



Indigenous

MCRN recognises the Gundungurra and the Darug peoples as the Traditional Owners of this land; and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.



DID YOU KNOW?

There is **still a higher level of disadvantage experienced by the Aboriginal and Islander communities** than the non-Aboriginal community. On average, Indigenous people have: lower incomes, higher unemployment, greater housing disadvantage and poorer health and social outcomes. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 19% of housing & homelessness services. **In the Blue Mountains – as right across the country – our indigenous peoples suffer extreme disadvantage, and ‘Closing the Gap’ initiatives are an absolute priority.**

The Blue Mountains Aboriginal Community has a strong diversity being made up of Darug and Gundungurra peoples as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from many language / community groups all over Australia.

In 2011, Katoomba Township had the highest proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander population in the City (2.9%).

At the 2011 ABS Census, 1,317 BM residents identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:


( 1,277;  24); or 1.7% of the total population of the Blue Mountains (1.3% in Greater Sydney). Of these, there were 660 males (50.0%) and 659 females (50.0%). The median age was 21 years.

The BM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population profile is extremely youthful. The percentage of ATSI aged 65 years+ is small, sadly reflecting the short life expectancy of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people:

Age Group	ATSI %	Non-ATSI %
0-4	11.1	6.1
5-14	22.4	13.1
15-24	21.1	11.3
25-44	21.7	23
45-64	19.5	30.7
65+	4.3	15.8

Our Goals

-  Challenge the stereotypes about indigenous people which often lead to discrimination and racial actions that impair relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.
-  Address the needs of indigenous people, most particularly:
 - improved health (particularly a reduction in chronic illnesses amongst our indigenous peoples);
 - increased access to economic opportunities;
 - local indigenous culture and heritage more visible, celebrated and preserved.
-  Engage disadvantaged, vulnerable and minority sections of the community in planning of the City – including our indigenous communities – to ensure decisions meet future needs.
-  Develop respectful relationships with Traditional Owners; and develop good relationships with Aboriginal services and organisations.
-  Engage in Reconciliation projects.
-  Ensure mainstream services are accessible and culturally appropriate to indigenous people.

-  Assist indigenous communities and organisations advocate to Government at all levels to address issues concerning their communities.

What We're Doing to Achieve Our Goals

-  **Mountains Outreach Community Services (MOCS)** are involved in many Aboriginal events in the Blue Mountains communities by:
 - Supporting NAIDOC week activities;
 - Co-organising the bi-annual Women's Spirit Event and bi-annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diggers recognition event.
 - Involvement in the 'Aboriginal Artists in Blue Mountains Schools' collaborative project.
-  **Australians for Native Title & Reconciliation (ANTaR)**
 - Blue Mountains People for Reconciliation/Blue Mountains ANTaR is a combined group of (aboriginal and non-aboriginal) Mountains residents who (since 1997) support the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre and the Gundungurra Tribal Council in the area;

- ANTaR meet monthly to discuss and take action in relation to a broad range of issues, locally and at a state and national level. These issues include recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, challenging racism, and 'Acknowledgment of Country' at all civic and community events in the Blue Mountains.

📌 **'Welcome to Country'** is standard practice for important community events; 'Acknowledgment of Country' is standard practice for important meetings and gatherings. The community sector is strengthening and further developing working relationships with Aboriginal services and organisations (including the Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre and *Healthy for Life*).

📌 The Blue Mountains Aboriginal **Healthy for Life Program** is a community-based initiative that operates as a Consortium of eight organisations which form the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Health Coalition (with Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local acting as the Lead Agency). The Program (<http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/programs-projects?pid=1297>) assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents to access health services (in partnership with five primary health care sites). *Healthy for Life* is funded through the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

📌 The community sector is working to ensure generalist community services are accessible and culturally appropriate to the Aboriginal community.

Ngairé's Story

A family new to the Mountains was referred to a support service for one of their parenting programs – single Mum ('Ngairé') with 5 children (6 yrs, 8 yrs & 9 yrs), one just starting high school (13 yrs), and one toddler (2 yrs). The original reason for referral was issues

around the older child's transition to high school & support required for the 6 yr old, who was diagnosed with ADHD. After completing a family assessment the worker believed that it would be of great benefit to contact (with 'Ngairé's' permission) the Aboriginal Culture Resource Centre, which had an Aboriginal Family Support Worker. The family and workers met to discuss the needs of 'Ngairé' and her children, to decide how best to provide support services to them. While 'Ngairé' still wanted the original support service to provide some support, she asked that the Aboriginal Family Support Worker be her main worker throughout her 'case plan'. The support service assisted in completion of required paperwork for teacher's aide funding for the school for the 6 yr old, and both workers and 'Ngairé' attended meetings with the school principal and connected with a transition to high school program that was being facilitated by the local youth organisation. The ACRC worker organised for 'Ngairé' to attend the Aboriginal playgroup & to participate in activities held at the centre. Although the ongoing support from the original service has since concluded, 'Ngairé' still sometimes accesses the service for practical support, & she has maintained contact with ACRC (participating actively in community activities such as NAIDOC week). The coordinated and respectful response to this family and their specific needs is acknowledged by all services which supported them.

📌 The sector initiates and implements Reconciliation projects and events including:

- annual Elders Lunches in October; and annual Reconciliation Week events;
- bi-annual Women's Spirit events; and bi-annual Remembering Aboriginal Diggers event;
- annual Aboriginal Artists in Schools project which feeds into the NSW Reconciliation Council's Schools Challenge;
- fundraising to send local Aboriginal people to the Dreaming Festival.

✓ How is State Government Contributing to These Achievements?

✓ In 2012, the NSW Government embarked on a **process of consultation with Aboriginal communities – the OCHRE initiative**.

✓ Communities & other key stakeholders expressed a strong desire for change and the need for Government to build a genuine & sustainable partnership with Aboriginal communities & organisations. There was also strong demand for effective co-ordination to prevent the duplication of government & non-government services, and a strengthened focus on education & employment, as keys to overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.

✓ Throughout the consultations, Aboriginal people repeatedly raised the importance of respect for Aboriginal culture and need for healing to address the impact of trans-generational trauma as a result of colonisation & the

policies and practices of successive governments.

✓ Consultations continue - some key messages have emerged from the first round. These have been passed on to government departments, as part of a process of developing a State Plan, and we look forward to their urgent implementation:

- increasing Aboriginal representation in decision-making, service design and delivery;
- strengthening the Aboriginal community controlled sector;
- building cultural awareness and understanding.

✓ **In 2014, NSW became the first State Government to commit to formal support for the campaign to Recognise our indigenous peoples in the Constitution.**

