



MURDI PAAKI
REGIONAL
ASSEMBLY

JUNE 2025

UPDATE

MPRA MEETING OVERVIEW JUNE 2025

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly met on the 11, 12 and 13 June Cobar.

Over the three-day meeting, the MPRA met with a range of our key partners. We officially signed a Statement of Intent with the University of New England (UNE) and discussed future collaborations, including the development of the MPRA Youth Empowerment Strategy.

The Assembly also engaged with NSW Treasury about the First Nations Investment Framework and had the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) present an update on the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing Strategy and the MPRA Building Skills for Better Futures program. Additionally, the MPRA met with Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to discuss the Co-Commissioning Project on Targeted Early Intervention.

Throughout the meeting, MPRA delegates (CWP Chairpersons) provided updates on various community and policy-driven projects.

The next MPRA meeting is being held in Cobar on 2, 3 and 4 September.



Day 2 MPRA Meeting

2025
MEETING DATES

2-4 September
2-4 December

2026
MEETING DATES

3-5 March
2-4 June
1-3 September
1-3 December

MURDI PAAKI SERVICES LIMITED (MPSL)

Over the past three months, MPSL has continued to focus on strengthening governance, enhancing community engagement, and supporting CWP initiatives across the region.

To support this work, MPSL has visited several communities to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Community Working Parties (CWPs), the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA), and MPSL itself. These engagements have also supported the review and update of Community Action Plans (CAPs), ensuring they reflect current local priorities. This is one of the recommendations from the LDM Accord Negotiation Evaluations conducted by CAEPR that MPSL is assisting MPRA to implement.

As part of its ongoing engagement efforts, MPSL has developed a comprehensive CWP Pack, which includes all key MPRA governance documents, informational flyers, and detailed materials on the MPRA structure, the MPRA Accord MKII, and the MPRA Social Housing Accord. This pack is designed to support CWPs by providing clear and accessible resources to strengthen and support local governance and planning.

In addition, MPSL has been working on the implementation of the CWP Priority Tracker, which will assist with the monitoring and implementation of CWP local priorities, allowing communities to better manage and track their progress and Community Action Plans (CAP).

MPSL has also worked closely with government and non-government stakeholders on several significant initiatives. These include the MPRA Co-Designed Staying Home Leaving Violence Model, which is currently being piloted in Bourke; ongoing support for the Broken Hill Transitional House and the Department of Communities and Justice Targeted Earlier Intervention (DCJ TEI) program; and the development and implementation of the Murdi Paaki Accord MKII Schedules and Implementation Plans. MPSL has also contributed to the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy for the Murdi Paaki Region and continues to support the Murdi Paaki Young and Emerging Leaders Program.

MPSL supported the establishment of the statement of intent between the University of New England (UNE) and MPRA and worked with UNE students to develop a combined planning model. This model, piloted in Lightning Ridge, brings together the CWP Community Action Plan, the Local Aboriginal Land Council's Community Land and Business Plan (LALC CLBP), and the Walgett Shire Council Plan into a single integrated plan. This pilot project demonstrates a practical and scalable approach that can be duplicated across all Murdi Paaki communities to promote coordinated and community-led development.



WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

At the MPRA meeting in October 2024, members reviewed and endorsed the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy and its accompanying briefing paper. Developed by the MPRA Working Group, the strategy aims to strengthen education and training pathways, improve employment outcomes, and support business development for Aboriginal people across the Murdi Paaki region's 16 communities.

At the most recent MPRA meeting, members revisited the strategy and discussed the next steps for implementation. The strategy was officially launched at a regional symposium in Cobar on 27 February 2025, with key stakeholders in attendance including representatives from Education, TAFE, UNE, and Health.

MPRA members reaffirmed their commitment to progressing this work and supported the formation of a dedicated group to lead delivery of the strategy's objectives.

Our key partners NIAA and AANSW were not present at the symposium. In April, MPSL met with NIAA to discuss strategy implementation. NIAA is eager to progress but noted that multiple government agencies need to be involved. MPSL is working with NIAA to identify key state and federal agencies to assist with implementation. We hope to model this after RAHLA, where the community and government are equal partners at the table.

Members have agreed that establishing the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy for the Murdi Paaki Region Working Group will be a vital step forward. This group will provide strategic leadership, facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, monitor progress, and advocate for policies and programs that address workforce participation barriers in the region.

STANDING STRONG TOGETHER – MPRA AND NCARA

The MPRA is part of a bigger group called NCARA (NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances). NCARA brings together Aboriginal Regional Alliances from across the state to stand strong and speak up together. MPRA has been involved from the start and helps lead the way, making sure our voices in western NSW are heard when decisions are being made by government at the state level.

In June, MPRA took part in NCARA's meeting at Lightning Ridge, where we talked about how we keep growing our voice and working better with government. We're helping NCARA get stronger by planning for the future and pushing for fair partnerships that respect our way of doing things. MPRA will keep showing up and speaking out to make sure the needs of our region are front and centre.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Supporting young leaders and ensuring strong succession planning are central to the development of a new Youth Empowerment Strategy for the Murdi Paaki Region. Building on the foundations of the Murdi Paaki Young and Emerging Leaders Program, this initiative is being delivered in partnership with the University of New England (UNE) and its SMART Region Incubator (UNE SRI), following endorsement from the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) in September 2024.

The strategy aims to establish a more structured, community-led approach to youth engagement, leadership development, and long-term succession planning across the region. It responds to a recognised need for a renewed and coordinated framework to better support the growth and participation of young leaders in Murdi Paaki communities.

To ensure the strategy is grounded in local realities and shaped by youth perspectives, UNE students will work closely with the Wentworth/Dareton, Bourke/Enngonia, and Collarenebri communities. These on-the-ground engagements will gather insights directly from young people, helping to develop a strategy that reflects their lived experiences, priorities, and aspirations.

Securing funding for the Young Leaders program has always been challenging which has hindered ongoing engagement with our Young Leaders.

REGIONAL ABORIGINAL HOUSING LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLY (RAHLA)

The Murdi Paaki Regional Plan 2016 recognised that the existing housing situation for Aboriginal communities in the Murdi Paaki region was not adequately meeting their needs. To address these longstanding housing challenges, the plan emphasised the need for a new regional housing model that would be more culturally appropriate and community-led through this the Regional Aboriginal Housing and Leadership Assembly (RAHLA) was established.

The RAHLA is the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly's (MPRA) social housing agreement, established in 2018. The RAHLA includes Four Community Working Party (CWP) members from the MPRA alongside representatives from four key government agencies: the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO), NSW Treasury, the Premiers Department, and Homes NSW. This structure ensures collaborative decision-making, keeping Aboriginal voices central to the planning, delivery, and policy development of housing services. The agreement is co-chaired by the MPRA Chairperson and the Chief Executive of the AHO, ensuring equal leadership and shared decision-making between Aboriginal communities and government.

RAHLA supports the development of culturally appropriate, community-driven housing policies, emphasising sustainable housing delivery, tenant assistance, workforce development, and engagement with regional communities. However, RAHLA's primary role is centered on policy development—it emphasises listening to what communities want and need, advising on solutions that inform and guide government investment, rather than directly delivering services.

To inform these discussions, the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research (CIPR) is undertaking an independent evaluation of the RAHLA Agreement and the Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Business Consortium. The evaluation is examining governance, achievements, program efficiency, and the broader impact of RAHLA in meeting its goals. CIPR has already conducted interviews with current and former stakeholders.

Several important initiatives continue under the RAHLA framework. A new Remote Housing Strategy agreement was signed by MPSL and AHO in October 2024, this program will provide RAHLA and community oversight of the AHOs delivery of the repairs and maintenance program with MPSL working directly with AHO and other government counterparts to deliver the Aboriginal training and employment program. MPSL and AHO are currently visiting each community doing community engagement to ensure all stakeholders are well informed. This progress stems from a successful Murdi Paaki business case submitted by the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO). The business case was developed with ongoing support from the Community Working Parties (CWPs) and informed by their input into local Housing and Environmental Health Plans (HEHPs). These local plans contributed to the creation of a regional HEHP, which ultimately led to the development and approval of the Murdi Paaki Business Case. Ongoing engagement with local communities is informing the implementation of the Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) and training strategy. MPSL is actively supporting community engagement to ensure that the Community Working Party (CWP) Chairs are well supported and fully understand the programs being delivered in their communities.



STAYING HOME LEAVING VIOLENCE

In 2024, MPRA and DCJ co-designed the Staying Home Leaving Violence model to support people escaping violence while remaining safely in their homes. Locally, it has been adapted as Staying in Community Leaving Violence (SiCLV) to better meet community needs.

Bourke was selected as the first pilot site, with MPSL, the Bourke CWP Chairperson, and DCJ working together on implementation. Weekly meetings have helped develop key documents, including a Terms of Reference and an Expression of Interest inviting locals to join the SiCLV Working Group.

The first Working Group meeting took place on 17 June, with members discussing roles and next steps. The group is now helping shape procurement questions and will nominate a community member for the Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC). DCJ will soon begin selecting a service provider.

As planning progresses, MPSL will step back, transitioning leadership to the community. The CWP Chairperson will remain supported, and the Working Group will provide regular updates to MPRA—ensuring strong local ownership of the program.



MPRA ACCORD MKII

The MPRA tasked MPSL with developing the Murdi Paaki Accord MKII Schedules, which cover Health, Education, Economic Development, Law & Justice, and Early Childhood. In undertaking this work, MPSL worked closely with key NSW Government agencies, including the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), NSW Police, NSW Education, TAFE NSW, Training Services NSW, NSW Public Works, and NSW Health to get the schedules finalised and endorsed by their agencies.

All Accord MKII Schedules and their accompanying Implementation Plans were submitted to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) on 15 November 2024. To date, the MPRA has not received signed copies of the schedules. As a result, MPSL took the initiative on 5 June 2025 to forward the documents directly to the relevant Department Secretaries for further review and action.

Despite not being formally signed off, the MPRA continues to work closely with key NSW Government agencies on the implementation of the schedules. The MPRA maintains a strong and productive relationship with these agencies, which has supported ongoing collaboration across all focus areas.

WALGETT CWP

On 19 March, the MPRA Chairperson was formally notified that the current Walgett CWP had formed its own organisation and made the decision to step away from the MPRA framework. The MPRA acknowledges the decision of the WCWP to withdraw from the Assembly. The current Community Working Party (CWP) is now working in partnership with the newly established Walgett Cultural & Community Aboriginal Corporation (WCCAC).

We note from our community meeting, that Walgett is keen to establish a Community Working Party under the MPRA framework. MPRA is committed to ensuring that the voices of Walgett community members continue to be heard at the regional level. In line with our Governance Charter, communities that opt out of the Assembly still retain the right to have representation.

NSW TREASURY FIRST NATIONS INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

The MPRA is working in partnership with NSW Treasury to socialise the First Nations Investment Framework across the region. Released in October 2024, the Framework introduces a new approach to economic appraisal and evaluation that is specifically designed to improve outcomes for First Nations people. It promotes best practice in economic evaluation, strengthens the evidence base for decision-making, and helps ensure investment is directed where it will have the greatest impact.

As part of this work, NSW Treasury is collaborating with Regional Alliances like the MPRA to raise awareness and understanding of the Framework within communities. Over the coming months, Treasury will work with MPSL to coordinate attendance at CWP meetings. These sessions will provide an opportunity to introduce the Framework at the local level, explain how it can be used in practice, and discuss its relevance to community priorities and planning.

This engagement is an important step in supporting communities to take a more active role in shaping and influencing investment decisions that affect their futures.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Through research, community consultation, and the development of the Broken Hill Housing and Environmental Health Plan (HEHP) and Broken Hill CWP Community Action Plan (CAP), it was identified that transitional housing is needed for men leaving the criminal justice system. The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) approached MPRA through RAHLA with a vacant 5-bedroom house in Broken Hill to be used as a Transitional House. The property was designed in partnership with Broken Hill CWP and the Community Restorative Centre (CRC) through co-design community workshops. The project focuses on addressing challenges around bail, discharge, and housing stability. After workshops in late 2023 and early 2024 to develop service delivery and case management, the Transitional House is now operational and has welcomed its first tenants this year. The property is managed by Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Housing Corporation. Broken Hill CWP continues to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the “Wiimpatja Marli Yapara”, (meaning Aboriginal (Baaka) men’s place), Transitional House.

Through the success of this project, the AHO has approached MPSL with an opportunity to co-design and place transitional housing for youth in the Murdi Paaki Region. These discussions are in their early stages but represent a great outcome for the Murdi Paaki Region.



MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND SIGNING OF THEIR STATEMENT OF INTENT

The MPRA proudly signed a Statement of Intent with the University of New England (UNE) — marking the beginning of a transformative partnership for our region.

This agreement will strengthen outcomes in:

- Community-identified projects aligned with Community Working Parties Action Plans
- Support with Implementation of the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy for the Murdi Paaki Region
- Higher education pathways for First Nations students
- Youth programs and entrepreneurship
- Joint monitoring and evaluation of outcomes

Grace Gordon, Independent Chairperson of MPRA, spoke powerfully about the importance of culturally grounded, community-led education and shared her personal journey as an example of what's possible with the right support.

UNE's team — including Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Simon Evans, Sanaz Alian, and Alex Cook — were on hand, along with Dr Judith Burns, who reflected on the history of this growing partnership and the opportunities that exist within it. All were proud to be standing alongside community to commit to the future of our young people and region.

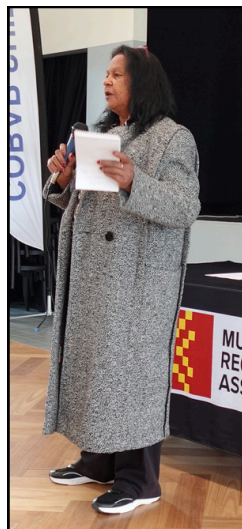
MPRA Members also shared heartfelt stories about what education means for their communities and thanked UNE for their genuine commitment to our region.

The event was proudly attended by representatives from Roy Butler MP's Office and the NSW Department of Education.

This is more than just an agreement — it's a commitment to long-term change through trust, cultural respect, and shared learning.



MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND SIGNING OF THEIR STATEMENT OF INTENT



MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY STRUCTURE

COMMUNITY WORKING PARTIES

BOURKE	BREWARRINA	BROKEN HILL	COBAR	COLLARENEBRI	COONAMBLE	ENNGONIA	GOODOOGA
GULARCAMBONE	IVANHOE	LIGHTNING RIDGE	MENINDEE	WALGETT	WEILMORINCLE	WENTWORTH/ DARETON	WILCANNIA

Community Working Parties (CWPs) are the foundation stones of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and are the community's Aboriginal voice, not only on their needs and aspirations, but also the issues faced by their community. Each community has established a CWP representative of the people in their communities. CWPs provide a direct link to the Regional Assembly and provide an insight into what's occurring at a local community level. While CWPs are not funding bodies, they are the peak representative body for their community for government and non-government organisations to consult and engage with, while also setting priorities around closing the gap and eliminating social issues for their community.

MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY



Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) is the peak representative structure that represents the interest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 16 communities across Western NSW. MPRA's governance model promotes the practice of good governance, responsible leadership and empowerment, this is a legacy of the former Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council. Community and Regional Governance are the tools that hand responsibility to us.

Membership of MPRA comprises Chairpersons from the sixteen Community Working Parties (CWPs), representatives of the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Young and Emerging Leaders (MPAY&ELP), three NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) Councillors, and an independent Chairperson.



The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is a formal affiliation of Aboriginal communities and, as such, purposely does not have legal standing nor can it enter into binding agreements with governments and others. To enable a greater level of participation in operational matters and to provide governments with improved opportunities to innovate and invest in Aboriginal people of the region, MPRA established Murdi Paaki Services Limited (MPSL) as an independent professional legal entity under sole ownership and governance of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

SUB COMMITTEES

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly at times requires sub committees, such as the Accord MKII committee to be formed to further progress the priorities of the Assembly

REGIONAL ABORIGINAL HOUSING LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLY

In 2015, the Assembly initiated a major grass-roots review of the Aboriginal social housing sector in western NSW. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on behalf of the Government of NSW and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Independent Chairperson on behalf of the Assembly entered into an Agreement to improve Aboriginal social housing outcomes in the Murdi Paaki Region. The Agreement establishes the Regional Aboriginal Housing Leadership Assembly (RAHLA) as the overarching governance structure for delivery of the Agreement objectives.



PURPOSE

To obtain CWP feedback and to provide an insight to ensure Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with funding agencies are being met. Please ensure that you have completed and provided this survey to your Community Working Party (CWP) Chairperson to allow Murdi Paaki Services Limited (MPSL) to compile the results and track the progress of each CWP. Please note that answers to this survey will remain confidential and are required on a quarterly basis, inline with Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) meetings (March, June, September and December). If you have any questions in regard to this survey please contact your local CWP Chairperson in the first instance. If further assistance is required contact Amy Pagett, MPRA Secretary at amy.pagett@mpr.com.au.

NOTE: CWPs/MPRA & MPSL do not own or manage housing or employment services

COMMUNITY WORKING PARTY

Are regular meetings being held (minimum 1 every 3 months)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are meetings being advertised? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are meetings open to all Indigenous locals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are Indigenous community members attending CWP meetings regularly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe that the CWP is functioning satisfactorily? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe a refresh needs to be undertaken? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, why? _____

SERVICE GAPS & WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Which Government and Non-Government agencies are attending CWP meetings?

☐ National Indigenous Australians Agency

☐ NSW Aboriginal Affairs

☐ Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI.e)

☐ Westpac

☐ NSW Transport

☐ Other, please specify _____

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN (CAP)

Is your CWP CAP completed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your CWP CAP endorsed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your CWP CAP relevant to the current priorities in the community? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you aware that the CAP is a living document and may be amended at CWP meetings as required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is progress being made on the priorities in the CAP? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Which two (2) priorities do you believe should be prioritised first?

<input type="checkbox"/> Heritage and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood and School Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Wellbeing
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Democracy, Leadership and Citizenship
<input type="checkbox"/> Law & Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Regional Resourcing and Capability

CWP SATISFACTION

Please select an option below that best represents your satisfaction of the CWP.

☐ 0% - 20% - Highly Dissatisfied

☐ 21% - 40% - Dissatisfied

☐ 41% - 60% - Neutral

☐ 61% - 80% - Satisfied

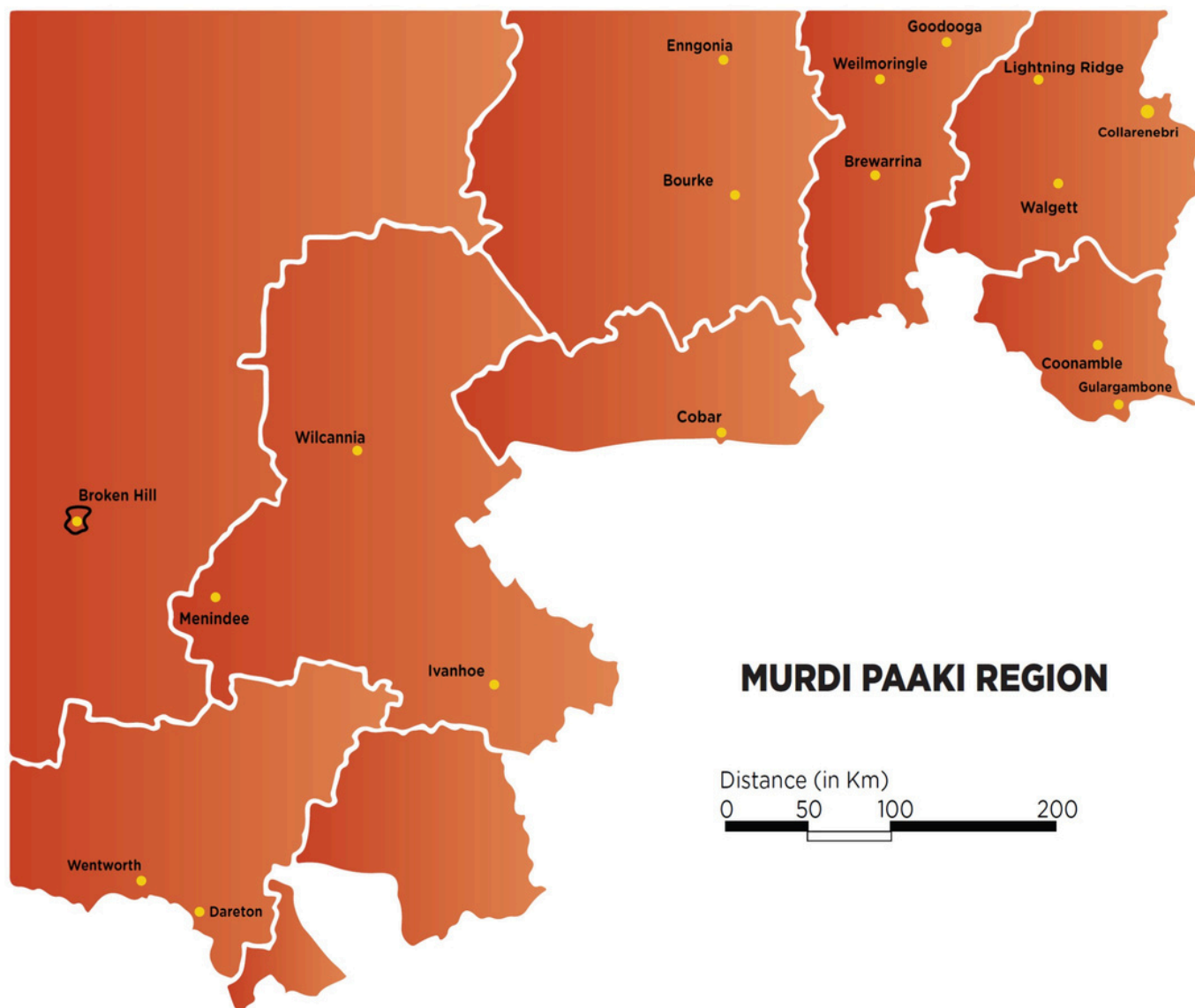
☐ 81% - 100% - Highly Satisfied

MURDI PAAKI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY &

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What support do you expect from the MPRA and MPSL to provide the CWP?





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