ABORIGINAL VOICES HEARD BY GOVERNMENT

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello has welcomed the strong feedback provided by Aboriginal communities to drive development of a new Government strategy for Aboriginal affairs in NSW.

“The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs has reviewed the results of its extensive public consultation process involving more than 1,700 people across NSW,” Mr Dominello said.

“More than 200 written submissions and 4,000 individual comments were received.

“The wide variety of contributors – including Aboriginal community organisations, non-government organisations, local Aboriginal Land Councils, schools, businesses and individuals – illustrates there is a real appetite for change.

“I would like to thank everyone who took part in this process, which has helped the Taskforce to obtain a strong understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal communities.

“Reports on the issues raised at 14 community meetings across the State are available for everyone to view on the Aboriginal Affairs NSW website.

“Common themes include the need to work in partnership with community members and organisations to ensure that those on the ground are able to take the lead on issues in their communities.

“Time after time the message to me was clear – imposing ‘top down’ solutions doesn’t work and we need a different approach. Effective solutions will come from the ‘bottom up’.

“There is also a strong demand for proper accountability so communities are not overserviced yet ‘under delivered’, with effective coordination to prevent duplication of government and non-government services.

“I would like to reassure the community that we have taken their views on board and this important information will be the foundation of the NSW Government’s new Aboriginal affairs strategy,” Mr Dominello said.

Taskforce member Maydina Penrith, who provides a voice for Aboriginal youth and women, said she is very pleased with the level of community engagement with the Taskforce.

“The Taskforce is the first time that Aboriginal community representatives and Government Ministers have sat side-by-side at the same table to work together on issues facing our communities,” Ms Penrith said.
“I feel very positive that so many people around the State have taken the time to have their say and make their views known to the Taskforce.”

The Taskforce is planning a second round of community consultations in August to present an interim report outlining the feedback and strategic directions for the new strategy.

The round two consultations are an opportunity for the Taskforce and Aboriginal communities to check that the report validates issues raised during the initial consultations.

“The development of a new Aboriginal affairs strategy is part of a long and sometimes complex journey towards strengthening Aboriginal communities,” Mr Dominello said.

“Our focus is on improvements in education outcomes, employment outcomes and service delivery.

“While we don’t claim to have all the answers, we do have a deep commitment to genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities and their representatives as part of the process.

“I look forward to working with the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs and our community partners as we take that next important step on this journey,” Mr Dominello said.

More information on the second round of community consultations, including dates and locations, will be available closer to August at www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce or phone (02) 9219 0702.