



Aboriginal
Affairs

Strategic Plan

2023 -2027



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A man with white body paint on his chest, arms, and legs is performing a ceremony. He is standing on a pile of green leaves and a large brown object. In the background, a crowd of people is watching. The scene is outdoors with trees and a bright sky.

Acknowledgment of Country

Aboriginal Affairs NSW acknowledges and pays respect to Aboriginal Peoples who are the custodians of Country. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the leaders of today, those who continue to carry Language, Culture and Truth for their People.





A Foreword from the Deputy Secretary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are resilient people. We are survivors. Over many millennia, Aboriginal people have occupied these lands, with deep spiritual connections to Country. As a collectivist culture, we cared for each other, our families and our Country, our land, waters, and natural resources.

This is why we have reset our vision and purpose as set out in this plan. Our vision is that every Aboriginal person and community is thriving and celebrated. Our purpose is to connect, listen, advocate, and enable Aboriginal communities, and to lead accountability and change across government. Put simply, this is about putting the voice of Aboriginal people at the centre of decision-making. Our focus is on truth-telling and healing, supporting self-determination, strengthening Aboriginal culture, and bringing the voice of Aboriginal people within government.

We are at a unique time in history, the opportunity to really stand on the shoulders of our ancestors to influence government and make sustainable change for the better. I believe we will do this through the mechanisms government are committed to establishing over the coming years. We must start with truth telling, allowing the stories of Aboriginal people to be told. We are positioned uniquely in the centre of government in order to do just that.

Our strategic priorities and goals outlined in this plan, demonstrate our commitment to representing community voices, leading reform and most importantly healing. We will work across these priorities in everything that we do and drive government to do the same. We will lead, influence and collaborate to ensure that we incrementally but systematically shift the dial.

Shane Hamilton
Deputy Secretary Aboriginal Affairs

About the Artwork



'In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors'

Amy Allerton

From the beginning of the journey, travelling along the paths that have been forged, we move forwards in the footsteps of our Ancestors and carry the legacy that they fought for. They are forever with us and within us; the past, present and future united in one story, reminding us of our history, grounding us in purpose and driving us towards our vision.

Walking hand in hand, side by side, we partner, collaborate and connect with community, culture and Country. Every step is planted firmly in truth, giving us strength to speak, wisdom to educate and opportunity to heal along every path we tread.

We care for, come from and belong to community. Strengthened by our diversity, we come together to listen to, advocate for and empower each other to lead and create change.

On the journey ahead, travelling along the paths we forge, we move forwards in the footsteps of our Ancestors to see that every person and community is thriving and celebrated.

Our History

1962: All Indigenous people are given the vote in Commonwealth elections.

1967: Referendum held to count Indigenous Australians in the census – 90.7% of Australians voted YES

1969: Abolishment of the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB)

1983: Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW) recognizes dispossession and displacement.

1982: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs established in NSW

1975: Racial Discrimination Act

1972: Tent Embassy established outside old Parliament House. It adopts Harold Thomas designed Aboriginal flag.

1972: White Australia policy abolished. Department of Aboriginal Affairs established in Federal Government.

1988: Office of Aboriginal Affairs created in NSW

1991: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents report with 339 recommendations

1993: Native Title Act passed in Federal Government

1995: Department of Aboriginal Affairs established in NSW

1997: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Children from their Families, Bringing them Home report tabled



2003: Two Ways Together

2008: Federal Government (Kevin Rudd) National Apology

2008: First National Agreement on Closing the Gap

2010: Amendment to Constitution Act 1902 (NSW) to recognise Aboriginal peoples as First Peoples of NSW, their cultural association with the land, waters, and contribution to NSW.

2016: NSW Government response to the Unfinished Business Report accepting majority of the recommendations.

2016: NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee tabled Unfinished Business Report in the inquiry into Stolen Generation reparations.

2013: OCHRE

2013: Regional alliances formed for Local Decision Making negotiations with the NSW Government.

2017: Enactment of Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 - First Act in Australia to recognise Aboriginal Languages and establishes the Aboriginal Languages Trust.

2017: NSW Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme

2018: First Evaluation of OCHRE

2023: Legislation for a Referendum for Voice to Parliament passed

2019: Second National Agreement on Closing the Gap

2019: NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA) sign accord with NSW Government



Our Story

The **Aboriginal Affairs NSW Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027** is a plan that is built on strength and is implemented to showcase self-determination. It aims to provide a clear picture of our strategic agenda over the next four years in working toward advancement for Aboriginal people in NSW. We want you to share our commitment and journey, to walk and see our way, through our cultural lens, how we operate and provide a culturally safe place for Aboriginal voices to be heard. It is our role to represent these voices and influence across NSW Government.

Our work is built on the legacy of our ancestors and grounded by telling stories of the oldest living culture known to man. With our voices at the centre of government, we bring the essence of Truth Telling. We continue to build and create whilst acknowledging Aboriginal people as sovereign to this land. We continue to advocate for the cultural space within Government to be able to appropriately reform policies and programs that brings the voice of Aboriginal people in NSW.

We connect to communities and listen intently to their song. We pride ourselves on respecting and reviving culture to provide our staff with a culturally safe space and sense of belonging. We recognise, our creation story is to connect Government and Aboriginal communities in recognition of who we are and reconciliation for our future generations.

Aboriginal Affairs NSW prides itself on being a leader in self-determination, policy reform, truth telling, and black excellence. We are central to the NSW government, and we use our position to continue to advocate for Aboriginal people and communities across NSW. We walk in truth, and we tell the story of the ancestors that left a legacy that will forever live on and stand the test of time.

We are Aboriginal Affairs

Our Vision

Every Aboriginal person and Community is thriving and celebrated.

Our vision statement describes the future state or goal that the agency is working towards achieving. We want Aboriginal people and Communities to thrive and be celebrated by others and this is our guiding light for the work at Aboriginal Affairs. The statement will help guide decision-making and strategic planning, providing direction and focus for the agency's initiatives. By having a shared understanding of the visions, we can work together effectively towards achieving our goals.





Our Purpose

**We connect, listen, advocate and enable
Aboriginal Communities to lead accountability
and change across Government**

Our purpose statement is a succinct and inspiring statement that summarises our primary activities, values, and goals while emphasising our contribution to the broader community. Our role is work in partnership with Community to influence government to ensure accountability of Government and drive positive change across Government.



Our Values

Leadership

At Aboriginal Affairs we all play a role as Leaders

Relationships

At Aboriginal Affairs we start with relationships

Community

At Aboriginal Affairs we value Community, Culture and Country

Truth Telling

At Aboriginal Affairs we honour truth telling

Advocacy

At Aboriginal Affairs we advocate for one another





Strategic Priority One:

Community & Culture

Informed by history, we partner with Aboriginal communities to empower self-determination that meets community needs and aspirations.

Strategic Priority Two:

Government Accountability & Collaboration

We listen to and acknowledge
Community so that we can lead
Government in truth-telling and
influence prioritisation of Government
policy and programs to drive change.

Strategic Priority Three:

Transformation & Influence

From a foundation of evidence, we drive change through transformative policy development and program design to challenge and influence our Government partners.



Our Goals

Goal 1 - Community Voice

Empowering the voice of community to; guide research, evaluation and policy; black excellence and expertise; and deliver on Treaty

Goal 2 - Reform

Coordinate across NSW Government, to drive change informed by community, embedding self-determination; while we design and deliver culturally responsive reforms and evaluation.

Goal 3 - Healing

Lead truth telling to embed healing, as we continue to uphold and celebrate culture



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