

# NSW Government response to the Ombudsman's OCHRE 2024: Current status and future direction report

28 July 2025

## Update

In January 2025, we tabled our latest OCHRE report in Parliament. This report assessed how well the NSW Government is delivering on its long-standing Aboriginal affairs plan, OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment). The report found that while OCHRE remains a promising model, several parts of the plan have stalled and without clear government commitment and accountability, its future is uncertain.

## What we called for

The Ombudsman's report made a core recommendation:

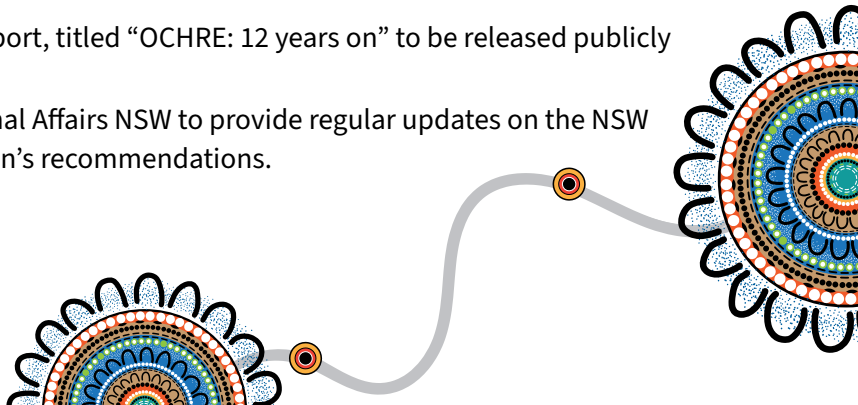
**That the NSW Government both articulate and demonstrate a renewed commitment to OCHRE, and to its continued status and future as the NSW plan for Aboriginal affairs in New South Wales.**

We also set out 10 detailed recommendations focused on legislative reform, program delivery, community engagement and aligning OCHRE with the Closing the Gap framework.

## How the NSW Government responded

In April 2025, the Hon. David Harris, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, responded to the Ombudsman's report. The response acknowledged the value of the report and the importance of sustained community involvement.

The Minister committed to several key actions:

- Seeking cabinet approval for a whole-of-government response to the Ombudsman's recommendations.
  - Leading the development of a progress report, titled "OCHRE: 12 years on" to be released publicly in December 2025.
  - Assigning the Deputy Secretary of Aboriginal Affairs NSW to provide regular updates on the NSW Government's response to the Ombudsman's recommendations.
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## Next steps from the NSW Ombudsman

The Office is continuing its oversight role and adapting to recent legislative changes affecting the Ombudsman's Aboriginal programs monitoring function.<sup>1</sup>

Over the next year, we will:

- provide updates on the NSW Government's response to our OCHRE Report recommendations
- publish case studies on what's working and where challenges remain for the delivery of OCHRE initiatives
- release a thematic review, highlighting progress and challenges, in a selected Aboriginal program area, and
- share insights into the Ombudsman's Aboriginal programs monitoring function in our Annual Report.

Our goal remains to ensure that Aboriginal people in NSW experience fair and effective government programs.



### Stay connected

For future updates, questions or contributions please reach out:

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<sup>1</sup> In August 2024, the NSW Parliament made changes to the Ombudsman's monitoring function in Part 3B of the Ombudsman Act 1974. Previously the Aboriginal programs to which the Ombudsman's monitoring function applied were prescribed by regulation and, at that time, the only Aboriginal Program that had been prescribed was the OCHRE Plan. Following the recent amendments, the term "Aboriginal Program" has been defined in the Act itself to encompass any government program primarily directed towards the health, cultural, economic, educational, or other wellbeing of Aboriginal persons or communities. This broader definition includes but is not limited to, the OCHRE Plan. The amendments specify the NSW Ombudsman is required to (continue to) monitor and assess the OCHRE Plan and is authorised to monitor and assess any other Aboriginal programs at its discretion.