

# **‘Proud Leaders in our Community’**

**Cobar Community Working Party  
Community Development and  
Strategic Plan**

**2005-2008**

**“Learning from the past, moving into the future”**

June 2005

Cobar Community Working Party

and

Burdon Torzillo and associates

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## **Acknowledgments**

Cobar Community Working Party (CWP) would like to thank and acknowledge the entire Cobar Aboriginal community for their input. The CWP would also like to thank the Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council for its vision and Burdon Torzillo for their patience and time in putting together our plan.

## **Intellectual Property**

This document is the property of the Cobar Community Working Party (CWP).

## Introduction

Cobar is a community in Western NSW which is remote from major urban centers. It is a town whose economy is heavily dependent upon two major industries, mining and pastoralism. The Aboriginal people of Cobar are committed to living in this place whatever the economic situation as this is the land of our ancestors.

We welcome everyone here. We will support you and make sure that no-one is left behind. We ask that you respect this place and help us look after this beautiful country. This is a land of freedom, peace, tolerance and harmony. We hold these values from our ancestors and from the spirit of this land and hold them for the community. We plan to work together with all members of the community

However, there are many indications that the world is increasingly in a perilous state, socially, environmentally and economically. All of these have the potential to impact heavily upon the community of Cobar and our future plans. We need to keep awareness of these issues as we plan.

There are huge issues with degradation to the environment- pollution and desertification, global warming and climate change in general. In particular, the effect of drought on rural communities, such as Cobar. There are also major concerns over the global economy and its effects on societies everywhere - especially the potentially disastrous effects of the rising price of oil and increasing world oil demands yet decreasing supply of oil. There is also much social breakdown in many countries around the world.

We need to prepare for a future that may not be as materially good as it is now. We can learn many lessons on responsible living in this environment from our ancestors and our traditional cultural practices. These may well be the great gift that we can offer to all Australians, and other people throughout the world.

We are also aware that we need to plan to ensure that our children and grandchildren are given the best opportunity to live safe, decent, comfortable and happy lives at a standard that is equitable with all other Australians.

Our plan is a process, flexible and responsive to the dynamic world in which we all live.

## Our Community

Cobar is 300 kms west of Dubbo. It is located on the crossroads of the Barrier Highway between Dubbo and Broken Hill and the Kidman Way between Hay and Bourke. It has excellent road, rail and air links to most of Australia's capital cities.

The Shire has an area of 44,000 kms<sup>2</sup>, being almost the same size as the whole of Tasmania.

Cobar Shire is home to 7,000 people, the majority of 5,500 live in the town of Cobar. The Shire's prosperity is built around the thriving mining – copper, lead, silver, zinc and gold – and pastoral industries, which are strongly supported by a wide range of attractions and activities that make it a major tourist destination.

The Great Cobar Heritage Centre with its museum and information facilities provides visitors with an insight to the history of its interesting region where mining first commenced in the 1870's. Over the years the fluctuating fortunes of the mines have had a similar variable impact on the population of the town, which today is half of the number of those who lived here in the early 1900's.

Approximately 600 Aboriginal people live in Cobar. The Aboriginal people living at Cobar now are a mixture of people from many families, clans and geographical regions.

Cobar is not on one of the many rivers in this area. Many of the aboriginal people here now, have come here by choice because of the town's educational, sporting and recreational amenities and facilities, and because it offers people a fresh start.

Many Aboriginal people of the town have worked hard to improve rights and services for Aboriginal people here. However, due to the small size of the community there are not many aboriginal organizations in the town.

Organizations and programs dedicated to serving the Aboriginal community are a major part of the town's current economy and wealth generation. These range from the money brought in through employment programs and social security payments, to all the positions employed through Aboriginal organizations, government and other organizations servicing the Aboriginal community here.

## Cobar Poem

We're living at the crossroads, the crossroads of a nation  
The Barrier Highway, East to West  
The Kidman Way, North to South,  
We're living in a place that we think the best

We're living at a time  
That is a cross road for the world  
Are we living responsibly caring for our planet  
Looking after this land and using resources wisely  
Or will we ignore the teachings of our ancestors  
And rush headlong into  
A hole deeper than the open cut

Some of us have always lived here  
Others have come for the peace and quiet  
The good schools, pools, nightlife  
Top sports and recreation, and welcome cheer  
We are a proud community of Aboriginal people  
Living in a friendly and exciting town

Our history is tied in close  
To the rocks that flash rainbows in the fire  
Our mob call it 'cobar', you mob say copper  
Strange how the words are so close  
It's the heart of this town and the heart of its joint history  
Even if us mob don't see that much come back  
From the mining of our Mother Earth, our heartland  
Just a great big hole  
Filled with green, healing water – so they say  
Where we've gone to swim  
The bottomless pit  
And explore the underwater tunnels  
Pushing mates through bars and holding our breaths forever  
Freaking out our mums and dads  
Asking when we arrived home after dark  
'where you been, you been swimming in that open cut'  
and we would answer, lying through our teeth  
'no way, we just been coming home from school'  
'Yara, don't tale 4 hours to walk home from school'  
'Ah I'm a slow walker mum.'  
but we would still get a feed and do it again the next night

There aren't that many of us in this town  
No river, weirs or cotton growers  
But we can go for yabbies down the Newie  
And swim at the res  
Cooking Johnny cakes out bush  
Teaching our kids to change tyres, cook dinner,  
Tell stories about our people and the land  
How uncle would go diving high off the rocks into the open cut

And aunt would go swimming there after the pub shut  
For it can get bloody hot out here  
But that's OK  
Because this is our country, our town, our land  
And we're proud of our place  
And we're staying and playing  
And making things great for us, our kids and their kids too.

There are not many things special for us here  
But we're a part of a friendly, multi-cultural town  
And we want to make sure that our culture and identity is strong  
And our kids are proud of their heritage  
We want it to be NAIDOC every week,  
Not just once a year

We're still here doing our job  
Looking after the town, Mt. Grenfell, Mt. Drysdale and all  
Custodians of this land, of the spirit  
Doing it our way, because we know  
We've been here for thousands of years  
Keeping it going, keeping us going

So listen to us, listen to our story  
Take a little time and lets work together  
Life goes through its cycles  
Just like the moon  
And while it has been the dark for a while  
Now the new moon has come  
A time of promise, planting seeds and new growth  
For we're moving on, to again reap the harvest of the hard work of all those  
who have come before  
To feed those here now  
And those yet to come

# Community Working Party

## Role and purpose

The Community Working Party has been established to:-

Create a community that is just, alive, healthy, respectful and enjoyable.

Work towards developing and implementing the clear, unified and long term aims & essential outcomes of our whole community.

Provide a place for our leaders to meet and talk about issues and problems affecting the community.

Endorse, support and advocate for projects and programs that work towards achieving the outcomes developed in this plan

Provide direction to government and other service providers for the provision of services to the Aboriginal people of Cobar.

Monitor, evaluate and review the operations of service providers to the Aboriginal people of Cobar.

Break down barriers in the community.

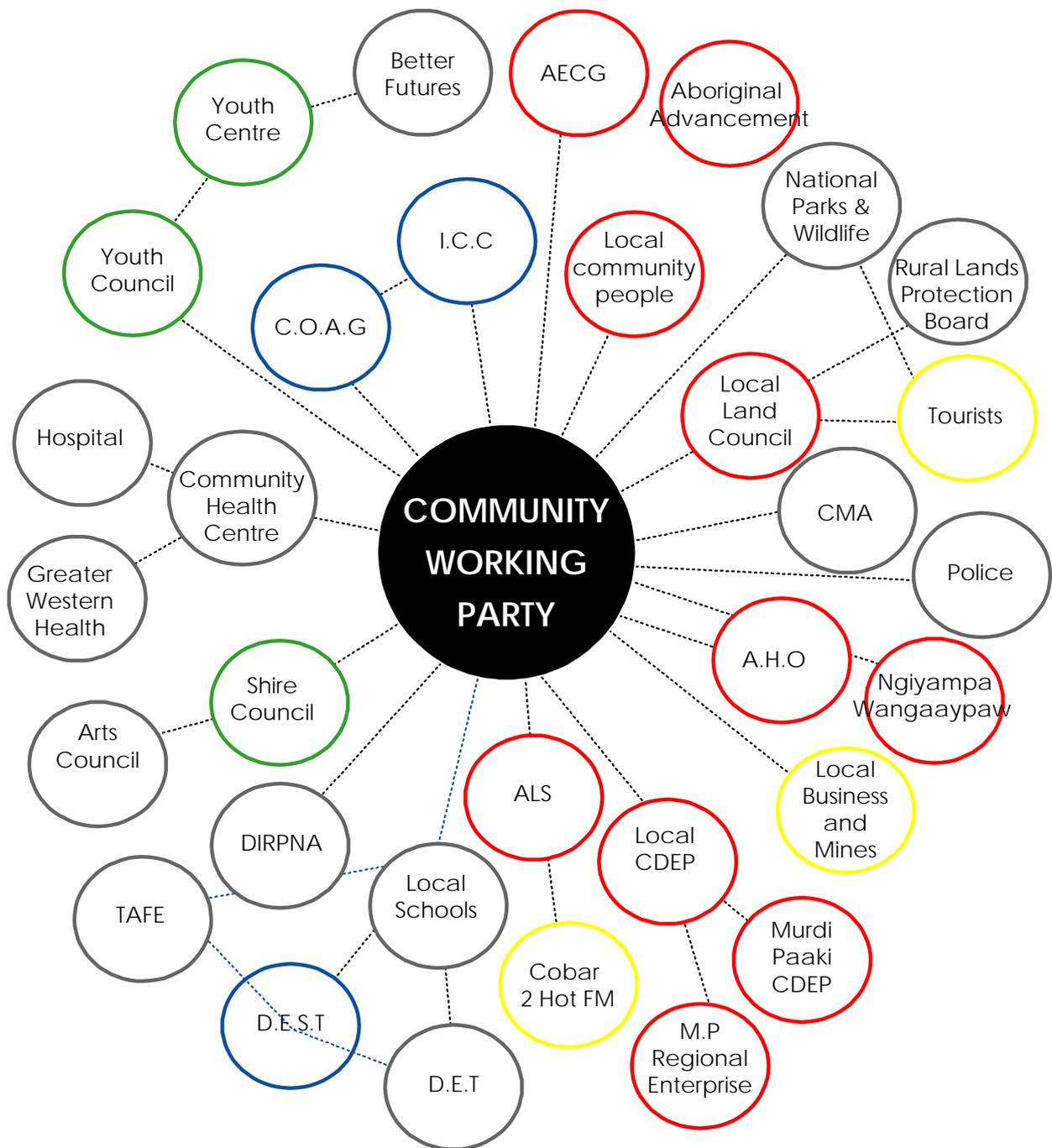
Develop respect for Aboriginal culture within the community.

Encourage cultural identity.

Show the good sides of our town.

Graphic 1:CWP Relationships map

## COBAR COMMUNITY WORKING PARTY RELATIONSHIPS MAP



## **The Community Working Party, their Strategic and Action Plans and the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG)**

COAG is an informal association of Australian Federal, State and Local Governments whose purpose is to develop co-operation between the different levels of government, reduce duplication of services and streamline bureaucratic processes to ensure more efficient and effective outcomes for the public.

COAG has made Aboriginal service delivery to Aboriginal people and communities one of its highest priorities. Each state has a trial area where the different levels of Government are working together under the direction of a lead agency from the Federal and the State Government. In NSW, the Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council area is the COAG trial site.

In the Murdi Paaki region the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training and the State Department of Education are the leading agencies.

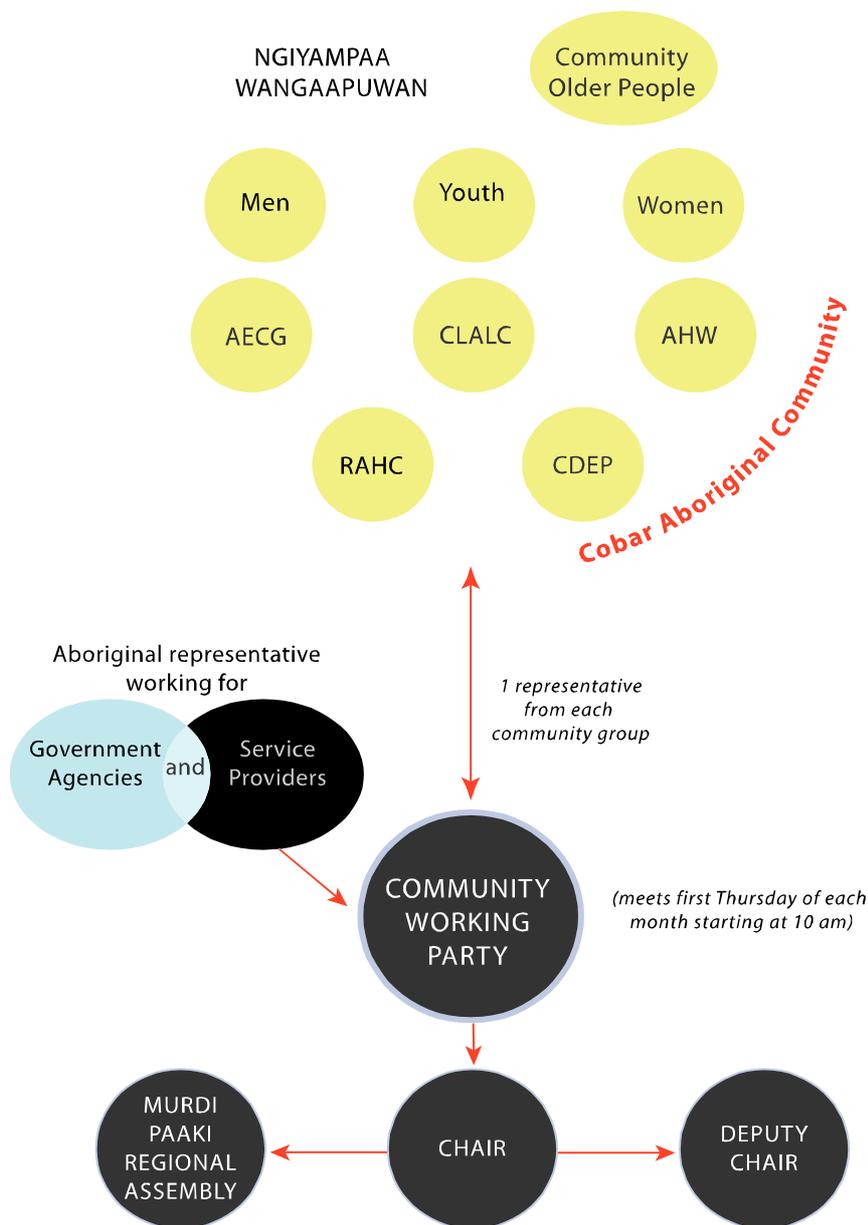
Government agencies are looking to the directions and essential outcomes of the Community Working Party to give direction and provide monitoring and review functions for the delivery of Government services to the Aboriginal communities of these areas.

Once the plans are prepared, then mutual obligation Service Responsibility Agreements will be prepared and implemented based on agreements between the communities and the relevant government departments to provide appropriate services to the communities which will be based on these community plans.



**Graphic 3: CWP Structure**

**Cobar Community Working Party**  
 Our Representative Structure



The Cobar Community Working Party has representatives from the community as well as from the major Aboriginal service organizations and also Aboriginal representatives from Government and non-Government agencies

## **Our rules of association and decision-making processes**

The Community Working Parties have been loose affiliations of representatives from the Aboriginal community with representatives from the wider community invited to attend and add to discussion.

Now that the Community Working Party has a more formal role to direct government programs and policies as well as monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of these we have developed a basic set of rules of association to ensure consistency and coherence in our decision making.

Our decision making is based on consensus and respect. This means ensuring that all sections of our community have a voice and that everyone knows what is going on and have an opportunity for their voice to be heard.

The CWP can take sometimes take a while to come to agreement. However, this process creates decisions that are more effective in the long term. Consultation and participation in all our decision making is crucial to effective and long term community development.

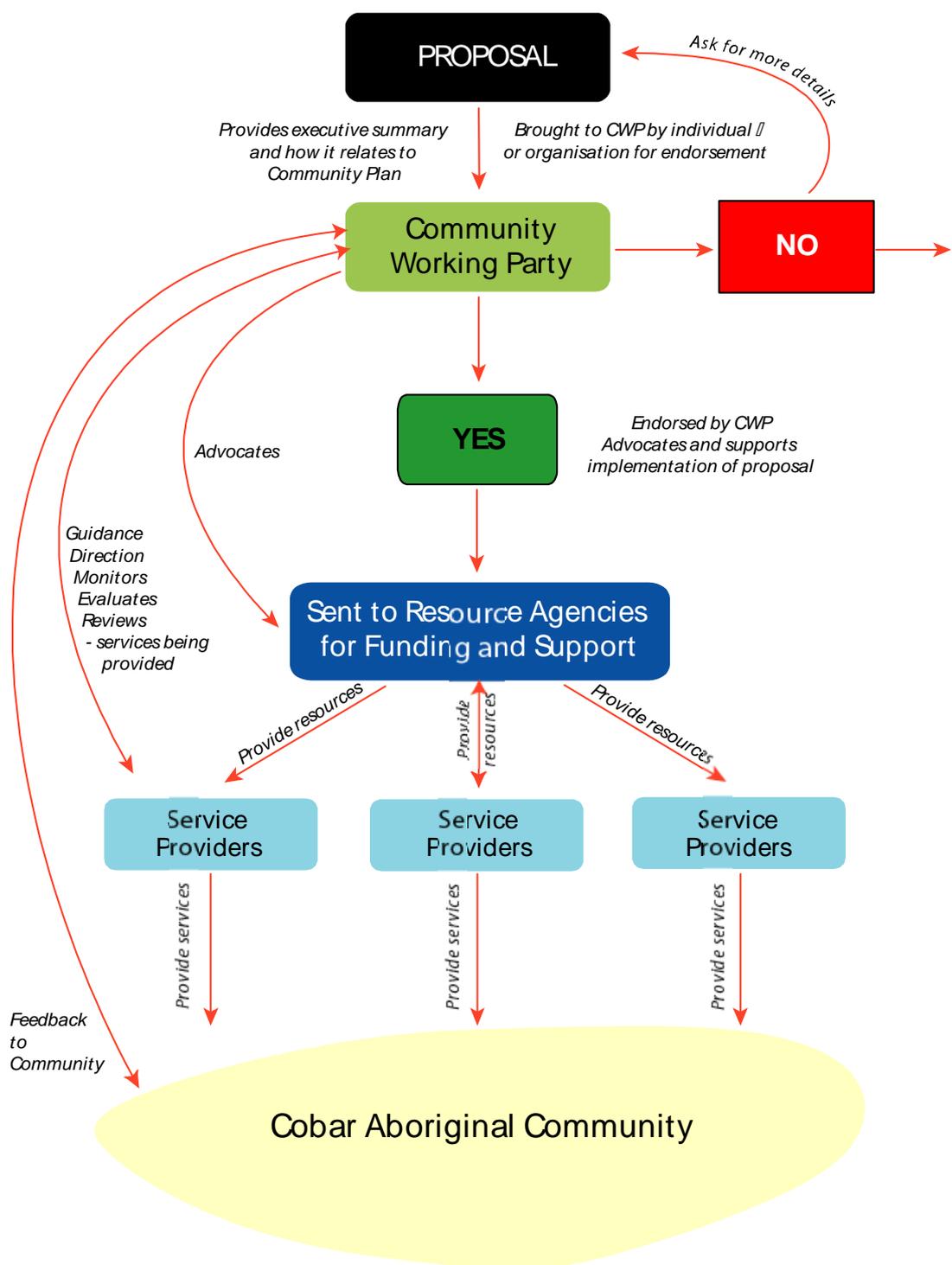
The main role of the CWP is to endorse strategies, programs and projects that are in line with our main aims and essential outcomes.

Proposals for projects will be presented to the CWP with an executive summary as well as full details. The CWP will then formally endorse the proposals, request more information, or not endorse if it is felt they do not fit within the general aims and directions of the Strategic and Action plans.

The CWP will then maintain an important role in advocating for the resourcing of these programs and then monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of the programs in relation to the essential outcomes which are detailed in this document.

**Graphic 4: CWP Endorsement & Advocacy**

Cobar Community Working Party Endorsement and Advocacy



## **Vision**

**A sustainable and viable ongoing Aboriginal community based on culture, family and country central to the life and direction of our people and to the whole community of Cobar**

## **Guiding Principles**

We have pride in our traditions and culture

We are here for the long haul

We have respect for all people, cultures and creeds

Happiness is a principle goal of all that we do

We promote the right to freedom of speech

We are open to listening to ideas and constructive criticism to make sure our community develops.

We aim to live in peace and harmony

Our community directed by wise people

We welcome everyone here. We will support you and make sure that no-one is left behind.

We ask that you respect this place and help us look after this beautiful country

This is a land of freedom, peace, tolerance and harmony.

We hold these values from our ancestors and from the spirit of this land and hold them for the community

We work together with all members of the community

## **What makes us happy and proud to be Aboriginal in Cobar**

A friendly, multi-cultural community

A safe environment for children and adults

Great sporting and recreation facilities

Good employment opportunities

A long, proud heritage

Our families

Being an equal part of the community

A supportive and close knit community

Low crime rate

We have come here by choice – not forced here by government or missions.

Good schools and facilities for our children

## **Main issues we face as a community**

### **Local**

To show our culture and identity all the time and have more respect from the wider community.

To develop businesses – particularly in tourism and art production.

Landscaping of houses and parks – beautification projects.

Elder – Youth camps.

Improvement in town health facilities – especially hospital, dental and maternity.

A night patrol and bus.

More support for the education of our children – especially in coping with ADD, ADHD.

More training programs and employment opportunities for our people through local businesses.

Racial discrimination and stereotyping

Long term future of the mines

Poor and water supplies

## **National and Global – longer term**

land and waters degradation and pollution

Predictions of oil crisis (past peak production levels but rapidly increasing demand and most major world economies based on oil) leading to higher prices for petrol and other fuel and perhaps significant economic collapses around the world

climate change with predictions that western NSW will become substantially hotter – up to 6 months of the year over 40 degrees Celsius in some parts

increasing house prices but no potential increase in employment or enterprise

drain of 'clever' and 'enterprising' people away from town especially if there is closure of the mines

the effect of GST on enterprises and people's lives

### **Priorities for our Community**

#### **Urgent and Important - Immediate**

Development of a cultural centre

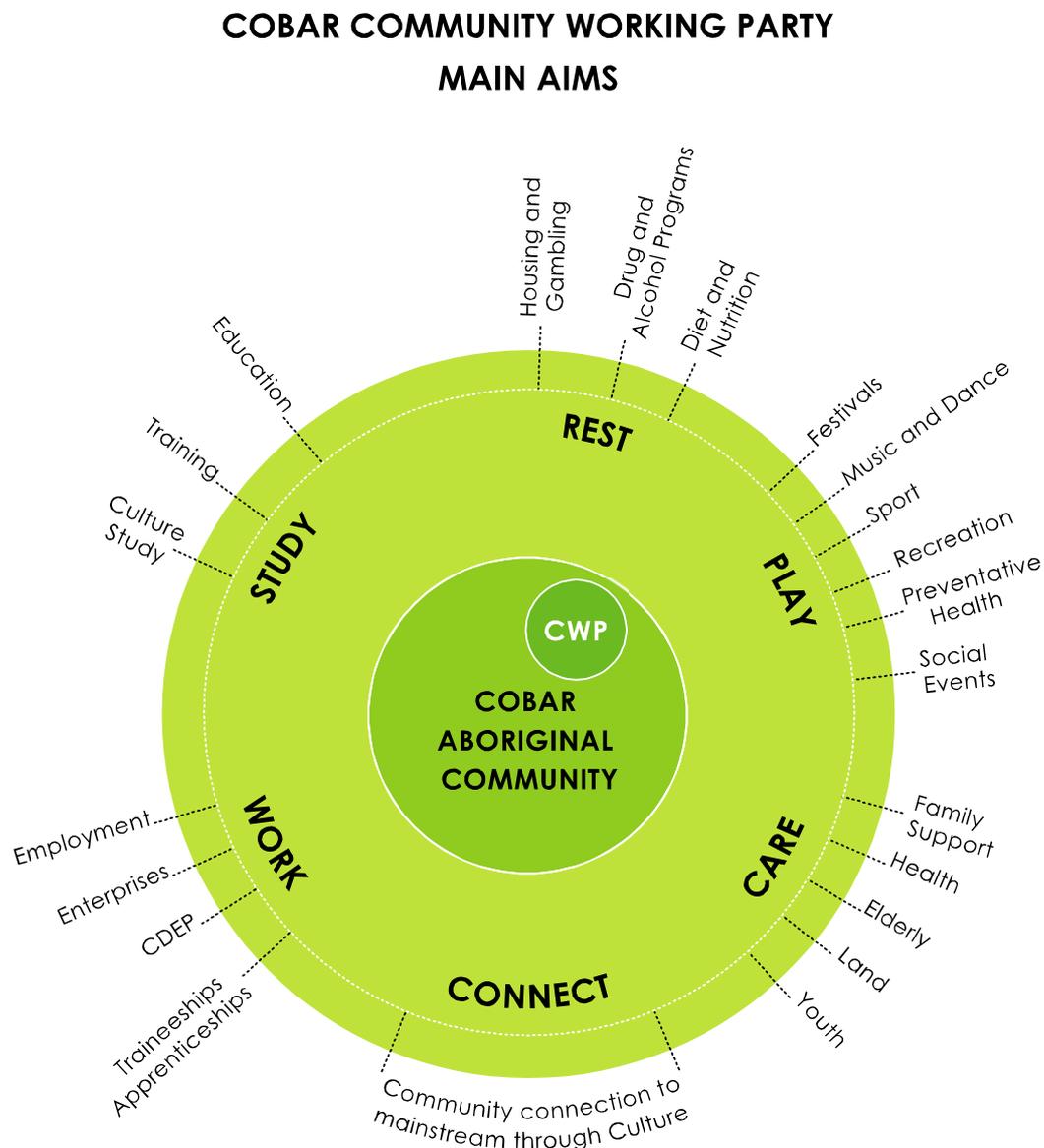
Improving Health

Ensuring better Educational outcomes for our children

Dealing with drug and alcohol abuse

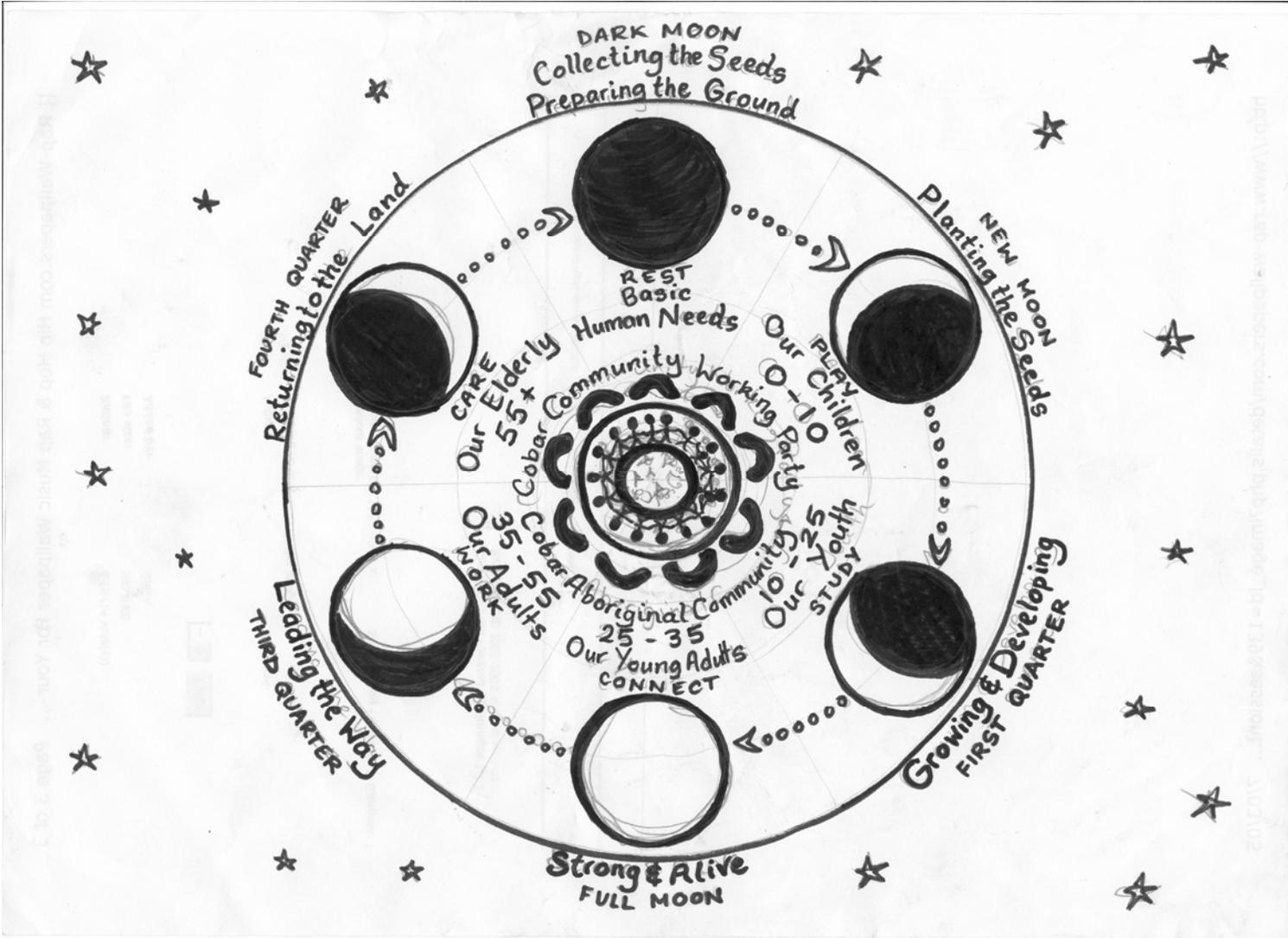
# Our Main Aims and long term essential outcomes

Graphic 5: CWP Main Aims



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Graphic 6: Our Cycle



# The Dark of the Moon – Preparing the Ground

## Our Culture and Identity – the basis of our life as Aboriginal people

Caring for the land and maintaining and enhancing our culture and identity as Aboriginal people and also as important members of Australian society.

### TARGETS

Our culture taught in schools

We are respected and acknowledged and seen as an essential part of the whole community

Our people consulted for issues around land and cultural and natural heritage

### MAIN FOCUS AREAS:

- Representation on regional and local land development advisory boards
- Development of a Culture Centre
- Support and maintenance of traditional culture
- Culture camps and programs
- Cultural awareness training

### MAIN ACTION AREAS:

- CULTURE AND IDENTITY
- LAND

# **Dark of the Moon – Collecting seeds for planting**

## **Our basic human needs**

The first part of the preparation for our future is to ensuring our basic human freedoms– for a healthy and long life, for worthwhile and meaningful employment, a respectful and crime-free community, access to essential services of good food, shelter, education, transport, communications, sport and recreation, and political and legal representation.

### **TARGETS**

**Our community and country:**

- clean, safe and enjoyable
- access to important and essential infrastructure and services
- political and legal representation

### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- landscaping and beautification
- communications and transport services
- develop CWP website to provide information on service delivery
- representation in levels of government

### **MAIN ACTION AREAS:**

- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE**

# **The New Moon**

## **Planting the seeds**

### **Our Children – (0-10 years)**

The precious gift of our future to be nurtured and cared for with delicacy and reverence

#### **TARGETS**

Our children:

- being healthy, respectful and obedient
- attending school
- nurtured by functioning families
- learning our culture and identity
- with high self-esteem

#### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- Parenting Programs
- Reducing domestic violence
- Reducing alcohol abuse and gambling
- Good nutrition
- Safe and healthy housing and services
- Homemaking Programs
- Appropriate pre-school and child care facilities

#### **MAIN ACTION AREAS**

- HEALTH
- WELFARE
- HOUSING

# **First Quarter**

## **Growing and Developing**

### **Our Youth – (10-25 yrs)**

Educating and training our young people to be responsible, healthy, compassionate, adventurous and exciting members of our community

#### **TARGETS**

Our youth:

- being fit, healthy and respectful
- developing life skills
- achieving in education
- supported by functioning families
- learning our culture and identity
- learning from and supported by mentors and elders

#### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- Making school fun and attractive
- Good sports and recreation activities
- Tutors and homework centers
- Rewarding excellence
- School and community camps
- Art and craft workshops
- Vocational training and work experience
- Early intervention for criminal and anti-social behaviour

#### **MAIN ACTION AREAS:**

- YOUTH
- EDUCATION
- SPORT AND RECREATION
- HEALTH

- **LAW AND JUSTICE**

# **Full Moon Strong, Fertile and Alive**

## **Our Adults – (25 – 35 yrs)**

Developing enterprise and responsible lifestyles through meaningful employment, appropriate housing, community infrastructure and opportunities for economic development

### **TARGETS**

Our adults:

- **Meaningfully employed**
- **Functioning and healthy families**
- **Living in safe, clean housing**
- **Independent, supportive, responsible**
- **Supporting our culture and identity**
- **Becoming leaders in our community**

### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- **Better Housing**
- **Ongoing learning about cultural practices and values**
- **Effective parenting**
- **Responsible alcohol use and gambling**
- **Reducing legal and illegal drug use**
- **Creating meaningful employment and training**

### **MAIN ACTION AREAS:**

- **EMPLOYMENT**
- **HEALTH**
- **LAW AND JUSTICE**

- **HOUSING**

# **Third Quarter**

## **Growing Older, Leading the Way**

### **Our Mature Adults – (35-55yrs)**

Taking responsibility for guiding, leading and managing our community into greater harmony, enjoyment and creativity through generous offering of time, energy and resources

#### **TARGETS**

Our mature adults:

- Leading our community
- Responsibly managing our organizations
- Secure and independent
- Learning from and supported by elders

#### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- Continuity of employment
- Learning and applying principles of good governance and management
- Mentoring younger people
- Volunteering services for community events and activities
- Community development
- Sustainable economic enterprise development and support
- Ongoing training and learning

#### **MAIN ACTION AREAS:**

- GOVERNANCE
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- ENTERPRISE
- EDUCATION

# **Towards the Dark Getting Old, Returning to the Land**

## **The Elderly – (55+)**

Care, honor and respect within our community for those older people who have created this community and provided the opportunities we now enjoy and who pass on the important essence of our culture, identity and heritage.

### **TARGETS**

**Our elders:**

- Being well and healthy
- Respected by the wider community
- Advising on cultural and heritage issues
- Being cared for in the community
- Mentoring younger people and adults in their roles in the community
- Role models for unity, integrity, respect within the community
- Supporting members of the community to live fulfilling and meaningful lives

### **MAIN FOCUS AREAS:**

- Developing language and cultural programs
- Support for elderly living in the community
- Health programs
- Membership on land, heritage and cultural advisory boards

### **MAIN ACTION AREAS:**

- **CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

- **LAND, WATERS and the ENVIRONMENT**
- **WELFARE**
- **HEALTH**

Sub-committees Action Planning Area Tables have been prepared as a separate document , attachment A :

CULTURE AND  
IDENTITY

GOVERNANCE

EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING

Where did this idea come from?

ENTERPRISE AND  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

Who has the responsibility to provide  
the resources for the project?

HOUSING

YOUTH

Who is willing and able to provide the  
service?

SPORT AND  
RECREATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

What do we want to achieve?

HEALTH

WELFARE

EMPLOYMENT

LAND, WATERS and  
ENVIRONMENT

LAW AND JUSTICE

### **Reporting and Monitoring**

'Having accurate and up to date information about health, welfare and socio-economic position of Aboriginal people in Cobar, over time is essential for the ongoing monitoring of the plan. The collection, collation and distribution of data against the COAG indicators is the responsibility of all Government Departments involved in delivery of services. In the Murdi Paaki area this would primarily involve co-ordination by the ICC and the active involvement of the two lead agencies, DEST and DET. The Cobar Community Working Party look forward to continuing supply of up to date statistics measuring the following indicators'

# The COAG Indigenous Indicators of Disadvantage, framework and data sources

In April 2002, the Council of Australian Governments commissioned the Steering Committee to produce a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. This report has an important long-term objective to inform Australian governments about whether policy programs and interventions are achieving positive outcomes for indigenous people.

The indigenous Indicator framework attached below will go to COAG in June for final endorsement. It is expected that it will be endorsed without change.

## Headline indicators

- Life expectancy at birth - AIHW
- Rates of disability and/or core activity restriction - DHAA
- Year 10 and 12 retention and attainment- COAG
- Post-secondary education – participation and attainment - ABS
- Unemployment and labour force participation - ABS
- Household and individual income - ABS
- Home ownership - ABS
- Suicide and self-harm – FACS
- Substantiated child protection notifications – FACS
- Deaths from homicide and hospitalisations for assault - Police
- Victim rates for crime - Police
- Imprisonment and juvenile detention rates.- Correctional Services

## Strategic Areas for action and indicators

Set out below is the indicators and possible sources for baseline data. Some of the data is already collected, and although may not be for the current year would be appropriate to use as the baseline information, for example statistics from the ABS 2001 census. The ABS census data provides information at a detailed local (community) level. Information such as Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and other ABS data may not be provided at a local or regional level, and may only be provided at a state level. This may be sufficient for the first base-line data, depending on the source of and complexity of collating the information may or may not be able to be disaggregated to a regional level.

## Early child development and growth (prenatal to age 3)

- Rates of hospital admission for infectious diseases

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- Infant mortality
- Birth Weight
- Hearing impairments

Source - Hospital Casemix or clinic data<sup>1</sup> or published AIHW

### **Early school engagement and performance (pre-school to year 3)**

- Primary school children with dental caries
- Year 3 literacy and numeracy
- Pre-school and school attendance

Source - State education departments, ABS census for school attendance

### **Positive childhood and transition to adulthood**

- Year 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy
- Retention at year 9

Source - State education departments, ABS census for school attendance

- Participation in organised sport, arts or community group activities

Source - survey

- Juvenile diversions as a proportion of all juvenile offenders

Source - Correctional services

- Transition from school to work

Source - ABS Census provides employment statistics by age groups

### **Substance use and misuse**

- Alcohol and tobacco consumption
- Alcohol related crime and hospital statistics
- Drug and other substance use

Source - AIHW, may be specific information in the Institute of Drug and Alcohol research, Curtin university. In isolated communities may be able to obtain data from the local store.

### **Functional and resilient families and communities**

- Children on long term care and protection orders

Source - Family and Community Services

- Repeat offending

Source - Correctional Services

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<sup>1</sup> Release of hospital casemix data is subject to the consent of the regional communities and the state department of health providing the data.

- Access to nearest health professional

Source – Community or the AMS

- Proportion of Indigenous people with access to their traditional lands

Source - Mapped for each region Land Council

### **Effective environmental health systems**

- Rates of disease associated with poor environmental health

Source - Hospital Casemix data, AIHW

- Overcrowding in housing

Source - Community and/or Regional Housing Authority

Source - ABS Census

- Access to clean water and functional sewerage

Source - CHINS survey

### **Economic participation and development**

- Employment (full-time/part-time) by sector (public/private), industry and occupation
- CDEP Participation
- Long term unemployment
- Self employment

Source - ABS Census

- Indigenous owned or controlled land

Source - LC

- Accredited training in leadership, finance and management

Source - Survey

### **Achievements of previous plan**

- By main aim area

Source - CWP plan