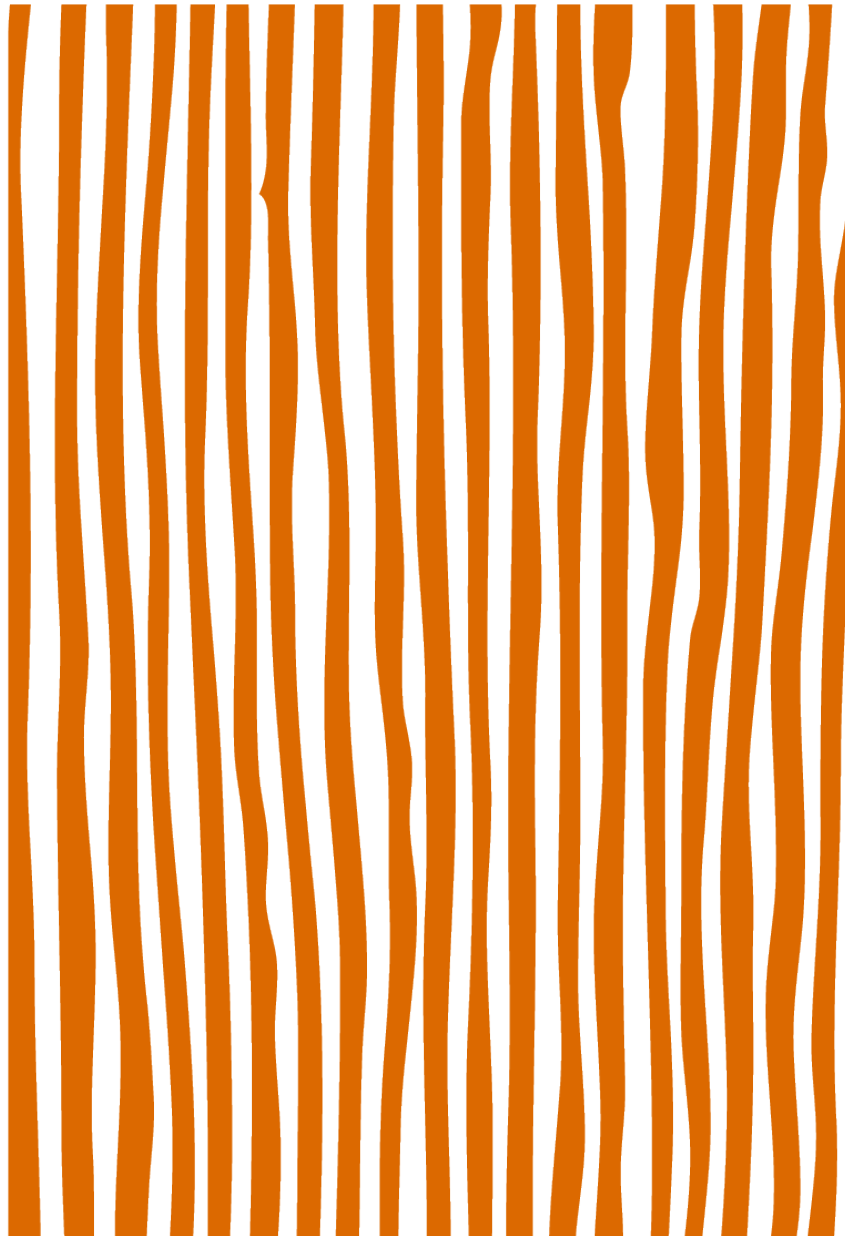


Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

Governance Handbook



Contents

Purpose of the Handbook	3
Our Journey	4
Functions of the Regional Assembly	5
Roles and Responsibilities	6
Assembly Meetings	9
Assembly Membership and Voting	10
Decision Making	11
Dispute Resolution	12
Managing External Stakeholders and Relationships	13
Our Principles and Code of Conduct	14

Key Acronyms

MPRA: Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

MPY&ELA: Murdi Paaki Young and Emerging Leaders Assembly

CWP: Community Working Parties

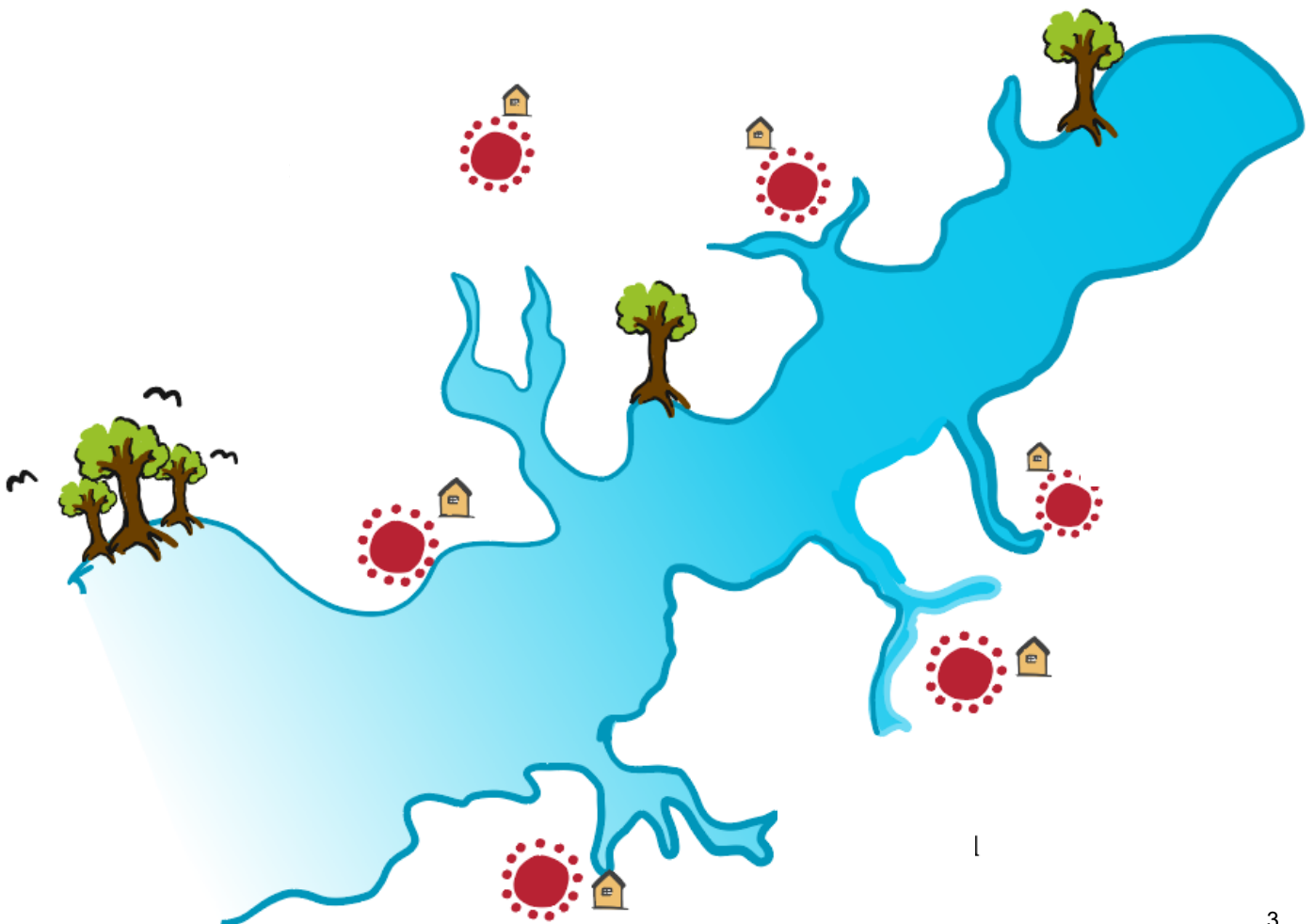
NSWALC- New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council

Purpose of the Governance Handbook

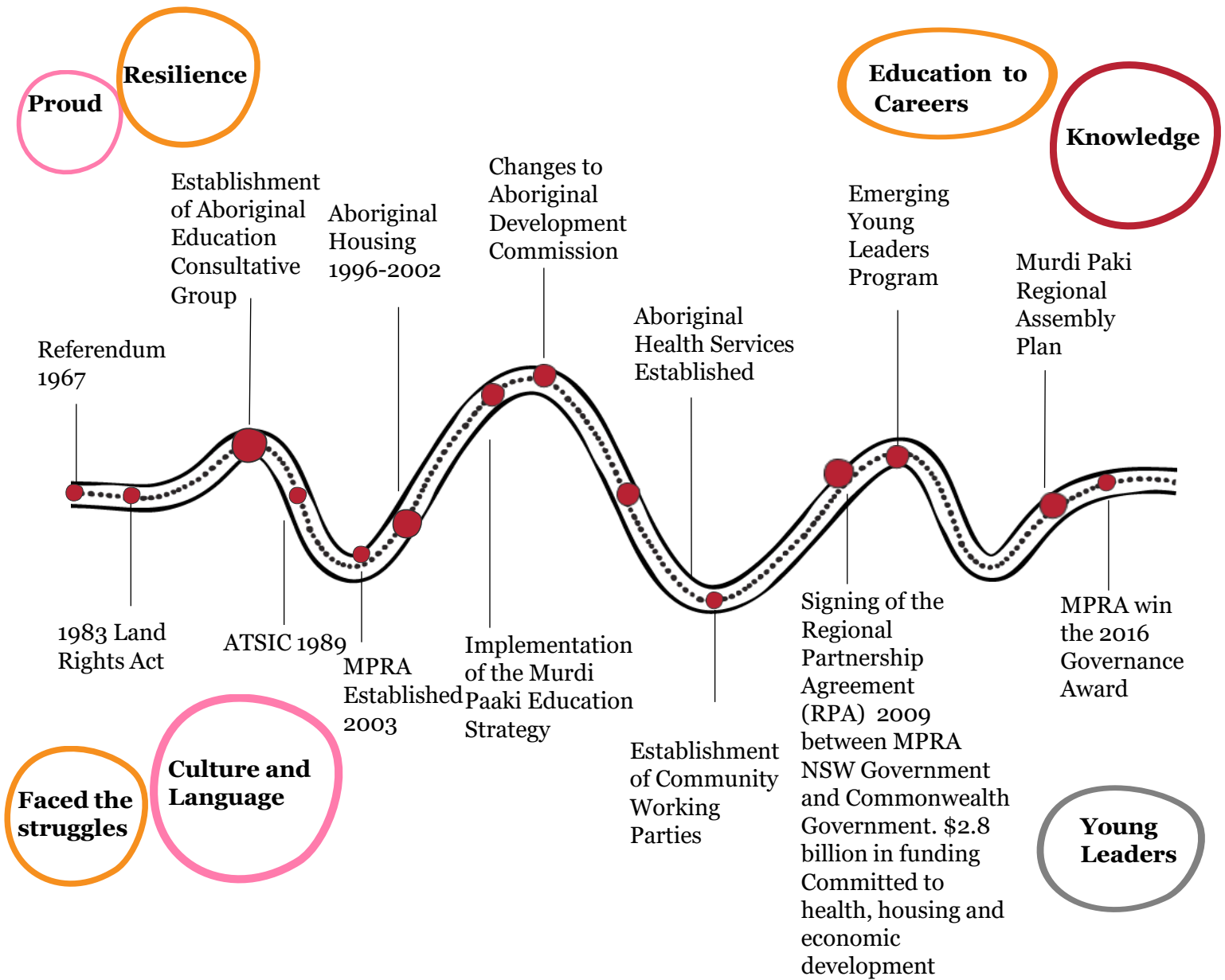
The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the Peak First Nations Governance body for the Murdi Paaki Region, in North Western New South Wales, representing the interests of First Nation peoples living in the region. This Handbook outlines the roles, responsibilities and rules that govern members of the Assembly in order to continue to practice good governance. Good governance means we are able to continue to provide for our communities and to be the voice that enables our communities to realise true self determination.

Our Metaphor for Governance: We are Murdi (blackman), the Assembly reflects Paaki (river) that connects our sixteen communities. The river is a metaphor of what success looks like, a healthy river that provides and reaches its destination. In order to continue to provide for our communities we need to ensure the river is healthy, meaning our governance is strong and effective. Our communities rely on us to provide the tools and support necessary just like the people and ecosystems that rely on the river.

The items outlined in this handbook will guide us to reach our destination and continue to provide to our communities. It is critical that members understand this, that as a member of the Assembly you are the Paaki and must always act in the best interests of our communities and region.



Our Journey

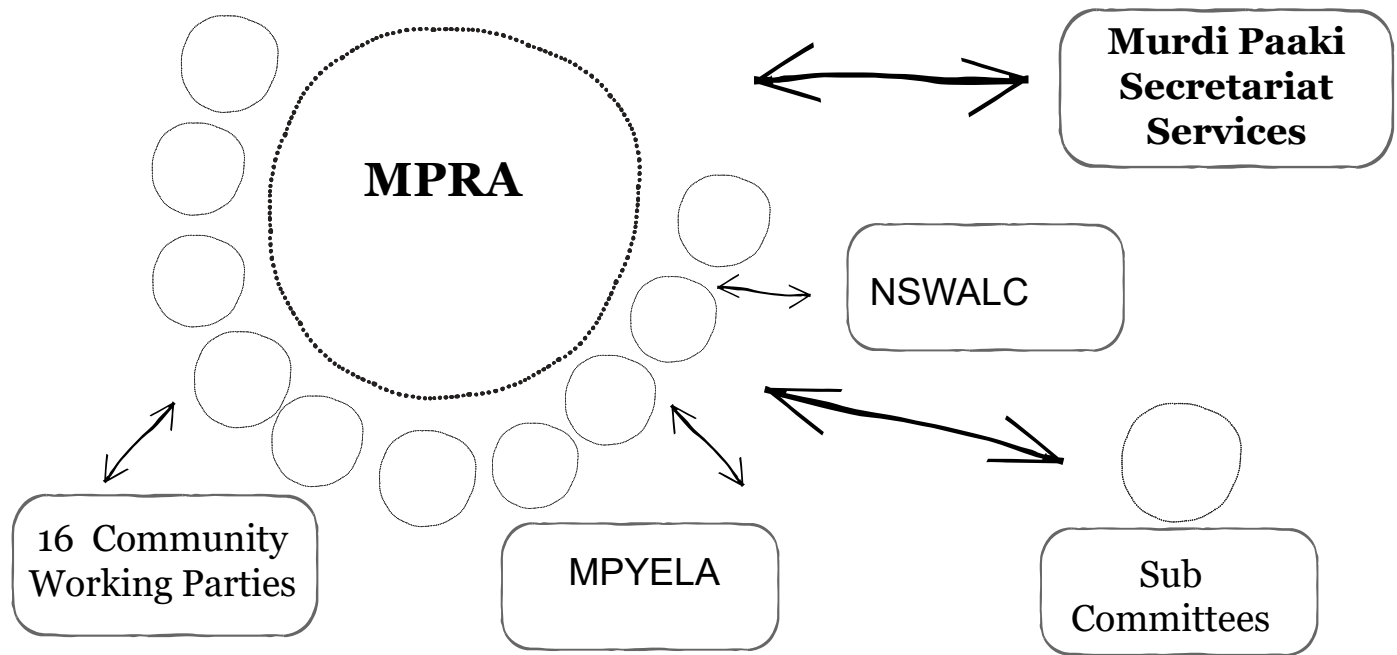


Brief History of Our Name

Murdi Paaki (pronounced ‘*murddy parky*’) means “blackmans river”. It was a name that was selected by the newly created ATSIIC Regional Council which came from amendments in 1993 to the ATSIIC Act 1989 to amalgamate the former Wangkumara and Far West Regional Councils into a single Council.

For election purposes, two words were kept in the names of the previous Councils. The words for the name were taken from the two sub regions, “Murdi” (blackman) from the top end, “Paaki” (river) from the bottom end. The Council identified the most common theme of the region that we all related to, The Barwon Darling river system. The river, enters the region in the northeast near and through Collarenebri, further working its way through Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke, Wilcannia, Menindee and exiting into the Murray at Wentworth.

Functions of the Regional Assembly



The Regional Assembly membership is drawn directly from the Community Working Parties elected by the people in the Murdi Paaki Region.

The functions of the Regional Assembly are:

1. **Respect, Maintain and Recognise** the special and unique customs and beliefs of the First Nations peoples living in the region;
2. **Advocate** the interests of First Nations people in the region;
3. **Develop, Implement and Review** a Regional Plan that is reflective of community to improve the economic, social, and cultural status of First Nations peoples and communities of the region;
4. **Determine** regional priorities;
5. **Assist, advise, and co-operate** with the Commonwealth, State and local government bodies in the implementation of the Regional Plan;
6. **Assist, advise, and co-operate** with First Nation individuals, communities, Community Working Parties and organisations in the implementation of the Regional Plan;
7. **Report to Community Working Parties** on the operations of MPRA, the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, non government agencies and local organisations;
8. **Monitor the implementation and effectiveness** of programs and services delivered by government and non-government agencies for First Nations people living in the region;
9. **Develop policy proposals** to meet national, state, regional, and local needs and priorities of First Nations people living in the region; and
10. **Report** on the achievements, milestones and practice of MPRA's objectives.

Roles and Responsibilities

Assembly Members

Role: The Regional Assembly membership is drawn directly from communities through the 16 regional Community Working Parties (CWP), which are elected by the people of each community, with the exception of the Wentworth Shire. Each CWP will elect one Assembly Member to represent the community's interests at a regional level –this is usually the Chair of the respective CWP's.

Members of the regional assembly contribute to the development and implementation of a regional plan that supports local grass roots development and opportunities aligning with the needs of communities across the region.

Responsibilities

- To adhere to and respect the code of conduct when conducting MPRA business;
- Attend all MPRA meetings. If members are unable to be present for a meeting they must nominate a second person to attend on their behalf. An apology must be sent to the Chair within a reasonable timeframe;
- It is the responsibility of members to read all meetings papers prior to attending the meeting (subject to sufficient time to review, see below for MP Secretariat responsibility). This helps us make informed and timely decisions;
- To work in the best interest of all First Nations people living in the region;
- Encourage service coordination, develop partnerships and networks that benefit communities and achieve outcomes outlined in the Regional Plan; and
- Influence service delivery that is culturally appropriate and reflects the needs of communities.
- An elected CWP Chairperson holds the position for a four year term, unless a refresh has been triggered.
- Any Key Performance Indicator (KPI) required by Members will be provided within the requested timeframe to ensure the continuation of funding.

Murdi Paaki Secretariat

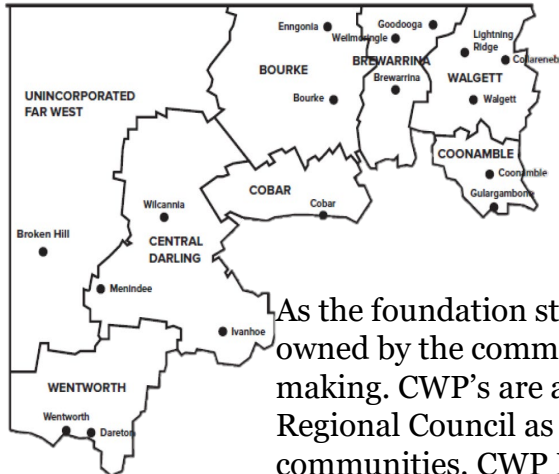
Role: The role of the Secretariat is to support the Chair in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Assembly and Assembly Business.

Responsibilities

- Ensuring meetings are effectively organised and minuted;
- Maintaining effective records and administration; and
- Hand MPRA folders to MPRA Members the day before the scheduled meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities (cont.)

Community Working Party



Role: Community Governance

CWP's are required locally to provide a governance /leadership model that suits the community. Structures should be representative and transparent .

As the foundation stones of our Assembly, CWP's are owned by the communities themselves and are of their making. CWP's are an innovation of the Murdi Paaki Regional Council as a response to initiatives by communities. CWP Members must currently reside in the community, with the exception of the Wentworth Shire.

Responsibilities:

- Represent and advance the interests of the community, individuals and families;
- Elect one representative to the Regional Assembly;
- Engage with Commonwealth, State, local government and First Nations organisations in the provision of services;
- Determine community priorities;
- Implement the community vision;
- Sustain the practice of community governance;
- Prepare, implement and review a community plan;
- Negotiate service delivery agreements with government agencies; and
- Engage with service providers to articulate community goals, aspirations and priorities.

NSWALC

Role: Elected Councillors for the region to the NSWALC are invited to attend, observe and take part in meeting business. The three Councillors receive one vote between the three regarding MPRA business.

Responsibilities: Supporting the region and its communities to achieve their aspirations. See MPRA members section.

Roles and Responsibilities (cont.)

The Chair

Role: The role of the Chair is to provide leadership and guidance to the membership of the Assembly.

Responsibilities include:

MPRA Meetings

- Responsible for upholding members to the code of conduct
- Provide strong and effective leadership;
- Coordinate the agenda with Assembly members;

External To meetings:

- Progress action items
- Liaise and meet with stakeholders and partners at the direction of the Assembly.
- Represent the assembly on official business
- Report back to the assembly on progress against action items
- Oversee the implementation of the Regional Plan;

Deputy Chair

Role: To assist the Chair in conducting MPRA business when required. The Deputy also fills in if the Chair is unavailable to attend meetings. Chair Person of the MPYELA is the Deputy Chair of MPRA.

Responsibilities:

1. To Support the Chair at Assembly Meetings;
2. To fill in for the Chair on Assembly Business where required; &
3. To ensure the Code of Conduct is being respected by members.

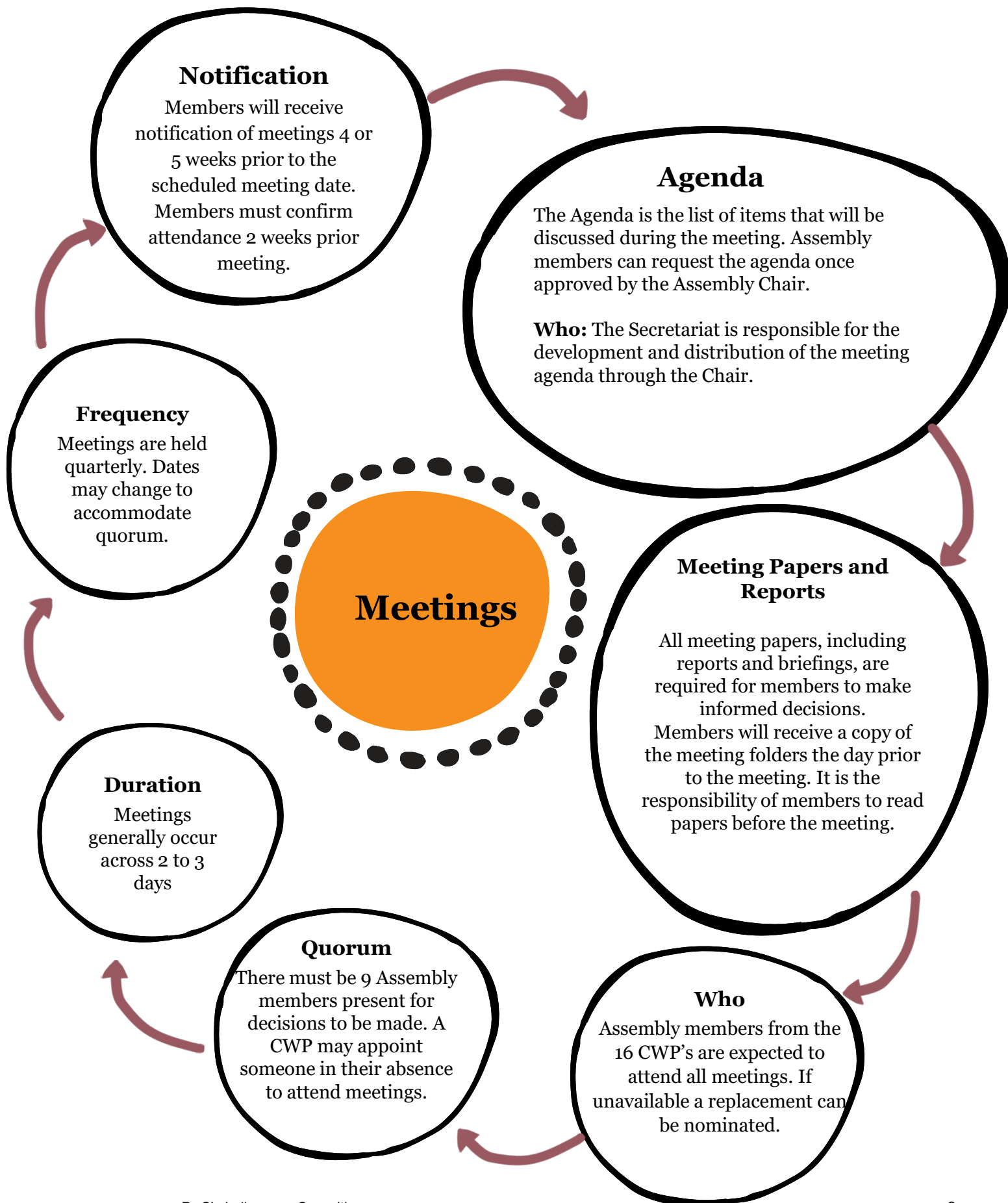
MPYELA

Role: To represent the interests of young people across the Murdi Paaki Region.

Responsibilities: A total of 4 seats are occupied by MPYELA on the MPRA with one of these seats being the Deputy Chair role. MPYELA are entitled to one vote on behalf of MPYELA on MPRA business.

MPRA relies on the Young and Emerging Leaders to undertake deliberative processes on behalf of the Aboriginal Youth of the region and to provide youth representation in decision-making and policy setting.

Assembly Meetings





Assembly Membership & Voting

Assembly Membership

Membership is made up of the elected Chair from each of the 16 CWP across the MPRA Region, four youth representatives from the MPYELA and the three NSWALC elected councillors. Two CWP representative can attend MPRA meetings though only one can vote and the additional role is that of an observer.

Murdi Paaki Young Emerging Leaders Assembly

Murdi Paaki Emerging Young Leaders Assembly (MPYELA) representatives will have speaking rights and one vote between MPYELA attendees on matters of the MPRA business.

Representatives will have speaking rights and one vote between 4 nominated MPYELA attendees on matters of the MPRA. These votes represent the views and interests of First Nation Youth across the MPRA region not the communities in which the representatives live.

MPYELAP forums/workshops can be conducted while MPRA regional meetings are taking place or anytime anyplace MPYELP requires based on available funds and resources.

NSWALC Councillors

NSWALC elected councillors are active member of MPRA. Councillors have one vote across the three members when voting on MPRA business. At certain times where there may be a risk of conflict of interest Councillors may be asked to leave the room.

Motions

Motions sought by MPRA members will not be moved or seconded in presence of presenters /delegations as this will be MPRA responsibility to approve or disapprove in confidence (No one in room only voting members and MPRA administration)

Proxy

If the CWP Chairperson/s is unable to attend the Regional Assembly meeting or sub committee meetings he or she can nominate another delegate from the CWP to attend and have voting rights in their absence. This is for a specified period only.

Observers

Observers must be approved by MPRA and observer's rights adhered to. Observers have no speaking /influential or voting rights unless requested by Chairperson that, issue is beneficial to MPRA agenda items.



Assembly Meetings

Quorum

MPRA quorum must be present in meeting at all times, each CWP Chairperson is responsible to provide quorum of 9. MPRA members who are CWP chairpersons must be present for each agenda item to provide quorum to conduct business and represent views and interest of the MPRA to presenters and guests.

Absence of the Chair

In absence of MPRA Chairperson once Chairperson has notified of unavailability MPRA can nominate an interim proxy for specified period to conduct MPRA business regarding regional meeting or other business from MPRA CWP Chairs.

The MPRA Chairperson present at the meeting can nominate an interim Chairperson to conduct MPRA meeting agenda items at regional meeting for an agreed time if required.

Speaking

Only one MPRA person nominated by MPRA Chairperson to have floor and speaking rights for sufficient period as determined by Chairperson and will either be a question/response or comment on subject or matter.

Chairperson will nominate speaker once speaker indicates intent to speak or respond, Chairperson will give as much time needed to speaker/speakers if doesn't impede on agreed agenda timeslot.

Presenters

Presenters can be provided with facilitator/workshop responsibilities as determined by MPRA Chairperson. Presenters must provide, at a minimum, a briefing paper to the MPRA Secretariat within 5 business days of the scheduled MPRA meeting.

Dispute Resolution

In event of a meeting dispute MPRA Chairperson can call time out and seek immediate resolution to the matter or reschedule issue as to not disrupt MPRA agenda.

Late Meeting Papers

All late letters or documents presented to MPRA Chairperson before agenda passed be accepted by MPRA as general business only.

Letters or documents presented after agenda will be presented as correspondence at the next MPRA unless beneficial to MPRA regional plan and important to MPRA members.

Sub Committees

Members can be nominate or elect to sit as a member on subcommittees to oversee implantation of MPRA business in particular focus areas. Subcommittees may be establish to further progress specific business under the regional action plan.

Decision Making

**Motion or issue
is introduced**

Making a decision

Members to discuss motion or issue

Considerations: Has sufficient information been provided and the time to read and understand this been made available?

Have members had the opportunity to have an honest and open discussion addressing any concerns or issues regarding the matter?

When are decisions made?

Examples:

1. I/we have the authority to make the decision.
2. I/we have been given the correct information in order to make an informed decision
3. There is a quorum of 9 members present

No

1. I/we inform the party that a decision cannot be made at this point.
2. I /we undertake the required next steps or request the information required.

Yes

1. Introduce Motion
2. Motion seconded
3. Motion passed

Managing External Stakeholders and Relationships

Government

Relationships with respective governments are an important dimension of the regional governance framework, based on the principle of working together to achieve better outcomes in accordance with Government policies and the aspirations and needs of communities as they identify them.

How do we do this?

Current agreements and policies in place that supports this relationship:

1. NSW Ochre Policy
2. Partnership Agreement
3. Working Code of Conduct
4. Funding KPIs

Community

Communities are the foundation of MPRA. Community governance and empowerment are central to bringing about change. Regional priorities are derived from grass roots community priorities and inform the work that Assembly members undertake in planning, negotiation, agreements and lobbying.

How do we do this?

1. Support and strengthening of CWP's
2. Ensuring good governance practices are always applied
3. Development, review and implementation of local community plans
4. Listen and walk with our communities
5. Working by the Code of Conduct

Services Providers

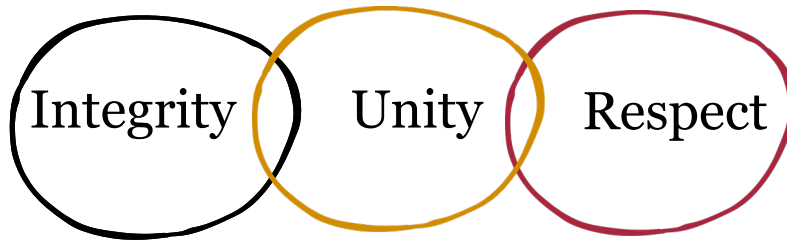
The Assembly is committed to ensuring that services are responsive to the needs of communities and are delivered through flexible funding arrangements that respond to community priorities. The Assembly works to:

1. Support First Nations people to influence and increase authority and control over service delivery to reflect regional and community circumstances.
2. Hold mainstream Departments accountable for the provision of efficient, effective and cultural match for services in accordance with priorities

How do we do this?

1. Entering into and enforcing formal Agreements between MPRA and Government.
2. Promote and encourage services to deliver against the Local and Regional Community Plans at a community and regional level
3. Both the Regional Assembly and CWP's play a role in achieving the above goals
4. Working by the Code of Conduct

Our Principles and Code of Conduct



As members of the Regional Assembly we acknowledge our responsibility to maintain the public and our communities trust in us, to work diligently and with integrity, and to use the influence gained as office holders to advance the common good of the First Nations people of the Murdi Paaki region.

This Code of Conduct is based on our 3 core principals ***Integrity, Unity and Respect***. In addition to this the code of Conduct outlines the expectation relating to accountability regarding MPRA business sand representation. It outlines a shared understanding and expectation of the way we behave as individuals, towards each other, our members, clients, partners, other supporters, and our stakeholders.

Respect: We genuinely acknowledge and respect each other's individual values, beliefs, efforts, privacy, abilities and ideas.

Assembly Members demonstrate this by:

- Supporting Members achievements;
- Understanding and supporting regional goals;
- Respecting everyone's views including valuing everyone's contribution to meetings;
- Listening to others including speakers, when presenting, who have the floor;
- Committing to stay in meetings when in session including being on time;
- Acknowledging all present in meeting;
- Respecting the diversity of our people and communities;
- Respecting each others opinions and being open minded;
- Not standing over others;
- Giving the speak our full attention by remaining off our phones and only leaving the room for urgent phone calls; and
- Respecting and adhering to Cultural Protocols across the communities.
- Abstaining from all forms of unacceptable or unlawful behaviour such as discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- MPRA does not accept Lateral Violence, members must refrain from behaviour that constitutes lateral violence.
- Dress Code: Neat and Casual



Integrity: *We maintain high standards of integrity and are dedicated in our approach to work.*

Assembly Members demonstrate this by:

- Conducting ourselves honestly;
- Ensuring our actions and decisions are in the best interests of First Nations people in the Region; and
- Ensuring fairness.

Unity: *We understand the importance of unity in demonstrating capability, strength and capacity.*

Assembly Members demonstrate this by:

- Showing a united front in the Assembly's views when in the presence of external stakeholders;
- Resolving issues or conflicts in a timely and respectful manner;
- Respecting other communities and individual opinions and needs; and
- Coming together to support communities and each other.

Accountability: *We acknowledge and assume responsibility for our own actions and personal behaviour and we are entitled to expect the same of others.*

Assembly members demonstrate this by:

- Being transparent in decision making and accurately recording and reporting MPRA information;
- Doing what an Assembly member says they will do including following up on agreed actions from MPRA meetings;
- Providing honest feedback to community working parties;
- Acknowledging that as an Assembly member there is a responsibility to behave in accordance with MPRA Principles and Objectives;
- Only making commitments that can be fulfilled and following through on them, maintaining a high standard;
- Taking responsibility for ones work and performance. Protect the physical and intellectual property of MPRA;
- Raising a perceived breach of the Code of Conduct in good faith, not victimising anyone for raising a breach in good faith; and
- Ensuring our expectations of others are reasonable, clear and understood.