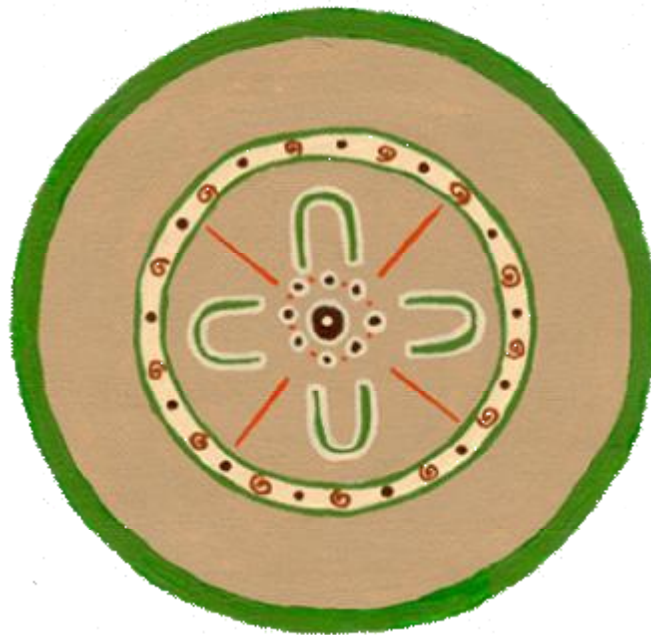


ILLAWARRA-SOUTH EAST RCMG

**Aboriginal Government
Employees Network**



2008 Gathering Report

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Introduction

Welcome to the Aboriginal Government Employees Network (AGEN) Gathering 2008 Report!

The Gathering was held at Rydges, Eaglehawk on the 23rd and 24th September 2008.

This report summarises the proceedings of the Gathering; documents the evaluation provided from AGEN members about the AGEN Gathering; and outlines the outcomes that will be pursued during the coming year.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country. We especially would like to acknowledge and thank traditional owners, Uncle Billy T Tompkins, Aunty Matilda House and Paul House – who graciously provided a warm Welcome to Country for the 2008 AGEN Gathering.

The success of the Gathering could not have been achieved without the dedication and support of the 2006-07 Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP), who were:

Jodi Edwards (Chairperson)
Leann Cross (Acting Chairperson for the Gathering)
Agnes Donovan
Melanie Goldstein
Paul House
Ken Davies
Carey Brandy
Mena Tracey
Barbara Sutton
Tracey Gill- Dallinger

All members of CAWP took an active role in the delivery of the 2008 Gathering. Special thanks must go to Leann Cross, who stepped in to Chair the Gathering at very short notice. Agnes Donovan very capably carried out the role of Master of Ceremony for the Gathering.

The AGEN Gathering is a project of the Illawarra-South East Regional Coordination Management Group (I-SE RCMG). The support of the I-SE RCMG for the AGEN Gathering is gratefully acknowledged. We especially thank Neil McGaffin, Chairperson of the I-SE RCMG, for his attendance and explanation of the role and purpose of I-SE RCMG.

AGEN 2008 was honoured to have involvement over the two days from a number of noted community elders and leaders, including:

- Aunty Mary Duroux
- Aunty Glennis Kelly
- Roy (Dootch) Kennedy
- Iris White
- Aunty Deanna Davison
- Aunty Marg Berg
- Aunty Kate Davis
- Uncle Lionel Mongta
- Aunty Mary Mongta

These community elders and leaders are warmly thanked for their contributions.

A special feature of the AGEN 2008 was a presentation from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). Presenters from AIATSIS gave their time and brought materials and literature to inform AGEN participants about the services available through AIATSIS. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Entertainment at AGEN was coordinated by Agnes Donovan, Ken Davies, and Tracey Gill-Dallinger. The Fancy Dress Trivia Night was enjoyed by everyone who participated! Thank you to Agnes, Tracey and Ken.

AGEN 2008 had an ambitious program of workshops over the two days. The positive outcomes from these workshops could not have been achieved without the generous support of AGEN members who stepped up to help facilitate. These members include – Lana Callaghan, Greg Christian, Marion Knight and June Lowe.

At short notice, Joanne Scott, Aboriginal Development Worker from Shoalhaven City Council, stepped in to assist with photography and facilitation. Thank you, Joanne!

Rydges Egelhawk hosted the 2008 Gathering. Members of the Eaglehawk staff demonstrated professional and courteous hospitality at all times.

The AGEN Gathering and the Cross Agency Working Party were resourced by staff from the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. Thanks go to Adam Selwyn, Stacey Quayle, Roslyn Chivers, David Crawford, Chris Lacey and Denise McConnachie, who all had a role to play in supporting the AGEN Gathering 2008.



Attendance at the Aboriginal Government Employees Network Gathering 2008

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Adam Selwyn	<u>DPC</u>
Adrian Meredith	<u>DAA</u>
Agnes Donovan	<u>RTA</u>
Alice Williams	<u>DECC</u>
Alison Simpson	<u>GSAHS</u>
Anita Brunhuber	<u>Eurobodalla Shire Council</u>
Arthur Smart	<u>Lands NSW</u>
Aunty Deanna Davison	<u>Community member</u>
Aunty Glennis Kelly	<u>Community member</u>
Aunty Kate Davies	<u>Community member</u>
Aunty Marg Berg	<u>Community member</u>
Aunty Mary Duroux	<u>Community member</u>
Aunty Mary Mongta	<u>Community member</u>
Barbara Sutton	<u>JJ</u>
Barry Lenihan	<u>NSW Police</u>
Bobby Maher	<u>DECC</u>
Brad Anderson	<u>OFT</u>
Bruce Hutchison	<u>JJ</u>
Bruce Toomey	<u>DECC</u>
Cameron Moss	<u>Community Services</u>
Carey Brandy	<u>DADHC</u>
Casey Neve	<u>Housing</u>
Cathy Vincent	<u>DECC</u>
Chris Lacey	<u>DPC</u>
Colin Holmes	<u>NSW Fire Brigade</u>
Daniel Morgan	<u>NPWS</u>
Danielle Towers	-
Daphne Parsons	-
Darrell Brown	<u>DET</u>
Darryl Toney	<u>Juvenile Justice</u>
David Crawford	<u>DPC</u>
David Mills	<u>Forests NSW</u>
Dean Freeman	<u>DECC</u>
Denise McConnachie	<u>DPC</u>
Dootch Kennedy	<u>Community member</u>
Edward Braddick	<u>DOCS</u>
Gary Olive	<u>JJ</u>

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Julie Stewart	<u>Community Services</u>
June Lowe	<u>Housing NSW</u>
Kathryn Dalmer	<u>Community Services</u>
Ken Davies	<u>DECC</u>
Lana Callaghan	<u>DAA</u>
Leanne Cross	<u>SESIHS</u>
Les Kosez	<u>CMA</u>
Lisa Zochmann	<u>Community Services</u>
Lynne Thomas	<u>DECC</u>
Mal Toney	-
Margaret Razmussen	<u>Community Services</u>
Marion Knight	<u>DOCS</u>
Mark Huddleston	<u>JJ</u>
Mary Mudford	<u>DECC</u>
Melanie Goldstein	<u>Housing</u>
Mena Tracey	<u>DOCS</u>
Michael Ryan	<u>NSW Fire Brigade</u>
Michell Scott	<u>DOCS</u>
Michelle Davison	-
Naomi Rawle	-
Nathan Slabb	<u>Housing NSW</u>
Nathaniel Morrison	-
Neil Harris	<u>NSW Fire Brigade</u>
Paul Burman	<u>Community Services</u>
Paul Carriage	<u>Forests NSW</u>
Paul House	<u>DECC</u>
Paul McLeod	<u>DECC MPA</u>
Phil Brown	<u>Juvenile Justice</u>
Phillip Needham	<u>Community Services</u>
Renee Leslie	<u>Community Services</u>
Richard Sullivan	<u>DADHC</u>
Robert Morris	<u>OFT</u>
Robert Slockee	<u>CMA</u>
Rod Wellington	<u>DECC</u>
Rodney Penrith	<u>DECC</u>
Roslyn Chivers	<u>DPC</u>
Roslyn Whitley	<u>Community Services</u>

Greg Christian	<u>TAFE</u>
Greg Evans	<u>RTA</u>
Helen Pussell	<u>DET</u>
Iona Marsh	<u>DOCS</u>
Iris White	<u>Community Member</u>
James layton	<u>DECC</u>
Janelle Ridgeway	-
Jannice Luland	<u>Community Services</u>
Jason Sharp	<u>Lands NSW</u>
Jaymee Baveridge	<u>Housing</u>
Joanne Albany	<u>Wingecarribee Council</u>
Joanne Scott	<u>Shoalhaven City Council</u>
John Fernando	<u>DCS</u>
John Simon	<u>DOCS</u>
Judith Norris	<u>DOCS</u>

Sandra Depers	<u>DOCS</u>
Sean McPhellamy	<u>Community Services</u>
Shane Herrington	<u>DECC</u>
Sharon Bloxsome	<u>DADHC</u>
Simon Schweitzer	<u>Bega Valley Shire</u>
Soozie Gillies	-
Stacey Quayle	<u>DPC</u>
Stan Braddick	<u>CMA</u>
Talea Bulger	<u>DECC</u>
Tony Harwood	<u>Commerce</u>
Tracey Gill-Dallinger	<u>Housing</u>
Tracey Rhodes	<u>DADHC</u>
Uncle Lionel Mongta	<u>Community member</u>
Vivienne Sweeny	<u>DOCS</u>
Wayne Roberts	<u>NSW Fire Brigade</u>
Zella Burt	<u>DET</u>



Background to the Aboriginal Government Employees Network (AGEN)

The AGEN brings together Aboriginal employees of the NSW Government in the Illawarra and South East Regions. It aims to increase the support, networking, and opportunities for collaboration between Aboriginal workers.

The AGEN was initiated in 2004 by the Illawarra and South East Regional Co-ordination Management Group (I-SE RCMG) as part of its cross-agency commitment to enhance service delivery and community outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

The first major Gathering of Aboriginal workers was held at Murramarang in November –December 2004. This first meeting developed a framework for the establishment of AGEN as an annual event, supported by a working group to operate in between the annual Gatherings. Members of the working group, known as the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP) are appointed each year by the AGEN Gathering.

Purpose of the AGEN Gathering 2008

The overall purpose of AGEN Gatherings is to provide support and networking opportunities for our Aboriginal NSW Government Employees in the Illawarra and South East Region. The Gathering is especially valued by Aboriginal employees because it provides opportunity to learn about cross-agency issues, work out ways of building stronger cross agency collaborations, and to meet and greet Aboriginal colleagues.

In 2008 the overall theme for the Gathering was the development of an **Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework** for the Illawarra- South East Regional Coordination Management Group (RCMG).

The idea for this Framework originated at the 2007 AGEN Gathering, when AGEN members visited sensitive Aboriginal sites on the South Coast. These visits highlighted many difficulties with the identification of significant sites, and their subsequent management. It became clear that many different agencies are involved. There is a need for consistency in understanding and approach.

In November 2007, the RCMG agreed to partner with AGEN to develop a Framework that will give more formal recognition to Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.

Many people may at first think that Aboriginal culture and heritage is really only an issue for those agencies involved in land management. However, Aboriginal Culture and Heritage is critical to the '*sense of identity*' that defines Aboriginal people. This '*sense of identity*' as an Aboriginal person underpins all aspects of life, and is an intrinsic factor in *all* engagement between Aboriginal people and non Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework is relevant to all I-SE RCMG agencies. Human services agencies connect to Aboriginal Culture and Heritage issues when they are considering ways to provide culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal communities.

The 2008 AGEN Gathering supported the development of the Framework on DAY ONE through inviting participation from recognised Aboriginal community elders and leaders, and listening to their stories and experiences with Culture and Heritage.

DAY TWO of the 2008 Gathering enabled Aboriginal employees to work in location focussed groups, to consider service delivery to local Aboriginal communities. There was an opportunity to identify what things are working well, and where are the gaps in service delivery.

DAY TWO finished with a workshop that identified practical ways of building reconciliation into the every day work places of Aboriginal employees. This workshop demonstrated that there are many positive actions happening inside NSW Government agencies that support and value Aboriginal employees.



DAY ONE of the Gathering

Local Aboriginal Welcome to Country

The Welcome to Country was organised by CAWP member, Paul House. Aunty Matilda House, Uncle Billy Tompkins and Paul presented information about the Traditional Owners of Country, the Ngambri people. They incorporated didgeridoo and song into this narrative, which was very well received by the Gathering.

Welcome by the Chairperson of the I-SE RCMG

Neil McGaffin introduced himself as the Chairperson of the Illawarra- South East Regional Coordination Management Group (I-SE RCMG) and the Regional Director, Planning, Southern Region. He acknowledged the traditional owners and warmly thanked Aunty Matilda House, Uncle Billy Tompkins and Paul House for their welcoming of all AGEN participants to Ngambri Country.

Neil then welcomed ALL AGEN members to this 5th gathering of Aboriginal Government Employees .Network

He noted that AGEN reflects a commitment to working together and to developing partnerships across government agencies and with communities. This is a commitment that the RCMG shares with AGEN.

Neil pointed out the positive benefits that have been achieved through the AGEN-RCMG partnership, including:

- RCMG commitment to implementing Two Ways Together
- Implementation of AGEN's Cultural Respect Training Framework and the Regional Aboriginal Employment & Recruitment Plan

Neil spoke of the latest joint AGEN - RCMG project, which is to develop a Culture and Heritage Framework for the Region. He thanked the Aboriginal Elders and leaders who have agreed to share their stories with AGEN.

Neil thanked members of the *Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP)* for doing all the work to implement the AGEN -RCMG partnership and to make the Gathering happen and he thanked the AGEN participants for their input, contributions, and ongoing enthusiasm.

He wished the Gathering 2008 every success.

The I-SE Regional Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework

Presentation by Michael Hood

Michael acknowledged the Traditional Owners of this land, and thanked Aunty Matilda, Uncle Billy and Paul for the welcome to country.

Michael introduced himself as the Manager, Planning and Aboriginal Heritage, for the Southern Region of the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC).

Michael has been nominated by the I-SE RCMG as the key contact person to work with CAWP in respect of the development of the Regional Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework.

The RCMG was very pleased to receive and endorse the report of the 2007 AGEN, and in particular the workplan for the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP) to develop an Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework for the Illawarra-South East.

The RCMG does not have a fixed view on what should be covered in the Framework. The generally expectation is that the Framework will provide agencies with guidance and direction, and enable learning and improvement in the way agencies operate in respect of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage. Agencies appreciate the importance of building understanding, as this will lead to better working relationships with communities. The outcome will be that Aboriginal Culture and Heritage is appreciated, recognised, emphasised, valued and protected.

The framework should build on best practice.

The final approval of the Aboriginal Culture and Heritage framework sits with the RCMG, but it is in the hands of everyone in the room to build the framework.

Michael spoke of his experience as a regulator of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (ACH).

DECC does its best to protect ACH and the current processes are of a high standard. However, regulation does not always equal good management, recognition and understanding by all involved.

The current legislation is out of date, blunt and does not represent best practice.

DECC regulation is also challenged by:

- often coming at the end of a development planning exercise
- there are often conflicting objectives of the developer, the consent authority, the regulator and the community
- being based on stones and bones, not the broader reflection of the significance of ACH in the landscape
- it is site (locality) based, and struggles to factor in the broader landscape/region
- ACH can be used as a way of achieving other (often very important) ends

The regulatory role played by DECC sometimes means that other agencies and groups do not get involved. There is a tendency to “*leave it to DECC*” or to the Local Aboriginal Land Council.

DECC is engaged in regional studies with the Aboriginal community and local Councils on the South Coast. These studies can improve our broader understanding of what is important across the landscape and to the community, and get these values integrated into Councils’ operations.

In general the best conservation outcomes, and the best learnings, arise from situations where communities and organisations come together in a spirit of goodwill

to build partnerships that can achieve real change in the way things operate. This usually comes down to individuals. The challenge here is to move beyond the reliance on individuals to make this work.

The proposed AGEN - I-SE RCMG Framework can improve things if it shows why ACH is important, points to the benefits that come from true engagement with the Aboriginal community, and it highlights some success stories. It would also be valuable to focus on some broader landscape scale responses.

It is easier to identify the importance of this to agencies involved in land management, but just as important to influence human service agencies.

Michael expressed his excitement that AGEN has identified the importance of this exercise. He is looking forward working with CAWP to get the Framework developed and approved by the RCMG.

Presentation by Ken Davies

Ken outlined his role as a CAWP member and proceeded to outline the Proposed **Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework** from the point of view of the CAWP.

What is it?

Ken referred to the document - *Proposal for Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework* – that was included in the Gathering pack provided to all participants

Ken stressed that this document is *not* the Framework, it's just a proposal about how the Framework might be developed. It includes a rationale to support the framework.

It is intended that the Framework will be about all RCMG government agencies understanding they *each* have a responsibility toward Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.

What will the Framework do?

It will establish an I-SE RCMG shared understanding of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage in the region and the importance of Culture and Heritage in the core business of agencies.

It will identify ways that this understanding can inform the core business of all I-SE RCMG agencies.

It will also identify ways that I-SE RCMG agencies can, at both individual and collective levels, work to strengthen the respect for Aboriginal Culture and Heritage and, through doing so, strengthen Aboriginal Communities.

How will it be developed?

It will be developed by CAWP over the next 18 months, on behalf of AGEN and the I-SE RCMG.

The story circles at AGEN 2008 will be the first step – these sessions will help to identify some key themes.

How will the Framework be used?

It will inform all agencies about how they can work in partnership with other agencies and with Aboriginal communities.

It will emphasise that agencies have a key role in preserving Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.

How will today's session have an impact?

Today's session brings in the perspectives of some Aboriginal elders and leaders, to help us to identify some of the key themes and ideas that need to be included in the Framework.

Following Ken's presentation, there was an opportunity for AGEN participants to ask questions about the development of the Framework, prior to breaking for lunch.

Story Circles

After lunch on Day 1, the Gathering broke into smaller Story Circle Groups to work with Aboriginal community Elders and leaders. The idea of the Story Circles was to hear from Aboriginal community people direct advice about how governments can best work with Aboriginal communities to respect, preserve and promote Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.

The Story Circles worked by first having time to listen to the knowledge and experience brought to the Gathering by the guest presenters. Then, after a tea break, there was time for questions and discussion.

Each Story Circle prepared a short list of main ideas which were brought back to share with the larger group at a plenary session.

The Story Circles were led by:

- Aunty Mary Duroux
- Aunty Glennis Kelly
- Roy (Dootch) Kennedy
- Iris White
- Aunty Deanna Davison
- Aunty Marg Berg
- Aunty Kate Davis
- Uncle Lionel Mongta
- Aunty Mary Mongta

The **outcomes** from these Story Circles were:

Aunty Mary Duroux and Aunty Glennis Kelly

This Story Circle was facilitated by Mel Goldstein and June Lowe. The big ideas from this group were:

1. Consultation carried out by Government agencies should be inclusive of ALL Aboriginal groups
2. Aboriginal staff should be nurtured so that they can progress through to upper management (ie become decision makers)
3. Career paths – should identify progression from trainee through to management positions
4. Note that Identified Aboriginal positions are only an opportunity to get a foot in the door – these positions can be a hindrance further down the track

5. Value Aboriginal workers and make them feel important
6. Recognise workers own aspirations to achieve
7. Aboriginal Culture and Heritage is a complex issue and requires much patience, and unity
8. There is a need to identify a common goal and then stick to that goal
9. It is a slow process and cannot be rushed – Government must learn to work at the pace set by Aboriginal community
10. This work requires mutual respect
11. Aboriginal workers should not be afraid – they must remember that Aboriginal people are the experts. Workers should believe in themselves and provide support and encouragement for their colleagues.
12. We need to overcome community factions, unite and stand proud.
13. Say what you mean, and MEAN what you say.
14. Elders should have more involvement. Workers should make use of the knowledge held by elders.
15. Aboriginal workers must remember that they are not on their own. The elders are there for support.
16. Workers should be assertive and have courage during negotiations.

Aunty Mary agreed to have her story session voice recorded. A transcript of the session will be made available at a later date and the information will be used in the development of the Framework.

Dootch Kennedy

This Story Circle was facilitated by Agnes Donovan and Ken Davies. The outcomes from this group were:

1. Consultation with Aboriginal people needs to be inclusive of all who have an interest.
2. Government agencies need to be transparent and accountable in their roles and responsible to communities

3. The Aboriginal community has rights and knowledge that should be utilised and accessed. Services must address Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage needs.
4. Non-Indigenous involvement can be helpful ie set up a local group in support of Aboriginal people.
5. A collaborative approach is needed involving all relevant stakeholders if we are to reach a positive outcome.
6. WE NEED MORE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WORKING IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT
7. NSW Government policies need to be updated
8. The language used in the Framework needs to be appropriate
9. Government agencies need to develop the skills to LISTEN, and then ACT on what they have been told.

Dootch agreed to have his story session voice recorded. A transcript of the session will be made available at a later date and the information will be used in the development of the Framework.

Iris White, Aunty Deanna Davison, and Aunty Marg Berg

This Story Circle was facilitated by Marion Knight and Joanne Scott. The outcomes were:

1. Government agencies should seek genuine engagement with Aboriginal people
2. They should be committed to common outcomes eg the Victorian Alps – NSW/ACT – an Aboriginal Reference Group was created for this project.
3. Aboriginal people who are employed in government departments also carry a responsibility to their community.
4. We need to identify how Aboriginal employees can to work within culture of organisations/agencies/departments but maintain cultural and personal integrity.
5. Cultural education needs to be brought up within a lot more forums
6. It is helpful when Non Aboriginal workmates stand up for Aboriginal staff.
7. Aboriginal workers need Non Aboriginal people to understand Cultural obligations, such as funerals/respect/passing

8. Informal cultural awareness is sometimes really effective eg put white fellas in a car for a 3 hour trip with Aboriginal staff.
9. Information needs to be gathered about each community – eg who are the traditional owners in each area.
10. Use opportunities (forums, conferences) to “build up” Aboriginal staff, not to drag them down.
11. Use Aboriginal networks to support staff.
12. NSW State Policy pays ‘lip service’ to EEO etc. Some State departments still have very few Aboriginal employees.
13. Limited opportunities in eg Fire Brigade – Aboriginal people need to move to Sydney to work. Only one dedicated Aboriginal Liaison officer position. Aboriginal people prefer to work in areas where they have family connections.
14. There is a very high risk of *burn out* of Aboriginal staff when they are the only ones in their Department.
15. Sometimes single Aboriginal positions can be viewed as tokenistic.
16. Only 1.2% of workforce in commerce is Aboriginal.
17. Aboriginal staff in Government Departments should have the opportunity to “return to country” to work in their departments.
18. Impact on communities – volunteer work.
19. Aboriginal National Park Rangers ‘care for country’ looking after sights in times of bushfires.
20. Some dozer drivers don’t care what they push over (scar trees etc)
21. Have better bushfire management plans.
22. Have more support for cultural, ceremonial, customs and obligations of Aboriginal staff employed in government departments.
23. Aboriginal staff should NOT be asked to compromise cultural and personal integrity in doing the job that they are employed to do in Government Departments.
24. When engaged in Government processes we need genuine commitment to a common outcome – no tokenism. Have comprehensive consultation.

Aunty Kate Davis

This Story Circle was facilitated by Barbara Sutton and Tracey Gill-Dallinger. The outcomes were:

Experiences in life is a theme running through all the ideas from this work shop

1. We need to recognise that today we are able to do things because of our elders struggles. Our Aboriginal elders have shown resilience and survival. They have led the way in fighting for our rights. Elders must be given recognition for the roles that they have played.

2. Koori people can find solutions. The Koori network is very effective.

3. Government agencies should always consider - What were the impacts on community?

- Sharing knowledge, interaction, having access
- Teamwork
- Transparency
- Isolation – break this down
- Better service delivery
- Better communication
- Support
- Be Flexible
- Cultural appropriateness – we need more appropriate service delivery

4. What were the messages we need to send to government agencies? -Trust in Aboriginal comrades to do the job and get the job done.

5. Get mechanisms in place so that Government will listen to Koori staff - BIG MESSAGE: LISTEN TO US.

6. Traineeships for Koori people.

7. Koori workers need to be persistent

8. Adopt active plans in consultation with Aboriginal community.

9. Negotiate mutually agreed timeframes – Koori time and Government times are different – negotiate over this.

10. Governments need to show cultural integrity when they engage with the Aboriginal community. To do this they should take advice from their Koori workers.

Uncle Lionel Mongta and Aunty Mary Mongta

This Story Circle was facilitated by Greg Christian and Leann Cross. The outcomes were:

Respect as a theme running through all three ideas.

1. Education:

- learning for our kids
- learning for governments – cultural awareness and respect
- learn out on the land (problem – in some places access to land is restricted)

2. Access

- Aboriginal protocols
- Better use of resources eg RCMG
- Process to access resources eg land/funding – obstacles include short time frames and complexity of application processes
- Consultation / feedback from consultation/ use of information from consultation

3. Employment

- Have more Aboriginal employment at relevant seniority to influence policy and decision making and to get things done. There is a glass ceiling for Aboriginal workers.

Story Circle Plenary

At the conclusion of the Story Circles Session, the large group was re-convened for a plenary session. All the Aboriginal community elders and leaders were presented to the larger group and warmly thanked for their contributions.

Networking Hour

After the Story Circle plenary, there was time for all participants at the Gathering to introduce themselves – indicating who they are and who they work for.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Presentation

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is located in Canberra and is a Commonwealth statutory authority within the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. It is a centre for information and research about the cultures and lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Terrilee Amatto, Manager - Access Unit at the Institute, provided a brief presentation on the role and functions of AIATSIS to interested delegates at the end of Day 1 of the Gathering. She was also available to answer questions posed about the services on offer.

The main functions of the Institute are to:

- undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;
- publish the results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to assist in the publication of the results of such studies;

- conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other persons or bodies to conduct such research;
- assist in training persons, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;
- establish and maintain a cultural resource collection consisting of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; and
- encourage understanding, in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. (www.aiatsis.gov.au, accessed 20 October 2008)

The Institute has an Aboriginal study press; audio visual archive; library; and research facility.

Entertainment

After Dinner on DAY 1, CAWP delivered a Fancy Dress Trivia Night. Quite a few people took the plunge and dressed up! Prizes were distributed for best dressed man, best dressed woman and best dressed table. There were also prizes for each round of Trivia, and medals for the outright Trivia winners.

The Trivia night was organised and run by Agnes Donovan, Ken Davies and Tracey Gill-Dallinger.



DAY TWO of the Gathering

Presentation from the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP)

DAY TWO started off with a report from the Cross Agency Working Party. This report was delivered by Mel Goldstein.

Purpose of AGEN:

- to increase support, networking and opportunities for collaboration for Aboriginal workers in NSW Govt Agencies;
- to improve service delivery to Aboriginal communities by encouraging and facilitating partnerships

Role of the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP):

- Report back to RCMG in November on outcomes from AGEN 2008
- Follow through on developing the Regional Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework
- Implement other actions as directed by AGEN Gathering and as endorsed by RCMG
- Organise AGEN 2009
- Report back to AGEN 2009

CAWP activities 2007-2008:

- Presentation of AGEN 2007 Report to RCMG (Jodi Edwards)
- Development of proposal for Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework
- Presentations about AGEN to other regions (2 done-Tracey and Jodi)
- Website development (Leann)
- Setting agenda & implementing AGEN Gathering 2008

Current CAWP Members 2008:

- **Jodi Edwards (Chair) (TAFE)**
- **Carey Brandy (A/Chair) (DADHC)**
- **Paul House (DECC)**
- **Melanie Goldstein (DoH)**
- **Agnes Donovan (DECC)**
- **Ken Davies (DECC)**
- **Leann Cross (SESIH)**
- **Mena Tracey (DoCS)**
- **Barbara Sutton (JJ)**
- **Tracey Gill-Dallinger (Housing)**

CAWP Nominations:

- CAWP is a two-year commitment
- Meets regularly in varying locations

Aboriginal Service Delivery – Gap Analysis

An important part of the DAY TWO program was a Gap Analysis Workshop. This workshop aimed to identify what things are working well, and what service delivery gaps exist for Aboriginal communities in different areas of the Illawarra and South East Regions.

The workshop was carried out on a location basis, to encourage stronger local level collaboration between Aboriginal workers.

The location groups were:

- South Coast
- Shoalhaven
- Over the Mountains
- Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Wingecarribee

The outcomes from each location were:

South Coast Group

Facilitators: Greg Christian and Leann Cross

Notes: Denise McConnachie

The group commenced by sharing information about **services that were being provided in the area:**

The Fire Brigade has a fire safety in the home program, which will install smoke alarms and a battery replacement program. This program saves lives by protecting people from house fires. There are five brigades on the South Coast. Brigades are willing to attend community groups to give talks on fire safety. The Brigades need support from community and from AGEN members to build awareness and participation in the Fire Safety programs.

Suggestions from the group included – linking with schools; AGEN members encouraging community groups to invite the Fire Brigades to community meetings; AGEN members to use their contacts to spread the word that disadvantaged households can get smoke alarms installed for FREE. The group suggested that the Fire Brigade may need to follow up these households annually to ensure that batteries get replaced in the smoke alarms (especially for elderly people).

The National Parks and Wildlife Service provide NAIDOC events each year and run environmental awareness programs in schools – “Discovery” Programs.

The Department of Community Services Bega Office carries out Aboriginal consultations and works to enable participation by families in decision making that will affect family members. The office participates in Naidoc Day and Sorry Day events. Workers deliver Out of Home Care Program; provide foster care support; deliver the Brighter Futures Program (early intervention for 0-8 year olds); work with Police as required; provide Disaster Welfare Responses and deliver Drought Relief Program.

DoCS workers asked for support from AGEN members to raise the profile for DoCS and communicate to the community the full range of work that is carried out by DoCS, and to help with overcoming some of the negative prejudices that some community members hold.

Juvenile Justice workers spoke of the *Journey to Respect* program that has been developed by their Department. This program focuses on inter-generational family violence. It works with young people 14 years of age and has shown a 90% success rate in reducing the use of violence in these families. The program gives young people alternative strategies for dealing with anger and teaches young people to *think* before they *act*. Parents of the young people are involved in the program. There is an emphasis on the importance of Culture.

Between 60% and 70% of the clients of Juvenile Justice are Indigenous. The Department would like to expand the operation of *Journey to Respect* but faces resource constraints.

The group suggested the program be more widely explained to the community. If the benefits of the program are promoted and become more widely understood, there will be a growing demand for program delivery and the Government may respond to this demand by increasing resources. The lack of availability of the *Journey to Respect* program was highlighted as a service gap.

TAFE provides training and support for the Circle Sentencing program. TAFE has also been delivering a pre-apprentice course for Aboriginal young people to underpin the employment strategy developed by Corrective Services in relation to the South Coast Correctional Centre.

The **Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer** (ACLO) (Daphne) is involved in a number of community programs. These programs rely heavily on community input, examples include Wangai-digii and the Kokoda Trail project. The ACLO also gets involved in Indigenous sports, as this is positive way to develop teamwork skills. The Police have 2 Aboriginal Liaison Committees on the South Coast – at Batemans Bay and Bega. The Police hope to establish committees at Mogo, Bodalla and Narooma.

The Aboriginal Development Worker at Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) explained that ESC has an Aboriginal Advisory Committee. ESC supported a Youth Café for Koori Kids which has been very successful. The Café brought volunteers who could work with Koori young people, providing support for the work of Government agencies eg Police.

This discussion identified **an important gap for Aboriginal communities**. Community members are not always well informed about what funding is available and do not always have the time and skills to participate in complex funding processes. Government agencies who fund Aboriginal communities should be more prepared to work with communities and to actively to develop up proposals that community can then endorse.

The group also felt that where projects had demonstrated that they were successful and effective (eg the Youth Café) all agencies should try to work together to keep these projects going (ie make them sustainable).

Greater Southern Area Health Services employs an Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer and Aboriginal Health Education Officer at Bega Valley Hospital (Allison

Simpson). These workers see inpatients in Bega and Pambula Hospitals, providing a major social welfare role. They also provide support and advocacy for Aboriginal people on wards and in the community. The Health Education Officer provided health promotion and health management programs in the community. Both officers participate in a number of different community committees, representing Aboriginal Health. The health workers are well supported by their managers.

The Gaps identified by the health workers included: the health worker positions are really stretched; the partnership between GSAHS and the Aboriginal Medical Service could be strengthened; stronger partnerships are needed with other health professionals (eg speech pathology, OT, dieticians, Drug and alcohol, mental health, domestic violence etc). the Aboriginal workers have to work across *all* these issues in the community whereas many other health professionals work as a team with a focus on one issue.

Shoalhaven Group

Facilitators: Marion Knight and June Lowe

Notes: Stacey Quayle

This group started off by identifying **what was working well**. This included:

DoCS is encouraging the Aboriginal community to be involved in decision making re the future of families to keep kids with family. There is now more community consultation about the cultural needs of children in care – this is leading to the use of “care circles”.

DoCS have increased the number of Aboriginal staff, so that now there is an Aboriginal worker in every program area.

The SSCAP – Shoalhaven Safe Community Aboriginal Partnership – has been developed as a community initiative. It is providing opportunity for workers to work together and to more effectively link into and support community. SSCAP is providing access to various managers in NSW Government. It is holding a number of forums and consultation with community and providing community with better access to information. SSCAP have made it very clear that it is “arm’s length” from any community politics.

DECC spoke of recent additions to parks and reserves at Coolangatta. Private holdings have been purchased, at a cost of \$1.2 million. There will be community meetings held on site to discuss this purchase and management of the land, later in the year. DECC also spoke of a Culture Camp initiative – which will involve the Far South Coast.

Then the group talked about **what is not working as well as it could be**:

Group members provided **feedback** that participation in SSCAP is often difficult, as many agencies have only a small number of Aboriginal staff and these staff members are over-taxed. Sometimes workers are not able to be released to attend SSCAP (eg AEA’s). It was also pointed out that invitations to SSCAP forums do not always reach all Aboriginal workers. Government employees attending SSCAP noted that they are not always free to fully participate in discussions, as they are wearing “two hats” – community member and government employee – and must be careful to respect their responsibilities to their employing agency.

The Shoalhaven has some **cross-border issues** impacting on the Wreck Bay community. An example is the interface between DoCS and the ACT Child and Family Service. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for various matters.

Shoalhaven City Council in general is not involved in the delivery of community services. The Council employs only 7 Aboriginal staff (full complement of 1,000 staff). There is a need for more investment by Council in cultural awareness training, at all levels of the organisation. Possibly a stronger relationship with the Local Aboriginal Land Council could be of benefit. Council is currently considering options for an Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

DoCS is finding that it is difficult to build links with community – unless things go wrong or there is a crisis. DoCS would prefer to have more positive links in place for community involvement - this may prevent some crises from occurring.

All Aboriginal employees expressed resonance with the **vulnerability that Aboriginal staff have to “burn out”**. This is largely due to that fact that all Aboriginal Government employees are available to their communities 24 hours, 7 days a week. Aboriginal communities have very high expectations of AGEN members. This fact is not always fully appreciated by middle managers and managers.

The group identified a number of **strategies which may help overcome these issues**:

- Regular sessions for workers to share info on their local areas
- AGEN members to assist with promotion of homework centres in Aboriginal community – to help improve attendance at these
- Cultural Awareness Training at all levels in all agencies and inclusive of all staff
- More cadetships for Aboriginal young people to gain entry level positions in the public sector
- More Aboriginal liaison officers for DECC

Over the Mountains Group

Facilitators: Agnes Donovan and Tracey Gill-Dallinger

Notes: Chris Lacey

Presentation: Alice, Mary and Nioki

What is working well over the Mountains:

- Aboriginal Education – eg Discovery Ranger. Education is changing attitudes and developing relationships eg service networks all meet together.
- Aboriginal staff are being supported by their managers and supervisors, including senior management (NPWS, DECC, Housing, RTA, NSWFD)
- Aboriginal people are being given real opportunities to have input to Regional RTA Action Plans.

- Government agencies are showing that they are now aware that they need to deal appropriately with Aboriginal communities in relation to Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.

What is not working well over the Mountains:

- Aboriginal workers are suffering from *Community Meeting Burn Out* – too many meetings. Community is suffering too.
- Government agencies need to remember that they need to talk with as many community people as possible
- Some Aboriginal workers feel isolated (eg Goulburn mob)
- Putting infrastructure in place but there are no tangible benefits
- Inability of agencies in some locations to recruit Aboriginal workers (NSWFD)
- Some agencies are lagging in terms of implementing stated policies in relation to Aboriginal employment
- Aboriginal people need to come to understandings in relation to the transfer of knowledge. Young Aboriginal people need to be able to learn from Elders about culture and heritage. If this transfer is not achieved, the knowledge will be lost.
- This point emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal workers establishing partnerships in their own communities, and building up partnerships so that they can be stronger.
- Community events need to change
- There is a lack of support from Government agencies in terms of coordinating services and working cross- agency to resolve community issues
- Communities need more voice in how Government dollars are spent for those communities.

Wollongong – Shellharbour - Kiama - Wingecarribee Group

Facilitators: Mel Goldstein and Barbara Sutton

Notes: David Crawford

Identified Gaps – Current Situation

Community Based Working Group was identified as a significant positive force in Wollongong – works well – finds out what community wants

- can inform State Agencies via cluster groups
- works well – exchanging information
- working in partnership with State Agencies

A lot of the gaps in service delivery to Aboriginal community - have been identified & addressed by CBWG and SSCAP work groups and plans

Current pattern – is more about increasing resources to Aboriginal services and existing programs – rather than the absence of services.

Working Well

Educational services:

Support services for Koori kids at schools are working well – is a need to engage all Koori children

Expulsion / suspension rates have declined –DET is working on a lot of issues to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students

Koonawarra / Kanahooka primary schools are doing well – links to local Aboriginal population

Aboriginal Education assistants – play an important role for kids and with connection to community – but can become isolated in the school structure.

- need to be able to better engage AEA's in community processes eg. CBWG, SSCAP & AGEN
- need to increase number of AEAs

AECGs – can support AEAs

Communities Division DOCS – has number of programs working with primary school Aboriginal students

Identified Gaps:

Health and transport – transport difficulties for Aboriginal people to access health services – some areas are looking at better utilisation of existing services – eg DCS have underutilised community buses

Transition to schools programs

- room for improvement of primary to high school transition
- support programs at schools are working well

Need to target neglected families

Aboriginal people with disabilities – are an overlooked section of community

Some Issues

Detention at **Juvenile Justice** centres for some male adolescents' – unfortunately a better lifestyle than provided in their home environment. Detention is sometimes seen as a means of accessing regular meals and serving as a means of establishing a sense of community with other Aboriginal young people.

NSW Fire Brigade – Mike Ryan indicated that there is a goal to make FB more diverse – presently struggling to recruit Aboriginal and other groups – would welcome part-time Aboriginal recruits

Suggestions

Education

School based traineeships to become part of national curriculum

- encourage entry into Police / Fire / Ambulance via such traineeships

AECGs can provide increased support to AEAs in schools.

School Info Days – Agencies could attend Career Info days – to show students what is possible – aimed at younger age groups – eg Yr 8 – rather than Yrs 10 & 11
Bombaderry High School – mentor program – worthwhile model

There is a strong need to review the model of allocation of AEA's to schools to ensure there are more of them and that all students are able to access an AEA regardless of the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in individual schools.'

Employment

Develop New Employment Opportunity networks – improve employment opportunities

Making Reconciliation Real in our Work Places – Outcomes

The DAY TWO afternoon session was a brief and energising workshop aimed at identifying simple and achievable ways that reconciliation can be incorporated into the workplace.

Participants were requested, at the beginning of AGEN 2008, to give consideration to any actions that they were aware of in their work place that has shown respect for Aboriginality or made them feel supported and valued as an Aboriginal work colleague. A worksheet entitled "*Making Reconciliation Real in our Work Place*" was included as Item 10 in the Gathering Packs and was provided so that participants could record these experiences.

The actions outlined in the worksheets were transcribed prior to the workshop and were used to stimulate discussion during the session. The session was facilitated by [Agnes Donovan and Leann Cross](#).

These actions of reconciliation have now been collated (held at Appendix 3) and grouped into four broad themes, being:

- Attendance at events
- Support/recognition
- Workplace practices and training
- Culture

Noting these positive experiences has provided a platform for feedback and encourages best practice in the workplace. During the session, participants were asked to nominate to a small working group who would be responsible for developing these experiences into a booklet entitled "*Practical Reconciliation in the Workplace*" for distribution to all agencies. The membership of this working group consists of:

- Brad Anderson (Fair Trading)
- Darrell Brown (DET State Training)
- Barbara Sutton (Juvenile Justice)
- Robert Morris (Fair Trading)
- Casey Neve (Housing)

Gathering Plenary

Agnes and Leann chaired the plenary session.

The Gathering agreed to continue the work on the Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework. Participants asked to be kept in the loop as each draft is developed.

To support the development of the Framework, it was suggested that CAWP could run some smaller workshop sessions with AGEN members on a locality basis.

It was also suggested that each RCMG Agency be asked to hold its own internal workshop to develop an agency unique *position statement* in relation to how Aboriginal Culture and Heritage connects to their agency core business.

It was agreed that the outcomes of the *Making Reconciliation Real in our Workplace* session be developed into a small booklet for wide distribution through all I-SE RCMG agencies. If possible this booklet should include Aboriginal artwork.

Denise McConnachie thanked all CAWP members for the hard work and commitment they put in to bring the 2008 AGEN Gathering to fruition. She presented each outgoing CAWP member with a small gift as a token of appreciation.

Appointment of CAWP 2008-2009

The Gathering appointed the members of the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP) for 2008-2009.

Appointment to CAWP is a two year commitment, with half the members retiring each year. This system provides for mentoring and continuity.

The continuing members of CAWP in 2008-2009 are:

- Jodi Edwards (TAFE)
- Mena Tracey (DoCS)
- Barbara Sutton (JJ)
- Tracey Gill-Dallinger (Housing)

The newly appointed CAWP members are:

- Alice Williams (DECC)
- Phil Needham (DoCS)
- Cathy Vincent (DECC)
- Greg Christian (TAFE)



Appendices

Bio Details, Guest Presenters for the Welcome to Country and Story Circles

Name of Presenter	Bio Details
Billy T Tompkins	<p>Billy T is a respected Ngambri leader who was born on Erambie Aboriginal Reserve Cowra and lived and worked in Wee Jasper and Canberra Region all his life. Billy T is a Senior Ngambri song man who has a passion for protecting culture and heritage in the country of his ancestors. Billy T has multiple Aboriginal ancestries including Ngambri/Ngurmali/Wallaboolloa/Pajong and Wiradjuri. Billy has participated in numerous official government welcomes and other government activities and was recently involved in the 20-20 Australian summit at Parliament House.</p>
Aunty Mary Duroux	<p>Aunty Mary is a proud descendant of the Yuin people and respected elder.</p> <p>Born in Bega and lived up and down the South Coast until she moved to Kempsey in 1963</p> <p>Returned to Moruya in 1989.</p> <p>Aunty Mary is an accomplished author and poet.</p> <p>Aunty Mary has always fought hard for what she believes in and was one of the many people instrumental in the negotiations that led to the hand back of Biamanga & Gulaga to the Yuin people.</p>
Aunty Glennis Kelly	<p>Aunty Glennis grew up on the South Coast and has lived in Narooma most of her life.</p> <p>Like so many other elders, over the years Aunty Glennis has held numerous volunteer positions in organisations and continues to give up her time to attend conferences, workshops & forums.</p> <p>She is committed to delivering culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people which she has demonstrated through positions held with Home Care and a number of Aboriginal Community Organisations including Katungul AMS.</p> <p>As a respected elder and active community member Glennis was nominated to represent Wagonga LALC in the negotiations for the hand back of Gulaga and currently holds the position of Deputy for Wagonga</p>

LALC on the Gulaga Board.

Dootch Kennedy Roy Kennedy, better known as Dootch, is the Chairman of the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council. Dootch has been a tireless campaigner for Aboriginal Rights – both social and economic for more than 25 years. He established the Sandon Point Tent Embassy and continues his involvement with the Aboriginal struggle at Sandon Point.

Iris White Iris is Manager for Aboriginal Education and Training for the Illawarra Institute of TAFE. She is an active advocate for Aboriginal people in the broader community, and represents these interests on a number of boards and committees, including Southern Rivers CMA, NSW ACT Aboriginal Legal Service, and the Regional Community Consultative Council.

Deanna Davison Aunty Deanna is a Ngarigo Elder who has lived most of her life on the South Coast. Her ties are to the South Coast, through her fathers line – the Walker family.

Aunty Marg Berg Aunty Margaret Berg was born in Gundagai and lived at Brungle Mission for most of her life. Her family travelled to do seasonal work, and she also worked on station properties at Gobaralong, and Banangaroo. At 18 years of age she moved to Melbourne where she met and married her husband. Margaret lived in Melbourne for 32 years, bringing up three children. Margaret moved back to Brungle and is now actively involved in volunteer work with her Aboriginal community. Margaret is passionate about her Aboriginal heritage. She is currently Chairperson of the Brungle/ Tumut Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Aunty Kate Davis Aunty Kate's full name is Kathleen Jane Stewart-Davis. She is an Aboriginal Elder from the Walbunja Clan on the South Coast of NSW. Aunty Kate is the eldest daughter of Oswald Stewart and Doris Chapman; she was born in Bateman's Bay, but now lives permanently in Nowra.

Uncle Lionel Mongta Uncle Lionel Mongta is a member of the Yuin Nation. He lives in Bodalla – which is Walbunga area. Uncle Lionel is a traditional owner of Gulaga Mountain. He has been an active advocate for his people all his life and has a special interest in issues affecting country. He is currently serving on the National Water Trust convened by the Federal Environment Minister, the Hon Ian McDonald, amongst many other commitments.

Aunty Mary Mongta Aunty Mary Mongta is part of the Yuin Nation and from the Walbunga area. She works closely with DADHC to improve service delivery for the aged and people with disabilities.

Making Reconciliation Real in our Work Places – Outcomes

Attendance at events

- Attending/participating in NAIDOC week celebrations and ceremonies
- Hosting NAIDOC celebrations
 - Host Bush Tucker luncheon with special guests, e.g. dancers, singers, high profile, Aboriginal people, Welcome to Country by local Elder, use of NAIDOC theme for activities, lucky door prizes, paint canvas mural that hangs on premises, awards, films, hand outs
- NSW Fire Brigade attend NAIDOC day at local level co-ordinated by NSWFB community safety division. NSWFB has an Aboriginal Service Liaison Officer Terry Hill who is the main contact person for all Aboriginal Country Initiatives
- NAIDOC and Reconciliation Soccer match of Cops-v-Community
- All staff in NPWS attend and help out Harmony Day
- Research in the lead up to NAIDOC week, including Aboriginal art on the internet, staff investigation of map to find their country - staff then wrote this Aboriginal country on their selected Aboriginal print along with their name and this was then placed on their work station or placed on the wall.
- Attending community events.
- Attending and having an input at conferences created for Aboriginal staff
- Aboriginal men's group bowls day at Warilla Bowls Club
- I coordinate a reconciliation walk in Queanbeyan, where we have approx 900 people that participate in the walk. I engage all the secondary schools, government agencies and community as a whole, we walk over the bridge then to the council chambers for the official flag raising and ceremonies and the cutting of the cake.

Support/Recognition

- Workplace provides support for Aboriginal employees
- Workplace provides opportunities for networking
- Support for role as member of CAWP and involvement in AGEN (Housing NSW – Shellharbour)
- Aboriginal staff allocated time on the agenda of staff/unit meetings to report on current Aboriginal issues, events, etc
- Inviting Aboriginal workers to meetings at the office
- Workplace enables participation in Aboriginal planning and other forums
- Support development of Aboriginal staff so they can get promotions
- Recognition of the community obligations of Aboriginal employees
- Flexible application of workplace/HR policies
- Support from management in Commerce for staff mission statements and requests to improve service delivery to indigenous communities in the South Coast region and state wide
- Sponsorship of NOWRA LALC in their Celebration 100 years of Bomaderry Homes(25-5-08)
- Funding communities in their celebrations of NAIDOC

Work Practices and Training

- Aboriginal training of non-Aboriginal staff. The feedback was tremendous - passionate and informed delivery of information.

- Work in partnership with other agencies eg. DECC and local shire council for specific events such as Naidoc week to build better relationships.
- Appointment of Aboriginal Liaison Officers
- Staff development days – Cultural awareness to all other staff.
- Introduction of language program to staff (the one that is taught to all Year 8 students)
- Non-Aboriginal staff allocated time to help with NAIDOC events
- Monthly mandatory cultural awareness training for all staff.
- In-house training to staff on wards re: how to best treat and care for Indigenous inpatients
- Police
 - local cultural awareness training of all staff, corporate cultural awareness training before transfer of staff
 - Local Employment Strategy for students in Years 11-12
 - Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committee
 - Aboriginal artwork in workplace
- HousingNSW
 - Cultural respect training
 - Local Employment Strategy
- I am usually consulted when indigenous people access the service.
- I am always consulted on the production of resources for the services that are produced.
- I have Aboriginal people as my direct managers and they are extremely supportive. The hierarchy see indigenous health as important.
- Colleagues select a weekly totem from a range of postcards with Aboriginal drawings of animals
- Seeking the opinion of Aboriginal staff when dealing with Aboriginal clients and their families
- Encouraging self development
- Positive feedback and advice
- Encouraging Aboriginal community to become involved in work of agency to help troubled youth and community members
- NPWS recognise the hard work of Aboriginal workers
- Employ and Aboriginal School Based Trainee
- Koori Jobs Expo
- Developing and implementing the local languages through environmental education programs, eg. Koori walking tracks
- Development of a Memorandum of Understanding between NPWS and Local Aboriginal Community

Culture

- Displaying Aboriginal artwork and information
- Workplace celebrations of significant Aboriginal dates and events - Very positive feedback from non Aboriginal staff for 2006,2007, 2008
 - In 2008 Dept of Fair Trading engage Dootch Kennedy to conduct a short cultural tour at Mt Keira
 - 2006 Kristy Narkle cooked up a large pot of kangaroo stew and damper
 - 2007 held two screenings of Lousy Little Sixpence followed by group discussion and questions
 - 2005 colouring in competition for infants and school kids

- Arranged for the interested staff to walk along 'The Healing Track'.
- Arranged for all interested staff to do the tour Bush Walk at Coomaditchie
- Reconciliation within community provides better platform for reconciliation between community and non Aboriginal people



AGEN Gathering 2008- Evaluation

Delegates of this year's AGEN Gathering were provided with a Gathering Pack at the start of the event. Item 11 in the Pack was an evaluation form which participants were requested to complete. The evaluation form was provided to obtain feedback from participants on the success of the event and covered the following matters:

- Assessment of expectations of the Gathering
- Support, or otherwise, for the proposed directions of the Regional Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework
- Appraisal of the Aboriginal Service Delivery Gap Analysis session on Day 2
- Suggestions for the 2008-2009 CAWP Action Plan
- Suggestions for AGEN to focus on in 2009
- Opportunity to provide additional comments

21 evaluation forms were submitted, representing a 21 per cent response rate from AGEN participants. The responses from participants have been collated and are reported below.

In general, participants attending the 2008 AGEN Gathering responded positively to the event, valuing the opportunity to meet other Aboriginal workers and learn about the key issues being addressed in other agencies. Many participants noted that they particularly valued the Story Circles as a vehicle for driving discussion.

One fifth of respondents indicated that the Gathering fell below their expectations citing inappropriate behaviour of colleagues during the event, lack of practical experiences and rehashing of the same old issues as the reasons.

The focus of this year's AGEN Gathering was the proposed Regional Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework (the Framework). The proposed Framework, and its future implementation, was seen, by the majority of respondents (80 per cent), as a positive step for government agencies as it clearly recognises the importance of Aboriginal culture and heritage across all of government and provides support to Aboriginal workers. The remaining respondents (20 per cent) were undecided whether to support the development of the Framework as they were not clear what the Framework would achieve or how it would relate to their job.

Day 2's session on Aboriginal Service Delivery was viewed by respondents as being useful as it provided an opportunity to develop a shared understanding of local issues and strategies to address service delivery gaps. There were some minor criticisms of the session expressed. These related to the time allocated to the session and an opinion that old issues were being rehashed.

Participants were asked whether they had any suggestions for (a) for the CAWP Action Plan 2008-2009; and (b) AGEN to focus on in 2009. Unfortunately there was no clear direction expressed in the responses to either question. Some respondent's did suggest that, in 2009, AGEN should continue to focus on the culture and heritage theme or deal with education and training. These are themes that have either been considered in previous years or are part of the current program of AGEN. In the main, the responses were general comments relating to the 2008 AGEN Gathering.

The final section of the Evaluation Form invited additional comment. In summary, the respondent's valued the event and benefited from the networking opportunities. The event was considered to be such a success by some respondent's that it was suggested that a statewide AGEN Gathering be organised.

Responses to the venue were mixed with some participants being very happy with the hotel whilst others were disappointed with the level of service from the staff, the quality and quantity of meals and the cleanliness of amenities.

Many respondents also expressed their disappointment in the behaviour of other delegates after the evening entertainment.

Aboriginal Government Employees Network 2008 Gathering Evaluation

1. Overall, how well did the 2008 AGEN Gathering meet your expectations?

a. AGEN fell below my expectations	4
b. AGEN met my expectations	11
c. AGEN was better than I expected	4
d. Not answered	2

Comments a)

Need to have more practical experiences

Need to move on from the same old issues

Bad behaviour by other colleagues marred the Gathering

Good to hear about the work of other agencies but I didn't get anything out of it

Comments b)

First AGEN – excellent and direction of AGEN great (x2)

Cross government workers meeting and delivering their experience and issues (x2)

Story circles an excellent learning experience

Great networking opportunity (x2)

Good venue

Provided opportunity to add more positive information to current community network

Was not clear how the land stuff connected with my work

Close the Gap discussions were worthwhile and hope that something positive comes out of it

Comments c)

Discussion circles interesting and provided different perspectives (x2)

All participants play an important role in their agencies regarding how services are delivered

Make sure the hotel provides a proper service – the meals could have been more nutritional, the toilets should be regularly cleaned

Made me more aware of issues

New networks established

Comments d)

First AGEN – great

Issues being addressed are still the same old one – seem to be taking 2 steps forward and 1 step back

Need more employment for indigenous workers in government

2. DAY 1 at AGEN was about the proposed Culture and Heritage Framework for the I-SE RCMG. From your experience of this day do you:

Support AGEN's direction with this project	16
Not sure whether to support this project or not	5
Do not support AGEN's directions with this project	0

Comments a)

Framework will see sites and culture and heritage protected for generations to come
 Building respect between communities and government workers
 Agencies need to be aware that it is about more than just Heritage Studies and buildings
 Framework takes into account the importance of community involvement in cultural heritage
 Framework provides support to Aboriginal workers within their respective agencies
 Individual groups struggle to achieve goals and AGEN and the RCMG provide a forum to push for change and recognition of cultural heritage and the values of Aboriginal people
 We can learn from the framework and implement it in our agencies
 Guidelines of content (?)

Comments b)

Not sure how it relates to my position but happy to see it happen and see what eventuates
 The framework wasn't clear, but the group contributed some great ideas

Comments c)

Nil comments

3. DAY 2 at AGEN was about identifying service gaps, and thinking of ways to overcome these, For the main geographic area where you work, do you consider that:

a. The discussion to identify gaps was:

a. Useful	18
b. Not useful	0
Not answered	3

b. The discussion to identify actions that could be taken was:

a. Useful	16
b. Not useful	1

Comments

Gap identification allows appropriate strategies to be developed
More Aboriginal workers need to obtain higher grade positions
Speakers need to be screened before AGEN
Too much rehashing of old issues
Groups identified the support that is needed to Aboriginal works
Recruitment gaps can be rectified by School Education Officers, Centrelink notices and using TAFE to advertise vacancies in the NSW Fire Brigades
Not enough time allocated
More time to address cross agency solution, instead of just individual agency solutions, would have been good
Need more speakers around the room as it was a bit too big and hard to hear guest speakers
Great idea to split the groups into geographic areas
Provides a shared understanding of local issues and provides a platform to address them.

4. Do you have any suggestions for the CAWP Action Plan 2008-2009?

Organise a State Gathering
Create more jobs for Indigenous workers
Meal check for numbers at the end of first day
Workshop bags to be provided to paid participants only
More accredited training
Keep involving Elders
Days are too short
Invite NSW Fire Brigades to community meetings to support and understand Aboriginal requirements locally so that measures can be tailored to suit those needs
Consolidate the framework so that it can be presented to agencies and implemented

5. What do you think should be the main focus for AGEN 2009?

Keep to the Culture and Heritage theme (x2)
Action Plans to become real in all agencies
A more influential role by Aboriginal staff in policy and direction of agencies
Developing strong, respectful employees that are role models demonstrating integrity, strength and responsibility
Run accredited training programs
The outcomes of the workshops (x2)
Focus on what young people need for a better future and lifestyle, eg. Health, education, employment
Constant contact with all members of AGEN
Engagement of other government agencies at a local level through RCMG
Enjoyed the gap analysis session
Cultural awareness – what works in different agencies, how various projects are implemented and how Aboriginal workers train/work with non-Aboriginal workers
Breaking down inter-departmental barriers to enable better service delivery
Networking
Advancement and action

6. Any other comments

Really enjoyed the Gathering as it provides good networking opportunity and new perspectives on issues relevant to Aboriginal people and communities

State Gathering every 2 years in regional and urban areas
Well done CAWP on your hard work which delivered a good result, despite 2
nominated chairpersons not being able to attend
Participants that shame themselves should apologise to everyone – very
disappointed in behaviour of some participants
Those participants that behaved in an improper manner have put all the hard work of
others in the past 5 years in jeopardy. They should not attend if they are going to
behave in that manner. It should be noted that this type of behaviour will not be
accepted at AGEN Gatherings
Unhappy that participants partied into the early hours of the morning and deprived
people of sleep
Don't hold the Gathering at high class hotel in the future – high cost
Need simple food, eg. Curried egg
Meals were terrible (x2)
No lunch available
Had to wait for meals
Delay in obtaining room keys
Are the objectives/outcomes of AGEN being addressed?
How can we provide an update of the outcomes for the 2009 meeting?
Very well run event (x2)
Opportunity to understand the way interaction with agencies can be achieved.
Trivia not appropriate as you are mentally exhausted. A DJ and live entertainment
(dance) would provide opportunity to unwind and network
Don't apologise for other people's behaviour – they should take responsibility and do
it themselves
Don't have dinner so late
Trivia was a great
Need a more hands on approach so shy people can get involved – not discussion
groups
Have the event at the Coachhouse

