



OCHRE

The Continuing Conversation

Evaluation | Stage 1: Implementation and early outcomes

North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

Stage 1 Final Report

Prepared for participating Aboriginal Communities and members of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group

June 2018

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This report belongs to the Aboriginal Communities of Dubbo, Narromine, Gilgandra, Peak Hill, Trangie, Wellington and Mudgee, and the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group.

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest operates on Wiradjuri Country.

The evaluation team from the Social Policy Research Centre acknowledges the Wiradjuri peoples as the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future and all Aboriginal peoples in the region.

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Social Policy Research Centre

OCHRE North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest | Stage 1 Evaluation Report | June 2018

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Glossary

AEO	Aboriginal Education Officer
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LOTE	Language other than English
NCARA	NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances
Nest	Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest
NSW AECG Inc.	NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
<i>OCHRE</i>	Opportunity Choice Healing Responsibility Empowerment
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales

The *OCHRE* North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest: What we have found

<p>What is working?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) helps build young Aboriginal people’s positive cultural identity, supports young people to develop pride and knowledge in their own culture, builds confidence and belonging through opportunities to learn and practice their language and culture. • Students involved in the Nest said they enjoy classes and wanted to learn more and most students talked to their families about what they had learned. • The Nest provides employment and learning opportunities for tutors and increases tutors’ skills, knowledge and confidence. • The Nest builds and strengthens community – through community members volunteering and their shared commitment to teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture. Aboriginal people are sharing knowledge with their communities and Tutors are sharing resources at community meetings. • There are now more people learning an Aboriginal language. • The teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture at the Nest increases cultural understandings between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples. • A key strength of the Nest is the support and participation of TAFE teachers. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of colonisation still has impacts on the success and structure of the Nest, and views of who should teach and learn Aboriginal language and culture. 	<p>What needs further work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of support from some schools and some members of the community. • There is a lack of resources, including ongoing funding for Aboriginal language teachers and tutors. • There is a need for more resources, information and staff stability from the implementation stage, including improved employment security for Aboriginal Language and Culture tutors and teachers, secure and ongoing funding for the Nest. • Government policies need to reflect the need to involve Aboriginal communities in decisions about the teaching of Aboriginal language and culture. • There needs more support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture across all Government Schools and non-government school sectors, including Juvenile Justice. • It is important to improve Aboriginal cultural safety in schools, including Aboriginal cultural safety training for all school staff. • Increased training, including digital online professional development, and sharing knowledge with other LOTE (language other than English) teachers. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <div style="background-color: #fce4d6; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 10px 0;"> <p> Language must be owned by the lands; no TAFE or schools or government can own it. It is our intellectual property.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures for theNest should be clear and should reflect community ownership of the Nest.
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About the *Continuing Conversation*

The *OCHRE* Evaluation adopts the approach of ‘continuing conversations’. Over the past two years, SPRC evaluators have continued the conversations with members of Aboriginal communities in different locations in NSW about three *OCHRE* programs, Local Decision Making, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests and Opportunity Hubs. The evaluation team have used culturally acceptable methods as much as possible and facilitated community-control of the evaluation.

Community-controlled research involves co-design – this is a way of conducting research *with*, and *not on*, communities. The evaluation team asked communities how they would like information collected, what they think would be a measure of the program’s success, who the team should talk to, and what is the best approach to contact people to be a part of the evaluation. We trained local community members to be researchers to have conversations. As part of co-design we also returned a draft report to research participants in communities and asked for their feedback, (validation of findings – see Appendix A) which has been added to this final report.

The evaluation team have sought to address any concerns about the draft report to ensure participants are comfortable with what has been written, without compromising the independent findings of the report. This final report has been approved by nominated representatives of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group. The report will be provided to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (30 June 2018) and will then be presented formally to the Minister on 15 August 2018.

The evaluation team have drawn lessons from all *OCHRE* sites being evaluated and presented a Synthesis Report to the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances.


Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were set up following a series of Aboriginal Language Forums coordinated by NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group from 2012. State-wide Languages and Culture Forums were held with TAFE Western Dubbo (2014) and in Sydney (2015). In 2013-2014 these became part of *OCHRE* (NSW AECG Inc.: 2016a). Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests have been established in public schools in NSW as part of *OCHRE*.

A Nest is a network of communities bound together by their connection through an Aboriginal Language. Each Nest continues to create learning pathways for Aboriginal students, teachers and community members. The size, shape and form of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are community driven.¹

¹ See Aboriginal Language Programs in Public Schools, <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec/language-culture-and-communities/aboriginal-language-programs-in-public-schools-nsw> Accessed 23 May 2018

Summary of the *Continuing Conversation*: *OCHRE* North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

This is a summary of what we heard about *OCHRE* and the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest (the Nest). We had conversations with members of Aboriginal communities from Dubbo, Narromine, Peak Hill, Trangie, Gilgandra, Wellington and Mudgee about the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest.

 Direct quotes from what we heard are highlighted.

What people told us about the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

There is widespread support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in local Aboriginal communities.

We heard:

- The Nest helps build young Aboriginal people's positive cultural identity, supports young people to develop pride and knowledge in their own culture, builds confidence, and belonging through opportunities to learn and practice their language and culture.
- The Nest provides employment and learning opportunities for tutors and increases tutors' skills, knowledge and confidence.
- The Nest builds and strengthens community – through community members volunteering and their shared commitment to teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture. Aboriginal people are sharing knowledge with their communities and Tutors are sharing resources at community meetings.
- There are now more people learning the Wiradjuri Language.
- The teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture at the Nest increases cultural understandings between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples.
- A key strength of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) is the support and participation of TAFE teachers.

Students involved in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest said they:

- Enjoy classes and wanted to learn more.
- Most students talked to their families about what they had learned.

Community members and participants in the evaluation told us that:

- ☐ Language must be owned by the lands; no TAFE or schools or government can own it. It is our intellectual property.
- ☐ [The Nest] is going great now – more schools getting regular classes – more routine, more skill.
- ☐ [The Nest] has come a long way – good feedback from most Principals, good feedback from parents.
- ☐ They would like a fixed location for a ‘Keeping Place’ and a ‘research centre’.

Implementing the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

We heard there are some important things to consider during implementation and to maintain the Nest:

- During implementation and prior to the establishment of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest, the Yarradamarra Centre conducted consultations with the Aboriginal communities of the area.
- Stakeholder relationships, including a community-based reference group, tutor training and developing resources are important for implementation and to support the ongoing success of the Nest.

Challenges and improvements to implementing the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

We heard there are **challenges** to the ongoing success of the Nest:

- The history of colonisation still has impacts on the success and structure of the Nest, and views of Aboriginal language and culture. In particular there is ongoing debate in the Aboriginal communities about who can teach and learn the Wiradjuri Language and how this should be decided.
- There is a lack of support from some schools and some members of the community.
- There is some tension between Government policies that support Aboriginal languages and cultures and autonomy of School Principals through *Local Schools, Local Decisions*.
- There is a lack of resources, including ongoing funding for Aboriginal language teachers and tutors.
- Maintaining the high-standard of teaching, teachers and tutors set for themselves, without crossing community expectations.

Improvements

- There needs to be more resources, information and staff stability from the implementation, including improved employment security for Aboriginal Language and Culture tutors and teachers, and secure ongoing funding for the Nest.

- The NSW Government legislation and policies that support Aboriginal languages and cultures, such as the *Aboriginal Language Act 2017*, need to be reinforced in schools.
- There needs more support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture across all Government Schools and non-government school sectors, including Juvenile Justice.
- It is important to improve Aboriginal cultural safety in schools, including Aboriginal cultural safety training for all school staff.
- There needs to be increased training for Nest staff, including digital online professional development, and sharing knowledge with Language other than English (LOTE) teachers.

Community views of success for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

At co-design, we were told the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest view success as:

- Wiradjuri Language and Culture being taught in every school in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest area:
 - ☞ ... and that they are actually working with the tutors and the community within those schools.
- The establishment of a locally based Wiradjuri Language and Cultural research centre in the north west Wiradjuri region.
- A Wiradjuri Cultural Keeping Place is established in the north west Wiradjuri region – for learning, resources and repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts. We heard that:
 - ☞ What we need is a Keeping Place museum.
- Expanded resources for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture, including ongoing opportunities for tutors to develop resources and share knowledge.
- Hearing Wiradjuri Language being spoken – and that:
 - ☞ No matter where you went you heard Wiradjuri being spoken.

Aboriginal community participants told us:

- ☞ Success is our community speaking our language.
- ☞ Students are speaking and singing at schools and events. Wiradjuri people are doing Welcome to Country.
- ☞ Students have confidence in learning and speaking Wiradjuri.
- ☞ Building pride and connection with their Wiradjuri identity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on what we heard was working well and what could be improved.

Recommendations for NSW Government

Theme	Recommendations
Sustainability – long-term funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of secure and long-term funding for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. • Establish a Wiradjuri Language and Culture Centre in the north west Wiradjuri region in the long-term.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand funding and opportunities for ongoing training, information sharing and resource development for Wiradjuri teachers and tutors. This would include opportunities for coordinators and teachers to access additional funding for mentoring and support for tutors.
Sustainability – employment security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing funding to ensure employment security for Wiradjuri Language teachers and tutors – not casual employment for 3 hours a week.
Access to Nest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support School Principals in the region to include the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in their schools. • Provide more support for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal language across all Government Schools, including Aboriginal young people in Juvenile Justice custodial institutions, and non-government school sectors.
Community role in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the complexity of local Aboriginal cultures and provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities' active engagement in decision-making.
Data provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data for stakeholders – numbers and stages of children learning an Aboriginal language.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures and processes for the Nest should be clear and should reflect community ownership of the Nest.

Recommendations relevant to Schools/Department of Education

Theme	Recommendations
Inclusion of local Aboriginal language as core curriculum for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local Principals to make local decisions to include the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest as part of their responsibility to NSW Government policies regarding the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages and cultures. • Include local Aboriginal Languages and Cultures as part of the core curriculum – not as something unique or ‘add on’.
Culturally safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a respectful and culturally safe environment for Aboriginal language and culture teachers, tutors and students in schools. Ensure all staff, Principals, teachers and general staff receive localised Aboriginal cultural competency and safety training. • Support Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors within schools and work with classroom teachers to understand the role of Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors and how the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest program works in Key Learning Areas and across all stages of the curriculum. • Ensure relevant local Aboriginal protocols are identified and followed – who can teach Aboriginal language and culture?
Expansion of Aboriginal Language and Cultural Activities-teaching on Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation by broader Aboriginal communities in schools, especially in Aboriginal Language and Cultural activities. • Support ‘on Country’ learning.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and support continuing professional development, education and training pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors. • Aboriginal Education Officers to work with Nest staff and develop formal mentoring structures.
Sustainable supply of Aboriginal Language teachers and tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an online shared resource and register of available and casual teachers and tutors. This resource could be flexible and used by, and across other Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.

Theme	Recommendations
Government policies included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government policies supporting the teaching of Aboriginal language and culture need to be reflected in local school actions.

Recommendations relevant to NSW AECG Inc.

Theme	Recommendations
Relationship and Communications with NSW AECG Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve liaison with NSW AECG Inc. to ensure the diversity in Aboriginal communities are represented – ensure the Nest Reference Group reflects this diverse representation and is not an additional level of governance.
Cultural Keeping Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Cultural Keeping Place (fixed location) to support and resource the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest – including digital platforms for sharing resources and the repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.
Relationships to assist in community determined service and activity provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and support relationships in the participating communities. Ensure the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is providing what communities want.

Recommendations relevant to North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest coordinator, teachers and tutors

Theme	Recommendations
Stakeholder relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build on strong community and school relationships and include all stakeholders in decision making where possible.
Aboriginal Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acknowledge the diversity of the region and work with other Aboriginal language groups.
Continuing Professional Development for tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutors to participate in training opportunities to develop digital resources and technology skills. Tutors to continue to take advantage and participate in any knowledge and information-sharing workshops.
Program Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include more activities and programs.

Directions for next conversations

There are two more stages to the evaluation:

- Stage 2, from July 2018 to June 2021 will identify changes experienced by communities, outcomes and make recommendations for improving the initiatives.
- Stage 3, from July 2021 to June 2024 will assess the contribution the initiative has made in meeting long-term goals and make recommendations for improving the initiative.

Based on the conversations to date (including co-design), we propose the next conversations include and discuss:

- Tutor training, qualifications and professional development including technology and language teaching skills.
- Development and access to digital resources.
- Community access and inclusion in Nest activities.
- Conversations with more people across the region.
- Collating and collecting participation data – including what data needs to be collected and how the community would like to use this data.
- Conversations about the possibility of a Language and Culture Centre, research centre or permanent Keeping Place for the return of local cultural artefacts.

Part A:

The Continuing Conversations

1 The Continuing Conversations

University researchers from UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) have been employed by NSW Government to continue the conversations that commenced with the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs to see how *OCHRE* – the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs – is working. The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is part of *OCHRE* and was chosen by Aboriginal Affairs NSW to be part of the evaluation.

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were set up following a series of Aboriginal Language Forums coordinated by NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (NSW AECG Inc.) from 2012. State-wide Languages and Culture Forums were held with TAFE Western Institute, Dubbo (2014) and in Sydney (2015). In 2013-2014 these became part of *OCHRE* (NSW AECG Inc.: 2016a). Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests have been established in NSW public schools as part of *OCHRE*.

A Nest is a network of communities bound together by their connection through an Aboriginal Language. Each Nest continues to create learning pathways for Aboriginal students, teachers and community members. The size, shape and form of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are community driven. (NSW Department of Education, 2018)

The NSW Government wants to know:

- Is the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is being implemented as intended? What aspects are working well, and which could be improved?
- Do the Language and Culture Nest outcomes continue to reflect what communities want to achieve?
- What improvements to the design of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest could be made to better meet Aboriginal determined outcomes and for future developments of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest?

It will also contribute to a question about the overall *OCHRE* plan:

- Do the *OCHRE* policies and practices respond to emerging evidence and practice learnings? Is change to policy and practice timely?

1.1 Summary of the evaluation process

The evaluation team have used culturally acceptable methods as much as possible and facilitated community-control of the evaluation.

Community-controlled research involves co-design – this is a way of conducting research with, and not on, communities. The evaluation team asked communities how they would like information collected, what they think would be a measure of the program’s success, who the team should talk to, and what would be the best approach to contact people to be a part of the evaluation. We trained local community members to be researchers to have conversations. We also returned a draft report to evaluation participants in communities and asked for their feedback, (validation of findings – see Appendix A) which has been added to this final report.

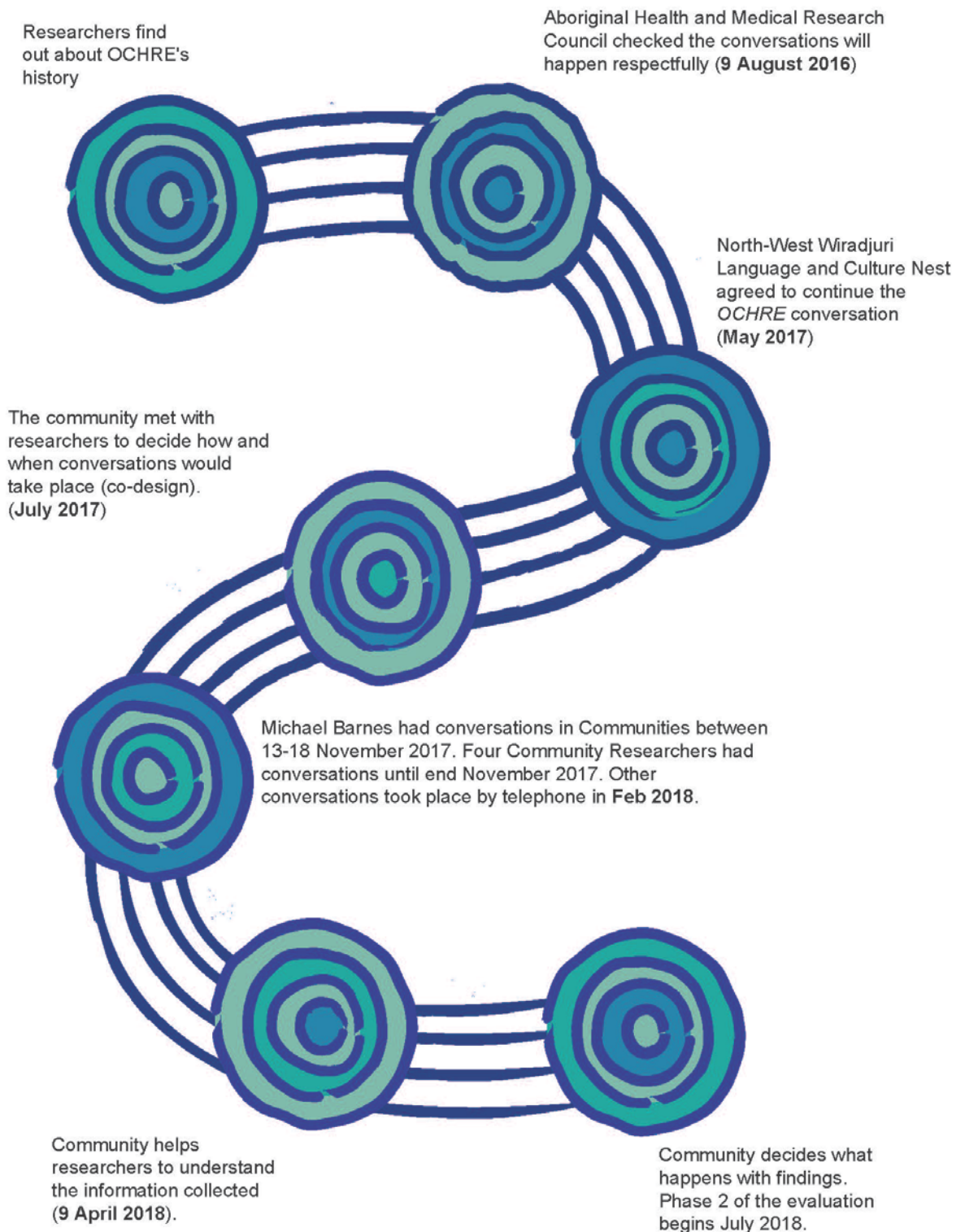
The evaluation included the following steps:

- The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest provided permission to have a continuing conversation on Country.
- The evaluation team worked with members of Aboriginal communities in the region, including stakeholders, to co-design what the evaluation would look at and how it would be carried out. In the workshop we heard from people involved with the implementation of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and from other participating community members.
- SPRC Evaluation team trained four local Aboriginal people to be community researchers to have conversations with local people about the Nest.
- We (the evaluation team, including community researchers) listened to people in communities talk about their experiences with the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. We listened to students, parents, Principals, teachers, language tutors, Aboriginal Education Officers, local partners and service providers, Local Aboriginal Land Council representatives, and other organisations in the area. Additional conversations were held with state government staff and the NSW AECG Inc. to understand how the NSW Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest model was established and how they are managed.
- Limited data were available for the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. We were only able to analyse the number of schools who had agreed for the Nest tutors to come into their school and the hours tutors worked across the Nest. Data by school year were only available for students learning Wiradjuri Language in schools prior to the Nest.
- The evaluation team returned to communities to check the findings and recommendations. Feedback from these conversations has been incorporated into this final report.
- The participating Aboriginal communities of the North West Wiradjuri region own this report and will decide what to do with this report.

The conversations were led by an Aboriginal researcher – Michael Barnes, a Ngunnawal man from the Canberra region, working with four local community

researchers. During the evaluation, the role of state government has been to provide information, resources and support as needed.

Figure 1 Summary of the Continuing Conversation



1.2 Measures of success

At the co-design workshop, we were told by participants that success of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest can be seen in many ways. We asked what things would show that the Nest was going well.

We heard success for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest would be:

- Wiradjuri Language is being taught in every school in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest area:

... and that they are actually working with the tutors and the community within those schools.

- A locally based Wiradjuri Language and Cultural research centre is established in the north west Wiradjuri region.
- A Wiradjuri Cultural Keeping Place is established in the north west Wiradjuri region – for learning, resources and repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts. We heard that:

What we need is a Keeping Place museum.

- Expanded resources for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture, including ongoing opportunities for tutors to develop resources and share knowledge.
- Hearing Wiradjuri Language being spoken – and that:

No matter where you went you heard Wiradjuri being spoken’.

Aboriginal community participants told us:

Success is our community speaking our language

Students are speaking and singing at schools and events. Wiradjuri people are doing Welcome to Country.

Students have confidence in learning and speaking Wiradjuri.

Building pride and connection with their Wiradjuri identity.

1.3 Conducting the evaluation

We also asked the Wiradjuri communities *how* they would like us to do the evaluation. We were told:

- The evaluation team need to take time to listen to communities across the region.

- The community researcher model was a good way to do the evaluation. We were told that to find Aboriginal community-based researchers:

💬 You could pick people that have got connections, you know, like, Kinship structure, like, because ... we've all got kind of Kinship structure with one another.

- Aboriginal community-based researchers and committee members could be trained to conduct the evaluation.
- Aboriginal community-based researchers should be paid appropriately.
- SPRC evaluation team need to be flexible and consider people's responsibilities and other things that happen in the community (such as Sorry business) when training and employing community-based researchers.
- The evaluation team should seek advice from Local Aboriginal Elders to establish a network of people for the researchers to have conversations with.
- It is important that enough time is allowed for the evaluation team to listen to people and researchers, (Michael, SPRC) should be going to all communities from the whole area and its surrounding regions.
- The evaluation should include people from all ages, pre-school, schools, NSW AECG Inc. and other representatives.
- The evaluation team should ask questions that provide:

💬 good data – not blame questions.

- Information should be collected in group meetings, for example:

💬 If you get a select few together then you are going to get diversities in their response, which is going to be better for you guys to get the truth of what's happening in those communities.

💬 If people want to talk individually they'll get you on the side. They'll hang back and have a talk to you afterwards.

Participants also said:

💬 The best way to reach young people, teachers and Principals is through an online format.

💬 Using Aboriginal community-based researchers where possible would be a good approach.

Further detail about who we listened to, the information we collected, and how we came up with our findings are in Section 7.

1.3.1 Strengths and limitations to the evaluation methods

There are many **strengths** to the evaluation method, including:

- Community-control of research through co-design at the beginning of the evaluation.
- The success of the Nest, and how success is measured, is determined by community members.
- Members of the community were trained to conduct the research and were central to conversations about the Nest.
- Students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders could take part in the structured interview or take part in the survey online.
- Checking our findings with community members – adding to and changing the findings based on community feedback helps maintain community control of the evaluation and ensure communities have a voice.
- Participating communities had control of final report and when or if it will be made public.

Limitations of the evaluation include:

- The allocated resources for the evaluation limited the amount of time we (the evaluation team) could spend in each community.
- There are other Aboriginal Language and Culture programs available to schools in the area – therefore attribution of findings to the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest alone will be difficult.

Note also that Wiradjuri is not the only Aboriginal Language available in the area. The Yarradamarra Centre (TAFE) and some schools conduct language courses in Wiradjuri and Gamilaraay.

2 Findings

This report focuses on the implementation and early outcomes of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. The findings are based on what we heard at the co-design of the evaluation and the conversations we had in community as well as program data provided to the evaluation by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

In the continuing conversation, we heard about the strong connections between Aboriginal culture, language and identity and the importance and interdependence of culture and language, with place and Country.

We heard that prior to the implementation of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest there was a huge network of people teaching language and culture in the area, in schools, in communities and at TAFE. We also heard that Aboriginal community members express wide support for teaching and learning Wiradjuri Language and Culture. Government and school policies also support the teaching and learning of Aboriginal Cultures and Languages.

We had conversations with 36 young people about the Nest. Of these, 17 were currently in Language classes, though not all through the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. Students were enthusiastic about learning Wiradjuri Language and Culture.

Aboriginal community-based researchers also had yarns with 38 parents or community members – half (19) had children learning an Aboriginal Language in school.

We also had conversations with community stakeholders from schools and NSW Government representatives, through interviews and in the co-design workshop.

Community members who participated in the evaluation told us:

- There is widespread support for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages and cultures.
- The history of colonisation still has impacts on the success and structure of the Nest, and views of who should teach and learn Aboriginal Language and Culture. In particular there is ongoing debate in the Aboriginal communities about who can teach and learn the Wiradjuri Language and how this should be decided.
- There are many strengths and positive impacts of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest, including:
 - young people's positive cultural identity
 - knowledge sharing
 - employment for tutors
 - building community through relationships and voluntary participation.

Implementation of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest:

The Nest:

is going great now – more schools getting regular classes – more routine, more skill.

has come a long way – good feedback from most Principals, good feedback from parents.

How it can be improved?

- Develop and implement a Cultural Keeping Place (fixed location) to support and resource the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest – including digital platforms for sharing resources and the repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.

Language must be owned by the lands, no TAFE or schools or government can own it. It is our intellectual property.

2.1 Support for Language and Culture

We heard there is strong and wide-spread support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest communities. Aboriginal people are passionate about the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture, and how it is taught. Most stakeholders we listened to were also supporters of the Nest.

Support for the Nest

- Community members (including students and stakeholders) support and value the teaching and learning of language and culture.
- Students enjoy learning language and culture, and many want to learn more. Most students talked to someone in their family about what they had learned at school. One said:

I like telling mum what I learn – they like that we are learning it.

- The Nest was an opportunity to revive Language. It was also an opportunity for children, who don't have access to language, to learn it.
- Many people supported the Nest and it was successful due to the combined efforts of Language and Culture teacher, tutors, School Principals and other members of Aboriginal communities.

The general feeling of our conversations with **community participants** was that:

Language is a way to develop and maintain Culture – If you have no culture then you have no identity, so Language is the start to culture and identity.

Students and **community members** told us they wanted language and culture to be remembered, respected and revived – and did not want it to be *forgotten* or *lost*. We heard from one community member that:

Everyone should know their cultural backgrounds and languages.

All students thought learning language was very important and this was reflected in community views. Almost all **community members** and **parents** were positive about the Nest and opportunities for their children to learn language and culture at school.

We heard from **all students** that they want to learn about language and culture, and those in classes said they enjoy it. Most said they would like to spend more time and learn more.

One student said, learning language and culture was important:

... so, I know who I am and to teach others.

Another said, it was important to:

Learn about my culture and my language and Aboriginal ways.

We heard repeatedly that the success of the Nest was due to the combined efforts and support of people involved – the teacher, the TAFE supporters, the tutors, and Principals. We heard that tutors and staff are committed to the program and go above what is required to make classes a success. One explained:

I buy all my resources myself and pay a lot of conferences myself, I will do that if I think it is important to develop my skills, but the whole Nest and wider benefit from that even though I really couldn't afford it.

One school stakeholder told us their school was doing language and culture prior to the Nest because it is important.

We try to make sure language is in everything they do. Cultural learning is totally important to us. We try to take them around communities to learn about outside communities, also our tutor is well loved and respected.

The LCN has been great as it has helped us with keeping things going.

2.1.1 Reservations and conditions for teaching and learning language and culture

We heard a few reservations about what language was being taught and where.

Communities' reservations include:

- Ensuring the Nest is culturally respectful, accessible and with community involvement. Language and culture should be taught in a culturally respectful way – a **proper thing**.
- Learning at school is better than not learning any language, and learning Wiradjuri is better than not learning any Aboriginal language.

Stakeholders were clear that:

Ensuring protocols are followed around 'who can teach' Wiradjuri is also important (NSW AECG Inc.:2016b).

Several **community members** talked about learning language at school and there was an overall sense that:

🗨 learning any language was better than learning none.

One person explained:

🗨 Not all children have opportunities to learn language and culture; because of this, learning at school is a good opportunity, especially if it is done in a culturally respectful way with Aboriginal teachers.

Another said learning at school was:

🗨 ... good way otherwise they wouldn't learn, although the best way [to learn] is out bush.

One person explained how language needs to be taught and learned. They told us:

🗨 So, if it's done locally with local Aboriginal teachers then yes, it's a good thing. Not if it's taught without community involvement or community say in its development.

🗨 Again, it goes back to how accurate it is. If it is accurate, I think it is a good thing. If it's not accurate, it should be left alone and not taught.

Some **community members** were keen to be involved with the Nest. One person said, they would like to be involved and go to school:

🗨 ...and talk about culture and sites identification.

2.2 Acknowledging history

We were told it is important to pay attention to the local context, languages, history, and culture of the region where the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is located.

History and Aboriginal Languages

- The Nest is located in a multi-lingual region, due to the forced removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional land.
- Language boundaries within the Nest are:
 - Still an issue but any language is better than none.
- In discussing the Nest, we need to remember that:
 - Language is part of the process of healing.
- Community members would like a secure and permanent Keeping Place

Box 1 below provides an overview of Aboriginal language and culture in the context of Australian history.

Box 1 Regeneration of Aboriginal Language and Culture

Language is a key part of cultural regeneration, and community wellbeing. Shayne Williams, referring to Dr Marika's work, said 'our languages are embedded within the very spirit of Country, so that each word that we have, and use keeps us in spiritual harmony with Country'. (Williams, 2011: 6)

Teaching Aboriginal language and culture based on geography to Aboriginal peoples in the region is not straightforward. Due to previous government policies and directives of removing Aboriginal peoples from their families and traditional Country, and current economic realities, not all Aboriginal peoples in NSW are able to live in the Country of their traditional ancestors and cultures. In any one place, at any one time, there will be Aboriginal peoples who are direct descendants of the Traditional Aboriginal peoples of that place, for example, Native Title holders and/or claimants; Aboriginal peoples who are not direct descendants of the Traditional Aboriginal peoples, but whose families have lived in an area for several generations and have strong social and family relationships and ties; there will be Aboriginal peoples who have moved to an area in recent more contemporary times, and do not have family backgrounds, support or extended relationships in an area; and also Aboriginal peoples from the Stolen Generations, removed and disconnected from their birth families and who may have no or little knowledge of their traditional or historical ancestries.

This cultural mix of Aboriginal peoples in any one place, can be highlighted when Language and Culture regeneration programs and initiatives develop and progress. If not acknowledged, this may cause Aboriginal peoples to 'compete' for their identity and belonging in a specific place. This is not the intent of cultural regeneration but can be divisive in communities if not understood nor accommodated.

We heard that the history of forced removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional land in the region impacts on the Nest. Many Aboriginal people from different language groups now live in the same area due to former government policies and actions. Wiradjuri is one of many Aboriginal languages spoken in the region. We heard it is important to develop community support with these other language speakers and to acknowledge and recognise the linguistic complexity of the region.

- Speaker one: ... that goes with all Language Nests, though, because a lot of our mob have moved around forcibly to different areas.
- Speaker two: Yeah, so we were multi-multilingual. That's what we have to keep in mind. We weren't just one language. We spoke several languages.

Stakeholders at co-design workshop discussed the Keeping Place. We heard that Aboriginal community members would like somewhere for cultural artefacts to be returned to and kept on Country. One person said:

- Our communities actually need their own Keeping Places.
- ... and you need it set up so that it's like a museum type thing because if you start then getting back artefacts and stuff like that you need a proper museum style place in which to store the stuff. So, our people are very aware of that. They can't ask for stuff to be given back without a special place to store it.

Other stakeholders recognised the challenges in establishing a physical Keeping Place and were keen to explore alternatives such as a digital or 'virtual' keeping place.

2.3 Community wide impacts – identity, confidence and community

- Language was sleeping for a while but its woken up now – we can see the positive change in the children, they are proud and accepting they are Aboriginal.

We heard that many people in local communities know about the Nest through their child's, children's or relative's participation, or their involvement with the local AECG Inc. or TAFE. Some people heard about it through the community researchers and the evaluation.

Although the Nest has been operating for a relatively short time. We heard that there were already some positive impacts.

We heard about **community wide impacts**.

- The Nest supports young people to develop pride and knowledge of their culture. The Nest builds confidence, identity and belonging through opportunities to learn language and culture.
- Language and culture classes through the Nest provide employment and learning opportunities for tutors and increases tutors' skills, knowledge and confidence.
- The Nest activities increase cultural understanding between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people.
- A key strength of the Nest is the support and participation of TAFE teachers.
- The Nest builds community – through volunteering and shared commitment to teaching and learning.
- Through the Nest there are now more people learning Wiradjuri Language.
- Nest Tutors are sharing resources at community meetings, and community members are sharing knowledge.

2.3.1 Culture, identity and confidence

We heard overwhelmingly that the Nest supported young Aboriginal people develop confidence in their culture and identity. Participants told us:

- Acknowledging our culture, because we need to learn our culture and helps our kids grow with confidence about themselves and where they come from.
- I see it – it's shifting students' attitudes in that whole identity. It's a very powerful tool for our younger generation and I'm very proud and honoured to say that I'm a part of it – of that revitalisation of the language.

We also heard Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children were learning language and culture. One person told us this teaches **Aboriginal children** to be:

- Proud of who they are [and] teaches non-Aboriginal kids about culture and respecting culture.

One stakeholder explained the long-term goal and impact of teaching and learning Aboriginal language:

So, what it does is build tolerance, respect, understanding, between black and white Australians, of the differences of culture ... embed that respect and everything around the language, and actually they have a better understanding of who we are as a race of people, and there's a respect there. That will only lead to building a better, bigger nation.

We heard teaching and learning Wiradjuri Language and Culture has impacts beyond the school and in communities.

One stakeholder explained that the work of the Nest was recognised by the extended community. They said the students had an opportunity to show their skills when the school had been asked at short notice:

to introduce a Lions Convention (100 years) – we had three-days' notice from a Saturday. [The tutor] drove that with the kids – they loved it and so did the Convention.

2.3.2 Training skills and building community

One tutor explained that the Nest gave Aboriginal people opportunities to do things for their community. The Nest was building and supporting community alongside culture and language.

We all get together and work out and show each other what we have shared to what works and doesn't. Opportunities for me to go into the school to help our kids and for me to have the opportunity to have work and enjoy what I do. ... we all share resources for what works and doesn't and the kids are happy to learn.

Tutors told us they felt very supported by the teacher of the Nest and other language teachers at TAFE. These teachers were active in catering to the tutors' needs.

TAFE/Yarradamarra Centre and school staff involved in teaching and learning Wiradjuri have formed a strong family like supportive team. (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b)

Tutors have had some opportunities to develop their skills through training.

AEOs [Aboriginal Education Officers] and Tutors have been released by schools to attend 2-day workshops for teaching training, language learning, and resource development at the end of each term – this is lifting the skills of everyone and includes achieving their Cert II and III in Wiradjuri. (NSW AECG Inc, 2016b)

The support also promotes community and community building. Additionally, there are many staff and community members volunteering their time and in-kind support to build Wiradjuri Language and culture teaching and learning.

2.4 Implementation of North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

To successfully implement and sustain a local NSW Aboriginal language/culture programme within a NSW public school there must be in place a strong working partnership between a school and its local Aboriginal community (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b).

Schools and students are keen to take part in the Nest and there has been a gradual development of resources and support for tutors. [The teacher] works to make sure these things happen (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b).

In November 2016 there were 14 language tutors and 2082 students in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. At the time of reporting, the Nest has 25 Language tutors and reaches 15 schools (see Section 6.4 for more information).

Most stakeholders, including tutors, Principals, Aboriginal Affairs NSW and NSW AECG Inc. representatives viewed the implementation of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest as a success.

To establish and ensure the ongoing success of the Nest we heard:

- The Yarradamarra Centre conducted community consultations prior to establishing the Nest and this was a positive start to the implementation.
- Stakeholder relationships, including a community-based reference group, tutor training and developing resources are important to ensure the success of the Nest.

Strengths of the Nest:

- Relationships with members of Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders are a vital part of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and a strength.
- Curriculum and resources developed by Aboriginal language and culture teachers with local Aboriginal Elders can also be used for other Aboriginal languages.

Challenges to the Nest include:

- Lack of support from some schools and some community members.
- Lack of resources, including funding, tutors and ongoing security of classes.

2.4.1 Establishing the Nest

Community consultation and stakeholder relationships

We heard:

- There are some Wiradjuri Language and Culture programs already in place and that Aboriginal communities:

☞ Already had a huge network prior to Nest and was already teaching language and culture in schools.

- The Yarradamarra Centre conducted local community consultations before the establishment of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. Through this process:

☞ Yarradamarra was approved and accepted by the community to be the [North West Wiradjuri] Language and Culture Nest.

- We heard that the Nest belongs within community and supportive relationships are important for its success.

☞ Each tutor is selected for a school by Kinship ties to that community. They are introduced to the whole community not just school or students.

- We also heard how the Nest Reference Group was established through building on existing expertise and networks. NSW AECG Inc. explained they:

☞ Weren't going to set up alternative governance structures in those places where they already had governance structures. So, what we did is, our thing was, that we would support the governance structures already in place.

☞ In respect to [the local language speakers] who were there, they decided that they just wanted... whoever in the community turned up [to a community meeting], that would be the reference group. So, there wasn't a formal structure. So, they did that.

☞ And in respect to those two, we agreed with that, because they're the ones that have actually learnt language in that area of the world.

Liaison between the Nest and local Government Schools is particularly important. The success of the Nest was due to the combined efforts of people involved – the teacher, the TAFE supporters, the tutors, and **supportive Principals**. One person in the co-design workshop said they were very happy:

... to have the opportunity to have a language Nest... [Tutor's name] done her work marvellously. We really appreciated her time there and – and we want to be involved.

One **school representative** explained their school had started working with the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and stopped because it was:

poorly organised, caused too much disruption at the school to students and teachers.

This school has put other language and culture opportunities into their curriculum as they view these programs:

As very important but have to focus on core activities such as literacy, numeracy etc. To do any extracurricular activities, they have to be well organised and integrated into a busy school timetable.

Resources, programs and tutor support to make the program sustainable

Support for tutors, schools and liaison with broader communities is valuable to address issues regarding teaching Wiradjuri in a multi-lingual region. The expertise and support from Yarradamarra is important for the Nest. Along with community consultation, Yarradamarra is involved in training tutors, developing resources with Elders, and sharing knowledge.

AEOs and tutors have been released by schools to attend 2-day workshops for teaching training, language learning and resource development at the end of each term – this is lifting the skills of everyone and includes achieving their cert II and III in Wiradjuri. (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b)

The development of resources and programs for learning Wiradjuri helped establish and maintain the Nest. We heard from one participant:

I do a lot of language and culture within the schools, training of the tutors, getting a lot of the schools up and running, support them with resources and programming. Now that we've got the program teacher going we should have a lot more really good programs.

By the end of the year hopefully we've got it from pre-school all the way up to Year 12 programming. If not, we're going to push for more extended time to get that finished. So, it doesn't matter then which class we're going into they'll have full programs with lessons and everything with it.

One stakeholder explained their school:

- Did language as a trial the school was happy and so we expanded it then made it LOTE [Language other than English] for Year 7.
- Students do two lessons a week – open to everyone or they can go and do French.

The school are planning to expand the classes into Year 11 and 12 and noted that:

- You can't teach language without culture – like any other language, you learn about their culture.

This school participated in many opportunities to support Aboriginal language and culture and participated in:

- Identity excursion – to the different communities – learn cultural background and to meet the Elders – go to missions and caves.

2.4.2 Strengths of the Nest

One of the strengths of the Nest has been the Language and Culture **teacher's relationships with schools and communities**. We heard relationships within communities are also important:

- [The Teacher] has been instrumental in progressing the [North West Wiradjuri] Language and Culture Nest through writing programs, her good rapport with some Principals before the Nest started, and her support for tutors and teachers through pulling language and cultural resources together to match the Key Learning Areas.

One **school representative** said the Nest had supported and strengthened their school curriculum in language and culture and through the program:

- Our kids all are learning about local and wider culture and every child receives lessons.
- Everything seems to be organised and there has been really good feedback from parents. The school has started a committee in the school to raise profile – now have yarning circle, and a cultural approach. The funding has been hugely beneficial.

Resources and programs developed for the Wiradjuri Language and Culture can be transferred to teaching other Aboriginal Languages. One participant explained they could be:

- An example for other language groups, too, just to be able to see how a full program looks, because we're new at this and we're building up all our resources in such a short time to build them all up.

2.4.3 Challenges for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

We heard there are some challenges to the implementation and ongoing successful operation of the Nest. We heard that the implementation of the Nest was **difficult at the start**. This included an understanding about how the Nest would sit within the school curriculum, the role of tutors, and a lack of resources.

One participant said:

it was like ... chucking us in the deep end without resources and skills.

We heard that government objectives and policies were not always reflected in the actions of local schools, where Principals made local decisions and chose not to have the Nest. We also heard some community members:

Devalue language and culture programs – some support and/or inform Principals with the argument that literacy and numeracy skills is what is needed, and that language and culture programs are unnecessary.

The Nest needs to maintain and develop continued support from community members and other Aboriginal language speakers.

We heard that **students** and schools would like continuity of classes and this can be challenging when tutors must travel such large distances.

We also heard that **community members** would like more people to be able to access the Nest, including those in non-government schools, community groups, people in gaol, high school students, and pre-school children.

Other **challenges** were identified by **stakeholders** regarding:

Maintaining the high-standard we set in relation to teaching without crossing community expectations. And 'using the right people for the right culture and learning, because the Elders and the local Aboriginal community will have their say and want it to be coming across respectfully'.

2.5 How can Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests be improved?

We heard about challenges faced at the time of the Nest was implemented. We also heard about challenges to sustaining the Nest and other potential program improvements.

We were told that to **improve the implementation** of the Nest:

- There needed to be more resources, information and staff stability when the Nest began.
- Government policies supporting language and culture needed to be reflected in local school action.

We heard that to **sustain and develop** the Nest, there needs to be:


- More support for language and culture across all Government Schools and in other school sectors, including Juvenile Justice.
- Improved resources and continued training opportunities for tutors, including job security and Aboriginal cultural safety training for all school staff.

2.5.1 Improvements to implementation

School representatives and tutors said there were challenges with implementing the Nest.

We heard:

- There needed to be more resources and participants felt there was not enough information about how the Nest would operate or be supported.
- There needed to be improved staff stability, including government representatives, tutors and NSW AECG Inc. staff. One participant told us:

 [NSW] AECG [Inc.] staff turnover has been huge and created difficulty with different views on how things should be done.

- Timing was important – and affected whether the school was able to accommodate the Nest. Many schools run a variety of programs for their Aboriginal students, which can:
 - ... complicate things ... some of these programs provide only stereotypical sporting opportunities and leave girls out entirely, which makes for more complications (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b).

We also heard that at the state policy level there is a strong call for schools to implement Aboriginal language and culture programs; however, at the School Principal level you can get individuals isolating Aboriginal communities – taking Aboriginal communities out of the process of implementing and participating in cultural programs and student support re-engagement programs (NSW AECG Inc., 2016).

2.5.2 Program and other improvements to the Nest

While most people thought the Nest was going well, some explained how they thought the Nest might be improved and sustained. We heard the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest needs more resources to improve and expand the program.

We heard many suggestions for resources and training that would improve the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and support it to continue. These included:

- Improved employment security for teachers and tutors.
- Improved cultural safety in schools, including cultural training for school staff.
- Increased resources and training, including digital and online resources, sharing knowledge with other LOTE (language other than English) teachers.
- Secure and ongoing funding for the Nest.

We heard there are many other ways the Nest can be more sustainable. This includes issues of tutor employment and ongoing funding. We heard that tutors need proper employment conditions; current conditions mean there is a chance of 'potential burnout'.

Some [Tutors] are working 4 days a week at school but are not permanent – no holidays, no travel pay, no wear or tear cover on cars. Where is the value in what the tutors are bringing when they aren't made permanent?

We heard there needs to be funding for professional development for tutors, and enough tutors to meet the needs of the whole region. One **stakeholder** said:

In the future, it would be great if more local people could be tutors.

Another explained tutors need opportunities to develop and learn teaching skills and strategies, including the chance to 'work with other LOTE teachers, sharing knowledge'.

We were told tutors and staff share resources, and one **stakeholder** said:

the Nest] wouldn't be sustainable without the possibility of sharing resources – when we started there was basically nothing.

Another stakeholder noted it would be good to have opportunities to:

Look elsewhere for more support, such as looking at wider communities in NT or WA to share Songlines and upskill our people.

We heard there was pressure on tutors in the school environment. Tutors are often expected to be 'experts' about all Aboriginal culture. Additionally, in the Nest Reference Group meeting notes:

Meeting attendees noted that some schools need to implement training around appropriate language and protocols for working with Aboriginal communities – Aboriginal staff are sometimes dumbfounded with inappropriate and racist language being used both in the staffroom and when school staff and Principals work with the Aboriginal community. (NSW AECG Inc., 2016)

We heard that schools and Principals could support Language as a priority and more could be done to promote of the Nest and how the program can support and integrate Key Learning Areas for students (NSW AECG Inc., 2016).

We heard the program would benefit from access to digital resources, and a permanent Keeping Place:

□ In...reality we should be independent – stand-alone language and cultural centre.

We also heard schools would benefit from online sharing of resources and a register of available casual tutors:

□ A website for language tutors to link together and share resources would be great. This resource could be flexible across Nests – a shareable website full of games for language where we can just change the language to the site...so if staff are absent that is another back-up.

We heard that the government needs to consider ways to encourage Principals to support the Nest. We heard that government needs to ensure long-term funding to provide greater stability of the program, and to provide better employment conditions for tutors, professional development, and teaching resources. We also heard that the funding model could change so that the schools use their 'global budgets to implement language and culture programs' (NSW AECG Inc., 2016).

Government needs to support the Nest by providing data for stakeholders about who is learning Language – how many Aboriginal and non-Indigenous children and at what stage.

3 Discussion and recommendations

3.1 Is the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest being implemented as intended? What is working well? What could be improved?

The intention of an Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is to support and revitalise Aboriginal Languages and Culture in a region. The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is working toward this goal.

To maintain and sustain the Nest it is important that there are ongoing conversations and consultations with members of Aboriginal communities to maintain these relationships. Additionally, these conversations can help address the issue of what languages can be taught, by whom and to whom. This is an ongoing challenge in the region due to the forcible removal of Aboriginal peoples from their lands.

3.1.1 What is working well?

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is **strongly supported** by most community members. Tutors, teachers and others involved in the Nest are strongly committed to ensure its success. Relationships between the Nest, schools, the Yarradamarra Centre, and broader communities are positive. **Community members place high value on learning and revitalising Wiradjuri Language and Culture in the north west Wiradjuri region.** The Nest is also well supported by local Aboriginal people and School Principals where it has been implemented successfully.

The implementation and success of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest has been helped by language and culture programs already operating in the region. The Nest has also benefitted from the background work of the NSW AECG Inc. Aboriginal Language Forums.

Students are enjoying the program, would like to do more language and culture, and are developing skills and confidence. We also heard relationships with community, including schools, Nest tutors and teachers are working well. The strength of these relationships means many Principals continue to support the program.

Tutors are committed to the program and take opportunities to share knowledge and develop skills. We heard that support from the Yarradamarra Centre working with Elders to develop resources. Additionally, the Nest teacher is working on a program for teaching Wiradjuri from K–12.

3.1.2 What could be improved?

The positive views of the Nest included some ways it might be improved. The basis of any improvement to the Nest was **funding security and employment stability and security**. Tutors and teachers need secure work to maintain their roles.

Schools and students need funding security to ensure continuity of the program. More tutors are needed – while more tutors are becoming qualified, it is important to support and mentor those already in schools. There needs to be increased and ongoing opportunities for information and knowledge to be shared between tutors.

Many children and young people are still missing out on the opportunity to learn language and culture through the Nest. The Nest needs to be expanded to all schools, from preschools to high schools in all sectors, and in other locations where young people are participating in education. There also needs to be more resources for adults to learn language.

Schools need to ensure cultural safety for tutors by training all staff and developing a culture of support for Aboriginal language and culture within the school. This will contribute to the ongoing stability of the Nest.

It would be appropriate to introduce and support other Aboriginal languages in the region and this might be possible through the development of online resources.

3.2 Do outcomes continue to reflect what community members want to achieve?

Community members told us that success for the Nest was to hear Wiradjuri Language being spoken, to provide classes in every school, to establish a local research centre, and to establish a permanent Keeping Place – for learning, resources and repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.

Measures of success also included providing opportunities for tutors to continue to learn, have job security, and develop resources and share knowledge. And for students to have confidence and build pride in their identity.

Currently, the Nest is slowly progressing toward achieving the long-term goals of hearing Wiradjuri spoken on the street and learning language in every school. We heard that the Nest continues to support, train and mentor tutors, provide opportunities for learning and sharing knowledge, and develop resources.

There are no current plans for an independent research centre. There is some discussion about wanting a permanent Keeping Place.

There have been ongoing opportunities for tutors to develop resources and share knowledge. Elders have been working with the Yarradamarra Centre to make appropriate resources for teaching language and culture in schools.

We heard that the long-term goal of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests is to develop nationhood – to teach Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids respect for themselves and each other, for culture and community.

The ongoing conversation with communities through the *OCHRE* Evaluation can support community participation and involvement in the Nest. For example, through the co-design, conversations and feedback processes, there are opportunities for communities to express their views and to ‘talk back’ to policy makers (Walden et al., 2014).

3.3 Are *OCHRE* policies and practices responding to evidence?

There has been significant change in NSW that will pass on through *OCHRE* policies and practices. This has occurred in parallel to the evaluation and may have been informed by community’s experience with *OCHRE*.

The *Aboriginal Languages Bill* was passed by the NSW Legislative Assembly on 18 October 2017. The objects of the Bill are to:

...acknowledge that Aboriginal languages are part of the culture and identity of Aboriginal people; to establish an Aboriginal Languages Trust governed by Aboriginal people that will facilitate and support Aboriginal language activities to reawaken, nurture and grow Aboriginal languages; and to require the development of a strategic plan for the growth and development of Aboriginal languages. It states:

- (a) The language of the first peoples of the land comprising New South Wales are an integral part of the world’s oldest living culture and connect Aboriginal people to each other and to their land;
- (b) As a result of past Government decisions Aboriginal languages were almost lost, but they were spoken in secret and passed on through Aboriginal families and communities;
- (c) Aboriginal people will be reconnected with their culture and heritage by the reawakening, growing and nurturing of Aboriginal languages;
- (d) Aboriginal languages are part of the cultural heritage in New South Wales; and
- (e) It is acknowledged that Aboriginal people are the custodians of Aboriginal languages and have the right to control their growth and nurturing (Hansard: 18 October 2017: 60).

The draft Bill proposed a centre for Aboriginal Languages in NSW within Aboriginal Affairs NSW; however, this was not supported during community conversations.

Instead, an independent Aboriginal Languages Trust will be established to focus, coordinate and sustain Aboriginal Language activities at local, regional and state levels.

3.4 Recommendations

Recommendations in this report are from our findings developed from *Continuing Conversations* with members of Aboriginal communities, stakeholders, including students, Principals, and others in the region. These are based on what we heard was working well and what could be improved.

Recommendations for NSW Government

Theme	Recommendations
Sustainability – long-term funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of secure and long-term funding for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. Establish a Wiradjuri Language and Culture Centre in the north west Wiradjuri region in the long-term.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand funding and opportunities for ongoing training, information sharing and resource development for Wiradjuri teachers and tutors. This would include opportunities for coordinators and teachers to access additional funding for mentoring and support for tutors.
Sustainability – employment security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing funding to ensure employment security for Wiradjuri Language teachers and tutors – not casual employment for 3 hours a week.
Access to Nest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support School Principals in the region to include the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in their schools. Provide more support for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal language across all Government Schools, including Aboriginal young people in Juvenile Justice custodial institutions, and non-government school sectors.
Community role in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the complexity of local Aboriginal cultures and provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities’ active engagement in decision-making.
Data provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide data for stakeholders – numbers and stages of children learning an Aboriginal language.

Theme	Recommendations
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures and processes for the Language and Culture Nest should be clear and should reflect community ownership of the Nest.

Recommendations relevant to Schools/Department of Education

Theme	Recommendations
Inclusion of local Aboriginal language as core curriculum for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local Principals to make local decisions to include the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest as part of their responsibility to NSW Government policies regarding the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages and cultures. • Include local Aboriginal Languages and Cultures as part of the core curriculum – not as something unique or ‘add on’.
Culturally safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a respectful and culturally safe environment for Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers, tutors and students in schools. Ensure all staff, Principals, teachers and general staff receive localised Aboriginal cultural competency and safety training. • Support Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors within schools and work with classroom teachers to understand the role of Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors and how the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest program works in Key Learning Areas and across all stages of the curriculum. • Ensure relevant local Aboriginal protocols are identified and followed – who can teach Aboriginal language and culture?
Expansion of Aboriginal Language and Cultural Activities-teaching on Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation by broader Aboriginal communities in schools, especially in Aboriginal Language and Cultural activities. • Support ‘on Country’ learning.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and support continuing professional development, education and training pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors.

Theme	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Education Officers to work with Nest staff and develop formal mentoring structures.
Sustainable supply of Aboriginal Language teachers and tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an online shared resource and register of available and casual teachers and tutors. This resource could be flexible and used by, and across other Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
Government policies included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government policies supporting the teaching of Aboriginal language and culture need to be reflected in local school actions.

Recommendations relevant to NSW AECG Inc.

Theme	Recommendations
Relationship and Communications with NSW AECG Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve liaison with NSW AECG Inc. to ensure the diversity in Aboriginal communities are represented – ensure the Nest Reference Group reflects this diverse representation and is not an additional level of governance.
Cultural Keeping Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Cultural Keeping Place (fixed location) to support and resource the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest – including digital platforms for sharing resources and the repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.
Relationships to assist in community determined service and activity provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and support relationships in the participating communities. Ensure the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is providing what communities want.

Recommendations relevant to North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest coordinator, teachers and tutors

Theme	Recommendations
Stakeholder relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build on strong community and school relationships and include all stakeholders in decision making where possible.
Aboriginal Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acknowledge the diversity of the region and work with other Aboriginal language groups.

Theme	Recommendations
Continuing Professional Development for tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tutors to participate in training opportunities to develop digital resources and technology skills.• Tutors to continue to take advantage and participate in any knowledge and information-sharing workshops.
Program Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include more activities and programs.

4 Future focus – next steps

4.1 Stage 1 of the *OCHRE* Evaluation

This is community-controlled research. We have listened to feedback on the draft report and made changes requested, without compromising the independent findings of the report. This is the final report for Stage 1 of the *OCHRE* Evaluation for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest.

This report has been accepted by nominated representatives of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group involved in the evaluation. The report will be provided to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (on 30 June 2018) and will then be presented formally to the Minister on 15 August 2018.

The evaluation team have drawn lessons from all *OCHRE* sites evaluated and will present a Synthesis Report to NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA), with recommendations for the NSW Government. The evaluation team has conducted the same process of validation with NCARA about the synthesis report.

4.2 Direction of next conversations – Stage 2

There are two more stages to the evaluation:

- Stage 2, from July 2018 to June 2021, will identify changes experienced by communities, outcomes and make recommendations for improving the initiative.
- Stage 3, from July 2021 to June 2024, will assess the contribution the initiative has made in meeting long-term goals and make recommendations for improving the initiative.

Based on the conversations to date (including co-design), we propose the next conversations include and discuss:

- Tutor training, qualifications and professional development including technology and language teaching skills.
- Development and access to digital resources.
- Broader community access and inclusion in Nest activities, including non-government schools, families and community members.
- Conversations with more people across the region.
- Collating and collecting participation data – including what data needs to be collected and how the community would like to access and use this data.
- Conversations about the possibility of a Language and Culture Centre, research centre or permanent Keeping Place for the return of local cultural artefacts.

Part B:

About the Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

5 *OCHRE* Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

5.1 What is *OCHRE*?

OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) is a community-focused plan for Aboriginal people in NSW. *OCHRE* was developed by the NSW Government in response to conversations with over 2,700 Aboriginal people in NSW who identified Aboriginal language and culture, education and employment, and accountability as priorities for Aboriginal communities.

OCHRE includes several different programs and supports:

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

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

The aims of *OCHRE* are to:

- Teach more Aboriginal language and culture to build people's pride and identity
- Support more Aboriginal students to stay at school

- Support more Aboriginal young people to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs
- Grow local Aboriginal leaders' and communities' capacity to drive their own solutions
- Focus on creating opportunities for economic empowerment
- Make both government and communities more accountable for the money they spend (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2013: 3).

Evaluation is a key component of *OCHRE*, providing ongoing evidence to improve the effectiveness of *OCHRE* projects and outcomes into the future, and informing the NSW Government about the future expansion of *OCHRE*. This evaluation includes Opportunity Hubs, Local Decision Making (including Regional Industry Based Agreements), and Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. Two sites for each program are part of the evaluation.

5.2 What is an *OCHRE* Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest?

As explained above, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are an initiative designed to revitalise and maintain languages as an integral part of culture and identity. '*OCHRE* recognises Aboriginal languages and cultures as a unique component of Australia's heritage. It is a fundamental element of Aboriginal culture which reaffirms Aboriginal identity, spirituality and connection to Country' (NSW Department of Education, 2018).

An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language. The Nests bring communities together around their traditional languages and link to schools, TAFE NSW, universities and other community language programs and/or groups.

Each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest has a base school which receives funding each year for administrative support and to employ Aboriginal language tutors at schools within the nest.

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are designed to **provide a continuous learning pathway for Aboriginal students**. The language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal Language and Culture holders and speakers from local Aboriginal communities are critical to the continuing development and support of teaching and learning in the Nests.² (emphasis added)

² See, <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/policy-reform/language-and-culture/nests> Accessed 23 May 2018.

Language and Culture Nests are funded by the NSW Government Department of Education; the NSW AECG Inc. supports their implementation.

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are not the only program available to schools – engagement in the program is at the discretion of the School Principal. Participating schools may also determine what Year students the program is available to. Non-participating schools may be (but not always) accessing other language and culture programs from other local providers at their discretion.

The Ministerial Taskforce recommended that Nests be trialled in a location in five language groups: Wiradjuri, Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung, Paarkintji/Barkindji and Gamilaraay/Yuwaalawaay/Yuwaalayaay. This has recently been extended by the Aboriginal Languages Bill 2017; during the NSW Government announcement two satellite Nests were announced in the Moree and Kempsey areas (Gamilaroi and Dhungutti), as well as additional funding (see Section 3.3 above).

5.3 How Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were established

The information in this section was sourced from information provided by Department of Education, conversations with government staff, as well as publicly available reports on the consultation and reporting process related to *OCHRE*.

5.3.1 Selection of sites

NSW Government, in partnership with NSW AECG Inc. and the Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development, identified locations in each of the identified language areas to trial the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. In doing so, they considered:

- The number of language speakers
- The availability of language teachers
- The availability of language resources
- The level of commitment and activity around language revitalisation within local schools
- The proximity to the resources, infrastructure and support available through local communities and regional NSW AECG Inc. networks, TAFEs, universities and schools. (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2013: 20)

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest was established in October 2013, Paakantji in April 2014, Gamilaraay/Yuwaalawaay/Yuwaalayaay in May 2014, and both Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung in February 2014.

5.3.2 Funding and tender process

There are two elements to funding the Nests. The language teacher and tutors are funded via a host school through a five-year government commitment. A separate contract was established for the development of Keeping Places associated with the Nests – discussed here.

The Request for Tender was published 10 March 2015 inviting suppliers to tender for the development of five Keeping Places in partnership with five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in Dubbo, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Wilcannia and Lightning Ridge. The tender was only open to small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and non-profit organisations. No tenders met the selection criteria and therefore no tender was awarded.

The Department of Education then negotiated directly with NSW Inc. for Keeping Place services in April 2015³, with a contract currently in place until December 2019. Under the contract, NSW AECG Inc. are required to:

- 'Maintain governance structures including: State wide Steering Committee and Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups.
- Provide reports to the department and communities as required.
- Provide advice, training and support to each Nest on the use of digital media equipment and software applications for the recording of Aboriginal languages resources.
- Establish a website (clearinghouse) to provide storage, access and dissemination of Aboriginal languages resources.
- Engage additional Language and Culture Advisor/s to support satellite Nests.
- Establish and support 2 new satellite Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests (Gamilaroi and Dhungutti).
- Support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups to determine the nature of a sustainable Keeping Place (virtual or physical).
- Identify and promote qualification-based training in Aboriginal languages.
- Support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups to facilitate the provision of Aboriginal Language tutors.
- Support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups to ensure a range of Aboriginal language learning opportunities are accessible in each Nest.
- Work with Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in the development and publishing of materials that support the teaching of Aboriginal languages.⁴

There is concern about the short-term nature of funding for Aboriginal education and calls for a long-term commitment from government. The passage of the *Aboriginal*

³ Note, in minutes for the Gumbaynggirr Nest, (AECG 2016c) noted that the contract was finalised in two months prior to July 2016.

⁴ Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

Languages Bill through the Legislative Assembly in 2017 may address this concern (Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, 18 October 2017: 59-77).

5.3.3 Consultation with the community

As described in Section 5.1, the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests is one of several initiatives that arose from the consultation with Aboriginal Communities by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs. Conversations with over 2,700 Aboriginal people in NSW identified Aboriginal language and culture, education and employment, and accountability as priorities for Aboriginal communities.

For each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest, a formal agreement was signed by the then Minister, Local and Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, as well as representatives from communities, TAFE, relevant universities and schools. The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest's Vision and Commitment Statement for North West Wiradjuri was signed on 25 October 2013, which was followed by an incremental implementation of activities.

A further consultation about the Nests occurred when NSW AECG Inc. was awarded the contract in 2015.

5.3.4 How Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests work

Each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is aligned to a 'base school' which receives funding for administrative support and the employment of Aboriginal Language tutors for schools within the Nest area. The Nests provide continuous learning pathways for Aboriginal students by Aboriginal Language and Culture holders. The Nest teacher collaborates with schools, local Aboriginal Language holders and speakers, and supports the teaching and learning in the Nest.

Nest teachers develop Aboriginal Language Programs and supports the engagement and professional development of Aboriginal Language tutors. **Tutors are employed in accordance with the NSW Department of Education's policies and procedures.** The teaching and learning of Aboriginal Languages in schools is also supported by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) through a syllabus.

Formal guidelines covering how the Nests work will be formally released in 2018.⁵ Language and Culture Nests have been implemented differently (in terms of structure and composition) in each area.

5.3.5 Governance of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

The NSW Department of Education, Aboriginal Education and Communities (AEC) is leading the implementation of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in

⁵ Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

partnership with NSW AECG Inc. and local Aboriginal language and community groups. The Department identified three key features of governance:

- 'A state-wide Steering Committee, consisting of AEC and [NSW] AECG [Inc.] representatives
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW, conducting monitoring and evaluation
- Local Nest Reference Groups, with an elected chair.¹⁶

The AEC is responsible for managing departmental communication. NSW AECG Inc. is responsible for managing communication with the community via local reference groups. Aboriginal Affairs NSW, part of Department of Education, compiles regular reports based on information provided by AEC as part of the overall *OCHRE* Accountability Structure.

From 2016, each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest has a reference group which includes representation from NSW AECG Inc. (local, regional and State), the Department of Education's Aboriginal Education and Communities (AEC) Directorate, the Nest Teacher/Tutor, local Elders and community representatives. The AEC identified the purpose of the groups is to:

- 'Develop local engagement with and input into Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
- Ascertain local priorities for the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
- Facilitate coordination and development of local language and culture resources and processes for recovering, revoicing and re practising Aboriginal language and culture.
- Facilitate data collection and ongoing evaluation/performance measurements processes'.⁷

5.3.6 Monitoring, evaluating and reporting

Each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest provides a quarterly report on:

- The number of Tutors/Teachers of an Aboriginal Language
- The number of Aboriginal Students learning and Aboriginal Language
- The number of non-Aboriginal students learning an Aboriginal Language
- The total number of students learning an Aboriginal Language
- The number of schools teaching an Aboriginal Language.

The measures were developed by NSW Department of Education.. Regular progress reports are provided by the State NSW AECG Inc. to the Department. The

⁶ Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

⁷ Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

figures are then reported by Aboriginal Affairs NSW in annual *OCHRE* reports⁸, as well as in annual reports of the Department of Education. In the *OCHRE* Four Years On report, Monitoring Data from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 showed an increase from 60-67 schools (pre-school, primary and secondary) participating in the Language and Culture Nests, and an increase from 5,166 to 6,379 students participating (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2017: 29).

⁸ See *OCHRE* Annual Reports available at: <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/our-agency/staying-accountable/ochre/ochre-annual-reports>

6 North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest, launched on 25 October 2013. The Nest covers communities and public schools in Dubbo, Narromine, Peak Hill, Trangie, Gilgandra, Wellington and Mudgee.

Figure 2 Communities in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest



Source: Department of Education PowerPoint presentation, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

6.1 A profile of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest community

A *Community Portrait for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest* has been prepared by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, including the most recent 2016 Census data.⁹ This provides an overview of the local population, households, income, education (participation in school by age), and disability for the area within the Nest. Just under 12.5% of residents (12,394 people) within the Nest area identify as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origins. In 2016, 41% of Aboriginal residents in the area were under 18 – of which, 13% (1,592) were under five years old, 16% (2,029) were aged between 5-11, and 12% (1,519) aged 12-17. Some

⁹ See *Community Portrait: the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest* <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/community-portraits/Indigenous-Portrait2016D-North-West-Wiradjuri-Nest.pdf> Accessed May 23 2018.

4,167 Aboriginal children and young people attended school or an educational institution in 2016 (444 in pre-school, 1,841 in primary school, and 1,235 in high school).

6.2 Aboriginal Language in schools prior to the Nest

A Language dictionary is available, and Language is taught in schools, TAFE and at University.

A scope and sequence (used by teachers to guide their teaching of a subject) was available for the Wiradjuri Language (revised by then BOSTES in 2013) prior to the implementation of the Nest. There was also a Board endorsed course for Years 11 and 12 prior to the Nest.

Based on an evaluation of Aboriginal Language Programs (2013), records show 144 primary school students were learning Wiradjuri in schools, and a further 15 were learning in schools for specific purposes – but it is not clear in what context or how Language was taught.¹⁰ In 2013, there were 3 Language tutors, with 13 training as Wiradjuri tutors in TAFE and University.

6.3 How is the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest organised?

The overall design of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests was part of a broader community consultation in 2012 (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2012). Adjustments are made through local governance structures – each of which is tailored to local community and environment.

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is based at **Dubbo Public School**. The Nest teacher has been employed since 2014; at the time of reporting, the Nest has **25 Language tutors**. In 2014, a permanent **Keeping Place** was recorded as being the Yarradamarra Centre, at TAFE NSW Western campus.

Under the NSW public school reform, *Local Schools, Local Decisions*, it is up to the Principal of a school whether they want to participate in Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. Parents may encourage Principals to provide Language programs in schools, often through their input to the School's three-year plan. Not participating in the Nest does not mean that the Language and Cultural needs of students is not met. The Nest is not the only source of language and culture in schools – for example, four schools receive funding for other Language programs from the Department, and eight schools receive Language programs from both the Nest as well as other Department funding arrangements. The Department provides other programs, including Health Culture, Healthy Country with NSW AECG Inc.; STEM

¹⁰ Information source AEC, provided to the evaluation team by Aboriginal Affairs NSW (North West Wiradjuri profile).

campus with NSW AECG Inc. and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA); and Language and Culture Camps with NSW AECG Inc..

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is governed by a reference group that meets once per school term. The Nest Reference Group comprises representatives of key Aboriginal organisations, Elders/community members as well as local NSW AECG Inc. members.

6.4 How is the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest being used?

6.4.1 Schools participating in the Nest

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest currently teaches Language in nine Primary Schools, four central schools, and two Secondary schools (Table 1).

Table 1 Schools participating in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

Primary Schools (Local Government Area)	Central Schools (Local Government Area)	Secondary Schools (Local Government Area)
Buninyong (Dubbo) Dubbo North (Dubbo) Dubbo South (Dubbo) Dubbo West (Dubbo) Eumungerie (Dubbo) Gilgandra (Gilgandra) Mumbil (Wellington) Stuart Town (Wellington) Wellington (Wellington)	Lincoln Juvenile Justice 4-12 (Dubbo) Trangie Central K-12 (Narromine) Tullamore Central K-12 (Parkes) Yeoval Central K-12 (Mid-Western Regional)	Gilgandra (Gilgandra) Kandos (Mid-Western Regional)

(Source: Aboriginal Affairs NSW)

6.4.2 Students participating in the Nest

The number of students participating, and the way they participate, varies by school and by Year. As mentioned above, this may also be determined by the School Principal. The data available to the evaluation is limited to the schools taking part in the Nest and the hours worked by the tutors. In 2014, 4,045 tutor hours were provided under the Nest, this reduced to 2,640 hours in 2015 and to 2,026 hours in 2016 (data provided by Aboriginal Affairs NSW).¹¹ From 2015-2017, students in Years K–6 were the focus of Language classes, with a slight decrease in 2017. In

¹¹ The way data is collected and is reported changed from monthly to quarterly in 2016.

2017, Nest focused on increasing the number of students in Years 7–10 participating in the program.¹²

In 2017, data started to be collected based on the number of hours worked by tutor, by school and Year. However, no data is available from previous years to make any comparison or assumptions.¹³

6.4.3 Continuity of Language for students

The objective of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is to provide a continuous learning pathway for Aboriginal students. It is therefore reasonable to build that from the early years and grow the program as the cohort of Aboriginal students age. The focus on teaching the younger students may also be due to the availability of tutors of Language at different levels and what had occurred previously – focusing on Wiradjuri Language in primary schools. Irrespective of why this occurs (whether intentional or due to the availability of tutors), this may mean that older students, some of which may have previously had access to Wiradjuri Language, miss out.

¹² Based on information provided in correspondence by the Department of Education, dated 13 April 2018.

¹³ Correspondence with NSW Department of Education.

7 About the conversations

7.1 Who did we have conversations with?

Michael Barnes and four Community Researchers had conversations in community between 13 November and mid-December 2017. The online survey, which replicated the conversation guide, was left open until end of January 2018 to ensure everyone who wanted to could tell us what they think.

- Community researchers yarned with 85 community members, including 36 students, 37 parents and community members, and 12 non-government stakeholders.
- Michael Barnes had conversations with the stakeholders directly involved with the Nest as well as six School Principals and language tutors.
- An online survey was made available for people to complete if they preferred to provide feedback this way or if they had more to say – we did not receive any responses.
- SPRC evaluation team held a co-design workshop and interviewed government policy staff.

7.2 What sorts of information did we collect

The evaluation team collected different sorts of information:

- What people told us in conversations either face to face, by telephone, or anonymously through an online survey.
- High level information (data) about how the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is used (reported to NSW AECG Inc., AEC and Aboriginal Affairs NSW) and background reports.
- Other publicly available information about the community (ABS data).

Together, this gives us the most up-to-date information about the Nest.

7.3 How did we come up with these findings?

The evaluation team collected community views to answer the research questions. This involved looking at each conversation and identifying common themes and, in some cases, unique differences. The themes, and examples of what people told us, are presented in the findings – in text in italics, or as indented text.

7.4 Checking and confirming findings

SPRC evaluation team returned to community (9 April 2018) to check our findings and recommendations reflect what the community told us. This draft report was

circulated prior to meeting. It is an opportunity for community participants to tell us if we have misunderstood anything, or if they agree with what we have written. Feedback from the meetings have been incorporated into the final report, without compromising the independent findings.

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Appendix A Summary of report validation process

Date	Action	Comments
3 April 2018	Draft report and draft summary sent to Nest Reference Group	N/A
9 April 2018	Draft presented to the Nest Reference Group	Reference Group provided approval for the report to be presented to NSW Government with minor changes.
April/May 2018	Revision to report (content)	To reflect discussion at the Nest Reference Group meeting on 9 April 2018.
April/May 2018	Revision to report (format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of one-page table summarising findings • Addition of one page prior to summary about what is community-controlled research • Addition to summary of what the <i>OCHRE</i> program is • Change of recommendations in the summary to table form • Change of format to quotes from participants into orange highlight and call out sign • Added Box history of Aboriginal peoples and impact on language and culture regeneration • Other minor changes to identify who is speaking (bolding of community members and students, parents and carers) • Small editing to reduce repetition and ensure consistency within the report and across the reports
13 June 2018	Updated report sent back to Nest Reference Group Chair and Teacher.	Purpose to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm changes requested • Final sign off
27 June 2018	Approval for publication	
30 June 2018	Report to Aboriginal Affairs NSW	
15 August 2018	Presentation to the Minister	

