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Appendix 1: Service Activity Reporting

Acronyms

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
AMYP - The Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program
ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
BMCC – Blue Mountains County Council
CBFFP - Community Builders Fixed Funding Program
FaCS - NSW Department of Family and Community Services
KPI – Key Performance Indicator
LGA – Local Government Area
NAIDOC – National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned photographs in this document contain images of deceased persons

Front Cover Aboriginal Artwork: John Hunter ©
Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) acknowledges that the City of the Blue Mountains is located on the traditional lands of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. We would like to pay respect to Elders both past and present of the Blue Mountains and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

We would like to thank all the participants, partners and contributors to the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program (AMYP), the NSW Department of Family and Community Services for funding the program and the Blue Mountains City Council for supporting the initiative. Finally, we would like to dedicate this report to Uncle Jeff Cooper in honour of his eldership, support and wisdom. Sadly he passed on before the program could be completed.

Photo with permission of family
The Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program was developed in response to the community needs of Aboriginal Men and male youth (18-24) living in the Blue Mountains of NSW. Located 50km west of Sydney on the Great Diving Range, the Blue Mountains Local Government Area has a significant population of Indigenous people aged from 18-49. The AMYP has provided a number of successful projects over the duration of four years from 2012-2016 to produce some significant impacts. Outcomes included training, mentoring and leadership, inter-generational engagement, Aboriginal cultural revival, health and wellbeing outcomes and the development of resilience, eldership, and self-empowerment. The program also developed community networks and capacity. The facilitators of the program faced a number of challenges throughout its delivery but addressed them in a pragmatic manner through a culturally holistic approach. The challenges were predominately two fold, being responsive to the specific needs of participants being affected by issues related to the inter-generational trauma brought about by contact history, and the difficulty of overcoming impediments within existing service provision systems. The Aboriginal Men and Youth Program strategically developed a number of recommendations to address the key issues and impediments experienced during project delivery.
The following recommendations have been proposed by BMCC in response to the feedback received by participants and facilitators that were part of the Aboriginal Men and Youth Project. It is intended that these recommendations should be taken into consideration by Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGO’s) when developing and implementing direct service provision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA).

1. Cultural awareness and cultural competency training is delivered in a continuous nature to Government and NGO service providers in the Blue Mountains LGA focused on supporting services to become increasingly responsive and supportive to the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains;

2. Future community service initiatives targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in the Blue Mountains should be delivered by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff as an active capacity building process to support self-determination and sustainability;

3. Continue to support and build capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement networks within the Blue Mountains LGA that can collaboratively drive outcomes for the Aboriginal community;

4. Funding bodies are more responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs through establishing longer term or ongoing funding partnerships that invest in approaches which are committed to and achieve lasting community outcomes.
The Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program was developed in response to the community needs of Aboriginal Men and male youth (18-24) living in the Blue Mountains of NSW. Located 50km west of Sydney on the Great Dividing Range, the Blue Mountains Local Government Area has a significant population of Indigenous people, especially those aged from 18-49 (BMCC, 2016). In an attempt to address gaps in service provision within the Blue Mountains Local Government Area a funding application was submitted to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), discontinued Community Builders Fixed-term Funding Program (CBFFP). The submission successfully secured funding to initiate the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program. The program consisted of a three year project that was extended for a further year. It was administered by the Blue Mountains City Council who appointment an Aboriginal Men and Youth Project Officer to commence the program in July 2012. By 2016, the program had delivered numerous successful and engaging projects to leave a legacy of community capacity and support networks.

1.1 Project Aims

The aims of the Aboriginal Men and Youth Program were to:

1. Increase connectedness, resourcefulness, trust, respect and/or participation in the community;
2. Enhance communities social infrastructure to support desired community results;
3. Enhance the evidence base about what makes communities stronger;
4. Facilitate training in setting up and managing community groups and organisations (Governance);
5. Provide training in mentoring and leadership;
6. Provide training in recruiting and training volunteers;
7. Build skills and connectedness by facilitating participation in the program.
1.2 Objectives

- The AMYP will deliver a number of Aboriginal Men’s and Youth meetings, workshops and forums as per the NSW FaCS Program Agreement;
- The AMYP will deliver yearly inter-generational cultural camps;
- The AMYP Project Officer will engage with participants and the Indigenous community to develop activities to facilitate the program aims.

The mode of delivery of these aims and objectives was achieved through methods which were agreed to by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services as the funding body, through ‘Service Specifications’ or KPIs’ prior to the commencement of the project. The activities listed as objectives were some of the key methods developed to deliver the program.
Figure 1: Map of the Blue Mountains Local Government Area
Source: (BMCC, 2007)
The Blue Mountains has an important and strong connection to Aboriginal culture, heritage and history. Aboriginal people’s connection to the Blue Mountains region is both ancient and contemporary in nature. The Blue Mountains City Council acknowledges traditional owners of the local government area, the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. It also acknowledges and supports the contemporary historic Indigenous community through process and protocol. The Indigenous community of the Blue Mountains is diverse, being made up of Darug and Gundungurra peoples as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from many language and community groups from all over Australia (BMCC, 2010). In 2011, it was estimated that the Blue Mountains Local Government area had 1,324, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the region which is 1.7% of the total population (ABS, 2016). However, this does not take into account the nature of the Indigenous community and transitory movements of extended families and kinship connections that significantly increases the population of the Indigenous community at any one time. More than half of the Indigenous community is under the age of 24, while a large proportion is between the ages of 18 – 42 (ibid). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the region experience lower incomes, higher unemployment, greater housing disadvantage and poorer health and social outcomes.

Young males and Aboriginal men have been adversely affected through collective inter-generational marginalisation and assimilation that has eroded traditional gender roles and responsibilities (Jackson, 2011). This process has been exacerbated by racism and disempowerment resulting in a higher probability of ‘at risk’ behaviour, suicide and incarceration (ibid). Due to the high rates of incarceration and suicide within the Indigenous community, Aboriginal elders and service providers contacted Blue Mountains City Council through existing Indigenous engagement process to voice the issues affecting youth and men in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. Blue Mountains City Council responded by undertaking a consultation process with their community partners such as the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre. The consultation processes resulted in the development of a vision to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains and bring about community connectivity, leadership, resilience and
empowerment. From this vision a funding application was developed and submitted in 2012 to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) - Community Builders Fixed Funding Program (CBFFP) to assist Aboriginal men and male youth.

The funding application was successful and a platform to develop a program to deliver a range of projects with associated activities was established. The program was designed to help young Indigenous men and male youth to understand their social and cultural roles, responsibilities and improve their health and wellbeing. It was hoped that the Aboriginal Men and Youth Program, (AMYP) would assist men to make connections with existing support services and encourage their full participation in community life, while also reviving their cultural knowledge, improving their self-esteem, resilience and confidence. In addition to this it was envisaged that the program would help develop positive role models through inter-generational mentorship, support eldership and provide skills development.
3.0 Method

The evaluation of the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Men and Youth Program was directed by ethical protocols. Research was planned to ensure that consent was gained from participants prior to interviews and consultations. Permission was also sought to include information collected from research participants quoted in the report. The names of informants are confidential and were replaced with generic titles to assure anonymity.

It is difficult to fully quantify and measure all the outcomes delivered by the Aboriginal Men and Youth Program. For the purpose of evaluation a research strategy was developed in coordination with key staff from the Blue Mountains City Council. The strategy principally focused on the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. This research process included the following:

1. The collection and review of the relevant literature;
2. Consultations, interviews and data collection;
3. The compilation and documentation of the findings;
4. Cross-referencing and analysis of qualitative and quantitative information;
5. The development of recommendations.

The research process relied heavily on qualitative interviews with program clients and participating service provision partners. It was found that informal open-ended interviews were very useful because they allowed for general discussion and a more comprehensive coverage of information. General discussion allowed participants to express their own perspectives and support the data collection process. Quantitative data included information collected from a list of project activities and participation records collected through the delivery of the program.
The spectrum of stakeholders surveyed and interviewed during the research process were primarily located in the Blue Mountains L.G.A. However, due to the nature of Indigenous family relationships and movements across the greater Sydney region program clients that had relocated from the Blue Mountains Local Government Area into Penrith and the Hawkesbury region also contributed to the research project. The stakeholders surveyed and interviewed included at least 35 sources, consisting of:

- Service providers from government and non-government agencies and;
- Program participants, Indigenous elders and community members.

The Compilation Findings

The analysis of the research data established a platform to evaluate the program. The research data consisted of documentation tallying the number of activities, the type of activities delivered and the attendance of each activity. Contributing data also consisted of interviews and survey results collected during activity surveys. The findings were presented to the Blue Mountains City Council and used to develop a final evaluation report.

Recommendations

The recommendations identified actions to improve Indigenous programs and provide solutions to address issues experienced by clients participating in the program. The recommendations were developed in direct collaboration with BMCC in response to the feedback received by participants and facilitators that were part of the Aboriginal Men and Youth Project.
The program was established around a specific context that aimed to increase connectedness, resourcefulness, trust, respect and/or participation within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains. The agreed program activities established key performance indicators (KPIs’) around the following areas:

- **Governance**: Training in setting up and managing community groups and organisations;
- **Mentoring and Leadership**: Training in mentoring and leadership/Training in recruiting and training volunteers and;
- **Other Community Skills**: Undertaking activities that build skills and connectedness.

The priority groups were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in the Blue Mountains, socially and financially disadvantaged and young men between the ages of 18-24.

The program targets included the following life skills and mentoring KPIs’:

1. **Ten Monthly meetings of an Aboriginal Men's and Youth group per year for 3 years** (30 in total): Requirements - 10 attendees per session 5 men and 5 young men/youth (total 30x10 = 300 attendances);

2. **Four full day workshops per year delivered quarterly for 3 years** (12 in total): Requirement - 20 attendees per session 10 men and 10 young men/youth (total 12x20 = 240 attendances);

3. **Two Aboriginal Men's forums per year for 3 years** (6 in total): Requirement - 20 attendees per session 10 men and 10 young men/youth (total 6x20 = 120 attendances);

4. **One camp for the Men and Youth each year for the duration of 3 days over 3 years** (3 in total): Requirement - 30 attendees per session (total 30x3x3days = 270 attendances);

5. **Mentoring of Aboriginal men at least three times per week over 45 weeks per year** (135 sessions, 135 attendances with a total of 405 over 3 years respectively).
Program Delivery

The delivery of the program activities was negotiated with participants through culturally appropriate engagement to meet their needs. The project commenced on 1 November 2011 for initial completion by 31 October 2014. However, there were two subsequent project extensions approved from June 30 2015 until 2016. This extension skewed the results and data across a longer period. The activities were organised into a planned series of regular events that aligned with the expected KPI targets. They consisted of a combination of ‘Life Skills’ and ‘Mentoring’ activities organised into the following themed categories:

- Monthly Aboriginal and Youth Meetings;
- Full day Workshops;
- Aboriginal Men’s Forums and;
- Cultural Camps or equivalent replacements.

Additionally, the AMYP Project Officer routinely met with program participants on multiple occasions from week to week in order to provide ongoing mentorship support and momentum for attendance to the monthly AMYP meetings.

1. Monthly Aboriginal Men and Youth Meetings

The monthly AMYP meetings included discussion group activities and meetings associated with leadership, life skills and governance that had a duration from 30-180 minutes. The activities revolved around ‘talking circles’ that provided peer to peer and elder led cultural mentorship experiences. Mentorship experiences included the delivery of ‘Culture and Arts’ as a medium to facilitate the provision of inter-generational engagement and community based activities. The meetings were held at various locations that pragmatically addressed the needs of clients. Guest speakers and presenters’ provided information and support in the talking circles. These included health, literacy support, service referrals, and investment in personal capacity to support leadership and cultural
governance processes. From 2015-2016 an Aboriginal Men’s and Youth School Holiday program was incorporated into the schedule of meetings to include holiday based activities alongside regular meetings such as cinema sessions to watch an appropriately Indigenous themed movie, canoeing and swimming. Examples of the range of monthly AMYP activities included:

- Culture and arts activities with fine arts skills training such as painting Aboriginal art with elders as a medium to talk about cultural identity and traditional based governance and leadership roles;
- Guest speakers on Indigenous men’s health;
- Discussions via ‘talking circles’ that identified client needs to inform program planning and direct professional service referrals and support;
- General gatherings with BBQ and open discussions;
- BBQs’ associated with ‘talking circles’ to facilitate safe and culturally appropriate environments.
- Informal meetings and consultation with participants;
- Visits to various venues and general engagement with participants;
- Attendance to NAIDOC activities;
- Physical activity based meetings and;
- Visits to educational institutions and sporting venues.

2. Full Day Workshops

Full day workshops were provided to participants in a range of areas. The focus of the workshops was negotiated through the monthly talking circle engagements and regular client consultations. The talking circles informed AMYP planning to target and facilitate the provision of specific events within the scope of the funding mandate. Examples of single events included:

- Healing circle workshops focused on mental health awareness;
- Arts Training and Arts Therapy approaches to mental and emotional wellbeing, (Fine arts, photography and other arts training) within an inter-generational/cultural setting - elder/youth participant interaction;
- ‘Health and Wellbeing Day’ focused on physical and mental health training;
- Excursions as ‘on country’ cultural site visits with elders’;
- Out of the Mountains Excursions focused on life skills, mentorship and leadership;
- Training events focused on life skills, emotional wellbeing and resilience such as the ‘Sorry Business’ workshops;
- Money matters, financial literacy workshop with Indigenous Money Mentor;
- Managing your fines workshops;
- Educational based cultural workshops for NAIDOC and;
- Activities related to the promotion of healthy lifestyle through physical activity.

3. Aboriginal Men’s Forums

The Aboriginal men’s forums were a series of full day events that were delivered around a two way communication context with formal and informal presenters that engaged audiences to support dialogue. The themes focused on a number of areas including health and wellbeing, employment and life skills.

- Aboriginal Youth Forum: These events focused on domestic violence prevention, health and wellbeing support, good health choices and emotional/mental wellbeing. (Delivery supported by various partners and service providers).
- Referral Pathways Forum: The forum focused on a collaborative delivery of information in close association with a number of Men and Youth service providers that could assist participants with their issues through supporting referrals in the Blue Mountains region.
- Job Expo and Careers Development Forum: The expo provided direct assistance and information to participants to help them develop career paths.
- **Wellbeing Forums:** The wellbeing forums focused on spiritual, psychological and physical wellbeing, resilience, life balance and healthy living themes.

4. **Cultural Camps**

The cultural camps fostered inter-generational engagement through the medium of culture and heritage activities based ‘on country’ in the Blue Mountains. The events were problematic and through consultation with participants alternative activities were developed and substituted for the camps.

Cultural Camp Substitution

- **Aboriginal Men and Youth Boxing for Life Program:** The two terms of the Boxing for Life Program in 2014 supported youth with an avenue to develop resilience, healthy lifestyles and create a positive avenue for anger management. The program established health and fitness activities combined with leadership and mentoring to support ‘youth at risk’. The program had a duration of 16 weeks, with 3, one hour sessions per week at a total of 48 sessions. A mean of 14 participants with a total 672 attendances’ occurred as a result of the program.

- **Film festival:** The film festival developed a leadership and mentorship framework for 20 Youth with Indigenous mentors. The youth were trained to instil confidence and the necessary skills to run the Indigenous Film Festival as young leaders. The festival was delivered as a 3 day event that consisted of another 2 days of training prior to screening at different venues in Katoomba and the Blue Mountains. The 20 Indigenous participants received formal references and referrals to training organisations to further develop their pathway in event management. The film festival initiated a total of 100 attendances and attracted 500 people.
Final Results

From the program data, the attendances for the AMYP exceeded the service specifications for the KPIs’ and delivered on priority group participation. There was a variation of the program that substituted the cultural camps as agreed activities for alternates, namely the ‘Aboriginal Men and Youth Boxing for Life Program’ and the ‘Indigenous Film Festival’. This was due to participant requests and program delivery issues that are documented in the discussion section of the evaluation report. The attendances for the program across the four key delivery areas that included monthly Aboriginal and youth meetings, full day workshops, Aboriginal men’s forums and cultural camps or equivalent replacements predominately met the expected number of activities per year set at as KPIs’.

However, there was a fluctuation of results that reflected higher delivery of activities in some areas and less in others that established higher attendance results than expected. An example of this includes the high number of full day workshops delivered for the program to exceed expected delivery targets with fewer monthly Aboriginal and youth meetings in some years than others. The replacement of cultural camps for the boxing program and the film festival activities established a very high attendance rate that exceeded expectations put upon the cultural camps. This unexpected trend surprisingly brought about a high attendance figures that would not have been initially expected that balanced the program to fill lower figures across the key delivery areas.

Table 1. Program Results

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>All Requirements Met</th>
<th>501 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups</th>
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<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Requirements Met</td>
<td>1041 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Requirements Met</td>
<td>366 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Current Total</td>
<td>1908 of the required 1335 attendances to date includes all Priority Groups</td>
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See (Appendix 1) for program results table.
From the inception of the AMYP it was envisaged that an Indigenous Project Officer would be employed to facilitate the program. In 2012, an Aboriginal male was appointed to coordinate the program. A senior Aboriginal male facilitating the program is a culturally appropriate benefit in the support of Aboriginal men and youth, especially one who resided in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. Blue Mountains city Council adheres to a number of protocols when dealing with Indigenous people to ensure respectful and meaningful engagement, to which respecting gender roles and acknowledging ‘Men’s Business’ and ‘Women’s Business’ is one. Blue Mountains City Council staff is mindful that gender protocols exist and always seek Aboriginal community based advice when these issues arise. There are many matters where the Aboriginal community expect gender protocols to be implemented especially with respect to certain knowledge and places, as sacred or specific to either men or women. This also relates to the management of programs that are targeting Aboriginal men and youth. Quite often this understanding is not recognised by mainstream services that do not have a high level of Indigenous cultural awareness that can lead to misunderstandings or disagreement.

Unfortunately, the initial steering committee for the AMYP was predominately non-Indigenous female’s which led to problematic communication. Due to the nature of the AMYP it was a frequent occurrence for issues of a cultural nature, specifically those relevant to men and ‘Men’s Business’ to be of high consideration during planning and program management discussions. However, the appropriate protocols for Aboriginal men or women made it difficult to manage these conversations appropriately to deal with issues as needed. A lack of Indigenous cultural awareness was a key factor that influenced the AMYP throughout its delivery. Fortunately, the issues affecting the steering committee were eventually resolved overtime by addressing structural impediments to program governance.

Cross cultural communication issues and a lack of Indigenous cultural awareness with non-Indigenous staff from program partners often caused problems for program coordination that isolated Indigenous staff. It also created barriers for Indigenous clients to access and use community based services that further disadvantaged the Indigenous community.
“It was often the case that people were not familiar with cultural protocols, Indigenous cultural sensitivities, humour, engagement and interaction which affected peoples relationships (Aboriginal Worker)”.

**Recommendation 1:** Cultural awareness and cultural competency training is delivered in a continuous nature to Government and NGO service providers in the Blue Mountains LGA focused on supporting services to become increasingly responsive and supportive to the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains;

**Recommendation 2:** Future community service initiatives targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in the Blue Mountains should be delivered by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff as an active capacity building process to support self-determination and sustainability.

**Elders and Indigenous Mentorship - Respecting Traditional Protocols**

Elders’ are custodians of knowledge and experience. They act as instructors and mentors and are often referred to as ‘Aunty’ or ‘Uncle’ in recognition of their status. In Aboriginal culture, both males and females of various ages can be elders but they are predominately older in age, as wisdom, resilience tolerance and cultural capacity is accumulated over time. The term ‘Elder’, does not necessarily always refer to men and women who are over fifty or sixty years old. Relatively young people (30’s and 40’s) may have been given the status of ‘Elder’ due to them having a highly respected position in their community (BMCC, 2010). This recognition is connected to specific skills and knowledge that may possess *(ibid)*. Aboriginal Elder’s conduct reflects Indigenous approaches to leadership, as they lead by good action, thought and words. The AMYP focused on nurturing eldership by developing inter-generational engagement between youth and elders. Every activity delivered in the AMYP was supported by Elders that gave value and weight to their knowledge and wisdom. Elders have the responsibility of providing guidance on all matters as well as making decisions on the ceremonial and cultural obligations for the Aboriginal community. Furthermore, Elders hold knowledge of people’s history, kinship systems, and cultural lore.
The ‘Stolen Generations’ is a determinant that continues to cause historic trauma within the Indigenous community. Many harmful social and emotional wellbeing issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be attributed to the impacts of child removal practices (Kendall, 1994). Elders have a pivotal role in helping to address the detrimental impacts of the Stolen Generations by helping youth understand the connectivity of trauma and also to re-unite and connect communal kinship systems. Many of the AMYP activities focused on trust and healing as a basis for mentorship and the interaction between youth and elders was invaluable to this process.

“We developed trust with the youth and connect with them both in a supportive way but also an Aboriginal way (Elder)”.

However, single determinants do not occur in isolation from others. Many occur together and many accumulate as time goes on. The timing, intensity and duration of determinants and the presence or absence of protective factors influence social and emotional wellbeing experienced at any point in time. The determinants of ‘mental health’ are generally accepted to include a range of psychosocial and environmental factors such as income,
Aboriginal Men and Youth Program

employment, poverty, housing, education, access to community resources, physical health, and demographic factors such as gender, age and ethnicity (Zubrick, et al 2010). The AMYP established a regime of connected activities that attempted to address multiple determinants at any one time. Activities that provided educational support with literacy and numeracy, furthering education, skills development, employment activities, housing, health and referrals to facilitate access to social services were all collectively consolidated into the program to provide a holistic approach.

Careers Support - “The program encouraged me to continue on with school and TAFE (Program participant)”.

Referral Activities - “I got help with Centrelink through referrals to help me access payments I needed to get by (Program Participant)”.

Employment Expo – “The program helped me get a job when I got back to the Blue Mountains; I never had a job before (Program Participant)”.

Program Delivery

In the first year of the project (2012–2013) there were a number of similarly new Aboriginal Men’s projects operating in the Blue Mountains, the AMYP contributed to larger joint projects, incurring higher expenditure. In the second year (2013–2014) the opportunity for larger joint projects declined as the other Aboriginal Men’s programs ceased operation during that period. The AMYP Project Officer developed partnerships on smaller activities with other local service providers in 2013–2014, whereby those service providers financially contributed to the activities, thus reducing the expenditure made through the AMYP. The project officer implemented activities through the AMYP in response to the desires of the participants, with these activities costing much less than activities in 2012–2013. Initially the AMYP activities focused on four areas of delivery:

- Monthly Aboriginal and Youth Meetings;
- Full day Workshops;
- Aboriginal Men’s Forums and;
- Cultural Camps.
However, as the program progressed, participant and stakeholder feedback established an evaluation loop that provided the impetus for the AMYP Project Officer to alter and adapt the program. In negotiation with BMCC and FaCS program activities were developed to directly meet the needs of the AMYP participants and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains.

**Meeting Needs**

It was clear from active participant engagement and evaluation by the AMYP Project Officer that there were some activities that were problematic to deliver. The ‘Cultural Camps’ were difficult to coordinate with partnering support services due to logistics and ‘duty of care’ issues. The duration of the activity included ‘overnight stays’ that established an environment that could expose ‘at risk’ youth to circumstances that may foster detrimental behaviour. Many of the cultural camp attendees struggled with substance abuse issues and the ‘camping environment’ was difficult to police for alcohol usage by youth at the camping sites.

> "Most of the youth in the program had social issues, many with accommodation problems, and trends of incarceration throughout their families (Program Worker)".

In order to address these issues it was decided in negotiation with participants and program partners to establish new activities to trade the cultural camps. The camps were replaced by the Boxing for Life Program and a film festival. The Boxing for Life program required relatively low expenditure over the two month period it ran, yet still providing strong project outcomes.

> Boxing Program - “The boxing program was a very successful activity for the youth, especially for the youth who were at most risk. The program connected elders and youth with other Aboriginal men to help them deal with some deep seated issues, depression and anger (Youth Worker)".
“The boxing program helped me divert anger, get a healthy lifestyle and develop positive attitude (Program Participant)“.

“The boxing program diverted kids from at risk behaviour to keep them out of jail (Youth Worker)”.

“There is a big absence of male role models for these boys’ lives and the boxing coaches are good male role models (Elder)”.

Other activities that were developed to meet the needs of the participants included a series of art workshops as requested by the Elders and youth. These activities focused on painting skills with prominent local Artists, and photography. Essentially they focused on ‘Art Therapy’ by sharing the therapeutic benefits of Indigenous art as a means to address emotional issues in a culturally supportive and inter-generational environment. They also gave youth the opportunity to strengthen cultural identity, gain skills, confidence, self-esteem, training and support.

*Art programs – “The Aboriginal art classes were the most rewarding for me (Program Participant)”*
Photography – “The photography classes were a fantastic program for the youth, they had an exhibition, they were in the local newspaper, it built their self-esteem. Six of the youth went onto pursue photography further and there work is shown on a photography website (Community Worker)”.

“I loved learning how to use the cameras and take photos (Participant)”.

“The Photography program gave the youth an opportunity to open their eyes and broaden their horizons for careers in the future (Elder)”.

Figure 4: Aboriginal Youth Photography Project

Additionally, a series of activities developed to address the needs of participants’ included:

- ‘Wellbeing Day’ and ‘Mental Health Day’ that used ‘on country’ visits based on cultural healing processes to support health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing Day - “Many of these youth are dealing with big family issues and find it hard to connect with culture. Elders, ceremony and country help them deal with problems (Support Worker)”.
• Regular Elders golf activities, aimed at keeping Male Elder’s in the community active through low impact sport and BBQs’ with excursions and;
• Sorry Business workshop and Money Matters financial literacy workshop.

Some workshops were received very well by participants. One of these was the ‘Sorry Business Workshop’ that supported participants with an understanding of protocols and processes around death and the deceased.

*Sorry Business Workshop* - “The workshop helped me understand how to deal with ‘Sorry Business’ and the issues and emotions you deal with (Program Participant)”.

“The workshop helped me to understand how to organise a funeral like bereavement payments from Centrelink (Program Participant)”.

The success of one day workshops in the program established a skew towards the provision of ‘workshop’ type activities. Workshop activities were delivered at a very high rate that exceeded KPIs’. The trend established a realisation that coordinated engagement with the Indigenous community in the Blue Mountains was reliant on a key role that effectively identified issues, liaised with the community and facilitated collaborative activities with service providers via networks.

**Recommendation 3:** Continue to support and build capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement networks within the Blue Mountains LGA that can collaboratively drive outcomes for the Aboriginal community;

“The role could support the needs of the Aboriginal community. It could broker investments, do networking, referrals and stakeholder engagement. It would provide ongoing cultural awareness and cultural competency training to government and non-government service providers and organisations in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area which could be a way to generate funding (Community worker)”.

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Aboriginal Men and Youth Program

22
Strengths and Weaknesses

A major strength of the program was the stability it provided for the co-ordination of service networks to collaboratively provide activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men and Youth in the Blue Mountains. The position helped address the needs of the Indigenous community by focusing on inclusive dialogue between support services and clients. One of the major weaknesses of the program was the inconsistency and reliability of Indigenous targeted project funding that was available to the spectrum of allied services which was predominately short term in nature. This affected capacity building and network coordination to address Indigenous issues in a holistic manner.

Recommendation 4: Funding bodies are more responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs through establishing longer term or ongoing funding partnerships that invest in approaches which are committed to and achieve lasting community outcomes.

Unintended Outcomes

Some of the unintended outcomes included the high number of full day workshops delivered in the program that exceeded expected delivery targets with fewer monthly Aboriginal and youth meetings in some years than others. The high number of attendances brought about by the replacement of the ‘Culture Camps’ with the boxing program and the film festival. However, the most unexpected outcome for the AMYP was the outstanding achievement of participating youth with the photography activities that has led them on to great acclaim and career paths in photography.
6.0 Conclusion

The AMYP primarily addressed the program aims and objectives. It met the expected funding KPI's. There was a need for program flexibility and there were a number of alterations to the initial program format that responded to the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Blue Mountains region. The program increased connectedness, resourcefulness, trust, respect and participation within the Indigenous community. It developed skills and connectedness by facilitating participation in the program, while also providing training and mentoring with strong leadership outcomes. A number of barriers were faced in relation to the delivery of the program that primarily related to levels of Indigenous cultural awareness and cross cultural communication. Due to this primary factor, facilitating governance training in setting up and managing community groups and organisations was difficult. The Indigenous community has very poor capacity and needs support of positive and culturally aware service systems to empower change. The least resourced community groups cannot be expected to make change without the ongoing help of wider social support structures. Trust was a major factor in community based relationships that hindered engagement. The final reporting data has enhanced the evidence base about what makes communities stronger and the AMYP enhanced the Indigenous community’s social infrastructure to support desired community results.
References


Kendall, C. (1994). The History: Present and Future Issues Affecting Aboriginal Adults who were Removed as Children. Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal, 18, 18–19.


Appendices
Service Activity Reporting: Community Skills Development

Key Result Area: Increased connectedness, resourcefulness, trust, respect and/or participation in the community;

Objective 1. Social Infrastructure: Enhance communities social infrastructure to support desired community results

Objective 2. Enhancing Evidence Base: Enhance the evidence base about what makes communities better

Community Skills Development Activities

Community skills Development projects are training projects that provide information and training to members of the community so that their access to and knowledge of community resources is improved and their quality of life enhanced. The projects also aim to increase participation and inclusion in their community.

- Governance: Training in setting up and managing community groups and organisations
- Mentoring and Leadership: Training in mentoring and leadership/Training in recruiting and training volunteers
- Other Community Skills: Undertaking activities that build skills and connectedness.

Priority Groups

Group 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in the Blue Mountains (90% of attendees/ per activity)

Group 2: Socially and financially disadvantaged (50% of attendees/ per activity)

Group 3: Young men 18-24 (50% of attendees/ per activity)
Program Targets

Key tasks: Life Skills and Mentoring

- **10 Monthly meetings of an Aboriginal Men’s and Youth group per year for 3 years (30 in total);**
  - Requirement: 10 attendees per session 5 men and 5 young men/youth (total 30x10 = 300 attendances)

- **Four full day workshops per year delivered quarterly for 3 years (12 in total);**
  - Requirement: 20 attendees per session 10 men and 10 young men/youth (total 12x20 = 240 attendances)

- **Aboriginal Men’s forums held twice per year for 3 years (6 in total)**
  - Requirement: 20 attendees per session 10 men and 10 young men/youth (total 6x20 = 120 attendances)

- **A camp for the Men and Youth each year for the duration of 3 days over 3 years (3 in total).**
  - Requirement: 30 attendees per session (total 30x3x3days = 270 attendances)

- **The project was also to deliver the mentoring program through the engagement of Aboriginal men at least three times per week over 45 weeks per year**
  - Requirement: 135 sessions, 135 attendances (total of 405 over 3 years respectively).
| Year          | Activity:                                      | Target and Comments for Specific Activity                                                                 | No | Participants | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------------|---|---|---|---|
| 2012        | Monthly Aboriginal Men and Youth Meetings      | **Discussion Group Activities:** Various<br>**Leadership and Governance:** Various<br> - Collaborative activities in association with a number of other Aboriginal Men’s projects operating in the Blue Mountains | 5  | 55<br>Met   | 55<br>Met | 40<br>Met | 55  |
| 2012 July - 2013 | Full day Workshops                           | **Single Event:** 1 x Aboriginal men’s BBQ and healing circle meeting in Springwood;                      | 1  | 38<br>Met  | 38<br>Met | 24<br>Met | 38  |
| 2012        | Aboriginal Men’s Forums                       | **Referral Pathways Forum**<br> - Collaborative association with other services supporting referral for Aboriginal Men and Youth in the Blue Mountains region | 1  | 22<br>Met  | 22<br>Met | 15<br>Met | 22  |
|              | Cultural Camp                                 | No culture camp was delivered in the year ending 2012                                                   | 0  | 0<br>Met  | 0<br>Met | 0<br>Met | 0  |
|              | NB: Above includes unreported Additional Activities from half year reporting figures July 2012 – July 2013 |                                                                                                          |    |              |              |              | 115 |
| 1 July 2013 - 30 June 2014 | Monthly Aboriginal Men and Youth Meetings | **Life Skills Mentoring Group – Culture and Arts**<br> - Aboriginal Culture/Arts and inter-generational youth/elders engagement | 11 | 105<br>Met | 105<br>Met | 90<br>Met  | 105 |
|              | **Leadership and Governance Talking Circles with Mentorship Support**<br> - Talking circles with guest speakers and client engagement on various life skills issues |                                                                                                          |    |              |              |              |     |
|              | **Mentoring Activities**                       | **Mentoring Occurrences/participants**                                                                    | 135|              |              |              | 161 |
|              | **Full day Workshops**                         | **Health and Wellbeing Day:**<br> - 2 x Men’s Golf Days – Physical fitness, healthy lifestyles coaching and low impact exercise building connections in | 7  | 82<br>Met  | 82<br>Met | 60<br>Met  | 82  |
the community and promotion of healthy lifestyle choices through life skills awareness;
- 2 x Fine arts skills – painting workshops, including youth and elders, cultural awareness/mentorship;

Out of the Mountains Excursions
- 1 x Men’s group day out of the mountains trip to beach and BBQ lunch at Norah Head, Central Coast. Cultural identity and youth/elder mentoring;
- 1 x Youth culture and wellbeing day at Muru Mittigar Cultural Centre

School visits and youth mentorship
- 1 x photography workshops aimed at mentors (men) and youth each workshop ran for 2 days (2013) focusing on arts therapy as a means to address historic trauma/resilience and mental health issues;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Camp/Alternative</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Cultural Camp</th>
<th>1 x Youth camp in partnership with NSW Health and the Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre 2013; 31 participants x 3 days = 93 attendances’</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total attendances’ = 105 + 161 + 235 = 501 Attendances’ (2013 - 2014) All Requirements Met Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Total | 501 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 1 2014 - June 30 2015</th>
<th>Monthly Aboriginal Men and Youth Meetings</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Life Skills Mentoring Group – Culture and Arts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Aboriginal Culture/Arts and inter-generational youth/elders engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Leadership and Governance Talking Circles with Mentorship Support</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Talking circles with guest speakers and client engagement on various life skills issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring Activities</th>
<th>135</th>
<th>Mentoring Occurrences/participants</th>
<th>115</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full day Workshops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Full Day Workshop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 3 x Men’s Golf Days – Physical fitness, healthy lifestyles coaching and low impact exercise building connections in the community and promotion of healthy lifestyle choices through life skills awareness;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 1 x Photography workshops aimed at mentors (men) and youth each workshop ran for 2 days (2013)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 1 x Youth wellbeing day at Muru Mittigar 2014;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- 2 x Fathers/grandfathers/uncles and boys outings (dinner (picnic in the park) plus NRL match souths vs panthers 11/4/14, Lunch (picnic in the park plus NRL match panthers vs tigers 6/7/14;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 1 x AMYP BBQ and healing circle meeting in Springwood aligned with NAIDOC;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 3 Exhibitions Resulting from the photography workshops held at Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Blue Mountains City Council and Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural Centre;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>Met</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Men’s Forums</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Youth Forum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 3 x Aboriginal Youth Forums focused on domestic violence prevention, health and wellbeing support, good health choices and emotional/mental wellbeing. (Delivery supported by various partners and service providers).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Camp/Alternative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.B: No Cultural Camp Replaced with:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Men and Youth Boxing for Life Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Replaced with Two terms in 2014 of the Boxing for Life Program: Youth health and fitness activities combined with leadership and resilience engagement with Aboriginal mentors;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- (16 weeks, 3, one hour sessions per week at a total of 48 sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A mean of 14 participants with a total 672 attendances’</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing Sessions/Combined Mentoring and Life Skills attendances’</td>
<td>16x3= 48 sessions with 14 attendees at attendances’</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48x14 = 672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total attendances’ = 81+83+143=62=672 = (2014 -2015)</td>
<td>672</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition to the attendances from the replacement activity the Aboriginal Men and Youth Boxing for Life Program the total attendances meets all requirements with 1041 attendances.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Requirements Met Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Type</td>
<td>Occurrences/Participants</td>
<td>Met 1</td>
<td>Met 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Aboriginal Men and Youth Meetings</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Leadership and Governance Talking Circles with Life Skills Mentoring Group – Aboriginal Men’s and Youth School Holiday program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consisting of events held at Katoomba Pool with BBQ lunches’, canoeing at Wentworth Falls BBQ Lunch provided. Movie Day in Katoomba. Supervised bush walks with elders at Wentworth Falls with associated BBQ.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Talking circles with guest speakers and client engagement on various life skills issues.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Activities</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring Occurrences/participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full day Workshops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Day Workshops</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 x Money matters – financial literacy workshop with Indigenous Money Mentor; Managing your fines workshop; 1 x Aboriginal men’s BBQ and sharing circle meeting at Wentworth Falls Lake;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 1 x Beach Trip to Northern Beaches supervised by youth workers and Aboriginal Men and Youth project officer;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 1 x Elders Touch Footy in the gully and pool and BBQ;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 1 x Men’s and Youth Wellbeing day - cultural excursion Northern Beaches including lunch and cultural sharing at Narrabeen lake with North Sydney north Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Office;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 1 x Sorry Business Workshop, Counselling, support, resilience, life skills, wills, literacy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Men’s Forums</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Expo and Careers Development Forum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 x Job expo for Indigenous participants providing guidance of education and career pathways development.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>Met</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal Youth Forum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
partners and service providers).

| Cultural Camp/Alternative | 1 | N.B: No Cultural Camp  
Replaced with:  
Film Festival  
- Replaced with a comprehensive event that established a leadership and mentorship framework for 20 Youth with Indigenous mentors. The youth were trained to provide them with the confidence and skills to take up major responsibilities with the delivery of a 3 day Indigenous Film Festival as young leaders.  
- 20 Indigenous Youth as primary participants with 5 days of full attendance for preparation and delivery. A total of 100 attendances.  
- (500 attendees at the film festival) | 0 | 95 | 220 | 20 | 500 |

| Year 1 | All Requirements Met | 501 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups | Met |
| Year 2 | Requirements Met | 1041 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups | Met |
| Year 3 | Requirements Met | 366 of the required 445 attendances includes all Priority Groups | Met |
| Current Total | 1908 of the required 1335 attendances to date includes all Priority Groups | Met |