

NSW Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues

Inquiry into Overcoming Aboriginal Disadvantage



Above left - an example of a partnership being developed appropriately: Dharriwaa Elders Group (“DEG”) members and staff met with NSW Housing officer Shona Barker to discuss working together on a new project to develop initiatives to increase availability of affordable housing in Walgett.. Above right: DEG’s Speaker George Rose opened a meeting of the Castlereagh Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committee in May 2008 where community workers from a large region meet to help police implement their new Aboriginal Plan “Aboriginal Strategic Directions 2007 – 10”

A supplementary submission
discussing themes raised by the Interim Report
from Walgett’s

Dharriwaa Elders Group

(“DEG”)

Introduction

Regrettably, we have not had the time to devote to writing a definitive response to the Committee's request for a supplementary submission. Instead, we have prepared a discussion of some of the issues raised by the Committee in its letter to us of the 3 July 2008. There are many ways the DEG can contribute information and opinions about how to improve specific services and address issues (e.g. Aboriginal employment initiatives, improving education and health outcomes, co-ordinating transport services, preventing child abuse, crime prevention initiatives, support for offenders, affordable housing initiatives, social and emotional wellbeing services etc) but unfortunately we have no time to outline them here. Instead, following is a discussion of the issues from our knowledge and observations in a small Aboriginal remote country town. We leave the next step to the Committee of drawing policy and legislative recommendations from our opinions and observations. We would be happy to verbally contribute feedback to questions but cannot devote any more time to this submission.

Measuring outcomes

It's true that NSW programs and strategies are not effectively monitored to determine if targets are being met. Regional teams of community development facilitators who are resourced with templates that are well-designed by evaluation experts are needed. Statistics collected by this team should be used by government agencies to better target programs and should be shared with the important non-profit community sector so that it can benefit from them and prove the contribution of its services to the government's efforts. Currently small community organizations are stretched to fulfill time-consuming reporting requirements which don't seem to be noticed or analyzed anyway. Rarely are we given advice regarding smart ways to evaluate our programs which are always hard to measure. The community sector, in recognition of its vital role, should be equipped with skilled evaluation resources – which could be provided by a regional unit shared by communities.

The DEG observes that many State Government departments are not educated about the Two Ways Together policy or the State Plan. They are often locked into the old mindsets of incompetent employees who should be moved into less critical roles. It is our experience that workers we see employed by NSW Dept of Primary Industries, Greater Western Area Health Service, NSW Lands, NSW Art and Sports and Recreation, NSW Dept of Environment and Climate Change, Western Lands and even the Catchment Management Authorities often seem unaware of NSW policy regarding Aboriginal communities. They are ill-equipped to understand and achieve the targets set by government, and seem to find it difficult inviting the experts (Aboriginal community organizations) to work in partnership with them, to achieve their goals. Then there is the Dept of Aboriginal Affairs which in our experience is a wasted resource. It should be abolished and its current resources devoted to funding regional evaluation teams, targeted policy development teams, targeted project teams and the infrastructure needed to support this community facilitation. These tasks should be managed by Dept of Premier and Cabinet which in our experience has an overview of all government depts.

Each government department should produce Plans for how they are going to implement government policy – but they should be restrained from forming their own Aboriginal consultative groups in each community which is the current situation. It is a ridiculous imposition on community elders to have to attend advisory monthly meetings for each government department that has written a plan for how it will implement aboriginal-specific priorities. Currently the DEG attends regular meetings for health, justice and police agencies to assist them to carry out their Plans.¹ This way of working contributes to the spreading of knowledge and working-together experience and many do not learn or participate unless they are directly involved. Also one-stop shops often do not work in communities if they are controlled by factions that exclude others.² So we can see why each agency seeks to work this way. However this way of working is impractical for the community and its organizations which are hard-pressed delivering services. We need a system for working with government which is better designed to pass on advocacy and policy advice, as well as report on how the Plans are meeting their objectives and targets. Skillfully convened on-line fora would help. Another solution would be regional peak bodies for the community sector which advise agencies on the implementation and evaluation of government Plans³. This would provide more efficiency and prevent us from taking our eyes off the ball which we cannot afford to do with limited resources.

¹ Police LACACCs and their regional gatherings, the "Community Justice Group" convened by NSW Attorney Generals Dept, Aboriginal advisory groups to the CMAs, the "Walgett health forums" (meetings convened by health service providers) and their regional equivalents are some examples.

² The Walgett Community Working Party was a successful discussion and information exchange forum for government and the Aboriginal community when it was first established, but when it was tinkered with and changed by government, and then left to fail, it became ruled by one non-inclusive faction and consequently is no longer useful as a policy-development arena.

³ e.g. how the AH&MRC acts for Aboriginal Medical Services

Recommendation: Abolish DAA

Recommendation: Establish a community facilitation unit responsible to Cabinet which is tasked to:

- commission high-quality evaluation templates to be used to monitor program effectiveness in communities
- provide cabinet with high-quality advice drawn from evidence collected which is then used to determine future programs and policy
- educate government employees re government policy
- supervise regionally-based teams of evaluators and facilitators which resource community and non-govt sector and government agencies to work effectively in Aboriginal communities, and to meet government targets
- convene on-line fora to support policy facilitation and government advice channels in communities

Recommendation: Resource community sector organisations and their peak bodies to advise government

Coordinated service delivery

Members of the DEG participated in the Murdi Paaki COAG trial as explained in our previous submission. Here we saw opportunities for more co-ordinated service delivery in our town which in many cases were not pursued – probably due to poorly trained regional staff of NSW and Commonwealth agencies. At the beginning of this process the Walgett Interagency was functioning. Agencies were **required** to send their staff and there was a real attempt to better co-ordinate services on the ground and work together to address unmet community needs. When it had good co-ordination (provided by NSW Premiers Dept) and a good minutes secretary (provided by Walgett Shire Council) it started to function well. The DEG proposed an “actions template” be collated and reported against so that participants could track the implementation of actions and recommendations to government coming from the meetings. This level of efficiency was never reached. The Walgett Interagency gradually deteriorated we believe, due to poor co-ordination from the Community Facilitator who was poorly supervised by NSW Premiers Dept and Commonwealth’s FACSIA. Another destabilizing influence was an intervention in 2007 by NSW DET working with the local AECG, seeking to change how the Interagency worked. Many agencies and local originations stopped attending because of the confusion. NSW Premier & Cabinet is attempting to regenerate it now. In the process, the original urgency has been lost. Agencies only seem to participate to promote their projects, if at all. NSW Health for example has rarely attended; we don’t see DoCS there any more. The case-management program for at-risk families that was started in 2006 (and supported by the NSW Ombudsman’s Report from its review of NSW Police’s work in Aboriginal communities) and implemented by a multi-agency group of DoCS, Police and Education, has discontinued. There no longer seems to be the direction from Government for agencies to attend the Interagency, work hard to reduce duplications and design more effective, co-ordinated service delivery in Walgett.

In 2004 the DEG first convened the Youth Subcommittee of the Walgett Interagency because it was concerned about the lack of services for youth and the poor delivery of existing services. This group tries to meet on a monthly basis and reports to the monthly Interagency meetings. Other Subcommittees were set up to concentrate on the other main need areas for Walgett – domestic violence and employment and training. Our experience with the Youth Subcommittee showed that the way to increase services on the ground was to match a service provider with funds already allocated mainly from the Commonwealth, to existing programs. We never became aware of any new Commonwealth or State funds that were created specifically to address Walgett’s needs. Another success of the Subcommittee was to actively seek another service to supply a Youth Centre for the town, in response to the Council’s neglect. The Subcommittee’s work combined with elder’s lobbying, the sacking of Walgett’s Council and a newly-appointed Administrator, led to the Council re-opening its Youth Centre, and providing an improved youth service to Walgett⁴.

The DEG proposed that actions proposed by DEST COAG trial officers in response to the vague “community plan” developed by the Walgett Community Working Party be reported back to the Walgett community. This never happened. We sighted Walgett action tables at a regional assembly meeting which contained some community plan items, and others we recognized from other sources. How these actions were determined remained confidential with the DEST CoAG team and the community was never privy to information about how the actions were going to be implemented and how actions were selected and prioritized. We do know that no Walgett Shared Responsibility Agreement was developed to implement them and so far most of the proposed actions remain dreams.

⁴ Which the Council is proudly accepting awards for now
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After a while we had a sense that a lot of planning work at the community level had no relevance to the decisions being made by all three levels of government regarding services to be delivered to Walgett. The DEG realized that the way to ensure more effective delivery of services to the ground was to convene regular meetings with service providers itself, and influence them to work together and more appropriately for Walgett. This process has always involved much education time – educating the regularly changing agency professionals about working for Walgett's Aboriginal community, bringing them up-to-speed with the planning and development work achieved so far, helping them understand the new and confusing world of a dysfunctional Aboriginal community they found themselves in. This process can be assisted by the supply of better Aboriginal cultural awareness training for government workers before they hit our town⁵, better selection processes of staff, new staff undertaking to document the attainment of their cultural competencies and the resourcing of a simple wiki space that Interagency members can access group-developed documents, meeting minutes etc. We can quickly recognize new non-Aboriginal people who can work with us and work effectively. Unfortunately many don't stay – usually because their family needs to relocate and career paths lead them further afield. We need a way to help the good ones stay, ways to stay in touch with those who leave and keeping them in our contact. We know they have to leave eventually but they should be facilitated to pass on their work to their successors so that their efforts aren't wasted.

Another example of the DEG's attempt to address a community need and co-ordinate services is our work to convene the Walgett Yuwaalaraay Gamilaraay Language Teaching Group. This Group brings together agencies teaching the local Aboriginal language – the Catholic and DET schools, TAFE, interested community language activities/ teachers and the DEG's language program. The Group plans and implements Aboriginal language development strategies. NSW DET has answered all of the requests from this group, and we have received verbal undertakings from the Catholic Schools Office, TAFE and NSW Corrective Services which show promise. The Group recently invited all Interagency members to participate in a language initiative but so far there have been no takers.

Sometimes the DEG's work to promote the co-ordination of services takes a while to become accepted. But eventually we see progress. Once local strategies are working, government should become aware of them, and recognize how they can be used to support the implementation of government policy and programs. Often we are surprised to find that government policymakers are unaware of local initiatives.⁶ NSW Dept of Aboriginal Affairs recently held a consultation in July 2008 regarding a proposed new framework for Aboriginal community governance where communities were required to come up with convincing designs for a workable governance framework within a short time. DAA workers present were largely unaware of local initiatives and existing plans. Patiently many elders attended in a voluntary capacity, and community organisations released staff from their normal duties to attend. Alongside this hopeful contribution from the community, there was general disquiet that yet another new framework would be imposed over the top of existing structures which themselves are in great need of support.

Another example of uncoordinated service delivery in Walgett is that we still have unflouridated drinking water, despite fluoridation being proven as one of the best public health initiatives a government can introduce. NSW Health and the local council have so far failed to introduce fluoridation to Walgett despite a strong campaign from elders and doctors. Consequently many health costs are incurred while community members suffer medieval tooth decay and infections, further burdening immune systems.

Sometimes the lack of co-ordination of service providers becomes untenable and the community sector has to take action. At times like this it appears to elders that government doesn't care about its Aboriginal citizens. In 2002 the DEG became concerned about uncollected garbage entering the water supplies at Gingie and Namoi Villages, two Aboriginal communities outside Walgett. DEG brought doctors, Walgett Shire Council, Walgett hospital, the Walgett CDEP, NSW Land and Water Conservation, Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council and NSW Dept of Education staff together to show them where uncollected garbage was falling into the rivers which supplied the town's drinking water. After that meeting the local Outback Division of GPs bought wheelie bins for the two communities, council began to collect rubbish regularly and a big rubbish clean-up was undertaken by the

⁵ The DEG made a short video for this purpose (the only locally-developed cultural awareness resource) which some agencies have found useful. This can be purchased by agencies for a two-year license. All purchases go towards assisting the DEG to maintain its capacity.

⁶ Apparently PM Rudd and Minister Macklin during an informal Walgett visit in February 2008 were told by a verbal community member that there was a duplication of youth programs in Walgett. FACSIA officers assumed then that there were no local initiatives at co-ordinating appropriate service delivery for youth programs and were surprised to visit the DEG when there was a Youth Subcommittee in process. We believe they should have been aware of the Subcommittee's work since 2004, from its reporting to the Interagency and sometimes to the CWP. We are aware of no attempts by government at more strategic, policy levels to design programs using the work and plans of the Walgett Youth Subcommittee.

Walgett CDEP and Walgett Council. Soon after, the DEG called a similar meeting of service providers due to concerns about children becoming sick from the drinking water at Gingie Village. During that process we discovered that no regular testing of drinking water was being undertaken at Walgett to ensure it met Australian Standards. The Council and NSW Health wanted Walgett Land Council to provide volunteers to undertake this vital service. Needless to say, once the immediate problem of contamination of the Gingie Village water tanks was fixed, this volunteer system collapsed. Today we don't know if the Council is undertaking this task regularly. A continuing concern is the lack of testing of the drinking water and fish for chemicals commonly used by local and up-river agricultural industries.

Recommendation: Service co-ordination should be resourced. Walgett requires a wiki space (shared password-access www site) where all minutes, agendas, shared documents developed by the group e.g. strategic plans etc are available. This will overcome some of the problems and duplication caused by new government employees arriving in town and having to be brought up to speed (or failing to be brought up to speed) re how everyone works together, the roles expected of them, and the work done so far. Such a small resource will save reinventing the wheel every five years when new plans are created and everyone has forgotten the old ones which are largely still relevant.

Recommendation: NSW Government direct agencies to attend interagency meetings and work together to better co-ordinate programs. This means all agencies who work in Aboriginal communities including NSW DECC, NSW DPI etc who we have never seen at interagency meetings.

Recommendation: NSW Government create new funds which are targeted to address community needs and which allow multi-agency collaborations and implementation.

Partnership in service delivery

The word partnership is used a lot by government but we would like to define the term so that we can measure whether a partnership does exist and how well it functions⁷.

The DEG believes it is a partner of the Commonwealth because it is funded to undertake certain annual projects for the government. The quality of this partnership varies depending on the quality of project officers and departments. Much time is spent by us writing the annual submissions to undertake the projects, measuring the projects, and writing quarterly financial and performance reports for the projects. We believe that a lot of these tasks could be undertaken by skilled evaluation teams whose costs are shared across funded projects - leaving us with the tasks of undertaking the project, which is usually fairly poorly resourced to begin with. We rarely get feedback from our reports and we've learnt that no contact probably means we are considered to be doing well. If we had a more effective partnership, needs identified in our reports e.g. specific training, project-related legal work, policy development, education of stakeholders, program promotion etc would be responded to and resources developed to address them. We are sure our needs would be similar to many other organisations funded by the same programs. Ideally resources like these that would be required by most projects could be addressed as a whole and the costs shared. This process would save scarce funds and assist the community sector to better fulfill its partnership obligations on the ground.

We believe that the community sector performs many valuable tasks for government that are currently undervalued. The DEG finds it always has to work to generate respect for Aboriginal people and elders from government, as respect is often not there otherwise. We believe government workers have much to gain from learning from DEG members about the community they have come to work in and supposedly to assist. Respect for this role should come from Government, including funding to support this role.

DEG's role in assisting government to work with its clients, and assisting our members to access government services, should be recognized. For example, our organization spends much time assisting members to troubleshoot problems with NSW Housing. This agency has proved many times that its officers who work fortnightly in Walgett have difficulty contacting and following-through matters with its elderly Aboriginal clients. We find ourselves often assisting Centrelink customers to understand a troubling letter they have received about their pensions, and troubleshooting with Centrelink to solve the problem. NSW Ambulance Service is another agency that we recently assisted, by negotiating for an elder about an invoice she should have never received. IPTAAS isolated patient travel scheme reimbursements are another process we assist our members with. The stress our

⁷ We would have liked to give you our definition, but have not had the time to draft one. We would be happy to be commissioned to do so in the future

members are put under by government agencies must have its toll on elders who already struggle with the consequences of poor health and low education levels.

Another task the DEG performs for government is confirming the Aboriginality of Walgett citizens so they can participate in government programs. This task takes up much board meeting time (as it requires the common seal). We do not find this task onerous⁸ but we do find the need to devote resources to the task. For this reason we have started invoicing government agencies that request a DEG common seal resolution, for a processing fee, which have so far not been paid. The ignoring of our invoices by the NSW Government must mean it does not recognize the value of the organization's time performing this task.

A fair partnership would mean that the contributions of community organizations are respected by government. Members and directors of community organizations in Walgett are frequently asked to participate in government reviews, planning meetings, and policy development consultations etc because it is finally accepted that programs won't work well without local ownership and design. First off, we believe preliminary work should be done by government consulting community sector peak bodies, and our proposed Regional Aboriginal Community Facilitation Teams. When the community REALLY needs to be met, Dharriwaa Elders will accept this task without requesting sitting fees, unless their intellectual property is being exploited. Our members DO want their contributions acknowledged, respected and remembered, and their participation costs to be well covered. It is galling for an aged pensioner who may be one of the few holders of the knowledge government requires, to provide quality advice to a well paid public servant, who usually hasn't given them enough notice, and who hasn't provided transport, refreshments, scribes and accommodation that might be required in order to facilitate their participation, and then who doesn't really understand and won't implement the advice they've been given.

Some NSW agencies who in our experience at least realize that transport and refreshments need to be provided for meetings with community include NSW Dept of Education, NSW Dept of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Health, NSW Ministry of Transport, [Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority](#), NSW Ombudsman, NSW Office of Fair Trading, NSW RTA and recently NSW Police. Most NSW agencies don't resource meetings it expects to have with local Aboriginal community volunteers and this list of shame includes NSW Dept of Primary Industries, NSW Dept of the Attorney General, NSW DoCS, NSW Housing, NSW Corrective Services, NSW Dept of Local Government, NSW Dept of Environment and Climate Change, NSW Ambulance Service, Dept of Arts, Sport and Recreation, Regional Arts NSW, NSW TAFE, NSW Dept of Juvenile Justice. The DEG believes this lack of respect and undervaluing of partnership opportunities must end.

The DEG's members set up their association to provide members with advocacy and secretariat to advise government. More effective partnerships with the Walgett community will occur when government acknowledges the role the DEG and other community organizations can play in providing government with the advice of their members. If the capacity of community organizations is improved, partnership activities could occur more fruitfully and the number of "community consultations" needed would be reduced.

The DEG seeks to influence government in matters that will further the development of Walgett's Aboriginal community. An important part of this role is educating government of the cultural value for Walgett's Aboriginal community of native vegetation, significant places, and local languages. We seek to protect these cultural values and are often disappointed with the under-resourcing of NSW Government agencies to enforce legislation designed to protect the environment and Aboriginal culture. In this area, government's partnership with community organizations need more development.⁹ We complain that NSW DPI, NSW DECC, Rural Lands Protection Boards and CMAs do not perform enough monitoring on-ground works. The Aboriginal community sector has the available labour force and motivation to perform this work (for a fee) yet are not encouraged to perform this work for these agencies.

Aboriginal advisory boards of CMAs are inadequate ways of government receiving input regarding policy and processes from Aboriginal people. They might look good in principle but the people on these boards are usually low-skilled and unresourced to feedback to their communities properly, or to feed up community perspectives to the committee. Again, properly facilitated community meetings incorporated into the regular business of community organizations would meet this need.

⁸ as has been suggested in recent correspondence from the Director General of NSW DAA

⁹ Please find enclosed a report from a review recently commissioned by DEG which scientifically and legally challenges incomplete work of NSW Government agencies which adversely affect Aboriginal cultural values in our area.

NSW Attorney Generals Department's Crime Prevention Division have had trouble rolling out Circle Sentencing in Walgett. Walgett elders keenly sought to support the program from the beginning and suggested a raft of measures including local ceremonial and naming suggestions, to assist its implantation in Walgett. All these suggestions were rejected. Project Officers began a community mapping exercise with elders to identify family groups of offenders so that circle members could be selected appropriately. This important initiative was overlooked and remains unused. A new Walgett committee (Community Justice Group) was established by the AGD, drawing on elders from the DEG. While such a group might be useful in larger centres, in Walgett when it draws upon most of the same people as a community organization, why not commission the community organization to convene the group, making sure they invite appropriate elders who may not be DEG members, to participate? In this way a non-local template isn't enforced over the top of the established one, but also the sustainability of the local organization is supported. Another example of the unhelpful attitude towards the community from this department has been the recent convening of a meeting for the DEG with the new magistrate – very important for the success of the program. Apparently the only time the magistrate can spare is lunch time to meet with elders, but the department cannot stump up the cost of providing lunch for elders who he wants to meet with. Instead the department expects volunteer elders to come and sit watching the magistrate eat his lunch. The DEG politely and regretfully became unavailable for this lunch. Another example of how the AGD is offending Walgett elders is how it is convening younger, non-elders to participate in recent circles.

Data should be shared between government and community sector in recognition of the valuable work of the sector and to enhance its quality. We face the stupid position of providing NSW DECC with data regarding the location of Aboriginal sites they should be protecting, yet when we want access to sites they have mapped in our region so we can check that we have no duplication and we both have the same data set – this is very difficult. We have a need to perform on-ground monitoring of Aboriginal places of cultural significance yet we can't access topographic and crown lands data to assist this work (which is largely not performed by any NSW agency). Data sharing will enhance partnerships.

Recommendation: The non-profit non-government sector be recognized for the important role it has in assisting government and reimbursed for its expenses incurred in this role.

Recommendation: The capacity of non-profit community organisations be improved by government so that more productive partnerships can occur between Aboriginal community and government

Recommendation: Existing partnerships be enhanced and real, useful support offered in response to reports offered from the community sector to government.

Recommendation: Community consultation, collaboration and negotiation processes are resourced and accounted for so the valuable input of time-pressed Aboriginal community leaders / volunteers is encouraged and not wasted.

Recommendation: Share non-confidential data with community sector to inform real partnerships.

Recommendation: Government commission Aboriginal community sector to perform work in communities that it is required by law to perform but has been unable to do. This work will range from facilitating community partnership planning to undertaking on-ground works in country.

Recommendation: Share cultural awareness costs across agencies using programs approved by elders. These tasks could be handled by regional knowledge centres which are briefed by local elders groups and others to act on their behalf to educated professionals before they enter communities. Such a centre would also act as an ethics committee, weeding out workers and proposals before they land on community.

Recommendation: Non-government non-profits should be paid processing fees in acknowledgement of resources they devote to assisting government.

We have not had time to discuss the Funding and Employment, Mentoring and Training of Aboriginal People and Specific Strategies discussion items suggested by the Committee. But we make these requests to finish:

1. Elders require immediate reparation for their and their parent's NSW Government trust funds as a matter of urgency before they die.

2. Elders who were inmates of Bomaderry Children's Home, Cootamundra Girls Home and Kinchela Boys Home must be given all the benefits War Veterans have, including special health care access.
3. Fluoride tablets should be immediately supplied to Walgett residents
4. Environmental health measures should be immediately resourced for Walgett including safe drinking water and dog controls
5. A baby health centre and dialysis centre be urgently established in Walgett
6. Minimum scheduling of children's health checks of twice a year and follow-up with their families from appropriate health and medical experts should be implemented in Walgett
7. Alternative, community based sentencing options are urgently developed in Walgett (e.g. bracelet home detention etc) to prevent young men committing minor offences being incarcerated and separated from their young families.
8. Programs to provide support to Aboriginal men returning to their communities from jail, to prevent re-offending and help them develop functioning, responsible lives for them and their families, must be immediately implemented in Walgett.
9. More resources are needed for the mentally ill – which is a larger, mostly undiagnosed and often unrecognized problem in Walgett. The mentally ill must not be jailed. Services must be provided to support social and emotional health in the home.
10. The Dharriwaa Elders Group and other Aboriginal community organizations in Walgett must be funded adequately to sustain their capacity, respond to community needs and work in closer partnerships with the NSW government.

We would love to provide our opinions regarding STEP and CDEP programs, and suggestions for creating and supporting new industries in north west NSW

We support the NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Directions Policy because it has designed a process of accountability and reporting back from the regional and state levels to the local advisory groups, and promises to implement outcomes.

The DEG is experienced at providing successful, on-the-job training to Aboriginal women who have mostly never been employed before, or are recovering from years of disengagement through substance abuse. We believe our strategies could be used as an example to other communities in this respect, and our training and project management and mentoring role should be better financially valued. Some barriers to Aboriginal employment are driver's licenses, substance abuse, mental health, juvenile fines and other fines, high incarceration rates and no support when offenders return to community. Community internet access, driver's license training, are initiatives that have been recommended by the DEG in the past.

More work needs to be done to assist the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Local Aboriginal Land Councils fulfill their legislated role for Aboriginal communities and the DEG would like to be consulted further about this.

NSW DECC needs more resources to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities and scientists and landholders in order to truly protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW.

Clear consultative pathways straight to Cabinet from Aboriginal communities must be established which cannot be abolished by changes of government.