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OCHRE

The Continuing Conversation

Evaluation | Stage 1:
Implementation and early outcomes

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Stage 1 Final Report

Prepared for the Aboriginal Communities of Coffs Harbour,
Grafton and Nambucca NSW.

June 2018

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This report belongs to the Aboriginal Communities of
Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest operates on Gumbaynggirr Country.

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

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Glossary

BMNAC	Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation
LALC	NSW Local Aboriginal Land Council
<i>OCHRE</i>	Opportunity Choice Healing Responsibility Empowerment
NCARA	NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances
Nest	Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest
NSW AECG Inc.	NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales

The OCHRE Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest: What we have found

<p>What is working?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) is positive for young people and for the community involved in it. Learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is important. • Students enjoy classes and (most) wanted more time to learn. They like to talk to their families about what they had learned, and learning Language supported their connection with Aboriginal culture and community. • Tutors and teachers are committed to teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. [Some tutors are working for free, so students don't miss out.] <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is being revitalised and more people are coming to speak Language. 	<p>What needs further work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members would like input into how the Nest classes work, including who teaches them and how students are taught. • Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching – focus on speaking Gumbaynggirr and not writing. • Language learning resources should be accessible to all members of Aboriginal communities in the region. • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest program is not being taken up by every government school –this means that many Aboriginal students do not have an opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language. • Addressing the cultural acceptability of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest sitting in the school environment. • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest program is under-resourced. Needs resources and funds to support staff, training and job security – this includes teachers training within the community and ongoing Language skills development. • Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal people and available for all students. • Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communication about how the Nest operates, and how it is structured. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for improved consultation with local Aboriginal Communities and stakeholders during implementation. • More resources are needed to ensure access to the Nest across the region. • It is challenging for the Nest to provide community-wide access when it is based within a government school. • Better mechanisms need to be developed to accommodate Elders to be part of the Nest.
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About the *Continuing Conversation*

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

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

The evaluation team have sought to address any concerns about the draft report to ensure participants are comfortable with what has been written, without compromising the independent findings of the report. The final report is presented to nominated representatives of the Aboriginal communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca. With their approval it will then be presented to NSW Government.


We have drawn lessons from *OCHRE* sites being evaluated and presented a Synthesis Report to the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA).

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were set up following a series of Aboriginal Language Forums coordinated by NSW Aboriginal Education Consultation Group from 2012. The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) was launched in Coffs Harbour on 19 February 2014. Based at William Bayldon Public School in Coffs Harbour, the purpose of the Nest is to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr Language as an integral part of local Traditional Aboriginal culture and identity. Through the Nest, opportunities to learn the Gumbaynggirr Language are available to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people enrolled in government preschools and schools in these communities.

A Nest is a network of communities bound together by their connection through an Aboriginal Language. Each Nest continues to create learning pathways for Aboriginal students, teachers and community members. The size, shape and form of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are community driven. (NSW Department of Education, Language, culture and communities, 2016)

Summary of the *Continuing Conversation*: *OCHRE* Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

This is a summary of what we heard about the *OCHRE* Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest). We had conversations with Aboriginal communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.

 Direct quotes from what we heard are highlighted.

We heard that it was important to listen to people across the whole valley – from Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca Heads as the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture does not sit within one community. Therefore, we had conversations in each of these communities.

What people told us about the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

- There is widespread support for Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in the community.
- The impact of history and government bans on Aboriginal Languages shapes how Aboriginal community members feel about the teaching and learning of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture.
- There is some disagreement in the communities about how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was developed and is delivered. However, there appears to be no single best way for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures to be taught and one program is unlikely to meet everyone's needs.
- Community members have mixed views about how, who and where Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture should be taught and how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should work – in particular, who owns Gumbaynggirr Language, who has cultural authority to teach it, and who can learn it in the first instance.
- Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching – for example, learning should focus on speaking Gumbaynggirr and not just writing.
- Prior to the Nest, there were already functioning, but under-resourced, Aboriginal organisations conducting Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture classes, and training. The State Government could provide more resources and proper funding to these organisations (Murrumbidgee and other Aboriginal organisations, including Yarrawarra Cultural Centre).

What is working well?

- Learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is positive for young people and for the community and the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is positive for young people and for the community involved in it.
- Some community members, parents and all students supported teaching Language and Culture in schools.

Wherever our kids are learning Language is a good thing ... And any opportunity is an advantage to students.

Yes. It's good because most parents have not had the opportunity to teach their kids about language and culture. Knowing that the kids are learning about themselves and where they have come from might help them understand what it is to be a first Australian.

Many non-Aboriginal people are also getting involved in Gumbaynggirr Language learning and this is big for building mutual understandings.

- Students learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture said they enjoy classes and (most) wanted more time to learn.
- Students like to talk to their families about what they had learned, and learning Language supported their connection with Aboriginal culture and community. It was important.

I like learning about my Culture and Language, so I can teach my other family members.

It is important... to learn about our culture and understand where we come from. And to also keeps our culture alive and to ensure our Culture and Language isn't forgotten.

Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

- Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should begin with developing relationships and learning from existing programs that teach Aboriginal Languages and Culture run by Aboriginal organisations.
- Most participants agreed that the Gumbaynggirr peoples should have input and community-control into the design and management of the Nest. Community members would like input into how the Nest classes work, including who teaches them and how students are taught. The Nest implementation could be more respectful to Gumbaynggirr Elders.

Challenges

- Demand for classes exceeds supply of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture teachers, tutors and Nest resources.

What are the challenges and what could be improved?

Challenges

- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest sits in the government school environment, where they are subject to the rules of the education system and decisions by the Principal. The program is not being taken up by every government school – this means that many students within the Gumbaynggirr Language footprint do not have an opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language.
- The NSW Department of Education’s policy for employment of tutors, requiring Cert III qualifications, makes it difficult to find teachers and prevents some Aboriginal Gumbaynggirr Elders from participating in the Nest.
- Muurrbay [Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative] as a major resource for providing language and culture support, education and training.
- The tutors themselves do not have secure employment and have limited resources for essential activities for teaching, including travel to schools, developing skills and accessing appropriate materials.

Teaching in schools relies on having the Principal’s agreement to participate in the Nest, meeting the Department of Education’s conditions of employment, and follows a **white way** of teaching. There should be ways of ensuring that schools involve the community in the teaching of Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in an appropriate way.

Improvements

- Secure and stable long-term funding and adequate resources to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. There also needs to be wider community access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture learning resources.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should be Aboriginal community-controlled and less constrained by government processes.
- NSW Government should provide resources to community organisations to support existing Language and Culture programs and develop them more.

For Students:

- There needs to be an increased number of classes - one class a week is not enough to learn a language.
- Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal people and available for all students.

For Staff:

- Nest staff need support, training and job security – this includes teacher training within the community and support for ongoing language development. This will develop tutors’ skills and increase the number of Gumbaynggirr Language tutors and teachers.

For Aboriginal communities, schools and stakeholders:

- There needs to be wider community access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture learning resources.
- Improved communication about how the Nest operates, including the structure of the Nest. Community members need to know more about the Nest and what is happening to ensure they can be a part of the process.
- There needs to be improved communication between schools and teachers with Nest teachers and tutors.

Community views of success for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

We were told a Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest will be a success when:

- Local Aboriginal people are speaking Gumbaynggirr Language.
- Members of Aboriginal communities have access to Gumbaynggirr Language classes.
- All young Aboriginal people have access to Language and Culture, including learning 'on Country'.
- People with cultural authority, (Elders, Aboriginal people with cultural knowledge who are accepted by communities) are teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and have job security.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is community-controlled, properly funded and resourced.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for the **NSW Government** are based on what we heard was working well and what could be improved.

Themes	Recommendations
Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation should begin with developing relationships and learning from existing programs that teach Aboriginal Languages and Culture run by Aboriginal organisations. • Aboriginal organisations should be funded to do Language and Culture work in the community and then go into schools. • Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communications about how the Nest will operate and the governance structure of the Nest. • Ensure staff consistency during the implementation stage. • Policy decision-makers (in the Department of Education and Aboriginal Affairs NSW) come together to prioritise and support teaching Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in schools – and not rely on local Aboriginal peoples to fight for inclusion. • Aboriginal Community members and school stakeholders would like more information about the Nest, how it is organised, how decisions are made and how the Nest operates in schools, including opportunities for ongoing communication with and input from members of Aboriginal communities.
Aboriginal cultural conflicts with the appropriateness of locating an Aboriginal Language and Culture nest in NSW School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include mechanisms to ensure that Gumbaynggirr peoples and community members should have more input into the design and management of the Nest. • Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal traditional ways of teaching and learning, learning should focus on oral, not just a written language. • Build cultural respect and cultural acceptability of Nest programs through greater inclusion of Gumbaynggirr Elders into content and teaching.
NSW Government support for existing Aboriginal organisations to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Government to provide more resources and funding to existing Aboriginal organisations that include Muurrbay and Yarrawarra Cultural Centre.

Themes	Recommendations
provide activities and content for the Nest	
Access to the Nest is not available for all Aboriginal people in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal peoples in the region. • The broader Gumbaynggirr community should be able to access resources and classes provided. Classes should be available across all schools and all years, not only for some children in some government schools. • There need to be improved pathways for members of Aboriginal communities to learn Language and Culture and continue to build knowledge.
More Aboriginal community input into Nest programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gumbaynggirr communities would like more input into the classes including ensuring Aboriginal methods of learning and teaching are the priority and that Gumbaynggirr teachers should be approved by Gumbaynggirr communities. • Reference group could include more community members, including those from different organisations and hold their meetings across the Nest region.
Adequate and sustainable resourcing of the Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nest is currently under-resourced and needs an increased budget so that schools do not have to use their funding to ensure Nest classes operate. The Nest needs to be better resourced and funded including staff support, training and job security. This includes teacher training WITHIN the community and support for ongoing Gumbaynggirr language development. • More learning and teaching resources, training and support for Gumbaynggirr teachers – including support for Gumbaynggirr Elders to be allowed into schools to teach. • Schools need to be able to access other Gumbaynggirr Tutors to ensure Gumbaynggirr Language classes have stability. Ideally Tutors would be on continuing contracts rather than being casual employees.
Number of Language classes available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be an increased number of classes offered. The current class once a week is not enough to learn language. • Schools should be resourced to receive more than 3 hours of Aboriginal Language teaching each week.

Themes	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Language teaching should be part of the core curriculum not an added extra. • Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture should be part of the pre-school curriculum.
Education and training of Nest Teachers and tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be supported professional education and training to develop tutors and to increase the number of Gumbaynggirr Language teachers. • Increased funding and support for developing Gumbaynggirr Language teachers' knowledge and capacity, including professional development. • Nest tutors and Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) should have a resource kit to work from. • Nest Tutors should be encouraged to share their resources, experiences, and have access to peer support.
Need for improved communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the communications between teachers, tutors and schools.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the governance structures, decision making processes and accountability mechanisms, and processes of the Nest including the roles of the Steering Group, NSW Department of Education, NSW AECG Inc. and Aboriginal Affairs NSW. There needs to be a program protocol which sets out in detail the structures and processes for governing the Nest.

Direction for next conversations

There are two more stages to the *OCHRE* Evaluation:

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

Based on the conversations to date (including co-design), we propose the next conversations include and discuss **continuity of Gumbaynggirr Language classes over time** (for example, looking at quantitative data about participation) and Aboriginal **community roles and access to the Nest**. Data is currently being collected by the Department of Education and the next stage of the evaluation will include analysis of this information.

Part A:

The Continuing Conversations

1 The *Continuing Conversations*

University researchers from UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) have been employed by NSW Government to continue the conversations that commenced with the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs to see how *OCHRE* – the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs – is working. The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is part of *OCHRE* and the communities involved in the Nest have consented to be part of the evaluation. Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests have been established in public schools as part of *OCHRE*.

The **NSW Government** wants to know:

- Is the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest being implemented as intended? What aspects are working well, and which could be improved?
- Do the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest outcomes continue to reflect what the community wants to achieve?
- What improvements to the design of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest could be made to better meet outcomes in the Aboriginal community, and for the future development of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest?

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

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

1.1 Summary of the evaluation process

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

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

The evaluation included the following steps:

- The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest provided permission to have a Continuing Conversation on Country in three areas – Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.

- The Evaluation team worked with each participating community to co-design what the evaluation would look at and how it would be carried out. In the workshops we heard from people involved with the implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest and community members.
- The Evaluation team trained local Aboriginal people in each location to be community researchers to have conversations with local Aboriginal people.
- We (the evaluation team, including community researchers) listened to people in the communities about their experiences with the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. We listened to students, parents, Principals, teachers, language tutors, Aboriginal Education Officers, local partners and service providers, NSW Local Aboriginal Land Council representatives, and other Aboriginal language providers and organisations in the area.
- Additional conversations were held with government staff to understand how the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest model was established and how they manage the Nests.
- Limited quantitative data is available to analyse for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. We were only able to see the number of schools who had agreed for the Nest tutors to come into their school and the hours tutors worked across the Nest. Data by school year were only available for students learning Gumbaynggirr Language in schools prior to the Nest.
- The evaluation team returned to each community to check the findings and recommendations. Feedback from these conversations has been incorporated into the final report.

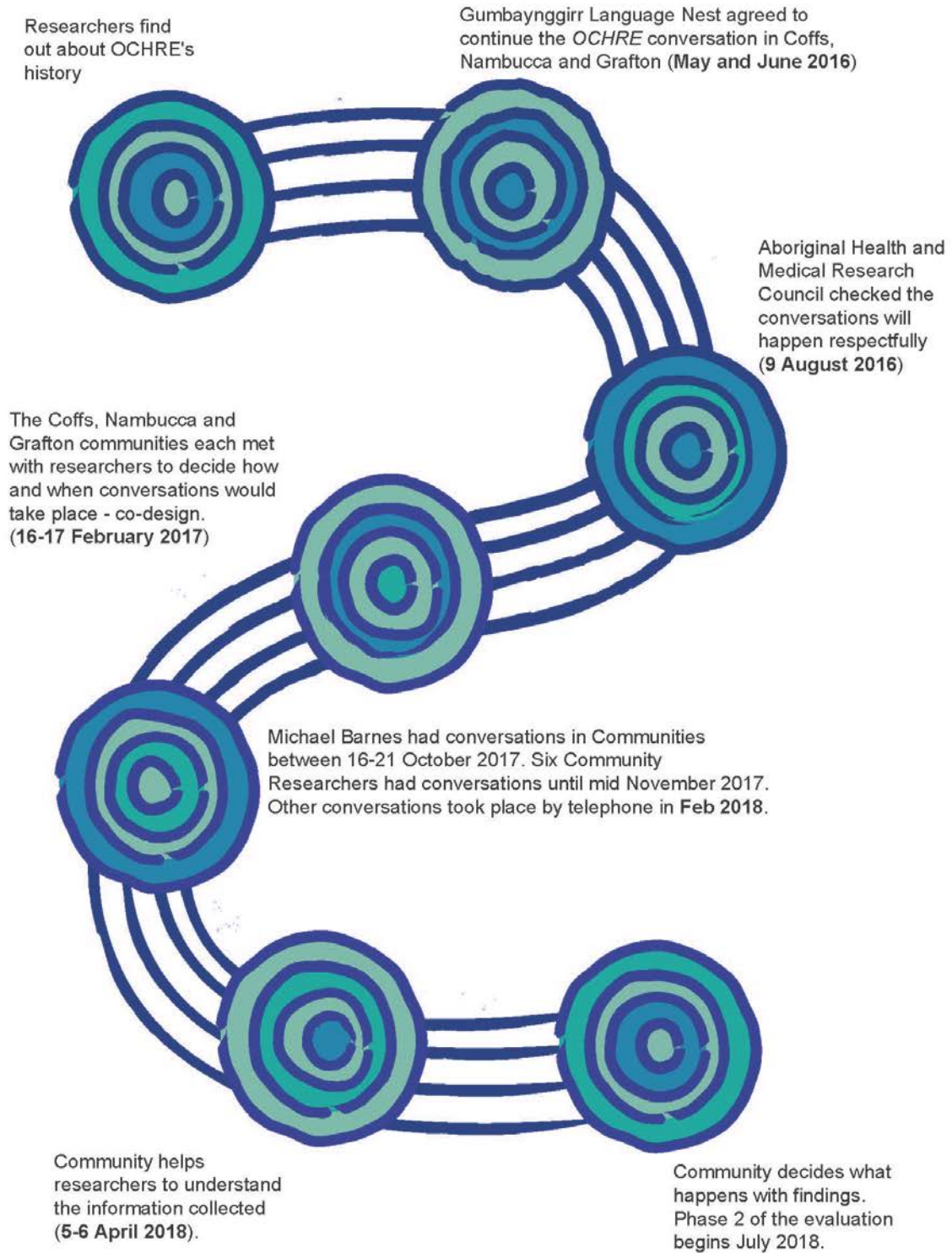
The Gumbaynggirr communities of Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca own the report and will decide what to do with the report.

The conversations were led by an Aboriginal researcher – Michael Barnes, a Ngunnawal man from the Canberra region, working with six local Aboriginal community researchers (two from each location).

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

See Figure 1 below for a summary of the conversation process.

Figure 1 Summary of conversation process




1.2 Measures of success

We asked the Gumbaynggirr communities how we will know if the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is going well.


We were told the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest will be a success when:

- Local Aboriginal people are speaking Gumbaynggirr Language.
- Members of Aboriginal communities across the region have access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture classes.
- All young Aboriginal people have access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture, including learning 'on Country'.
- People with Gumbaynggirr cultural authority are teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and have job security.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is community-controlled, properly funded and resourced.

One participant explained that:

 The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest would have been successful if it did the following in its 3-4 years of operation:

- Led and facilitated by a local Aboriginal organisation/ Corporation.
- Prioritised community-based learning, including on Country.
- Prioritised Aboriginal student and Aboriginal community member learning.
- Prioritised the speaking of language over the writing/spelling/reading of language.

 Produced 50 proficient speakers of the language who could be categorised as the following:

- competent (able to hold conversation completely in language).
- highly competent (conversations, translations and the telling of stories completely in language).
- near fluent/fluent (ability to completely immerse people in language without any reliance on English).

1.3 Co-designing the evaluation

We also asked the Gumbaynggirr communities how we should do the evaluation through the process of co-design.

Participants of the co-design workshops said it was very important to listen to people from across the whole valley, Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca Heads. This should include:

- Gathering together and yarning with Aboriginal communities.
- Accessing a wide network of people – through participants from the co-design workshop – the Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW AECG Inc., and the Valley network.
- Providing handouts about the purpose of gatherings to communities prior to the event.
- Advertising gatherings through local newspaper and radio.
- Holding a forum at a NAIDOC event.
- Conducting surveys.
- Work with local Aboriginal community-based researchers – asking people about their experiences of the Nest.
- Listen to young Aboriginal people's views through social media.

Note - the timing of our conversations in community did not coincide with NAIDOC week; however, this will be considered for future stages of the evaluation. Also, for technical and ethical reasons, we were unable to listen to young people's views on social media.

Further detail about who we listened to, the information we collected, and how we came up with our findings are explained in Section 8.

1.3.1 Strengths and limitations to the evaluation methods

Strengths of the evaluation method include:

- Aboriginal Communities' control of research through co-design at the beginning of the evaluation.
- Measures of success (short and long-term) of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest are determined by the community.
- Conversations and surveys were conducted with parents, students, teachers, Principals, Aboriginal Education Officers, and other people in the wider community, including the Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative, the Bularri Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Corporation, and the Gurehlgam Corporation Healing Centre.

- Members of Aboriginal communities are trained to conduct the research and were central to the conversations.
- Checking our findings with Aboriginal communities and adjusting the findings and recommendations based on community feedback helps maintain community control of the evaluation and ensure communities have a voice.
- Local Aboriginal communities having control of the final report.
- There is wide community interest in the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest and the feedback process of the evaluation has increased local knowledge about the Nest.

Because of the evaluation, it has the community talking a lot more [about the Nest].

Limitations of the evaluation include:

- The evaluation team had limited time to spend in each community.
- There are other Language and Culture programs in the area; therefore, identifying findings about the impact of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest alone will be difficult.
- The co-design workshop in Grafton coincided with several other community events – two people attended.
- Quantitative data from the program is incomplete and does not provide an accurate picture of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest activities.

2 Findings

This report is focused on the implementation and early outcomes of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. The findings are based on what we heard at the co-design of the evaluation and the conversations we had in community.

In the continuing conversation, we heard about the strong connections between Aboriginal culture, language and identity and the importance and interdependence of culture and language, with place and country. The intention of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests is to 'provide a continuous learning pathway for Aboriginal students'.¹

We had conversations with 25 young people about the Nest, and 3 young people completed the interview online. Of these, 15 were currently in Language classes, though not all through the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. Students were enthusiastic about learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture.

Aboriginal community-based researchers also had yarns with 57 parents or community members, 9 completed the interview online; 13 had children learning an Aboriginal Language in school.

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

Community members, including **students** and **stakeholders**, who participated in the evaluation told us:

- There is widespread community support for Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture.
- Learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is positive and supports young people to develop cultural identity, confidence and self-esteem.
- Some Aboriginal community members had concerns about the cultural acceptability of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest sitting in the government school environment.
- There are already functioning, but under-resourced, Aboriginal organisations conducting Language and Culture classes and training.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest activities and resources are not accessible to all young Aboriginal people and wider Aboriginal communities – and only to students in participating government schools.

¹ See <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/policy-reform/language-and-culture/nests> Accessed May 25, 2018.

- The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is not properly resourced – including job security for tutors to ensure its stability.
- The NSW Department of Education requires Gumbaynggirr Language tutors to hold formal qualifications (Cert III). This impacts on Gumbaynggirr Elders and other Gumbaynggirr community members being allowed to teach their own Language.
- Worldviews of language and culture influence communities' perspectives of who can teach Language and Culture, how it is taught and where.
- Gumbaynggirr Language, Culture and Country belong to and are the responsibility of the Gumbaynggirr people.
- There appears to be no single best way for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures to be taught and one program is unlikely to meet everyone's needs.
- Governments need to acknowledge and work with Gumbaynggirr people in ways that respect and acknowledge this fact and support language and culture revitalisation.

2.1 Community support for Language and Culture in the Gumbaynggirr Nation

There is very strong and wide-spread community support for the teaching and practice of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in the Gumbaynggirr Nation. This is illustrated by local support (and pride) in the Aboriginal community-run Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative based in Nambucca Heads.

Muurrbay is:

a leading regional language centre that provides strategic support to revitalise the languages of seven Aboriginal communities, of central to north of NSW' (Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative website).²

Wherever our kids are learning language is a good thing' and that 'any opportunity is an advantage to students'.

We heard that learning Language and Culture for young people:

... builds identity and confidence in ways that I have never seen before.

Having pride within themselves as they have known where they came from.

One parent participant told us:

² See <http://muurrbay.org.au/about-us/> Accessed May 25, 2018

I wish I had the chance to learn a lot more in school as I would love to teach my kids when I have them. As so many of our young generation learning about their culture and language would give them self-pride.

2.1.1 Students views

We heard from 28 **young Aboriginal people** about learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. Of these, 15 were currently in classes, though not all through the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. Young Aboriginal people were positive about learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture classes at school and 26 said they would like to learn more Gumbaynggirr Language.

Young people involved in Language and Culture classes said they:

- Enjoy classes, thought it was important and (most) wanted more time to learn.
- Talk to their families about what they had learned and supported community connections.

I like learning about my Culture and Language, so I can teach my other family members.

[It is important] ... to learn about our culture and understand where we come from. And to also keep our culture alive and to ensure our Culture and Language isn't forgotten.

Of the 28 Aboriginal students we heard from, 26 did not learn an Aboriginal Language at home. Young Aboriginal people told us they are keen to maintain their own Language and Culture. One Aboriginal student explained that it was important:

... so we don't lose our identity.

It is important to know your tribe and where we stand in our Country. If we forget about Aboriginal heritage we would not know who we are. It's the way we are.

One student, who was not part of the Nest, said it was important to learn Language:

... so, it's not forgotten and makes the Elders happy.

We need to know [our] Culture and Language so we can identify who we are and where we come from and how to connect to our land and give us a sense of belonging to each other and the land we walk on.

It's important to know your area's Language and don't forget it.

2.1.2 Philosophical worldviews of Language and Culture

Community views of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest are shaped by philosophical questions of **who**, **where** and **how** Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is taught and learnt. It is also important to acknowledge and recognise the history of Aboriginal communities being forbidden to speak their own language in schools.

Community members told us that unlike some Aboriginal communities where a local Aboriginal language was spoken widely and as a first language:

- ☞ For places along the mid-north coast and that for us, our grandparents and that weren't allowed to speak it at all.
- ☞ ... so, they weren't able to pass it onto our parents who were[not] able to pass it onto us.
- ☞ For me, you know, I think Gumbaynggirr people should learn it first and it should be only taught first, you know, and then it goes onto the next lot of people, because it was taken away from us. It was taken away from our Elders to pass onto us and it belongs to them and us. So, we should learn it first. It's a shame when you walk into a shop or something and a white fella talks in your language.

One **community member** explained the integration of Language and Culture, and community responsibility for Language and Culture:

- ☞ The Language is a link between the past, thousands of years ago to now, have to continue to participate in Aboriginal events – NAIDOC, knockouts, community events. It's our responsibility to live in a manner that gives meaning and identity as Aboriginal people, it's my responsibility as [an] individual. Language is a conveyer of story, songs, ceremonies from the beginning 'til now.

We heard it was important to remember this history when teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and that Gumbaynggirr communities should be taught as a priority. We heard:

- ☞ One of the things that's a challenge about this [establishing Nests], it is getting our people to learn to speak Language again....

Box 1 below provides an overview of Aboriginal Language and Culture in the context of Australian history.

Box 1 Regeneration of Aboriginal Language and Culture

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

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

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

2.2 Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Participants' views of **where**, **who** and **how** Language and Culture can be taught and learnt has implications for the implementation and improvements for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. Most **community participants** we listened to felt that the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was not implemented with community priorities in mind.

Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest relies upon:

- The program being allowed access to government schools and support from government school Principals.

- Availability of tutors to teach Gumbaynggirr Language.
- Tutors who meet the employment conditions of the NSW Department of Education.
- Local community interest in and support for the program.
- Some tutors are working for free to make sure students don't miss out on the chance to learn Gumbaynggirr. Some schools use school global funding to ensure classes happen.
- Muurrbay [Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative] as a major resource for providing language and culture support, education and training.
- Government can learn from existing community-based Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture programs.

In 2016 there were priorities to develop a community reference group and employ a Nest Coordinator or Project Officer. This would help with:

- Organising Nest reference group meetings.
- Coordinating the Cert III learning program. Muurrbay currently delivers programs for teachers and tutors to gain their Cert III; however, this takes time to complete.
- Coordinating teaching activities and developing learning resources.

2.2.1 Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture – who teaches, where and how is it taught?

We heard a range of different opinions about the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest model during conversations with community members and the co-design workshops.

The location of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest, how Gumbaynggirr Language was being taught, and who has access to learning are key issues. The impact of history and government bans on Aboriginal Languages has shaped how Aboriginal community members felt Gumbaynggirr Language could be taught and who should be taught Gumbaynggirr Language.

We also note that there appears to be no single best way for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures to be taught and one program is unlikely to meet everyone's needs.

Teaching and learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in government schools

There were different perspectives on the teaching of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture at government schools. Some participants feel that community-based programs are the culturally acceptable places for learning Aboriginal Language and Culture. Other participants feel that any access to Language and Culture at school is positive now, and for future generations. For example:

- Knowing that the kids are learning about themselves and where they have come from might help them understand what it is to be a First Australian.
- I suppose it would be good cause if no one talks and teaches it, it's gonna die off, hey. You don't hear no young fellas talking it that's for sure, hey, but someone's gotta pass it down or it's gonna get lost.
- The 'Nest' allows for community members to be trained and employed in retaining its information and bringing it forth to the next generation.

We also heard that if the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is in some schools, it should be in all schools.

- So, shouldn't the Nest be going out to all the schools and negotiating with them, each school, and talking to the Principals and negotiating with them about getting teachers in there?
- So, you're saying that the Nest might be doing this, but then it might be some of the Principals might be saying, 'No, we want it done this way', causing the barrier.

However, teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in schools raised the **question of who owns language** in government schools we were told:

- The question ... who owns the Language? So, if we teach this in schools, and I'm quite open with this, is that, yeah, we want everyone, whoever, to learn our Language, but when it comes to a government point of view in setting up these Nests, you know, I think their view is - correct me if I'm wrong - I think their view is that nobody owns the Language.
- It's not really a whole of community initiative if you're only targeting half the audience.

We heard from community members and stakeholders that:

- All Language and Culture programs should be led and facilitated by Aboriginal corporations at all times. This would ensure that Language learning is linked to Country and community which therefore ensures authenticity free from Eurocentric viewpoints/perspectives of our Language and Culture.

Some participants feel that the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is another example of government involving itself or controlling Aboriginal community business. One participant explained the issue of the Nest being located in a school was not the problem. The problem was the limitations of a school-based curriculum.

- I think it's the principle of who's been given the mandate to actually roll it out, so there's not an issue with Language being taught in schools.

It's more that at a Department level and the Department is dictating, that's what happens.

- When we look at school curriculums and all this western viewpoint of – this is how you get through a course – it actually limits the ability of a teacher to impart more Language on a kid, because they've got to fit within these strict guidelines.

For some people, despite the Gumbaynggirr Language 'getting out there' through the Nest, the way the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was established and operates is **seen as a form of government control**.

- It's just like every other thing that we try to do that is controlled by the government.
- It's taken away from us.
- I think that's very negative towards the Aboriginal people and they've taken everything else from us, taken our land off us and everything else, now they're taking over our language and using it where they want to use it.
- Okay probably it's a good thing that it's getting out there, but it should go through the right channels and not through **white** organisations and the Department of Education.

Is the Nest culturally respectful?

Aboriginal Community participants in this evaluation support traditional ways of learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in terms of who teaches Language, where it is taught and how it is organised. Some stakeholders from Aboriginal communities in the region, and outside school had mixed views about the success of the Nest and whether it is culturally respectful.

Parents of children involved in the Nest felt school was a good place for children to learn.

- Yes. It's good because most parents have not had the opportunity to teach their kids about language and culture. Knowing that the kids are learning about themselves and where they have come from might help them understand what it is to be a first Australian.
- I think it is an ideal opportunity for everyone to learn language.

Parents and community members also said

- I think it's great for children to learn their Language and Culture, but I think it **should be taught by the more traditional Elders** as opposed to being taught out of text books by tutors.

It is a way [it is a good thing] but **there is a need for options outside of government schools** to access language.

Another participant said

Yes and no [Nest is and isn't culturally respectful] I don't think its respectful when you put cultural stuff into a government department. Where is the respect there to the Aboriginal people in the community? Now they have given that government agency how to deliver it, implement it... all that information and resources... that's the communities' Language and Culture. They can't go into the school and access that information... How is that culturally acceptable?

One **stakeholder** explained that having the Nest in schools was a barrier:

The NSW Dept of Education is the barrier. The learning of our Language and Culture will never be successful when teaching and learning is approached from a western Eurocentric perspective.

Aboriginal Languages Act 2017

In the feedback session, there was some discussion about the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* and how this might be implemented. Some saw the Bill as supporting Aboriginal languages in schools. One said that currently:

It's up to the Principal to decide whether they want to participate or not [in the Nest]. I think that will change with the language Bill coming through.

And that Bill ...will give more clout to the argument [for supporting the Nest].

Another participant was more cautious about the possible impact.

I think we need to be very careful with the Languages Bill. I think that it is another way of government placing controls on language, actually, and I think it's a dangerous thing.

2.2.2 School stakeholders' views

We also heard from 10 **school stakeholders**. Six were involved with schools as either a Principal or teacher. School stakeholders highlighted the importance of school commitment and proper funding to ensuring the success of the Nest. They believed the program would be a success once it:

was sustainable and students were able to speak some of the Language.

One **school stakeholder** involved with the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest said:

☞ If schools don't want to implement Language, it will never work. Those schools that do are immediately impacted on by the lack of funding.

Among **school representatives** there was no consensus about whether the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was working as planned. Schools' experience of working together with Aboriginal communities varied.

We heard:

☞ As far as our school is concerned, we have been well-informed, and it has run as planned.

☞ Overall a fantastic initiative – that took a while to get off the ground.

One school was told:

☞ We have to have a Nest but had no real idea what it meant or who the spokesperson was.

☞ There was not enough information about 'who to talk to, how does it happen'.

Another **school representative** explained that their school (which does not participate in the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest):

☞ We have a long history of acknowledging the importance of Gumbaynggirr in our community. Gumbaynggirr is part of the fabric of our school. [Our school] has just gone about it in their own way. Lack of funding has meant that the [Gumbaynggirr] Language and Culture Nest was never going to work as it was set out. To be honest [school name] is self-sufficient in this matter.

One **stakeholder** said that to be successful there needed to be more secure teaching hours within the school. We heard that for classes to have some continuity it would be good to establish a resource for schools to access. For example,

☞ In a tutor's absence they could call up another language tutor and join their classroom digitally – this would stimulate the kids' learnings through chatting with other students throughout NSW in a virtual classroom.

One **school stakeholder** suggested it would be good to help tutors come together and share their resources and experiences. Resources could be physical; for example, objects (model of the human body), maps, and Language dictionaries. They could also be digital. We heard:

☞ Tutors should be given resources to teach language in the classroom.

- ☞ A base kit for teachers, AEOs [Aboriginal Education Officers], that include Indigenous movies, song books, Apps, charts training, and take-home kits for parents’.
- ☞ We need historical and cultural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander movies, music for song and dance, and language Apps.
- ☞ I would like to see Apps happening, with our own language so kids to be more engage in technical gadgets, they are more inclined to interact with Apps than a piece of paper.

2.3 Resources for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

We heard some discussion about Gumbaynggirr Language teacher qualifications and resources, and that State government commitment and support (resources and funding) was important. Resources, funding and training and support for tutors and teachers were central to improvements for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest.

At the **co-design workshop** we heard there needs to be a commitment of resources from NSW Government, as well as the schools participating, if the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is going to work. This commitment included: time, funds and support for students to participate in Nest.

- ☞ I don’t know how it works, but from the Department of Education, the AECG, there needs to be a mandate to these Principals about allocating funds in the school budget as well ...
- ☞ It needs to be mandated from the government to tell them that they need to put money aside to actually have this done. Because if they’re going to take it seriously, which they obviously aren’t, and they’re leaving it on the black fellas to do it, I think that that should be - AECG need to do something. So, does the department...

... Not only fund...

... But resources.

...They need to allocate time... they need to allocate time for these kids to learn their own language.

... and their culture...

We heard that one of the key tasks of the Nest is to develop teaching and learning resources. This should include developing:

- ☞ Language stories about the community and environment that kids are growing up in today.

Developing resources:

- Brings the community together [but we heard that]
- Teachers and tutors are not getting the time to spend together to develop [them].

2.3.1 Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest Tutors

Regarding teachers, in the **co-design workshop** we heard that participants wanted to know who decided that Gumbaynggirr Language tutors need to have a Cert III to be allowed to teach in schools. The Cert III requirement highlighted a tension between Western qualifications and cultural authority. Gumbaynggirr **community members** participating in the continuing conversation, felt there should be discussion and consultation to ensure appropriate people, with acknowledged cultural authority, are teaching Gumbaynggirr Language in Nests in schools. They noted the difference between Western qualifications and culturally-acceptable Aboriginal qualifications. This would also demonstrate more respect for local Elders.

We heard employment regulations can prevent Gumbaynggirr Elders and other people with Gumbaynggirr cultural authority in the community from being teachers. There needs to be different ways for Elders to be included in the Nest with more respect and recognition of their knowledge and standing in their community.

- I don't think Elders should have to put themselves through Cert III to prove they've got knowledge. But they can be maybe co-presenters.

One participant explained that classroom teachers also need to understand how the Language and Culture classes work. For example, NSW Department of Education guidelines require a qualified teacher in the classroom at all times. The classroom teacher must stay in the classroom when a tutor does not have that level of training. Not all classroom teachers understand their role with regard to Language tutors. This was explained to us in the feedback session.

- So, you've got to be a qualified teacher to be teaching in schools?
- Yes. But if you're teaching language, then you have a qualified teacher...in the room.

One participant wanted more support from the organisation running the Nests to find and train Gumbaynggirr Language and culture teachers:

- I was sort of saying the AECG need to back us as well and the language teachers and stuff ...
- [They need to] ask these organisations, our organisations and other organisations and say, '*well do you have some of these teachers [to] come and do this style of teaching?*'.

Continuity of classes is important for schools. However, school teachers need to be working in a culturally respectful way. We heard some criticism about who was running classes when Gumbaynggirr tutors were away.

- There are white teachers filling in on language classes with no understanding of our culture or language.
- We have young ones here correcting our Elders, telling them how to speak their language, more needs to be done to ensure they are teaching our lingo the right way, saying things the right way?

Participants also discussed the importance of training and flexibility for supporting Aboriginal teachers in learning Language in their community. We heard that some tutors volunteer their time to make sure all children have opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in schools. We heard

- [There are] more schools wanting teachers than there are teachers.

Tutors and teachers drive over extended geographic areas to do their work. In the co-design workshop we heard:

- Yeah, so [different tutor]'s running around the three schools, but only claiming for one.
- ... That's not fair...
- ... Or else them other two primary schools miss out and it doesn't look good.

We also heard that working conditions mean that tutors are not employed during school holidays and have to find other work during that time. Also, that tutor hours cannot properly cover all classes in all schools.

- We were told we can have up to 3-6 hours a week funded through the Nest, K-12. How do we cover all [age groups] in 3 hours a week?

In some school, Principals provide additional school funds to keep the Nest going.

- So, the three Principals, [Principal] did this, I've got a lot of time for these three Principals. They've made a lot of difference [here]. I would not have worked at [school location] ... but I'm back for history. It's changed. I'm telling you, it's changed. It's changed a lot. It's so good.

2.4 Communication with Gumbaynggirr communities and information about the Nest

We heard that the Aboriginal communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca, had limited information and knowledge of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest.

Community members and participants in this evaluation who knew about the Nest said they found out about it through direct involvement with the school or *OCHRE*. Some people had children who were in Gumbaynggirr Language classes or had missed out on being in a Gumbaynggirr Language class. Some people knew about the Nest because they were part of an Aboriginal organisation that conducted Aboriginal language and cultural training in the community.

During the **co-design workshop**, we heard that community members had not received much information about how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was set up or managed.

There is an expectation from Government that communities will support the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest – because it is ‘for them’. However, some Aboriginal community members told us they had not had any input into how it was run or structured.

We heard that instead of placing expectations on Aboriginal communities, senior government decision-makers need to work together to support the program through policies and decisions across State Government departments. State departments also need to work with Aboriginal communities. In the co-design workshop we heard:

... I would like to put up another recommendation, is that those ministers, our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Education, they need to come together ...

Why should we have to go in and bat at a local level with our schools when those two up there should be having the conversations and coming down?

They make the policies and the decisions, so they need to have those conversations.

Another speaker responded:

But even have them [government representatives] come up here and have a conversation with communities...

... with us.

We were told that many people would like more information about the Nest and what happens in schools:

I have heard about it, I'd like to know more in detail what the Nest role is within the schools. Conversations between government and the different Aboriginal community organisations could support better understanding of the Nest.

Yes, I am aware of the Nest, but I feel they are not widely advertised.

Participants felt that access to the Nest, and more information about it, would help their understanding of what was happening in the classroom, and that would be positive.

As we learn our way, we have a better understanding of what our children are learning and have a better relationship with them through our culture.

2.5 Early impacts and success of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Although it is too soon to see broad **impacts** of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, **school stakeholders** told us there were:

Some indicators at our school that Aboriginal students are more comfortable speaking in language in assembly.

The aim of the Nest is to support young Aboriginal people's cultural identity and support self-esteem through Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. However, some Aboriginal participants had concerns that while they supported the teaching and learning of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture young Aboriginal people had broader needs. One participant said about the Nest.

It is a good way to expand the general knowledge of all students but doesn't address the specific needs of Aboriginal students.

We learned from the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest NSW AECG Inc. meeting minutes that teachers and tutors at the Nest, report that Aboriginal students (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b):

Are clearly becoming very involved in their lessons, they ask more questions and generally show high levels of participation in their learning.

Show a real sense of pride in their Gumbaynggirr classes – when you do language, they often know some of it already and they spark and lighten up when they hear it in the classroom.

The minutes also noted that the implementation of the Nest has seen:

Increases in relearning of Language across Gumbaynggirr Country.
There is real passion and growing confidence within the tutors as they learn Language.

These minutes also explained that in 2016, teaching Gumbaynggirr in Stage 1 was identified as a priority in the Nest, but this could be delivered to anyone who had not learned Language before (so could be delivered in other Stages). NSW AECG inc.

recognises that the Nest needs to be delivered across the different stages of schools; however, this relies on having enough tutors with enough Language to do so.

... at some schools, tutors and teachers are only able to manage teaching language across one stage of learning (i.e. Stage 1) (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b).

2.6 How can the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest be improved?

Aboriginal **community members** and participants in the evaluation are positive about the teaching and learning of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture being taught. Areas where the Nest can be improved are through who has access to classes, and if the community had any input or control of the classes.

Improvements

- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should be Aboriginal community-controlled and less constrained by government processes. Needs to be culturally relevant and respectful to Gumbaynggirr Elders and Gumbaynggirr community.
- Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communication about how the Nest operates, including the structure of the Nest. Community members need to know more about the Nest and what is happening to ensure they can be a part of the process.
- Access to classes for **all students** with opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture prioritised for young Aboriginal people. Including access for smaller schools and towns.
- Access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture needs to be available across communities – not just in some schools and in some classes, and not only for young people.
- Adequate resources and funding should be given to the Nests, including support (mentoring), training and job security for Gumbaynggirr Language tutors and support for ongoing language development. An increased budget would schools ensure classes happen.
- Increased number of classes - one class a week is not enough to learn a language.
- Improved communication between schools and teachers with Nest teachers and tutors.
- A register of replacement Gumbaynggirr Language tutors for schools would help to provide students with a continuous program.

2.6.1 Community-control of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture

Parents, community members and other stakeholders told us the way the Nest was planned and implemented was unclear. We heard there needed to be better communication with parents and communities in the development and implementation of the Nest. For the Nest to be community informed and controlled means that there needs to be ongoing relationships between members of the Aboriginal communities, schools and the NSW Department of Education.

Parent participants who supported the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest in local schools said the classes should be expanded, and traditional ways of teaching used. They also said there needs to be input from Gumbaynggirr Elders and Gumbaynggirr community members.

I think any way our children can learn Language and Culture is great. More qualified Gumbaynggirr tutors would be a great asset and doing some traditional on Country teaching would be great with more community input, Elders coming into schools as well.

We heard that **community members** want more control over how the Gumbaynggirr Language is being taught and learnt.

I don't see us truly controlling our language when the Department [of Education] still dictates how we work. When it's sitting there, and we've got to tick the department's boxes off. 'Oh - we've done this in the curriculum, we got the kids to create these new words'.

They're reading and writing, I mean reading and writing? Our kids are getting assessed on how they spell their language ... That's ridiculous. I say to the kids don't worry about your spelling, I just want to hear you

2.6.2 Valuing existing Aboriginal Community Language and Culture programs

The intention of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest model is for communities to develop and operate the Nests how they see fit. Nest Reference Groups are established to support this. We heard how the Nest benefits from working with local and existing Gumbaynggirr Language providers. For example, we heard from the Murrumbidgee CEO that they had been working alongside the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest to provide teachers and develop resources.

There are already several existing Community based language and culture programs. Murrumbidgee was established in 1986 and expanded in 2004 and is registered as a training organisation for certificates in Gumbaynggirr Language and cultural maintenance.³ Bularri Murrumbidgee Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC)

³Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative
<http://murrumbidgee.org.au/about-us/> Accessed May 25, 2018

based in Coffs Harbour also provides cultural programs for Aboriginal youth at three after school learning centres, supported by the Commonwealth Government's PaCE initiative⁴ – this includes Gumbaynggirr Language Revitalisation Programs and cultural camps. The Yarrawarra Cultural Centre based in Corindi Beach, also provides cultural programs in the area and houses the Jalumbo Keeping Place – a collection created through the Jalumbo Cultural Heritage Research Unit established by the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation.⁵

One **community member** suggested that rather than setting up the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest, it would be better to fund Aboriginal community organisations already teaching Gumbaynggirr Language in the region. With increased funding these organisations could extend their programs – this would also enable the program to reach Independent schools and not only government schools.

So, if all that money instead of being in the Department [of Education], were given to Muurrbay Language Centre for example, that means it's an Aboriginal community organisation that's taken the language forward.

... we don't have limitations on which schools we can teach at. We can teach in Independent schools, whereas the Nest they can't. They kind of hinder their own program with their rules.

One participant said that the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest could learn from other successful Aboriginal community-run programs.

Have a look... You know that's what the government should be looking at, because they come and ask that question, all we can do is say look here, have a look at these organisations, how they're going about it.

2.6.3 Access to the Nest

Several people said it was important to teach Gumbaynggirr Language outside government schools and make it more widely accessible. We heard language and culture needs to start from the community and go into schools.

... if it is in community and based here, it starts the driving force that can then emanate out to the schools. It should be in community first then in schools.

Well, again in the school only certain age groups are taught it [Gumbaynggirr Language] and then they don't teach it the old way where we sit down and talk, they made it all white.

⁴ Full program title: Children and Schooling - Indigenous Education Targeted Assistance, Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE)

⁵ See <https://www.yarrawarra.com.au/jalumbo-research-centre-museum>

Family and community members and young people in non-government schools also want access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. While Nests are:

- ☞ [a good thing] there is a need for options outside of government schools to access language.
- ☞ ...community-based learning and if they have the opportunity to access the Nest, if they have the means to learn their own language, they may only have access in their own area. You gotta think about Elders, and transport issues, they should be given the opportunity to tap into the LCN [Nest].
- ☞ Yes, I think it's good for all children to learn in schools, but **older people need access** and the community. So, everyone can talk to each other in Gumbaynggirr.

Community members said there was a 'need for parents and grandparents to learn language as well as children' (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b). Participants in towns without access to a Nest wanted Aboriginal Language Hubs closer to home.

- ☞ One person said community access 'should be compulsory':
- ☞ Yes, if I was more informed when events are on and if [an] event could be available out my way sometimes, that would be nice to see. I would really like to be more involved.

At the NSW AECG Inc. meeting one stakeholder explained:

I think the parents and the wider community should be involved because if my children are learning this at school and want to discuss it at home, I feel like I'm left out of the loop and unable to support and encourage them to succeed if I don't have access to the same information (NSW AECG Inc., 2016).

In terms of non-Aboriginal people learning Gumbaynggirr Language, we heard that this was seen by some **community members** as a positive thing:

- ☞ Many non-Aboriginal people are also getting involved in Gumbaynggirr Language learning and this is big for building mutual understandings.

3 Discussion and recommendations

Communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca have strong views about the teaching and learning of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in the region. These views are part of a robust and ongoing discussion in the Gumbaynggirr Nation and other Aboriginal communities in NSW about the best ways to maintain and revive language and culture.

There is some disagreement in the communities about how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was developed and is delivered. However, there appears to be no single best way for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures to be taught and one program is unlikely to meet everyone's needs. The implementation of the Nest, and the evaluation, have highlighted these tensions but have also provided the opportunity for the Gumbaynggirr communities to work through some of the issues. There is recognition in the communities that it will take time for the Gumbaynggirr Nation to recover from the history of colonisation and language deprivation, and that the Nest is part of this process – but only one component of the bigger picture of language and culture recovery.

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is highly valued. On the one hand people, told us it is good that there are opportunities for young people to learn Language and Culture at school. The young people involved in the Nest also valued their involvement and the contribution of the Nest to their sense of identity and community. On the other hand, some people in the community feel that placing the Nest in schools takes away ownership of Language and Culture from the Gumbaynggirr peoples. Nests located in schools operated according to Department of Education rules that impose a 'white' framework on the teaching and learning of Aboriginal Languages and Cultures

The broader Gumbaynggirr community would like more input and greater access to the resources of the Nest.

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

3.1.1 What is working well?

Views from students, members of community, and stakeholders varied.

Many community members and parents were positive about opportunities for young Aboriginal people and thought it was good they could learn at school. Students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) involved in learning Gumbaynggirr language at school enjoyed classes. Most wanted more time to learn Gumbaynggirr Language

and Culture and valued what they were learning. Students who were not learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture at school would like the opportunity to do so.

School Stakeholders with classes from the Nest were enthusiastic about the quality of the tutors and the classes. Views about what was working well were mixed. Tutors are increasing their own skills and confidence in teaching Gumbaynggirr Language. Tutors, teachers and students were learning through their involvement with the Nest.

Some community members and some other stakeholders said there needed to be more conversations between the Nest and broader Aboriginal communities.

3.1.2 What could be improved?

We heard several ways that the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest can be improved:

- The Nest could be more accessible across the community – not just in some public schools and not only for young people.
- The community could be more involved in deciding how the Nest works. It could be more respectful to Elders and have more community control and input, using traditional ways of teaching and learning Language and Culture (outside the classroom).
- The Nest could work better without the constraints of working in schools – teaching in schools relies on having the Principal's agreement to participate in the Nest, relies on meeting the Department of Education's conditions of employment, and follows a 'white way' of teaching.
- The Nest could be better resourced and funded, including staff support, training and job security – this includes teachers training within the community and support for ongoing language development.
- Governance and accountability structures need to be clearer so that community members and other stakeholders can be clear about how decisions are made and where authority lies for decisions about the development of the Nest and the use of its resources. These should be transparent to community members as well as other stakeholders. The roles of different government departments and other organisations such as NSW AECG Inc. need to be documented clearly.

A report commissioned by NSW AECG Inc. emphasises the need for a strong partnership between a school and local Aboriginal communities.

To successfully implement and sustain a local NSW Aboriginal language/culture programme within a NSW public school there must be in place a strong working partnership between a school and its local Aboriginal community. Partnerships between schools and Aboriginal communities, however, are often difficult to maintain if school staff are not aware of the

following issues, which not only exist within many NSW Aboriginal communities, but also cause deep tensions within these communities:

- Culture – opposing interpretations of:
 - the exact geographic boundaries of Country
 - the content of knowledge stories of Country
 - the identification of spirit ancestors of Country
 - the identification and gender specificity of spirit sites of Country
 - foundational law/lore of Country
 - cultural imaging of Country
 - Kinship structures of Country
 - Language – opposing interpretations of:
 - cultural origin of words
 - meaning of words
 - pronunciation of words
 - spelling of words
 - gender specificity of words
 - construction and phraseology (Williams, 2013: 9).

3.2 Do outcomes continue to reflect what the community wants to achieve?

Aboriginal communities in the Gumbaynggirr region would like to see:

- Local Aboriginal people speaking local Aboriginal Language.
- Increased community access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture classes, including ‘on Country’.
- People with cultural authority teaching Language and with job security, and a Nest that is properly funded, resourced and community-controlled.

The Nest is beginning to acknowledge and reflect these views and this evaluation has identified some ways it can be improved.

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest has encouraged students, families and teachers to learn Gumbaynggirr language and to speak it, although there is a long way to go before a substantial part of the community can speak and understand Gumbaynggirr language.

We heard that the evaluation has helped increased knowledge about the Nest in the local community. People are talking about the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest and are looking for more local community ownership. The original community consultation leading to the development of *OCHRE* was some time ago; while the Task Force consultation was wide-reaching, and most of the people we listened to did not appear to be involved in subsequent consultation or the development of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest.

There is opportunity to re-engage the community in the ongoing development and implementation of the Nest.

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

3.3 Are OCHRE policies and practices responding to evidence?

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

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

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

- (a) The language of the first peoples of the land comprising New South Wales are an integral part of the world's oldest living culture and connect Aboriginal people to each other and to their land;
- (b) As a result of past Government decisions Aboriginal languages were almost lost, but they were spoken in secret and passed on through Aboriginal families and communities;
- (c) Aboriginal people will be reconnected with their culture and heritage by the reawakening, growing and nurturing of Aboriginal languages;
- (d) Aboriginal languages are part of the cultural heritage in New South Wales; and
- (e) It is acknowledged that Aboriginal people are the custodians of Aboriginal languages and have the right to control their growth and nurturing (Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, 18 October 2017: 59-77).

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

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

The Legislation will be supported by \$2m in new funding through a revised agreement with NSW AECG Inc. to provide support and capacity building services through to 2019. This will include two new satellite Nests, located in Moree and Kempsey areas (Gamilaroi and Dhungutti), and will support Nest governance structures to enhance community decision making, explore the use of digital technology to create teaching resources, and increase the number of Aboriginal Language teachers.

3.4 Recommendations

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

Themes	Recommendations
Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nests (the Nest)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation should begin with developing relationships and learning from existing programs that teach Aboriginal Languages and Culture run by Aboriginal organisations. • Aboriginal organisations should be funded to do Language and Culture work in the community and then go into schools. • Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communications about how the Nest will operate and the governance structure of the Nest. • Ensure staff consistency during the implementation stage. • Policy decision-makers (in the Department of Education and Aboriginal Affairs NSW) come together to prioritise and support teaching Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in schools – and not rely on local Aboriginal peoples to fight for inclusion. • Aboriginal Community members and school stakeholders would like more information about the Nest, how it is organised, how decisions are made and how the Nest operates in schools. Including opportunities for ongoing communication with and input from members of Aboriginal communities.

Themes	Recommendations
Aboriginal cultural conflicts with the appropriateness of locating an Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest in NSW School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include mechanisms to ensure that Gumbaynggirr peoples and community members should have more input into the design and management of the Nest. • Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal traditional ways of teaching and learning - focus on oral not a written language. • Build cultural respect and cultural acceptability of Nest programs through greater inclusion of Gumbaynggirr Elders into content and teaching.
NSW Government support for existing Aboriginal organisations to provide activities and content for the Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Government to provide more resources and funding to existing Aboriginal organisations that include Muurrbay and Yarrawarra Cultural Centre.
Access to the Nest is not available for all Aboriginal people in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal peoples in the region. • The broader Gumbaynggirr community should be able to access resources and classes provided. Classes should be available across all schools and all years, not only for some children in some government schools. • There need to be improved pathways for members of Aboriginal communities to learn Language and Culture and continue to build knowledge.
More Aboriginal community input into Nest programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gumbaynggirr communities would like more input into the classes including ensuring Aboriginal methods of learning and teaching are the priority and that Gumbaynggirr teachers should be approved by Gumbaynggirr communities. • Reference group could include more community members, including those from different organisations and hold their meetings across the Nest region.
Adequate and sustainable resourcing of the Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nest is currently under-resourced and need an increased budget so that schools do not have to use their funding to ensure Nest classes operate. This would ensure secure teaching hours. • The Nest needs to be better resourced and funded including staff support, training and job security. This includes teacher training WITHIN the community and support for ongoing Gumbaynggirr language development.

Themes	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More learning and teaching resources, training and support for Gumbaynggirr teachers – including support for Gumbaynggirr Elders to be allowed into schools to teach. • Schools need to be able to access other Gumbaynggirr Tutors to ensure Gumbaynggirr Language classes have stability. Ideally Tutors would be on continuing contracts rather than being casual employees.
Number of Language classes available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be an increased number of classes offered- The current class once a week is not enough to learn language. • Schools should be resourced to receive more than 3 hours of Aboriginal Language teaching each week. • Aboriginal Language teaching should be part of the core curriculum not an added extra. • Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture should be part of the pre-school curriculum.
Education and training of Nest Teachers and tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be supported professional education and training to develop tutors and to increase the number of Gumbaynggirr language teachers. • Increased funding and support for developing Gumbaynggirr Language teachers' knowledge and capacity, including professional development. • Nest Tutors and Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) should have a resource kit. • Nest Tutors should be encouraged to share their resources, experiences, and have access to peer support.
Need for improved communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the communications between teachers, tutors and schools. • Improve communications between the Nest and Aboriginal communities.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the governance structures, decision making processes and accountability mechanisms, and processes of the Nest including the roles of the Steering Group, NSW Department of Education, NSW AECG Inc. and Aboriginal Affairs NSW. There needs to be a program protocol which sets out in detail the structures and processes for governing the Nest.

4 Future focus – next steps

4.1 Stage 1 of the *OCHRE* Evaluation

This is community-controlled research. We have listened to feedback on the draft report and made changes requested, without compromising the independent findings of the report.

This is the final report for Stage 1 of the *OCHRE* Evaluation for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. This report has been accepted by members of Aboriginal communities involved in the evaluation. The report will be provided to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (on 30 June 2018) and will then be presented formally to the Minister on 15 August 2018.

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

4.2 Direction of next conversations – Stage 2

There are two more stages to the evaluation:

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

Based on the conversations to date (including co-design), we propose the next conversations will include and discuss continuity of Language classes over time (for example, looking at data about participation) and the community-control and access to the Nest.

Part B:

About the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

5 *OCHRE* Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

5.1 About *OCHRE*

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

OCHRE includes several different programs and supports:

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

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

The aims of *OCHRE* are to:

- Teach more Aboriginal Language and Culture to build people's pride and identity.

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

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

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

As stated above, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are an initiative designed to revitalise and maintain NSW Aboriginal languages as an integral part of culture and identity. '*OCHRE* recognises Aboriginal languages and cultures as a unique component of Australia's heritage. It is a fundamental element of Aboriginal culture which reaffirms Aboriginal identity, spirituality and connection to Country'.⁶

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

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

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are designed to **provide a continuous learning pathway for Aboriginal students**. The language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal Language and Culture holders and speakers from local Aboriginal communities are critical to the continuing

⁶ See Aboriginal language programs in schools, <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec/language-culture-and-communities>
Accessed 23 May 2018

development and support of teaching and learning in the Nests. (emphasis added)⁷

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are funded by the NSW Government Department of Education, with their implementation being supported by the NSW AECG Inc..

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

The Ministerial Taskforce recommended that Nests be trialled in a location in five language groups: Wiradjuri, Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung, Paarkintji/Barkindji and Gamilaraay/Yuwaalawaay/Yuwaalayaay. This has recently been extended by the Aboriginal Languages Bill (Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, 18 October 2017: 59-77); during which the NSW Government announced two satellite Nests in the Moree and Kempsey areas (Gamilaroi and Dhungutti), as well as additional funding.

5.3 How Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were established

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

5.3.1 Selection of sites

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

- The number of local Aboriginal language speakers.
- The availability of local Aboriginal language teachers.
- The availability of local Aboriginal language resources.
- The level of commitment and activity around Aboriginal language revitalisation within local schools.

⁷See, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/policy-reform/language-and-culture/nests> Accessed 23 May 2018.

- The proximity to the resources, infrastructure and support available through local communities and regional NSW AECG Inc. networks, TAFEs, universities and schools (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2013: 20).

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

5.3.2 Funding and tender process

There are two elements to funding of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. Aboriginal language teachers and tutors are funded via a host school through a five-year government commitment. A separate contract was established for the development of Keeping Places associated with the Nests and community reference groups.

The Request for Tender was published 10 March 2015 inviting suppliers to tender for the development of five Aboriginal Keeping Places in partnership with five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in Dubbo, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Wilcannia and Lightning Ridge. The tender was only open to small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and non-profit organisations. No tenders met the selection criteria and therefore no tender was awarded. The Department of Education then negotiated directly with NSW AECG Inc. for Keeping Place services in April 2015⁸, with a contract currently in place until December 2019. Under the contract, NSW AECG Inc. are required to:

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

⁸ Note, in minutes for the Gumbaynggirr Nest, AECG noted that the contract was finalised in two months prior to July 2016.

- Support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups to facilitate the provision of Aboriginal Language tutors.
- Support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Reference Groups to ensure a range of Aboriginal language learning opportunities are accessible in each Nest.
- Work with Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in the development and publishing of materials that support the teaching of Aboriginal languages.⁹

There is concern about the short-term nature of funding for Aboriginal Language and Cultural education and calls for a 'long-term commitment from government and schools to support the [Aboriginal] Language [and Culture] Nests' (NSW AECG Inc., 2016b). The passage of the Aboriginal Languages Bill through the Legislative Assembly in 2017 may address this concern (Parliament of NSW, 18 October 2017: 59-77).

5.3.3 Consultation with the community

As described in Section 6.1 above, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are one of several initiatives that arose from the consultation with Aboriginal Communities by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs. Conversations with over 2,700 Aboriginal people in NSW identified Aboriginal Language and Culture, education and employment, and accountability as priorities for Aboriginal communities.

For each Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest, a formal agreement was signed by the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Local and Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (NSW AECG Inc.), as well as representatives from communities, TAFE, relevant universities and schools. The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest's Vision and Commitment Statement for Gumbaynggirr was signed on 19 February 2014, which was followed by an incremental implementation of activities.

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

5.3.4 How Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests work

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

⁹ Source: Correspondence with the Department of Education.

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

Formal guidelines covering how the Nests work will be formally released in 2018.¹⁰ NSW Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests have been implemented differently (in terms of structure and composition) in each area.

5.3.5 Governance of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

The NSW Department of Education, Aboriginal Education and Communities (AEC) is leading the implementation of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in partnership with NSW AECG Inc. and local Aboriginal language and community groups. The Department identified three key features of governance:

- 'A state-wide Steering Committee, consisting of AEC and [NSW] AECG [Inc.] representatives
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW, conducting monitoring and evaluation
- Local Nest Reference Groups, with an elected chair.'¹¹

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

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

- 'Develop local engagement with and input into Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
- Ascertain local priorities for the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
- Facilitate coordination and development of local Language and Culture resources and processes for recovering, revoicing and re practising Aboriginal Language and Culture.

¹⁰ Source: Correspondence with the Department of Education

¹¹ Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

- Facilitate data collection and ongoing evaluation/performance measurements processes'.¹²

5.3.6 Monitoring, evaluating and reporting

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

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

The measures were developed by NSW Department of Education. Regular progress reports are provided by the State NSW AECG Inc. to the Department. The figures are then reported by Aboriginal Affairs NSW in annual *OCHRE* reports¹³, as well as in annual reports of the Department of Education. In the *OCHRE* Four Years On report, Monitoring Data from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 showed an increase from 60-67 schools (pre-school, primary and secondary) participating in the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, and an increase from 5,166 to 6,379 students participating (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2017: 29).

¹² Source: Correspondence with Department of Education.

¹³ Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *OCHRE* Annual Reports available at:

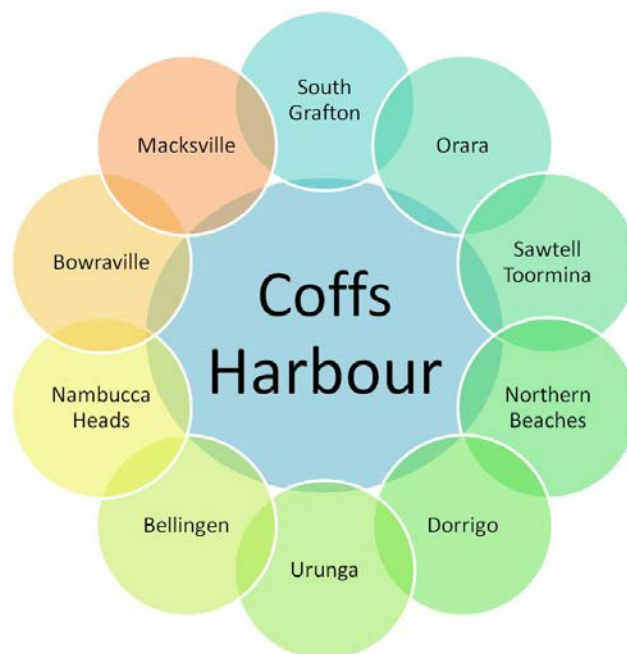
<https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/our-agency/staying-accountable/ochre/ochre-annual-reports>
Accessed May 23, 2018

6 Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was launched on 19 February 2014. The Nest covers public schools in the communities of Coffs Harbour, South Grafton, Macksville, Orara, Nambucca Valley, Sawtell, Toormina, Northern Beaches, Dorrigo, Urunga, Bellingen, and Bowraville.

Figure 2 Communities in the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest



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

6.1 A profile of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest community

A *Community Portrait for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest* has been prepared by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, including the most recent 2016 Census data (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2018). This provides an overview of the local population, households, income, education (participation in school by age), and disability for the area within the Nest. Just under 6% of residents within the Nest area identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Of the 9,304 Aboriginal residents, 11% (1,038) are under five years old, 17% (1,624) aged between 5-11, and 13% (1,240) aged 12-17. Some 2,784 Aboriginal children and young people attend schools (302 in pre-school, 1,519 in primary school, and 963 in high school).

6.2 Aboriginal Language in schools prior to the Nest

The Gumbaynggirr Language area has very strong existing community Language and Cultural programs; for example, the Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative (funded by the Australian Government), and the Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation and the Yarrowarra Cultural Centre. A Gumbaynggirr language dictionary is available.

A scope and sequence (used by teachers to guide their teaching of a subject) was available for the Gumbaynggirr Language (revised by then BOSTES in 2013) prior to the implementation of the Nest. Records also show that Aboriginal Language was already being taught at Stage 1 (12 schools), Stage 2 (10 schools), Stage 3 (6 schools), Stage 4 (4 schools) and Stage 5 (2 schools) – but it is not clear in what context or how Language was taught.¹⁴ Figures from the Aboriginal Language Program Evaluation (2013) show that 552 primary, 366 secondary and 170 Central students were learning Gumbaynggirr in Schools in 2013. At that time, 20 tutors already had Certificate III qualification.

6.3 How is the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest organised?

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

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is based at **William Bayldon Primary School** in Coffs Harbour. The Nest teacher has been employed since 2014; Gumbaynggirr also has **23 Language tutors** (at the time of reporting). A temporary **Keeping Place** was established in August 2014 at the **Coffs Harbour Education Campus**.

Under the NSW public school reform, *Local Schools, Local Decisions*, Principals of government schools decide whether they will participate in Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. Parents may encourage Principals to provide Language programs in schools, often through their input to the School's three-year plan. The Nest is not the only source of Language and Culture in schools, and students' Language and Culture needs can be met without participation in the Nest. For example, three schools receive funding for other Language programs, and seven schools receive Language programs from the Nest and through other Department funding arrangements. The Department provides other programs, including Health Culture, Healthy Country with NSW AECG Inc.; STEM camps with NSW AECG Inc. and the

¹⁴ Information source: AEC, provided to the evaluation team by Aboriginal Affairs NSW (Gumbaynggirr profile).

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

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

In the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest, funds were devoted to the development of teaching materials and programs to ensure high quality Aboriginal language delivery across the different tutors and schools in the Nest.¹⁵

6.4 How is the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest being used?

6.4.1 Schools participating in the Nest

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest, at the time of reporting, teaches Language in 12 Primary Schools and four Secondary schools (Table 1) out of 61 Primary Schools, 13 Secondary Schools, 1 K-12 School and 4 other Government Schools in the area.

Table 1 Schools participating in the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Primary Schools (Local Government Area)	Secondary Schools (Local Government Area)
Baryulgil (Clarence Valley)	Macksville (Nambucca)
Bellingen (Bellingen)	Nambucca Heads (Nambucca)
Boambee (Coffs Harbour)	Toormina (Coffs Harbour)
Coffs Harbour (Coffs Harbour)	Woolgoola High (Coffs Harbour)
Dundarrabin (Bellingen)	
Frank Partridge VC (Nambucca)	
Macksville (Nambucca)	
Nambucca Heads (Nambucca)	
Nymboida (Clarence Valley)	
Tyalla (Coffs Harbour)	
Urunga (Bellingen)	
William Bayldon (Coffs)	

(Source: Aboriginal Affairs NSW)

6.4.2 Students participating in the Nest

The number of students participating, and the way they participate, varies by school and by school Year. As mentioned above, this may also be determined by the School Principal. The data available to the evaluation is limited to the schools in the

¹⁵ Source: Correspondence with the Department of Education.

Nest and the hours worked by the tutors. In 2014, 3,085 tutor hours were provided under the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest, this was maintained in 2015 and dropped to 2,026 in 2016 (data provided by Aboriginal Affairs NSW).¹⁶

This reflects a community decision to not endorse non-Aboriginal people to teach in Nest schools. The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Teacher worked with Elders to identify and endorse Aboriginal tutors, hence the drop in numbers.¹⁷

In 2017, data started to be collected based on the number of hours worked by tutor, by school and Year. However, no data is available from previous years to make any comparison or assumptions.¹⁸

6.4.3 Continuity of Language for students

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

¹⁶ The way data is collected and is reported changed from monthly to quarterly in 2016.

¹⁷ Correspondence with NSW Department of Education.

¹⁸ Correspondence with NSW Department of Education.

7 About the conversations

7.1 Who did we have conversations with?

Michael Barnes and six Community Researchers (two from Coffs, Grafton and Nambucca) had conversations in communities between 16 October and mid-November 2017. The online survey, which replicated the conversation guide, was left open until end of January 2018 to ensure more people could tell us what they think.

- Community researchers yarned with 87 community members, including 25 students, 57 parents and community members, and 5 non-government stakeholders.
- Michael Barnes had conversations with 15 stakeholders directly involved with the Nest including tutors, representatives from Aboriginal organisations, including the Local Aboriginal Land Council and two school Principals.
- In addition, 9 parents/community members and 3 students completed the online survey.
- Of the parents we heard from, 13 parents had a young person learning Gumbaynggirr Language at school, 53 did not.
- Of the students we heard from, 15 were learning Gumbaynggirr Language at school, 13 were not.
- SPRC evaluation team held a Co-design workshop and also interviewed government policy staff.

7.2 What information did we collect?

The evaluation team collected different sorts of information and we recorded:

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

Together, this gives us the most up-to-date information about the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest.

7.3 How did we come up with these findings?

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

7.4 Checking and confirming findings

SPRC evaluation team returned to communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca to meet with participants involved in the evaluation (5-6 April 2018). In these meetings we checked with community participants that our findings and recommendations reflect what they told us. This draft report was circulated prior to meeting. Feedback from the evaluation and co-design meetings are incorporated into the final report. In the feedback meeting members of Aboriginal communities had the opportunity to tell us if we have misunderstood anything, if they agree with what we have written, and to make clear our recommendations.

8 References

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Appendix A Summary of report validation process

Date	Action	Comments
30 March 2018	Draft report and draft summary sent to Gumbaynggirr	N/A.
5-6 April 2018	Draft presented to communities	The findings were presented to communities in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.
May/June 2018	Revision to report (content)	Updated to reflect community feedback.
May/June 2018	Revision to report (format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of validation page • Addition of a one-page table summarising finding • Addition of one page prior to summary about what is community-controlled research. • Addition to summary of what the <i>OCHRE</i> program is • Change of recommendations in the summary to table form • Change of format to quotes from participants into orange highlight and call out sign • Other minor changes to identify who is speaking (bolding of community members and students, parents and carers) • Small editing to reduce repetition and ensure consistency within the report and across the reports
13 June 2018	Report sent for confirmation	Purpose to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm changes requested at community meetings • Approval for report to be published
21 June 2018	Feedback from community members involved with the evaluation	Correction of satellite Nest languages.
28 June 2018	Approval for publication	
30 June 2018	Report to Aboriginal Affairs NSW	
15 August 2018	Presentation to the Minister	

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