

NSW
ABORIGINAL
LAND COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2022



NEW SOUTH WALES
ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

www.alc.org.au



CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council (**NSWALC**) was formed in 1977 when 200 people met at the Black Theatre in Redfern and demanded the return of Aboriginal land.

These people were soon joined by thousands of others who lobbied Parliament to pass the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, built our network of 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (**LALCs**) and made the successful claims for Crown Land that are our movement's lifeblood. This first wave of Aboriginal Land Rights fought for and established Aboriginal Land Rights and our Aboriginal Land Councils.

The second wave of Aboriginal Land Rights consolidated the rights we had won through claiming land and securing Aboriginal Land Rights. This Strategic Plan builds on this work and positions us to properly fulfil the rights we have obtained.

Land and water rights remain central to this Council as we stand at the cusp of the third wave of Aboriginal Land Rights; reacquiring our lands and waters is at the heart of our future. However, the land we have had returned will only be of full value to us if it enables the cultural, economic and political renewal of Aboriginal people in NSW.

Our Strategic Plan sets NSWALC's direction and prioritises our efforts towards achieving this renewal. It also gets everyone – our Council, staff, LALCs and the broader Aboriginal Land Rights movement on the same page so that we are all working towards the same goals.

The Plan commits us to an ambitious agenda of cultural protection, social wellbeing and economic development.

It also adds a new political call: that there be a process for establishing a Treaty or Treaties between the NSW Government and the Aboriginal people of this state.

Since 1977 NSWALC has made remarkable gains but much more remains to be done. Land and water rights must be an inheritance not just a support for our system. Otherwise, in future years Aboriginal people will once again have little to show for what they once had.

The great achievements we have made opens up new challenges. We must significantly enhance our economic and social wellbeing without surrendering the land and water we have reacquired to achieve this; nor must we allow others to think that this is what we should or will do.

We must acknowledge our strength: 120 LALCs connect us to our 23,000 members and, through them, to all the 230,000 Aboriginal people in NSW. LALCs are representative, place based organisations that represent local Aboriginal peoples and support local voices. Our diversity and our reach gives us great strength. NSWALC will work with all LALCs to maximise this. We have a strong agreement among us about how we govern ourselves through our nine regions. Our cultural diversity combined with a unity of purpose will build a better future for our children and grandchildren.

Being successful will require us - NSWALC, LALCs, members and Aboriginal peoples - to walk together and to enable others in the community to join us in genuine partnership. We are all custodians of our lands and waters. NSWALC embraces our leadership role in this journey. Where we exercise our leadership responsibilities, we will do this solely for the benefit of all Aboriginal people now and into the future.

**Roy Ah-See, Chairperson
NSW Aboriginal Land Council**



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S FOREWORD

This Strategic Plan positions NSWALC to succeed for Aboriginal people as we enter the third wave of the modern Aboriginal Land Rights movement in this state.

The first wave was begun by our founders in 1977 who established our Land Council, built its membership and campaigned for Parliament to pass the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

The second wave was about consolidating the work of our Aboriginal Land Rights legends, by claiming land and building the capacity of our network.

This Strategic Plan will guide us as we commence the third wave of our movement. This is about leveraging our land base to enable our cultures and communities to flourish, our economies to develop and the political relationship between Aboriginal people and the broader community to become one of equals.

In particular, we need to diversify our economic activities with new enterprises in order to secure our fair share of the NSW economy.

The Strategic Plan recognises that NSWALC will only achieve our aims if we work in partnership with the network of LALCs. We must also strengthen the support from and engagement with our members and broader Aboriginal communities. The network and membership are our key sources of strength. We need to work together. We must use our diversity to try new things, to learn from each other, to identify where opportunities are available for us to succeed well and to identify where acting together is essential. NSWALC must provide the balance that maintains diversity but realises the benefits of our collective size and experience.

The Strategic Plan also positions us as the preeminent body to advance Aboriginal interests in this state. This requires us, in partnership with LALCs, to take on the full range of leadership, advocacy and influencing roles that are required across all levels of government, with others in the community and with the non-government and private sectors.

However, we will need to build our capability to work in the new ways the Strategic Plan requires because it envisages an expanded range of activities that NSWALC will undertake. We will need to develop the skills to take these on and we will need the ability to work with others in the interim to ensure that opportunities are not lost as our capabilities are built.

This Strategic Plan gives all of us – Councillors, staff, LALCs and the broader Aboriginal Land Rights movement – the tools to do these things.

**James Christian PSM, Chief Executive Officer
NSW Aboriginal Land Council**

THE CONTEXT FOR THIS PLAN

NSWALC is the largest member based Aboriginal organisation in Australia, with a network of 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils and 23,000 members.

Through our membership, NSWALC also serves the needs of 230,000 people in NSW, Australia's largest Aboriginal population.

Like its predecessors, this Strategic Plan and the operations of NSWALC itself are governed by the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

The Plan reflects the purposes of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* to provide for Aboriginal Land Rights and representative Aboriginal Land Councils; to vest land in those Councils through claim and acquisition and to provide for community benefits.

It also reflects the Objects of NSWALC to improve, protect and foster the best interests of Aboriginal persons within NSW.

The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* established a Statutory Account to support economic development, the purchase of land on the open market and self-determination through a network of representative Aboriginal Land Councils. The Account is administered by the Council of NSWALC and was resourced with an amount equal to 7.5 per cent of land taxes on non-residential properties each year for a time limited period of 15 years.

Successive Councils of NSWALC have nurtured the Account over the last 35 years. Since Government contributions ceased 20 years ago, the Fund has grown while it has resourced the operations of NSWALC and the network of 120 Local Aboriginal Councils. The current Council and its successors have a responsibility to continue this stewardship.

However, effective stewardship of the Account alone cannot deliver on our long-term vision for Aboriginal people. The Council of NSWALC has needed to make decisions in recognition that:

- Diversification of our economic activities with new enterprises is needed to deliver integration with, and a fair share of the NSW economy.
- The Account needs to be an exemplar of our self-determination. It is Aboriginal money, managed by Aboriginal people for the benefit of future generations of Aboriginal people.
- The Account can be a driver for NSWALC and LALC initiatives, but its overwhelming purpose must be as a long term beneficial resource for all Aboriginal people in NSW. It must be clearly built into a growing inheritance for future generations.

However, NSWALC predates the introduction of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and the context in which we operate is broader than the requirements of legislation.

NSWALC's Strategic Plan is also inspired by the organisation's original aims adopted when it was formed in October 1977. These sought Aboriginal ownership and control of sacred sites and resourcing to enable their effective administration; a land base adequate to meet the social, cultural and economic needs of Aboriginal people from the existing Crown land; mineral and natural resources rights; and the establishment of significant compensation.

While this Strategic Plan was being developed, NSWALC Councillors participated in the forum that produced the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We seek to fulfil the aims of the statement in NSW by working to secure a process that will culminate in a Treaty or Treaties for Aboriginal people.



WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE

OUR DESTINATION

Beyond survival to a future in which the Aboriginal people of NSW are culturally rich, politically strong, economically self-reliant and live our lives to their full potential.

OUR PURPOSE

We are a democratically-elected voice to empower all Aboriginal peoples.

We provide strong leadership, support and advocacy for Aboriginal Land Rights and the Aboriginal people of NSW.

OUR VALUES

- Inclusiveness, diversity and respect to guide us in our decisions and actions
- Culturally-strong leadership
- Self-determination by Aboriginal peoples
- The power of Aboriginal Land Rights to unify Aboriginal peoples and to strengthen partnerships

OUR GOALS

The goals we will advance through this Strategic Plan are:

1. Secure our land and water rights
2. Protect our culture and heritage
3. Pursue economic independence, prosperity and security for our peoples
4. Support our people
5. Secure our future

GOAL 1 | SECURE OUR LAND AND WATER RIGHTS

WHY THIS GOAL IS IMPORTANT

Securing the return of land to Aboriginal people and ensuring access to their lands and waters is the core business of NSWALC. As Aboriginal people, our lands and waters are central to our being. Land and water are essential to the spiritual, social, cultural and economic survival of our communities. We must ensure that lands and waters are well managed so as to protect the vital importance they have to Aboriginal people.

WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GOAL

We will maximise:

- The amount of land and water that is in Aboriginal ownership, control and management; and
- The social, cultural and economic outcomes from our lands and waters.

GOAL 2 | PROTECT OUR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

WHY THIS GOAL IS IMPORTANT

As Aboriginal people we are the inheritors of the oldest living cultures in the world. Our culture and heritage are essential to our survival as distinct, self-determining peoples. We cannot create a secure future for our descendants unless our culture and heritage is protected.

WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GOAL

We will maximise achievement of the culture and heritage priorities of our members and broader Aboriginal communities in ways that:

- Secure, protect and celebrate our culture and heritage;
- Empowers future generations to understand their culture and heritage; and
- Enables future generations to draw on their culture and heritage to make their lives better and fulfilling.

GOAL 3 | PURSUE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND PROSPERITY FOR OUR PEOPLE

WHY THIS GOAL IS IMPORTANT

Restoring economic independence and prosperity to Aboriginal communities is essential to our survival as a distinct, self-determining people.

Economic independence is also necessary if we are to unlock the full potential of Aboriginal Land Rights and ensure the effective management of land that has been returned.

WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GOAL

Our broad aim under this goal is to create opportunities to grow economic prosperity and independence for Aboriginal people and for LALCs through:

- An increased capability to undertake or be part of business ventures and generate employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people; and
- Diversification of our business activities in order to provide greater prosperity to our future generations.

We will continue to pursue the priorities of our Economic Development Policy; targeting three new priority areas that are essential to enhancing the economic wellbeing of Aboriginal people. We will establish:

- An employment services, training and brokerage capability;
- An Aboriginal housing capability; and
- A land development and construction capability.

GOAL 4 | SUPPORT OUR PEOPLE

WHY THIS GOAL IS IMPORTANT

Ensuring the social wellbeing of Aboriginal people must accompany the achievement of Aboriginal Land Rights and economic independence. Without social wellbeing, reacquiring our land will be hollow and securing economic independence impossible. We must also ensure that securing access to our lands waters and compensation for past wrongdoings does not absolve governments of providing services to Aboriginal people that are our rights as citizens.

WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GOAL

Our broad aim under this goal is to enable the growth of social wellbeing, security and employment for Aboriginal people. There are actions that we can take ourselves to achieve this but we must also focus on ensuring equitable access to the resources and opportunities, including employment opportunities, that are available to others in the community and for that access to be in ways that recognise Aboriginal culture and values.

In pursuing this goal we will continue to:

- Advocate for the rights of our people;
- Build the capacity of our members and the broader Aboriginal communities of NSW; and
- Provide support for our people in need.

GOAL 5 | SECURE OUR FUTURE

WHY THIS GOAL IS IMPORTANT

We have stewardship responsibilities to ensure that a stronger system is handed to the next generation.

The other goals of this Strategic Plan are essential to providing Aboriginal people with a pathway to a secure future but they are not sufficient. We need to underpin our Strategic Plan with actions that are prudent and future orientated.

WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GOAL

We will build the confidence that the long-term future for NSWALC and the LALC network is secure and that it will continue to deliver for future generations of Aboriginal peoples. To do this we will:

- Continue to grow and exercise responsible stewardship of the Statutory Account;
- Work to achieve a Treaty or Treaties for Aboriginal people;
- Continue to engage our youth and membership;
- Continue to support and foster a culture and system of good governance and improvement; and
- Develop a compliance and regulatory framework which actively recognises and responds to performance.



HOW THIS PLAN WORKS

This Strategic Plan sets NSWALC's direction and priorities for the next five years. It also ensures that our Council, staff, LALCs and the broader Aboriginal Land Rights movement are all working towards the same goals.

The Strategic Plan details the high level goals that NSWALC is working to achieve. It will sit alongside a planning framework the Council has adopted that will:

- Regularly identify the best actions to achieve the plan;
- Drive its ability to do more with what it has gained to ensure a strong and secure future; and
- Enhance its accountability and responsiveness to Aboriginal people.

Key features of the planning framework are:

- Annual supplements to set out actions to be undertaken to advance the Strategic Plan. These supplements will form part of NSWALC's Community Land and Business Plan and will be directly linked to the NSWALC budget;
- Preparation of annual supplements will incorporate consultation with members and broader Aboriginal communities on what they see as important priorities for the coming year;
- Actions will be prioritised for inclusion within an annual supplement by the Council taking into account how they:
 - Maximise achievement of the Strategic Plan's aims and objectives; and
 - Ensure that, at a minimum, they do not deplete the long-run growth of the Statutory Account.
- All actions will have indicators that show how success is measured against the overall aims of the relevant goals and specific objectives that they pursue; and
- The achievements against annual supplement strategies will be reported on annually.



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