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OCHRE Evaluation Plan: Overview and Stage 1

Prepared for:
Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education

Version 1.3

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Glossary

AH&MRC	Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
CIRCA	Culture and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
Hub	<i>OCHRE</i> Opportunity Hub
IBA	<i>OCHRE</i> Industry Based Agreements
IWAAC	Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LDM	<i>OCHRE</i> Local Decision Making
NCARA	NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances
Nest	<i>OCHRE</i> Language and Culture Nest
NGO	Non-government organisation
SERAP	NSW Education State Education Research Applications Process
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales
VET	Vocational and educational training

1 Introduction

Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education (Aboriginal Affairs) have contracted the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia (the evaluation team) to conduct an evaluation of three Local Decision Making processes, two regional Industry Based Agreements (trialled in two locations), two Language and Culture Nests, and two Opportunity Hubs (hereafter referred to as projects), operating as part of OCHRE – the community-focused plan for Aboriginal affairs in NSW. This plan sets out how the evaluation of these projects will be conducted.

The plan will be developed further, over time, in consultation with both the NSW Government and the communities involved with the projects that will be evaluated. Updates to the evaluation plan will be published as and when changes occur. For each project, the evaluation team will meet with Aboriginal community representatives to seek permission to evaluate the project in their community. Once permission has been granted, conversations with each community will follow to find out how to evaluate each project to meet the needs of each community within the budget available and time constraints. Conversations with each community will continue throughout the 10-year evaluation period to find out how the project is being implemented and what the outcomes are. Before reporting the findings of the evaluation, each community will be consulted to ensure that the community validates the findings. Approval has been provided by the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct the evaluation (reference AH&MRC 1192_16).

This evaluation plan builds from the preliminary work undertaken in 2014 and 2015 by the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), in consultation with key stakeholders.

This evaluation plan provides the overall approach to the evaluation. Individual data collection plans, based on the co-design conversations in each community, will be developed for each of the projects. The plans will identify key stakeholders, what local community view as success and how it might be measured (where identified), method and timing of data collection. What local community view as success and how it might be assessed will change over the stages of the evaluation.

The summaries of co-design and the data collection plans will be available on the project website when complete: see <https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/ochre-initiatives-evaluation/>. The rest of this document is organised as follows:

- Section 2 presents the background to *OCHRE*, a brief overview of the initiatives covered in the evaluation, and considerations for the evaluation
- Section 3 explores the design issues of the evaluation
- Section 4 identifies the scope of the evaluation
- Section 5 outlines the overall approach to Stage 1 of the evaluation, and the three phases (design, data collection and reporting) within Stage 1
- Section 6 identifies key risks to the evaluation
- Section 7 provides an overview of the governance to the evaluation
- Section 8 considers the costs of the evaluation

- Section 9 provides an overview of the evaluation team
- Section 10 presents the anticipated timeline for the evaluation and key deliverables.

2 *OCHRE* initiatives

In late 2011, the then Premier and the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs established a Ministerial Taskforce to develop a plan to improve outcomes in education and employment for Aboriginal people in NSW, and to enhance service delivery (NSW Government 2013).

In 2012 and 2013, some 2,700 Aboriginal people in NSW stated that Aboriginal language and culture, education and employment, and accountability are important priorities for Aboriginal communities. The NSW Government responded with *OCHRE* (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) – the community-focused plan for Aboriginal people in NSW. *OCHRE* supports:

- **Connected Communities** – where schools work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders in the local community to improve education outcomes for young Aboriginal people
- **Opportunity Hubs** – which provide young Aboriginal people with clear pathways and incentives to stay at school and transition into employment, training or further education
- **Industry Based Agreements** – partnerships with peak industry bodies to support Aboriginal employment and enterprise. To further support local and regional economic participation, regional IBAs are being trialled and offered to two Regional Alliances participating in Local Decision Making.
- **Language and Culture Nests** – to revitalise and maintain languages as an integral part of culture and identity
- **Local Decision Making** – where Aboriginal communities are given a progressively bigger say in what services are delivered in their communities, and how they are delivered.
- An **Aboriginal Economic Prosperity Framework** – that drives the long-term and sustainable economic prosperity of Aboriginal people and their communities across NSW
- A **Deputy Ombudsman** (Aboriginal Programs) – to provide independent oversight over Aboriginal programs.

The overall objective of *OCHRE* is to transform the NSW Government's relationship with Aboriginal communities in NSW, allowing Aboriginal communities to increase ownership of the policies and programs that affect them, and to ensure that government services are coordinated and effective.

The aims of *OCHRE* are to:

- Teach more Aboriginal language and culture to build people's pride and identity
- Support more Aboriginal students to stay at school
- Support more Aboriginal young people to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs
- Grow local Aboriginal leaders' and communities' capacity to drive their own solutions
- Focus on creating opportunities for economic empowerment
- Make both government and communities more accountable for the money they spend (*OCHRE*, April 2013, p.3).

Evaluation is a key component of *OCHRE*, providing ongoing evidence to improve the effectiveness of *OCHRE* projects and outcomes into the future, and informing the NSW Government about the future expansion of *OCHRE*.

As noted in Section 1, this plan concerns the evaluation of Local Decision Making, Language and Culture Nests, and Opportunity Hubs. The other initiatives are subject to separate evaluations; for example, the evaluation of the Connected Communities initiative is being undertaken by the Centre of Education Statistics and Evaluation, NSW Department of Education.

2.1 Overview of initiatives in this evaluation

Each of the initiatives included in the evaluation was developed through a particular turn of events and selection process. This section provides a brief overview of the projects.

2.1.1 Industry Based Agreements

Industry Based Agreements link Aboriginal people with employment and business opportunities and build relationships between industry and communities.

State-wide IBAs are public commitments from peak industry bodies and the NSW Government to forge long-term partnerships to strengthen economic prosperity in Aboriginal communities across NSW. State-wide IBAs have been signed with the NSW Minerals Council (signed June 2013), the Master Builders Association of NSW (signed April 2014), the Civil Contractors Federation of NSW (signed February 2015), and the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (October 2016).

While there is flexibility for each IBA to be implemented in a way specific to the industry, the intended outcomes include:

- Increased Aboriginal employment, apprenticeships and traineeships
- Increased engagement of Aboriginal participants on government and non-government projects
- Increased capacity and number of Aboriginal companies providing goods and services to industry
- Changed culture within industry to become more inclusive of Aboriginal participation

A review of learnings and achievements from the operation of State-wide IBAs has been completed (The Centium Group Pty Ltd., unpublished).

To further support local and regional economic participation outcomes, the NSW Government is trialling a regional approach to IBAs and offered to the two Regional Alliances participating in Local Decision Making.: IWAAC and TRAA.

Regional IBAs bring together Aboriginal regional alliances, the NSW Government, industry and/or employers in Local Decision Making sites to negotiate and implement Agreements, which support the economic participation of Aboriginal people and communities.

By aligning regional Industry Based Agreements with Local Decision Making, Agreements can be negotiated in ways that are consistent with the principle of self-determination, giving Aboriginal regional alliances the opportunity to negotiate with government, industry and/or employers to create local and regional opportunities for economic participation.

2.1.2 Opportunity Hubs

Opportunity Hubs (Hubs) aim to 'provide Aboriginal young people with the confidence and knowledge to follow a supported pathway between secondary school and further education and/or employment' (NSW Government 2015e). Hubs build partnerships between employers, schools, education and training providers, and local community. This is done to match individual students' aspirations with employment, training and education opportunities (NSW Government 2015e). The Hubs support children from Year 5 through to one year post high school. For the younger years the activities are largely group work and event-based. From Year 9, staff work more intensively with students to develop career plans and link them with potential employers.

Four locations were chosen for the initial establishment of Hubs – Upper Hunter, Campbelltown, Dubbo and Tamworth – based on the following criteria (NSW Government 2015e):

- Existence of strong Aboriginal leadership
- Significant or growing proportion of Aboriginal students in school populations
- Real and sustainable employment opportunities
- Real opportunities for non-government organisations (NGOs) and business sector buy-in
- Available career champions and mentors
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) or tertiary education providers.

The Dubbo and Upper Hunter Hubs commenced operation in December 2013, and Campbelltown and Tamworth commenced in March 2014.

While there is flexibility for each Hub project to be implemented in a way that meets local community needs, the intended outcomes include:

- Increased participation and retention at school
- Clearer pathways to employment, training and further education after school
- Higher expectations of education achievement
- Enhanced job readiness among young people
- Increased industry exposure, opportunities and placements for Aboriginal young people
- Educators, service providers, employers and community work together.

2.1.3 Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests (Nests) initiative is jointly led by the Department of Education, and the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG), NSW's peak advisory group on Aboriginal Education (NSW Government 2015a). Nests 'provide a continuous learning

pathway for Aboriginal people while recognising the existing language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal community members', and 'enables Aboriginal people and communities across NSW to reclaim, revitalise and maintain their traditional Aboriginal languages' (NSW Government 2015a).

The Nests are school-based and provide Aboriginal students and their families with a pathway of learning (from preschool through to Year 12 and into tertiary education). The Nests offer Aboriginal students an opportunity to contemplate teaching language as a job (NSW Government 2015a).

The North-West Wiradjuri Nest was launched on 25 October 2013, the Gumbaynggirr Nest on 19 February 2014, the Bundjalung Language Nest on 20 February 2014, the Paakatji/Baakantji Nest on 30 April 2014, and the Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay Nest on 2 May 2014 (NSW Government 2015a).

The intended outcomes of the Nests include:

- Improved knowledge of, and competency in, Aboriginal languages
- Increased number of language learners
- Aboriginal people are supported through the learning and teaching of Aboriginal languages and culture
- Increased access to career pathways
- Nests are managed by the community and developed sustainably.

2.1.4 Local Decision Making

An open expression of interest process was co-ordinated by Aboriginal Affairs in 2013 for Aboriginal communities to apply to be part of the Local Decision Making (LDM) initiative (NSW Government 2015d).

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced on 4 December 2013 the selection of the initial implementation of LDM to the following regional alliances (NSW Government 2015d):

- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) (Far Western NSW)
- Illawarra and Wingecarribee Regional Partnership Alliance (Illawarra South East), now Illawarra-Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation (IWAAC)
- Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (North Coast).

The following regional alliances have since been included in the LDM initiative (NSW Government 2015d):

- Barang Central Coast Aboriginal Regional Partnership (Central Coast) announced on 8 September 2014
- Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRAA) (Central West) announced on 8 September 2014
- Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (NRAA) (New England North-West and Upper Hunter) announced in March 2015.

LDM projects provide a path to Aboriginal community-based regional self-governance.

Through LDM, communities are progressively delegated increased decision-making powers once their capacity is proven and agreed conditions are met. Government service delivery will be directed through binding agreements between Aboriginal regional alliances and government (called Accords). The Accords include negotiated and agreed priorities, key actions to achieve desired outcomes, timeframes, resources, responsibilities, and how success will be measured. The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government signed an Accord on 19 February 2015. TRAA and IWAAC have commenced Accord negotiations with the NSW Government.

The intended outcomes of the LDM's include:

- Self-determination for Aboriginal communities in Alliance areas
- Alliances offer effective communication channels between local Aboriginal communities and governments
- Regional alliances become the accepted peak bodies in their areas for representing the interests of Aboriginal communities
- NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA) is accepted by the Aboriginal community and governments as the peak representative body for Aboriginal self-determination
- Robust governance arrangements (internal & external accountability)
- Alliances direct and influence design and delivery of services, including pooled funding
- Stakeholders and alliances develop strong working partnerships
- Government departments and agencies are more responsive, flexible and accountable to alliances
- Accords are delivered to achieve improved coordination and effectiveness of service delivery for the agreed priorities in the accords
- Open and transparent criteria are agreed by alliances and Government for transition through the stages required for the alliances to control local service delivery and for government to share information and decision making.

In two sites (TRRA and IWAAC), regional IBAs are being piloted as part of the LDM initiative¹, negotiated through the Accord process. Regional IBAs will support the economic participation of Aboriginal people and communities. The actions and responsibilities will be detailed in the Accord.

2.2 Implications for the evaluation

Each of the initiatives included in this evaluation is different and will require specific methods to be employed. This is implied by the draft logic models and theories of change developed by CIRCA in 2015.

- Hubs are relatively 'traditional' interventions which aim at producing a specific range of outcomes for a particular population. They are also provided in a similar way to most government funded programs; by organisations who compete through an open tender.

¹ For further information, see <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/industry-based-agreements>.

Thus, the important questions relate to whether they are well conceived, what the barriers and facilitating factors are for effective implementation, and for Stage 1, what the short-term impacts of the initiatives are.

- Nests are also initiatives working directly with communities; however, their outcomes are less easy to measure than those for Hubs. While it will be relatively easy to track attendance at language classes and cultural events, for example, it is more challenging to assess the Nests' aim to facilitate Aboriginal communities taking ownership of their language and culture.
- Although the Accords developed through the LDM process have specific deliverables, they do not directly produce particular outcomes for individuals. However, it would be expected that community members should increasingly perceive government services as being more responsive to their needs and that the concerns of the community are being taken on board by policies affecting their communities. Aboriginal peoples in NSW have more control over their lives, the services they receive and the policies that affect them. The main focus of the evaluation in Stage 1 will be the effectiveness of the processes by which decision making is handed over to communities, as well as the contextual issues. This includes how regional IBAs are identified and implemented. The evaluation will attempt to draw general lessons on how self-determination can be effectively implemented in different contexts.

3 Considerations in evaluation design

The design of the evaluation has been informed by:

- The requirements of the NSW Government
- Consultation with key stakeholders
- Ethics guidelines
- A literature review of international and Australian Indigenous evaluation approaches (published separately).²

This section of the evaluation plan presents some of the core considerations in the continuing design of the evaluation.

OCHRE is an ambitious initiative for NSW and represents an attempt by the NSW Government to engage in a new way with Aboriginal communities and service providers, while also attempting to shift the focus onto measurable and achievable outcomes.

Evaluations of multi-component initiatives are always challenging, especially in attributing outcomes to specific components of programs or policies. Projects, such as those funded under *OCHRE*, often have subtle unintended positive and negative impacts on the community that are difficult to measure.

The evaluation design seeks to address a number of tensions including methodological rigour, stakeholder engagement, cost, and timeliness essential for a robust evaluation. Data collection will not be possible, for example, if local Aboriginal communities are not fully engaged. Interpretation of findings will be challenging if the context of the data collected is not well understood.

3.1 Theoretical approach

The *OCHRE* evaluation or *continuing conversation* will be based on the principles of decolonising research as articulated above. This is also consistent with the underlying philosophy of *OCHRE*, which is to facilitate the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples in NSW.

The evaluation seeks, as far as possible, for the evaluation approach and the methods used to be controlled by the communities involved in the evaluation sites. The evaluation will adhere to the AH&MRC five principles of research with Aboriginal communities, that is: to provide net benefits for Aboriginal people and communities; to ensure Aboriginal community control of the research; to conduct research with cultural sensitivity; to reimburse costs; and to enhance Aboriginal skills and knowledge.

There are a number of implications for the conduct of the *OCHRE* evaluation.

² The review is available at https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/Evaluation_theories_and_approaches_relevance_for_Aboriginal_contexts.pdf

Methods

The *OCHRE* evaluation will be a multi-method project and will use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods, to be co-designed with each community. Methods will include culturally sensitive Aboriginal approaches such as yarning, but will also involve quantitative analysis of administrative data and possibly conventional 'positivist' primary data collection methods such as surveys. However, unlike conventional government funded evaluations, these will not take priorities over narrative methodologies, and in particular, the findings will be discussed and reported in consultation with communities.

Context

The overall approach to the *OCHRE* evaluation, as articulated in this Plan, will be a case study design in which the local context and history of each site will be central to the methods used, as well as the analysis and interpretation of findings. However, the evaluation will also seek to draw broader lessons from the research, in particular relating to the challenges associated with self-determination – for Aboriginal people as well as for government. A significant contextual factor for the evaluation is the history of research and evaluation in Aboriginal communities, and the effect this history has on the conduct of the evaluation. The history must be acknowledged in all the interactions with communities. However, the current policy and social context will also be factored into the approach, with ongoing policy development at the state and Commonwealth levels affecting the *OCHRE* initiatives as well as the evaluation.

Capacity building

A key component of the *OCHRE* evaluation is to support communities to engage with the evaluation and ultimately to assume control over its outputs and deliverables. This cannot be done alone by the evaluation team, and thus the team will work closely with Aboriginal Affairs to support communities. This is consistent with the broader role of Aboriginal Affairs staff in coordinating the implementation of *OCHRE*, but requires particular skills and approaches.

Independence

The *OCHRE* evaluation is an independent evaluation in the sense that Aboriginal Affairs will not have the final say in relation to the evaluation report and the findings and conclusions. Rather, as indicated above, the evaluation will be community controlled. The report will be presented to the community and it is for the community to decide whether they deliver the report to government. In addition, the evaluation team will be working closely with Aboriginal Affairs staff as well as community organisations to progress the continuing conversation; the evaluation itself will be formative and will feed back insights into the policy process. A key consideration therefore will be for the evaluation to be as transparent as possible in documenting the process for maintaining the balance between independence and engagement and how these tensions are resolved over the course of the project.

Language

The language used for the *OCHRE* evaluation will reflect the commitment to community control and to Aboriginal research methods. The best example of this is the use of the term 'continuing conversation', rather than 'evaluation', as the description which will be used with communities. This

shows cognisance of Aboriginal communities' sensitivities about evaluation and also that the communities themselves are not being evaluated. Similarly, we will use terms such as 'yarning' or 'story telling' rather than 'narrative methodologies'. The term 'logic model' will not be used, rather we will ask what local community view as success and how it might be assessed. Graphics and other representations will also be used in preference for complex text or tables.

Community control and ownership of data

The AH&MRC HREC five key principles outline provisions for Aboriginal community control of research – this includes ownership of data. This stems from past experience of Aboriginal communities sharing their knowledge with researchers and that knowledge or data being taken by researchers without validating with the community how that knowledge was used and without acknowledging the ownership of the data. The provision in the five principles acknowledges that Aboriginal communities own their knowledge and experiences, and any information shared with researchers is still owned by the individuals who provide this. The Aboriginal Community has control, or ownership, over every aspect of the research in terms of the community directing how research is designed and conducted, and how that information is analysed and reported. The reports arising from the research become the vessel in which deidentified data is stored and reported, and the report and community knowledge within the report is owned by the community.

In addition, ethics requirements also require that researchers maintain the confidentiality of each individual participant. Any knowledge shared with the research team therefore remains private, remains the ownership of the participant, and is stored in a way to maintain that privacy. In accordance with ethics approval and UNSW policies and procedures, participant data is stored securely, with access provided only to the research team that has been approved by ethics to access the data, and maintained for seven years, after which time it is destroyed. This information is not disclosed to any other party without the express consent of the individual participant. A participant may also contact the researchers and ask for their data to be destroyed. Were an outside party, such as a government department, to request access to this data, the research team would be required to go back to ethics and seek a modification to the original approval.

We will highlight to the community where and how this data is stored, who has access to it, and seek confirmation that this protects the community's data. In addition, we will discuss with the community how to seek approval for the use of data in the future, including the publication of research findings.

Self-reflection on the evaluation

An important component of the continuing conversation will involve discussion within the evaluation team and with communities about the evaluation itself so that lessons can be learned and noted about the conduct of the evaluation, not only for *OCHRE* but also for future evaluations in Aboriginal communities. The aim is for the *OCHRE* evaluation not only to adhere to the principles of Aboriginal research, but to contribute to the evidence base for Aboriginal evaluation which is scientifically rigorous while at the same time developing and enhancing the Australian contribution to the international literature on Indigenous methodologies and processes.

Assessing success of OCHRE

As indicated in Section 4.1, this first stage of the evaluation is focused on implementation of *OCHRE* initiatives in the study sites. In each site the community will be asked what they view as success for the initiative and for *OCHRE* as a whole. It must be recognised that communities do not necessarily view success in quantitative measurable terms, rather community's view of success is often related to the community's sense of ownership of the initiative and how the initiative contributes to self-determination of the community.

Each of the initiatives under the *OCHRE* plan has its own quantitative performance which were determined by the NSW government. These will also be examined as part of the evaluation and the findings will be contextualised in the light of the findings from the fieldwork component of the evaluation.

3.2 A continuing conversation

The overall approach which will be taken for this evaluation will involve the evaluators having a *continuing conversation* with Aboriginal communities involved with the *OCHRE* projects included. This way of describing the evaluation serves a number of purposes. First, it shows Aboriginal communities and organisations that the evaluation is not intended to be an assessment of their performance.³ The evaluation is focused on developing the projects with local Aboriginal community views in mind. Second, Aboriginal communities have in the past been involved with evaluations which have been conducted in culturally insensitive ways, have not produced findings meaningful to them, or whose findings have been ignored by government departments. This has understandably resulted in some Aboriginal communities being suspicious of evaluations. This evaluation represents a conscious decision by government to develop a much higher level of engagement with communities than is normally the case for government funded evaluations.

Within the context of the *continuing conversation*, the evaluation team will work with local communities to ensure that the evaluation collects robust data on implementation and outcomes (or analyses data collected for other purposes) to ensure that the findings are reflective of the wishes and feelings of the communities and are also rigorous and underpinned by high quality analysis. Although there is obviously a tension between these requirements, they are not necessarily in conflict.

3.3 Issues to consider when working with NSW Aboriginal people/s

Research on and service delivery for Aboriginal peoples in Australia is based on an historical legacy where the processes of engagement, consultation and service delivery have been undertaken with pre-determined outcomes, or where the feedback provided by Aboriginal people through research findings has not been seriously considered by the decision-makers within government. From this basis, the amount of research done on Aboriginal people and the levels of

³ Note that there are separate monitoring and quality assurance processes which have been put into place to ensure that service providers are delivering on their contracts and that the services are of high quality.

government service delivery directed towards Aboriginal communities appear to have achieved limited benefits and outcomes for Aboriginal people (Smith 1999; Steinhaur 2002; Weber-Pillwax 2001; Wilson 2001). One way of helping to safeguard against the evaluation continuing this historical legacy is for the evaluation to meet the highest ethical standards of research and evaluation with Aboriginal communities as set out in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) guidelines. The evaluation will require ethics approval and must include consultation and feedback as part of the research design.

NSW contains many Aboriginal nations, language groups and communities with their own socio-cultural and political structures and protocols for engaging with each other and with 'outsiders'. This includes the inter-personal protocols of how one should interact with Aboriginal people, to the broader aspects of the correct organisations and individuals to engage with the community. NSW Aboriginal nations and communities may also have differing historical relationships to the processes of colonisation, research, evaluations, and delivery of government services. One community or nation, for example, may have had limited interactions with government associated service delivery or evaluation, while others may have a longstanding and continuing relationship with the NSW Government that may include positive and/or negative experiences. The evaluation must be mindful of this history, and on this basis, the evaluation needs some degree of flexibility in its approach to ensure that each Aboriginal community feels comfortable with the evaluation process.

Aboriginal people in NSW still feel the ongoing impacts of colonisation. The policy to remove children from their families, and the displacement of Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands has been, and continues to be, experienced as trauma by Aboriginal people. The evaluation team must ensure a process that is mindful of the likely impacts of the evaluation process on existing trauma. There is a real possibility that the process of engaging in the evaluation can trigger trauma in the communities and locations where the evaluation is being undertaken. These sensitivities will be addressed in the data collection as well as feedback components of the evaluation. To help the evaluation team engage with communities in a way that acknowledges their particular context, the team will develop a profile of each community site, focusing on the specific protocols and relationships that need to be developed and maintained.

3.4 Issues to consider in undertaking a government funded evaluation

Evaluations that are funded by government agencies must consider the differing influences and aspects of control, power and autonomy. While consideration is given to ensuring that control, power and autonomy lies with the Aboriginal communities, the NSW Government, in consultation with key stakeholders and representatives of Aboriginal communities, has determined the scope of the evaluation. The NSW Government has, for instance, set the end time-frame, the budget and the projects that will be evaluated. Thus, while the evaluation is driven by the Aboriginal communities involved, including identifying what local communities view as success and how it might be assessed, determining the methods used, and reviewing the findings and the subsequent report, they will not have complete power, control or autonomy over the evaluation.

There are also deeper questions around self-determination and historical issues that exist for each of the Aboriginal communities where projects are located. Whether the evaluation can unpack these issues is a matter that may require further exploration and/or the inclusion of specific overarching broad questions in the Evaluation Framework (see Section 5.1)

3.5 Theory informed evaluation

This evaluation is informed by the most relevant and appropriate theoretical understandings on evaluations of policies and programs and, in particular, evaluations of Aboriginal programs in Australia and internationally.

The literature review undertaken to inform this evaluation identified the need to focus on the principles for engaging with communities and respecting Aboriginal culture and epistemologies. There were significant gaps in how to address the complexities and practicalities of operationalising the principles in the real world of government funded research and evaluation, where researchers (and communities) do not have unlimited resources, are constrained by short timescales and other commitments, and where communities are sometimes conflicted about the value of the evaluation. In this context, this evaluation itself will potentially make a significant contribution to the theory and practice around evaluating programs in Aboriginal communities.

From a theoretical perspective, the evaluation is closest to the realist evaluation stance, but also draws upon participatory action research and co-production. However, the evaluation team will not engage directly in community action research and will remain independent both of NSW Government agencies and the projects being evaluated.

Epistemologically, the approach combines positivist with constructivist paradigms similar to the 'Braided Rivers' approach developing in the NZ context (Macfarlane, 2012), an approach that attempts to synthesise Western and Māori approaches to evaluation. This approach acknowledges that Western science and kaupapa Māori⁴ knowledges result in distinctive approaches to the development and evaluation of programs. In summary, the literature review undertaken to inform the approach taken (the *OCHRE* Evaluation Plan) identifies the following core components of best practice:

- Respectful mutual relationships between the evaluation team and the communities involved in the evaluation, with communities playing a key role in the design and implementation of the evaluation, and in the dissemination of evaluation findings. Overall, this involves taking a co-production approach in which the community and the evaluation team work together on all aspects of the evaluation.
- Giving priority to the views and beliefs of Aboriginal communities about the program, rather than relying on externally imposed criteria for evaluating success.

⁴ Māori principles or world view.

- Taking into account the context in which the program is being implemented, including the historical context of colonialism, the current context of disadvantage, and the cultural context of each community in which research is being conducted.

4 Evaluation scope

The objective of the evaluation is to provide evidence to improve the effectiveness of *OCHRE* projects and outcomes into the future, and to inform the NSW Government about any possible future expansion of *OCHRE*.

4.1 Evaluation stages

The evaluation is planned to continue for 10 years and will occur in three stages with each stage completed within a three-year period.

- Stage 1 (to which this evaluation plan applies) will occur over the period 2015/16 to 2017/18 and will focus on implementation, any short-term outcomes, and recommendations for improvements to the initiative.
- Stage 2 will occur over the period 2018/19 to 2020/21 and will focus on identifying changes experienced by participants and stakeholders, outcomes, and recommendations for improvements to the initiative.
- Stage 3 will occur over the period 2021/22 to 2023/24 and will focus on assessing the contribution the initiative has made in meeting long-term goals, and recommendations for improvements to the initiative.

4.2 Initiatives and projects included

When the evaluation commenced, the evaluation scope included two sites for each initiative, i.e. two Local Decision Making projects, two Industry Based Agreements, two Language and Culture Nests, and two Opportunity Hubs initiatives. The sites identified for the evaluation were selected as they were considered to be the most mature at the time of selection in mid-2015.

In early 2017, the NSW Government commenced a trial of Regional IBAs (as described in Section 2.1.3 above). Consistent with this change, Aboriginal Affairs advised SPRC that the IBAs with the Master Builders Association of NSW and the NSW Minerals Council originally included in the evaluation would be replaced by the regional IBAs developed through the Accord process with TRRA and IWAAC. This change enables the evaluation to address the impact of this change, as experienced by Aboriginal community, industry and government.

A review of learnings and achievements from the operation of state-wide IBAs has been completed (The Centium Group Pty Ltd., unpublished). As the trial sites includes the IWAAC, the scope of the evaluation has been broadened to include this LDM as a third LDM project site.

The *OCHRE* initiatives and the projects within these are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Scope of the evaluation, updated 2017

Inclusion	Exclusion
<p>Nests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest (Coffs Harbour) North-West Wiradjuri Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest (Dubbo) 	<p>Nests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paakantji/Baakantji Language and Culture Nest (Wilcannia) Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest (Lismore) Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalay aay Language and Culture Nest (Lightening Ridge)
<p>Hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campbelltown Hub Tamworth Hub 	<p>Hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper Hunter Hub Dubbo Hub
<p>LDMs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (Far Western NSW) Three Rivers Regional Assembly (Central West) (includes Regional IBA) Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation, added April 2017 (includes Regional IBA) 	<p>LDMs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barang Central Coast Aboriginal Regional Partnership (Central Coast) Northern Region Aboriginal Alliance (New England and North-West and Upper Hunter) Regional Aboriginal Development Alliance (North Coast)

Key information on the projects included follows.

4.2.1 Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest

The Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is based at William Bayldon Public School in Coffs Harbour and covers the communities of South Grafton, Orara, Nambucca Valley, Sawtell Toormina, Northern Beaches, Dorrigo, Urunga, and Bellingen.

Close to 12,200 children enrolled in government preschools and schools, including over 1,800 Aboriginal children from these communities, have the opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr.

4.2.2 North-West Wiradjuri Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest

The North-West Wiradjuri Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is based at Dubbo Public School and covers the communities of Dubbo, Gilgandra, Wellington, Mudgee, Narromine, Trangie and Peak Hill.

Over 9,300 children enrolled in government preschools and schools, including over 2,800 Aboriginal children from these communities, have the opportunity to learn Wiradjuri.

4.2.3 Campbelltown Opportunity Hub

The Campbelltown Opportunity Hub is based at Level 1, 101 Queens Street Campbelltown and is operated by Marrickville Training Centre (MTC) Australia.

Over 700 Aboriginal students in Years 5 to 12 from government and non-government schools in the Campbelltown Local Government Area are part of the Hub.

4.2.4 Tamworth Opportunity Hub

The Tamworth Opportunity Hub is based at 123 Marius Street Tamworth and is operated by the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Over 1,000 Aboriginal students in Years 5 to 12 from government and non-government schools in the Tamworth Local Government Area are part of the Hub.

4.2.5 Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly LDM

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* LDM 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 government.

4.2.6 Three Rivers Regional Assembly LDM (including regional IBA)

The Three Rivers Regional Assembly region extends from Lithgow in the east of NSW through to Nyngan in the west, and represents the interests of Aboriginal people across the communities of Bathurst, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Mudgee, Narromine, Nyngan, Orange, Parkes, Peak Hill, Trangie, Warren and Wellington. There are close to 17,700 Aboriginal people living in these communities with an estimated 14% under 5 years of age.

In September 2014, the Three Rivers Regional Assembly became part of the *OCHRE* LDM program and is working towards signing binding Accord with the NSW Government from March 2017.

The focus of the regional IBA for this region will be agreed during the formal Accord negotiations and will be included in the evaluation of the LDM and not reported separately.

4.2.7 Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation LDM (including regional IBA)

Regional areas represented by the Illawarra-Wingecarribee Aboriginal Alliance Corporation (IWAAC) include the Local Government Areas of Wollongong, Kiama, Shellharbour and Wingecarribee. Close to 7240 people who live in the region are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with 13% of this group being under 5 years old.

In December 2013 IWAAC was launched as part of the *OCHRE* LDM. IWAAC started preparing to enter formal Accord negotiations in June 2017.

The focus of the regional IBA for this region will be agreed during the formal Accord negotiations and will be included in the evaluation of the LDM and not reported separately.

4.3 Core evaluation questions

The evaluation questions have been updated to reflect conversations with community during co-design as well as a request from Aboriginal Affairs to include a recommendation from the *OCHRE* Evaluation Steering Committee. For further information see <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/conversations/TAB-A-OCHRE-Evaluation-Steering-Committee-Communique%CC%81-7-February-2017.pdf> (Question 4):

1. Is *OCHRE*⁵ being implemented as intended? What aspects are working well and which could be improved?
2. Do the outcomes from *OCHRE* continue to reflect what the community wants to achieve?
3. What improvements to the design of *OCHRE* could be made to better meet the outcomes in the Aboriginal community, and for the future development of *OCHRE*?
4. Do *OCHRE* policies and practices respond to emerging evidence and practice learnings? Is change to policy and practice timely?

In-depth questions will be developed for each of the projects during the co-design process with each community.

⁵ The questions apply to both the overall *OCHRE* initiative as well as each *OCHRE* project.

5 Stage 1 of the evaluation

5.1 Evaluation framework

The diagram below (Figure 1) represents the framework used in this evaluation. The framework is a modification of the frameworks developed by Melbourne University Centre for Program Evaluation and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ATSIL, 2014).

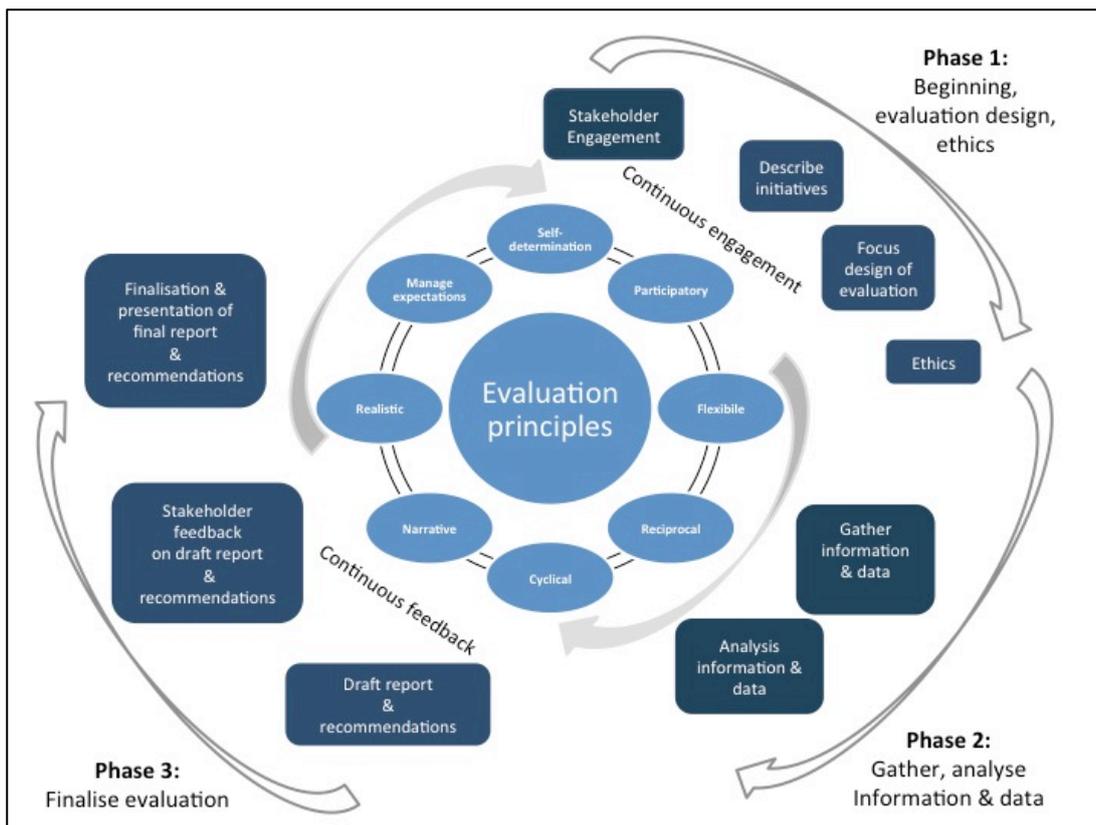


Figure 1 OCHRE evaluation framework

Source: the diagram is based on a diagram from ATSIL 2014.

5.2 Aim and focus

Stage 1 will focus on the implementation of the initiatives, assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the projects and the barriers and facilitating factors for effective implementation. It will investigate what changes have occurred in the working relationship between staff in government departments and Aboriginal communities. In addition, the evaluation will examine the way each project has been implemented and, where possible, the outcomes of the project on communities and community members.

In particular, Stage 1 will:

- Assess whether activities are being implemented as intended and identify those aspects of the project or initiative that are working well and those that could be improved.

- Assess whether the project outcomes continue to reflect what the community wants to achieve.
- Recommend improvements to the design of the project and initiative to better meet outcomes in the Aboriginal community, and for the future development of the initiative.

Although Stage 1 will focus on implementation, it will set the scene for further work on impacts and outcomes, and will seek to identify benchmarks to measure these. It is important that methods employed are as rigorous as possible, while at the same time fully engaging with local Aboriginal communities and other Aboriginal stakeholders in a way that will maximise the likelihood of continued engagement in the stages that follow.

The overall approach to the evaluation will be to treat each site as a case study. This means that methods can be tailored to the needs of each community, and the context of the site will become integral to the data collection and interpretation, consistent with the literature on Indigenous research. In addition, the evaluation will draw out cross cutting themes from all the sites in a synthesis report in order to provide insights into the broader questions around Aboriginal self-determination and governance. As part of this the evaluation, will also consider how NSW Government Departments have changed and adapted the way they work in order to facilitate self-determination for Aboriginal peoples.

Stage 1 will proceed in three phases.

5.3 Phase 1: Beginning the evaluation – design and ethics

5.3.1 Engaging stakeholders

The evaluation team will seek to engage a range of stakeholders who have had direct experience with the projects at various levels. These may include:

- local Aboriginal community members
- services engaged to provide the projects
- members of the governance groups
- government agencies associated with *OCHRE* initiatives
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Aboriginal Health Services
- Aboriginal Community Working Parties
- local councils
- local Aboriginal Corporations.

The evaluation team will seek suggestions from Aboriginal Affairs and other organisations to identify suitable participants to engage.

5.3.2 Understanding the project contexts

Understanding context in evaluation is important as it assists evaluators make sense of the social, cultural, historical and political dimensions of the community, and assist evaluators with framing an evaluation approach that is responsive to local stakeholder and community needs (Chouinard & Miller 2016).

This part of Phase 1 seeks to develop a considered working understanding of the history and the current state of play of *OCHRE* as a whole, and of the projects subject to this evaluation. This includes engaging with key personnel at Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement unit of the Department of Education, State Training Services of the Department of Industry, and project governance groups. For each project, the evaluation team will map the development of the project including the context and precedents, and the rationale for the particular way the project has been implemented. This will involve talking to key stakeholders and examining relevant reports, community profiles and policy documents.

5.3.3 Applying for ethics

An ethics application was submitted in late May 2016 to the AH&MRC Ethics Committee and approved (ref AH&MRC 1192_16). While this Committee has a focus on health, it is the appropriate committee in NSW to provide approval for a study of this type. The Committee requires all applications to meet the following ethical standards:

- **Net benefits for Aboriginal people and communities:** The research will advance scientific knowledge and result in a demonstrated net benefit for the health of Aboriginal people and communities
- **Aboriginal community control of research:** There is Aboriginal community control over all aspects of the proposed research including research design, ownership of data, data interpretation and publication of research findings
- **Cultural sensitivity:** The research will be conducted in a manner sensitive to the cultural principles of Aboriginal society
- **Reimbursement of costs:** Aboriginal communities and organisations will be reimbursed for all costs arising from their participation in the research process
- **Enhancing Aboriginal skills and knowledge:** The project will utilise available opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of Aboriginal people, communities and organisations that are participating in the project.

The evaluation will adhere to the ethical principles that guide human research, which include confidentiality, voluntary participation, and freedom to withdraw.

5.3.4 Implementing ethics requirements

The ethics requirements for this stage of the evaluation are provided at Figure 2. In addition to ethics approval from AH&MRC (received 9 August 2016), researchers sought community agreement to have conversations. Once received, the community will be actively engaged in each

step of the research process from co-design through to reporting to ensure the community has control of the research. A summary of progress for each site is available on the project website.



Figure 2 Process for the first Phase (2016)

As the scope and method of the evaluation for each project has developed through the co-design process, additional approvals have been and may be required. Already, we have sought permission from the NSW Department of Education under the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) to allow researchers to talk to school staff and students in schools, and NSW Police in terms of their involvement in negotiating the Accords with communities.

In addition, a number of modifications have been made, approved by AH&MRC, in relation to the scope of the evaluation, working with community researchers as part of the research team, and extending the age at which students can participate in the study to Year 7 and above (with anyone under 16 years requiring parental consent to participate). Other changes have arisen due to changes in the evaluation team.

The evaluation team will ensure that the scope of the evaluation remains within the current approvals and will apply to modify the approval if further changes to the scope of the evaluation are requested.

5.4 Phase 2: Gathering and analysing information

5.4.1 Focusing the evaluation through co-design

Phase 2 aims to focus the design of Stage 1 of the evaluation and to ensure that all stakeholders, and in particular Aboriginal stakeholders, have contributed to the overall design of the evaluation in their location, the questions asked, what local community view as success and how it might be assessed, the method (including analysis of data), and the reporting back of findings.

To achieve this, a one-day co-design workshop will be held in community. Workshops are chosen as they support robust discussion and a collaboration of ideas; this is the optimal method of consulting stakeholders in a single location. Workshops also offer logistical and budgetary advantages over individual consultations. For critical stakeholders, those who are unable to attend the workshops, or those for whom confidentiality may be an issue, consultations will be offered. Face-to-face consultations will be encouraged, while recognising that there may be circumstances where contact by telephone may be preferred by some stakeholders.

Through the co-design workshops and consultation exercise, members of the evaluation team will:

- Discuss the focus of the evaluation and the most important issues that need to be explored in more depth.

- Discuss what local stakeholders view as success within a 3-year period and what can realistically be achieved. This will include teasing out possibly different views of success and if there are differences between different stakeholders, and what improvements in the working relationships could look like, from both community and government perspectives.
- Discuss how success can be assessed within the resources of the evaluation and community. This will include a discussion of the use of existing data.
- Present the draft method for the project outlined in the CIRCA evaluation plans.
- Discuss whether the draft method is appropriate and how this might be applied in the community.
- Adapt and develop ideas (or create new ideas) so that the methods best reflect the local needs and preferences around data collection.
- Identify potential participants and how they might be recruited.
- Summarise the outcomes of the co-design workshop and check with the community that the evaluation team have interpreted information correctly.
- Discuss the best ways to feedback, validate and share the findings from the evaluation with Aboriginal communities.
- Next steps.

Although this Phase will assist in refining the methodology for each project, the final methods must abide by the ethics approval provided by the AH&MRC and be achievable within the resources available.

Developing consensus amongst key stakeholders about key aspects of the design of Stage 1 in their community, the workshops and interviews will provide key information about the nature of the triangulation to be undertaken (see Section 5.4.3) and the material needed to develop the evaluation plan for Stage 1 and Stage 2 for each project.

The evaluation team will work in conjunction with Aboriginal Affairs to develop instruments for these workshops, including discussion guides and ‘conversation starters’. The co-design summaries will be signed-off by a representative of the community to ensure that they are a true summary of the of what was said during the co-design workshop and will be used to form the basis of the data collection plan. Both the co-design and data collection plan summaries are available on the [project website](#).⁶

5.4.2 Collecting data

Conversations with participants will occur using a range of mechanisms developed to maximise opportunities for participant and engagement. Following initial conversations during community consultation and co-design, the main conversations for Stage 1 of the evaluation will take place in community during the last quarter of 2017 (and the first quarter of 2018 where necessary). The visit to each project site will be supplemented with other conversations, for example at NCARA meetings held in Sydney.

⁶ The project website is <https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/ochre-initiatives-evaluation/>.

The precise methods employed for each project will be developed through the co-design workshop. Methods are likely to include one-to-one or group yarns, interviews with stakeholders, or surveys. The evaluation team will capture the stories of individuals (anonymised), communities or organisations affected by *OCHRE* projects using a case study design.

There are several sources of secondary data available to the evaluation. These include:

- data collected on project activities, inputs and outcomes as part of the ongoing monitoring and reporting required under *OCHRE*
- case studies, reports, minutes of meetings and other program documentation collected by individual projects
- administrative data including educational outcomes, Aboriginal apprenticeships and traineeships, and Government contracts obtained by Aboriginal companies/contactors
- surveys and census data such as employment and industry participation and the Census of Population and Housing.

Additional data may be collected as part of this evaluation to fill in specific gaps not addressed in the data described above.

The data collected in this phase will enable the evaluation to report on changes over time. A decision on the data required will be made following work undertaken as part of Section 5.4.1 and discussion with key government departments. It will be important to establish early on the state of the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government, so that changes in this core objective can be reliably documented over the course of the evaluation.

5.4.3 Analysing data

As indicated in Section 5.4.2, data will be available from a number of sources. This ranges from large-scale secondary databases to qualitative interviews and focus groups with community representatives and other stakeholders, and case studies and contextual information about each community and project.

Data will be synthesised to answer the evaluation questions relating to the particular 'case', any short-term outcomes, and the contextual factors that have facilitated or hindered effective implementation.

In accordance with the 'Braided Rivers' approach discussed in Section 3.5, the quantitative data will be triangulated with the different qualitative methods. This will provide a grounded analysis on the impact of the program.

Using information from a random sample of participants an initial analysis frame will be developed using NVivo to provide the basis for a thematic and narrative analysis of the data. The information provided by the remaining participants will subsequently be coded into NVivo and classified into these themes.

The analysis will also look more broadly at the regional IBAs, Hubs, Nests and LDMs as initiatives, as well as *OCHRE* as a plan for transforming relationships between Aboriginal communities and

the NSW Government. In addition, the analysis will draw broader conclusions about the lessons learned about the process of self-determination for Aboriginal communities.

All findings will be validated with communities so that they can contribute to the analysis and provide contextual information, as well as comment on the implications of the findings. Thus, analysis will be co-produced by the evaluation team and the communities.

5.4.4 Overcoming challenges

Attributing changes in Aboriginal communities and organisations to an *OCHRE* project will be a significant challenge for the evaluation. There are many other policies and programs funded by the Commonwealth, NSW and local governments that have been implemented in NSW. This is particularly the case in the area of Aboriginal employment and education. In addition, both outcomes and processes are influenced by contextual factors within the communities and the broader society.

To attribute particular changes to a specific project ideally requires a comparison of information for individuals and/or communities who are affected by the program (or some aspect of the program), whose progress is compared to an equivalent group who have not participated. (In some circumstances pre-program experiences can be used for comparison). This will be difficult to achieve for all projects in the evaluation and therefore it will be very difficult to link particular changes in communities directly to the project. Nevertheless, by comparing different data sources, and in particular using qualitative research to validate the quantitative research findings, it is possible to get a good sense of the extent to which particular changes can be attributed to a project.

5.5 Phase 3: Reporting findings

The findings arising from Phase 2 will be reported in June 2018. The key steps in achieving this are detailed below.

5.5.1 Feeding back to stakeholders – draft report and recommendations

The evaluation team will seek stakeholder feedback on the draft report and recommendations made for each project. While the details of this feedback process will be negotiated in Phases 1 and 2, in broad terms the process will provide the opportunity for each community to comment on the draft of the report for the project in their community before it is formally submitted to the NSW Government. This process will include:

- Providing a written copy of the draft report and recommendations to interested stakeholders of the projects and requesting written feedback.
- Presenting the draft report and recommendations to interested stakeholders in a face-to-face session or in other formats as agreed with the communities, providing the opportunity for verbal feedback.

The draft synthesis report will be presented to NCARA for feedback. NCARA have agreed to sign off the report. To meet the terms of the contract between the SPRC and Aboriginal Affairs an

embargoed copy will be provided to the Head of Aboriginal Affairs. The report will only be released with the approval of the NCARA.

5.5.2 Finalising the report and recommendations

The feedback received from stakeholders will be consolidated into the final report for each project site. The report will be presented formally to the community and it is up to the community what happens to it next. The community may (or may not) decide to present this report to Head of Aboriginal Affairs. Any subsequent use of the reports or the community specific content of the reports must be with the consent of the community to which they relate.

In addition to the site reports, the research team will produce a Stage 1 evaluation synthesis report which will synthesise the findings of the individual site reports to answer the overall evaluation questions.

Permission will be sought from Aboriginal communities and AH&MRC (in accordance with the ethics approval) to share the evaluation findings with NSW Government, other *OCHRE* initiatives, and projects not included in the evaluation.

A brief plain English summary of the report findings and recommendations will be provided. Subject to permission from the communities, this summary will be made available on the SPRC website to ensure complete transparency in the process.

5.5.3 Disseminating findings

Subject to the approval of the Aboriginal community and AH&MRC, the findings will be presented to NSW Government in both a written format and in a presentation provided by SPRC including the *OCHRE* Project Control Group, the Senior Executive Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Reform and the *OCHRE* Steering Committee, and the *OCHRE* projects not included in the evaluation. It is likely that further briefings will occur. A detailed dissemination strategy will be prepared closer to the release of the report.

6 Risks and risk management strategies

This evaluation, along with *OCHRE* itself, represents a new and innovative process by which the NSW Government interacts with Aboriginal communities and organisations in NSW. The evaluation will have to address the tension between deep engagement with Aboriginal communities while providing robust findings to the NSW Government on the implementation (and ultimately the impact) of *OCHRE*. Consequently, there are very high expectations of this evaluation from many different stakeholders. Similar to *OCHRE* itself, however, the resources available to the evaluation are limited and these will have to be used very effectively in order to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation.

There are a number of other risks which the evaluation will have to overcome as set out in Table 2. This will continue to be updated with the evaluation plan.

Table 2 Risks and mitigation strategies

Risk	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Evaluation is not viewed as independent of Aboriginal Affairs leading to lack of engagement.	Evaluators are dependent on Aboriginal Affairs staff for introductions and organising meetings etc., but need to be independent.	Flyers and other material will be branded as UNSW and it will be clear that the evaluation is independent of Aboriginal Affairs. Stakeholders will also be told of the governance structures in place.
Various monitoring, quality assurance, and reporting mechanisms for <i>OCHRE</i> could create confusion or participant burden.	Evaluation could be perceived by community members as additional scrutiny involving a group of people flying in and out of communities and monitoring their progress.	Liaison with Aboriginal Affairs, the Ombudsman's Office, and other key parties responsible for <i>OCHRE</i> , to understand how related functions are operating in practice and avoid participant burden; and an effective stakeholder communication strategy.
Stakeholders not happy with focus on process in the first phase.	Many stakeholders expect to see some outcomes for direct participants in some initiatives and also system level outcomes.	Short-term outcomes will be assessed according to the logic models of the different initiatives, but attribution will not be made to <i>OCHRE</i> at this stage.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Evolving nature of <i>OCHRE</i> undermines methods and credibility of findings.	Evaluation reports could be out of date or inappropriate if not addressing the current <i>OCHRE</i> situation.	Case study methodology is designed to address these issues and the changing nature of the initiatives and their context is part of the implementation findings.
Inability to build evaluation capacity in Aboriginal communities.	Aboriginal research is required to build capacity in the communities.	Close work with Aboriginal Affairs and regional teams will help to support the communities to develop skills in data collection and use. In addition to community control of the research, the evaluation team will train and engage community researchers where the community decides this is the most appropriate method of data collection.
Challenges in generalising findings due to small number of sites being studied for each initiative.	The evaluation is meant to inform future policy development but may be hampered by the case study approach.	Discussions with key stakeholders to draw out more general lessons from the case studies to include the overall policy context.
Delays due to ethics approval, operational issues etc.	A number of practical challenges can delay the evaluation	Close working together with Aboriginal Affairs and AH&MRC to ensure that these issues are addressed.

7 Governance

7.1 Steering Committee

A steering committee oversees and supports the work of the SPRC team so that the best possible approach is taken. Its work includes providing advice on plans and reports, and helping to solve issues. The steering committee makes recommendations to government when it believes improvements are needed.

7.2 NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, Human Research Ethics Committee

The AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee is the approval body for research with Aboriginal Communities in NSW. The Committee has five clear principles of conducting research with Aboriginal Communities and also advises on Aboriginal control of research and maintaining ownership of community knowledge and data. The evaluation and any subsequent changes to the evaluation must be approved by the AH&MRC Ethics Committee prior to being implemented.

The terms of approval from AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee also require that the final draft report from the research, and any publication or presentation where data or findings are presented, must be provided to the AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee to be reviewed for compliance with ethical and cultural criteria prior to: (1) submission for publication, and/or (2) any dissemination of the report.

7.3 NSW Department of Education, SERAP

In some sites, the community may require the evaluation team to talk to younger people and to talk to Principals, staff and students within the school environment. Where this is the case, separate approval will be sought through the SERAP – the State Education Research Application Process of the NSW Department of Education. Any approval will still require individual school Principal approval to be sought.

8 Cost of the evaluation

The cost of the evaluation for the LDMs and IBAs will be met by Aboriginal Affairs NSW; the Opportunity Hubs by State Training Services NSW, NSW Department of Industry; and the Language and Culture Nests by Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement, NSW Department of Education.

9 Evaluation team

Table 3 identifies the key personnel involved in the evaluation.

Table 3 Evaluation personnel

Person	Roles and Responsibilities	Position (Organisation)
Ilan Katz	Chief Investigator	Professor (SPRC)
BJ Newton*	Researcher (Campbelltown & Illawarra-Wingecarribee)	Research Associate (SPRC)
Michael Barnes	Researcher (Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Murdi Paaki, Tamworth, Campbelltown & Illawarra-Wingecarribee)	Researcher (IPSOS)
Shona Bates	Project manager	Research Associate (SPRC)
Bruce Bradbury	Data Analyst	Associate Professor (SPRC)

- Note BJ will be on leave from November 2017 to October 2018.

The following staff will be meeting people in the eight communities as part of the evaluation:



Professor Ilan Katz, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW

Ilan is the professor leading the team working on the *OCHRE* evaluation. Ilan is an experienced social worker and researcher and has led a number of projects looking at Aboriginal policy, including income management, Cape York welfare reform trials and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing.

Ilan was born and educated in South Africa and spent many years as a social worker and researcher in the United Kingdom.

As the leader of this project, Ilan will come to each of the communities to talk to community leaders and organisations



BJ Newton, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW

The

BJ is a Wiradjuri woman who lives in Sydney. Her family come from Erambie Aboriginal Reserve at West Cowra. BJ has a double degree in Social Work/Arts and has recently completed a PhD in Social Policy exploring Aboriginal parents' views on child safety and wellbeing. BJ's current and recent projects are in the areas of child protection, education, poverty, domestic and family violence, and Indigenous policy. BJ is also Chair of the Indigenous Research Strategy Group at SPRC.

BJ will be coming out to the Campbelltown, Illawarra and Wingecarribee sites and talking to the communities about their experiences with the different *OCHRE* programs.



Michael Barnes, IPSOS

Michael is a Ngunnawal man from the Canberra region. Michael commenced as a Senior Project Manager with IPSOS Public Affairs, in December 2016. Prior to this, he worked with the Department of Social Services for nearly 10 years on the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children known as "Footprints in Time" where he worked with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around Australia. Michael has over 10 years experience working in research with communities, families and stakeholders.

Michael will be talking with those interested in the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest at Coffs Harbour, the North-West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest, the Opportunity Hub at Tamworth, the Murdi Paaki Assembly in far western NSW, and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly in Central West NSW, as well as supporting BJ in the Campbelltown and Illawarra-Wingecarribee sites. He will be holding conversations about community experiences and be responsible for the analysis and reporting of data.

evaluation governance is presented in Section 7 above, and the communication plan is presented in Appendix A.

10 Deliverables and timeline

Table 4 below identifies the key Stage 1 deliverables associated with this evaluation and delivery dates.

Table 4 Timeline and deliverables

Item	Deliverable	Date
Year 1		
1.	Draft evaluation plan (with key evaluation questions, associated measures and methods).	30 April 2016
2.	Ethics application submitted to the AH&MRC.	23 May 2016
3.	Literature review outlining methodological and ethical approach to the <i>OCHRE</i> Evaluation – final version	30 May 2016
4.	Annual progress evaluation report (update on community field visits and ethics application; summary of literature review findings)	30 June 2016
Year 2		
5.	Mid-year progress report	30 Dec 2016
Year 3		
6.	Annual progress report	30 June 2017
7.	Mid-year progress report	30 Dec 2017
8.	Stage 1 evaluation report (with findings of the process evaluation for each project – this will include recommendations for change to improve project outcomes for evaluation design).	30 June 2018

References

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Appendix A Communication plan

Target audience	Communication objectives	Format	Timing	Staff
Aboriginal Affairs	How will the evaluation be conducted?	Evaluation Plan	Apr 2016	Ilan BJ Shona Michael
		Teleconf meeting	Weekly	
		Face to face meetings	Monthly	
	What progress is being made in the evaluation?	Progress report	June 2016 Dec 2016 Jun 2017 Dec 2017	Ilan BJ Shona Michael
		Teleconf	Weekly	
		Face to face meetings	Monthly	
OCHRE Initiative communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the OCHRE Evaluation? What is included in the OCHRE evaluation? Who is undertaking the evaluation? How will the evaluation be undertaken? How long will it take? Who will be involved in the evaluation? What is the content of the report and recommendations When will the reports and recommendations be out? 	Evaluation Plan	April 2016	Ilan BJ Shona Michael
		Community flyers	May 2016	BJ Michael
		Participant information sheets and consent forms	May 2016	BJ Michael
		Teleconf		Ilan BJ Michael
		FAQs		Aboriginal Affairs
		Face to face meetings		Ilan BJ Michael
Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the evaluation be undertaken? What progress is being made in the evaluation? When will the reports and recommendations be out? 	Face to face meetings	Yearly	Ilan
Aboriginal Affairs	How will the evaluation be conducted?	Evaluation Plan	Apr 2016	Ilan BJ Shona
	What progress is being made in the evaluation?	Progress Reports	Dec 2016 Jun 2017 Dec 2017	Ilan BJ Michael Shona
OCHRE Evaluation Steering Committee	How will the evaluation be conducted?	Evaluation Plan	Apr 2016	Ilan
	What progress is being made in the evaluation?	Progress Reports	Dec 2016 Jun 2017 Dec 2017	Ilan BJ Shona Michael
NCARA	<p>What progress is being made in the evaluation?</p> <p>What are the implications of the findings?</p> <p>How should the findings be disseminated?</p>	Face to face meetings, draft reports		