to work with agencies to develop an Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the region which assists Government departments to increase the number of Aboriginal employees. Budget: None in addition to existing resources Measures: REG to scope strategy at its next meeting # and pattern of agencies signed up to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy # of Aboriginal people employed</p> <p><i>3. Create jobs in new industries</i> Engage new mines and emerging industries to provide sustainable jobs for Aboriginal people. Budget: None in addition to existing resources Measures: Report to REG meeting in June 2007</p>
	<p><i>4. Support Aboriginal people to establish new businesses</i> Provide business development start-up workshops targeting Aboriginal people Budget: None in addition to existing resources Measures: # of workshops and # of attendees</p>

of new businesses established by workshop participants

5. Learn from the implementation of the Job Compact

REG to review the evaluation of the Job Compact pilot and develop a strategy to expand it across the region.

Budget: None in addition to existing resources

Measures: Evaluation report from the pilot – July 2008

6. Identify economic opportunities through Community Land & Business Plans

REG to provide input into the development of the Land Council Business Plans to identify economic opportunities and areas where agencies can contribute to the goals in the plans

Budget: None in addition to existing resources

Measures: # Community Plans complete
Plans include contributions from key Government agencies

7. Investigate project to reduce criminal history as a barrier to work

REG to investigate criminal history as a barrier to work for Aboriginal people and develop a plan to reduce the impact of less serious crimes on employability where possible

Budget: None in addition to existing resources

Measures: Research into breadth of problem complete
Plan to reduce impact of problem developed

8. Leverage opportunities to improve Aboriginal employment in State Government public works contracts

REG to investigate ways in which more Aboriginal employment and training opportunities can be created within existing and future public works contracts

Budget: None in addition to existing resources

Measures: Number of Aboriginal people employed through public works contracts
Number of public works contracts let to Aboriginal organisations

Data development – REG to request regional data from relevant agencies
– REG to review whether further data sources are required
– REG to review whether the list of headline indicators can be reduced to a smaller number

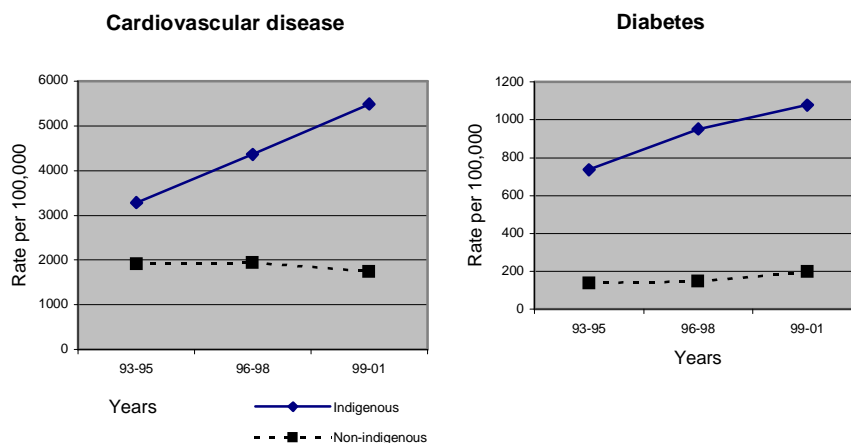
Links Regional Development Plans; Land Council Plans; Councils' Local Environment Plans

Goal 2: Improved prevention and access to early treatment for high impact diseases

Population: All Aboriginal people

Indicators • Incidence rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes

Baselines



Background to the baselines • Access to services is a barrier, particularly for remote communities
 • Lifestyle factors in the whole population tend to be more pronounced in the Aboriginal population (nutrition, exercise) – especially the case for Type 2 diabetes
 • Limited access to fresh food, again particularly for remoter communities (e.g. one centre only gets one delivery of fresh food per week)

Lead Hunter New England Area Health Services

Partners and roles • ICC – link to Australian Government agencies
 • AH&MRC – link to community on health issues
 • Australian Department of Health and Ageing – Aboriginal health programs; funding for adult and child health checks
 • NSW Department of Education & Training – role in health education
 • NSW Department of Sport & Recreation – activity programs
 • Community Transport – transport to and from services
 • AMS – provide health services
 • Division of GPs – provide health services, including prevention messages

Possible Actions *1. Improved nutrition (links to Goal 3 on Education)*
 Poor nutrition is a risk factor for a range of diseases. REG to explore opportunities to increase leverage of existing programs, including:

- Kids Health Eating and Physical Activity (KHEPA) – ways to adapt to be culturally appropriate to Aboriginal communities in the region (HNE Health Service to lead)
- Food access – e.g. Birrelee MACS provide a fruit box for \$10 – may be able to expand to other sites (Area Health Service to lead; work closely with AMS; Early Childhood Nurses)

Budget: None required beyond existing resources

Measures: # of sites where program is delivered
 # of families with improved access to fresh food

2. Improve identification and referral processes

There is scope to improve the early identification of Aboriginal people who would benefit from support and assistance from a range of health programs (mental health, maternal health, drug & alcohol support, diet and exercise programs). The ‘first to know’ agencies may not be health services (e.g. schools may be an important contact point for maternal health programs). The REG will identify priority programs and referral points and work on processes for each program to develop relationships with the key referral points.

Budget: None initially
Measures: # of programs where early intervention referral points are identified
Pattern of referrals to key programs
and pattern of agencies involved

3. Monitor progress of otitis media screening (linked to Goal 3)

The REG has a role to oversight the progress on achieving the goal for screening and treatment of otitis media for young children. Hunter New-England AHS and DET have a working group managing the otitis media screening and will provide regular reports to the REG.

Budget: None

Measures: # and % of Aboriginal children who are screened each year

Data
development

— Area Health Service to provide update on progress in collecting obesity data

Links

Aboriginal Child, Youth & Family Strategy (NSW DoCS Communities Division)

Goal 3: Improved performance at school and schools provide a meaningful educational experience

Population: Aboriginal school students

Indicators	– Literacy and numeracy rates; retention rates; suspension rates
Baselines	– Literacy – 21.05% of Aboriginal students were in the two highest bands, compared to 41.8% of non-Aboriginal students (2003 data) – Numeracy – 20.1% of Aboriginal students were in the two highest bands, compared to 42.8% of non-Aboriginal students (2003 data) [DET to provide time series data]
Background to the baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal children tend to be less ready for school than non-Aboriginal children – lower participation in structured activities at pre-school ages; fewer activities (e.g. being read to by adults)• Low level of parental support, partly influenced by parents own negative experiences of school• Schools often seen as unfriendly or uncomfortable environments (lack of Aboriginal teachers; perceived as large institutions)• Lower level of performance at school is a barrier to further education or training
Lead	Department of Education & Training
Partners and roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICC – link to Australian Government agencies• Aboriginal Education Consultation Group – link to community• NSW Department of Community Services – funded services and Communities Division program funding• Australian Dept of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – funding for programs• Australian Dept of Education, Science and Training – program funding, including pre-schools (Tamworth, Moree and Armidale)• Australian Department of Health & Ageing – funded child health checks• Business Advisory Service / Indigenous Business Australia – development of new child care centres
Possible Actions	<p><i>1. Improved access to early learning activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DoCS funded services to provide a link to early learning resources (e.g. ‘Parents as teachers’; local libraries)• Scope out options from successful examples in the region (e.g. Coonamble early learning project; Parkes early literacy project)• Scope out a proposal for a new child care centre – process to be supported by BAS <p>Budget: None required beyond existing resources Measures: DoCS to report on options for utilising funded services as ‘contact points’ REG to review successful examples (DoCS to report to next REG meeting)</p> <p><i>2. Improved nutrition (links to Goal 2 on health)</i></p> <p>Poor nutrition is a barrier to effective learning for kids. DET and HNEAHS to coordinate a working group to explore opportunities to increase leverage of existing programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kids Health Eating and Physical Activity (KHEPA) – ways to adapt to be culturally appropriate to Aboriginal communities in the region (HNE Health Service to lead)• Food access – e.g. Birrelee MACS provide a fruit box for \$10 – may be able to expand to other sites (Area Health Service to lead; work closely with AMS; Early Childhood Nurses) <p>Budget: None required beyond existing resources Measures: # of sites where program is delivered # of families with improved access to fresh food</p> <p><i>3. Systems promote culturally appropriate learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systems need to find better ways of linking to communities. The first step will be to activate the AECG and ensure it provides a valuable forum for interaction between

education providers and community. Further actions to be scoped in discussion through the AECG

Budget: None required beyond existing resources

Measures: # of AECG meetings
Perceptions of the strength of the partnership (survey of AECG members)

- DET is currently rolling out cultural competency training for all staff in the region (priority schools in 2007; all schools by end of 2009). DET will provide training places to other agencies when the courses are run (up to the limit of the course size).

Budget: None required beyond existing resources

Measures: % of education staff trained
of other agency staff included in DET training

- One longer term goal is to increase the number of Aboriginal people working in schools. DET reports that Aboriginal workers (volunteer and paid) are often disadvantaged by police checks which raise old charges. DAA to raise with NSW Police to explore options for streamlining the process.

Budget: None required beyond existing resources

Measures: DAA to report progress to the REG

— REG to explore options for collecting data

Data
development

Links

All Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies

Goal 4: Safer Communities	
Population: Aboriginal people	
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members reporting that they feel safe (periodic surveys) • Reported rates of domestic violence (note likely underreporting) • Breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders • # and % of reports of child abuse resolved
Baselines	REG to request data from AGs/BoCSAR and State Plan unit in Premier's Department
Background to the baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background issues are similar to other low SES communities – high juvenile crime rate, in part related to alcohol and drug use and adolescent boredom • Lack of cultural activities to facilitate the development of a strong cultural identity • Limited active engagement between youth and Elders • Low rates of employment – partly a cause and partly a symptom
Lead	NSW Attorney General's Department (Crime Prevention)
Partners and roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier's Department • ICC – link to Australian Government agencies • Aboriginal Legal Service • NSW DoCS –ACYFS • NSW Department of Juvenile Justice • NSW Police – partnerships in crime prevention • Australian Department of Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs – funding for community programs • Hunter-New England Area Health Service – programs relating to child abuse & domestic violence
Action Plan and budget	<p><i>1. Support the establishment of the Community Justice Groups</i> Attorney General's is employing Community Justice Coordinators to support the Community Justice Groups (Armidale & Moree). The REG can provide connections, support the induction of the Coordinator and assist in the development of a regional plan. Budget: None required Measures: Plan developed by REG meeting in June</p> <p><i>2. Support the implementation of the Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities</i> The Action Plan outlines up to 88 actions at the State and local level, as well as a range of actions that require further development The REG will play a significant role in developing and monitoring action in this region and will undertake an initial review of local action. Budget: None required for planning/scoping Measures: Plan developed by REG meeting in June</p>
Data development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extract community survey data from statewide surveys for State Plan – Request regional data on domestic violence and AVOs from NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BoCSAR)
Links	<i>Right to Respect</i> (Juvenile Justice); Safer Communities compacts (AGs with Local Councils); ACSAT implementation plan (DAA/Attorney General's)

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 chaired jointly 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 TWCC 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/primary address	Contact person
Coordinating Agencies	
NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs	Tad Kiemski Regional Manager 02 6701 9040
NSW Premier's Department	Maureen Chapman Regional Coordinator 02 6771 5781
Indigenous Coordination Centre	Tony Slater Manager 02 6701 9000
GOAL 1: Increased Employment and Household Income	
Department of Aboriginal Affairs	Tad Kiemski Regional Manager 02 6701 9040
GOAL 2: Improved prevention and access to early treatment for high impact diseases	
Hunter New England Health	Tony Martin Area Director, Aboriginal Health 02 6592 9630
GOAL 3: Improved performance at school and schools provide a meaningful educational experience	
NSW Department of Education & Training	Des Gorman New England Education Director 02 6755 5934
GOAL 4: Safer Communities	
NSW Attorney Generals Department	Lee Towney Crime Prevention Adviser NSW Attorney General's Department 02 9228 8654