



Rhetoric to reality: Evolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities



Education
Aboriginal Affairs





RESEARCH & EVALUATION

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- NSW Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Education
- Aboriginal Housing Office
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- Office of Environment and Heritage
- Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner
- NSW Public Service Commission



ARTIST RECOGNITION (COVER)

Kim Healey is a descendant of the Bundjalung and Gumbaynggirr nations, and also a descendant of the Djunbun (Platypus) Clan, original custodians of the Washpool at Lionsville in Northern NSW. She currently lives within Country in South Grafton NSW, creating and telling her stories along the mighty Clarence River. Kim strives to capture Country and utilise her voice through her work, to interpret the world around her.

This work captures Kim Healey's connection to Country. It speaks of the Bundjalung and Gumbaynggirr nations which were created by the Yuladarah, the creator of rivers, boundaries and tribal land. This is the Clarence River boundary with Susan Island in the middle of these two tribes which is a birthing place. Using a sgraffito technique, scribing in the sandy medium is a mapping system of Country.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and may not reflect those of NSW Aboriginal Affairs, the participating agencies or the NSW Government.



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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
INTRODUCTION	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	18
ANALYSIS	21
DISCUSSION	22
CONCLUSION	32
REFERENCES	33
APPENDICES	37

**FIGURES
AND TABLES**

Figure 1: Nous Group continuum of collaboration	11
Figure 2: IAPP's Public Participation Spectrum	11
Figure 3: Findings of major themes emerging from 'Rhetoric to Reality'	23
Figure 4: Developmental model of cultural competence	26
Table 1: Activities to address structural racism	15

“

There are three ways of dealing with people: you can do **to** them, **for** them or **with** them.

The historic experience for Aboriginal people is the done to or done for experience. We need to be doing it **with** them.” - research participant



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research question — *How can the NSW public service shift its structural and attitudinal frameworks to support devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities?*¹— was explored in a study conducted by a public servant research team who were part of the 2015 cohort Executive Master of Public Administration (EMPA) of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). Sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs, this qualitative study sought to inform the future development of policy and practice in devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities. This required rich and detailed descriptions of the experiences of NSW public servants who work with Aboriginal communities, so that the research team could understand their underlying motivations, gain insights into context, and generate practical ideas. Together with literature and document reviews and a

limited systematic review that explored the principles and practices of co-design, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with 10 senior NSW public servants and focus groups with 32 mid-level NSW public servants in regional and metropolitan locations.

Local and international literature clearly highlights the many barriers to effective collaboration with Indigenous communities. In Australia, these include its colonial past and its history of poor social and economic outcomes that have contributed to a lack of respect, understanding and trust between government and communities. But when it comes to specific initiatives, the literature falls short. Recommendations for improvements to structural and attitudinal frameworks for more effective collaboration are broad and little more than rhetoric.

¹ A note on terminology: Given this report reviews international literature, it refers to and uses the words “Indigenous peoples” for indigenous peoples in jurisdictions other than Australia, and where the term refers generically to Indigenous peoples internationally. When referring to Australian research, the term Aboriginal is used, as this is the term adopted by the NSW Government. A particular reference may use the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which is the term commonly used in the literature and in official publications outside of NSW.

For the public servants involved in the study, 'devolved decision-making' in Aboriginal communities is not the final objective. Rather, their overriding concern is to find and practice different ways of working with Aboriginal people that involve sharing knowledge and power, collaborating, responding to local contexts and ultimately, achieving better shared outcomes for communities. With this goal in mind, the research team identified three themes for shifting NSW public service structural and attitudinal frameworks. Connecting to culture, connecting to Country highlights that current efforts to develop genuine cultural competence in the NSW public service can be ad hoc and tokenistic, and that a lack of cultural competence remains a dominant barrier to collaborative relationships with Aboriginal communities. Setting the tone indicates the need for strong and consistent leadership to support successful racial equity initiatives, and for clearer career paths for Aboriginal public servants into leadership positions given their important role in shifting the way government interacts with communities. Achieving 'big change by starting small' suggests that governments can use locally designed initiatives — perhaps funded by micro-financing approaches — to engage more closely with Aboriginal communities. This approach requires a long-term commitment to build and foster capabilities within Aboriginal community organisations, and can include more integrated procurement processes delivered using co-design principles to improve opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

Throughout this report, the research team highlights areas that the NSW public service

might explore further, since they offer the clearest opportunities to shift structural and attitudinal frameworks towards effective collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal communities. These include the following.

- Cultural competence is most effective when it is localised, ongoing and taught on-Country. Local communities could benefit from being engaged in this teaching. Given the strong recurring nature of cultural competence themes, there would appear to be value in considering these elements in the development of any NSW public sector-wide framework for cultural competence.
- Public-sector leaders who are fully committed to cultural competence are most likely to establish collaboration with Aboriginal communities as a routine approach within government. Examples of successful leadership of this kind should be recognised and publicised across the public sector to hasten and effect change.
- Aboriginal public servants should be supported and nurtured, and should be seen as critically important for a culturally competent NSW public service.
- Initiatives such as local micro finance may offer a more flexible way to strengthen the design of local services and improve their outcomes.
- Whenever Aboriginal-controlled organisations succeed and grow strong, their stories should be shared to set a positive tone for devolved decision-making. Their example will guide others to replicate the elements of their success.

INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric to reality is the final report of a research project completed as part of the core curriculum of the 2015 Executive Master of Public Administration (EMPA) of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). The project was sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs to inform the future development of policy options in the area of devolved decision-making in Aboriginal communities.

OCHRE is the NSW Government plan for Aboriginal affairs. The name *OCHRE* is both a word, symbolic of Aboriginal peoples' deep connection with Country, and an acronym standing for opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, and empowerment. The plan is a significant departure from previous government strategies. *OCHRE* prioritises genuine partnerships between government and Aboriginal communities and supports local communities to determine their own priorities and make decisions. This devolved decision-making approach seeks to change the relationship between government and participating Aboriginal communities.

Implementation of *OCHRE*, now in its third year, may be hampered by blockages in the public sector which prevent genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities. These include a disconnect between high-level government principles and their implementation by public servants on the ground. This report provides new and specific insights in response to the research question:

How can the NSW public service shift its structural and attitudinal frameworks to support devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities?

The report builds on existing literature and early learning from the implementation of *OCHRE*, and focuses on identifying and shifting the blockages within the public service which are preventing real change in the decision-making dynamics between government and Aboriginal communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The aim of *OCHRE* is to “support strong Aboriginal communities in which Aboriginal people actively influence and fully participate in social, economic and cultural life” (NSW Government 2013, p. 5). Specific outcomes include growing the capacity of local Aboriginal leaders and communities to drive their own solutions, focusing on “creating opportunities for economic empowerment” and making “both government and communities more accountable for the money they spend”.

The merits of involving Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to improve public policy outcomes are not disputed. This literature review focuses on the effectiveness of approaches governments have taken to collaborate with Indigenous communities, and in particular how both institutional (structural) and individual (attitudinal) frameworks can affect the successful devolution of decision-making to Indigenous communities. The review

identifies a gap in the broad literature on practical, tested strategies to shift structural and attitudinal frameworks to improve public policy outcomes, particularly in the context of Australian Aboriginal affairs.

Collaboration, partnership, devolved decision-making, co-management ... what does it all mean?

Researchers and organisations that advise on collaboration have identified a continuum of different types. For example, Nous Group (2013) describes a continuum with six forms of collaboration progressively increasing in difficulty and resource intensity, shown in Figure 1 below. The NSW Public Service Commission (2014) describes an identical model.

Similarly, the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP 2014; Figure 2) describes a continuum which features five levels of collaboration, with increasing impact on the

Figure 1: Nous Group continuum of collaboration



decision and the promise that the organisation is making to the public.

The further an organisation moves along the spectrum, the more power and control it is giving up or sharing with the party with which it is collaborating. In relation to its continuum, Nous Group (2013, p. 9) notes that, “[at] the right end the organisations, at least in one area of their operations, have effectively ‘merged’. They have a common mission, joint authority and control and share risk, resources and benefits.” The furthest right side of the IAPP spectrum takes this a step further, as it places

the decision-making in the hands of others, and is true devolved decision-making.

Devolved decision-making generally refers to the delegating or relinquishing of control or authority by one party to another party. The literature discusses devolving decision-making both to parties within an organisation and to parties external to it (Astill 1998). Devolved decision-making is also sometimes referred to as decentralisation, although some authors argue that decentralisation is a different concept (Cascon-Pereira 2006). For the purposes of this paper, we define devolved decision-making

Figure 2: IAPP's Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing impact of the decision

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decisions making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

as the process through which an agency of control (such as a government department) deliberately relinquishes aspects of control over the organisations or functions for which it is responsible, in order for those organisations or functions to move further towards self-management (adapted from Sharpe 1994). The aim of devolved decision-making is to enable the party to which decisions are devolved to be more responsive to local circumstances and needs, and more flexible in dealing with rapidly changing environments (Sharpe 1996).

The language used in government and academic literature to describe the desired working relationships with Indigenous populations differs. The terms are not always clearly defined and are used interchangeably, resulting in a lack of clarity and meaning. For example, in environmental management, the concept of 'co-management' arises often (e.g. Armitage et al 2011; Robson & Kant 2007; Zurba et al 2012), and refers to "various degrees of integration and power-sharing between pure state and pure local community resource management systems, ranging from government consultation with user groups, through advisory group input into government management, to user group management with government assistance" (Robson & Kant 2007, p. 1114). In health and other literature, 'partnership' (e.g. Taylor et al 2013; Thomas et al 2015), 'engagement' (e.g. Kelaher et al 2014) and 'shared decision-making' (e.g. Jull et al 2015) are used to describe varying degrees of engagement. It is unclear whether these terms are used consistently with the continua described above, or in a more generic way. Given this, we are using the term 'collaboration' as a generic word to describe any level of partnership along the continuum.

There is considerable research on outcomes, but the focus has been on particular sectors

Achieving any of the above outcomes is widely recognised by governments and researchers as a 'wicked problem' (e.g. Hunter 2007; Signal et

al 2013). Considerable research in Australia, and countries such as New Zealand and Canada, has examined whether governments have been successful in engaging with Indigenous populations to achieve stated objectives. The majority of this research draws on specific case studies, and to a lesser extent, interviews with stakeholders. The case studies have mostly focused on specific initiatives in environmental management and health. Nevertheless, common themes have emerged regarding the barriers and incentives to shared or devolved decision-making with Indigenous populations.

Both institutional (structural) and individual (attitudinal) frameworks may affect actions to devolve decision-making

Both the structures of an organisation and the beliefs and attitudes of its individual employees can have a profound effect on that organisation's ability to collaborate successfully with Aboriginal communities. "Compared with the rest of the Australian community, most Aboriginal people are considerably disadvantaged. It may be that prejudice toward Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal Australians would, either directly or indirectly, inhibit any positive moves to assist in changing this situation" (Pendersen et al 2000, p. 111). Issues surrounding Aboriginal disadvantage and negative attitudes in Australia are a combination of both societal and individual processes (Pendersen et al 2004). Racial discrimination can occur not only at the individual level, but also at the system or institutional level, as a result of the policies, conditions and practices that affect a broad group of people (AHRC 2012).

Structural or institutional frameworks are work roles and administrative mechanisms that allow organisations to conduct, coordinate and control their work. Structural frameworks may be real or conceptual, and may include regulations, delegations, policies, resource allocation, politics, networks and relationships, hierarchies and corporate structures, power, performance targets and measurement, and risk management (Rapert & Wren 1998).

At the organisation or society-wide level, institutional racism may explain why an organisation's or a government's efforts to improve outcomes for Indigenous populations have had limited success. Institutional racism refers to "the manner in which a society's institutions operate systematically, both directly and indirectly, to favo[u]r some groups over others regarding access to opportunities and valued resources" (Delgado 2015, para 1). Institutional racism can persist even if the individuals working within the organisation do not have racist beliefs, attitudes or actions (Delgado 2015; Pierce 2014). Direct, overt forms of institutional racism are easier to identify, address and eradicate than indirect forms (Delgado 2015). Indirect institutional racism, however, may continue to exist even if earlier laws, policies and practices that were specifically designed to exclude particular groups have since been eliminated (Delgado 2015), for example racial segregation laws in the United States, apartheid in South Africa, and the White Australia Policy. Indirect institutional racism can go some way to explaining why overt racism (e.g. hate crimes) is socially unacceptable, but racial disadvantage persists (Pierce 2014).

At the individual level, people's attitudes, beliefs and actions can act to disadvantage some groups over others. Attitudes represent an "enduring favourable or unfavourable response disposition towards a person, object or issue" (Cacioppo et al 1991, p. 523). Attitudes are generally explained in positive and negative attribute dimensions, such as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likeable-dislikeable (Ajzen 2001). The object of the attitude could be anything in the environment, such as a concrete target, person, behaviour, abstract entity, or event (Albarracín et al 2010). People organise their perceptions of the world in terms of their attitudes, and attitudes can influence how people behave (Cacioppo et al 1991). These include racist attitudes and beliefs. Like institutional racism, individual racism has changed over time, where 'modern

prejudice' is more prevalent than 'old-fashioned' racism (Pendersen et al 2000). Where the old-fashioned form is characterised by overt hostility and rejection, the modern form is more subtle and covert, involving individualistic values (Pendersen et al 2004). Poteat and Spanierman (2012) state that "modern racism attitudes comprise beliefs that racial minorities are overly aggressive and forceful in attaining societal resources, receive unfair opportunities, and are undeserving of the positions of status they have attained" (p. 759). Studies have shown that a person's awareness of their personally-held biases is critical in reducing an individual's modern forms of prejudice and discrimination. "When people's goals to be non-prejudiced are made salient, they often adjust their attitudes and behaviours to be more egalitarian, and they work harder to compensate for prejudiced behaviour" (Perry et al 2015, p. 64). On the other hand, when people's biases are not recognised, they are likely to continue prejudiced behaviours. Therefore, a person's awareness of and concern for his or her own biases are critical factors in reducing prejudice, and people may 'correct' their thoughts and actions to become more egalitarian when they become aware of their bias (Perry et al 2015).

Barriers to devolved decision-making are well documented, as are theories for supporting it

The literature analysing government approaches to collaborating with Indigenous populations identifies barriers to success and ways to improve collaboration, both in Australia and overseas.

The barriers or limitations include the legacy of the colonial past and a history of poor outcomes, which has engendered a lack of respect, understanding and trust between the parties. Examples from the literature include the use of 'white' language (Quayle & Sonn 2013); historical and cultural differences, including insensitivity to Indigenous cultural customs (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2013; Escott et

al 2015; Hunt 2007; Taylor et al 2013); tokenistic inclusion of Indigenous representatives in governance structures which offer no opportunity for real influence (Escott et al 2015); and a coercive or paternalistic approach on the part of governments, particularly when problems arise (Hunt 2007; New Zealand Productivity Commission 2015).

The structures and frameworks used to establish and develop working relationships have also been subject to criticism. For example, issues which can hinder the development of relationships include:

- disengagement and high turnover of government staff (CIRCA 2015; Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2013; Hunt 2007)
- government failure to understand the customary decision-making processes of Aboriginal communities (Zurba et al 2012)
- a government tendency to focus on managing a relationship to the point of agreement instead of managing it in order to foster ongoing cooperation (Robson & Kant 2007)
- limited data on outcomes and limited evaluation of programs (Hunt 2007; Productivity Commission 2015; Te Puni Kokiri 2013; Te Rau Matatini 2014)
- short-term funding (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2013)
- programs delivered in isolation or where responsibilities are ambiguous (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2013; Kelly 2011) so that Indigenous communities must participate in multiple government relationships (Kelly 2011)
- politicisation of the policy (Stewart & Jarvie 2015; Te Puni Kokiri 2013).

As well as analysing barriers, the literature presents theories about what works, including many recommendations about best-practice collaboration with Aboriginal communities. It is clear that interactions with Aboriginal people,

particularly in the delivery of services, should be culturally appropriate or safe (Thomas et al 2015). This issue is raised frequently in research on the health sector, where culturally appropriate models of care recognise a holistic approach to health and well-being. “Aboriginal health means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their community” (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Group 1989). This holistic approach can also be observed in other Indigenous peoples’ beliefs and customs, including Māori peoples (Te Rau Matatini 2014).

Building trust and developing genuine relationships with Aboriginal communities are also a strong theme in the literature. This includes allowing time for trusted personal relationships to develop and consolidate before becoming operational (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2015; Taylor et al 2013; Zurba et al 2012), and taking care that government does not dictate the rules of engagement as the more powerful partner (Hutcheson 2011). Linked to this is supporting an organisational culture in government that fosters and supports Indigenous perspectives (Te Puni Kokiri 2013). It is important to establish structures that allow effective collaboration and engagement, including providing opportunities for Aboriginal representatives to “sit at the table in true partnership ... to identify issues and solutions” (NSW Ombudsman 2011) and other ongoing formal mechanisms for robust engagement on both the development and delivery of programs (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2015). Flexibility in design and delivery is important so that local needs and contexts can be taken into account (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2015). There is a role for governments to develop capacity-building programs for Aboriginal representatives (Zurba et al 2012), including in governance (Hunt 2007) and negotiation (CIRCA 2015), in addition to practical training

in relation to the policy issue at hand (e.g. land management, health care, etc.).

It is also useful to discuss individual-level attitudinal barriers to collaboration, and how these might be overcome, as this understanding may help to counter any beliefs or attitudes held by individual staff that do not align with the values of the organisation. A series of studies of factors that cause prejudice, and in particular those that are potentially modifiable, showed that less empathy towards Aboriginal Australians and less collective guilt about past and present wrongs against Aboriginal peoples were strong predictors of negative attitudes toward Aboriginal Australians (Pendersen et al 2000; Pendersen et al 2004).

There is limited research on practical strategies for addressing problematic structural and attitudinal frameworks

Studies that specifically examine ways to address structural racism in organisations have found that no single activity will lead to transformative organisational change. However,

it has been shown that a combination of practices can promote change (Abramovitz & Blitz 2015). Practical activities that an organisation can undertake are presented in Table 1. These are based on a study undertaken by Abramovitz and Blitz (2015).

These actions are supported by other authors, including those in the Australian context, who also recommend the provision of cultural safety training for staff (e.g. see Downing & Kowal 2011; Fredericks 2006; Paradies et al 2008), although Downing and Kowal (2011) note that cultural safety training has limitations. Further, organisational leaders are important to achieving change and engaging individuals in racial equity work. Racial equity initiatives tend to fare better when executive leaders openly and actively support the process (Abramovitz & Blitz 2015). Organisational change to promote racial equity can however be limited by insufficient resources, the attitudes of staff, organisational reluctance to take on resource allocation conflicts, and an unwillingness to change an organisation's structure (Abramovitz & Blitz 2015).

Table 1: Activities to address structural racism

Policies that express a commitment to racial equity
A deliberate strategy to hire, retain, and promote racially diverse staff
An orientation process for new staff that highlights the importance of racial equity
A shared language or analysis about race and racism within the organisation
Informal discussions with staff about racial equity issues
Anti-racism training or workshops which staff are encouraged to attend
Change the organisation's physical environment to reflect diversity
Modification of clinical, student, or staff evaluation forms to address racial equity

Studies have also shown it is possible to change prejudiced attitudes towards Aboriginal people through education campaigns that counter persistent false beliefs about this population (e.g. that Aboriginal people drink more alcohol than non-Aboriginal people, or that Aboriginal people receive more government benefits than non-Aboriginal people), and inform about Aboriginal history (Pendersen et al 2000; Pendersen et al 2004). In addition, inducing empathy through something as simple as asking people to read about commonplace acts of discrimination, has also been shown to change attitudes towards other racial groups (Finlay & Stephan 2000).

Theories and practices from other disciplines offer ideas to assist in developing structures and supportive attitudes that are conducive to collaboration

On the spectrum discussed above (pp. 10-11), the more intensive the collaboration, the more important it is to have a broad range of enabling factors in place (Nous Group 2013). It is essential that a collaborative partnership has mutual goals, purposes and benefits. Other enablers include the existence or possibility of trust, effective leadership, influential individuals, and appropriate governance (NSW Public Service Commission 2014; Nous Group 2013). An organisation must also possess specific capabilities which support collaboration, including conceptual skills (e.g. big-picture thinking, creativity, risk tolerance), technical skills (e.g. risk analysis, evaluation design), and interpersonal skills (e.g. relationship management, negotiation, communication, trust-building, diplomacy) (Nous Group 2013). One report (PRC 2015), which examines the way the recommendations of inquiries into institutional responses to child sex abuse have been implemented, and the factors that have assisted, or hindered successful implementation, elucidates how structural frameworks help or hinder change in an organisation. The report found that the facilitating factors include an

individual or position to champion change, a project team to oversee implementation, public or government support for the reform, resources (both financial and human), and political or ministerial support (PRC 2015, p. 80). Factors that hinder implementation include budgetary constraints, lack of human resources, existing workload or time constraints, and lack of political will (PRC 2015, p. 81).

VicHealth's partnership tool sets out a change process which organisations can follow to embed partnerships into an organisation as an ongoing way of working (VicHealth 2011). This process is similar to those described in traditional change management texts (e.g. Lewin's three-stage model (1947), the GE Work-Out model (Ulrich et al 2002) and John Kotter's eight-step plan (1996)). VicHealth's partnership tool comprises four steps: motivating change, developing support for change, maintaining the transition, and sustaining momentum. The tool also provides a checklist for assessing the strength of a particular partnership the organisation has with another party. The items on the checklist reflect the capabilities outlined above, and focus on common goals, mutual benefit, skills and governance, and participatory decision-making (VicHealth 2011).

Genuine support is essential to bring about the conditions required for effective collaboration. Potential barriers to collaboration must be identified and removed; enabling factors and capabilities within the collaborating organisations and individuals must be developed (NSW Public Service Commission 2014). The NSW Public Service Commission identified four actions that are required: 1) strong leadership from the Premier and ministers in adopting collaboration as a common way of working, with secretaries and chief executives leading the expansion of capability within their agencies; 2) supportive accountability and incentive arrangements, such as performance recognition of collaborative efforts and outcomes, and measures targeting the organisation and individuals to track progress; 3) active development of the capabilities required for collaboration, backed

by the necessary resources; and 4) increased opportunities to collaborate and learn through practice (NSW Public Service Commission 2014).

Summary

From widely differing geographic and policy contexts, the barriers which hinder effective collaboration on public policy outcomes with Indigenous communities are well documented. Recommendations about how to overcome them however tend to be expressed rhetorically, and in the form of broad concepts such as “culturally appropriate” practices (Thomas et al 2015), “flexible approaches ... to focus on strengths” (Taylor et al 2013, p. 1) and “genuine engagement” (Hunt 2013; Hutcheson 2011). This provides little guidance on practical implementation. Much academic research studies specific engagement initiatives in localised geographic areas, and mostly in health and environmental management (e.g. Beaudoin 2015; Escott et al 2015; Kelaher et al 2014; Robson & Kant 2007; Zurba et al 2012). There is limited research on other sectors and on practical ways to make the devolution of government decision-making to Indigenous communities more effective. Research outside Aboriginal affairs offers some strategies to make structural and attitudinal frameworks more conducive to effective collaboration (e.g. Nous Group 2013; NSW Public Service Commission 2014; PRC 2015; VicHealth 2011), but these apply broadly and it is not clear that they would work in Aboriginal affairs.



METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Methodology refers to the rationale and philosophical assumptions that underlie research, while methods are the techniques and procedures followed to conduct it (McGregor & Murnane 2010).

The methodology and methods of the present study were informed by the research team's and the project sponsor's understanding of current issues, the research question and the available resources.

To answer the research question, it was essential to find out in detail what NSW public servants working with Aboriginal communities were experiencing, and what they thought would hinder or assist devolved decision-making. To that end, the research team favoured qualitative methods. O'Leary (2014) notes the goal of qualitative research is to gain an intimate understanding of people, places, cultures and situations through rich engagement and even immersion in the reality being studied. Qualitative research methods are particularly useful for understanding underlying reasons and motivations, for

gaining insights into the context of a problem, for generating ideas and hypotheses, and for uncovering prevalent opinions (Park & Park 2016).

To assess existing knowledge as well as to collect primary data on the personal perspectives and experiences of NSW public servants, the following methods were used:

- in-depth interviews with NSW public service executives
- focus groups with NSW public servants
- a systematic review of literature on co-design.

Interviews and focus groups

Sampling approach

Given the exploratory nature of the study, it was considered important to hear from those public servants working most closely with Aboriginal communities, as their experience would contribute most to a better understanding of the

issues. Purposive sampling was considered the most appropriate strategy so that informants could be deliberately selected based on their experience and expertise. “The purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within” (Tongco 2007, p. 1).

At the same time, the research team wanted to ensure a range of perspectives was obtained. Consequently, the purposive sampling strategy included a maximum variation schema. Purposive sampling with a maximum variation technique aims to provide the most representative sample while at the same time generating contrasting views (Teddy & Yu 2007). “Comparisons or contrasts are at the very core of qualitative data analysis strategies (e.g. Glaser & Strauss 1967; Mason 2002; Spradley 1979, 1980)” (Teddy & Yu 2007 p. 81).

Aboriginal Affairs identified the following agencies as having the greatest involvement with Aboriginal communities, and as such, they were selected for inclusion:

- Aboriginal Housing Office, Department of Family and Community Services
- Multiple policy units and districts, Department of Family and Community Services
- Cultural Heritage Division, Office of Environment and Heritage
- National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Environment and Heritage
- Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner.

Public servants at various levels (including senior executives) in these agencies were nominated by their agency to participate in the research. The participants were from a mix of regional and metropolitan centres (Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Dubbo).

The NSW Public Service Commissioner was also included for interview. His broad view and

experience of the NSW public service was considered to be of particular value.

In accordance with the research team’s approved application to the ANZSOG Human Research Ethics Committee, all research participants were given an explanatory paper and signed consent forms before they participated in an interview or focus group (see Appendices I-III). Participation was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the interviews or focus groups at any time.

Interviews

During July and August 2016, 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior executives; seven interviews were conducted by telephone and three were face-to-face. The interviews ran for approximately one hour. The interview guide was based on the research question and was designed using processes outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013). The interview guide was tested initially with a senior executive with significant experience of working with local decision-making in Aboriginal communities; the question construction and flow of the interview were subsequently refined. A copy of the interview guide is in Appendix IV.

Focus groups

Seven focus groups were held across three locations (Coffs Harbour, Dubbo and Sydney). Thirty-two public servants participated. The focus groups varied in size from two participants to 10. Five were conducted in-person and two by teleconference. Each group ran for approximately two hours and was facilitated by two research team members. A copy of the focus group schedule is in Appendix V.

Twenty-eight focus group participants completed an information sheet to assist researchers to understand the participants’ demographics. Half (n=14) of the participants identified as female and half (n=14) as male. Most of the participants (n=20) were aged between 35 and 54 years and had worked in the NSW public service for 10 years or more. Sixteen participants worked in rural locations, eight in metropolitan areas

and four participants identified as working in both regional and metro areas. Almost all participants (n=23) reported they had experience working with Aboriginal people in the community.

Those who conducted the interviews or focus groups partly transcribed the recordings while another research team member (not involved in that interview or group) listened to the recordings and edited the transcripts where appropriate. This ensured important themes and issues were not overlooked.

Systematic review

Positive outcomes achieved through genuine co-design were a common theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. To understand the practice more, and how it might contribute to changing public service practices, a focused systematic review was undertaken.

The search engines Google scholar and Victoria University of Wellington Library's Te Whaharoa were used. The search criteria were 'co-design' in the title and 'community'. The search was limited to studies and articles completed in the last 10 years. Newspaper articles and studies that focused on ethnic committees and art were excluded as these were not seen as relevant to the research question.

A matrix approach to the review evidence hierarchy was used that included the following headings:

- reference/title
- discipline (level in hierarchy)
- focus/research question
- key concepts/findings
- method, including sample size, sampling method and data collection.

The findings of the systematic review are included in the *Discussion* section of this report.



ANALYSIS

The primary data analysis followed the key steps for thematic analysis as outlined by O'Leary (2014, Ch. 13 & 14) and Braun and Clarke (2013; 2006) summarised as:

- identifying biases and noting overall impressions
- reducing the data and coding into themes
- searching for patterns and interconnections
- mapping and building themes
- building and verifying theories
- drawing conclusions.

The overall process was iterative and dynamic, involving cycles of both inductive and deductive reasoning. Research team members individually reviewed all of the written transcripts and identified common themes. The research team coded the data according to statements or ideas expressed by participants which were relevant to the research question (for example, mention of things that were barriers or enablers

in the operation of structural or attitudinal frameworks, and of processes associated with devolved decision-making and the role of the public service), or which could be associated with concepts described in the literature, or were unusual or surprising.

Relationships between the themes were identified allowing the data to be reduced further. The key themes that emerged are considered in the *Discussion* section of this report.

DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis revealed strong ideas about changes needed in the public service to support devolved or shared decision-making as a way to improve outcomes for Aboriginal communities. Considering the theme categories and sub-categories as analysed against the research question *How can the NSW public service shift its structural and attitudinal frameworks to support devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities?* the research team found that for public servants, devolved decision-making occupied a secondary role.

“Don’t turn devolved decision-making into an ideology.”²

The interviews and focus groups revealed that for participants, devolved decision-making in Aboriginal communities is not the final objective. They did not disagree with the concept of devolved decision-making, but viewed it as another policy initiative which was not directly relevant to their current work. Most participants were not involved significantly or directly in

local decision-making under *OCHRE*, but were experienced in working with Aboriginal people and communities, and in earlier iterations of government policy mechanisms for shared decision-making. These public servants were interested in shifting to *different ways of working* with Aboriginal people that involve sharing knowledge and power, collaborating, responding to local contexts and ultimately, achieving better outcomes for communities. The central concern for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal public servants participating in this research was better shared outcomes. Whether the means of achieving these was co-design, devolved decision-making, community development, or other collaborative ways of working, the most important thing was to create better *shared outcomes* than are currently being experienced by Aboriginal communities, through a shift in the public service to different ways of working.

With shared outcomes as the goal, the strong recurring themes about what needs to shift in the

²All quotations in this section are from interview and focus group participants.

public service to achieve the goal were grouped into the following three categories (depicted in Figure 3):

1. Connecting to culture, connecting to Country

“We have to learn to be the servant and not the decision maker.”

“Cultural competency training is a joke, it’s generic, it’s pointless, it’s pretty ridiculous.”

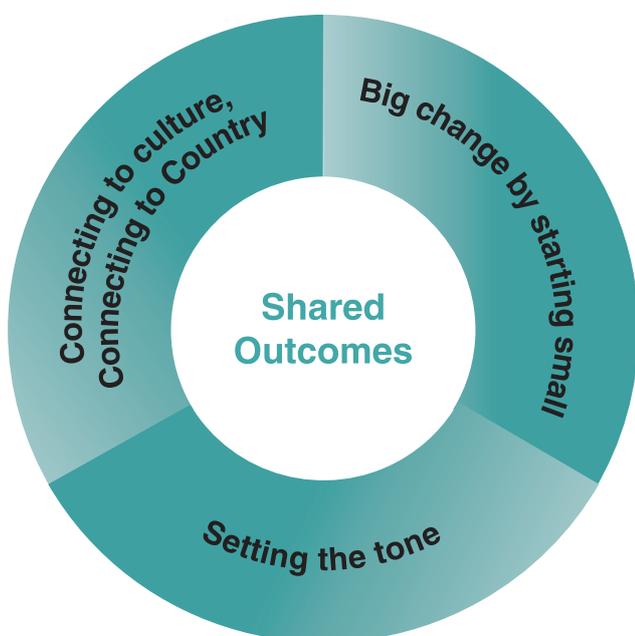
2. Setting the tone

“Strong leaders can change cultures.”

3. Achieving big change by starting small:

“Every community, every parent wants the best for their child, but people are so disempowered and overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems that they’re not even prepared to start small.”

Figure 3: Findings of major themes emerging from ‘Rhetoric to Reality’



Shift 1: Connecting to culture, connecting to Country

Key findings

The theme which emerged most clearly from our research was how important it is for public servants to develop and maintain genuine cultural competence. Almost all participants raised some aspect of cultural awareness or competence training as an example of what works and what does not. Participants felt strongly that the current approach to cultural competence in the public service can be ad hoc, tokenistic, generic and static. Similarly, we found that ideas about cultural awareness, competence, safety or intelligence are not well articulated or understood in the NSW public service. The following statements provided by participants highlight these ideas:

“We’re underdone on comprehensive support for developing cultural competency.”

“I think we can all put our hand up, ‘Yep, job done,’ but then not actually spending any time with Aboriginal communities or adding on that extra layer to think about them.”

“Cultural competency training must be delivered in the most authentic way possible. It has to be real, practical and relevant for staff in their roles.”

“It needs to be honest and delivered by Aboriginal people.”

Research participants considered genuine cultural competence to be critical to changing public sector attitudes and structures. This finding is supported by the literature, which shows that cultural understanding (Zurba et al 2012) and culturally appropriate or safe service delivery (Thomas et al 2015) are important to building relationships with Aboriginal people. Studies have shown that a combination of practices can change structural racism in organisations (Abramovitz & Blitz 2015).

The literature also supports the provision of cultural training for staff (Downing & Kowal 2011, Fredericks 2006, Paradies et al 2008). The limitations of cultural awareness training as a stand-alone activity were noted by our research participants and have been noted in previous research (e.g. Downing & Kowal 2011), including the risk of stereotyping, promoting 'otherness' and ignoring systemic responses. However, studies have shown it is possible to change prejudiced attitudes towards Aboriginal people through specific education activities (Finlay & Stephan 2000; Pendersen et al 2000 & 2004).

The local decision-making framework recognises that public servants need a level of cultural competence to participate. The Premier's Memorandum *M2015-01 Local Decision Making*, states that "NSW agencies will adhere to the principles of local decision-making and ensure staff are educated to respond to the needs of Aboriginal communities in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner".

While cultural competence was recognised by our research participants and supported by the literature as a key enabler, the lack of a current framework for the development of genuine cultural competence by public servants persists as a dominant issue in shifting public service structural and attitudinal frameworks.

"The key is having a culturally competent NSW government."

Below we note a number of recurring ideas for improvement in the understanding and the application of cultural competence in the public service that were raised by research participants.

Accepting that racism and paternalism still exist in the attitudes and structures of the public service and which may be manifested in 'unconscious bias' was noted by many participants: *"It's hard to accept we have unconscious bias because people in the public sector are values driven."* Participants were candid about what they perceive as paternalistic views and subtle forms of racism

and bias shown by individuals and institutions: *"I believe government and its agencies a lack of faith and trust in Aboriginal people's ability to make sound decisions in the best interest of their communities."*

Understanding history and the historical trauma experienced by Aboriginal people was viewed as critical. *"From a community perspective there is a lot of historical hurt or pain from previous government decisions... You have to let them vent their anger and frustration of the historical decisions that have been made that have had a significant impact on their communities."*

"[A] lot of our staff don't understand the stolen generation."

Re-conceptualising cultural competence in the public service as a lifelong journey was seen by many participants as necessary for meaningful change. This includes real experience of working alongside Aboriginal people and communities, and ongoing reflective learning. *"We need our staff to keep asking, 'Why is that the case?'"* This finding is supported by the literature, which notes that enhancing a person's awareness of their biases is critical in reducing modern forms of prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Perry et al 2015).

Building trust was seen as vital. For example, participants talked about public servants, including senior public servants, taking the time before getting down to business to build relationships with Aboriginal people, by having a cuppa on neutral ground, listening and building rapport: *"It may take a couple of meetings before you get down to the nitty gritty of developing your relationship with that community."* Building trust and developing genuine relationships were also a strong theme in the literature (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2015; Taylor et al 2013; Zurba et al 2012).

Including Country as critical to the development of cultural competence was a universal theme. Participants provided examples of how this could be achieved, including through site-based training, localised activities, travelling

to community with regional staff, meeting with Aboriginal people, learning about Country and doing business on Country: *“Working on Country is such a positive generator.”* *“Immersion delivers real learning.”* *“Immersion is the ideal form of training... need to remove the fear factor that white fellas have about talking to Aboriginal people.”*

Exploring new ways of problem-solving with Aboriginal people was also seen to build cultural competence. Participants named co-design as a good example of an immersive practice that had the effect of building deep cultural awareness and competence: *“Hearing the stories, bringing the humanity back, sharing stories”*. The systematic review also showed that co-design can generate and nurture interaction between stakeholders (local and external) which can lead in turn to community ownership of the solution to a problem (Sabiescu et al 2013).

Developing the ability of public servants to deal with uncertainty, complexity and anger was mentioned by many participants. *“Sometimes the public service gets a bit soft. It’s not personal; people need to vent... We need to expect there’s always going to be a contentious relationship. Just be comfortable with that — be comfortable with being unpopular.”*

Significantly, participants noted that there was no standard expectation across the NSW public service about undertaking cultural competence development, and that practices across agencies varied widely.

A number of participants held up *Cultural competency lifecycle at the Aboriginal Housing Office* (Aboriginal Housing Office, Family and Community Services) as one example of good practice because it sets out what is required as cultural competence development, what support is offered, and how success is measured throughout an individual’s employment with the Aboriginal Housing Office (copy at Appendix VI).

A potentially useful model for the development of cultural competence in the NSW public service that reflects the findings of this study and is similar to the Aboriginal Housing

Office model is found in the work of Ranzijn, McConnochie and Nolan (2009), who state that *“... developing cultural competence is more complex than completing a series of training sessions, ticking a series of boxes and claiming at the end that one is culturally competent”* (p. 5). The continuum of cultural competence, and the elements required to develop this competence are usefully depicted in the *Developmental model of cultural competence* at Figure 4, below (McConnochie, Egege & McDermott 2008 in Ranzijn, McConnochie & Nolan 2009, p. 9). This matrix has recently been used by the NSW Department of Justice, resulting in an agreement to move towards cultural competence rather than cultural awareness in the training and development of the legal profession (NSW Department of Justice, May 2016).

The way forward

Cultural competence programs need to be ongoing, on Country and localised.

“It has to be focused, down to specific community level. Get local staff to do cultural awareness training... has to be connected to the people of the Country and localised.”

“Lifelong cultural competence learning... perhaps consider layers of learning from basic, to site visits, to secondments in community organisations. Job swaps too for managers and execs.”

We note that the *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–17* (NSW Public Service Commission 2013) includes a sector-wide strategy to “Improve Aboriginal Cultural Competency in the Workplace” (Sector-wide Strategy 5). Under this strategy the NSW Public Service Commission has responsibility for a review of “the relative effectiveness of various approaches to Aboriginal Cultural Competency development across the Sector including the need for a Sector-wide framework” and to “Develop Sector-wide approaches designed to support agencies and staff to enhance their Aboriginal Cultural Competency”.

Figure 4: Developmental model of cultural competence

	CULTURAL INCOMPETENCE	CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE	CULTURAL AWARENESS	CULTURAL SENSITIVITY	CULTURAL COMPETENCE	CULTURAL PROFICIENCY
PROFESSIONALLY SPECIFIC SKILLS						
GENERIC SKILLS						
CRITICALLY EXAMINING THE PROFESSION						
INDIVIDUAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES						
UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND HISTORIES						
GENERIC UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE						

Cultural competence is most effective when it is localised, ongoing and taught on-Country. Teaching on-Country also presents the opportunity to engage local communities in its delivery.

Given the strong recurring nature of these themes, there would be value in considering these elements in the development of any NSW public sector-wide framework for cultural competence.

Shift 2: Setting the tone

Key findings

The 'tone' set by the public service for achieving shared outcomes with Aboriginal communities needs to shift. Levers to achieve this change include strong public sector leadership and, support and strengthening career paths for Aboriginal public servants.

Public sector leaders

Participants repeatedly raised public sector leadership as an enabler of shared and devolved decision-making.

"You need an innovative [public service] leader who has a long-term commitment to delivering services to Aboriginal communities and can make tough decisions and stay firm — not being frightened. Staying focused and clear."

"Strong leaders can change cultures."

"CEO going out and fronting community — having robust conversations, leading from the front, trust building, always following through."

Participants identified positive examples of public sector leaders who have worked with Aboriginal communities. Participants valued leaders who matched rhetoric with practice, and suggested the following characteristics of good leaders.

- Communicating a clear vision, purpose and process for improved outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW.
- Leading by example in getting out of the office and into communities to build relationships with Aboriginal organisations, community members and representatives, and not just when there are difficult or contentious issues. Leaders are not afraid

of hearing people's anger in these situations, but genuinely listen– *“leaders who are willing to give away their power”* – and make it a priority to engage with cultural events such as NAIDOC.

- Devolving decision-making to public servants who are closer to the communities, rather than holding all decision-making power in Sydney or, if that is not possible, taking the decision makers to the community rather than requiring the community to come to the decision makers.
- Fostering a culture that allows failure and learning. Innovation is essential when working with communities on complex issues where past outcomes have been poor. *“Government needs to let go of constant fear of repercussions if things don't work out and a level of accountability that makes us very nervous about making decisions. We need to focus on what is actually working in communities.”*

A good example of this was discussed where a Secretary authorised a genuine co-design process for a complex issue without any preconceived expectation of the outcome, and then followed through by supporting the outcome. This example contrasts with what Parker and Gallagher (2007) term an 'empty promise' – the more familiar experience of participants. Many discussed the way top-down control can inhibit potentially innovative solutions. The systematic review indicates this is likely to occur when consultation with community members has no bearing on final decisions, and where bottom-up decision-making continues to be undermined by top-down directives (Walsh et al 2006).

- Practising reflective learning. A good leader does not accept poor outcomes as the norm, but continually asks, 'Why is that the case?' and encourages staff to do the same.

Many of the above characteristics are consistent with the continuum of cultural

competence discussed earlier. The literature also suggests that racial equity initiatives tend to fare better when executive leaders openly support and become active in the process (Abramovitz & Blitz 2015). Participants were able to name good leaders in the public service, but noted that they are the exception rather than the rule. This suggests that good leaders who can develop and promote cultural competence should be given a higher profile.

The way forward

We suggest the leadership characteristics outlined above are best at enabling shared and devolved decision-making with Aboriginal communities, particularly when they are coupled with astute cultural competence. We note the NSW Public Service Commission's work in developing public-sector leaders and, in particular, the identification of leadership styles which foster high-performing organisations. There are similarities between the leadership styles identified by the commission and those identified in this research – for example, authenticity, development orientation (including collaboration), and people-development.

If public sector leaders are required or encouraged to demonstrate clearly that they are committed to developing their own cultural competence and that of their staff, their example is likely to shift attitudes about working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities.

High performing public sector leaders with an ongoing commitment to strong cultural competence were identified as the most likely to set the tone for collaboration with Aboriginal communities. A process that recognises and shares leadership success may deliver wider value across the public sector.

Aboriginal public servants

Participants were united in their view that Aboriginal staff in the public service play a critical role in shifting the way government interacts with communities, and help greatly to develop the cultural competence of non-Aboriginal staff. Two important themes emerged: first, the need to attract, support and retain Aboriginal staff, and second, the need for more Aboriginal people in senior decision-making roles in the public service.

“We have Aboriginal workers as front line workers, but we don’t have Aboriginal workers in management or policy positions.”

“We need to support our Aboriginal staff better — assist them to remain in their roles and stay healthy.”

Participants discussed the pressures experienced by Aboriginal public servants “given they’re ‘living it’ day to day and at home too”, and the community’s perception that Aboriginal public servants can solve problems over which they have very little real policy or decision-making power. It was noted that Aboriginal staff are often called on to deal with difficult Aboriginal clients or negotiations, rather than being seen as a resource to build the capability of other non-Aboriginal staff to work with Aboriginal clients. Regular debriefing and networking opportunities were suggested as a way to support and retain Aboriginal staff who must straddle both worlds.

Participants from several agencies suggested the NSW public service should become an employer of choice for Aboriginal people at all levels of seniority. The Aboriginal Housing Office was cited as an example: it markets itself directly to Aboriginal communities as a good place to work.

The way forward

Aboriginal staff in the public service should be supported, nurtured and seen as a critical component of a culturally competent NSW public service. However, the public service

needs to do better at promoting Aboriginal people into leadership roles. We note that all of these issues are addressed in the *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014-15*, including its aspirational target that 1.8 per cent of staff at all salary bands (including executive roles) be Aboriginal by 2021 – a figure which reflects the Aboriginal civilian population over 15 years in NSW (Aspirational Target, *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014-15*, NSW Public Service Commission). Since the strategy was published, the NSW public sector has focused more strongly on leadership development, networking and support for its Aboriginal employees.

Aboriginal public servants should be supported, nurtured and seen as a critical component of a culturally competent NSW public service.

Shift 3: Big change by starting small

Key findings

Participants reflected on the way structures such as legislation, policies and funding models are enacted. Their lack of flexibility was felt to inhibit closer engagement with Aboriginal communities. *“Funding approvals are so complex. We were going to have district budgets to meet district needs. However, we never got control of the budget. The centre is still operating around programs and programs don’t meet the needs of the communities as these decisions are made in Sydney and not at the local level.”* The ability to achieve positive outcomes through the application of co-design approaches was shown through examples of small, locally designed initiatives being implemented ‘under the radar’ and within existing structures. These initiatives suggest the public service can respond to community needs on a small and local scale, and that this may be an easier,

more flexible and less risky way to provide more tailored services and outcomes for communities.

In particular, our research suggests that shifts in the way funding arrangements operate, in the support provided to Aboriginal community organisations, and in the way public service procurement processes are undertaken, may help communities and smaller Aboriginal organisations to make the most of local opportunities with flow-on economic and wellbeing benefits.

“Program barriers, funding barriers, no-one wants to give up their money or take any risks... Innovation tends to happen when District Directors turn a blind eye to that.”

The systematic review also highlighted co-design as a good way to foster interaction between local and external stakeholders and, by allowing the community to provide meaningful contributions, to create a sense of ownership – what Ramirez (2008) calls “ownership of the problem and its solution”.

Local micro finance

There may be significant benefits from making relatively small investments of public resources. One focus group discussed how an investment of less than \$150,000 can go a long way in funding, for example, a three-day gathering of community and government comprising one day spent on Country (in which no ‘business’ is done), a second day for talking about issues in an open, sharing way, and a third day for talking about specific business.

Introducing the use of localised pooled funding models was suggested as a way to give local service providers more control and flexibility in the way they respond to service demands. Participants saw opportunities for public and community agencies to collaborate on pressing local issues that would require relatively small amounts of funding. One example was a collaboration between Justice, National Parks

and local Aboriginal organisations to take young men out on Country as part of their preparation for release from custody. With a clear agreement on the outcomes to be achieved, contributions could be sought from each agency which, although still kept separate for transparency and accountability, would allow flexibility in the design of services.

The way forward

There may be ways to use relatively small investments to strengthen local service design and decision-making. It is worth exploring whether micro financing models that could be explored also include engaging a coalition of peak bodies in partnership with the public service in micro-finance arrangements, or Aboriginal Affairs’ regional offices could be authorised to become a fund holder and service broker.

Funding initiatives, such as local micro finance, may offer greater flexibility to strengthen local service design and improve outcomes.

Procurement

Procurement emerged throughout the research as both a barrier and an enabler of shared and devolved decision-making.

“There is no correlation between the ability to provide a service and the ability to write a tender.”

“Procurement doesn’t understand the needs of the business. The question should be, ‘What is the best [procurement] approach to getting the best outcomes?’”

“In commissioning we are twice removed — we don’t deliver services directly. Commissioning should involve co-planning and co-design.”

One participant spoke about their involvement

in subsequent rounds of a bulk procurement process in which the initial rounds had had the unintended effect of excluding Aboriginal organisations. The participant noted the improvements that were made in subsequent rounds where *“we could do engagement [with potential suppliers] right from the beginning of the process, not just consultation. We could have a conversation... [and we were] ...able to focus on three locations ... could do better engagement and could build the tender for local conditions.”*

An independent review of this bulk procurement process highlighted important lessons about how procurement can be developed. For example, “[f]urther work is required on the development of alternative procurement approaches for human services which can be more faithful to the concept of highly collaborative design, and co-design, while still allowing the benefits of competition to be realised as well as adherence to probity requirements” (KPMG 2015, p. 20), and “[n]ew thinking on alternative procurement approaches is needed so that the benefits of co-design are not lost while still meeting probity concerns” (Ibid, p. 24). On co-design, Ramirez (2008) notes that it is believed a sense of ownership emerges when the community provides meaningful contributions from the beginning stages of the design process, starting with the definition of priorities.

Participants also spoke of the need for greater certainty about funding and for more flexible timeframes to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal communities. Current funding timeframes were often considered inadequate and were a common point of frustration.

“Real collaboration and co-design of services takes time. We need to make sure we have longer-term certainty around funding.”

“Financial timeframes are incompatible with project timeframes. It frustrates both parties.”

The systematic review also identified examples of alternative procurement approaches in other jurisdictions that may deliver this greater flexibility. For example, under New Zealand’s results-based system of integrated contracting, all agencies involved in the provision of a service are encouraged to collaborate and to think differently about how they contract with service providers. Integrated contracting allows services to be developed and planned which offer greater capacity to meet clients’ needs, greater focus on achieving long-term outcomes, and greater certainty of funding through longer contract terms (Pomeroy 2007).

The way forward

Suggestions arising from the interviews and focus groups included shifting structural frameworks to allow the public service to go out to the wider sector and design the tender at the planning stage, and only ... *“lock it down once this process had occurred. With greater engagement of stakeholders, and more dispersed decision-making, stakeholders could have been led on the journey more, which may have supported increased buy-in from them”*.

We note government procurement processes in NSW underwent significant reform during 2013–15 (see www.procurepoint.nsw.gov.au). This should address some of these issues over the long term if specific attention is paid to Aboriginal-controlled suppliers and if the objectives and outcomes of the reform are understood throughout the public service. The strategic reform direction on ‘innovating the approach to government procurement’ is especially relevant: it includes allowing the market opportunities to offer new solutions, and provides case studies of innovative supplier arrangements and ‘maximising opportunities for small and medium enterprises to supply government’ – which is also relevant to Aboriginal-controlled non-government organisations.

Innovative and flexible procurement approaches should be outcomes focused and allow adequate time for collaboration and co-design.

Building the capability of Aboriginal community organisations

While our research focused on the public service, many participants talked about the need for capacity building in Aboriginal communities to support devolved decision-making.

There was a view that the public service perpetuates the often-held belief that Aboriginal organisations are not capable of good governance, and that devolved decision-making is the latest fad.

“There’s mythology around Aboriginal services. There’s a sense that they can’t meet their governance requirements. Some of that might need unpacking.”

“Community leaders have to be lawyers, teachers and negotiators. They have to pick up so much more than non-Aboriginal people would ever be expected to do.”

Our research found that the government places high expectations on Aboriginal communities and organisations to collaborate with it, or to deliver services on its behalf, without undertaking any ongoing program or providing a long-term commitment to build and foster capability in these organisations.

Self-sustaining Aboriginal organisations are considered fundamental to successful devolved decision-making, but organisations are typically limited by size, resources and capability, which are significant constraints on their sustainability and capacity.

“It takes time to build capability to run a business, [which is] not achieved in 12 months. Just ask an entrepreneur.”

Participants noted good examples, especially in land management, of when resources spent on building capability for governance in an Aboriginal community flowed through to other Aboriginal organisations beyond the defined relationship. Examples were also mentioned of the benefit of telling the stories of Aboriginal organisations and communities, for example through the activities of the Office of NSW Small Business, that demonstrate high levels of capability and success.

The way forward

A shift is required for the public service to tell the stories of strong and successful Aboriginal controlled organisations, to learn from and replicate the elements of their success, and to use innovative ways to foster strong Aboriginal organisations into the future. The operation of junior boards to build the capability of young Aboriginal people in cultural heritage and land conservation was noted as one such innovation.

“What we don’t hear is that similar story from communities that have taken control over their affairs and are winning.”

In addition, one participant posed a question which is well worth exploring — that the public service should ask about the “97 per cent of communities that are not on the government’s radar for support. How are they strong and resilient?”

Sharing the stories of strong and successful Aboriginal-controlled organisations will set a positive tone for devolved decision-making. It will also provide a point of reference to assist others to learn and replicate the elements of their success.



CONCLUSION

How can the NSW public service shift its structural and attitudinal frameworks to support devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities?

In seeking to answer this question, the research team found a number of themes which recur persistently in the primary research conducted for this project, in the literature, and in NSW public sector initiatives. Our research showed that many of these themes persist, despite having been identified previously. We therefore deliberately sought practical solutions from participants on this group of themes. Based on our interviews and conversations, we found 42 NSW public servants who are passionate, experienced and care deeply about improving outcomes for Aboriginal people.

From the research, we identified specific opportunities for the NSW public service to shift the way it works with Aboriginal communities so as to progress towards devolved decision-

making. Cultural competence that is inclusive, immersive and ongoing emerged as a key mechanism for overcoming the attitudinal and structural barriers to that shift. Flowing from this are specific opportunities for leadership development and visibility, and the support and development of Aboriginal public servants. Other actions include better localised shared funding arrangements, procurement processes and capability-building activities for Aboriginal communities, organisations and businesses. To reinforce these initiatives, the NSW public service should tell the stories of thriving Aboriginal communities and organisations.

To conclude, we are confident that a genuine move towards the principles and practices of co-design between the public service and Aboriginal organisations and communities would be of significant value and would transform the public service's relationship with Aboriginal communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Participant Explanatory Statement

Project title Rhetoric to reality: Devolving decision making to Aboriginal communities.

Interview invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study on improving structures and ways of thinking in the public service that will support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

The research project is part of a work-based project that is being undertaken by students currently enrolled in the *Executive Masters of Public Administration (EMPA)* at the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). It is a cross-jurisdictional work-based project. Research project members are:

Laura Andrew, Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria

Jane Cipants, Legal Aid NSW, New South Wales

Sandra Heriot, Family and Community Services, New South Wales

Prue Monument, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, Commonwealth

Grant Pollard, Ministry of Health, New Zealand

Peter Stibbard, Department of Treasury and Finance, Victoria

The Project Advisor is Dr Zina O'Leary, University of Sydney.

This statement is for participants who agree to be interviewed as part of the above research work-based project. It is to be read in conjunction with the attached consent form/s.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore how structures and ways of thinking in the NSW public service could be changed to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

2. Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as being a representative of an organisation that either oversees or has been involved in local decision making with Aboriginal communities. If you are being invited to be interviewed, you have been approached directly by Aboriginal Affairs. If you are being invited to participate in a focus group, you have been nominated by your department.

3. What does this study involve?

Initially, structured interviews will be undertaken with a small number of representatives. These interviews will be undertaken by the research team over the telephone or in person. The team will document these discussions and will include summary information as part of the report. A copy of the executive summary of the report can be provided to you, as a participant, subject to the approval of Aboriginal Affairs. Any direct quotes will be checked with you before finalisation of the report.

The interviews will inform the issues to be explored in focus groups with public servants from agencies involved in local decision making processes with Aboriginal communities. The focus groups will be run by the research team. The team will document the discussions in the focus groups and will include summary information as part of the report.

It is important you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. All information will be treated in a confidential manner and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of this research.

Participation in the project is voluntary and participants in a focus group should be aware that other members of the focus group know who is participating and that their contribution to the focus group (even if they withdraw) will be known to the other focus group members.

All of the research will be kept secure in the researchers' offices until the conclusion of the project. The information will then be securely archived in accordance with applicable laws and standards.

Participants can request to receive the executive summary of the final report and/or the final report subject to the approval of the sponsoring agency.

4. Are there any possible benefits from participating in this study?

A report will be completed on this research and an executive summary of the key findings and/or the final report can be made available to you, as a participant, on request, subject to approval of Aboriginal Affairs. The findings of this research may lead to the development of protocols or guidelines or recommendations for policies or procedures. If the findings of this small study are linked with a wider study, the result may be valuable information for others which could increase the value of local decision making and how public servants work to support Aboriginal communities.

5. What if I have any questions about this research?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study, please feel free to contact:

Sandra Heriot

on <phone number>

or

Laura Andrew

on <phone number>

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we can email you a summary of our findings on request. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the research study.

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANZSOG Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, you should contact the ANZSOG HREC at the following:

The Secretary - Samantha Hicks, Manager Programs, ANZSOG

HREC

ANZSOG

PO Box 230

Carlton VIC 3053

Email HRECsecretary@anzsog.edu.au

Tel <phone number>

Fax <fax number>

The Secretary is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote ANZSOG *Work-based Project*, WBP14 Team 7, research.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form. This Explanatory Statement is for you to keep.

Appendix II: Consent Form – Interviewees

Project title: Rhetoric to reality: Devolving decision making to Aboriginal communities.

This consent form is for participants who agree to participate in interviews as part of the above research project. It is to be read with the attached Explanatory Statement.

Researcher's statement

The work-based project is part of the core curriculum of the *Executive Masters of Public Administration* (EMPA) of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). This project will explore how the NSW public service can support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities. It is sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and could be used by the agency to inform the development of policy options in this area in the future. The project is detailed further in the Explanatory Statement.

We are asking you to participate in an interview to help us better understand structures and ways of thinking in the NSW public service that might help to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

The interviews will be conducted between the period of June 2016 to September 2016 and will take approximately one to two hour/s to complete.

The interview is for the purpose of this project only.

The information you provide in your interview (and in the final report) will be strictly confidential.

Interviewee statement

I hereby consent to participate in an interview on ways to support devolving decision making in Aboriginal communities. I have read the Explanatory Statement on the nature of the project and the interview arrangements.

In providing my consent, I note that:

- I have read the project Explanatory Statement.
- I understand that the interview is for the purposes of this research project only.
- Participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time and for any reason.
- The interview will be conducted at a workplace or another mutually agreed location, or even over the telephone.
- The interview may be audio-taped to assist the project team with note taking. The audio-tapes will be destroyed once research is completed. Should a recording be made, a copy may be provided on request, at the discretion of the research team, together with the interview notes.
- Subject to the approval of the sponsoring organisation, I may be provided with a copy of the executive summary and/or final report.
- The research team member/s will periodically ask me to confirm during the interview that my statements have been accurately understood and interpreted.
- The research team member/s will take notes and I can request to be provided with a copy of the interview notes and have an opportunity to review and confirm these.
- I agree, and have the authority to agree, to my organisation being identified in the report: YES/NO
- These arrangements have been approved by the ANZSOG Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

I, _____ *please print your full name*

of _____ *please identify your position title/ organisation*

consent to participating in an interview to assist with the Work-based Project

Signed _____ date / /2016

Appendix III: Consent Form – Focus Groups

Project title: Rhetoric to reality: Devolving decision making to Aboriginal communities.

This consent form is for participants who agree to participate in a Focus Group as part of the above research project. It is to be read with the attached Explanatory Statement.

Researcher's statement

The work-based project is part of the core curriculum of the *Executive Masters of Public Administration* (EMPA) of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). This project will explore how the NSW public service can support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities. It is sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and could be used by the agency to inform the development of policy options in this area in the future. The project is detailed further in the Explanatory Statement.

We are asking you to participate in a Focus Group (group interview) to help us better understand structures and ways of thinking in the NSW public service that might help to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

The focus groups will be conducted between the period of June 2016 to September 2016 and will take approximately two hours to complete.

The focus groups are for the purpose of this project only.

The information you provide in your focus group (and in the final report) will be strictly confidential, however see footnote [1] below.

Focus group interviewee statement

I hereby consent to participate in a Focus Group interview on ways to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities. I have read the Explanatory Statement on the nature of the project and the focus group arrangements.

In providing my consent, I note that:

- I have read the project Explanatory Statement.
- I understand that the Focus Group is for the purposes of this research project only.
- Participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time and for any reason. However, I understand that my contribution to the Focus Group discussions will, by the nature of the Focus Group, be known to the members of the group.
- The Focus Group will be conducted at a workplace or another mutually agreed location, or even over the telephone.
- I will participate in a Focus Group of between four to eight number of people, conducted by two to three members of the research team and this will take approximately two hour/s.
- The research team member/s will periodically ask me to confirm during the Focus Group that my statements have been accurately understood and interpreted.
- The Focus Group may be audio-taped to assist the project team with note taking. The audio-tapes will be destroyed once research is completed. Should a recording be made, a copy may be provided on request, at the discretion of the research team, together with the Focus Group notes.
- The research team member/s will take notes and I can request to be provided with a copy of the notes and have an opportunity to review and confirm these.

- Subject to the approval of the sponsoring organisation, I can request to be provided with a copy of the executive summary and/or final report.
- These arrangements have been approved by the ANZSOG Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

I, _____ *please print your full name*

of _____ *please identify your position title/ organisation*

consent to participating in an interview to assist with the Work-based Project.

Signed _____ date / /2016

¹My contribution to the Focus Group discussions will, by the nature of the Focus Group, be known to the members of the group.

Appendix IV: Semi-Structured Interview Template

Name of Interviewer:

Name of Interviewee:

Place of Interview:

Date & Time of Interview:

Research Focus

- The work-based project is part of the core curriculum of the Executive Masters of Public Administration (EMPA) of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG).
- This project will explore how the NSW public service can support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.
- It is sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and could be used by the agency to inform the development of policy options in this area in the future.
- The project is detailed further in the Explanatory Statement.
- We are asking you to participate in an interview to help us better understand structures and ways of thinking in the NSW public service that might help to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

Timing

- The interview is expected to take approximately one hour to complete. Please let me know if you need a break at any time.

Confidentiality

- The interview is for the purpose of this project only.
- The information you provide in your interview will be strictly confidential.
- Individual names and other personal identifiers will not be used (unless you give explicit approval for this).

Recording

- With your permission, I would like to audio-tape and take notes during the interview.
- The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. Information from the transcripts will be used in the final report but not personal identifiers.
- The audio-tape will be destroyed once research is completed.
- If you agree to being audio-taped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

Consent provided: YES NO

1. Settling-in Questions

- How long have you worked with your agency and how long have you worked in the public sector?
- I would like to start by talking about your current role and any experiences you have had with Aboriginal Communities in that role.

- What do you see the role of your agency being in terms of working with Aboriginal communities?

2. Devolved Decision-Making / Current practice

I'd like to talk about devolved decision making.

For the purposes of our research, we consider devolved decision-making to be the process through which an agency of control (such as a government department) deliberately relinquishes aspects of control over the organisations or functions for which it is responsible, in order for those organisations or functions to move further towards self-management.

- Have you been involved in the Aboriginal Affairs' Aboriginal Communities Local Decision Making: Policy and Operational Framework?
- What has been your involvement in that framework?
- Apart from the framework, have you or your staff had any experience in devolving decision-making to Aboriginal communities or other community groups? If so, can you tell me about the experience?
- Overall, from the public sector perspective, what do you consider to be the critical success factors in devolving decision making to Aboriginal communities?
- What have been the public sector barriers?

3. Structural Questions

I would now like to ask you some questions about the public sector structural frameworks that may help or hinder devolved decision-making.

Structural frameworks are the work roles and administrative mechanisms allowing organisations to conduct, coordinate and control their work.

They may be real or conceptual, e.g. regulations, delegations, resource allocation, networks, hierarchies, power, performance targets etc.

- From your perspective and within the context of structural frameworks, what have been the barriers to devolved decision-making?
- What are the key 'success factors' required to support devolved decision-making?
- *Have public sector power structures (real or perceived) presented a challenge to devolved decision making? If so, how?*
- How are the private and not-for-profit sectors involved in partnership and governance arrangements?
- Is any support provided to facilitate the participation of such organisations? What sort of support?

4. Attitudinal Questions

- What attitudes, behaviours and ways of thinking within the public service have assisted or hindered the process of devolved decision making?
- What are some of the beliefs that non-Aboriginal public servants hold about working with Aboriginal communities?
- How do you think that this impacts on their work?
- What strategies might change attitudes and ways of thinking to better support devolved decision-making?
- Have you seen any examples of this?

- In your experience are staff in your agency equipped to engage and negotiate with Aboriginal people? Why or why not?

5. Wrap-Up

- Do you have any further comments to make or information that you feel would be useful to the research?
- Thank the participant for their time.

Probing Questions / Prompts

Probing for Clarity

What do you mean.....

Could you be more specific about...

Could you tell me a little more about...

Can you give me an example?

What would that look like in practice?

Probing for additional information

What else worked well/didn't work well?

Can you tell me more about that?

Appendix V: Focus Group Schedule

Note to facilitators: Instructions to facilitators are in standard print. Questions to read out are in bold. Prompts are also provided, to be read out if and when needed (for example, if people do not understand a question, or to help encourage further discussion).

Running the Focus Group Sessions

Please refer back to these notes just before the group is due to meet to refresh your memory.

Two people will facilitate the sessions - one to lead the session, the other to take notes and make sure the recording equipment is running properly.

You should try to get everyone involved in the discussion. You need to record both majority and minority views.

Before the group assembles

Test the recording equipment to make sure it is working and that the sound is recording at an acceptable level.

Ensure you have any paperwork ready before the participants arrive, e.g. notes and Participation Consent Forms (see below).

Preparing to start the session

As people assemble try to offer them some refreshment.

Once people are settled, check with the group whether they all know each other. If not, start by going round the group and getting everyone to introduce themselves. For your own convenience it helps to draw a 'map' of where everyone is sitting. You may not be able to do this if the group all know one another beforehand, but you can develop it as the session proceeds.

Make sure that everyone is comfortable before you start and that everyone can see each other.

Logistics and Introductions

Facilitators – introduce yourselves.

Explain duration of the session – no more than 2 hours.

WHS – location of toilets and fire exits, drinks etc.

Acknowledgement of Country

Thank you for welcoming us here today. I respectfully acknowledge Traditional Custodians of this land on which we are meeting, the <name> people and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Dubbo – Wiradjuri People

Coffs Harbour – Gumbaynggirr People (pronounced Goom-bang-gear)

Introduction to the session

We are very grateful to you all for sparing time to talk about what devolving decision making to Aboriginal communities.

Our work-based project is part of the core curriculum of the Executive Masters of Public Administration (EMPA) of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). This project will explore how the NSW public service can support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities. It is sponsored by Aboriginal

Affairs NSW and could be used by the agency to inform the development of policy options in this area in the future.

Your participation in this focus group will help us better understand structures and ways of thinking in the NSW public service that might help to support devolved decision making in Aboriginal communities.

Read out the statement on confidentiality

We are very keen to hear from all of you and want everyone to feel comfortable to provide their views, ideas and suggestions. There are no right or wrong responses to the questions and issues that we will be asking you to consider. Your honest thoughts and opinions is what we want.

Chatham House rules apply, so we would like the issues discussed today to stay within this group.

Confidentiality The focus group is for the purpose of this project only. The information you provide in the session (and in the final report) will be strictly confidential. Individual names and other personal identifiers will not be used (unless you give explicit approval for this). **Recording** With your permission, we would like to audio-tape and take notes during the session. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. The audio-tape will be destroyed once research is completed.

If people would prefer to discuss their ideas in a one-on-one interview, then we can organise this.

Ask participants to complete consent forms if they haven't already.

Discussion Point 1: Devolved Decision Making

Q1: Who is familiar with the Aboriginal Affairs' Aboriginal Communities Local Decision Making: Policy and Operational Framework?

Get a sense if the group is familiar with the document and its purpose. See if anyone is willing to briefly explain it. If not, provide a brief explanation:

It provides a policy and operational framework for government and Aboriginal communities to work together to increase local decision making for Aboriginal communities. It sets out a pathway for communities to have more control in the delivery and coordination of government services, and for government to support community identified priorities, including in the area of economic development. It directs the way government works with communities and looks at ways to improve along the way.

Local decision making for Aboriginal communities relies on government devolving some control to these communities. For the purposes of our research, we consider devolved decision-making to be the process through which an agency of control (such as a government department) deliberately relinquishes aspects of control over the organisations or functions for which it is responsible, in order for those organisations or functions to move further towards self-management.

Discussion Point 2: Barriers to Devolved Decision Making

Show a list of barriers listed against structural and attitudinal (that came from the interviews). See if the group has any further points to add to the list.

Q2. What do you think are some of the barriers, within the public sector, to devolved decision-making? What can we add to the current list?

Prompt: can discuss with the person next to them for a few minutes and then report back to the group.

Discussion Point 3: Structural Frameworks – Solutions Focus

Let's focus on current public sector structural frameworks being the work roles and administrative mechanisms allowing organisations *to conduct, coordinate and control their work*. *Structural frameworks may be real or conceptual. (For example, regulations, delegations, resource allocation, networks, hierarchies, power, performance targets etc.)*

Q3. What are the key success factors required, in terms of structural frameworks to support devolved decision-making?

Prompt: discuss with person next to you.

Q4. How can we implement 'success factors' across agencies?

Prompt: each person take time to write down a number of strategies, eg: training, sharing best-practice, new policy, operating procedures etc. Then share back with the group until the list is exhausted.

Discussion Point 4: Attitudes & Behaviours – Solutions Focus

Q5. What are the success factors in terms of attitudes or behaviours to support devolved decision making?

Q6. How can these attitudes/behaviours be developed across agencies?

Prompt: each person take time to write down a number of strategies, eg: training, sharing best-practice, new policy, operating procedures etc. Then share back with the group until the list is exhausted.

Ending the session

Finally, summarise the discussions and thank participants for their time. Remember to collect the Participation Consent Forms.

APPENDIX VI: CULTURAL COMPETENCY LIFECYCLE – PROVIDED BY ABORIGINAL HOUSING OFFICE, FACS

CULTURAL COMPETENCY LIFECYCLE AT THE ABORIGINAL HOUSING OFFICE

	Induction	Initial Training	Manage Performance	Grow & Develop	Exit
	New recruits are made aware of the requirement to be culturally competent to be an effective team member of the AHO	Source, select and acquire training aligned to AHO goals of a culturally competent organisation	Employees understand that the AHO requires them to operate in a culturally competent manner while working towards the objectives of AHO	Optimise the cultural competence of employees to contribute to the success of AHO and their own careers	Employees leave with a positive experience of their cultural learning while at the AHO
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the culture of AHO, including cultural competency training discussed Determination made of urgency of training - does the person have any skills and knowledge in this area? Check to see if critical mass for face to face training reached. Requirement to complete mandatory FACS Cross Cultural eLearning discussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to initial face to face Cross Cultural Awareness Training Access to place based Aboriginal Cultural Training Regional immersion for city based staff Regular presentations by Aboriginal people to staff Participation in cultural days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace behaviours are monitored Regular one-on-one discussions scheduled and held discussing cultural issues that may arise Cultural complaints are discussed and a plan of action developed to deal with the matter Regular team meetings scheduled and held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate training provided Employees attend Aboriginal Cultural days presented by the AHO as well as in their own communities Opportunities for further cultural development provided (e.g. informal mentoring & coaching, conferences, training) AHO Staff Advisory Committee to develop cultural activities A staff award for contribution to cultural competence of the AHO developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees asked about their experience with cultural learning while in the organisation The 'Leaving AHO Survey' should include a question on their experience with cultural learning.
Forms and templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory FACS Cross Cultural Awareness eLearning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHO request for training form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee Performance Development Plan Conversation Guide Employee Performance Development Plan [online] (<i>Mid-Year and Annual Reviews</i>) Performance Improvement Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Cultural Calendar developed Access to FACS Learning Management System (LMS) Staff award applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving AHO Survey
Support	AHO Intranet <insert link to page>	AHO Intranet <insert link to page>	AHO Intranet <insert link to page> FACS Business Services (02) 0765 3999 FACSPerformanceDevelopment@facs.nsw.gov.au	AHO Intranet <insert link to page> FACS Business Services (02) 0765 3999 OrganisationalDevelopment@facs.nsw.gov.au	AHO Intranet <insert link to page>

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Assessment: the table below provides details of items required to be assessed and actioned to ensure the effective delivery of the employment lifecycle

	Induction	Initial Training	Manage Performance	Grow & Develop	Leave
System Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHO Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHO Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FACS Online Performance Development System AHO Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FACS Online Performance Development System AHO Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHO Intranet
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial understanding of Aboriginal history and peoples Understanding of managers role in creating a culturally safe workplace <p><u>Strategies to address skills gap:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education session for managers on the Cultural Competency/safety Include in manager's induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing understanding of Aboriginal history and peoples Understanding of regional operations and client base <p><u>Strategies to address skills gap:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education session on their role in On Boarding city based employees Include in regional staff induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of managers role in Managing Performance and behaviours Competence in managing poor behaviour Having difficult conversations <p><u>Strategies to address skills gap:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education session for managers on process and the FACS Online Performance System Include in manager induction Training on how to manage poor behaviour and having difficult conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factsheet on performance development process documented Information available on Intranet page Understanding of processes Understanding of managers role in developing employees <p><u>Strategies to address skills gap:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education session for managers on process and the FACS Online Performance System Include in manager induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factsheet on exit process includes cultural question Information available on intranet page <p><u>Strategies to address skills gap:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education session for managers Include in manager induction
Documentation on Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training feedback from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee regional visit Plan Employee feedback form for training Employee feedback form for regional visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Improvement Plan Updated documented process/factsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated documented process/factsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving AHO Survey
Measure of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with process Attraction of Aboriginal people to AHO Retention of Aboriginal employees (>12 months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with process Retention of employees (>12 months) who perform at a satisfactory or greater level Employee feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement of objectives Employee performance at a satisfactory or greater level Compliance with process Employee feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement of objectives Employee performance at a satisfactory or greater level Retention rates of employees (>12 months) who perform at a satisfactory level or greater Compliance with process Employee feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee feedback Cultural Programs/ Strategies formed after review of information gathered at exit reviews.

