



NSW ABORIGINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

In 2007, a class of third year Social Science and Social Science (Criminology) students from the University of New South Wales conducted research in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC).

The purpose of the research was to ascertain whether shared responsibility agreements (SRA's) facilitated the goals of the AJAC's Aboriginal Justice Plan (AJP).

The AJAC acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the students and teacher, Leanne Weber, in bringing this research project into fruition. Without their involvement this project would not have been possible.

The research project is important as both the AJP and SRA's offer ways of overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage. SRA's are offered on a national basis, and whilst the AJP is NSW specific, the sentiments expressed are applicable nationwide.

The AJP affirms the government's commitment to addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system, and SRA's adopt a whole of government approach towards addressing Aboriginal disadvantage by offering funding to service programs etc.

The AJP is a ten-year plan that commenced in 2004. The AJP is the only one of its kind in NSW and prides itself on being community developed, consulted, negotiated and endorsed.

This research project provides recommendations to improve the delivery of SRAs as well as operational procedures.



Shared Responsibility Agreements and the NSW Aboriginal Justice Plan

From July to November 2007, a group of third year Bachelor of Social Science and Bachelor of Social Science (Criminology) students at the University of New South Wales undertook a research project in collaboration with the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, supervised by Dr. Leanne Weber (l.weber@unsw.edu.au). This summary report gives a brief overview of their aims, methods and recommendations.

Study aims:

The broad aim of the project was to assess the potential for existing Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) to assist in meeting the goals of the NSW Aboriginal Justice Plan (AJP)

Background to this study

The Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC) in NSW has developed an Aboriginal Justice Plan (AJP) intended to address the underlying causes of Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system. The goals of the 10-year plan are:

- To reduce the number of Aboriginal people coming into contact with the criminal justice system as offenders, victims or affected community members.
- To improve the quality of services for Aboriginal people and ensure they are responsive to their needs.
- To enable Aboriginal people to work together to improve safety in their own communities.

In 2006, another group of social science and criminology students had completed a study into SRAs for their third year project. SRAs require Aboriginal communities to agree to make behavioural changes in return for federal funding for community projects. After examining documentation about SRAs, arranging a briefing from the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC), and interviewing key Indigenous commentators, the students concluded that SRAs were problematic because they were applied only to Aboriginal people; were arguably used to fund essential services; required behavioural changes which were often unrelated to the services provided; and were negotiated in a context where Indigenous communities may not have sufficient legal or political representation. Nevertheless, SRAs were one of the few remaining sources of federal funding for Indigenous programs. The AJAC was

therefore interested in assessing the potential for SRAs to contribute to achieving the goals of the AJP.

Methods:

The class decided to split into five groups corresponding to five of the strategic directions in the AJP, namely:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- Criminal justice system
- Community wellbeing
- Leadership
- Economic development

All groups contributed to a mapping process, whereby existing SRA agreements listed on the OIPC website were classified and sorted according to these five themes, and also with reference to the six administrative areas recognised by the AJAC, namely:

- Sydney Metro
- Murdi Paaki
- Many Rivers
- Binaal Billa
- South Coast
- Kamilaroi

This mapping process revealed that SRAs were clustered in particular geographical areas, and were less likely to address the more strategic aims of the AJP, such as fostering leadership and economic development. The findings from this mapping process are attached as an appendix to this report.

In addition, each group developed their own specific research questions and methods which generally consisted of speaking with several key informants selected because they had some knowledge or experience of the operation of SRAs, and gathering whatever additional information they could find about their chosen theme. Interviewees included local council members, Aboriginal community representatives, and academics.

It proved difficult to access members of Indigenous communities, so the research should not be interpreted as a community consultation. Equally, it was not possible to conduct a systematic survey of Indigenous Coordination Centre staff or SRA partners, so the research could not be said to constitute an evaluation of the SRA program. Despite these difficulties, students endeavoured to formulate well informed recommendations by supplementing their original research with academic literature and the limited amount of information available from official websites.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for action based on experiences of current and/or past SRAs:

- 1. Encourage government agencies to work together more effectively to ensure that longer term funding continues to go into SRA projects that are successful.** Many SRAs are highly successful, but the projects arising out of them are only guaranteed to run for a short period of time such as 12 months. Having to regularly apply and reapply for grants to run community projects is difficult, time consuming and stressful.
- 2. Lobby government agencies to make sure that adequate evaluation processes are built in to SRAs.** It is impossible to make sure that funding is going to the right areas and into successful SRAs if there is inadequate monitoring, reporting and evaluation. This process, and administration needs to be shared between the Indigenous communities involved and local ICC staff or staff from government agencies that are involved.
- 3. Lobby government agencies for more appropriate training for ICC staff and staff from government agencies involved in the SRA negotiation and implementation process.** This research has indicated that people from government agencies often enter into youth related work as it presents an opportunity for promotion. Training needs to ensure that those entering into youth related positions in particular are suited to the job with an appropriate understanding of Indigenous issues and youth or background in criminology.
- 4. Have clear, identifiable and achievable aims of SRAs that are clearly communicated to those involved in the implementation of the SRA and the local community.** Collaboration between government agencies and with the community is essential to ensure the success of SRAs. Some interviews suggested that there were major issues about communication between Commonwealth Government Departments and Indigenous representatives. There should be a greater emphasis to inform the local communities of the SRA process to encourage greater participation in the process. In lieu of this SRAs may be more appropriately used to achieve the community focused strategic actions of the AJP.
- 5. Encourage ICCs to have more information and literature on SRAs available to Indigenous communities.** Much of the literature on SRAs speaks negatively about SRAs. If information about how SRAs work and how they could assist, was available to Indigenous communities then more Indigenous people might be willing to be involved in the process. A pamphlet about current SRAs, what they've set out to do and what they've achieved could prove useful.

- 6. Lobby government agencies and ICCs to simplify and shorten the length of the negotiation process.** The process of negotiating SRAs can currently take up to two years. It is an arduous and complex process, and where Indigenous people are willing to engage in the process, they should be given as much scope as possible to direct the process.

Recommendations for Future Development of Sustainable Economic Development:

- 1. Develop and implement SRAs that focus directly on sustainable economic development.** At present there is a lack of SRAs which focus on economic issues. The mainstreaming of Indigenous Affairs can result in issues specific to Indigenous employment and training not being addressed. SRAs, which target these economic issues such as high levels of unemployment and low levels of education attainment, would be more effective in addressing these issues.

Recommendations for Future Development of Indigenous Leadership at a State Level:

- 1. SRAs could be linked to existing leadership programs in order to enhance continuous, long term leadership development.** There are leadership programs offered by some state governments that do not have anything to do with SRAs *per se*, but are used to provide local community members with the skills for developing and managing projects when they return to their community. There is scope for Indigenous internships with NGOs and private organisations to build and strengthen leadership capacity and foster skills which enable communities to better navigate the difficult waters of government. In general, SRAs must be synthesised with existing structures rather than operating in isolation or as ad-hoc policies.
- 2. Encourage and utilise Indigenous leaders to provide leadership training through these courses and in the development of local and regional SRAs.** This avenue is preferable to bringing in expensive consultants that do not have the necessary cultural understanding required to develop leaders in unique Indigenous environments. Where possible, Indigenous people should be employed by SRAs as Community Development Officers etc. If communities do not have the wherewithal to engage meaningfully because of a lack of leadership capacity, policy outcomes cannot be optimal.
- 3. Build leadership capacity in local communities.** State level leadership is going to be difficult to foster where many Indigenous leaders in local communities lack the capacity to engage in necessary tasks related to the running of organisations and administration, as well as the ability to engage meaningfully with government agencies. We feel that a major part of building state level Indigenous leadership will be building up leadership capacity on the ground through better targeted enabling and leadership/capacity building SRAs in local communities or regional SRAs/Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs).

The following students took part in this study:

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Jacqueline Thorp
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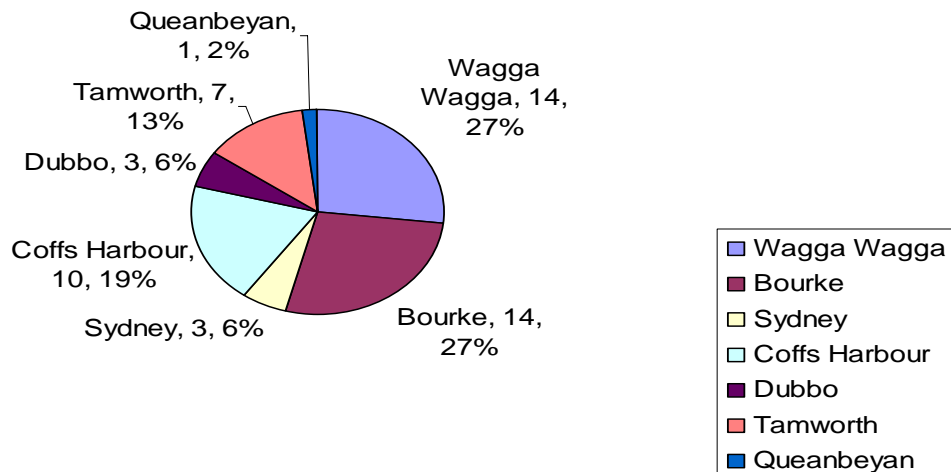
Distribution of SRAs In NSW

The Distribution of 52 SRAs In NSW



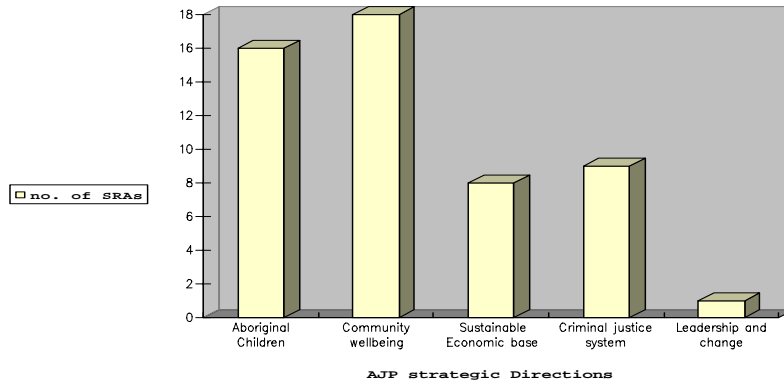
SRAs in Different ICC Regions

The Distribution of 52 SRAs in Different ICC Regions in NSW



SRAs in Different AJP Strategic Direction

Figure 1 :The distribution of 52 SRAs in NSW across the AJP strategic directions



SRAs in NSW Across Different ICC Regions

Figure 2: The distribution of SRAs in NSW across different ICC regions

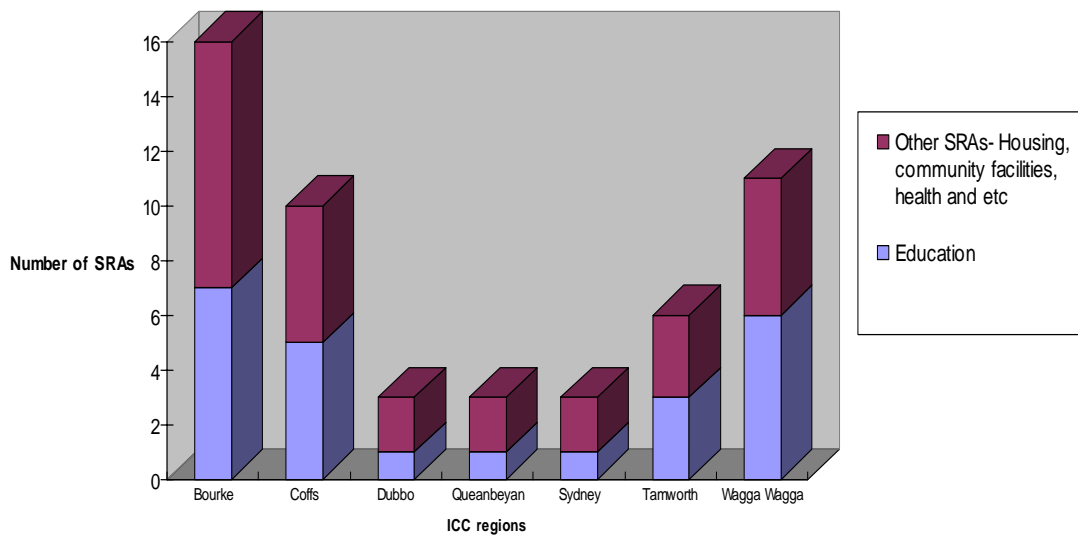


Table 1 : The distribution of 52 SRAs in 6 AJAC regions in NSW

<u>AJAC Regions</u>	<u>ICC</u>	<u>Communities</u>	<u>SRA</u>	<u>AJP Directions</u>
Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Engonia	Improving education	1-2
	Bourke	Ivanhoe	Air Conditioning for youth centre	1-2
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki-Bourke	Helping kids stay at school	1-2
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki-Brewarrina	Improving education	1-2
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki Bourke Shire Council and Bourke Community Working Party	Helping kids stay at school	3
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki Brewarrina Shire Council and Ngemba Community Working Party	Improving education	3
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki Regional Council	Engaging with Government - IT support	3
	Bourke	Engonia	Improving education	3
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki (regional)	Installation of Air Cooling Units (Regional Agreement)	3
	Bourke	Ivanhoe	Installation and maintenance of evaporative air cooling	3
	Bourke	Engonia	Improving education	4
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki	Improving education	4
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki	Bourke Community Assistance Patrol	5
	Bourke	Murdi Paaki	Community Facilitators	7
Many Rivers	Coffs Harbour	Hunter	Early Childhood centre	1-2
	Coffs Harbour	Hunter Region 2	Youth	1-2
	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Dunghutti youth	1-2
	Coffs Harbour	Baryulgil	Market Garden	3
	Coffs Harbour	Bowraville	Miimi Mothers	3
	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Support to complete the Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre	3
	Coffs Harbour	Hunter Region 2	Youth	3
	Coffs	Hunter	Hunter (Early	3

	Harbour		Childhood Education)	
	Coffs Harbour	Hunter	supporting to complete the Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre	4
	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Hunter (Early Childhood Education)	4
Sydney Metro	Sydney	La Perouse	La Pa Bummers Youth Heaven	1-2
<u>2 SRAs signed</u>	Sydney	La Perouse	Extension of the CDF	3
Kamilaroi <u>8 SRAs signed</u>	Tamworth	Inverell	Youth Activity Centre	1-2
	Tamworth	Mungindi	Youth Activity Centre	1-2
	Tamworth	Muswellbrook	Hot wheels program	1-2
	Tamworth	Mungindi	Youth Activity Centre	3
	Tamworth	Inverell	Youth Activity Centre	3
	Tamworth	Mungindi	Youth activity Centre	5
	Tamworth	Muswellbrook	Hot Wheels	5
	Tamworth	Inverell	Youth activity Centre	5
Binaal Billa <u>16 SRAs signed</u>	Wagga Wagga	Bathurst	Supporting young people and families	1-2
	Wagga Wagga	Narrandera	Connecting youth to education	1-2
	Wagga Wagga	Orange	Better pathways for our youth	1-2
	Wagga Wagga	Wagga Wagga	Black Sun: youth	1-2
	Wagga Wagga	Tumut	Heritage, Healthy Living and Stronger Families.	3
	Wagga Wagga	Narrandera	Connecting youth to education	3
	Wagga Wagga	Albury	Hume school cultural facility	4
	Wagga Wagga	Bathurst	Removing transport barrier	4
	Wagga Wagga	Narrandera	Connecting youth to education	4
	Wagga Wagga	Tumut	Heritage, health living and stronger families	4
	Wagga Wagga	Junee Correctional Centre	Youth activity Centre	5
	Wagga Wagga	Narrandera	Connecting youth to	5

	Wagga		education	
	Wagga Wagga	Wagga Wagga	Black Suns - Youth	5
	Dubbo	Dubbo	Sport and community activities: upgrading the oval	1-2
	Dubbo	Coonabarabran	Family violence Prevention Initiatives	5
	Dubbo	Dubbo	Sport and community activities and upgrade of oval	5
South Coast	Queanbeyan	Wreck Bay	Housing	3
	Queanbeyan	ACT Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Community	Governance	3

2
SRAs
signed

Table 2: Distribution of 52 SRAs in different AJP strategic directions In NSW

<u>AJP Directions</u>	<u>AJAC Regions</u>	<u>ICC</u>	<u>Communities</u>	<u>SRA</u>
<p><u>1-2</u> (Aboriginal children – Aboriginal young people)</p>	Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Engonia	Improving education
			Ivanhoe	Air Conditioning for youth centre
			Murdi Paaki-Bourke	Helping kids stay at school
			Murdi Paaki-Brewarrina	Improving education
	Many Rivers	Coffs Harbour	Hunter	Early Childhood centre
			Hunter Region 2	Youth
			Kempsey	Dunghutti youth
	Sydney Metro	Sydney	La Pouse	La Pa Bummers Youth Heaven
	Kamilaroi	Tamworth	Inverell	Youth Activity Centre
			Mungindi	Youth Activity Centre
			Muswellbrook	Hot wheels program
	Binaal Billa	Wagga Wagga	Bathurst	Supporting young people and families
			Narrandera	Connecting youth to education
			Orange	Better pathways for our youth
Wagga Wagga			Black Sun: youth	
Dubbo		Dubbo	Sport and community activities: upgrading the oval	
<p><u>3</u> (Community well-being)</p>	Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Murdi Paaki Bourke Shire Council and Bourke Community Working Party	Helping kids stay at school

		Murdi Paaki Brewarrina Shire Council and Ngemba Community Working Party	Improving education
		Murdi Paaki Regional Council	Engaging with Government - IT support
		Engonia	Improving education
		Murdi Paaki (regional)	Installation of Air Cooling Units (Regional Agreement)
		Ivanhoe	Installation and maintenance of evaporative air cooling
Many Rivers	Coffs Harbour	Baryulgil	Market Garden
		Bowraville	Miimi Mothers
		Kempsey	Support to complete the Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre
		Hunter Region 2	Youth
		Hunter	Hunter (Early Childhood Education)
Sydney Metro	Sydney	La Perouse	Extension of the CDF
Kamilaroi	Tamworth	Mungindi	Youth Activity Centre
		Inverell	Youth Activity Centre
Binaal Billa	Wagga Wagga	Tumut	Heritage, Healthy Living and Stronger Families.
		Narrandera	Connecting youth to education
South Coast	Queanbeyan	Wreck Bay	Housing

			A.C.T Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Community	Governance
4 (Sustainable economic base)	Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Enngonia	Improving education
			Murdi Pakki	Improving education
	Many Rivers	Coffs Harbour	Hunter	supporting to complete the Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre
			Kempsey	Hunter (Early Childhood Education)
			Albury	Hume school cultural facility
			Bathurst	Removing transport barrier
	Binaal Billa	Wagga Wagga	Narrandera	Connecting youth to education
			Tumut	Heritage, health living and stronger families
5 (Criminal justice system)	Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Murdi Paaki	Bourke Community Assistance Patrol
	Kamilaroi	Tamworth	Mungindi	Youth activity Centre
			Muswellbrook	Hot Wheels
			Inverell	Youth activity Centre
	Binaal Billa	Wagga Wagga	June Correctional Centre	Youth activity Centre
			Narrandera	Connecting youth to education

			Wagga wagga	Black Suns - Youth
		Dubbo	Coonabarabran	Family violence Prevention Initiatives
			Dubbo	Sport and community activities and upgrade of oval
7 (Leadership)	Murdi Paaki	Bourke	Murdi Paaki	Community Facilitators