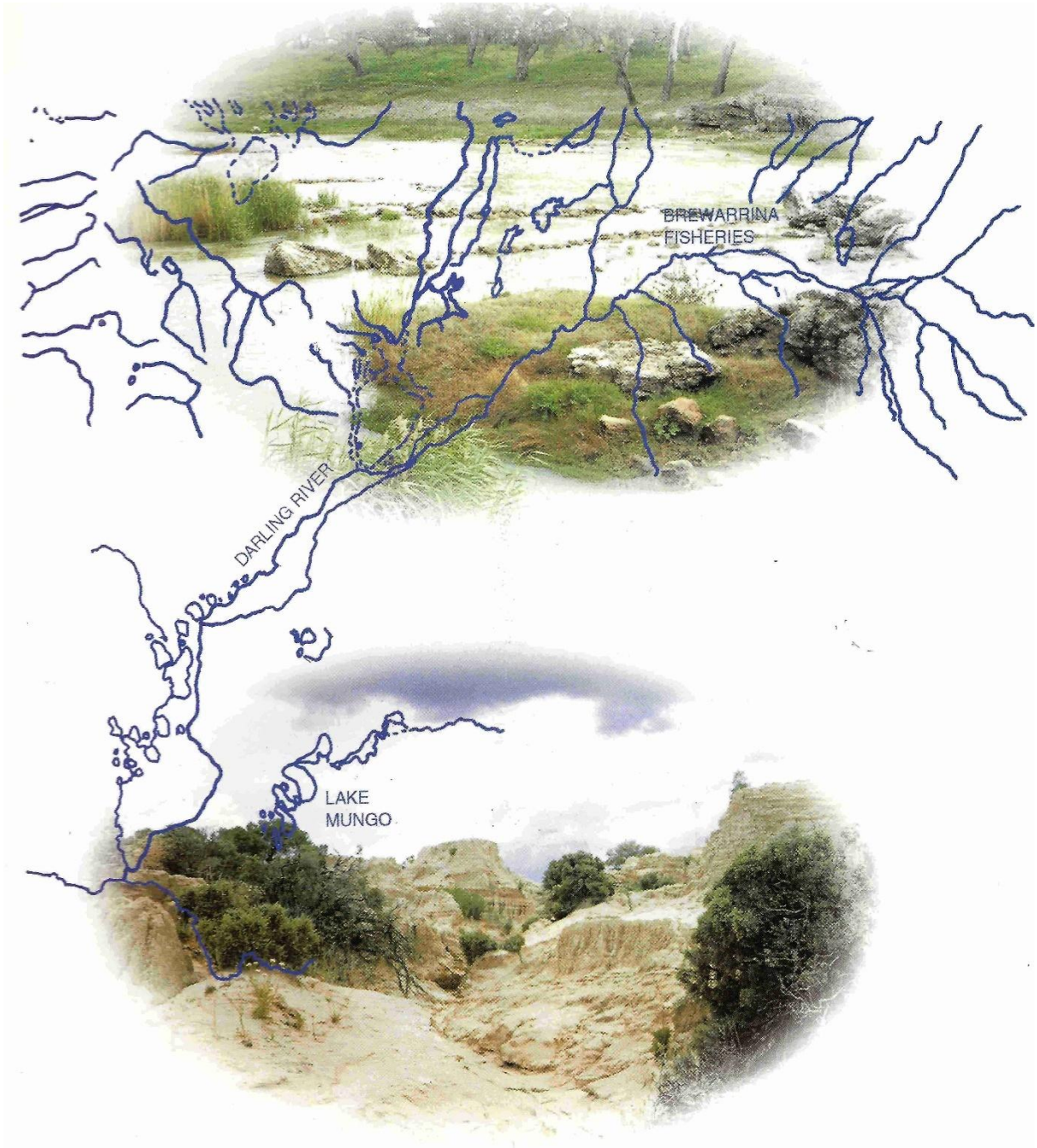
MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

THE ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

for the Murdi Paaki Region
AUGUST 2024



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AUGUST 2024

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Document Status

Revision No	Revision/Action	Date	Authorised
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ABBREVIATIONS

AA NSW	Aboriginal Affairs NSW
ABAI	Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation
ACCO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation
ACDP	Aboriginal Communities Development Program
ACLO	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
AHO	NSW Aboriginal Housing Office
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAP	Community Action Plan
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project
CDP	Community Development Program
CDSC	Central Darling Shire Council
CPIE	Community Participation in Employment (Program)
CtG	Closing the Gap
CtG S-E	Closing the Gap Socio-Economic (Outcome Area)
CWP	Community Working Party
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
E&T	Employment and Training
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
GTO	Group Training Organisation
HEHP	Housing and Environmental Health Plan
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IEP	Indigenous Employment Program
LGA	Local Government Area
LHD	Local Health District
MP RHEHP	Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Environmental Health Plan
MPAH&EH BC	Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Business Case
MPRA	Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
MPSL	Murdi Paaki Services Ltd
NAHS HIPP	National Aboriginal Health Strategy, Health Infrastructure Priority Project
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NSWALC	NSW Aboriginal Land Council
RASCI	Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, and Informed (Matrix)
RDA	Regional Development Australia
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
REDI.E	Regional Enterprise Development Institute
TAFE NSW	Training and Further Education NSW
TEAC	Murdi Paaki Training and Employment Aboriginal Corporation

SA3	Statistical Area 3 (ABS geographic area)
SBAT	School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
UNE	University of New England
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is of the opinion that solutions to raising the socio-economic standing of the Aboriginal community of the Murdi Paaki Region must involve a place-based, coordinated and integrated approach to education, employment creation and growing the Aboriginal business base. Quantitative data from sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Jobs and Skills Australia, Regional Development Australia Orana and Regional Development Australia Far West NSW, supplemented by qualitative evidence from Aboriginal community Community Action Plans and Local Government Council Community Strategic Plans, for example, confirm that post-school education achievements are falling behind those of other Aboriginal communities nationally and in NSW, growth in human capital is stagnant, and attempts to participate in economic activity are suffocated both by barriers to entry and by limitations imposed by a weak regional economy. The *Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy for the Murdi Paaki Region* charts a way forward through providing a compelling, consistent strategic narrative and tactical approach to rebuilding the capacity and capability of Murdi Paaki Aboriginal communities to engage more fully in the Region's economic affairs.

The Strategy aims to unite the policy aspirations of separate arms of government with those of the Region as defined by the *Murdi Paaki Reginal Plan 2023* to close and eliminate the gaps between the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous communities in western NSW and, also, the gap that is clearly visible between Aboriginal people living in remote communities and those resident in regional and metropolitan centres. Fundamental to this ambition is the creation of an improved and integrated form of governance for Regional economic advancement bringing together governments, the Assembly and other stakeholders to take responsibility for evidence-based advocacy and decision-making, and for determining how and when those decisions are made. Burdening an already stretched Aboriginal leadership with sole responsibility for implementing a transformation project of immense scale is not only unreasonable but also inescapably fatal. The Region has already demonstrated the value of collaborative approaches with a degree of shared risk through the Aboriginal social housing project and, with imaginative and willing joint ownership, delivery of this Strategy can be achieved. Allowing adequate time in development of Strategy-aligned programs and projects of size, significance and complexity, and creation of relationships and networks essential for realising successful outcomes, is essential.

Uninspiring economic outcomes from past effort point to the need for an overhaul of systemic processes as well as structures, including investing in the Region's human and social capital to ensure that effective, quality services can be underwritten where a functional labour market does not exist. The Strategy adopts a strengths-based narrative which positions Aboriginal community members as willing and productive members of civil society able to conceive and design responses to areas of service underperformance. Proposed solutions match individual and collective needs and aspirations in community with best practice delivery. Of necessity, the Assembly views the adoption of a "grow our own" model which recognises the unique characteristics of communities and small area labour markets as a foundational Strategy concept.

Key enabling factors to achieving political and public consent and support to this initiative are clarity and consistency on outcomes, so the Strategy documents the transition steps proposed to rebuild the eroded human and physical infrastructure required to effect positive change across the labour market ecosystem, starting with actions to raise educational attainment across all tiers of the

education system. This process must embed ways of reflecting Aboriginal cultural values into governance and delivery frameworks and foster stronger community and government agency capability, particularly on technical assurance and ownership of the Strategy.

In setting the twin goals of the Strategy, communities imagine government institutional frameworks which foster connected policy setting and coordinated service delivery, accommodate sources of advice from the local Aboriginal leadership, and embed rigour in their accountabilities:

- Stakeholders are collaborating to deliver against this Aboriginal Workforce Implementation Plan enabling Murdi Paaki Aboriginal communities to meet Closing the Gap targets and timeframes whilst raising social and economic wellbeing; and
- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly advocacy and influence is resulting in labour market policies and strategies which are increasing the proportion of the adult population employed in rewarding, long-term careers in traditional and non-traditional fields of occupation.

THEMES, THEME OBJECTIVES and DESIRED OUTCOMES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP: Murdi Paaki communities are empowered and supported to contribute to the co-design and implementation of training, employment and economic development initiatives
REGIONAL VET AND HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAYS, ACCESS AND ATTAINMENT: Academic partnerships at secondary and post-secondary levels, tailored to the Region's needs, are raising the skills base, strengthening human and social capital
PARTNERSHIPS FACILITATING ECONOMIC TRANSITION: Genuine, values-aligned partnerships are enabling integrated and collaborative approaches to rebuilding the Region's participation in local and regional economic activity
SHARED WORKFORCE DATA AND DERIVED KNOWLEDGE: Use of multi-source data and knowledge, performance monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder feedback is informing Strategy implementation and guiding responses to CAP priorities
REBUILDING AND SUSTAINING ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE: New and existing ACCOs are empowered and resourced to provide the platform upon which a 'grow our own' workforce is being nurtured
MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION: Opportunities for employment are increased and broadened: participation in economic activity, including business creation, is available to all who aspire to it

Six themes give structure to the Strategy and define the areas of focus and effort to produce the outcomes communities wish to see achieved while the Transition Plan proposes the series of integrated short-, medium- and long-term actions required to bring about change. The task is daunting but the lessons learned in Wilcannia and Bourke during the COVID-19 pandemic are to be heeded. To varying degrees, communities of remote NSW demand adequate, targeted investment with energetic application to address socio-economic condition.

A senior stakeholder group drawn from governments and the Assembly is proposed to provide oversight and high level direction of Strategy implementation. Such a governance entity is vital to effective engagement of agencies and NGOs with responsibility for policy formulation, service delivery and outcome accountability.

While all themes are of equal standing and all require attention, rebuilding and sustaining organisations and community infrastructure is essential as the precursor to supporting communities to participate fully in economic activity. The Assembly contrasts the current lack of ability to service community needs with that of the ATSIC CDEP era, and aspires to the reintroduction of supported employment to increase participation rates, build work-readiness and contribute to community agency and wellbeing. The connection of labour market programs with community development is to be reinstated. The absence of a lead Aboriginal organisation headquartered in the Region tasked with coordinating, supporting and/or delivering economic development initiatives

severely hampers the ability to facilitate a reversal of economic fortunes so the Strategy envisages the creation of a new organisation, provisionally named MP Squared, to fulfill this role. MP Squared will perform an operational function primarily delivering against Regional and community priorities whereas its existing sister organisation, Murdi Paaki Services Ltd, retains responsibility for assisting the Assembly on matters of policy, strategy and evidence-gathering.

An objective of MP Squared will be to foster Aboriginal entrepreneurs; organisational, family or single persons, to conceive, establish and grow sustainable businesses. The Assembly notes the lack of opportunity over the past two decades for community members to gain experience in corporate governance and management following erosion of the Region's organisational base post-ATSIC, and the challenge of rebuilding proficiency quickly. Measures to attract and retain the brightest cohort of young people would seem to be a self-evident step in meeting the shortfall in human capital and inventiveness. Community priorities are identified already in the respective Community Action Plans so the vehicles on which to construct new opportunities able to facilitate the emergence of a new leadership and skills base are identified and conceptualised. A further process of community consultation will fill out the detail.

Co-design of Strategy elements reflecting the needs and aspirations of individual communities is viewed as critically important for success. Communities are aware of the positive features and proven outcomes of past programs such as CDEP and CDP, and may consider these to be worthy of incorporation. Echoing the previous discussion about organisational capacity, the Strategy argues for a pivotal role to be played by local Aboriginal organisations in its implementation and providing scope for local flexibility and discretion in allowable participant activities. Establishing supportive workplaces offering relevant training which correlates with actual jobs available in community are essential for positive long-term employment outcomes. While training is an important way for job seekers to upskill and gain experience, the Assembly is firmly of the view that training for the sake of training is to be discouraged.

The Strategy is centred in people and place with an implicit understanding that implementation will take time. Duration is expected to be ten years and more: time to develop relationships, time to create community infrastructure, time to conceptualise, plan, design and rollout elements incrementally, and time to evaluate and refine. The model is a creation of the communities of the Murdi Paaki Region and offers an inclusive alternative to centralised Aboriginal labour market concepts which, on critical review, are found to underperform in achieving their objectives. While ownership rests in the first instance with the Assembly, buy-in from governments and government agencies, NGOs and private sector stakeholders will ensure a collective responsibility to contribute to the ambition, imagining and drive to transform Aboriginal socio-economic status.

1 The Murdi Paaki Region

1.1 The Region

The Murdi Paaki Region occupies approximately forty per cent of the land mass of New South Wales, extending from the Queensland border in the north to the Victorian border in the south and from Collarenebri in the east to the South Australian border in the west. The Region encompasses seven complete Local Government Areas (LGAs), the Unincorporated Far West, and portions of Balranald and Cobar LGAs as illustrated by Figure 1.1. Principal Aboriginal communities, of which there are sixteen, are spread across all LGAs. Broken Hill is the only settlement with a population exceeding 5,000. Most towns and villages are much smaller. Almost all are classified as 'Remote' or 'Very Remote'.

Figure 1.1: The Murdi Paaki Region



1.2 The people

While the Aboriginal population is increasing, Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) has recognised for some time that a demographic shift is occurring as most communities experience a decline in the non-Indigenous population. Recent population change and change in the population of working age (aged 15 to 64 years) at Regional scale is reflected in Figure 1.2 and Aboriginal population growth in Figure 1.3. Only Wentworth LGA exhibits growth over the period 2017 to 2022 and then mainly in the non-working age cohort. Many of the residents departing Broken Hill, Cobar and Walgett are of working age, depleting economic capacity. Consequent upon the outward migration of almost 2,000 residents (4.1%) in the period 2017 to 2022 from an already small and dispersed population is the loss of human capital: the skills, knowledge, and experience essential to underpin thriving

communities, and an accompanying loss of economic capital. Ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce is weak; this contributes to the strategic challenges confronting the Region.

Figure 1.2: Change in Estimated Resident Population and population of working age by LGA, 2017-2022

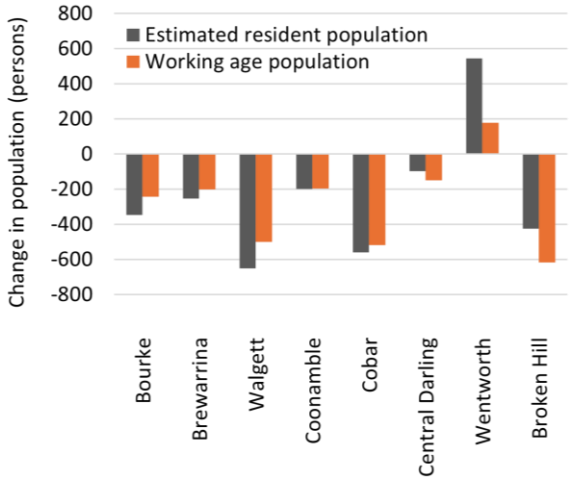
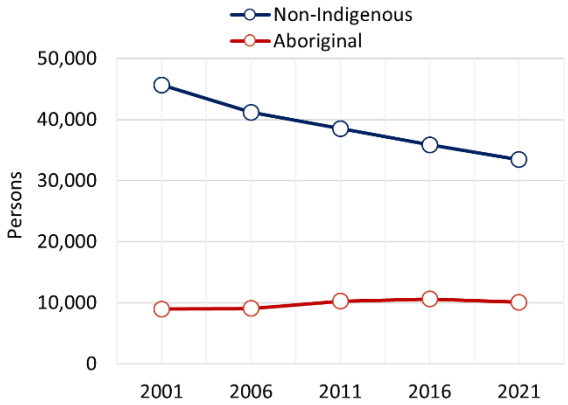


Figure 1.3: Trend in Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Estimated Resident Population, Murdi Paaki Region



A snapshot of the Murdi Paaki population drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data and later population estimate corrections is shown at Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Murdi Paaki Region snapshot, ABS 2016 and 2021 ERPs and Census

Aspect	2016	2021[1]
Estimated resident population (ERP) (persons)	46,542	44,332
Aboriginal population (persons)	10,606	10,094
Aboriginal population as a percentage of the total population	22.8%	22.8%
Median age (years) (Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population)	26 46	27 47
Working age population (aged 15-64 years) (total population)	25,245	22,861
Working age population (aged 15-64 years) (Aboriginal population)	5,155	4,559
Aboriginal working age population as a percent of total population	20.4%	19.9%
Aboriginal population aged 0-15 years (percent of Aboriginal population)	32.7%	31.9%

In summary, the Aboriginal population is approaching a quarter of the total population but comprises one fifth of the working age population aged 15 to 64 years. The median age of the non-Indigenous population 46 to 47 years but the Aboriginal population is much younger at a median of 26 to 27

[1] The ABS 2021 Census was conducted during lockdown at the height of COVID-19 pandemic, when Aboriginal households were very cautious of outside contact. This and a limited access to the internet meant that many Aboriginal households in the Region were unable to participate in the ABS 2021 Census, leading to gross underrepresentation in the published data. For example, the Aboriginal population enumerated for Walgett LGA fell by 40% from the 2016 to the 2021 Census. Subsequent adjustment by the ABS increases the 2021 total population by between 21% and 39% compared with a range of 15% and 29% for the 2016 Census. The undercount for LGAs as a whole increased from 21% to 27%. In view of the unreliability of the finer grain ABS data which is as enumerated on the night of the 2021 Census and not adjusted for the undercount, this Strategy uses the ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Non-Indigenous population fractions for 2016 as the basis for comparison and projection in preference to 2021 Census values.

years. The difference reflects the much larger cohort within the Aboriginal population of persons under 15 years of age: almost one third of Aboriginal people are below the age of 15 years.

The reduction in the non-Indigenous population is a continuing trend rather than an aberration and is being experienced by all communities except those in the Sunraysia district. Reasons for out-migration are varied but may be summarised as[2]:

- Lower standard of education which translates to sub-par academic outcomes. Local schools suffer a diminished reputation, are understaffed at early childhood and secondary levels, and are limited in subject offerings for Higher School Certificate (HSC) students;
- Time spent travelling to and from school each day;
- Social issues within communities, including unemployment, crime, drugs and alcohol;
- Limited career development opportunities for young people, and career opportunities for partners;
- Remoteness and isolation as reflected in a lack of opportunity to participate in sporting and cultural activities at a higher level, and time and travel costs associated with sporting and other extra-curricular commitments; and
- Unspecified family reasons and retirement.

Coupled with pressures on housing and limited access to health and human services, these drivers suggest that a new paradigm is needed in which to plan and foster Regional regrowth.

1.3 Economic environment

The economic landscape across the Region is dominated by the agriculture and mining industry sectors with strong contribution to local economies by the various services sectors: health and social assistance, education and training, and public administration. Relative to other industry sectors, the visitor economy is a smaller but nevertheless important contributor. Employment opportunities in agricultural activities have declined over recent years following the consolidation of rural properties, industrialisation of production and conversion of degraded rangelands to national parks so participation of Aboriginal workers in this traditional area of work is much diminished.

Any ambition to leverage the region's resource, environmental and rural industry strengthens must be tempered with the prospects of a hotter and drier climate which will see temperatures in excess of 35°C for extended periods. Attracting, growing and sustaining industry and its associated skilled workforce with yet another adverse externality will be challenging. Currently, at Regional scale, skills gaps exist across all employment classifications[3] from manager to labourer, from professional to semi-skilled worker; shortfalls which can be closed in part by a disciplined implementation of this Strategy.

1.4 Developing a case for change

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2023 documents goals and objectives directed at raising the Region's political, cultural, social and economic status. The Plan is intended to inform Governments in their

[2] Regional Development Australia, Orana NSW, Skills Report Position Paper 3: Family Drift (Bracing for Change Report, 2018)
[3] Regional Development Australia, Orana NSW, Skills Report Position Paper 2: Awareness of Trades (Bracing for Change Report, 2018)

dealings with communities across the Region, and also the increasing number of non-government organisation (NGOs), private sector enterprises and other institutions wishing to engage with Murdi Paaki communities. A companion document, Economic Profile of the Murdi Paaki Region, is intended to highlight the economic circumstances which exist in the Region and which may be used as the basis to formulate actions focussed on improving the economic status of Aboriginal communities, families and individuals. Underlying these higher level strategic planning documents is a suite of Community Action Plans (CAPs), produced by Community Working Parties (CWPs), and which advocate for local initiatives in each of the sixteen Murdi Paaki communities.

Synthesis of priorities and actions illustrates a need for reform of policy and practice in respect of programs which are directed at supporting increased levels of educational attainment, employment and enterprise creation since the evidence clearly demonstrates that desired outcomes are not being achieved within reasonable timeframes or, indeed, at all. Indicators show that, while progress is being made in some areas, this is insufficient to redress the depth of disadvantage experienced and the Region is slipping in comparison with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in the reference geographies of NSW and Australia. This Strategy presents a case to the Australian and NSW Governments, and other stakeholders with a responsibility for service delivery, for investing in a comprehensive and integrated NSW remote area labour market model which aligns with targets adopted under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

2 Historical context

2.1 Policy framework

The policy landscape guiding Aboriginal participation in employment has evolved since Government funded Indigenous Employment Programs (IEPs) were first introduced in the 1970s. An early initiative, Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), which embodied the principles of self-determination, self-management and mutual obligation, proved to be the most valued and enduring of the profusion of policies and programs implemented to date. Administered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the scheme offered flexible employment opportunities with a focus on community development. Its part-time nature allowed participants to work part-time for a minimum income and, for those where opportunities were available, to generate further livelihood benefits through additional market engagement.

2.2 Murdi Paaki CDEPs

Being under local control and fully accountable, CDEP provided a sheltered training ground for aspiring leaders to gain experience in governance, management and administration while simultaneously working on community-based projects aimed in many cases at civic enhancement. For example, in 1996/97, fourteen CDEP organisations were allocated funding by Murdi Paaki Regional Council to a total of $11.1M for capital, recurrent costs and wages[4]. Further, Regional Council allocated funding to the recently established Murdi Paaki Training and Employment Aboriginal Corporation (TEAC) to allow the organisation to continue to support community capacity building. Each CDEP was supported a dedicated Community Training Officer. CDEPs acquired their own premises from which to operate and the machinery and equipment necessary to fulfil work objectives. Some CDEPs contracted with Councils to provide certain municipal services while other focussed on grounds maintenance. Whatever a CDEPs operational aims, community members derived great pride from community-driven projects improving the lived environment.

The existence of CDEPs underpinned the roll out of major capital works in most communities under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, Health Infrastructure Priority Projects (NAHS HIPP) and Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP) through subsidising the wages of Aboriginal workers, apprentices and trainees to the extent of the allowance. In communities such as Brewarrina and Goodooga, building teams operated from the CDEP premises using CDEP resources.

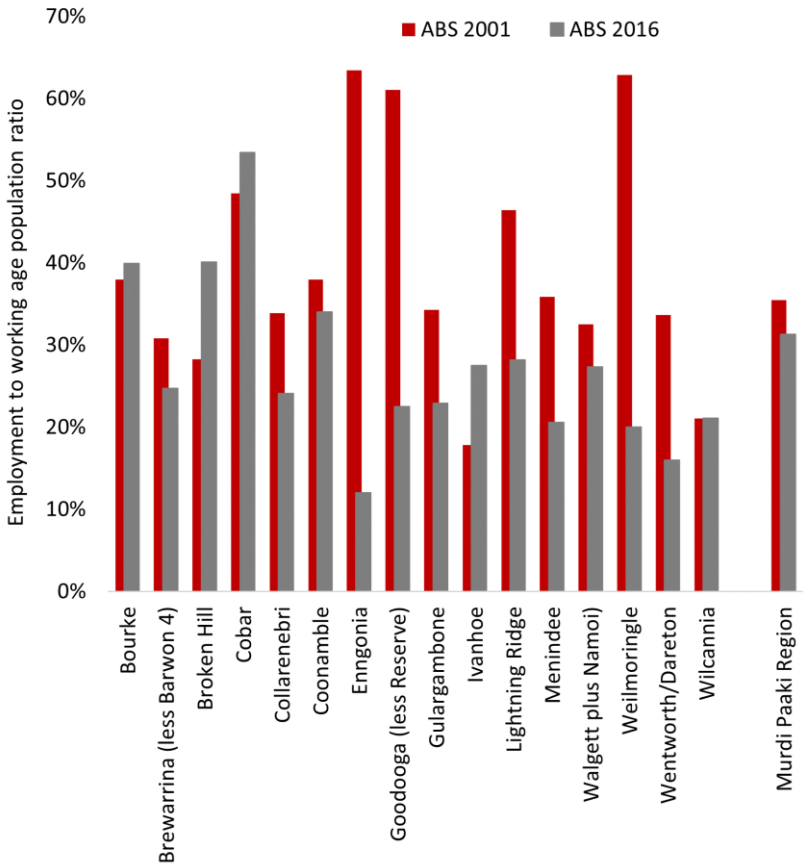
2.3 After ATSIC

Following the abolition of ATSIC in 2005, and the forced closure of CDEPs and sale of assets, participants were left with no option but to engage in the mainstream economy or be welfare recipients. The ensuing labour market support arrangements as applied to remote and very remote settings have proved grossly inadequate to the extent that labour force participation has barely changed over twenty years. Preferencing of non-Indigenous providers or Out-of-Region providers over local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) in the delivery of services, together with failure to stem the demise of ACCOs through funding chokes and/or onerous compliance requirements, has progressively eroded the capacity of the Region to administer its own

[4] Murdi Paaki Regional Council Annual Report 1996/97

affairs. A handful of larger ACCOs, mainly delivering health-related services, and the Land Council network are all that remain of a mosaic of endeavour.

Figure 2.1: Employment to working age population, ABS 2001 and 2016 Census, by community



The impact that closure of CDEP had is evident from Figure 2.1 which shows the employment to working age population ratio during and post-CDEP. While residents of Bourke, Broken Hill and Cobar did not experience a reduction in opportunity, in general the smaller the community the greater the loss to the extent that, in Enngonia, Weilmoringle and the Sunraysia communities, a great many people found themselves jobless and with no realistic local prospect of future employment.

2.4 Current governance arrangements

The peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal communities across the Region is the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, the successor to the ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council upon the abolition of ATSIC. The Murdi Paaki model for community-led governance centres on the sixteen Community Working Parties giving equal representation to the Region's principal communities. The model is community driven and practises a culturally derived form of community governance. MPRA is authorised to speak on behalf of communities through its relationship with CWPs creating a framework in which local decisions are made at community level and matters of regional significance are dealt with at the level of the Assembly. The Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Community Workforce Participation Strategy is a matter of Regional significance for which MPRA has carriage. In this MPRA is assisted by its operating arm, Murdi Paaki Services Ltd (MPSL).

3 Economic geography

3.1 Features of employment

A profile of economic participation at Regional scale is given by Tables 3.1 and 3.2. In all respects, the economic status of Aboriginal population of the Region trails that of their non-Indigenous counterparts and of the Aboriginal population of NSW more broadly. The number of persons in the labour force and those employed have changed little since the ABS 2006 Census as shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1: Employment to population ratio (population aged 15 years and over)

Area	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
	ABS 2016 Census		ABS 2021 Census	
Murdi Paaki Region	33.1% (22% to 46%)	57.0%	41.5% (24% to 60%)	59.3%
New South Wales	46.0%	59.1%	52.3%	59.6%

Table 3.2: Aboriginal participation in the economy, (population aged 15 years and over), ABS 2016 and 2021 Census

Aspect	2016	2021
Aboriginal working age population (male) (no)	2,713	2,422
Aboriginal working age population (female) (no)	2,988	2,739
In the labour force (no)	2,350	2,344
▪ Aboriginal (male) (no) (%)	1,180 (50%)	1,125 (48.0%)
▪ Aboriginal (female) (no) (%)	1,176 (50%)	1,219 (52.0%)
Labour force participation rate (%)	43.7	47.7
Aboriginal persons employed (no)	1,786	2,045
% of total labour force employed	75.8	87.1
Aboriginal persons unemployed (no)	570	304
% of total labour force unemployed	24.2	12.9
Not in labour force (%)	56.3	52.3

Figure 3.1: Labour force participation, Aboriginal population aged 15 years and over



Figure 3.2: Status of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over in the labour force

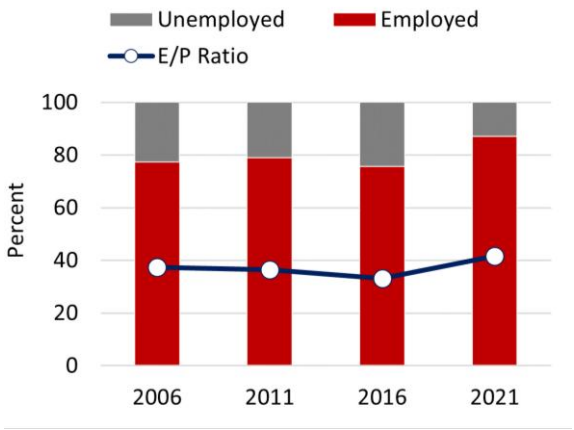


Figure 3.3: Proportion of Aboriginal persons aged 15 years and over in full-time employment (the week before the Census)

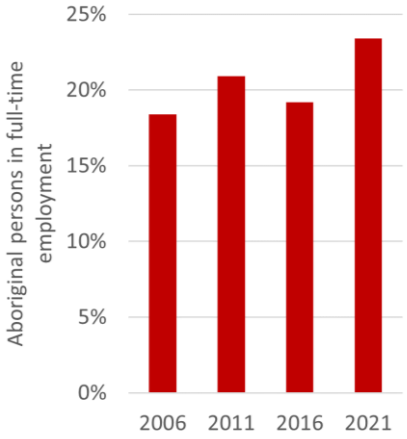


Figure 3.4: Sectors of employment, Aboriginal population, ABS 2021 Census

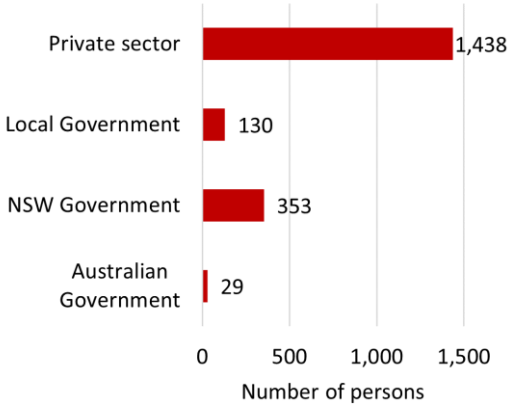
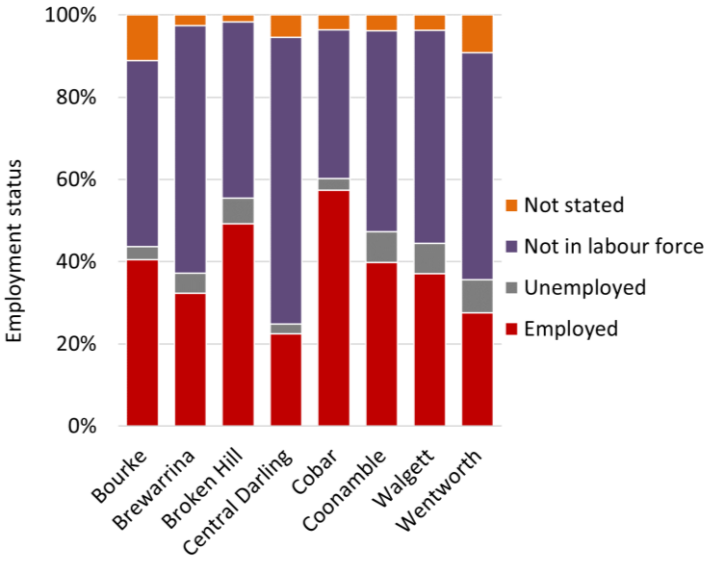


Figure 3.5: Employment status by local government area, Aboriginal population aged 15 years and over, ABS 2021 Census



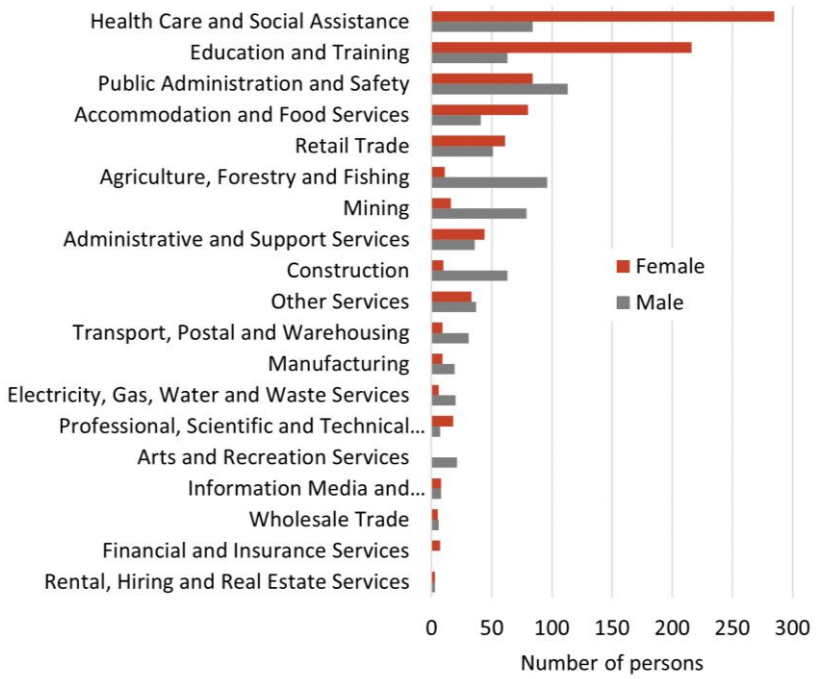
One in five Aboriginal persons aged 15 years and over were recorded as being in full-time employment by each ABS Census from 2006 as illustrated by Figure 3.3. In 2021, 30% of full-time employees were employed by either the Australian (n=15), NSW (n=234) or local government (n=89) with the balance of 792 employees working in the private sector, many of whom would be with ACCOs and principally Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs). The public sector accounts for 21% of part-time employment. Figure 3.4 quantifies full-time and part-time employment by public and private sector while employment status of the population of working age by community is shown in Figure 3.5. Opportunities appear strongest in the mining towns of Broken Hill and Cobar. Further, communities classified as Remote and Very Remote have lower engagement with the labour market than these two communities.

Table 3.3: Industry of employment, percent of employed persons aged 15 years and over, ABS 2016 and 2021 Census

	2016		2021	
Industry	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6.5	15.0	5.6	12.9
Health care and social assistance	21.3	13.2	19.1	15.5
Education and training	15.9	9.0	14.7	9.6

Industry	2016 Aboriginal	2016 Non-Indigenous	2021 Aboriginal	2021 Non-Indigenous
Retail trade	5.9	9.4	6.4	9.0
Mining	5.5	9.3	6.5	9.1
Public administration and safety	11.5	7.6	11.2	7.6
Accommodation and food services	7.0	7.8	6.9	7.1
Construction	4.3	5.0	6.7	6.0
Other services	4.3	3.5	4.0	3.4
Transport, postal and warehousing	2.4	3.5	3.4	3.7
Administrative and support services	4.6	2.9	4.5	2.8
Manufacturing	1.4	2.3	1.0	2.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	1.6	2.0	1.6	1.9
Wholesale trade	0.6	1.8	0.8	2.3
Electricity, gas water and waste services	1.7	1.7	1.0	1.7
Financial and insurance services	0.6	1.2	1.0	0.9
Arts and recreation services	1.4	0.9	1.6	0.9
Information media and telecommunications	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.6
Rental, hiring and real estate services	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.8
Inadequately described or not stated	2.5	2.4	2.9	1.9

Figure 3.6: Industry of employment, number of Aboriginal male and female employees aged 15 years and over, ABS 2016 Census



Of Aboriginal persons employed, one third are employed in health care, social assistance, education and training. Between 6% and 7% work in agriculture and a similar proportion in accommodation and food services as stated in Table 3.3. Participation in construction and mining together accounted for approximately 13% of employees.

The importance that the public sector, particularly the health and education classifications, plays in providing employment opportunities in Aboriginal communities is highlighted by Figure 3.6. Also evident is the predominance of Aboriginal women in these sectors. Overall, more women were in employment (n=911) at the time of the 2016 Census than men (n=781). Analysis of data for the period 2006 to 2021 reveals that the number of men in employment has stagnated (increased by < 2%) while the

number of women in work has increased by 39%. The significant increase in participation by women in employment between 2006 and 2021 is illustrated by Figure 3.7. The gain by women in health care and social assistance has been mirrored by the loss of male roles in the sector while the principal growth sector for Aboriginal men has been mining.

Figure 3.7: Industry of employment, change in number of Aboriginal male and female employees aged 15 years and over, ABS 2006 to 2021 Census



3.2 Existing Aboriginal business base

Of the total number of persons enumerated as working, only 7% were owner managers of their own business or were a family member contributing to business operations and, of these Aboriginal enterprises, 60% were owned and managed as an unincorporated business without employees. Table 3.4 refers.

Table 3.4: Aboriginal business ownership, all Murdi Paaki LGAs, ABS 2021 Census

Status	
Owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees	17
Owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees	7
Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise with employees	19
Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees	65
Contributing family worker	34

The industry sectors in which these enterprises operate are shown at Figure 3.8. Construction and agriculture have proved to be the areas of highest representation.

Figure 3.8: Aboriginal owner manager businesses by industry sector, all Murdi Paaki LGAs, ABS 2021 Census



The main centres of enterprise operations are Coonamble LGA (38), Broken Hill LGA (20) and Walgett LGA (20).

Notably absent from Figure 3.8 are, for example, such diverse activities as personal care services: hair and beauty services, automotive repair and maintenance services, visual arts and crafts including commercial photography, and a higher level of involvement in tourism-related business ventures, most of which might be expected to have attracted greater interest in Aboriginal communities.

3.3 Barriers to participation

It is well known that Aboriginal jobseekers are often confronted with barriers to workforce participation[5]. Measures to overcome these barriers do not appear to be effective since employment metrics show little indication of change since 2006. While each person will have his or her own challenges, there are some factors which appear regularly:

- Systemic racism;
- Low literacy and numeracy levels, and low computer literacy;
- Differing expectations around employment and the relationship with cultural and family obligations;
- Poor health, including mental health;
- Interaction with the justice system;
- The influence of domestic and family violence;
- Absence of documented proof of identity such as birth certificate.

Employment support services can help in negotiating these barriers but systemic failures within the sector hamper access: there are only two Workforce Australia Employment Services providers operating in much of the Region each having offices in Broken Hill, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge and Walgett. An objective of the Community Development Program (CDP) administered by the National

[5] Indigenous Employment Program Evaluation – Final Report, Deloitte Access Economics, 2021 accessed 12th April 2024 at https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous-employment-program-evaluation-final-report.pdf

Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is to assist job seekers in remote communities to build skills, address barriers to employment and contribute to their communities through activities and training but, in the Murdi Paaki Region, the funded CDP provider Regional Enterprise Development Institute (REDI.E) has a presence in only six Murdi Paaki communities: Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Enngonia, Goodooga and Wilcannia[6]. As job opportunities are scarce, persons of working age are not incentivised to seek pre-employment or employment support services even if these services are culturally safe and, in doing so, may forego access to other support services, such as healthcare services, housing services or legal services.

3.4 People of working age living in discrete settlements

The apparently anomalous situation in the Wentworth – Dareton community whereby the community has the highest percentage of persons with a tertiary qualification yet the lowest participation in the labour market raises a question around the influence of discrete settlements on perceptions of economic activity by the broader Aboriginal workforce. Table 3.5, produced for discrete settlements where census data are available, suggests the effect to be noteworthy.

Table 3.5: Participation in employment, population aged 25-64 years, discrete settlements

Census	2011		2016		2021	
Discrete settlement	Population	% employed	Population	% employed	Population	% employed
Gingie	24	0.0%	27	14.8%	18	27.8%
Namoi	48	8.3%	-	-	22	0.0%
West Bre	27	0.0%	-	-	20	0.0%
Barwon 4	-	-	-	-	34	29.4%
Warrali	-	-	-	-	14	0.0%
Mallee	89	34.8%	73	8.2%	54	5.8%
Namatjira	53	0.0%	63	0.0%	43	7.0%

If the data are representative, as a general rule, it would appear to be the case that residents of discrete communities are, more often than not, not connected to the labour force. Although populations in the working age range quoted are not substantial, except for the communities living at the Mallee at Wilcannia and the Namatjira – New Merinee precinct at Dareton, to have only twenty-one persons of a total of 205 adults in employment in the sample settlements at the time of the ABS 2021 Census suggests the existence of a systematic barrier. The absence of a consistent longitudinal dataset complicates analysis.

[6] https://www.workforceaustralia.gov.au/individuals/coaching/providers/search, for CDP providers, accessed 12th May 2024

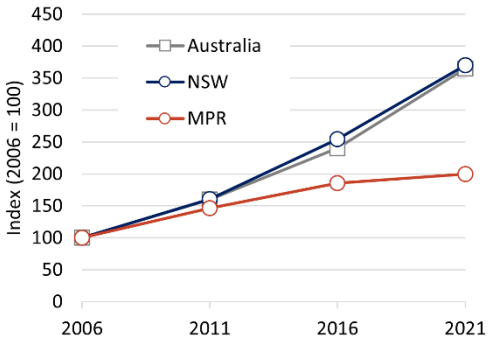
4 Learning

4.1 Education and training

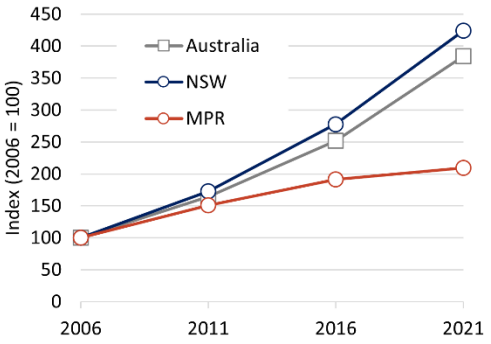
"*Education is key to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways to success. It's the foundation that can lead to increased wellbeing across all other aspects of life.*"[7] Yet educational achievement at all levels across the Region is not where it should be and, importantly, is not matching the gains elsewhere as the consistent divergence from national and NSW trends shown at Figure 4.1 indicate. The proportion of the working age population with a post-school qualification is growing but at too slow a rate. While nationally more Aboriginal people may be studying higher level vocational education and training (VET) courses and more Aboriginal people are going to university, the Region is lagging. The proportion of the adult population with a post-school qualification is shown at Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1: Trends in engagement in vocational and tertiary education

Certificate I to IV



Certificate III and IV



Degree level and above

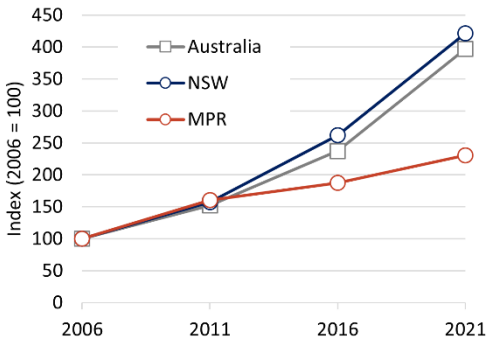
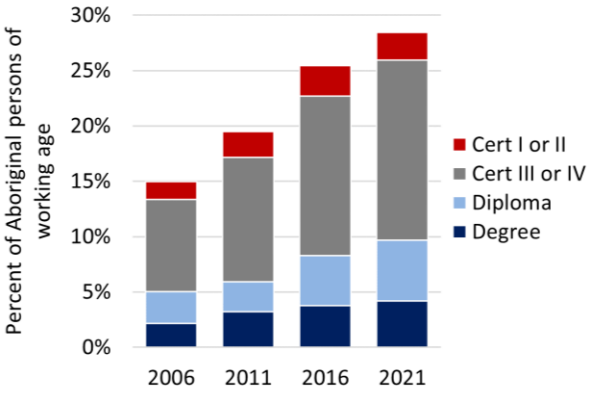


Figure 4.2: Post school qualification (%)

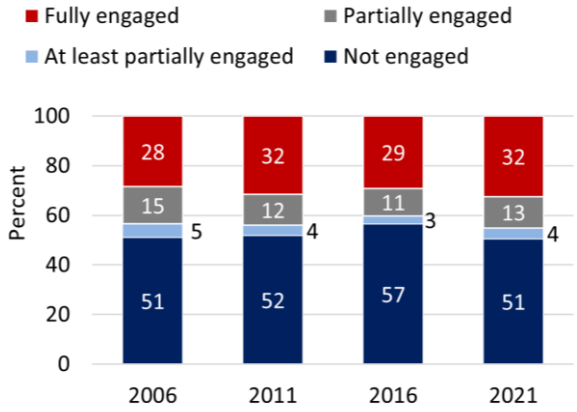


[7] National Australians Indigenous Agency https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education accessed 12th April 2024

To attain growth in completions at VET Certificate level and above, greater than an additional 600 students from the Region needed to be graduating in 2021. In comparison with the Closing the Gap (CtG) Target 6, which seeks an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%, the Region can only claim to have reached a lowly 32%. By LGA, the range is 17% (Central Darling) to 51% (Cobar). More than 15% of the non-Indigenous employed population hold a Bachelor degree or higher qualification compared to 3.4% of employed Aboriginal people. The knowledge deficit is a serious impediment to economic growth in Murdi Paaki Aboriginal communities.

The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over engaged in employment, education and training is shown by Figure 4.3. Little change has occurred over the period since 2006. Each category appears stubbornly resistant to improvement.

Figure 4.3: Engagement in employment, education and training (Aboriginal people of working age)



Target 7 of the Closing the Gap strategy aspires to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (aged 15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67% by 2031. Nationally in 2021, 58.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15-24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training and, while the trend is positive, the rate of progress is below that required to meet the target by the nominated deadline. The status of the Region at 45% falls well short of the target and of national and NSW achievements as evidenced by Figure 4.4. It is likely that the ABS 2021 Census overestimates this percentage for the reasons stated in Chapter 1 and that the situation is more critical than suggested by the data. A progressive decline in the level of participation in full-time employment, education or training by this cohort of young people is evident in Figure 4.5: a significant share of young people are not in employment, education or training. There is no discernible difference between the male and female populations.

Figure 4.4: Proportion of Aboriginal young persons aged 15-24
years who are in employment, education or training

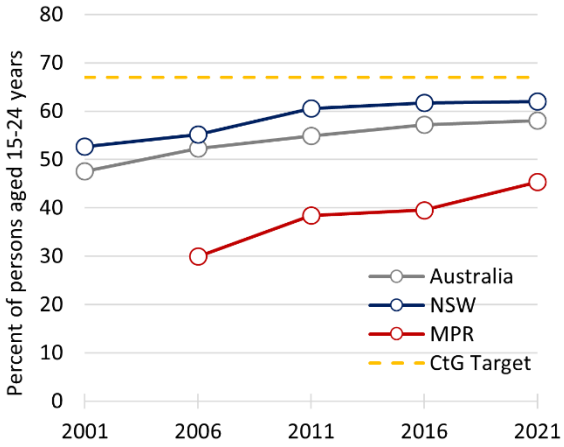
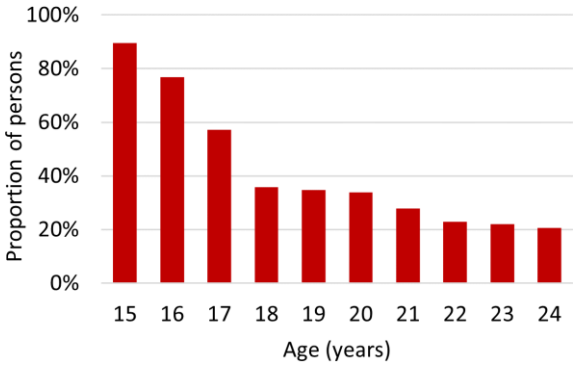
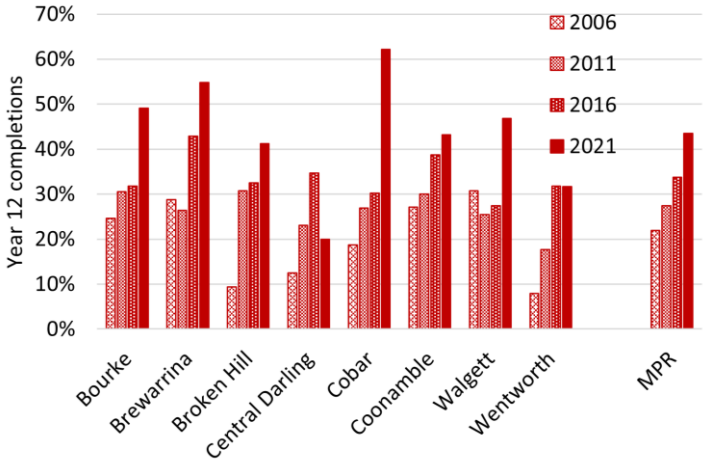


Figure 4.5: Proportion of Aboriginal young persons aged 15-24
years who are in employment, education or training in the Murdi Paaki Region by age, 2021



This is of great concern to the Region as this cohort constitutes 26% of the total population of working age and represents the future. While more Aboriginal young people are attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Figure 4.6 refers), the improvement is not being replicated sufficiently through greater attainment in vocational and higher education. There is much more work to do to deliver equitable education outcomes for Aboriginal people through Increasing attendance and school engagement, and encouraging and supporting greater take up of VET and university courses.

Figure 4.6: Proportion of Aboriginal young persons aged 20-24
years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent



5 Community priorities

5.1 A Regional roadmap for reform

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2023 sets down policy and practice reforms MPRA propose as measures necessary to bring about improvement in, among other areas of engagement, the socio-economic status of the Region's Aboriginal communities. The Plan, and the companion document Murdi Paaki Economic Profile, offers a Regional roadmap drawn from community-level appreciation of the social and economic environment experienced by families and individuals. The Plan aims to guide overarching policy-setting and decision-making in these areas under Regional governance and leadership. Action areas focus on providing a whole-of-life framework within which all community members can aspire to healthy, fulfilling lives in sustainable communities on Country.

The process of consolidating themes and actions into a broader Regional context inevitably obscures the nuances and subtleties of local contributions so these are given voice in the following to illustrate the range of specific, place-based measures directed at achieving measurable improvement in education and economic standing.

5.2 Observations drawn from CAPs and HEHPs

5.2.1 Education

CWPs view the stages of transition from school education into post-school labour market or higher learning as failing to provide students with adequate direction, purpose or incentive for future life. While improved, progress in raising the level of educational achievement is muted. There is a perception that students are not being supported well during the period Year 9 to Year 12 and the subject range is too restrictive such that exposure to the subject areas of student interest is narrowed. A number of practical suggestions coming forward in the Community Action Plans and Housing and Environmental Health Plans (HEHPs} are:

- Informed career advice, realistic career plans supported by mentoring by the local community, and clear tailored pathways to transition from school education;
- Greater use of, and access to, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs) across broader subject areas and necessary supports to raise completions;
- Participation in the NSW Government School to Work Program;
- Closer linkages with TAFE NSW to open up a fuller range of opportunities for learning, including by Distance Education and video conferencing if necessary;
- Active promotion and implementation of initiatives such as the NSW Government Regional Industry Education Program;
- Closer links with local business to provide opportunities for work experience; and
- Stronger encouragement to higher education.

For those adults who have not benefited fully from school education, literacy and numeracy remain barriers to training and employment and some CWPs request the re-introduction of the Literacy for Life program.

The CAPs flag an aspiration for a greater number of young people to undertake a course of tertiary education leading to the award of an academic degree. The focus is on qualification in education at all levels from pre-school to secondary level with the objective of raising the number of Aboriginal

teachers employed by the sector and, as a consequence, increasing the level of educational attainment by Aboriginal students. CWPs strongly support measures which lead to a greater number of Aboriginal students completing Year 12.

A common theme expressed by communities is the need to acquire increased competence and skills in business creation, development and operation as the means of growing an Aboriginal business base, whether at organisational level or as sole trader/family businesses. This must include a thorough grounding in financial management. Without a capacity to participate in economic development activities, communities are unable to see where employment opportunities are to arise: the business base is shrinking, not expanding. As at the ABS 2021 Census, there were only thirty-six incorporated and unincorporated Aboriginal-owned enterprises with employees; not the strongest base on which to build expectations. Building partnerships with employment agencies and non-Indigenous businesses to foster opportunities for training and/or employment has proved largely fruitless to the point where some communities are calling for a review of the performance of employment agencies. Creating one or more business incubators across the region is suggested as a useful measure to support small business startups. Government-funded services such as the Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative (ABAI) tend to focus on metropolitan and regional NSW, leaving communities remote from Sydney unsupported and without the enabling investments needed to build local economies designed around their strengths and leveraging enhanced access to information and communication technology.

5.2.2 Training

All communities are anxious to maximise sustainable employment and restore and extend Aboriginal organisational and commercial activity to levels experienced during the time of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). Identification and development of technical skills across industry sectors for men and women is central to achieving this aim and, then, providing the foundation for participation in growth sectors in the local economy or new business. Traineeships and apprenticeships are ideal vehicles for on-the-job learning but require employer sponsorship. Whatever the training delivery mechanism, CWPs stress that training must be delivered locally wherever possible.

An ability to record and pass on Aboriginal cultural knowledge, including the principles and practices associated with caring for Country, is a common aspiration across communities. Lands being handed back through Native Title and via Land Council land claims, together with the National Parks estate, require to be managed sensitively and sustainably and CWPs are keen to ensure that practices are consistent with achieving the optimum cultural, social, environmental and economic outcomes. Suggested areas of skills development are in recording oral histories for the education and guidance of future generations, in cultural sites preservation, bushland management and ecosystem management, and in environmental monitoring and technology. CAPs also document a desire to acquire the expertise to propagate and plant out native plants, including those for culinary or medicinal purposes, and to be more active in traditional fire management.

Expressed interest in land management has been extended in a handful of communities to rural property management and the use of farms, in cases model farms, as a training venue from which to deliver courses in stock management, shearing, horticulture and mechanical plant (earthworks and heavy machinery) operation and maintenance, for example. Building a capacity in heavy machine operations and civil engineering works will increase prospects for employment with contractors conducting infrastructure works and with local councils and RMS contractors.

Community concerns around the mediocre to poor standards and reach of health and human service delivery feature prominently in the CAPs and HEHPs. At the heart of these concerns are discriminatory practice, resourcing deficiencies and absence, generally, of cultural safety in service delivery. In the eyes of CWPs, improvements can readily be made through selective training of a cohort of Aboriginal workers, with emphasise on young adults, at all grades in the aged care, education, health, early childhood sectors, and in community services more broadly; this to extend to skilling local community liaison officers/services coordinators and paraprofessional personnel for smaller communities where resident specialist staff cannot be justified.

In developing an agenda for economic growth, communities propose elevating the capability of Aboriginal peaks, organisations and businesses to exercise a high level of ethical dealing in decision-making and administration. To this end, access to leadership and governance training which explains the essential duties of directors and senior managers in governance, risk management, financial performance and strategy is recommended. Linking with the suggested business incubators could be an avenue for ongoing support and mentoring. An argument is put forward in the CAPs for corresponding strengthening of capabilities in younger members of the community and it may be that a separate regime of skills development is required for this group which is less likely to have had exposure to an operational setting. A secondary benefit will be an ability to negotiate more assertively and confidently with governments.

The Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy presents a rare opportunity to implement a Regional employment and enterprise development initiative aimed at creating permanent work opportunities in building and construction and higher-level training at vocational level for up to one hundred apprentices and trainees through delivery of a major and varied package of Aboriginal social housing improvements. Negotiations through Training Services NSW and the TAFE NSW are proceeding to lock in commitments. Coupled with this, the Region has successfully negotiated a collaboration with the University of New England (UNE) to raise the number of graduates in Community Planning and Community Development and other disciplines of interest to take a leadership role in improving cultural, political, social and economic outcomes at community level. Objectives of these initiatives are to create a succession of future leaders, grow and diversify local economies, and work to a higher level of prosperity of households.

As the CAPs have identified the areas of skills development required, a training and employment needs analysis or skills audit is not suggested as a matter of routine but each community will have its priority areas and these can be negotiated through the respective CWP. Additional areas earmarked in the CAPs as increasing community capability through training but not referred to above are in hospitality and cultural- and eco-tourism, mining and security.

5.2.3 Employment

It is known that recruitment to job vacancies is usually by word of mouth rather than a competitive process. CWPs have been critical of the role of Employment Service (Job Network) Providers in not striving hard enough to find placements for Aboriginal people of working age so it is no surprise that CAPs and HEHPs highlight a strong desire for greater opportunity to participate in productive work activities. The concept of a community-led Community Participation in Employment (CPIE) scheme emerges for communities where opportunities are neither supported by the private sector which, for the Murdi Paaki Region, is most communities, nor by local government. The option of employment within Aboriginal organisations has been severely eroded with attrition of Aboriginal community-

controlled organisations over the past twenty years and, in any event, the organisations that remain are fully staffed.

The key to increased participation in employment is re-creation of the former business base focussed, principally, on services provided to the Aboriginal community. This is best exemplified by the development of a regional employment initiative associated with the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy which centres on building a local skills base and business infrastructure with the capacity and capability to carry out housing-related projects. Up to one hundred apprentices or trainees stand to benefit from VET-level trades training although Phase 1 of the Strategy is likely only to support thirty-six in four communities. This is only possible if the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy Business Case relating to Phase 1, the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation Project 2024, is accepted and appropriate training and employment arrangements negotiated: funding is only for the first year. Despite mandating of the Aboriginal Participation in Construction policy by the NSW Government, the Region has derived little benefit. Anecdotally, advice is that contractors prefer to cash out their commitment in lieu of employing Aboriginal workers.

Community interest in negotiating local strategic agreements with the business community or local government has not been reciprocated.

The previous section highlights those areas of employment of most interest: as National Parks Rangers and sites officers, teachers and teacher aides, health service professionals and paraprofessionals, Police Force Officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs), aged care and disability care workers, tourism operators, cultural officers, rural industry workers, youth coordinators. Members in two communities have expressed interest in arts and crafts production centred on ceramics.

These expressed preferences align in some instances with jobs where demand is known to exist. In the Orana Region and Western NSW, health professionals and allied health staff, social and welfare professionals, education professionals and protective service workers are very much in demand. Recruitment of machinery and heavy vehicle operators and maintenance personnel such as mechanics, auto electricians and diesel fitters is also a priority. In Far West NSW, demand for workers with mining specific skills is not strong but, collectively, a shortfall in exists. Fewer entry level job opportunities are available than ten years ago.

Most CWPs aspire to closer working relationships with their respective local government councils but, to date, only Central Darling Shire has indicated a willingness to consider a collaboration under Council's Community Strategic Plan. Such arrangements are difficult to negotiate in the face of ingrained racism and Council financial precarity. To work, councils require a commitment to ongoing funding to underpin municipal activities which would satisfy the needs of CPIE workers: streetscape beautification, general street maintenance, cemetery maintenance, fencing and the like.

One suggestion to ease identification of work-ready community members is the development of a Regional platform providing details of individuals seeking employment which would be publicly accessible. This could be useful for men and women with trade skills returning from the criminal justice system who wish to reintegrate into the workforce. Some ex-prisoners are said to possess building trade skills.

5.2.4 Business development

Communities acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses in driving forward an agenda for enterprise development. It is clear that there is no higher order planning at local government level which seeks to seriously integrate and build upon the attributes inherent within communities: HEHPs contain a summary of the priorities of local government as documented in council Community Strategic Plans. This uninterest in a significant population cohort percolates into the NSW Government Far West Regional Plan 2041, still in draft after two years, which offers little in the way of constructive ideas in addressing several of the region's strategic challenges relevant to communities: attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, housing availability and affordability, and social and education disadvantage. Several CAPs suggest local Economic Development Plans as a starting point for meaningful engagement but this assumes a willingness on the part of State and local decision-makers to contribute, an action not evident in the foregoing.

In an effort to take advantage of community-identified opportunities for enterprise as well as preserving connections to culture, business initiatives around eco- and cultural tourism and the associated infrastructure are to the forefront of proposals. The presence of scenic landscapes, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, underpins a unique outback experience which has international and national appeal. Missing in most communities is the infrastructure needed to showcase Aboriginal heritage and keep safe items of cultural significance so requests for investment in cultural centres or keeping places to provide the foundation of broader tourism offerings are frequent. Allied to the physical infrastructure is an ambition for the collection of oral histories, language and cultural narratives, to use as an educational resource. Development of local operations is to be guided by the Regional perspective to create a network of connected experiences which are complementary, not competitive. From this flow opportunities for arts and crafts production for commercial gain, guided tours of Country and other special events supported by a community's particular interests and endowments.

The CAPs convey a desire for communities to play a greater part in ensuring their welfare and the wellbeing of families and individuals. Paramount is the care of the elderly, through culturally safe residential aged care services for Elders happy to live in a communal setting and supported independent living for Elders wishing to remain at home in their communities. In view of the failure of existing services, these services are proposed to be provided by a Regional Aboriginal Community Controlled provider or, as a minimum, through a non-Indigenous provider with predominantly local Aboriginal staff. Similarly, communities are critical of human services delivery generally and see opportunities for establish a network of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) businesses specifically to provide an improved level of service to Aboriginal clients with a disability.

Discussion relating to the skilling of apprentices and trainees in building-and construction-related trades in conjunction with the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy is to be found in Section 5.1.3. The initial proposal involves creating four hubs: Brewarrina, Walgett, Wentworth/Dareton and Wilcannia, each with three teams of three aspiring trades supported by a supervisor. It is proposed to form a business cell at each hub able to operate commercially in the longer term. The structure can then be extended to other communities as circumstances permit. While the preliminary phase is progressing, a Regionally based entity can be formed to provided administrative, technical and financial services support until such time as the cells can become self-sustaining. Several Aboriginal unincorporated businesses service the building and construction market so the concept is not alien. Experience with previous capital works projects such as the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, Health Infrastructure Priority Projects program and the NSW

Government Aboriginal Communities Development Program confirms the proposal is realistic; the Strategy has the advantage of not being time limited in the way previous programs have been. The communities of Dareton (Itha Mari), Bourke (Kuru), Brewarrina (Northern Star) and Goodooga (Pulkurru) all had functional local Aboriginal building operations during the HIPP/ACDP period, so knowledge of the model exists. These operations failed simply because governments were unable to commit to continuity of capital works funding at business-critical junctures.

A Regionally based professional services organisation would also be available to assist communities wishing to tender for local government municipal services contracts such as garbage runs which were an income generator in past years, for work with NSW Government agencies, National Parks and Wildlife service in particular, and land rehabilitation contracts with extractive industry.

An inherent area of strengthening acknowledged in the CAPs as essential is that relating to the need to raise competencies in business operations. A lack of expertise in economic and social development, and business management and operation, is a barrier to progress. The concept of a Regional incubator(s) has support amongst CWPs which will then be in a position to explore a range of potential business opportunities particular to the location. For example, most communities are expressing concern over having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food (food security) and are looking to establish community gardens to grow fruit and vegetables as sustainable commercial operations. Testing the feasibility of these ideas would be valuable in determining merit and expectations, and business structure, before proceeding too far with efforts to implement. As carbon miles become more of a feature of food production and consumer preference, growing local is likely to become more sustainable over time. Affordability of groceries has caused two CWPs by way of their CAPs to lobby for the purchase of a supermarket to counter inflated prices and/or loss of main street retail shops and service outlets variously: butcher, baker, hairdresser, tyre repair and supply, truck cleaning, motel accommodation.

5.3 Community strategic aspirations

Themes drawn from the full suite of Community Action Plans (CAPs) and Housing and Environmental Health Plans (HEHPs) are set out below. These are not in any order of priority.

CARING FOR COUNTRY

Implement Ranger programs and negotiate for employment of trained sites officers to undertake maintenance of lands and water systems, including cultural burning to reduce bushfire risk, care of sites of cultural significance, flora and fauna, and control of feral animals, weeds and other biosecurity risks.

Monitor and protect sites and items of cultural heritage associated with mining developments, rehabilitation of disturbed areas, native plant cultivation and planting.

Expand bush tucker and bush medicine plantings to commercial scale.

Introduce cultural healing places to provide opportunities for connection to Country and identity, and for the exercise of cultural practices.

Upkeep cemeteries including grave site restoration.

CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

Re-establish and extend language programs in schools with teaching by authorised Aboriginal Elders.

Record the histories and life experiences of individuals and families as a community action research project to preserve this knowledge for future generations.

Establish cultural keeping places to hold artifacts, art and stories and as a venue for creative work by local artists.

Create Cultural Officer positions within Councils and with private museums and similar tourist venues.

INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Increase the number of Aboriginal staff at all levels of the education system from early childhood through pre-school to senior school: Principals/Directors, teachers, AEOs, SLSOs and support staff.

Grow a local workforce by facilitating and encouraging access to higher career pathways leading to formal qualifications at certificate, diploma and degree levels.

Devise practical strategies which encourage school students to complete Year 12 including negotiating implementation of the NSW Government School to Work Program to support students to transition from school to post school education, training and employment.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Increase the number of Aboriginal staff permanently employed by the health and human services sectors as a means to improving cultural safety, service quality and accessibility.

Grow a local multi-level workforce by facilitating and encouraging access to higher career pathways leading to formal qualifications in health and aged care-related disciplines, and in social work and disability services.

In smaller communities, employ a locally resident community liaison officer (say Allied Health Assistant) in a services coordinator/case manager/emergency liaison role.

Contribute to the personal development and motivation of young people through provision of fully resourced facilities, people, activities and opportunities. Recognise that young people are the future community leaders and worthy of investment.

ADDRESSING THE LAW AND JUSTICE IMBALANCE

Increase the number of Aboriginal Police Officers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and other Aboriginal employees in policing and the legal system.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPABILITY

Raise the capabilities of communities to better manage community affairs and to establish and operate service organisations and businesses. Focus on training in governance, business operations, and financial and risk management. Arrange mentoring and support.

Create permanent, funded Community Co-ordinator roles to support the work of CWPs and volunteer CWP Chairs in progressing community business.

EXTENDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Improve adult literacy and numeracy.

Ensure all people aged 15 years and above but particularly young people have ready access to accredited work skills development appropriate to their interests and potential, and are job ready.

Encourage and assist all people aged 15 years and above with potential to pursue higher education.

Establish culturally safe technology hubs to support people with limited computer literacy to access training and employment services.

INCREASING LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL ECONOMIES

Enhance the level of participation in employment across all industry sectors and occupations (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled) within the local business community and external contractors as a means of acquiring skills and experience in commercial activities with a particular focus on the building and construction industry in response to the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy.

Negotiate employment and training agreements with extractive industries.

Reinstate or create local community-led and community-operated, adequately resourced, work programs which provide part-time employment for those not wishing to enter the labour market full-time, provide for improvement and maintenance of civic amenities, and provide the foundation for contract work with local governments.

Support the transition of school leavers, beginning in Year 9, into chosen careers, areas of employment or further education. Raise the quality of careers advice, create greater opportunity for school-based traineeships and/or early exposure to the work environment through work experience.

Implement targeted pre-employment, employment and mentoring measures to assist individuals returning from the criminal justice system to successfully reintegrate into their community through work.

Advocate for an evaluation of the Region's Job Network providers to determine whether the community is receiving an efficient and effective service which is resulting in Aboriginal people of working age being job ready and taking up employment positions across all industry sectors.

BUILDING THE ECONOMIC BASE

Identify and harness opportunities for creation of Aboriginal owned enterprises, particularly those that involve cultural- and eco-tourism, cultural events, biodiversity and carbon sequestration with a focus on small business, noting that existing community-owned infrastructure to support development is minimal.

Acquire, or negotiate access to, a working rural property to function as a model farm for use as a training facility in rural property management and agricultural trades.

Create a network of community owned and operated building cells to take advantage of opportunities arising from the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy.

Position for and encourage the uptake of business opportunities presenting in allied health and human services.

In conjunction with UNE and in recognition of the loss of basic retail services and social venues to towns and villages, establish a Regional business incubator hub to assist start-ups to imagine, structure, plan, commence and support business operations to maturity.

AIM FOR COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Develop and foster strong working relationships with local government councils around areas of mutual economic interest.

Pursue the S355 Committee collaboration with Central Darling Shire Council as an exemplar for community-led project delivery.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Ask the NSW Government to ensure that, through its Aboriginal Procurement Policy, at least three per cent of domestic contracts for goods and services go to Murdi Paaki Region

headquartered, Aboriginal-owned, businesses across construction, facility management, human resources, medical, ICT and professional services.

WORK TOWARDS ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY

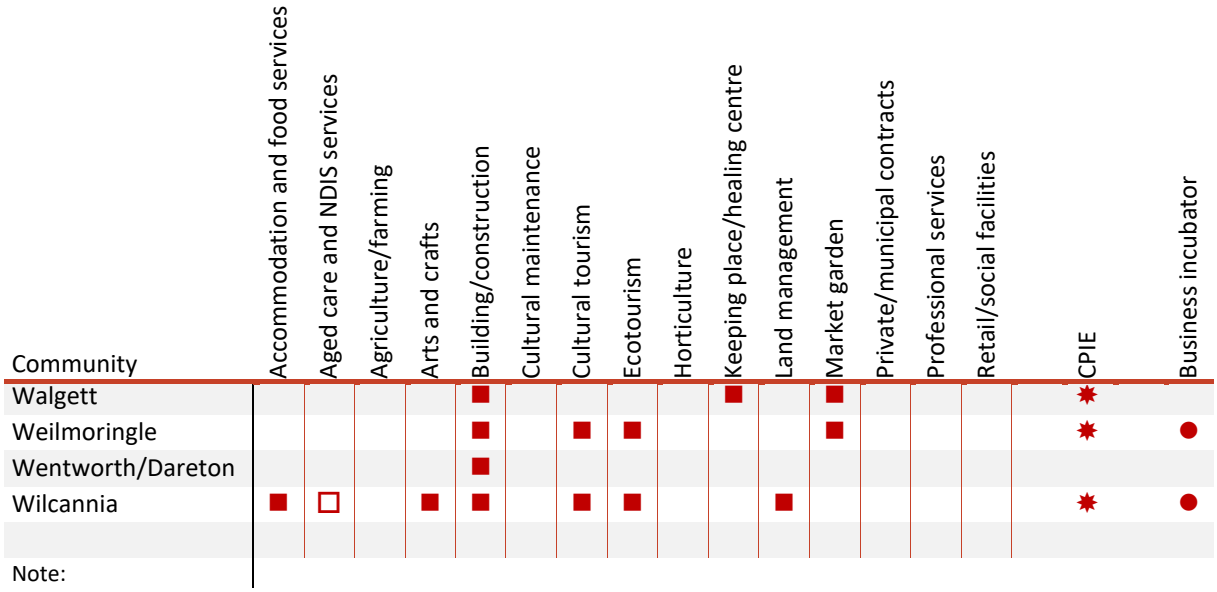
Establish a network of commercial community gardens as a step to guaranteeing community access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables and improving nutrition, and providing a focus for employment and enterprise.

5.4 Specific project proposals

CAPs and HEHPs include a number of areas of business activity which CWP wish to see their communities pursue, circumstances permitting. Table 5.1 draws together the ideas into common themes to yield an overarching perspective on areas of interest at local scale. Table 5.1 also indicates those communities seeking to collaborate with a business incubator and those communities flagging a need for a local supported employment cell (CPIE) able to undertake maintenance of town or village amenities.

Table 5.1: Identified projects by community

Community	Accommodation and food services	Aged care and NDIS services	Agriculture/farming	Arts and crafts	Building/construction	Cultural maintenance	Cultural tourism	Ecotourism	Horticulture	Keeping place/healing centre	Land management	Market garden	Private/municipal contracts	Professional services	Retail/social facilities	CPIE	Business incubator
Bourke		☐			■		■			■						✸	
Brewarrina		☐	■		■		■			■		■	■		■	✸	
Broken Hill		■		■	■		■			■	☐			■			
Cobar					■				■	■			■				
Collarenebri			■	■			■	■	■	■		■			■	✸	●
Coonamble				■			■	■				■				✸	
Enngonia						■										✸	
Goodooga	■						■					■			■	✸	
Gulargambone	■		■						■						■	✸	
Ivanhoe	☐	☐			■	■				■	■	■	■			✸	
Lightning Ridge		☐			■	■											
Menindee		■				■	■		■								



Note:

■ denotes stated business preference

□ denotes business opportunity arising from stated need

Agriculture includes working properties and those properties acting as a base for training in rural industry skills
Lands management relates to contract work in maintenance of National Parks and the like
Horticulture includes plant nurseries, bush tucker and medicine plantings
Cultural maintenance focuses on upkeep of sites of significance, cemeteries, recording oral histories and language
CPIE works extends to maintenance of town/village streetscape and surrounds, recreational facilities

6 Implementation plan

6.1 Closing the Gap strategic alignment

Relevant principal areas of action under Closing the Gap Socio-Economic Outcomes (CtG S-E) are listed in Table 6.1. Targets are specified but data for some is not readily available. Fundamental to the systematic delivery of Closing the Gap strategies are the Priority Reforms. Target indicators for Priority Reforms have been set but baseline and target values are still under discussion and development through the National Indigenous Australians Agency and Productivity Commission except for Priority Reform 5 which is a NSW-specific priority and which is relevant to this Economic Profile.

Table 6.1: Closing the Gap socio-economic outcome area

Socio-Economic Outcome		NSW Implementation Plan key action area
CtG S-E 1	Aboriginal people enjoy long and healthy lives	Key Action Area 3: The Aboriginal health workforce in NSW Health and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation sector are enhanced by building pathways and training opportunities
This Key Action Area aims to strengthen the Aboriginal health workforce in NSW Health and the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) sector through career pathways and training opportunities		
Target: Not set		
CtG S-E 6	Aboriginal students reach their full potential through further education pathways	Key Action Area 1: Support is provided at key transition points throughout the learning continuum
This Key Action Area aims to assist Aboriginal students to reach their full potential through further education pathways, including supported transitions at key transition points		
Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%		
CtG S-E 7	Aboriginal youth are engaged in employment or education	Key Action Area 1: The NSW Department of Education is culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, including through the services it funds and regulates, and the staff it employs Key Action Area 2: Aboriginal people are supported at key transition points
These Key Action Areas aim to ensure that culturally safe and responsive opportunities are provided for Aboriginal people to access employment, education and training and are supported to reach their full potential through supported transitions at key transition points such as between school, further education and employment		
Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15 to 24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%		
CtG S-E 8	Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal people and communities	Key Action Area 1: Aboriginal business owners and staff, and Aboriginal people looking to start a business, make high-quality business decisions

Socio-Economic Outcome		NSW Implementation Plan key action area
		Key Action Area 2: Aboriginal businesses access consumers and supply chains more effectively Key Action Area 3: Aboriginal people have sustainable employment and are skilled in the industries of the future Key Action Area 4: Aboriginal businesses have access to finance and insurance services to support business growth
These Key Action Areas aim to promote a flourishing Aboriginal business sector which employs more Aboriginal people, addresses unfair barriers to employment and economic participation including government procurement processes, and supports equitable access to future industries. (This CtG S-E is addressed through the NSW-specific Priority Reform 5)		
Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 64 who are employed to 62%		

The Region's strategic agenda which intersects with the Priority Reforms summarised in Table 6.2 below in large measure is documented in the *Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2023*. In keeping with the aims and actions expressed in the *Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2023*, MPRA wishes to participate in genuine partnerships with governments committed to shared decision-making, responsiveness and accountability. MPRA expects to be actively involved as a co-design partner throughout all stages of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies relating to Priority Reforms and Socio-economic Outcomes. The work to be done must address the unique needs of Murdi Paaki communities for it to be of value in narrowing and then eliminating the gaps between our metropolitan and regional Aboriginal communities and, then, our non-Indigenous counterparts.

Table 6.2: Closing the Gap priority reforms

Priority reform	Key action areas
Priority Reform 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision-making	▪ All Aboriginal communities have access to partnership arrangements in their local community and on policy issues impacting them, where their voice can be heard ▪ All partnership arrangements in NSW work effectively to advance progress on Closing the Gap through joint decision-making and self-determination ▪ Partnership arrangements in NSW are coordinated and work cohesively together to facilitate effective and respectful relationships between community and government
Priority Reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector	▪ ACCOs have a dedicated, reliable and consistent funding model designed to suit the types of services required by communities ▪ There is a dedicated and identified workforce in ACCOs, which has wage parity ▪ ACCOs have strong governance and business processes
Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations	▪ Government organisations and services are accountable for Closing the Gap ▪ Government organisations and services are culturally safe ▪ Government organisations and services are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people
Priority Reform 4: Shared access to data and information at a regional level	▪ Aboriginal communities have access to government data and insights in formats that enable local decision-making and shared decision-making with government

Priority reform	Key action areas
	▪ An Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance model increases Aboriginal communities' sovereignty over data about Aboriginal people ▪ Community data projects and capacity building enable Aboriginal analysis of data
Priority Reform 5: Employment, business growth and economic prosperity (NSW specific)	▪ Aboriginal business owners and staff, and Aboriginal people looking to start a business, make high-quality business decisions ▪ Aboriginal businesses access consumers and supply chains more effectively ▪ Aboriginal people have sustainable employment and are skilled in the industries of the future Aboriginal businesses have access to finance and insurance services to support business growth

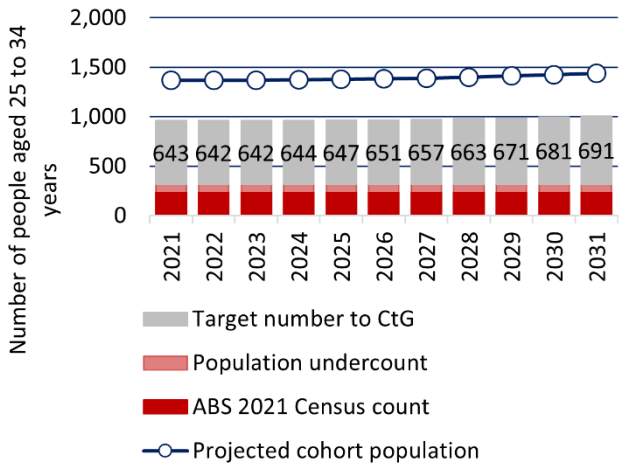
6.2 Achieving Closing the Gap targets

The ABS quote the top five areas in NSW with the greatest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as[8]:

- Brewarrina (51.4% of the total LGA population);
- Central Darling (36.5%);
- Coonamble (33.9%);
- Bourke (30.3%); and
- Walgett (21.2%)

yet these communities, all within the Murdi Paaki Region, may claim to receive meagre recognition.

Figure 6.1: Number of persons required to meet CtG S-E 6, Aboriginal persons reach their full potential



It is sometimes the case that government agencies adopt raw Census data instead of adjusted Estimated Resident Populations when allocating resources or developing policy, thereby further disadvantaging the Region's communities.

To provide a sense of scale to the task confronting the Region if relevant measurable CtG targets are to be met, an approximation of the numbers of persons required to be recruited into each activity has been attempted. Data has been extracted from published population projections[9] to 2041 for SA3 Bourke - Cobar - Coonamble (10501) and SA3 Broken Hill and Far West (10502) prepared for Aboriginal Affairs NSW. This geography excludes Wentworth LGA (Part of Lower Murray 10902) but includes parts of Warren and Bogan LGAs and so

[8] Australian Bureau of Statistics, New South Wales: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary. https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/new-south-wales-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary#where-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-live, accessed 23rd August 2024

[9] Wilson, T. (2023) *Projection methods and data inputs for the 2021-based Aboriginal population projections for New South Wales*, Advanced Demographic Modelling, Brunswick, prepared for Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Figure 6.2: Number of persons required to meet CtG S-E 7, Aboriginal youth are engaged in employment, education or training

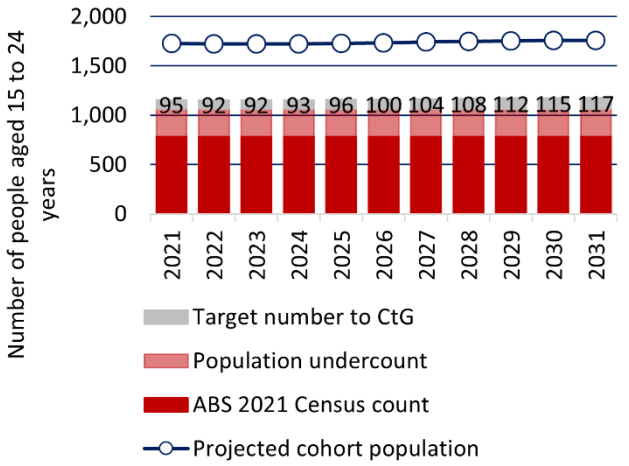
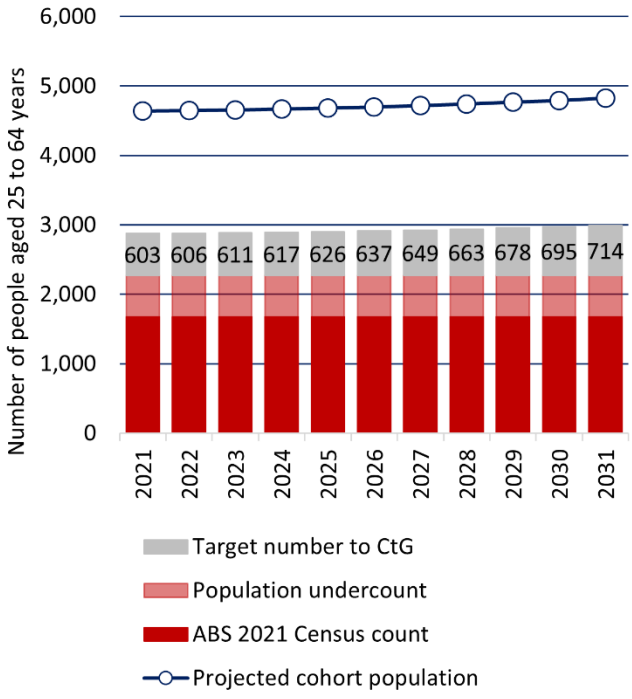


Figure 6.3: Number of persons required to meet CtG S-E 8, Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal people and communities



slightly overestimates population but the projections are indicative of the degree of effort needed to reach the CtG targets. This data provides 5-year age cohorts from which the cohort populations within the age ranges applying to CtG targets referenced in Section 6.1 and shown in Figures 6.1 to 6.3 have been extracted.

The biggest challenge for the Region, as discussed previously, is raising capacity and capability through education and training. Meeting CtG S-E 6 target of 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 34 years holding a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) by 2031 gives substance to the objectives the Region must aspire to if improvement in socio-economic status is to be achieved. Completions at Cert III level and above must be between three and four times the ABS 2021 Census cohort for this variable to satisfy the target.

The number of persons required to achieve the targets attaching to CtG S-E 7, Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 years engaged in employment, education or training would appear to be a more manageable exercise as reflected by Figure 6.2 except that the outcomes shown are heavily skewed by the proportion of young people still at school. As shown at Figure 4.5, the attrition rate post-school is high and it is expected that effort will need to be directed to moving people aged 18 years and over into education or training; employment opportunities being slim. The upward trend for this cohort population is projected to peak in 2032 and decline very slightly thereafter.

Figure 6.3 summarises progress required to meet CtG S-E8 relating to the percentage of Aboriginal people in employment. The ambition is to observe 62% of this population cohort in some form of employment by 2031 which, for the Region suggests finding job opportunities for a further 600 to 700 people over 2021 levels, an estimate that is increasing with a growing adult population. The disparity argues strongly for the introduction of the proposed CPIE scheme to provide opportunities

for economic activity even if part-time. Current demand, as reflected by Community Development Program registrations as at 31st May 2024 in Region 43 (Menindee, Tibooburra and Wilcannia) was 253 and 764 in Region 44 (Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Enngonia, Goodooga and Murrin Bridge), a total of 1,017, suggesting that the CtG target could be exceeded if adequate program infrastructure were available in community.

6.3 The change framework

To raise the existing levels of achievement of Aboriginal communities in education and economic activity to meet the aspirations of the Australian and NSW Governments and MPRA as defined by the CtG targets, it is critical that the Region has a solid implementation platform upon which to construct and advance the actions required to bring about change. Increasing Aboriginal representation in the Region's workforce will require an acknowledgement that new ideas and practices are required to drive change and effect measurable outcomes. The Region has fallen behind on all indicators and is unlikely, based on current trends, to recover without a serious commitment on the part of stakeholders to invest in Aboriginal communities to ensure that they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

This Strategy sets out the seven focus areas to achieve greater Aboriginal engagement in economic activity:

- Cultural adaptation;
- Leadership and accountability;
- Empowering communities;
- Economic growth;
- Social improvement;
- Partnership; and
- Information sharing and evidence.

The Strategy aims to attract increasing numbers of Aboriginal community members into career pathways which are diverse and supported and aligned with individual aspirations, but which also serve to meet the needs of the Region for sustainability, social cohesion and collective prosperity. For the Strategy to be successful, this will necessitate a broad coalition of government agencies, the private sector and professional associations with differing service responsibilities working collaboratively over an extended period to the common objective of developing and growing a strong, highly skilled and capable Aboriginal workforce across the Region. Continuity is essential to the point that the outcomes sought are realised. Each community will have its own aspirations and expectations for its families and individuals, as well as job-creation priorities, so community-level needs should be reflected in a place-based, community-led approach to program design, formation of relationship structures, selection of procurement models and funding arrangements which are aligned to achieve collective objectives. The implementation model must be centred on people and place with stakeholders prepared for Strategy roll out and evidence of tangible outcomes to take time. Figures 6.1 to 6.4 and Table 6.1 form the roadmap which the Region proposes drives implementation.

6.4 Key organisational addition

MPRA regrets the loss of the former Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation from the Region. While acknowledging that autonomous organisations are free to make decisions which they consider

to be in their best interests, the act of moving the centre of operations to beyond the Region diluted relationships and reduced the level of service to communities. Critically, accountability to the Region was erased.

In 2016, MPRA created a new business operation, Murdi Paaki Services Limited, with the specific objective of tasking MPSL with the role of advancing the political, cultural, economic and social initiatives promoted by the Regional Plan current at the time. This decision reintroduced a capability within the Region to promote and progress measures aimed at improving community wellbeing, including those relating to economic development. MPSL's mandate was and is strictly strategic and is not intended to extend to operational functions such as those performed by Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation for instance: corporate risk is judged to be too great. At times, it has been necessary to step outside the boundaries set by the Board but only when particular circumstances dictate intervention.

MPSL does not consider it has a medium or long term role in implementing labour market reforms but, rather, is supportive of a new entity, MP Squared, being created, tasked with executing roll out of the Transition Plan at Table 6.1. The existence of MP Squared is flagged in the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy Business Case as hosting a building and construction unit to take direct responsibility within existing social housing management framework for improving and preserving property condition on behalf of owners, managers and occupiers. This regional residential building operation is based on a cellular structure, each cell with the capacity to carry out work locally but able to contribute to a larger regional capability. Another and equally urgent function envisaged by the MPRA Workforce Working Group is to provide a back office function to smaller organisations which do not yet have the capacity or capability to carry out bookkeeping or compliance activities. As noted previously, such a service would facilitate the sustainability and growth of Aboriginal organisations and start up enterprises and, in consequence, raise employment levels and training opportunities in an environment where the market is not able or willing to do so. Other economic development roles for MP Squared will be devised and implemented as delivery of the Transition Plan progresses.



Figure 6.1: Planning and implementation framework

FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES		THEMES	STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS	EARLY ACTIONS
Cultural adaptation	Embed cultural principles	Community engagement, participation and leadership	Embed MPRA Engagement Protocol in external interactions	Expand human capital within MPSL to support CWP goal setting, decision-making and advocacy
Leadership and accountability	Increase skills, capacity and leadership	Regional VET and higher education pathways, access and attainment	Form MPRA/multi-agency governance and leadership working group	Form MPRA/interagency Workforce Working Group with financial capacity and Terms of Reference
Empowering communities	Strengthen community capacity in decision-making	Partnerships facilitating economic transition	Create education pathways which facilitate improved academic attainment	Negotiate Asset Preservation Project E&T framework, partnerships and progress implementation strategy
Economic growth	Increase participation in employment and business	Shared workforce data and derived knowledge	Align employment and skills development with CAP priorities and opportunities	Establish accessible pathways into VET and higher education offerings within a training framework for success
Social improvement	Strengthen social cohesion, wellbeing and ambition	Rebuilding and sustaining organisations and community infrastructure	Create and foster values-aligned partnerships and support networks	Match participant interest with CAP priority employment areas and job opportunities, and facilitate take up
Partnership	Establish network of values-aligned enablers	Meaningful and productive economic participation	Source sustainable streams of investment	Create and resource Region-based Aboriginal professional business unit (MP Squared) to support transition
Information sharing and evidence	Open pathways into training and skills development		Employ evidence-based approach to workforce strategic planning	Verify Strategy themes and strategic action areas, prepare responsibility assignment matrix (RASCI)
	Centre all stages of project delivery in evidence		Rebuild regional and community organisational infrastructure	Develop key partner policy aligned accountability framework and measurable targets
				Complete community physical infrastructure needs assessment

Figure 6.2: Strategy change model

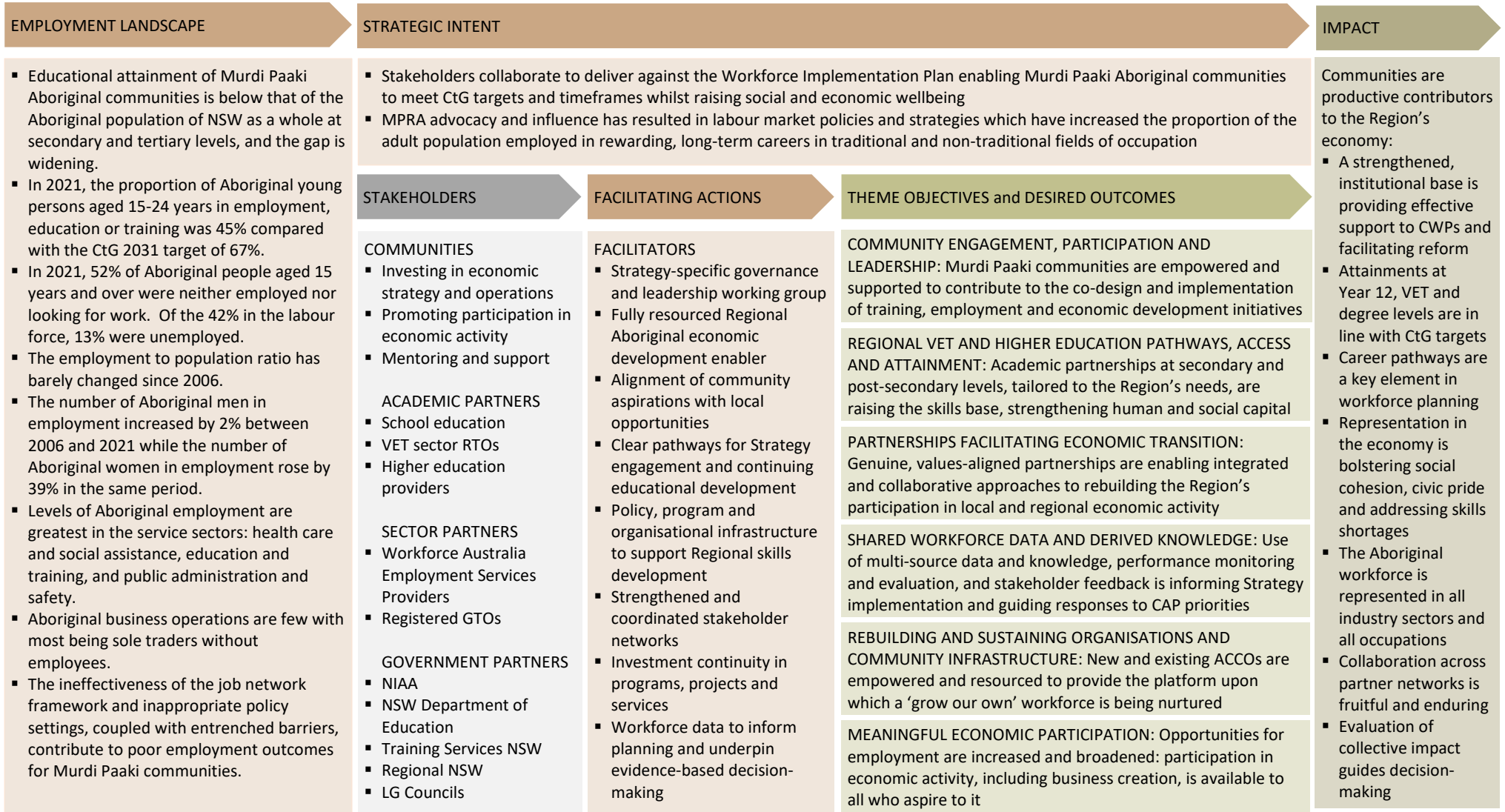


Figure 6.3: Strategy sequencing

THEME OBJECTIVES and DESIRED OUTCOMES	KEY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS (under governance of MPRA/interagency Workforce Working Group)		
	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP: Murdi Paaki communities are empowered and supported to contribute to the co-design and implementation of training, employment and economic development initiatives	▪ With CWPs, plan and begin to implement the employment and training (E&T) strategy embedded in the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation Project. Mobilise VET sector RTO, GTO and mentors	▪ Progressively extend the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation E&T strategy ▪ Engage CWPs in projects identification, co-design and early delivery ▪ Draft framework to enhance outcomes	▪ Mobilise wrap-around support framework and services to assist CWPs in delivering place-based CAP E&T initiatives including CPIE projects
REGIONAL VET AND HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAYS, ACCESS AND ATTAINMENT: Academic partnerships at secondary and post-secondary levels, tailored to the Region's needs, are raising the skills base, strengthening human and social capital	▪ Finalise MoU negotiations with UNE to establish accessible pathways to higher education ▪ Partner with RTOs and schools to resolve weak education and training outcomes	▪ Recruit an Education Liaison Coordinator to MPSL to encourage greater take up of VET and higher education ▪ Make available small business and entrepreneurship courses	▪ Create frameworks for higher education offerings to be delivered in community ▪ Expand Community Coordinators scheme ▪ Provide more opportunities for SBATs ▪ Provide access to teacher cadetships
PARTNERSHIPS FACILITATING ECONOMIC TRANSITION: Genuine, values-aligned partnerships are enabling integrated and collaborative approaches to rebuilding the Region's participation in local and regional economic activity	▪ Negotiate a Regional jobs and economic development package with NIAA ▪ Negotiate access to UNE SMART Region Incubator ▪ Conclude CDSC negotiations to create a S355 Committee delivery framework	▪ Partner with local government on initiatives of common interest ▪ Partner with Regional NSW and RDAs to establish industry needs and trends, and possible strategic contribution to growth	▪ Foster long-term partnership with NIAA to underpin remote jobs and economic development Strategy including CPIE ▪ Position local ACCO and Aboriginal business networks to benefit from SME procurement policies
SHARED WORKFORCE DATA AND DERIVED KNOWLEDGE: Use of multi-source data and knowledge, performance monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder feedback is informing Strategy implementation and guiding responses to CAP priorities	▪ Compile register of community members interested in economic activity ▪ Verify Strategy and Transition Plan ▪ Develop accountability framework	▪ Where of mutual benefit, align Regional W/F Strategy with identified skills shortages in the regional economy ▪ Review early implementation outcomes to highlight Strategy achievements	▪ Negotiate access to Region-specific E&T data and analysis to inform Strategy and CAP implementation
REBUILDING AND SUSTAINING ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE: New and existing ACCOs are empowered and resourced to provide the platform upon which a 'grow our own' workforce is being nurtured	▪ Create MP Squared as Regional professional services entity ▪ Complete community resource, asset and physical infrastructure needs assessment	▪ Recruit a cohort of Economic Development Coordinators to MPSL to support CWP project governance, decision-making and projects delivery	▪ Transfer service role from MPSL to MP Squared to rationalise MPRA Regional organisation responsibilities ▪ Position MP Squared as Regional GTO and financial services unit
MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION: Opportunities for employment are increased and broadened: participation in economic activity, including business creation, is available to all who aspire to it	▪ Connect with the Region's Workforce Australia services providers to improve entry into mainstream employment ▪ Encourage ACCOs to benefit from organised place-based E&T programs	▪ Connect aspiring applicants with health and human services providers to fill critical vacancies ▪ Identify opportunities for cadetships, internships and apprenticeships	▪ Plan for and action growth of new Regional human services ACCOs ▪ Encourage and facilitate small business creation and operations ▪ Roll out Regional housing strategy

Figure 6.4: Preliminary timeline

Timeline (Years)	1 (2024-2025)				2 (2025-2026				3 (2026-2027)				4 (2027-2028)			
Tasks / Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Governance																
Articulate benefit of, establish and foster MPRA/interagency Workforce Steering Group			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Continue the MPRA Workforce Strategy Reference Group as drivers of the transition process	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Strategy																
Endorse Strategy implementation and Transition Plan as the roadmap to improving education, training and labour market outcomes				■												
Negotiate access to Region-specific labour market data and analysis to guide Strategy and CAP implementation			■	■												
Continually review/update the Strategy to align with emerging opportunities, trends and identified skills shortages in the regional economy					■		■		■				■			
Secure Strategy buy-in with NIAA under IAS Program 1.1, Jobs, Land and Economy, as the community-led response to adverse CtG metrics				■	■											
Focus Strategy on the principle of 'grow our own' to provide the best workplace setting for learning and earning, and building our business base					■		■		■				■			
Partnerships																
Draft community engagement, participation and leadership framework to enhance Strategy outcomes at community level				■	■											
Foster long-term partnership with NIAA to underpin Strategy implementation, including establishing CPIE in all communities			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Finalise MoU negotiations with UNE to establish accessible pathways to higher education	■	■														
Partner with RTOs and schools to expand accessible training opportunities in fields of community interest			■	■	■	■										
Conclude CDSC negotiations to create a model S355 Committee delivery framework which builds on synergies between CAPs and Council CSP		■														
Collaborate with Region's Workforce Australia Services providers with the aim of improving rates of transition into mainstream employment					■	■	■									

Timeline (Years)	1 (2024-2025)				2 (2025-2026				3 (2026-2027)				4 (2027-2028)			
Tasks / Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Advocate with local government for greater engagement and collaboration across areas of common interest																
Partner with UNE SMART Region Incubator to support small business creation and development																
Logistics																
Carry out audit of resources, physical assets and infrastructure available to support Strategy objectives																
Develop Strategy RASCI matrix highlighting scheduling of development activities, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities																
Arrange access to entrepreneurship and small business courses to raise organisational capability																
Organisational																
Create MP Squared as Regional professional services unit charged with providing customised CWP program/project administration services																
Recruit Education Liaison Coordinator to MPSL to encourage take up of VET and higher education																
Recruit cohort of Economic Development Coordinators to support CWP project governance, decision-making and program/projects delivery																
Extend the purpose of MP Squared to function as an in-Regional GTO to provide a culturally aligned service as an addition to external providers																
Transfer MPSL early Strategy implementation activities to MP Squared to rationalise sphere of business operations and responsibilities																
Establish the Murdi Paaki Cobar Academy as the Region's central education and training establishment for VET and higher education																
Operations																
Plan and implement the E&T strategy embedded in the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation Project to begin lifting capability and capacity in construction																
Mobilise VET sector RTO, GTO and mentors to support execution of the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation Project																
Pending a MP Squared GTO service, develop a procedure for identifying persons interested in training, employment or business creation																

Timeline (Years)	1 (2024-2025)				2 (2025-2026				3 (2026-2027)				4 (2027-2028)			
Tasks Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Mobilise wrap-around support framework and services to assist CWPs in delivering place-based CAP E&T initiatives including CPIE projects						■	■									
Increase school student academic achievement as a foundation objective in building the Region's capacity for leadership and civic engagement:							■	■	■	■	■					
▪ Expand Community Coordinators initiative							■									
▪ Recruit, qualify and employ an expanding cohort of Aboriginal teachers							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
▪ Take full advantage of NSW Department of Education career advice and educational pathways services							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
▪ Increase SBAT offerings in areas of student interest and Regional need							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Increase post-school academic achievement to enhance knowledge and skills fundamental to a productive contribution to the Regional economy:			■	■	■	■	■									
▪ Identify and action opportunities for cadetships, apprenticeships and internships							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
▪ Create frameworks for VET and higher education offerings to be delivered locally			■	■	■											
▪ Build the Region's business and service economy to provide culturally safe learning and earning environment													■	■	■	■
▪ Progressively extend the Murdi Paaki Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
▪ Encourage existing ACCOs to increase their knowledge and skills-base through collaboration in place-based training							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Greatly elevate an Aboriginal presence in the Regional economy:	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
▪ Engage with CWPs in projects identification, co-design, planning and early delivery		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
▪ Facilitate identification and development of small-scale business aspirations, including by way of the UNE SMART Region Incubator					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
▪ Position local ACCO and Aboriginal business networks to benefit from NSW Government SME and regional procurement policies													■	■	■	■
▪ Engage with DPIRD and RDAs to bring a stronger planning focus to the ability of the Aboriginal workforce to contribute to the Orana and Far West NSW economies				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Timeline (Years)	1 (2024-2025)				2 (2025-2026				3 (2026-2027)				4 (2027-2028)			
Tasks Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
▪ Strenuously pursue the transformative economic opportunities embedded in the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Strategy Business Case	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Table 6.1: Transition Plan

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
Objective 0.1: Secure high-level support within the Australian and NSW Governments for the reform agenda	Secure Strategy buy-in with Australian and NSW Governments as the community-led response to adverse CtG metrics	Promote the Strategy as a Regional community-led, strategically aligned initiative which addresses the disparity between policy aspiration and reality	▪ Present the Strategy as an evidence-based Regional careers and economic development package to succeed CDP and offer an alternative to RJED	Agreement of governments to invest in the Region's human capital for productive purposes	MPSL, NIAA and AA NSW
			▪ Obtain agreement to Murdi Paaki OCHRE Accord II Economic Development Schedule	Agreement to Economic Development Schedule negotiated and Implementation Plan firmed	MPSL and AA NSW
			▪ Reinforce the need to 'grow our own' workforce in light of the Regional Aboriginal organisation and labour market characteristics, and barriers to entry	Agreement of governments to invest in rebuilding the Region's organisations and enterprises	MPSL, NIAA and AA NSW
Objective 0.2: Create, activate and assign responsibilities to Workforce Steering Group	Negotiate membership and ToR of MPRA/interagency Workforce Steering Group	Form and task a RAHLA-type structure with the role of guiding Strategy planning and implementation	▪ Confirm continuation of MPRA Workforce Strategy Reference Group and the point of contact for engagement and decision-making ▪ Advocate for and invite key government agencies and other stakeholders to participate in formulating and driving a change agenda ▪ Assign responsibility for Group administrative tasks ▪ Prepare ToR and operating framework	MP Workforce Steering Group established and functional with a commitment to a long-term reform process	MPSL
		Endorse Strategy themes and actions, and Transition Plan with Timeline as implementation roadmap	▪ Review Strategy and implementation proposals, and refine as necessary	Strategy finalised and endorsed for delivery	MP WSG

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
		Develop Strategy Work Plan	▪ Prepare RASCI matrix to identify and schedule individual tasks, responsibilities, accountabilities	RASCI matrix completed	MPSL
	Establish formal communication channel between the RAHLA and Workforce Steering Group	Define synergies with the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing and Environmental Health Business Case (MPAH&EH BC) including MP Regional Housing and Environmental Health Plan (RHEHP)	▪ Integrate common MPAH&EH BC and RHEHP E&T strategies with this Workforce Participation Strategy	Regional E&T strategies integrated and optimised	MPSL
Objective 1.1: Empower and support CWPs to plan, co-design and implement E&T and economic development initiatives	Ensure wrap-around support framework and services in place to assist CWPs in delivering place-based CAP E&T initiatives including CPIE projects	Recruit a cohort of Economic Development Coordinators to MPSL to support CWP governance, decision-making and projects delivery	▪ Seek investment in four positions, and recruit to MPSL in the first instance, transferring to MP Squared once created	Cohort of Economic Development Coordinators employed on full-time basis	MPSL
		Identify and co-design feasible CAP priority projects, prepare an implementation plan for each community and energise	▪ Work with CWPs to finalise CAP priorities, delivery objectives and implementation methodology	CAP priority implementation plans completed	MPSL
			▪ Conduct pre-feasibility reviews to identify projects with potential, including synergies which contribute to Regional or multi-community economic development initiatives	Desk top reviews completed and projects with potential identified	MPSL and MP Squared
		Ascertain community member career interests to allow compilation of training needs and focus of external interventions	▪ Conduct community expos to capture sufficient data on which to develop industry sector-specific E&T work plans	Industry sector-specific E&T work plans prepared for each community	MPSL
			▪ Collaborate with Region's Workforce Australia Services providers with the aim of improving service value to community	Relationships with Best Employment and VERTO established	MPSL
		Complete community resource, assets and physical infrastructure needs assessment	▪ In conjunction with CWPs, compile a schedule of community-owned assets available to support the Strategy	Community asset schedule prepared	MPSL and CWPs

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
	Introduce p/t community-based 'Work for the Dole' type (CPIE) projects to provide participants with work-like experiences	Prepare Regional proposal to NIAA advocating for the introduction of CPIE initiatives in each community	▪ Prepare proposal for re-introducing an Australian Government supported, flexible E&T package which addresses CWP-expressed desire for involvement in community-building projects	Detailed proposal prepared and submitted	MPSL
			▪ In view of the importance of education to economic renewal, advocate for higher education students to be included within the CPIE project	Concept incorporated in CPIE application	MPSL
Objective 2.1: To increase the number of school students completing Year 12 and reaching HSC minimum standard	Assign supports required to raise student attendance, retention and level of attainment	Expand the Community Coordinators initiative	▪ Review current support arrangements to ensure adequacy, appropriateness and effectiveness, and recruit to positions where considered beneficial to students ▪ Embed role modelling and mentoring in support framework	Year-on-year improvement in the number of Year 12 completions in all schools with at least an annual gain of 10% of Aboriginal school students completing to HSC minimum standard	Education NSW
	Increase access to career-related courses	Increase access to a broad range of SBATs aligned to student interests and future careers	▪ Introduce the Educational Pathways Program to all schools in the Region ▪ Link Construction – Civil traineeship with MP Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy and other Government funded capital works projects	Meaningful year-on-year improvement in the number of SBAT completions in all schools	Education NSW and MPSL
	Improve cultural competency in the ranks of teaching staff	Increase the number of Aboriginal teaching staff at primary and secondary levels	▪ Investigate the possibility of tied employment arrangements: cadetships and internships, with Education NSW	Availability of cadetships and internships known and take up accepted	MPSL
			▪ Encourage take up by school leavers of higher education offerings	Year-on-year improvement in the number of students commencing and completing a course of study in Education and Teaching at a tertiary institution	MPSL and UNE

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
Objective 2.2: To increase the number of students commencing and completing VET Cert I/II qualification	Improve accessibility to locally delivered higher education and accredited skills-based training	Establish the Murdi Paaki Cobar Academy as the Region's central education and training establishment for VET and higher education	▪ Negotiate a long-term lease arrangement for the former TAFE NSW Cobar campus ▪ Ensure campus buildings, equipment and other assets are adequate for intended purpose	Long-term tenure secured and campus operational	MPSL and TAFE NSW
	Partner with VET sector RTO to expand training opportunities across a broad range of purposeful offerings oriented to Regional skills shortage and CWP-identified fields of interest	Address barriers to student access, retention and academic progression, including deficits in post-school literacy and numeracy	▪ Raise the capability of all students with low levels of literacy and numeracy prior to commencing a course of accredited education	Ensure all VET students have a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy prior to commencing Cert I/II	RTO
		Mobilise VET sector RTO, GTO and mentor(s) to deliver MP Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy	▪ Coordinate MP Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy with W/F Strategy	More than 80% of aspiring trainees and/or apprentices complete documented pre-vocational training	AHO and MPSL
		Preference career-focused training over recreational offerings	▪ VET course offerings to Aboriginal communities are directed at improving student employability	CWP satisfaction with the range and relevance of VET courses available	RTO
		Generally, structure VET delivery to raise skills and experience in the workplace setting, equipping students for a lifetime of employment	▪ Where practical, conduct training in the workplace with culturally competent trainers	CWP and student satisfaction with the form of course delivery	RTO, AHO and MPSL
Objective 2.3: To increase the number of students commencing and completing VET Cert III qualification and above	Partner with VET sector RTO to expand training opportunities across a broad range of purposeful offerings oriented to Regional skills shortage and CWP-identified fields of interest	Mobilise VET sector RTO, GTO and mentor(s) to deliver MP Asset Preservation Project	▪ Coordinate MP Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy with W/F Strategy	More than 80% of apprentices complete VET Cert III in a building trade	AHO and MPSL
				More than 20% of apprentices completing are women	AHO and MPSL
		Generally, structure VET delivery to raise skills and experience in the workplace setting, equipping students for a lifetime of employment	▪ Where practical, conduct training in the workplace with culturally competent trainers	CWP and student satisfaction with the form of course delivery	RTO, AHO and MPSL

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
		Encourage ACCO staff and prospective business owners to enrol in and complete small business, entrepreneurship and/or marketing courses	▪ Research and advise on course suitability and availability, and arrange for delivery to interested participants	Student satisfaction with course content and form of delivery	MPSL and TAFE NSW
Objective 2.4: To increase the number of students entering and completing a course of higher education	Finalise MoU negotiations with UNE to establish accessible pathways to higher education	Create a Regional advocate and mentor to increase awareness of, and interest in, the opportunities to drive change in community through personal and collective capacity building	▪ Recruit an Education Coordinator to MPSL to act in a liaison capacity to encourage take up of higher education opportunities	Year-on-year improvement in the number of students commencing a course of study at a tertiary institution	MPSL, UNE and NIAA
	Create frameworks for higher education offerings to be delivered in community	Establish a dedicated in-Region learning and study space(s) with access to high-speed Internet, modern technology, and academic support	▪ Negotiate with UNE for students to have the option of community-based learning, supported by a local mentor	Agreement to the principle of supported community-based learning and measures to put into practice	MPSL and UNE
	Facilitate the take up of higher education	Consider incentives which remove financial barriers to building the Region's economic and social capabilities	▪ Negotiate for university students to be treated as CPIE employees paid pro rata	Agreement that community-based higher education students are eligible to be treated as full-time CPIE participants depending on unit load	MPSL and NIAA
Objective 3.1: Create and foster partnerships which enable integrated and collaborative approaches to rebuilding economic activity	Formalise community engagement and participation protocols	Effect a community engagement, participation and leadership framework to enhance Strategy outcomes at community level	▪ Assist CWPs to develop and/or mandate compliance of external bodies with community engagement protocols	Community engagement protocols in place and being observed	MPSL and MP Squared
	Optimise E&T opportunities available through Australian and NSW Government funded services, programs and projects	Promote the MP Workforce Participation Strategy with the Australian and NSW Governments, taking advantage of funding opportunities and policy and strategic alignments	▪ Establish a process whereby opportunities associated with publicly funded capital works projects are made known	E&T opportunities on capital works projects are being taken	MPSL and PWA
			▪ Engage with DPIRD and RDAs to bring a stronger planning focus to the ability of the Aboriginal workforce to contribute to the Orana and Far West NSW economies	Regular dialogue between sector peak stakeholders	MPSL, DPIRD and RDAs

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
	Conceive pathways to closer collaboration around economic development with local government	Conclude S355 Committee model delivery framework with CDSC which builds on synergies between Ivanhoe, Menindee and Wilcannia CAPs and Council CSP	▪ Successfully conclude negotiations with CDSC to reach a mutually agreeable ToR and operating structure	CDSC S355 Committee structure negotiated and functional, ToR agreed	MPSL, NSWALC and CDSC
		Raise awareness within local government of community aspirations to forge close working relationships in areas of mutual interest	▪ Hold a promotional forum with MP local government and elected representatives to identify appetite and opportunities for collaborations	Forum held and opportunities actioned	MPSL and DPIRD
Objective 4.1: Use multi-source data, knowledge, evaluation and feedback to guide Strategy implementation	Negotiate ongoing access to Region-specific E&T data and analysis to inform Strategy and CAP implementation	Reach common ground with stakeholders on labour market characteristics and needs	▪ Invite stakeholders operating within the E&T sphere to actively support data collaboration, knowledge sharing and evidence building	The Region's E&T landscape can be described in detail sufficient to reliably influence Strategy decision-making	MPSL, DPIRD and Training Services NSW
		Establish Regional and community performance monitoring, evaluation and review protocol with accountabilities	▪ Document a RASCI matrix, attaching individual task inputs and performance expectations to each Strategy initiative	Protocol agreed and implemented	MPSL, NIAA and DPIRD
			▪ Continually review/update the Strategy to align with emerging opportunities, trends and identified skills shortages in the regional economy	Evidence of Strategy review and updating	MPSL and DPIRD
Objective 5.1: Empower and resource new and existing ACCOs as the means to 'develop our own' workforce	Build the Region's business and service economy to increase opportunities for employment in a culturally safe learning and earning environment	Translate community aspirations for economic participation into a functional CPIE program, extended beyond entry level jobs and activities to provide greater opportunities for learning	▪ Negotiate the introduction of the proposed CPIE program across all communities irrespective of remoteness ▪ Where new ventures are recognised, aim to expand these into commercial operations	CPIE program supported, planned and operational	MPSL and MP Squared
	Make available small business and entrepreneurial courses with emphasis on financial management and compliance	Arrange for delivery of accredited business management courses	▪ Negotiate an ongoing program of course delivery tailored to the needs of individuals, organisations and communities	RTO relationships established, and courses available and being accessed	MPSL, UNE and/or RTO

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
		Facilitate access to business support services to assist with systems development and business planning	▪ Negotiate access to ongoing business support services tailored to the needs of SMEs and NGOs	Access to business support services negotiated and utilised	MPSL, UNE and/or RTO
	Negotiate access to business incubation services	Advocate for inclusion in the UNE SMART Region Incubator program and for a knowledge centre to be located in the Region	▪ Work with CWPs and UNE to forge working relationships around projects which are readily defined and have economic and social potential	Partnership negotiated and the service taken advantage of	MPSL and UNE
	Re-establish a Regional economic development-focused Aboriginal community-controlled organisation to drive and enable change	Create and resource MP Squared as Regional professional services entity to facilitate and support Strategy implementation at community level	▪ Emphasise with governments the importance of having a Region-headquartered economic development focussed service provider tasked by MPRA with responsibility for driving greatly improved outcomes in education, employment and business activity	MP Squared created and resourced to fulfil the MPRA-stipulated goal of improving economic and social outcomes for the Region's Aboriginal communities	MPSL, NIAA and AA NSW
		Position MP Squared as Regional GTO and financial services unit to provide a culturally aligned service	▪ Transfer MPSL early Strategy implementation activities to MP Squared to rationalise sphere of business operations and responsibilities ▪ Structure MP Squared to be able to provide community members with careers, not just jobs, working in culturally safe environments with other Aboriginal employees	MP Squared is positioned incrementally to take on a key and expanding multi-faceted role in supporting economic development	MPRA and MPSL
	Create a values-aligned pre-employment and employment support network	Bring together existed funded mentoring services to provide case management of aspiring workers and existing employees	▪ Negotiate a package of support measures through government agencies with responsibility and funded service providers	Regional deployment of an effective worker mentoring network	MPSL and MP Squared Training Services NSW and NIAA

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
Objective 6.1: Increase and broaden participation in economic activity, including business creation	Plan and implement the MP Asset Preservation Project E&T strategy	Under the direction of the RAHLA, take the E&T strategy beyond concept stage to align with approved project and training budgets, planned work streams and work package, and community readiness	▪ Negotiate creation of CDSC S355 Committee structure and implementation plan for asset preservation ▪ Progressively extend the E&T strategy to other communities after establishing necessary infrastructure	Planned implementation of E&T strategy across communities receiving R&M funding measured against work stream and work plan targets	MPSL, MP Squared and AHO
	Take advantage of existing sector resources to open opportunities into employment	Connect with the Region's Workforce Australia employment services providers to improve rates of entry into mainstream employment	▪ Ask for increased commitment and energy from the two funded WA providers to assist in delivering Strategy outcomes ▪ Negotiate a service level agreement if an option ▪ Advocate for a consolidation of employment services ▪ Energise support networks which address pre-employment requirements	Anecdotal advice from CWPs as to engagement and an increase in placements	MPSL
		Address the numerous and varied systemic barriers to mainstream employment			
	Encourage and facilitate small business creation	Develop a consultative process to allow expression of business ideas to filter up via the MPSL Coordinators from individuals and families	▪ Encourage MPSL Coordinators to actively seek expressions of interest from community	Stepwise increase in the number of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses	MPSL and UNE SMART Region Incubator
			▪ Conduct periodic business expos in conjunction with Councils	Expos and similar information events held	
	Aim to align Strategy E&T focus to identified skills shortages in the regional economy	Connect aspiring applicants with health and human services to fill critical vacancies	▪ Identify opportunities for cadetships, internships, apprenticeships and traineeships	Develop a schedule of financially supported learning opportunities and circulate via CWPs	MPSL and MP Squared
			▪ Establish a regular dialogue between MPRA, Far West LHD, Western NSW LHD and ACCHOs to flag workforce needs and opportunities	A line of communication established	MPSL
		Support existing ACCOs with place-based E&T opportunities as required	▪ When requested, assist in facilitating placement of aspiring community members into mainstream employment in health and human services	Effective relationships which facilitate placements into mainstream services	MPSL

Objective	Strategy statement	Tactical statement	Operational measures	Metrics	Enabler(s)
	Develop a strategy to enhance participation of community members and Aboriginal SMEs in Government-funded procurements	Develop a notification process which flags employment and supplier opportunities in capital works and in services	▪ Arrange for advice of impending capital works projects and supply contracts to be provided by relevant government agencies	Information flow established and SME participation in procurement growing	MPSL and MP Squared Government agencies
			▪ Advocate for greater enforcement and policing of Aboriginal Participation in Construction obligations	Evidence of improved employment in capital works projects and/or financial support for the Region's strategic aspirations	

7 A reflection

7.1 Principles of change

This Strategy maps a way forward to raise the socio-economic standing of the Aboriginal community of the Murdi Paaki Region. A comparison of statistics supported by qualitative evidence confirms that post-school education achievements are lagging, growth in human capital has been stifled, and opportunities to participate in economic activity are suppressed both by barriers to entry and by limitations imposed by a weak regional economy. The contribution that communities can make in addressing such workforce shortages as exist, as identified by the research of Regional Development Australia Orana and Regional Development Australia Far West NSW, is overlooked. Understanding how and why Aboriginal communities are in this predicament and what lessons policymakers and practitioners can take from it is well documented elsewhere, in academic papers and reports to governments. Suffice to say that the Region deserves a greater focus and sustained effort than has hitherto been the case. Several points which may assist in bringing about change may be itemised as:

- A need for an improved and integrated form of Regional governance to take responsibility for evidence-based decision-making, and for determining how and when those decisions are made;
- Governance structures incorporating ways of reflecting Aboriginal cultural values;
- A strengths-based narrative which centres Aboriginal community members as willing and productive members of civil society;
- A need for stronger community and government agency capability, particularly on technical assurance and “owning the project”;
- Participatory approaches which match best practice delivery with individual and collective needs and aspirations in community;
- Clarity and consistency on outcomes to achieve political and public consent and support;
- Adequate time in development of programs and projects of scale and significance, and creation of relationships and networks essential for realising successful outcomes;
- Sufficient investment to ensure that effective, quality services can be assured where a functional market does not exist.

The absence of a compelling, consistent strategic narrative and tactical approach to achieving improvement in socio-economic status in NSW remote and very remote Aboriginal communities is addressed by the Strategy. Proposed implementation as set out in Chapter 6 follows closely the community-led, evidence-based processes employed by MPRA and MPSL in advancing the Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Business Consortium project. This project has shown the Region is equal to delivering an initiative of size and complexity, generating investment in the process, introducing opportunities to create a skilled workforce presence in residential building, and pushing procurement practices forward.

The Strategy recognises that much preliminary work is required to rebuild the Regional and local organisational structures and systems crucial to providing the foundation for the “grow our own” model promoted by MPRA as the way forward. With such a small pool of volunteers confident enough and with time enough to provide SME/NGO governance and management in the short term, rebuilding a service delivery infrastructure will take time but the Transition Plan provides the framework for this to occur.