

Walking Together, Working Together

NEW SOUTH WALES
ABORIGINAL EDUCATION
CONSULTATIVE GROUP

AND THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
MID-POINT REVIEW



New South Wales
Aboriginal Education
Consultative Group Inc.





Acknowledgment to Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, whose ancestral lands and waters we work and live on throughout Australia.

We honour the wisdom of, and pay respect to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the cultural authority of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia.



Appreciation of Contributions

The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the NSW Department of Education would like to thank all the NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives who contributed their time and knowledge throughout the review process of the Partnership Agreement. We hold great respect for the expertise and diverse lived experiences of individuals and communities. Your willingness to share insights to this review is invaluable and significantly contributes to the work of empowering Aboriginal communities to achieve equality and excellence in education and training.



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Foreword

The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (NSW AECG) and the NSW Department of Education are proud to continue our strong and enduring partnership, highlighting our shared commitment to improve the educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people across New South Wales.

Grounded in the 2020–2030 Walking Together, Working Together Partnership Agreement, our collaboration is based on a strength-focused approach. Through respectful listening, shared decision-making, and genuine engagement, we are working together to ensure that Aboriginal learners are supported academically, culturally, socially, spiritually, and emotionally.

In her forwarding address in the 2020 – 2030 Renewed Partnership Agreement Walking Together, Working Together, our dear colleague, the late Cindy Berwick (OAM) shared her sense of hope and optimism. The optimism that we can continue to build on the successes achieved to date and the hope that the disparities and inequities that currently exist for Aboriginal children are challenged and addressed through building an education system that is respectful, collaborative and accountable.

As we celebrate the achievements of our students, families, and communities, we must equally reflect on where improvement is needed and take action.

The mid-point review of our Partnership Agreement marks an important milestone in this work. Insights from this review have shaped the agreed commitments and informed our next steps to ensure the Partnership Agreement remains current, practical, and impactful for the years ahead.

Our responsibility is clear. We must continue building strong connections between those we represent, uphold high expectations for every learner, and ensure that Aboriginal identity, culture, and language are recognised as central to educational success.

Together we remain steadfast in our commitment to walk together and work together, today and into the future, so that every Aboriginal child and young person is known, valued, cared for, and given every opportunity to meet their full potential in education.

Walking together. Working together. Always.



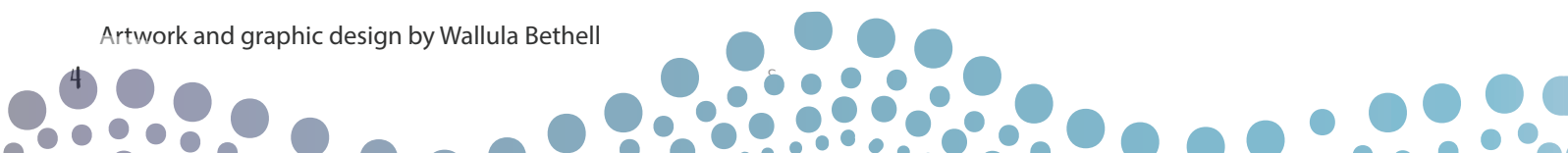
Murat Dizdar
Secretary
NSW Department of Education



Raymond Ingrey
President
NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

The artwork was inspired by the 2020-2030 Partnership Agreement theme of 'Working Together, Walking Together'. We are all unique, come from different walks of life and in partnership we can work towards achieving a bright and colourful future for our students.

Artwork and graphic design by Wallula Bethell



Executive Summary

In 2025, the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (NSW AECG) and the NSW Department of Education (the Department) collaborated to undertake a mid-point review of the [2020-2030 Walking Together, Working Together Partnership Agreement](#) (the Partnership).

Throughout the review process, NSW AECG delegates, members and department representatives were engaged to share their voices about the progress of the Partnership in practice.

Midpoint Review Snapshot

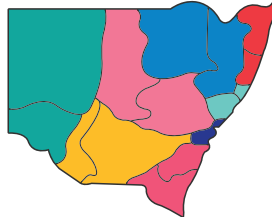
845 Super Regional attendees
(face-to-face and online)

305 Online survey responses

16,478 Years of experience in education

20 Regions represented

8 Super Regional Workshops



- Hunter, Central Coast and Manning (Kurri Kurri)
- Western 1 & Western 2 (Dubbo)
- North West 1 & North West 2 (Gunnedah)
- Riverina 1 & Riverina 2 (Griffith)
- Upper North Coast & Lower North Coast (Grafton)
- Metropolitan and Dharawal (Sydney)
- Western 3 & Riverina 3 (Broken Hill)
- Upper South Coast & Far South Coast (Batemans Bay)

4 Workshop Key Themes



Genuine Partnership
and Collaboration



Cultural Safety and
Inclusion



Advocacy &
Self-determination



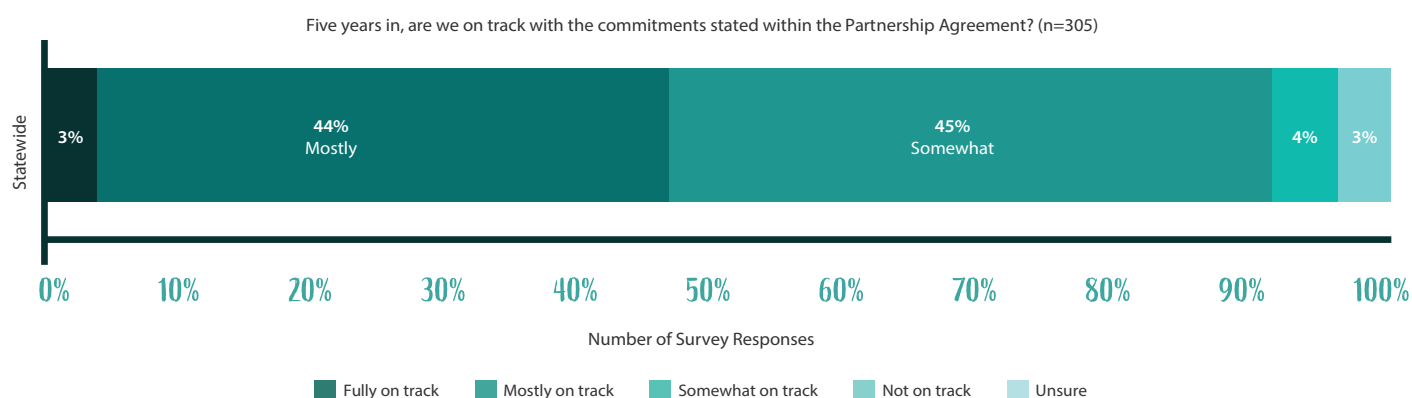
Accountability and
Monitoring

Key Findings and Opportunities to Strengthen

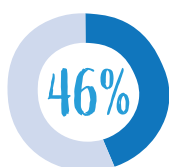
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Throughout the review process, NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives were engaged to share their voices about the progress of the Partnership in practice.

Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey questions, 45% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Somewhat' on track.

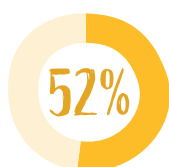


Genuine Partnership and Collaboration



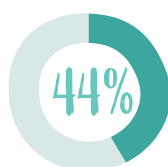
Of the 303 participants that responded to the survey question, 46% of participants believe the Partnership 'Mostly' upholds genuine partnerships

Cultural Safety and Inclusion



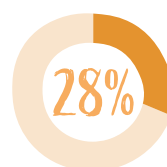
Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey question, 52% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' upholds cultural safety

Advocacy & Self-determination



Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey question, 44% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' upholds advocacy

Accountability and Monitoring



Of the 304 participants that responded to the survey question, 28% of participants believe reporting mechanisms are 'Mostly' effective



Genuine Partnerships and Collaboration

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Local and Regional AECGs provide ongoing guidance through cultural training, professional learning, and curriculum input to embed Aboriginal voices.
- Regular attendance by principals and school leaders at Local AECG meetings builds trust, strengthens collaboration, and improves student outcomes.
- Active engagement with NSW AECGs leads to higher teacher aspirations for Aboriginal students and stronger family-school relationships.
- Schools and NSW AECGs have been increasingly partnering with Aboriginal staff, Elders, and Aboriginal community organisations to deliver cultural events and integrate community voice into planning frameworks.

Gaps in Implementation

- Implementation of the Partnership vary across regions, with some maintaining strong partnerships while others face ongoing challenges including limited engagement and consultation.
- Many schools seek Local AECG input too late in the decision-making process, showing inconsistency and undervaluing Partnership commitments.
- Communities often remain unaware of the Partnership and have no existent framework to support AECGs.
- Unclear NSW AECG boundaries and understanding of which Local AECG supports which schools.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Establish a centralised data source for NSW AECG boundaries and contact details so schools, families, and communities know who to approach for support.
- Recognise and require meaningful participation of parents and families in decision-making, planning, and implementation of education programs, beyond consultation.
- Promote inter-school collaboration, cultural initiatives, and leadership opportunities, empowering Aboriginal students to share experiences and aspirations.



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Presence of Aboriginal staff and mentors in schools boosts student engagement, cultural pride, and provides guidance through educational transitions.
- The creation of dedicated spaces for Aboriginal students, families, and community members, have fostered a sense of belonging and enhanced wellbeing and collaboration.
- Increased visibility of Aboriginal identity through flags, murals, signage, language use, and embedding cultural protocols in school events and practices.
- Local Elders and knowledge holders support curriculum development, while professional learning enhances staff understanding of Aboriginal knowledges, cultures and histories.

Gaps in Implementation

- Many Aboriginal educators and staff continue to face racism, tokenistic practices, and undermining behaviours, creating an unsafe environment.
- Aboriginal staff are disproportionately tasked with leading cultural initiatives, community engagement, and student wellbeing, which can result in burnout and fatigue.
- Department staff and NSW AECG members carrying additional cultural responsibilities lack adequate support, exacerbating workload stress.
- Non-Aboriginal teachers often avoid embedding cultural content due to fear of mistakes
- Online Professional Learning modules are seen as compliance-driven and disconnected from community engagement.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants stressed the need to shift towards strength-based recognition of Aboriginal students' accomplishments and community contributions.
- Increasing Aboriginal representation in the school workforce is vital for creating culturally safe environments and ensuring students see themselves reflected in leadership.
- Participants called for investment in workforce growth and community-specific Professional Learning.
- Enhanced use of more informal, neutral meeting spaces for communities to share their voice without feeling intimidated.
- Cultural support mechanisms to be in place to assist Aboriginal staff who are dealing with workplace racism, as the current Anti-Racism Policy and dedicated position predominantly supports students.

Advocacy and Self-Determination

Current Strengths in Implementation	Gaps in Implementation
- Schools benefit from Junior AECGs, which give Aboriginal students a platform for decision-making, leadership, peer connection, and cultural pride. - Aboriginal Education Officers are crucial advocates for students, families, and communities, fostering collaboration with school leadership. - Many schools embed Aboriginal representation in recruitment panels, decision-making bodies, and planning processes, strengthening community voice and cultural integrity. - Active school participation in NSW AECG meetings and releasing Aboriginal staff for NSW AECG business enhances two-way communication, alignment with community priorities, and relationship-building.	- While Junior AECGs provide a platform for student voice, their input is often undervalued in school decision-making. - A lack of Aboriginal Education Officers in schools weakens advocacy and risks Aboriginal voices being lost in the learning environment. - Some school executives perceive NSW AECG advocacy as criticism. - Some school executives and Director, Educational Leadership (DEL) do not accommodate the timing required for Local and Regional AECG consultation.
Opportunities to Strengthen	
- Identified need to strengthen the role and advocacy of NSW AECGs within schools and communities through increased promotion and engagement. - Schools should develop or enhance engagement processes that prioritise authentic collaboration with parents, Elders, and communities to align initiatives with local priorities. - Strong momentum for every school to support a structured Junior AECG model to ensure student voices are consistently heard and connected to the broader NSW AECG network. - Building a strong Aboriginal education workforce is essential to enhance more culturally responsive education, student wellbeing, and authentic community partnerships.	

Accountability and Monitoring

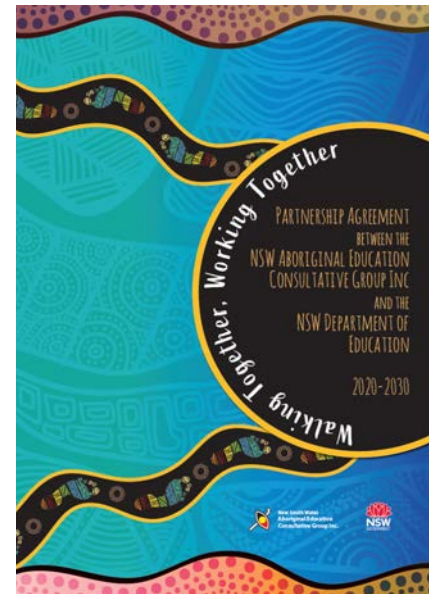
Current Strengths in Implementation	Gaps in Implementation
- Schools widely use educational plans and framework to monitor progress and uphold Partnership commitments. - Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP) yarn-ups and regular family meetings strengthen transparency, celebrate student success, and build trust. - Displaying Partnership and sharing updates at Local AECG meetings promotes awareness, accountability, and collaboration. - Schools increasingly recognise Aboriginal student achievements and successes	- Many schools lack understanding of the Partnership and its commitments, limiting the ability to meet the aims and objectives of the Partnership. - Absence of formal monitoring and reporting systems in schools and AECGs creates inconsistency and reduces transparency. - Schools often fail to share key information (e.g., funding allocations, attendance rates) with parents and communities. - Instances where an operational AECG is not present in communities, making it challenging to track progress and resulting in key information often being lost during communication.
Opportunities to Strengthen	
- More visibility of Local, Regional and State AECG activities and successes through newsletters, social media, and local media to raise community awareness - Greater oversight of Local and Regional AECG executives and clearer reporting measures in school plans to ensure transparency. - Formal monitoring and reporting structures should be collaboratively designed, tailored to community context, and supported by training for NSW AECG members. - Enhance information flow within NSW AECG structures and between the Department and communities to ensure decisions and updates reach grassroots level.	



Background

In 2020, the NSW AECG and the Department collaborated to launch the third consecutive Partnership Agreement which continues to formalise their long-standing partnership and shared commitment to embed Aboriginal voices, perspectives and cultural knowledge into policy and practice across the public education system.

The [2020-2030 Walking Together, Working Together Partnership Agreement](#) (the Partnership) reaffirms the commitment and responsibility the NSW AECG and the Department have in improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people. Each renewal has built upon the foundation of the previous, strengthening accountability, embedding cultural safety and responsiveness, and reinforcing the principle of genuine partnership between Aboriginal communities, NSW AECG and the Department.



The current Partnership extends this legacy, focusing on a strength-based approach that seeks to ensure Aboriginal students achieve outcomes equal to or better than their non-Aboriginal peers. The Partnership emphasises cultural identity, advocacy, and the right of Aboriginal children and young people to thrive academically, socially, and culturally.

The Partnership also reinforces our shared responsibility to uphold the principles and priorities of the National Agreement on [Closing the Gap](#) (Closing the Gap), ensuring that the work undertaken by NSW AECG and the Department continues to align with national and state efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and communities. In relation to the Partnership, the following priority reforms are the most relevant:

- Priority Reform 1 – *Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making*
- Priority Reform 3 – *Transforming Government Organisations*
- Priority Reform 4 – *Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level*

Purpose of the Review of the Partnership

The NSW AECG and the Department recognise the shared responsibility to monitor and report on the work undertaken by the NSW AECG Network, the Education workforce and our Aboriginal communities and families in progressing the Partnership in practice.

As the Partnership reaches the halfway point of its ten-year term, the NSW AECG and the Department have collaborated on progressing a mid-point review to assess the effectiveness of the agreed commitments. This review serves as a 'health check', drawing on the voices of individuals who are actively engaged in NSW Aboriginal communities and the education sector on a daily basis.

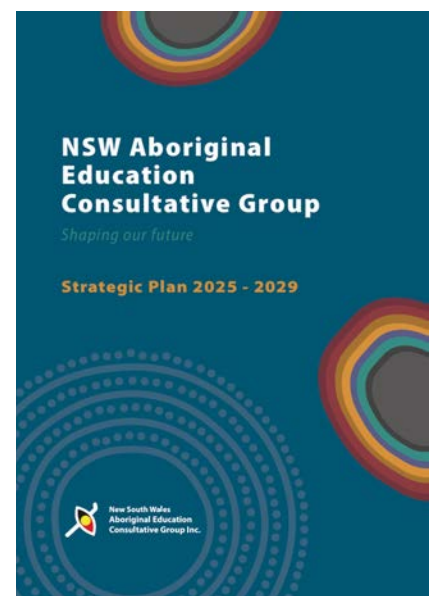
The mid-point review and analyse insights from the NSW AECG Network and Department representatives with the intention to:

- **Assess progress:** To assess the extent to which the Partnership has delivered on its commitments in practice.
- **Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities:** To highlight what is working well and where improvements are needed.
- **Strengthen implementation:** To enhance collaboration between AECGs and the Department, and to ensure that the Partnership is prioritised across the public education sector.
- **Maintain accountability:** To uphold transparency and shared responsibility between NSW AECG and the Department, ensuring that outcomes and key achievements are being communicated and celebrated.

The mid-point review honours the commitment made by NSW AECG as outlined in the NSW AECG Strategic Plan 2025-2029 and upholds the Closing the Gap priority reforms including:

- Priority Reform 1 – *Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making*
- Priority Reform 3 – *Transforming Government Organisations*
- Priority Reform 4 – *Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level*

Importantly, this review is not intended to alter the design, written content or structure of the existing Partnership, rather it serves as a 'health check' to provide valuable insights. The NSW AECG and the Department will formalise key commitments which focus on strengthening the Partnership commitments over the next five years.



Stakeholder Engagement and Methodology

The mid-point review engaged, listened and captured the voices of NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives from across NSW.

In March 2025, prior to stakeholder engagement, the NSW AECG and the Department completed a thematic analysis of the Partnership to identify key themes that were embedded within the agreed commitments of the Partnership. These themes informed the development of targeted questions, ensuring that discussions remained focused and aligned with the intent of the review. The four key themes included:



**Genuine Partnership
and Collaboration**



**Cultural Safety and
Inclusion**



**Advocacy &
Self-determination**



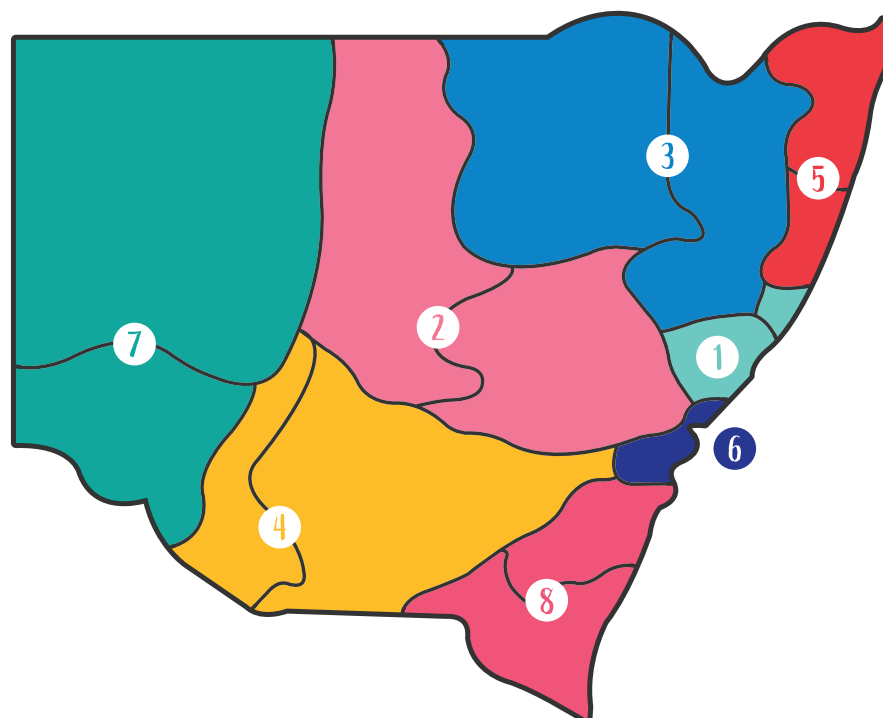
**Accountability and
Monitoring**

The NSW AECG and the Department took a mixed approach to engagement, combining face-to-face and online Super Regional meetings, along with an online survey to make sure we connected with NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives from across NSW. Student voice was not included in the engagement process of this review.



Super Regional Meetings

A series of Super Regional meetings were held across NSW throughout August 2025. These meetings were designed to facilitate meaningful face-to-face and online Whiteboard consultations with the Network and Department representatives to ensure broader accessibility and participation. This approach enabled the NSW AECG and the Department to engage with a diverse range of voices from across the state, ensuring that feedback was inclusive, and reflective of the experiences of those engaged with the education sector.



1 Hunter, Central Coast and Manning

Date: 8 August 2025

Location: Kurri Kurri

Attendees: 83 face-to-face, 72 online

2 Western 1 and Western 2

Date: 14 August 2025

Location: Dubbo

Attendees: 106 face-to-face, 30 online

3 North West 1 and North West 2

Date: 15 August 2025

Location: Gunnedah

Attendees: 38 face-to-face, 18 online

4 Riverina 1 and Riverina 2

Date: 22 August 2025

Location: Griffith

Attendees: 28 face-to-face, 32 online

5 Upper North Coast and Lower North Coast

Date: 5 September 2025

Location: Grafton

Attendees: 71 face-to-face, 47 online

6 Metropolitan and Dharawal

Date: 16 September 2025

Location: Sydney

Attendees: 94 face-to-face, 107 online

7 Western 3 and Riverina 3

Date: 18 September 2025

Location: Broken Hill

Attendees: 20 face-to-face, 14 online

8 Upper South Coast and Far South Coast

Date: 23 September 2025

Location: Batemans Bay

Attendees: 48 face-to-face, 37 online

As part of the Super Regional meetings, attendees were asked to identify the number of years they had been involved in education, including all experience with the NSW AECG, the Department or both. This collective knowledge and experience highlight a substantial foundation of expertise, providing valuable insights that informed the discussions and recommendations throughout the report. These figures were compiled and calculated at each meeting and reported as 'years of experience in education' in the data.

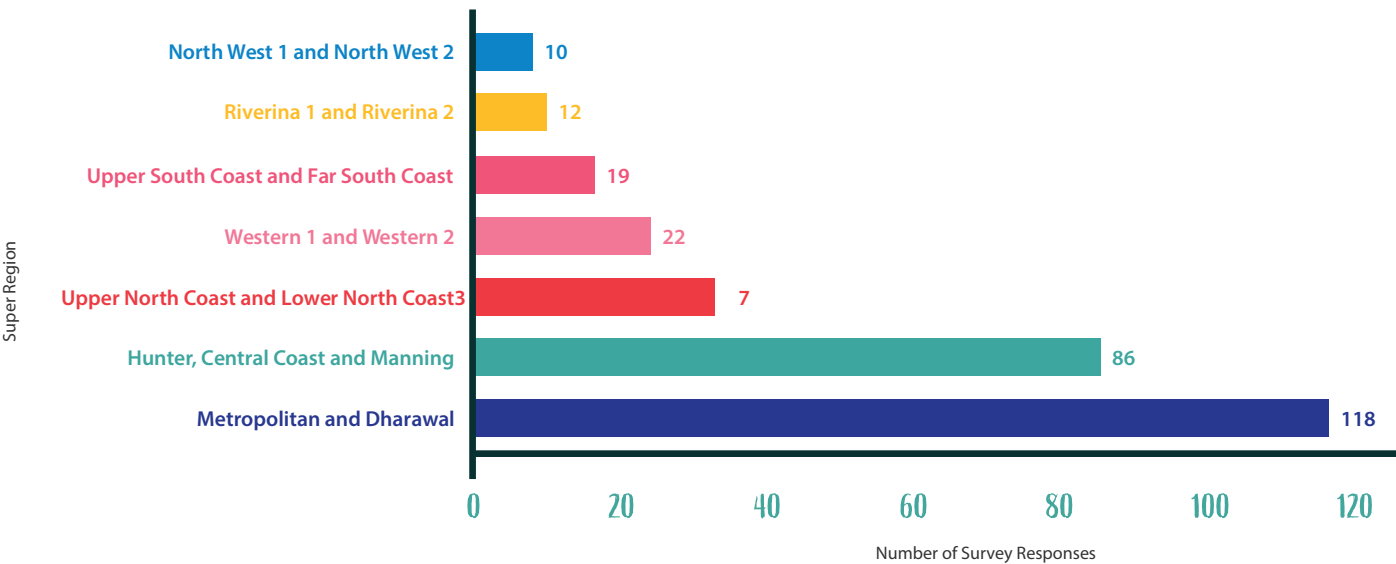
Online Survey

As part of the engagement process, the NSW AECG and the Department collaborated to design an online survey aimed at gathering quantitative and qualitative data.

This survey was intended to complement the face-to-face and online Whiteboard consults by adding a layer of structured feedback, making sure we captured both numbers and narratives.

The survey was open between the 4th of July to 6th October 2025, with NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives being able to access the questions via a URL/weblink and a QR code. Throughout the online survey period, a total of 305 completed survey responses were received from multiple Super Regions.

For noting: Data from Western 3 and Riverina 3 has been excluded from this dataset, as fewer than 10 online survey responses were received within this Super Region.



In line with commitments to Indigenous Data Sovereignty, a 'permission to use answers' question was added at the end of the survey. The logic here is that those who are invited to participate in the survey can view and complete the questions prior to submitting data. As a result, there were some individuals that completed the survey who chose to withhold 'permission to use their answers', and therefore this data could not be used in this review.

Additionally, it should be noted that not all participants who completed the survey responded to every question. Consequently, the reported figures may vary across different questions.



Statewide Findings

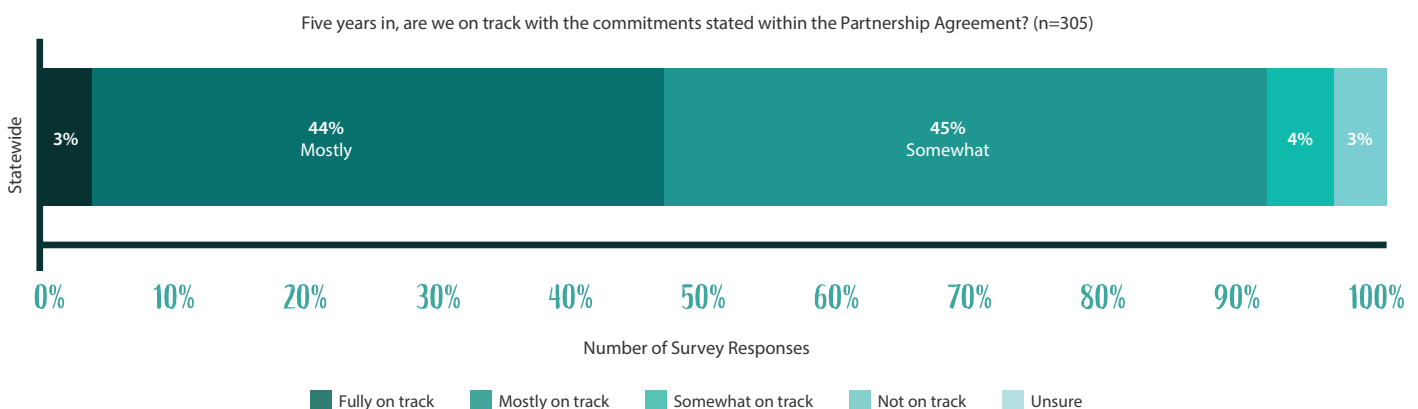
By drawing on insights from the Super Regional meetings and the online survey, the NSW AECG and the Department were able to gather a wide range of valuable feedback. This input played a key role in shaping the mid-point review findings and pointed to clear opportunities to strengthen the Partnership over the next five years.

It is important to note that while participation in the Super Regional meetings contributed to the findings in this report, not all insights and perspectives shared during these sessions are represented in the graphs. The visual graphs only reflect the data from the survey responses and therefore may not fully capture all the discussions and feedback provided during the face-to-face and online Whiteboard engagements.

Additionally, whilst the NSW AECG and Department teams have worked to capture a broad range of perspectives across the state, it is important to recognise that local communities and regions differ significantly in their experiences, needs, and priorities. To ensure community voices are meaningfully represented and empowered, Super Region-specific chapters have been included at the end of this report.

Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Firstly, the NSW AECG and the Department sought to establish an understanding of the overall progress of the Partnership's commitments to date. This involved asking the review participants whether they believed the commitments stated in the Partnership are on track at the mid-point. Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey question, 44% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 45% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.

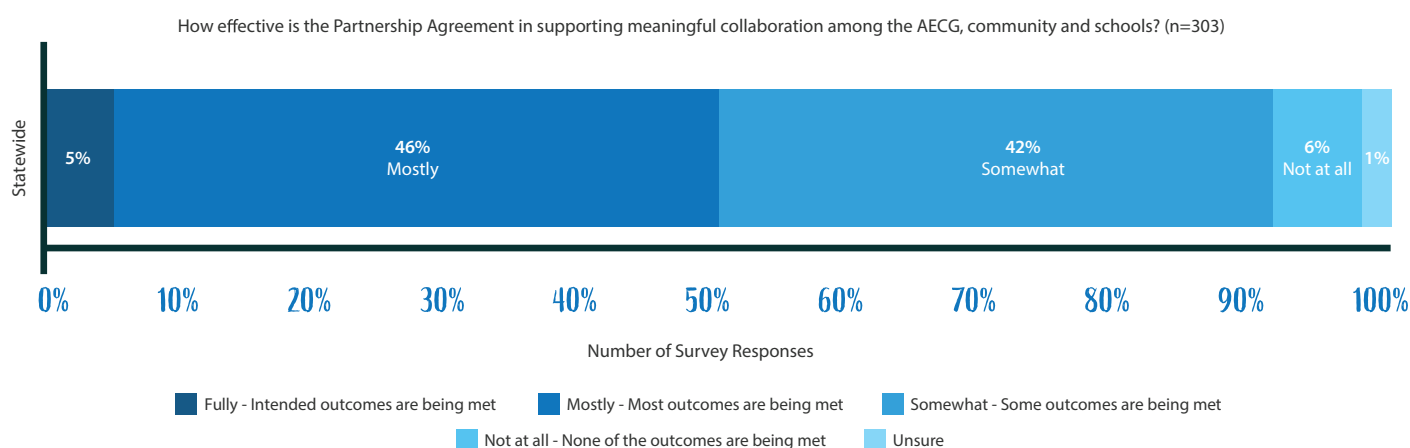


Genuine Partnership & Collaboration

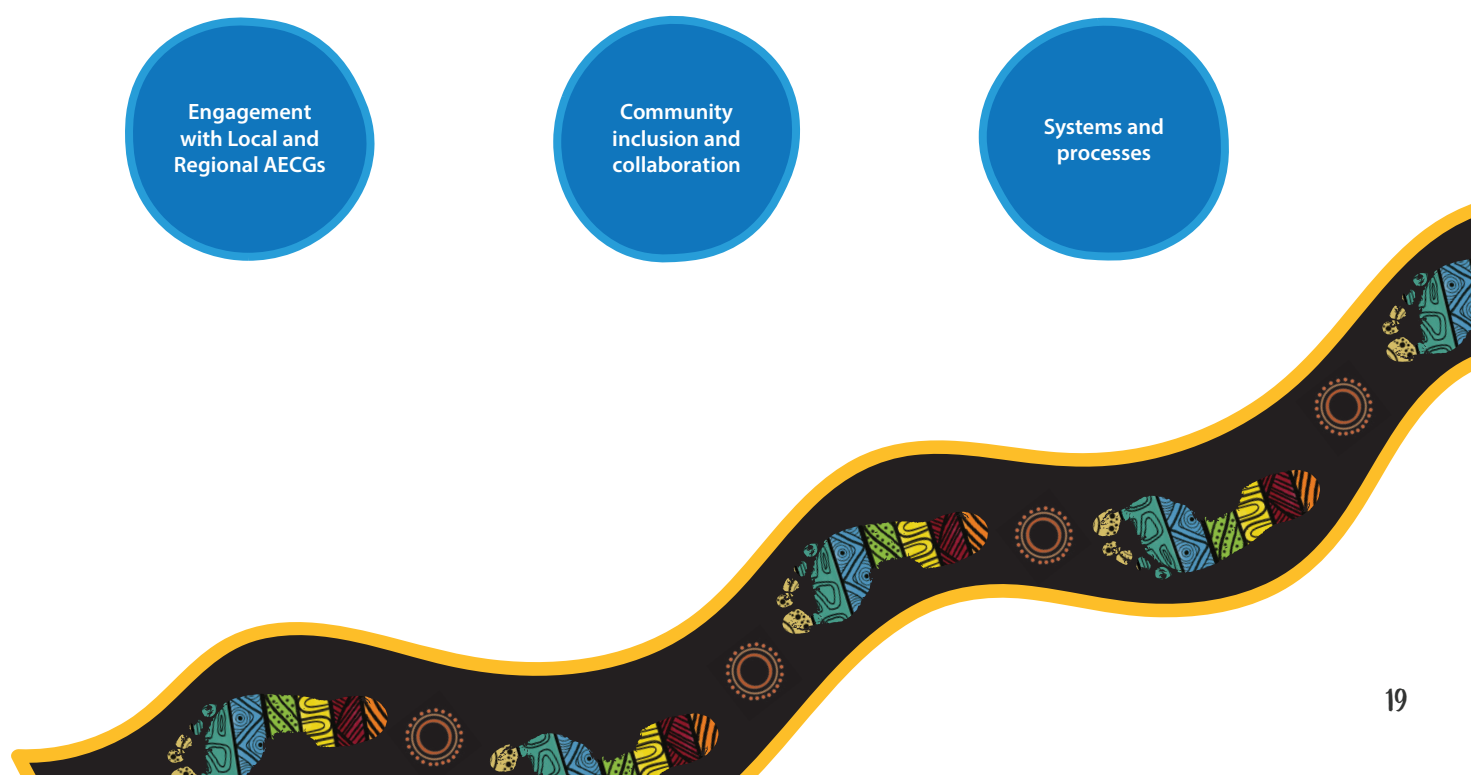
The NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives provided feedback on the **effectiveness of the Partnership in supporting meaningful collaboration between the NSW AECG, community and schools**. Review participants were asked if and how the Partnerships is supporting the following points:

1. Emphasis on a respectful, equal partnership between AECGs and schools.
2. Recognition of the NSW AECG as the peak advisory body on Aboriginal education.
3. Commitment to shared decision-making and consultation with communities and Elders.

Of the 303 participants that responded to the survey question, 46% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 45% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



From the insight, it is suggested there has been progress across schools in developing strong partnerships with Aboriginal communities, Elders, the Aboriginal workforce and the NSW AECG. The insights gathered throughout the review have been analysed and organised into key thematic areas. The following outlines the primary themes that emerged in Genuine Partnership and Collaboration:



Engagement with Local and Regional AECGs

Participants discussed the effectiveness of embedding the commitments of the Partnership into their practices at a local and regional level, demonstrating a strong foundation of genuine collaboration at our grassroots.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted the continued support from Local and Regional AECGs, with Directors Educational Leadership (DEL), principals and schools engaging with AECGs to receive support and advice regarding Aboriginal Education initiatives and outcomes. Through professional learning, cultural awareness training, and relationship-building, the NSW AECG is supporting schools to strengthen their understanding of Aboriginal cultures and local contexts. This is also supported by community members who are assisting with teaching and learning programs, ensuring history is taught with localised contexts.
- A consistent finding was that trust is strongest where school leaders, including principals and executive staff, regularly attend Local AECG meetings. This direct engagement demonstrates a genuine commitment to the Partnership with delegates describing a higher degree of collaboration, shared accountability, and improved student outcomes in these cases.
- In AECG regions where engagement is occurring, it was commonly reported that teachers are having much greater aspirations for Aboriginal children and connecting with families and communities.

Gaps in Implementation

- Despite this reported progress, it was evident that outcomes vary significantly across regions. Some regions have achieved outstanding progress and developed exemplary models of genuine partnership. However, other regions continue to face ongoing challenges such as limited engagement and consultation between schools and AECGs.
- Participants indicated some schools are often requesting support or consultation too late in the decision-making process which demonstrates inconsistent practices and a lack of understanding of the value of adhering to the commitments of the Partnership.
- In AECG regions where schools do not engage with the NSW AECG, relationships tend to be less impactful with delegates and members often reporting feeling excluded or undervalued in school decision-making.

“There is a clear shared agreement and commitment to continually improve and strengthen our partnership to improve outcomes for our kids”

“We are seeing an increase in engagement and true partnership in learning with our Aboriginal families.”

“It’s not embedded, not pushed by principals, principals don’t always attend meetings, planning for Aboriginal people not with Aboriginal [people].”

Community Inclusion and Collaboration

Participants emphasised the need to engage and collaborate with community, Elders and families to further strengthen the commitments of the Partnership and appropriately support the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- There has been a notable increase in school-community collaboration for cultural events, with schools working closely alongside Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) and local Elders to coordinate and celebrate events such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, and Harmony Day.
- Many schools are collaborating with Aboriginal Community-Controlled organisations to facilitate in-school events, programs and initiatives to further support Aboriginal students.

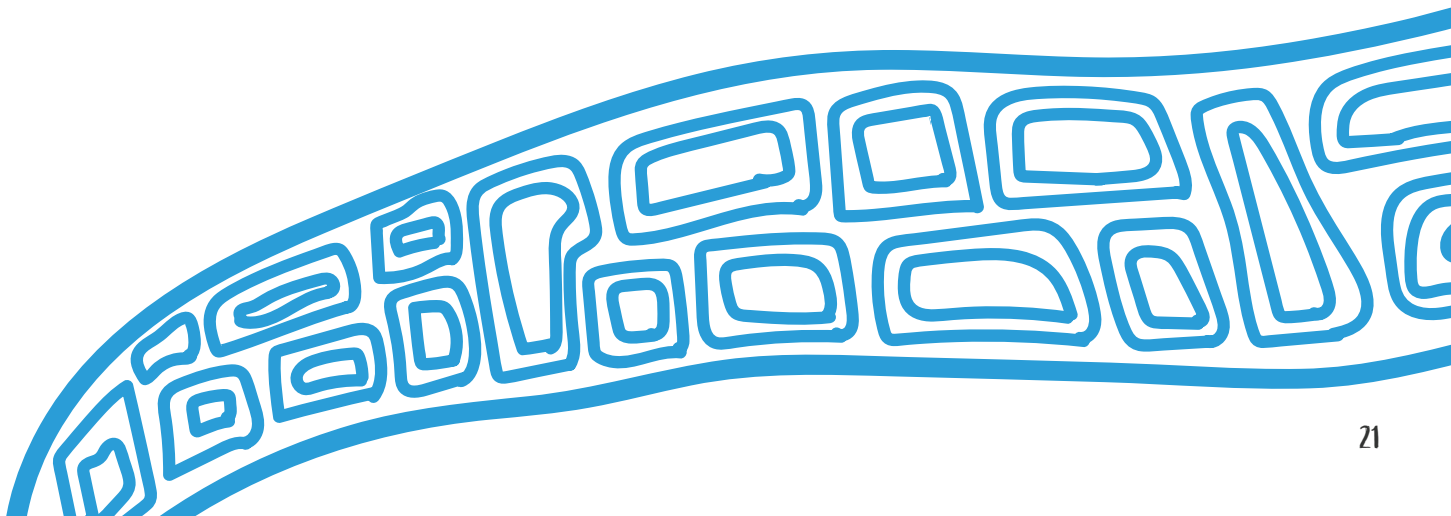
Gaps in Implementation

- Collaboration with community is often shaped by local contexts, making it highly place-based with a range of factors contributing to the challenges in appropriate engagement.
- Participants indicated that some schools were less cooperative, with principals and other executives not involving community in decision-making and school planning.
- Participants discussed the limited awareness of the Partnership, with many communities still unaware of the embedded commitments and the purpose of the document.

“The Partnership Agreement is well-known to the AECG & the schools that have a strong focus on Aboriginal Education, & work with, & consult local AECG. I feel that some schools are still not aware of the Partnership Agreement or the role of the AECG. I also feel that community are possibly unaware of the Partnership Agreement and its aims.”

“Every Local AECG meeting that I attend is top heavy with DoE staff. There are very limited numbers of grassroots parents and community members”

“Schools in my network are working closely with AECG’s to ensure close collaboration. Meaningful collaborations are occurring and will be ongoing. We have a strong collaborative culture I believe.”



Systems and Processes

Participants highlighted the strong NSW AECG and Department network support and improved use of the Partnership in schools, whilst others raised concerns about the absence of a structured framework with some confusion around boundaries and the roles of AECGs within schools.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants spoke about many schools utilising the commitments within the Partnership to shape the design and implementation of School Excellence Plans/Framework (SEP/SEF). Participants highlighted the strengths of the approach, noting its inclusive nature and its ability to authentically reflect community voice in decision-making.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants indicated that currently no framework or tools exist that assist Local AECGs to support schools and the Department to appropriately implement the Partnership commitments.
- Participants reported the limited communication between the Department and all tiers of AECG (Local, Regional and State) regarding education initiatives during the planning and design phases. This hinders the ability of Local and Regional AECGs to appropriately support and guide programs and policies that directly influence their communities and students.
- Delegates also reported confusion regarding Local and Regional NSW AECG boundaries and which AECG represents specific schools.
- Parents and community members in some AECG regions expressed difficulty when seeking support, unsure of who to contact for assistance or guidance. This lack of clarity has occasionally led to diminished connection, communication and engagement between schools and their local communities.

“We utilise the Partnership Agreement in an initial situational analysis of our school. The consultation with community on our current practices has led to a full school plan which we have progressively achieved.”

We make reference to the Partnership Agreement frequently in our school. It ensures that we are on track”.

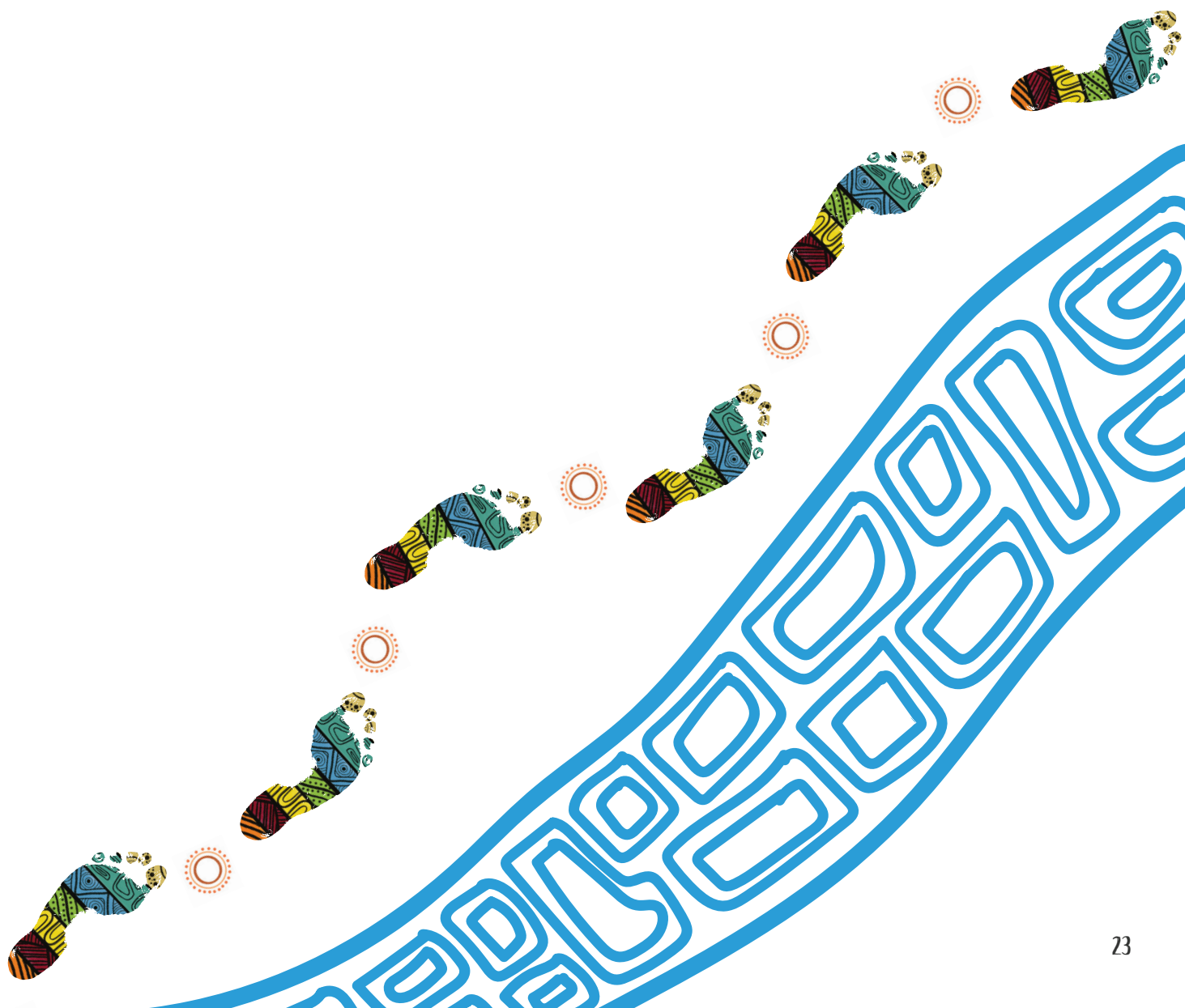
“Where a Local AECG represents a very diverse community with a large number of schools to support, true collaboration in an individual school’s planning is very difficult to facilitate”

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants highlighted the importance of having accessible and up-to-date contact information from the NSW AECG so that schools, families, and community members know who to reach out to when support or guidance is needed. Establishing a centralised and consistent data source, including regularly updated NSW AECG boundaries and contact details. This approach would support in ensuring that stakeholders can easily identify the appropriate local representatives.

A number of participants suggested a clear recognition and requirement to actively involve parents, families and community in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation of education-based programs and initiatives. Emphasis was placed on ensuring parents and families are encouraged to engage with schools and the NSW AECG to share their voice and aspirations for their children, not only in a consultative capacity.

In addition, participants identified the potential for stronger inter-school collaboration, particularly through the development or expansion of Junior AECG networks. These junior networks could create opportunities for students from different schools to meet and collaborate on cultural and leadership initiatives. This approach will enhance student voice and agency, allowing Aboriginal students to share their experiences and educational goals, while helping the NSW AECG to better understand and respond to their needs.

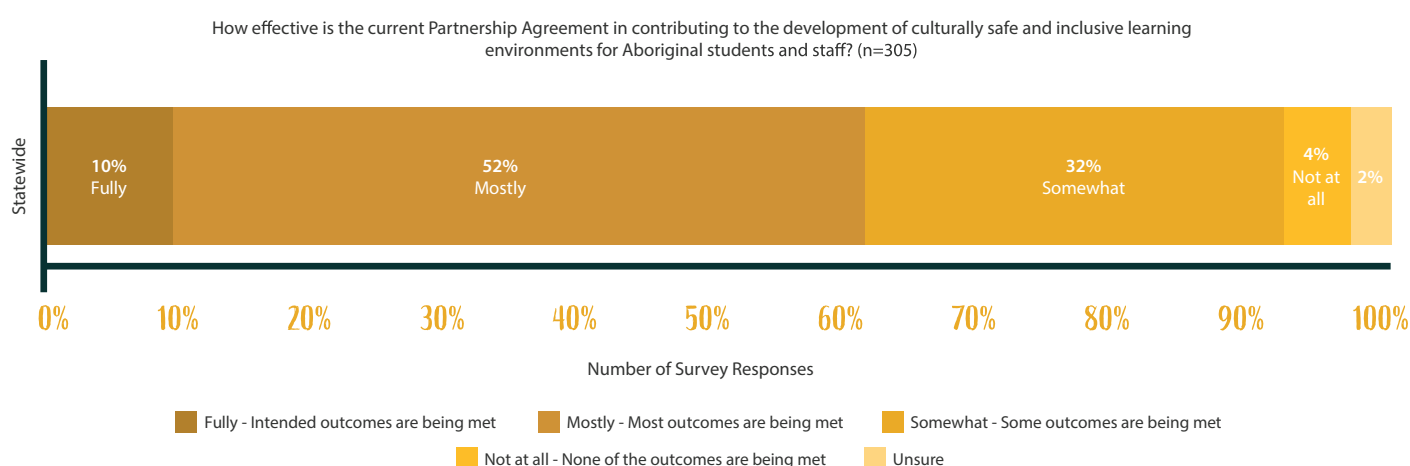


Cultural Safety and Inclusion

The NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives provided feedback on the **effectiveness of the Partnership in contributing to the development of culturally safe and inclusive learning environments for Aboriginal students and staff**. Review participants were asked if and how the Partnerships is supporting the following points:

1. Creating culturally safe learning environments
2. Promoting understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures and histories

Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey question, 52% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective in supporting cultural safety and inclusion, whilst 32% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



From the review, participants discussed that many schools across the state are demonstrating visible and meaningful change towards a culturally safe and inclusive environment for Aboriginal students, families and communities. The insights gathered throughout the review have been analysed and organised into key thematic areas. The following outlines the primary themes that emerged in Cultural Safety and Inclusion:



Aboriginal Workforce and Community Members

The presence of Aboriginal staff in schools is essential to fostering culturally safe, inclusive and responsive educational environments that support the wellbeing and success of Aboriginal students.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Many regions identified that the presence of Aboriginal role models, including staff, within schools have a profound positive impact on student engagement and cultural pride. The presence of Aboriginal mentors has increased the visibility of Aboriginal leadership, allowing students to feel a strong sense of connection, belonging, and empowerment.
- Additionally, Aboriginal mentors have assisted in guiding and supporting students through educational transitions and have been critical in promoting leadership and cultural support within schools.
- There have also been reports of Aboriginal staff members being at the entry gates of schools, which has been identified as a great way to ensure communities feel safe and welcome on school grounds.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants discussed reoccurring instances where Aboriginal educators and staff were exposed to ongoing issues of racism, tokenism and undermining behaviours.
- A consistent finding across consultations was the over-reliance on Aboriginal educators and staff to lead Aboriginal Education initiatives and cultural events. Many Aboriginal staff members expressed experiencing “cultural burnout”, as they often carry the responsibility for organising community engagement, supporting students’ wellbeing as well as their teaching or administrative duties.
- Cultural load and fatigue were evident among Aboriginal staff and NSW AECG members, with concerns that Department staff that hold AECG responsibilities do not receive adequate support for their additional workload.

“I think our Aboriginal staff carry a large cultural load. I see this having a huge impact on their wellbeing.”

“Our cultural safety and inclusion has been strengthened with our implementation of our cultural programs with an Aboriginal teacher and Aboriginal SLSO, formation of a Student Aboriginal Education Team, Cultural Space at Break times”



Designing Inclusive and Dedicated Physical Spaces

Designing inclusive and dedicated physical spaces for Aboriginal staff and students serves both symbolic and practical purposes, contributing meaningfully to their employment and educational experience and wellbeing.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Schools have increasingly incorporated Aboriginal culture and identity into the school environments through the physical display of Aboriginal flags and designs through logos, murals and signage.
- Several schools have introduced dedicated spaces and classrooms for Aboriginal staff, students and visiting families and external services to gather, learn and connect. This space serves as a culturally safe and responsive environment for Aboriginal community to be able to collaborate and support on school grounds without feeling intimidated.
- Participants highlighted that the establishment of a communal space for Aboriginal peoples has enhanced student wellbeing and safety, which potentially leads to the increase of student attendance, aspirations and confidence.

Gaps in Implementation

- In certain areas, reports of racism persist, with some parents and Elders expressing discomfort or even fear about entering school grounds.

“We highly value a culturally safe learning environment around promoting Aboriginal cultures and histories.”

“Aboriginal staff and students unfortunately still face racism therefore the creation of culturally safe and inclusive learning environments is still at the liberty of the Principal and Executive team in each school.”

“School doesn’t feel like culturally safe or welcoming space.”



Incorporation of Aboriginal Culture into Ways of Learning and Working

Incorporating Aboriginal cultures, knowledges and histories into ways of learning and working is a critical step in developing education systems that are not only inclusive and equitable, but also culturally responsive to the diverse needs of Aboriginal students, staff, and communities.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- The NSW Curriculum has progressively become more aligned with the cultural contexts or localised Aboriginal communities with Elders and knowledge holders assisting with providing histories and resources for schools.
- Participants highlighted the increased prominence of local Aboriginal languages in schools, which has been one of the most common responses of cultural safety & inclusion across the state. Schools are representing local Aboriginal languages through signage, national anthems and lessons, with some schools embedding languages into curriculum.
- Additionally, cultural protocols and practices have been increasingly embedded into school events and daily practices such as Acknowledgement, Welcome to Country and engagement with Elders and community members.
- Participants identified that Professional Learning (PL) opportunities have been a successful outcome of the Partnership. There have been improvements across non-Aboriginal staff, particularly in cases where Aboriginal people teach localised cultures, knowledges and histories and assist in coordinating programs.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants reported that non-Aboriginal teachers sometimes lack confidence in embedding cultural content into teaching practices in fear of getting it wrong or causing unintentional offence. This reinforces the importance of sustained PL and mentorship opportunities from Aboriginal educators and Local AECG representatives.
- Additionally, some participants noted that forms of online PL modules were identified as non-productive compliance which didn't uphold cultural integrity and appropriate connection to local communities.

"We have had significant success accessing local Elders and knowledge holders to enrich our Staff development days and to also build our cultural awareness. We have also accessed our DoE Curriculum advisor to further support the integration of Aboriginal perspectives in all areas of the school and curriculum. This will continue to be ongoing and supported."

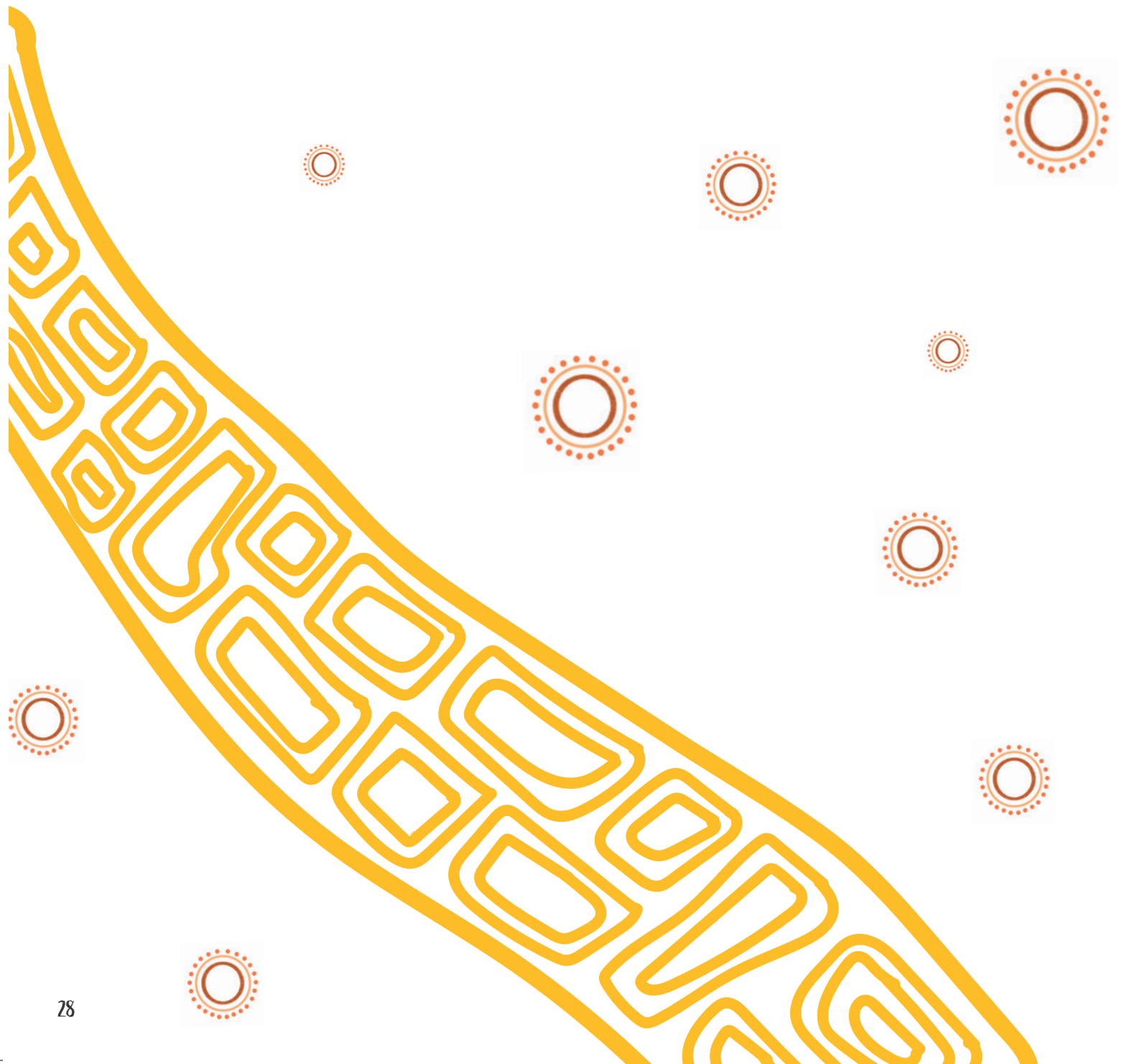
"Strong cultural programs are in place to ensure our students feel culturally safe e.g. Aboriginal languages, Junior AECG, culture groups, dance groups, didj groups. In addition, the community working together to localise Aboriginal pedagogies at our school."

Opportunities to Strengthen

While many schools are celebrating successes, several participants continue to report a focus on trauma and tick-a-box approaches rather than on celebrating cultural achievement and progress. Participants highlighted the need to shift the narrative towards strength-based recognition of Aboriginal students' accomplishments and community contributions.

Participants identified the need to increase Aboriginal representation within the school workforce to ensure that Aboriginal students see themselves reflected in the leadership and educational structures around them. Participants discussed the need for appropriate investment into creating culturally safe and responsive educational environments, through growing the Aboriginal education workforce and increasing community specific PL opportunities.

Participants emphasised the need for more informal and neutral meeting locations for the community to share their voice without feeling intimidated.

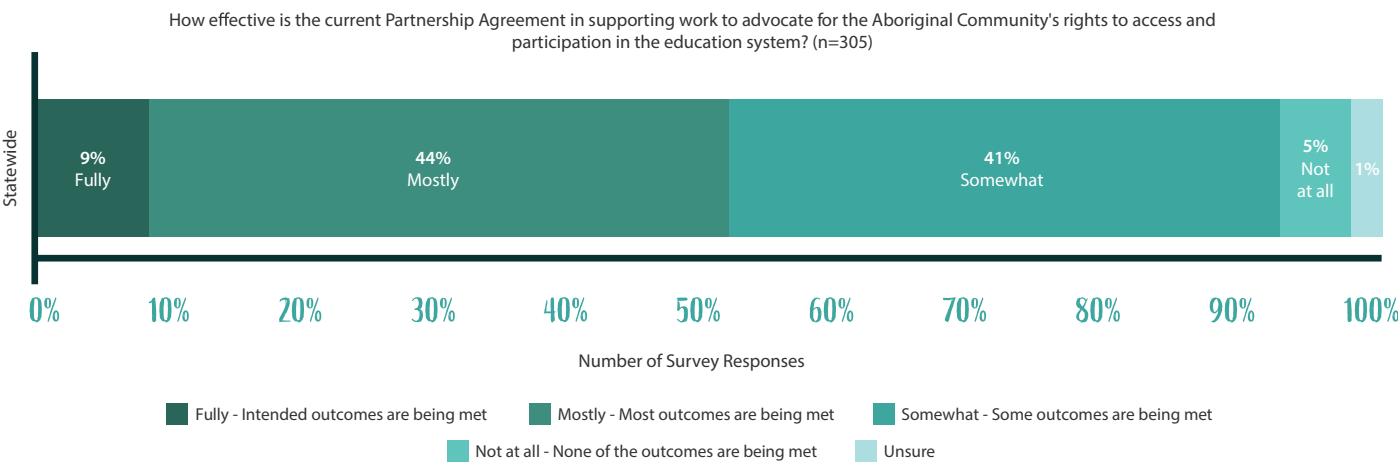


Advocacy and Self-Determination

The NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives provided feedback on the **effectiveness of the Partnership in supporting work to advocate for the Aboriginal Community's rights to access and participation in the education system**. Review participants were asked if and how the Partnerships is supporting the following points:

- 1. Supporting Aboriginal voices in education
- 2. Promoting respect, empowerment, and self-determination through local and regional AECG networks

Of the 305 participants that responded to the survey question, 44% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective in supporting advocacy and self-determination, whilst 41% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Through the review, participants emphasised the importance of leveraging the Partnership to reaffirm and strengthen the role, influence, and advocacy capacity of Local and Regional AECGs. The insights gathered throughout the review have been analysed and organised into key thematic areas. The following outlines the primary themes that emerged in Advocacy and Self-determination:



Junior Voice and Advocacy

Empowering student voice in decision-making and advocacy processes support our youth to actively shape their educational experiences to reflect their needs and aspirations.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- A common theme across all regions was the value of having a Junior AECG in schools to provide students with a meaningful platform to contribute their voice in decision-making.
- The Junior AECG structure allows Aboriginal students to actively participate in shaping their educational experiences while connecting with Aboriginal students from other schools, promoting leadership, peer connection, and cultural pride.

Gaps in Implementation

- Although the Junior AECG has been a useful tool in allowing students to have a voice, it was reported that their voice is often overlooked or devalued when it comes to decision making within the school.

“There needs to be more communication between schools and Local AECGs in relation to Junior AECGs and how student voice is being heard.”

“Adding tangible student voice hinges on trust and relationships”



Presence of Key Aboriginal Advocates

The presence of Aboriginal advocates in schools is critical for ensuring that student and family voices are not only heard but meaningfully integrated into school practices and decision-making. These advocates act as cultural bridges, creating a safe, responsive and respectful environment where Aboriginal perspectives are valued and reflected in the school's context.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted the importance of having Aboriginal Staff, including AEOs in schools to advocate for Aboriginal students, families and communities. AEOs have been a useful tool to promote community voice and work collaboratively with school leadership.
- Participants stated that many schools that have an AEO are reported to having a more collaborative approach to school planning and initiatives that include representatives in executive meetings, leadership teams and recruitment panels.
- Many schools are now embedding inclusive practices such as Aboriginal representatives on recruitment panels, decision-making bodies, and school planning and feedback processes

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants emphasised the need for executive leaders to play a critical role in advocating for Aboriginal staff and students. This involves supporting Aboriginal staff to build capability and confidence to take an active and leading role in decision-making processes
- A recurring concern across regions was that there are not enough AEOs or other Aboriginal staff in schools. This can sometimes result in Aboriginal advocacy and voice being easily lost in the learning environment.
- Participants discussed instances where principals and executive leaders can confuse advocacy from AECG members as criticism. Participants highlighted the need to shift this narrative to be perceived as an opportunity to strengthen relationships and improve outcomes, as opposed to an attack.

“There is clear and positive growth in the presence of genuine Aboriginal voice both from students and staff across our schools. This reflects a growing commitment to listening, inclusion, and shared leadership in culturally respectful ways.”

“Too many ACLO’s, AEO’s etc are light on when it comes to being an advocate for the community. Generally, they don’t want to make waves for fear of being noticed or called out. Each Regional director and DEL needs to be active in ensuring this is front and centre in their discussions with principals of each school in their network- regardless of enrolment size of Aboriginal kids within the school”

Two-Way Engagement between Schools and AECGs

Two-way engagement between NSW AECG members and the Department strengthens cultural responsiveness, builds trust, and ensures that educational strategies are aligned with the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal students and families within the local context.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants have identified that the presence of school representatives at Local AECG meetings are significant strength. This engagement encourages two-way communication and information flows, which enhances consistency, continuity and relationship-building. Additionally, this ensures that schools are aligned with community priorities and that local voices are reflected in school-based decision-making.
- It was reported that many schools and DELs have embedded practices that allow community voice especially for panels, and awards to be included in a timely manner.
- Participants discussed that many schools honour the commitments of the Partnership and this was evident through the release of their Aboriginal staff for important NSW AECG business, including Regional and State Meetings.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was reported that some schools still make the Transfer of Duties or Release process difficult for Aboriginal staff to attend to NSW AECG business including, but not limited to, Regional and State meetings, panels and other local business
- Many participants reported that some Principals and DELs do not allow for appropriate consultation process timeframes, for Local and Regional AECGs

“In my school the SRG, Aboriginal yarn ups with community being involved in community events on and outside of the school has increased self-determination for the community. However, I don’t feel this is reflected in the practices of schools in my local. ”

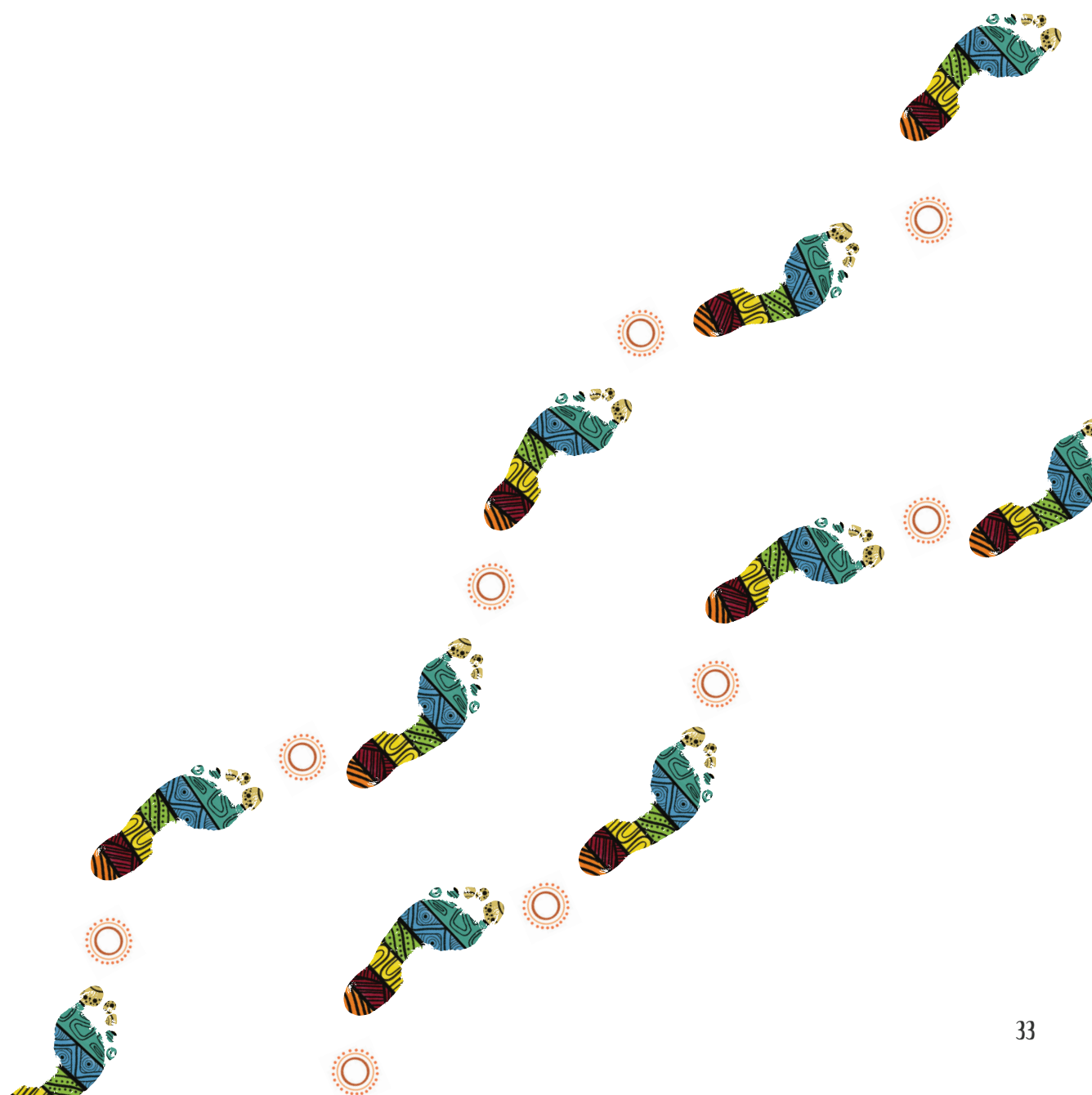
“To some extent, the voices are largely those of Aboriginal DoE staff, and it can be difficult for some AECG Full Members to authentically, and without fear, represent Community. Many school and DoE corporate staff do not understand that self-determination is a collective concept (rather than as related to individuals). Schools need to better understand and support their Local AECG by facilitating connections, such as distributing meeting notices to families, and inviting AECG to their community events”

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants emphasised the urgent need to elevate the role and influence of AECGs within schools and the broader community by strengthening promotion efforts and advocacy responsibilities. It was suggested that stronger commitment from schools to allow for Transfer of Duties and Release of staff to be able to engage in NSW AECG business.

Many participants advocated for schools to develop or strengthen appropriate engagement processes that focus on genuine co-design with parents, Elders, and local schools. This could involve increasing the recognition of families and communities as critical voices in Aboriginal education and giving agency to influence educational initiatives to align with community priorities.

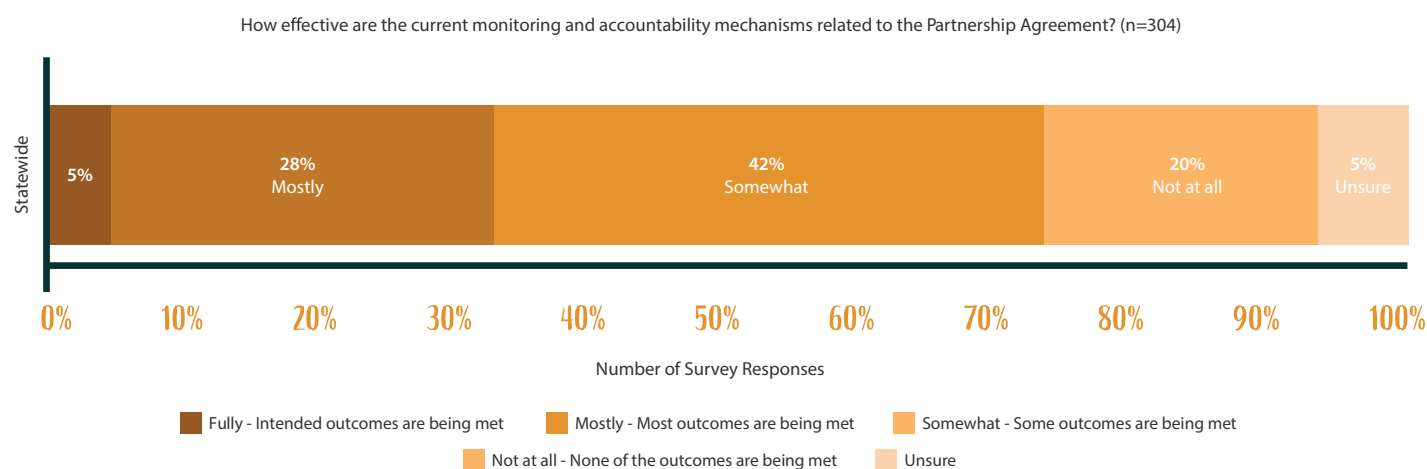
There was strong momentum for every school to establish a Junior AECG, in collaboration with their Local AECG ensuring that student voices are consistently heard and acted upon. Participants frequently highlighted that adopting a structured model would significantly strengthen student advocacy and guarantee their perspectives are effectively communicated to the broader NSW AECG network.



Accountability and Monitoring

The NSW AECG delegates, members and Department representatives provided feedback on the **effectiveness of the current monitoring and accountability mechanisms related to the Partnership Agreement**. Review participants were asked if and how the Partnerships is supporting in the assessment and reporting of the Partnership's progress at Local and Regional AECGs.

Of the 304 participants that responded to the survey question, 28% of participants believe the current monitoring and accountability mechanisms related to the Partnership are 'Mostly' effective, whilst 42% of participants believe they are 'Somewhat' effective.



Many participants highlighted that despite the Partnership's commitment to undertake an annual review of the progress, this has been the first review in five years which reflects a significant gap in monitoring and accountability.

Through the review, participants emphasised the importance of leveraging the Partnership to reaffirm and strengthen the role, influence, and advocacy capacity of Local and Regional AECGs. The insights gathered throughout the review have been analysed and organised into key thematic areas. The following outlines the primary themes that emerged in Advocacy and Self-determination:

School-based
accountability
and reporting
mechanisms

AECG-based
accountability
and reporting
mechanisms

School-Based Accountability and Reporting Mechanisms

Schools and educators have a critical responsibility to implement robust reporting and accountability mechanisms to uphold the Partnership commitments, ensure transparency, and monitor agreed actions.

Current Strengths in Implementation

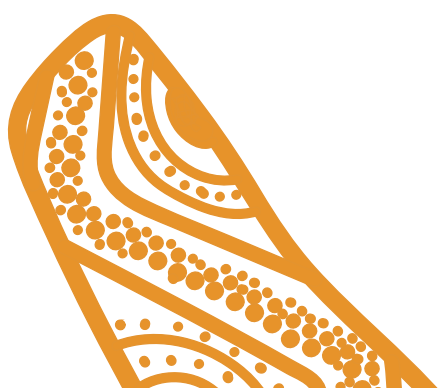
- Across the state, many participants discussed that the School Excellence Plans have been a useful tool for reporting, monitoring progress, and maintaining accountability. These plans have assisted schools in tracking their implementation of the Partnership commitments.
- Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP) yarn-ups with parents have also been effective in keeping families up to date with their children's success and progress. These meetings have provided an opportunity to celebrate student achievement and ensure parents remain actively involved in their children's education.
- Participants reported that some schools have started hosting termly or semesterly meetings with families to share updates on student progress, funding distribution, and school priorities. This transparency has been well received by families and communities, helping build stronger trust and shared accountability.
- Participants identified that a number of schools are physically displaying the Partnerships with the intent to raise awareness and encourage educators to incorporate the commitments within the ways of working.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants highlighted the persistent lack of awareness of the Partnership in many schools across NSW.
- Participants reported that many schools currently lack formal accountability measures, which raises concerns about transparency and consistency in implementing the Partnership. Without clear systems for monitoring actions, tracking progress, and reporting outcomes, it becomes difficult to ensure that agreed objectives are being met.
- It was also frequently reported that schools were not transparent in sharing data with parents and the community, such as allocations of funding, attendance & completion rates etc.

"I feel we are doing a good job with our kids who all have PLPs and participate at times in activities we offer"

"Overall, the Agreement is a strong framework, but its impact relies on consistent action, mutual respect, and accountability."



AECG-Based Accountability and Reporting Mechanisms

Reporting and accountability mechanisms led by AECGs are essential for maintaining the integrity of the Partnership by enabling communities and AECGs to actively oversee progress, provide feedback, and ensure schools deliver on agreed commitments.

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that Local AECG meetings serve as a key platform for sharing updates on the progress of the Partnership. These meetings provide an opportunity for schools and educators to report on actions taken, discuss achievements and challenges, and ensure transparency in implementation.
- Participants highlighted that more work is being done to celebrate the successes and strengths of Aboriginal education and our students through local award events such as Nanga Mai and Deadly Awards.

Gaps in Implementation

- There have been frequent reports on the time-poor nature of AECG meetings, with not enough time to discuss the progress of the Partnership. Members requested that the Partnership be part of the agenda, as this has already occurred in some areas.
- It was noted that there are currently no accountability frameworks or guidelines for Local and Regional AECGs to support schools.
- There were reports that some participants did not have access to an operational AECG making it difficult to report on progress, with a lot of key information often lost in transit.
- Participants noted lack of attendance and involvement of Principals and executive leaders in some regions is also a barrier to open and transparent accountability measures.

“Assessing and reporting should be co designed, transparent and cyclical with AECGs monitoring school level commitments, Regional AECGs consolidating findings and DET held to account through joint reporting and action planning. This makes the Partnership Agreement a living accountability tool, not just a policy document move monitoring from a consultative check in to a structured accountability framework with clear benchmarks, transparent reporting, escalation processes and community involvement. This ensures that the agreement actively drives change in schools, not just tick the box”



Opportunities to Strengthen

Across the state, there were many requests for more publicity around AECG activities and meetings. Suggested approaches included newsletters, social media updates, or local newspaper articles to increase visibility and community awareness.

It was reported that there needs to be stronger accountability placed on Local and Regional AECG executives. Participants also reported the need to co-develop accountability structures that provide more formalised ways of monitoring and reporting. While this was seen as a strong opportunity to strengthen the Partnership, it was also emphasised that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, any framework or structure must be localised and responsive to community context.

Participants shared that current reporting is not always accurate or consistent, and that a clear accountability framework would support stronger and more transparent monitoring of progress. Participants also identified the need for training and professional learning for Local and Regional AECGs to build confidence and ensure consistency across the state.

Finally, respondents highlighted the importance of improving communication processes, both within AECG structures and between the Department and the NSW AECG, to make sure information and decisions reach communities at the grassroots level.



Conclusion and Next Steps

Following an extensive engagement process with more than 800 NSW AECG delegates, members, and Department representatives across eight Super Regions, a broad range of valuable insights and learnings have been identified and embedded within this mid-point review report.

The face-to-face and online meetings, along with the online survey allowed the NSW AECG and the Department to hear and understand local and regional priorities, concerns, and opportunities. The insights gathered will guide and inform the ways in which the Partnership is implemented and strengthened over the next five years.

In December 2025, the NSW AECG Association Management Committee (AMC) met with the Secretary of the NSW Department of Education, Murat Dizdar, and members of the Secretary's Executive Support Team to discuss next steps arising from the review. The review findings were presented, with particular consideration on the identified *Opportunities to Strengthen*.

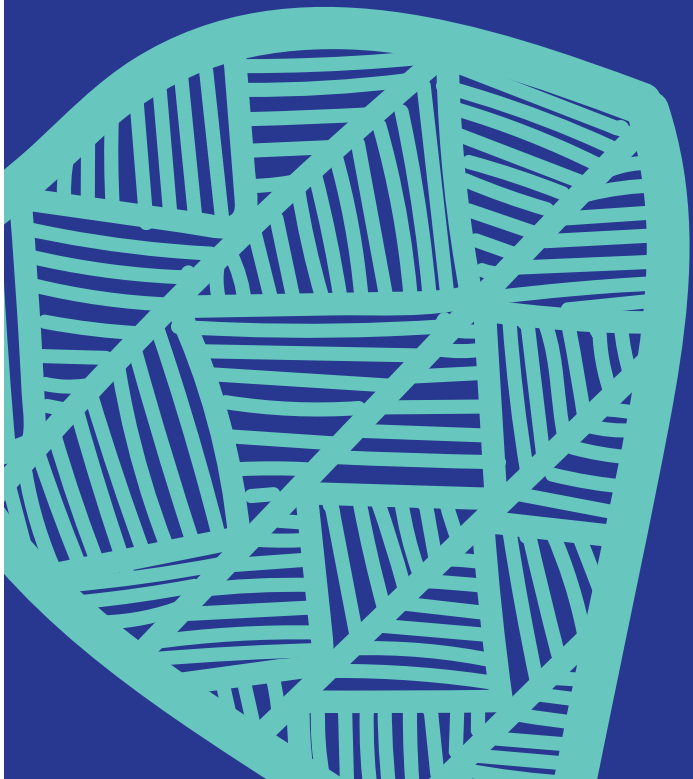
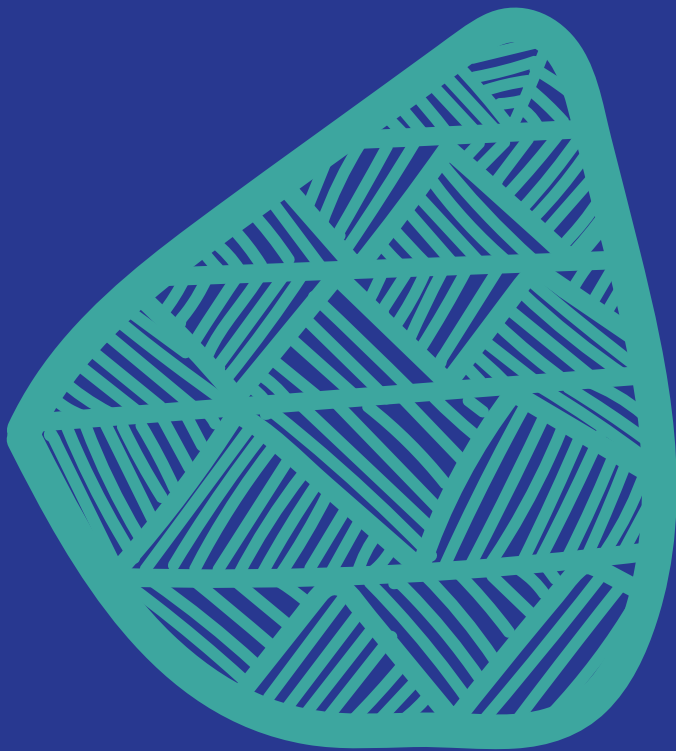
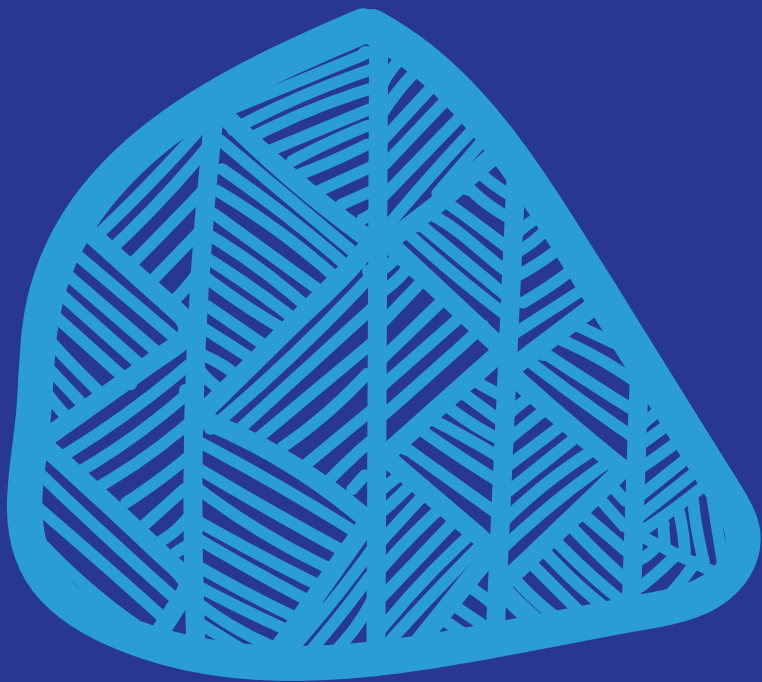
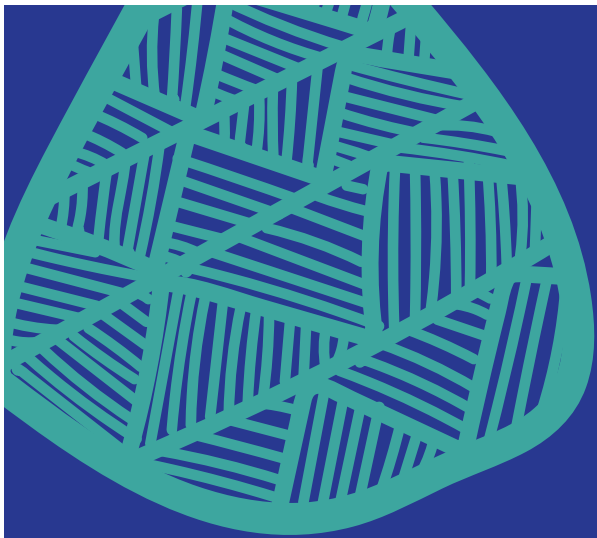
As an outcome of these discussions, the NSW AECG and the Department reached agreement on a set of commitments aligned to the *Opportunities to Strengthen*. Responsible teams and key personnel were identified, and indicative timeframes were established to support implementation and accountability over the coming years.

Below is the a high-level set of commitments agreed upon by the NSW AECG and the Department.



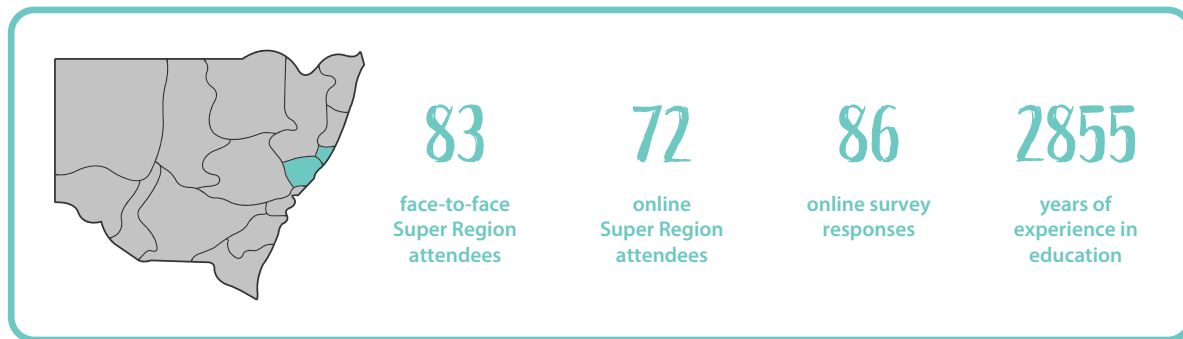
	Commitment	Responsibility
Genuine Partnership and Collaboration	Establish a centralised and consistent data source, including regularly updated NSW AECG and the Department boundaries and contact details for key personnel.	The NSW AECG & The Department
	Review and update processes to actively involve parents and families in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation of education-based programs and initiatives.	The NSW AECG & The Department
	Strengthen the inter-school/NSW AECG collaboration including the development or expansion of Junior AECG networks.	The NSW AECG
Cultural Safety and Inclusion	Increase Aboriginal leadership pathways within the school workforce, particularly in executive positions.	The Department
	Appropriate investment into creating culturally safe educational environments for students and staff.	The Department
	Explore opportunities for schools to engage with parents, carers and community stakeholders outside the school gate (more informal and neutral locations for the community members to attend).	The NSW AECG & The Department
	Appropriate investment into Professional learning opportunities for all staff, including culturally specific training delivered by local communities.	The NSW AECG & The Department
Advocacy and Self-determination	Stronger commitment from schools to allow for Transfer of Duties and Release of staff to be able to engage in NSW AECG business.	The Department
	Establish Junior AECGs within schools and strengthen/enforce ability to participate in decision-making processes related to Aboriginal Education matters.	The NSW AECG & The Department
Accountability and Monitoring	Increase publicity around NSW AECG activities and meetings. Suggested approaches included newsletters, social media updates, or local newspaper articles to increase visibility and community awareness.	The NSW AECG
	NSW AECG and NSW DoE co-develop place-based accountability structures that provide more formalised ways of monitoring and reporting between Local AECGs, schools, communities and then with Regional AECGs.	The NSW AECG & The Department
	Improve communication processes, both within NSW AECG structures and between the Department and the NSW AECG, to make sure information and decisions reach communities at the grassroots level.	The NSW AECG & The Department

As this report is primarily focused on documenting and consolidating the insights from the mid-point review, detailed information regarding the agreed commitments is not included within this document. The full set of commitments, including specific actions, responsibilities, and timeframes, will be outlined separately to allow for a more comprehensive and focused plan.



Super Regional Findings

Hunter, Central Coast and Manning



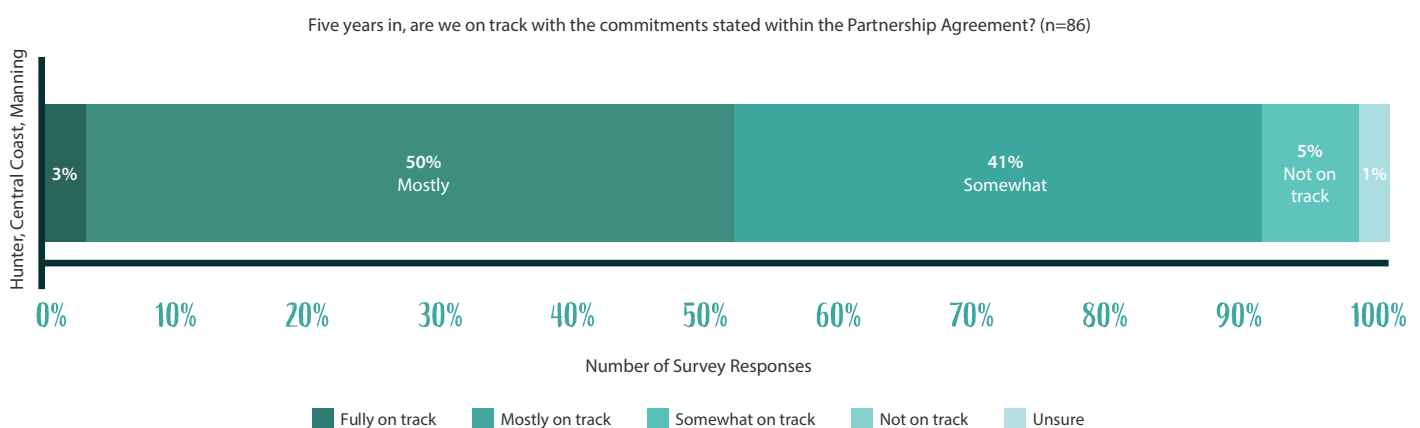
On the 8th of August 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Hunter, Central Coast and Manning Super Region held a meeting in Kurri Kurri. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

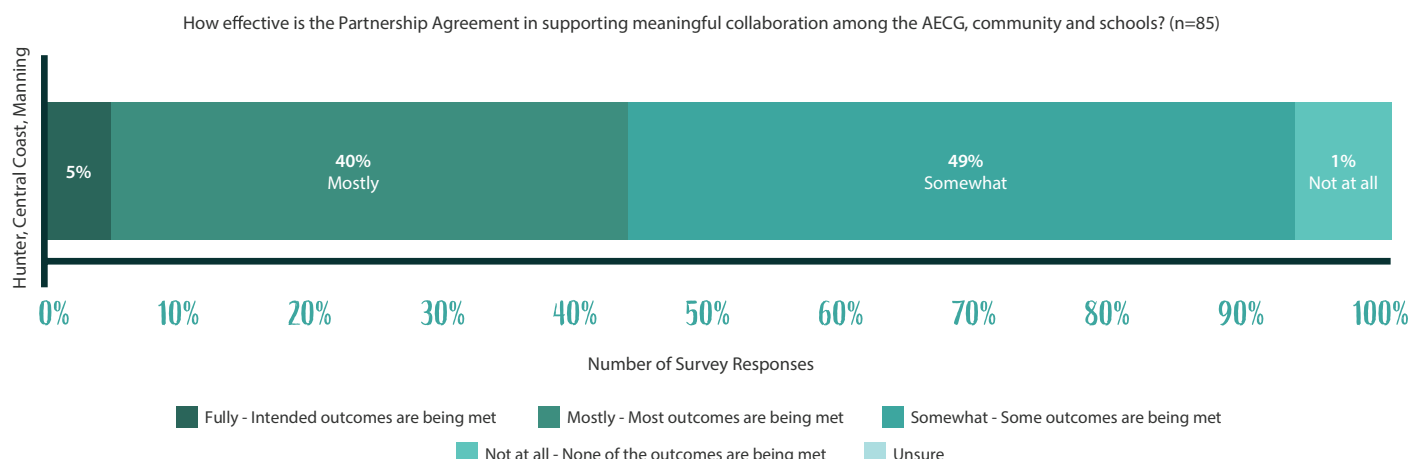
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 86 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 41% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Of the 85 participants that responded to the survey question, 40% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 49% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants discussed that engagement from schools and Local AECGs varied across the regions, with numerous delegates highlighting the effective communication between schools, AECGs and families.
- Some participants highlighted that AECG meeting attendance is generally strong amongst Department staff, with this being supported by flexible meeting times.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants identified a lack of consistent collaboration between schools and Local AECGs. This gap can lead to missed opportunities for co-designing initiatives and ensuring that programs reflect community priorities and cultural protocols.
- Participants reported that schools often assume Local AECGs fully represent the regions' local Aboriginal communities and act as the sole knowledge holders on community concerns, priorities, and interests. Therefore, some schools put in minimal effort in establishing or strengthening relationships with Aboriginal community members, groups or organisations external to AECGs.
- Participants noted a risk that partnership and consultation opportunities can feel tokenistic, narrowly framed, or limited to a small group of students and families, with feedback on outcomes often overlooked. They also reported that consultation with AECG and families does not always occur early enough to allow for genuine input and meaningful engagement.
- Although the strong attendance of Department staff at AECG meetings has been identified as a strength, many participants noted that the imbalance of representation at these meetings can limit diverse community input and create a perception that AECGs primarily reflect departmental priorities rather than the broader interests of local Aboriginal communities.

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants emphasised the importance of adopting a bottom-up, community-driven approach to planning Aboriginal education initiatives. This means schools should actively involve Aboriginal voices in decision-making processes at every stage, before, during, and after implementation, rather than relying on top-down directives.

Schools need to ensure that community perspectives are embedded in planning and decision-making. This includes consulting with Local AECGs and families early enough to allow for genuine input and co-design of initiatives. Consultation should not be tokenistic but ongoing and meaningful.

Participants highlighted that Aboriginal staff would benefit from non-Aboriginal staff taking greater responsibility for implementing initiatives after consultation, rather than placing the burden solely on Aboriginal staff or community members. Delegating tasks appropriately ensures sustainability and avoids over-reliance on a small group of individuals.

Participants identified a clear need for a structured engagement plan or framework to guide schools and the Department in effectively engaging with local Aboriginal communities, organisations, and AECGs. This approach aims to embed continuous, meaningful engagement and establish long-term partnerships rather than one-off consultations.

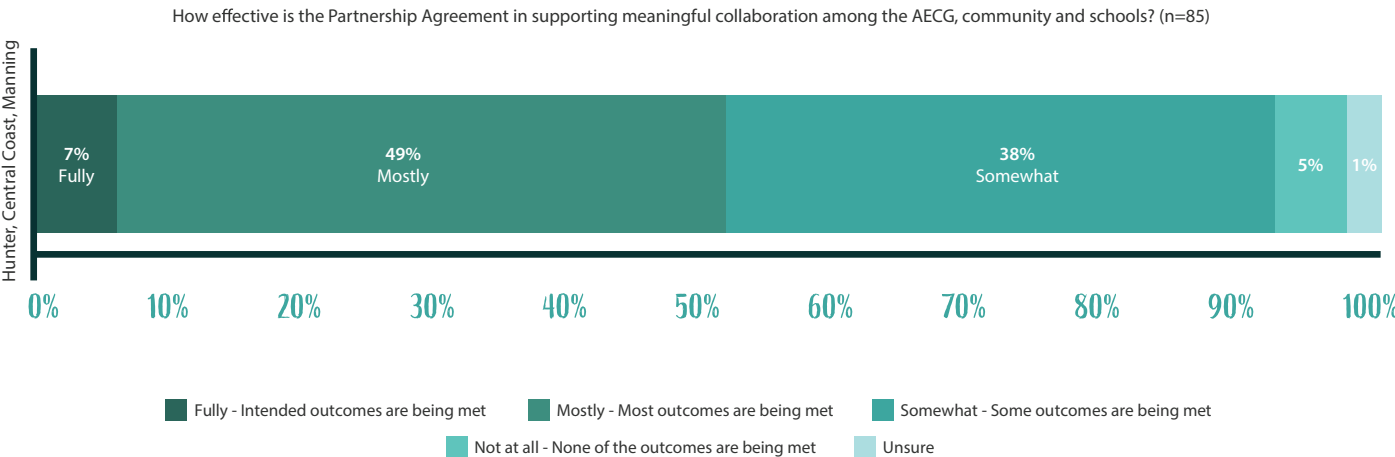
“We have been working well on building strong, genuine, meaningful and positive relationships with Aboriginal students, parent, carers and families.”

“With the establishment of a staff-led and student-led AET in the school, as well as the embedding of initiatives and resources in our School Excellence Plan, this has allowed for voices to be heard and ideas brought to life.”



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 86 participants that responded to the survey question, 49% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 38% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that professional learning sessions are increasingly being delivered by Aboriginal educators and community members.
- Culture is being woven more frequently into classroom environments and learning programs. Examples include incorporating local Aboriginal languages into signage and school uniforms, which promotes visibility and pride in cultural identity.

Gaps in Implementation

- While schools often celebrate Aboriginal culture during significant events such as NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week, participants noted the importance of moving beyond tokenistic recognition.
- Participants reported incidents of verbal attacks occurring in school playgrounds, raising concerns about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal students.
- Participants noted an overreliance on Aboriginal education teams, with schools often expecting Aboriginal staff to take primary responsibility for educating cultural competency to non-Aboriginal staff, regardless of their designated role.
- Participants expressed concern about cultural burnout among Aboriginal staff, noting that schools often rely heavily on a small number of individuals or community members to lead cultural initiatives. These expectations place significant pressure on these staff, leading to fatigue and disengagement.

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants highlighted the need for dedicated investment and targeted funding to support the development of place-based and strength-based professional learning opportunities that foster meaningful engagement with local Aboriginal communities, organisations, and AECGs. A key example provided was the Connecting to Country training, which participants identified as an essential program for deepening cultural understanding and building respectful relationships. Sustained funding for these initiatives would ensure consistency, accessibility for all staff, and long-term impact in embedding cultural competence across schools and the Department.

Participants emphasised that Aboriginal education must be recognised as a collective responsibility shared by all school staff, rather than being delegated solely to Aboriginal staff and community members. They noted that cultural learning and engagement should be embedded across the entire workforce through structured, systemic professional learning programs. This approach ensures consistency, sustainability, while reducing the risk of cultural burnout among Aboriginal staff.

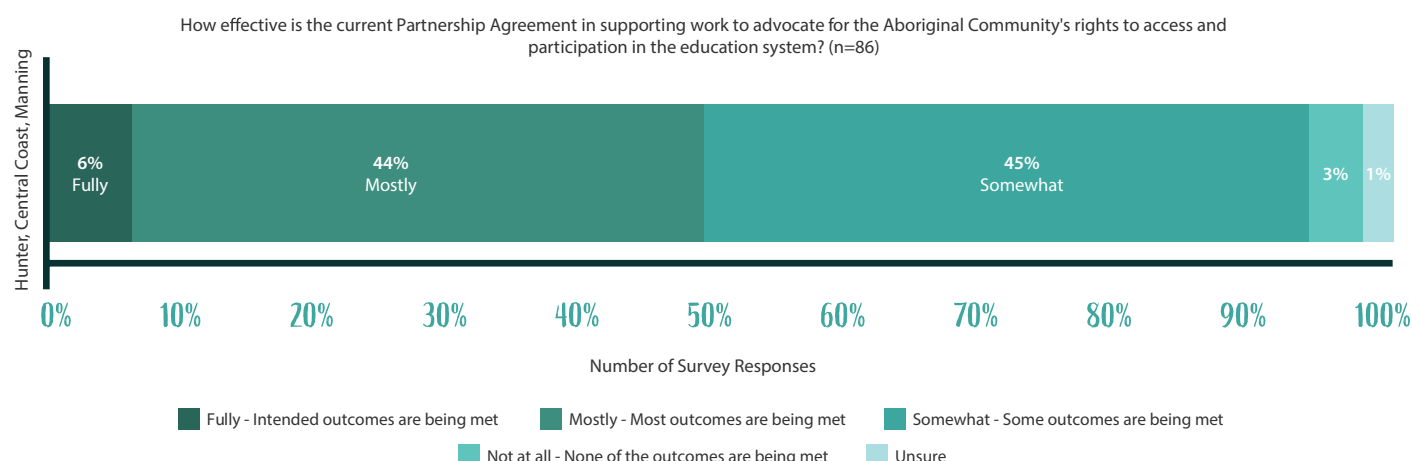
“Pressure on young people to be ‘Aboriginal Experts’”

“While (non-Aboriginal) staff are usually welcoming to teach about Aboriginal perspectives and pedagogies, they often lack the confidence and resources to do so”



Advocacy and Self-Determination

Of the 86 participants that responded to the survey question, 44% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 45% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that student perspectives are increasingly being heard through the establishment and growth of Junior AECGs in the Super Region. The success of Junior AECG has provided an important platform for young people to contribute to decision-making and build strong networking skills among the Junior AECG cohorts.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was noted that Aboriginal voices are absent from executive meetings in many schools. This lack of representation limits opportunities for Aboriginal perspectives to influence decision-making at the highest level, which is critical for embedding culturally responsive practices.
- Participants reported that Aboriginal staff and community members often feel unsupported when raising concerns within schools. This lack of support creates a climate where issues affecting Aboriginal students and families may go unaddressed.
- Participants raised concerns about the pressure placed on young Aboriginal students to act as cultural experts within their schools. This expectation often arises when schools look to students to explain cultural practices or represent Aboriginal perspectives in the absence of systemic support.

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants recommended improving the visibility and promotion of AECGs within schools and communities to strengthen awareness and emphasise Aboriginal knowledges in shaping culturally responsive education.

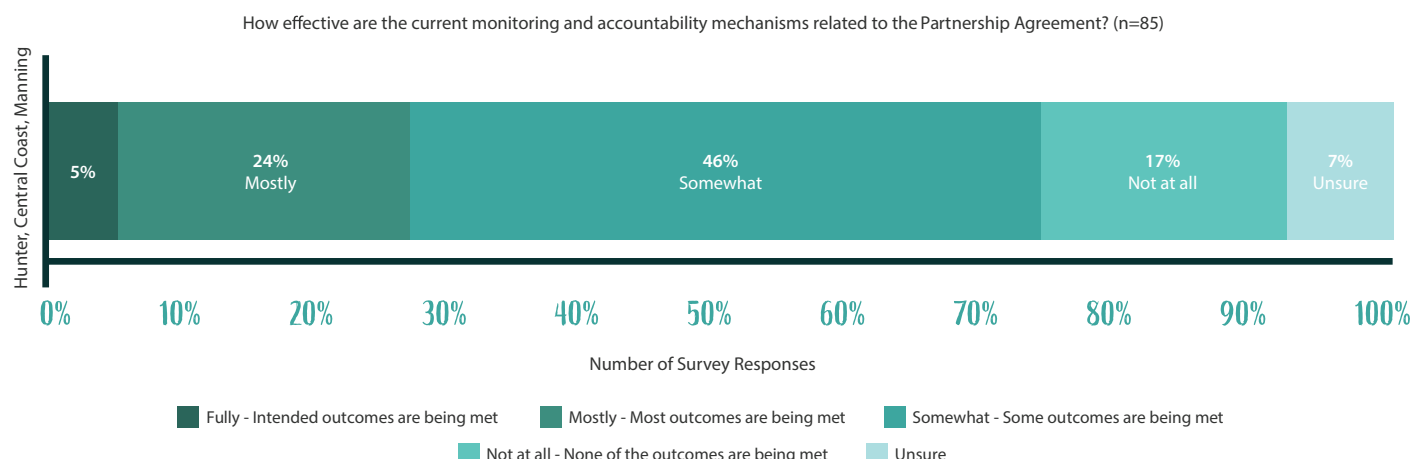
Participants emphasised the need for stronger support systems to empower Aboriginal staff to fulfil their professional role whilst also advocating for their communities without fear of repercussions. This support should include enhanced wellbeing resources and learning opportunities, while ensuring cultural responsibilities are managed to prevent burnout.

“Listening to community – might not be nice. Listen, listen, listen! – hard conversations need to be heard.”



Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 85 participants that responded to the survey question, 24% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 46% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Some participants discussed the usefulness of some plans and frameworks within schools, such as School Excellence Plans, in monitoring progress of the Partnership.
- Participants highlighted the influential role of internal Aboriginal staff and school-based teams in leading the implementation and continuous review of plans and frameworks.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants noted the absence of clear, consistent systems for tracking student progress across key indicators, such as attendance, HSC completion, and other academic milestones.

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants discussed the importance of establishing a clear framework or flowchart to guide reflection and monitoring processes of the Partnerships. It was emphasised these processes should include regular feedback, evaluation, and refinement of actions, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

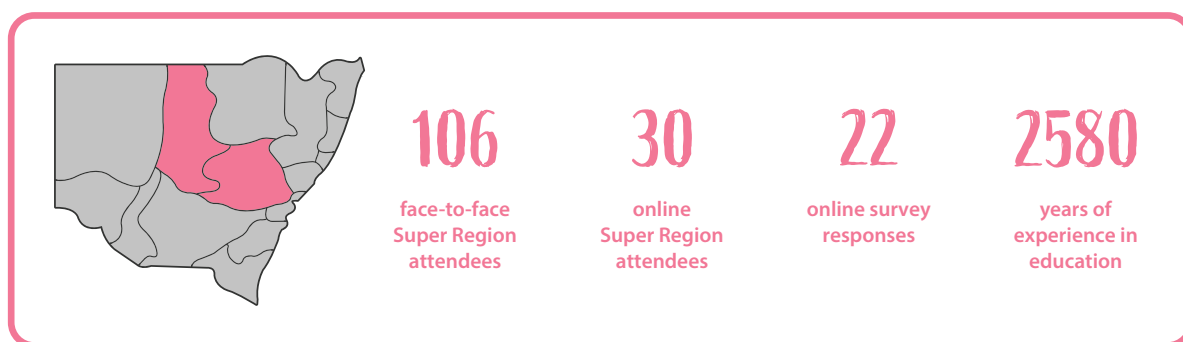
Participants discussed the necessity of setting clear milestones, check-in points, and measurable targets for the Partnership. It was highlighted the value of incorporating community consultations and focus groups to determine local measures of success and place-based actions and priorities.

Participants discussed the need to adjust policies to ensure staffing arrangements reflect the principles, commitments and resourcing requirements stipulated in the Partnership.

“With the establishment of a staff-led and student-led AET in the school, as well as the embedding of initiatives and resources in our School Excellence Plan, this has allowed for voices to be heard and ideas brought to life.”
“Listening to community – might not be nice. Listen, listen, listen! – hard conversations need to be heard.”



Western 1 and Western 2



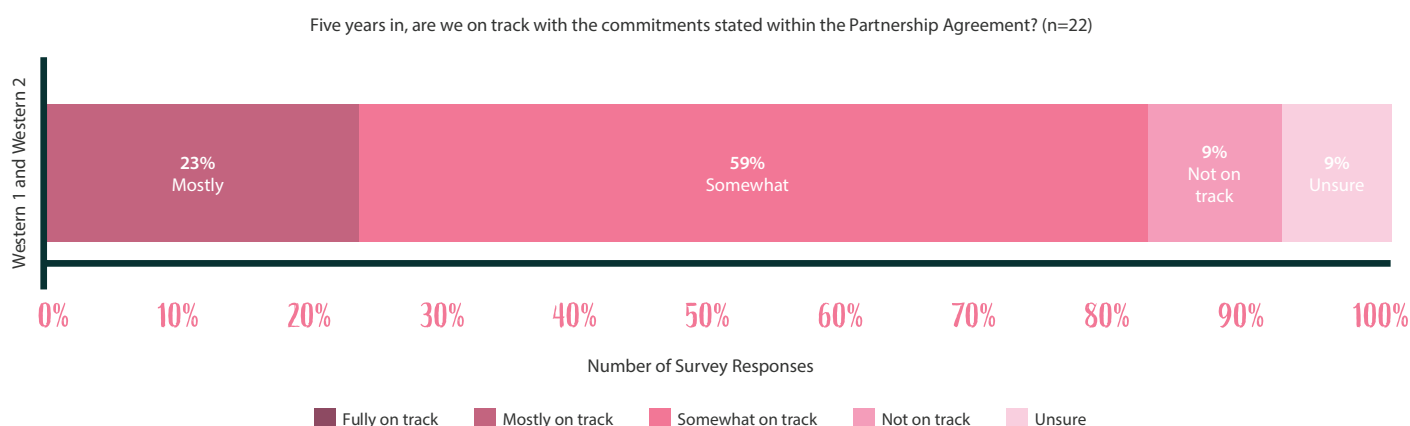
On the 14th of August 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Western 1 & Western 2 Super Region held a meeting in Dubbo. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

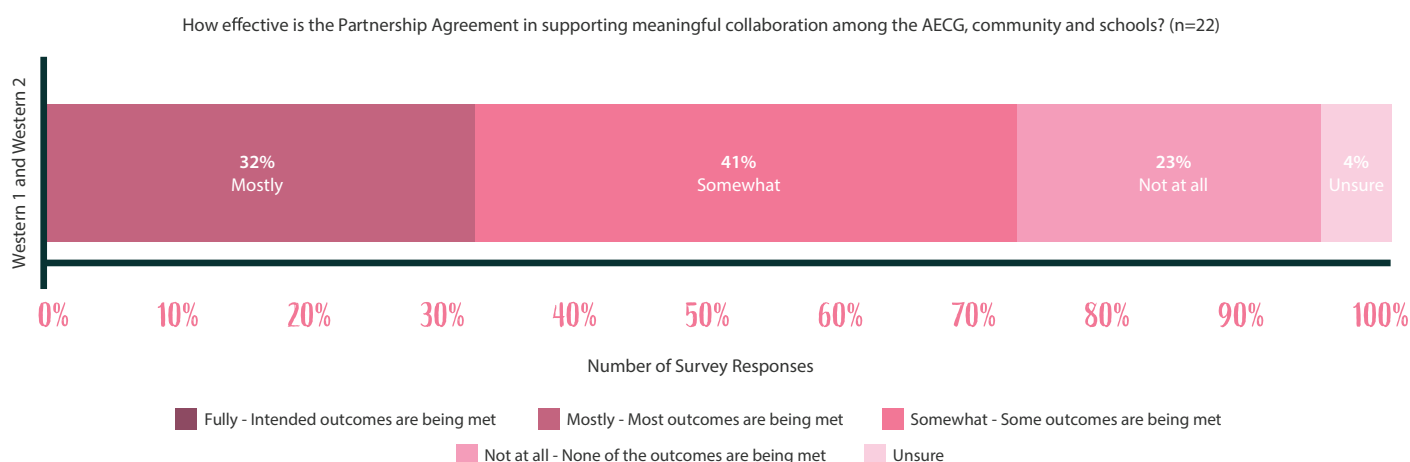
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 22 participants that responded to the survey question, 23% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 59% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Of the 22 participants that responded to the survey question, 32% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 41% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants reported an increase in engagement and genuine partnership with Aboriginal families. Schools actively working to build trust and strengthen relationships through cultural events, yarning circles, and collaborative planning sessions.
- Schools are reportedly working closely with their Local AECG to seek advice on Aboriginal Education initiatives, ensuring cultural integrity in programs and decision-making.
- It was highlighted that some principals are engaging more consistently with AECGs and community members, demonstrating a willingness to try new approaches and embed Aboriginal perspectives in school planning.
- Positive engagement between schools and Aboriginal communities has been noted, with examples of schools co-hosting cultural celebrations such as NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants indicated that relationships between schools and communities are often transactional rather than genuine. Engagement is sometimes limited to compliance or symbolic gestures, rather than meaningful co-design.
- A lack of clear communication from schools about plans and initiatives was reported, leading to confusion and mistrust among community members.
- Staff awareness of the Partnership remains low in some schools, with limited understanding of its commitments and principles.

Opportunities to Strengthen

Participants emphasised the need for Aboriginal staff and the community to be actively involved in key processes such as enrolment, reporting, interview panels, Personalised Learning Pathways (PLP), and funding decisions to ensure cultural knowledges are embedded in critical areas of school operations.

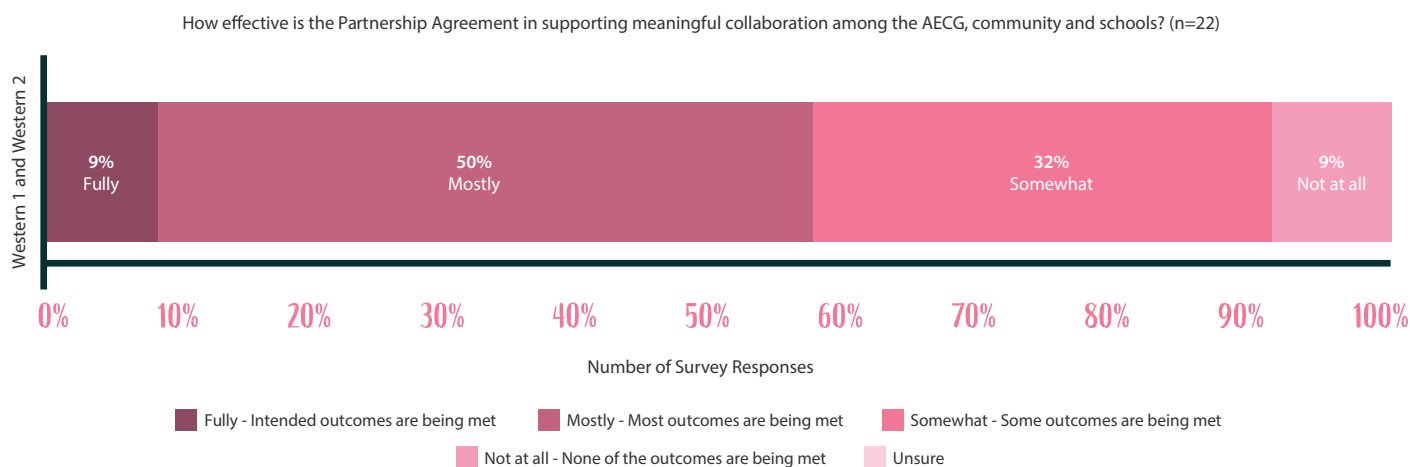
It was recommended that the Partnership Agreement be introduced to all new Department staff during induction programs to build awareness from the outset and reinforce the importance of shared responsibility for Aboriginal education.

“We are seeing an increase in engagement and true partnership in learning with our Aboriginal families.”



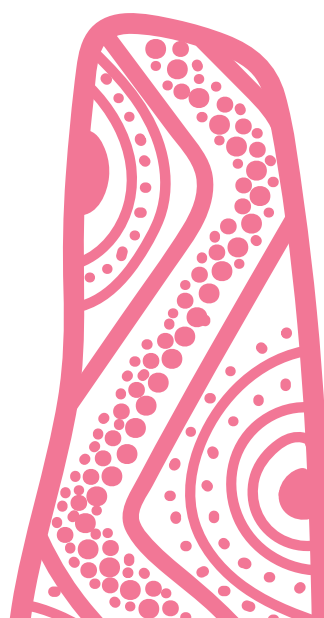
Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 22 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 32% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that some schools have successfully integrated local Aboriginal languages into classroom learning and signage.
- Schools with dedicated Aboriginal Education teams were reported to have stronger cultural programs and more consistent engagement with community.
- It was reported that many families expressed feeling welcomed and valued in schools that actively involve them in cultural events, planning processes, and decision-making. This sense of belonging has contributed to stronger relationships and improved trust between schools and communities.
- Participants noted an increase in cultural activities such as NAIDOC Week celebrations, yarning circles, and language workshops. These initiatives are often supported by local Elders and Aboriginal organisations, creating authentic learning experiences and strengthening community connections.



Gaps in Implementation

- A recurring concern was that some schools approach Aboriginal Education through a deficit lens, focusing on trauma or adopting “tick-a-box” compliance measures rather than celebrating cultural strengths and achievements.
- Personalised Learning Pathways (PLPs) were identified as inconsistent, with many schools failing to set clear, stage-specific goals, which limits opportunities for tracking progress and supporting student aspirations effectively.
- Participants emphasised that the shortage of Aboriginal staff in schools reduces opportunities for advocacy and cultural guidance. Without Aboriginal staff in schools, they risk losing community voice and cultural integrity in decision-making.

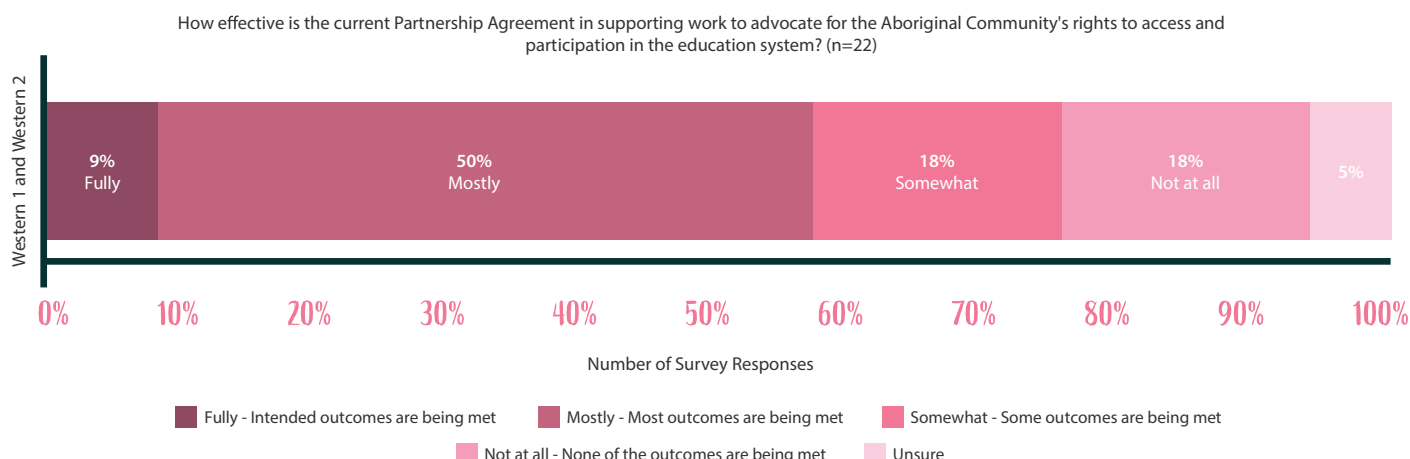
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants strongly recommended appointing more language teachers and AEOs in schools. This investment would enhance cultural safety, provide mentorship for students, and ensure Aboriginal knowledges are embedded in all aspects of education.
- Participants highlighted the importance of incorporating local histories into curriculum, particularly in regional NSW where impacts are more recent.
- Participants suggested that schools should display local Aboriginal languages on signage, uniforms, and learning materials.



Advocacy and Self-Determination

Of the 22 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 18% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that Junior AECGs are providing Aboriginal students with a meaningful platform to share their perspectives and influence school decisions.
- It was reported that many schools maintain regular contact with their Local AECG, ensuring cultural integrity in planning and decision-making.
- Participants also reported that AEOs have been strong advocates for the Partnership
- Participants noted that the NSW AECG are actively advocating for better outcomes and opportunities, reinforcing the principle that Aboriginal education is everybody's business.
- Students and families are recognising that staff are increasingly building cultural awareness through professional learning and engagement with community, which contributes to safer and more inclusive environments."

Gaps in Implementation

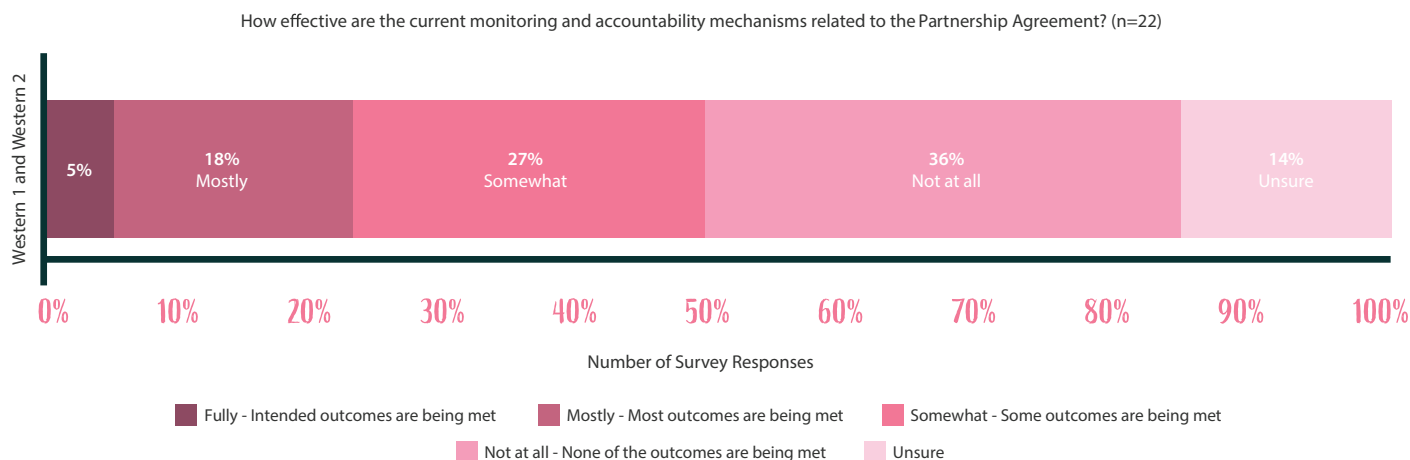
- PLPs were reported as becoming a "tick-a-box" exercise in some schools, rather than a genuine tool for supporting student aspirations and progress. This undermines trust and reduces the value of these plans.
- Participants highlighted that some Aboriginal students feel their culture is undervalued within schools, leading to disengagement and diminished wellbeing.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants emphasised the need for Junior AECGs to connect with Local AECGs and expand their network structure. This would create stronger links between student voice and community priorities, ensuring youth perspectives inform decision-making at all levels.
- Participants also emphasised the need for schools and the community to work together to increase the number of Aboriginal language educators.

Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 22 participants that responded to the survey question, 18% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 27% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

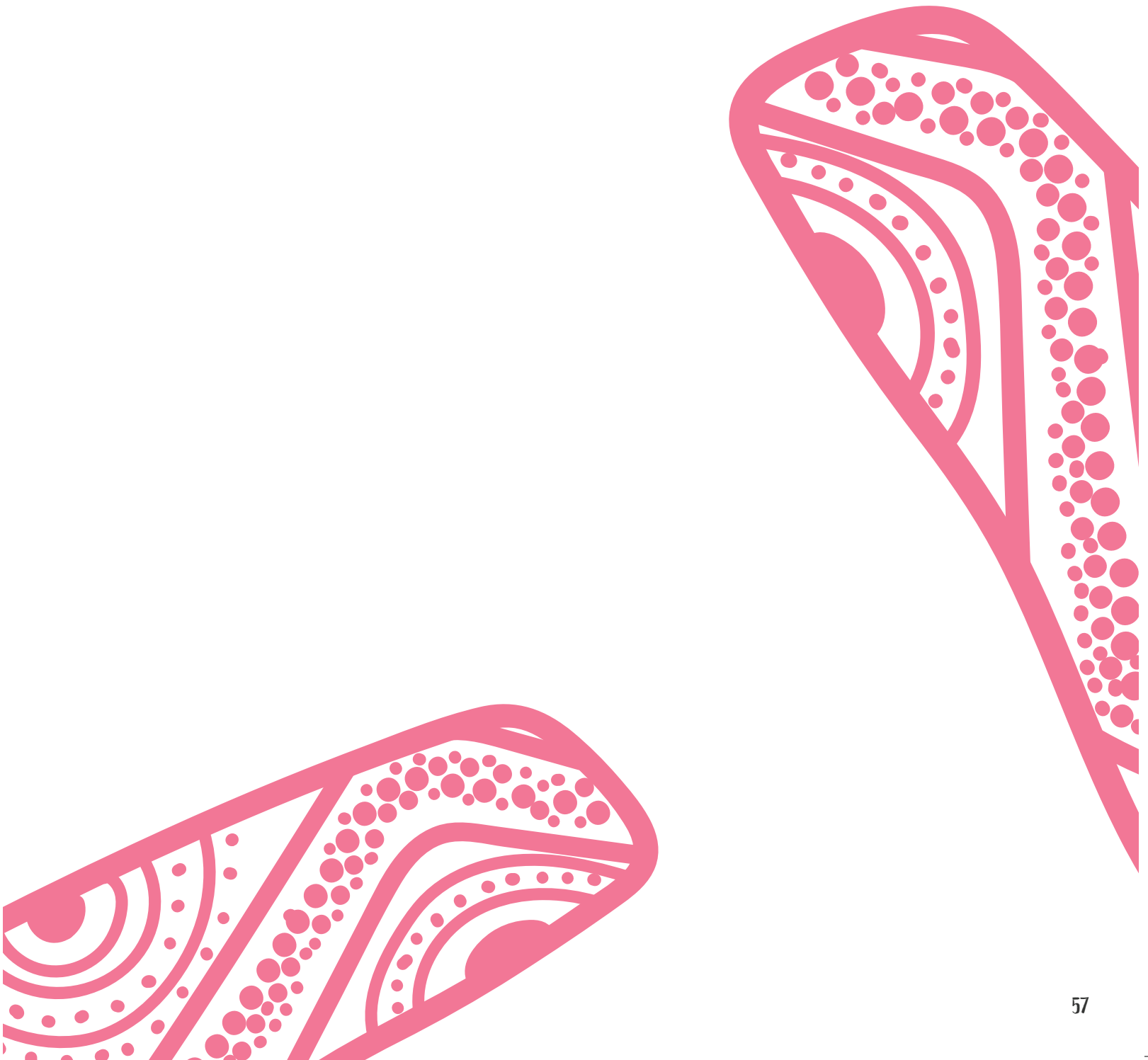
- Participants highlighted that School Excellence Plans have been tailored to reflect local contexts, ensuring that Aboriginal perspectives and community priorities are embedded in school planning.
- Many schools have adopted mid-year review processes within their School Excellence Plans. These reviews provide opportunities to assess progress, identify gaps, and adjust strategies in collaboration with AECGs and community members.
- Schools are increasingly reporting positive trends in Aboriginal student achievement and HSC completion.

Gaps in Implementation

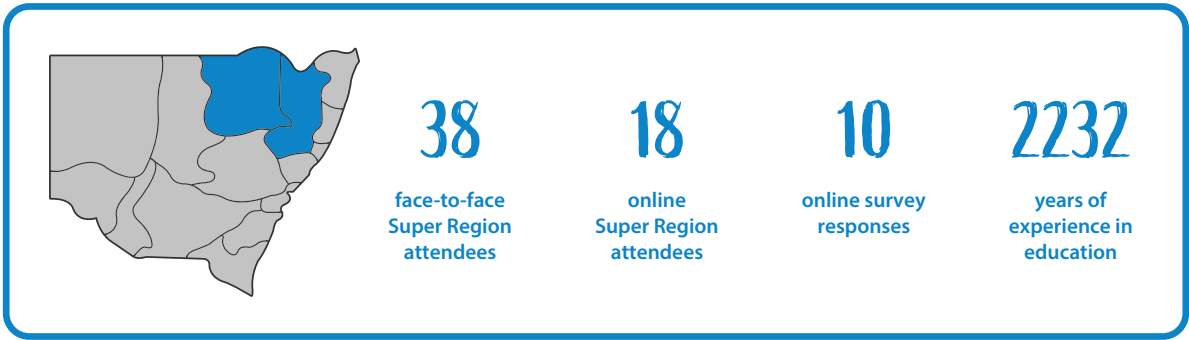
- Participants reported a lack of common understanding around what accountability looks like in practice, which can risk the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting across schools.
- There has reportedly been limited feedback consistency from both NSW AECG and the Department, leading to reduced transparency and difficulty tracking progress effectively.
- Schools operating in areas without a Local AECG face significant barriers to accountability and monitoring. Without structured community input, schools risk making decisions without Aboriginal voices, undermining the intent of the Partnership.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants recommended that schools provide regular feedback reports to AECGs. These reports should include updates on student outcomes, cultural initiatives, and funding allocations to strengthen transparency and trust.
- It was also recommended that Personalised Learning Plans (PLP) need to be actively reflected on and reviewed to ensure they remain meaningful tools for supporting student aspirations rather than compliance exercises.
- Participants suggested that in areas where Local AECGs are absent, schools should have access to Regional AECGs to maintain cultural oversight and ensure continuity in monitoring processes.



North West 1 and North West 2



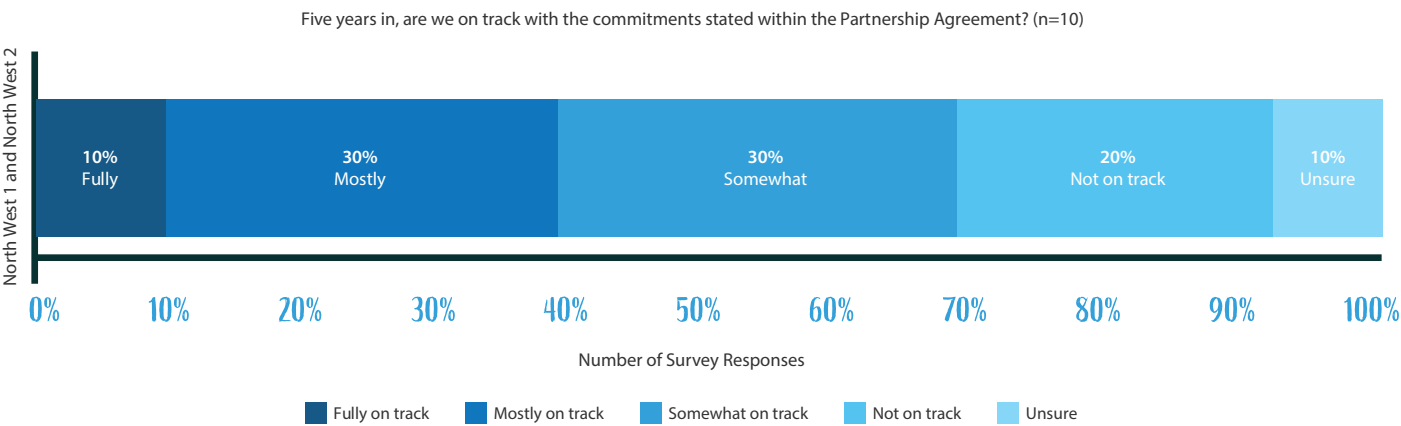
On the 15th of August 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the North West 1 & North West 2 Super Region held a meeting in Gunnedah. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

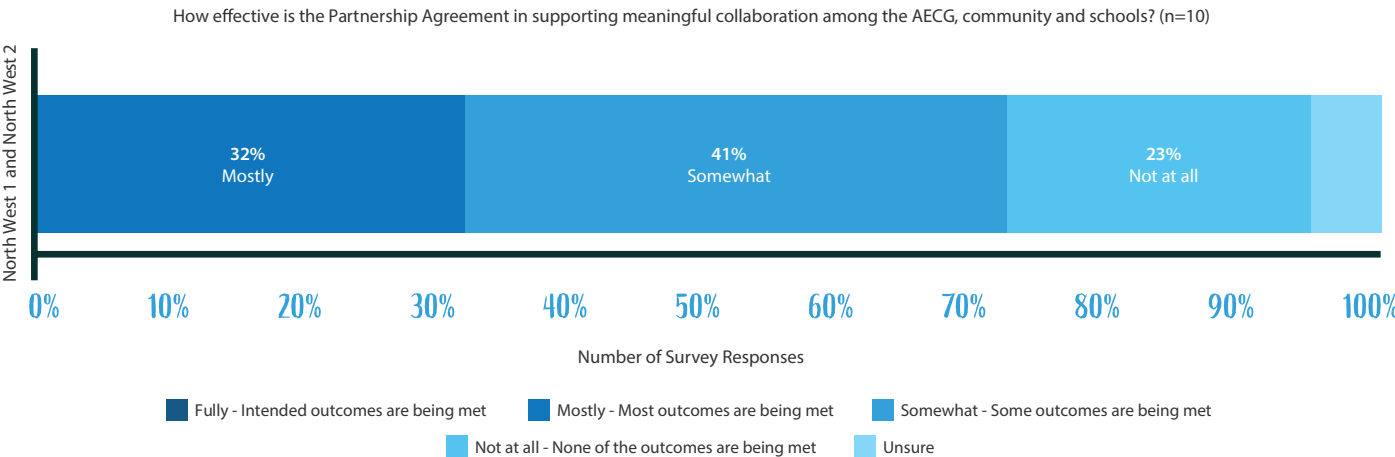
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 10 participants that responded to the survey question, 30% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 30% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Of the 10 participants that responded to the survey question, 32% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 41% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants emphasised that Local AECGs play an active role in supporting schools by providing culturally informed advice and guidance. This partnership helps staff make decisions that align with educational priorities while respecting cultural values, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.
- Several participants discussed that some principals are maintaining regular contact with Local AECGs to monitor the endorsement of programs, resources, and applications. This includes attending AECG meetings and seeking guidance to ensure cultural integrity in school initiatives.
- Participants highlighted good participation from Department staff at AECG meetings and strong mutual support between schools and AECGs.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants discussed that genuine partnerships are lacking in some schools, with engagement often perceived as a “tick a box” exercise rather than meaningful collaboration with Aboriginal communities and Local AECGs.
- Participants noted insufficient attendance by families and community members at key AECG and education meetings, which limits opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making. It was noted that a barrier to engagement may be due to community members feeling uncomfortable or unsafe attending these meetings.
- Participants observed that many schools are not actively engaging in agreed processes, resulting in fragmented efforts and missed opportunities for consistent actions and outcomes regarding the Partnerships.

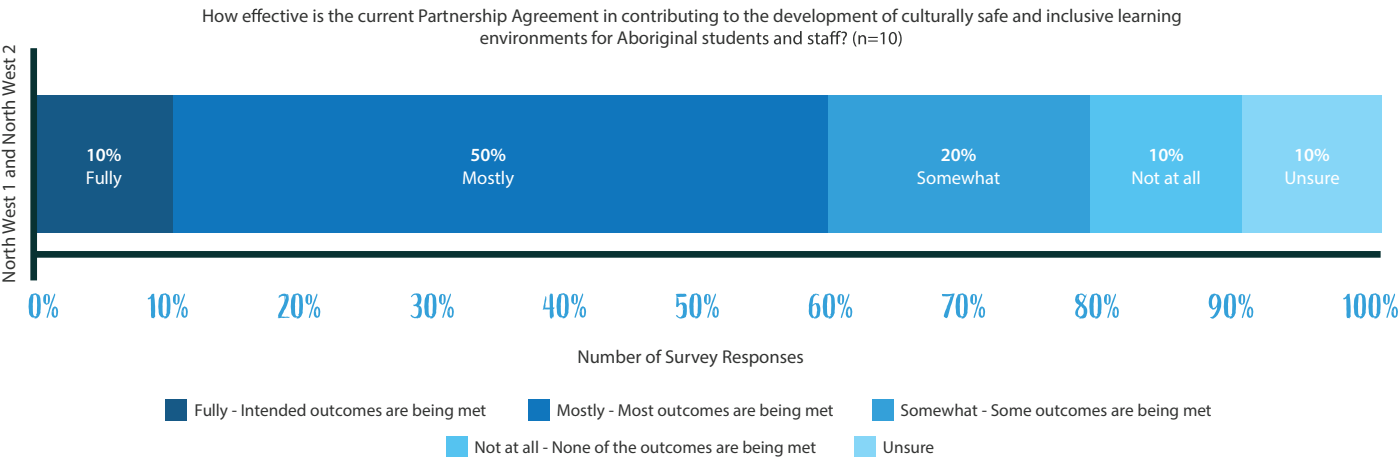
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants discussed the need to improve attendance at Local AECG meetings, suggesting proactive strategies such as contacting and reminding members and staff prior to scheduled sessions. Consistent meeting structures were also identified as essential for effective engagement and decision-making.
- Participants emphasised the importance of strengthening collaboration among schools through resource sharing and joint initiatives. It was noted that this approach would create consistency in program delivery, reduce duplication of effort, and improve efficiency across the system. Additionally, it would promote equity by ensuring all schools, including smaller or remote ones, have access to high-quality resources and support. Collaborative efforts would also foster professional networks, enable shared learning and enhance outcomes for students and communities in line with the commitments under the Partnership.



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 10 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 20% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted the strength and success of professional learning sessions delivered by AECGs.
- Participants observed that schools are making noticeable progress in creating spaces that feel inviting and inclusive, through the use of artworks and murals. Participants also noted that schools are successfully incorporating practices such as the Acknowledgement of Country into their daily routines and events.

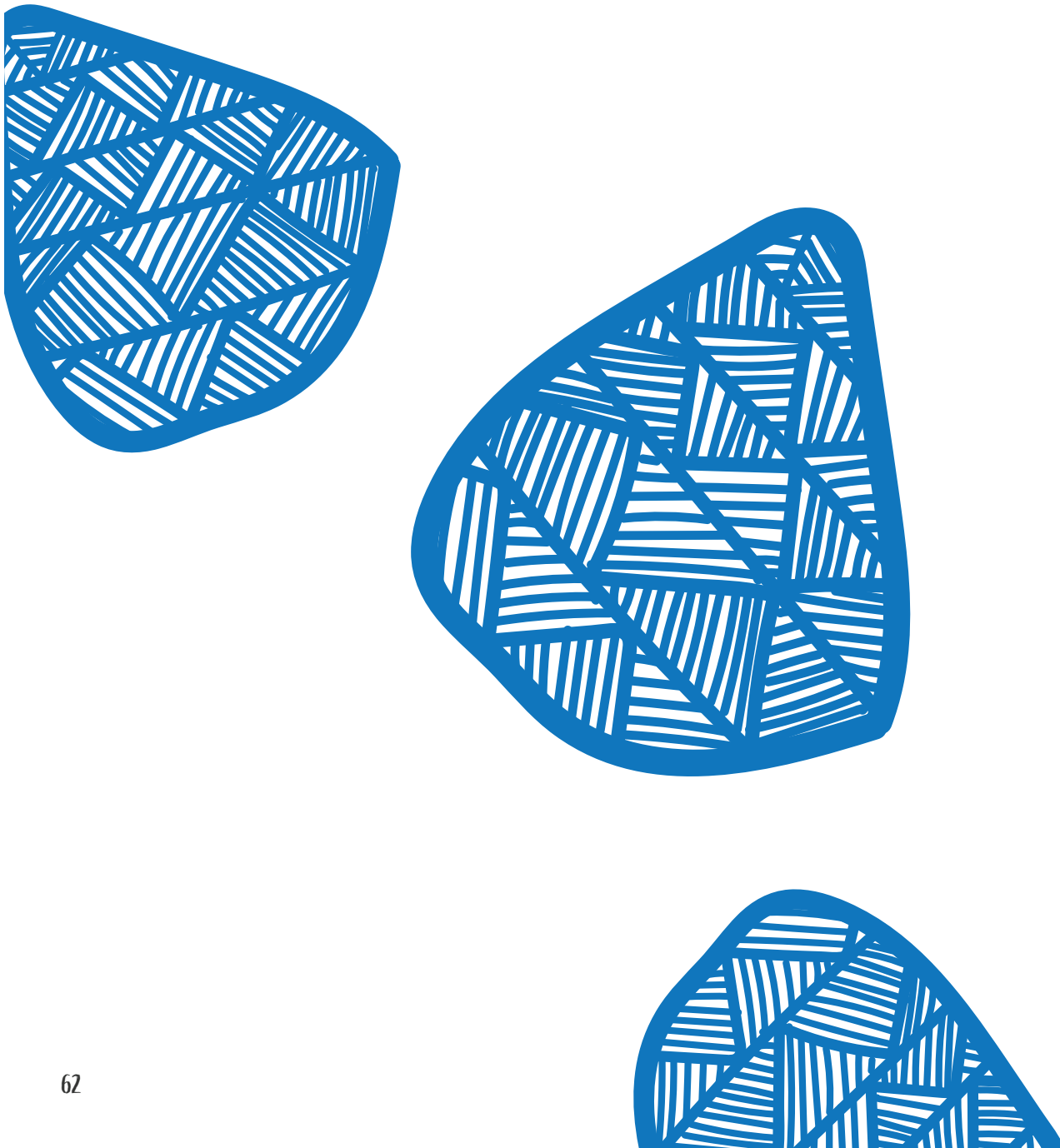
Gaps in Implementation

- Participants emphasised the ongoing need for staff members to engage in further professional learning to deepen their knowledge and confidence in implementing culturally safe and inclusive practices within the school environment.
- Participants discussed that the current curriculum and teaching materials do not sufficiently reflect local histories, languages, and cultural knowledges, limiting opportunities for students to engage with content that is relevant to their community.
- Participants observed that schools often rely on the same services and individuals for cultural programs and engagement activities, resulting in limited variation and missed opportunities to showcase broader community knowledge and expertise.

Opportunities to Strengthen

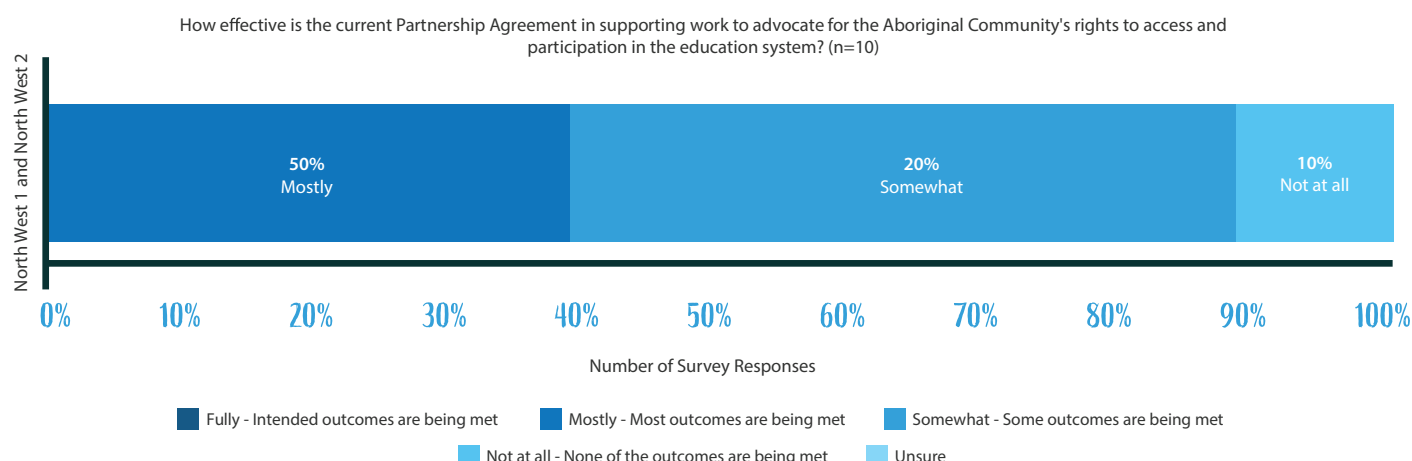
- Participants emphasised the need for school planning processes to reflect grassroots voices,, ensuring decisions are informed by local voices and community priorities.
- Participants highlighted the ongoing need for strengthened cultural responsiveness among staff through targeted and consistent professional learning opportunities.
- Participants discussed that schools and Local AECGs should consider creating safe, welcoming spaces for students, families, and community members to participate in meetings.
- Participants highlighted the importance of increasing access to merit selection and panel training to promote fair and culturally informed recruitment practices.

“More engagement with Local AECG to provide local context to curriculum, embedding local Aboriginal perspectives, knowledge, practices within curriculum”



Advocacy and Self-Determination

Of the 10 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 20% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants acknowledged that AECGs play a vital role in advocating for the educational success and wellbeing of Aboriginal students. Their efforts help ensure that student needs and cultural perspectives are represented in school planning and decision-making.
- Participants highlighted that student perspectives are being actively represented through the Junior AECG.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants expressed concern that the Department's current approach does not effectively reflect or support the grassroots structure of AECGs. This disconnect can lead to decisions that overlook local priorities and community-driven processes.
- It was noted that some Principals interpret advocacy from AECG members as criticism or attack, rather than viewing it as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and enhance cultural awareness within schools. This perception can hinder constructive dialogue and collaboration.

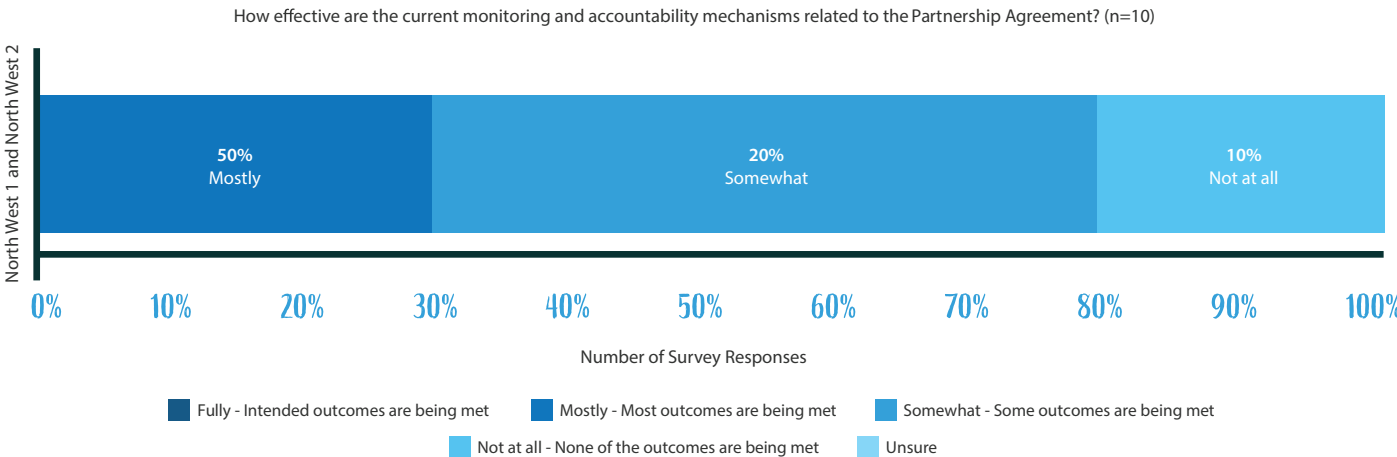
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants emphasised the importance of including Aboriginal staff in key decision-making processes, such as recruitment and hiring. Their involvement ensures that decisions are culturally informed and reflect the needs and priorities of Aboriginal students and communities.
- Participants identified a valuable opportunity to strengthen student voice through a more collaborative Junior AECG model that actively includes parent participation. This approach would not only empower Aboriginal students to share their perspectives but also create a stronger connection between families, schools, and community decision-making processes.

"AECG are positive advocates for Aboriginal students. Local AECG executive team support schools and guide staff in making culturally/education-based decisions."

Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 10 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 20% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants did not provide insights into current strengths of the accountability and monitoring of the Partnership.

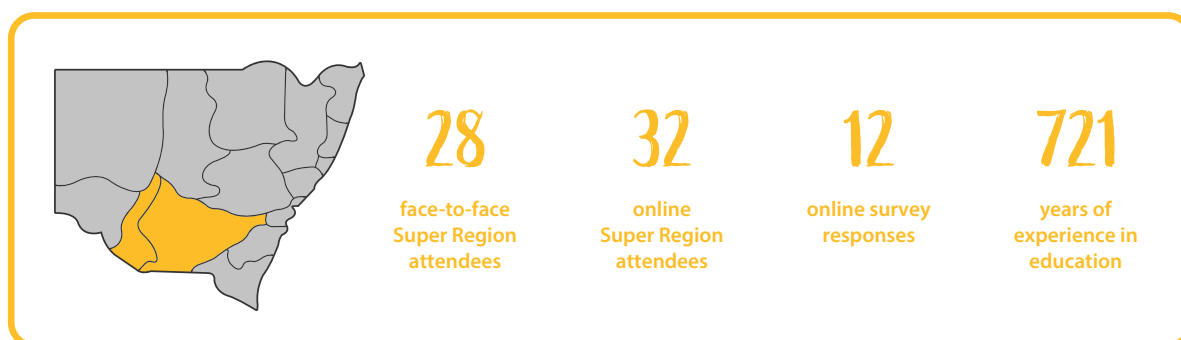
Gaps in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that the Partnership is not being lived out in schools, with minimal integration into School Excellence Plans and limited accountability measures such as annual check-ins.
- Participants noted that certain processes and decisions are not formally recorded, which limits accountability and makes it difficult to track progress or revisit previous actions.
- Current meeting structures do not prioritise providing updates on progress of the Partnership, leading to limited transparency and the ability to align efforts across schools and communities.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants discussed the need for improved transparency in how funding is allocated and utilised within schools. Greater transparency would help ensure that resources are directed toward initiatives that genuinely support student learning, cultural inclusion, and community engagement.
- Participants suggested creating a standardised template that schools can use to report back to their Local AECG on the progress of the Partnership. Such a template would provide a clear and consistent structure for documenting actions, achievements, and areas to strengthen implementation, and be presented in AECG meetings.

Riverina 1 and Riverina 2



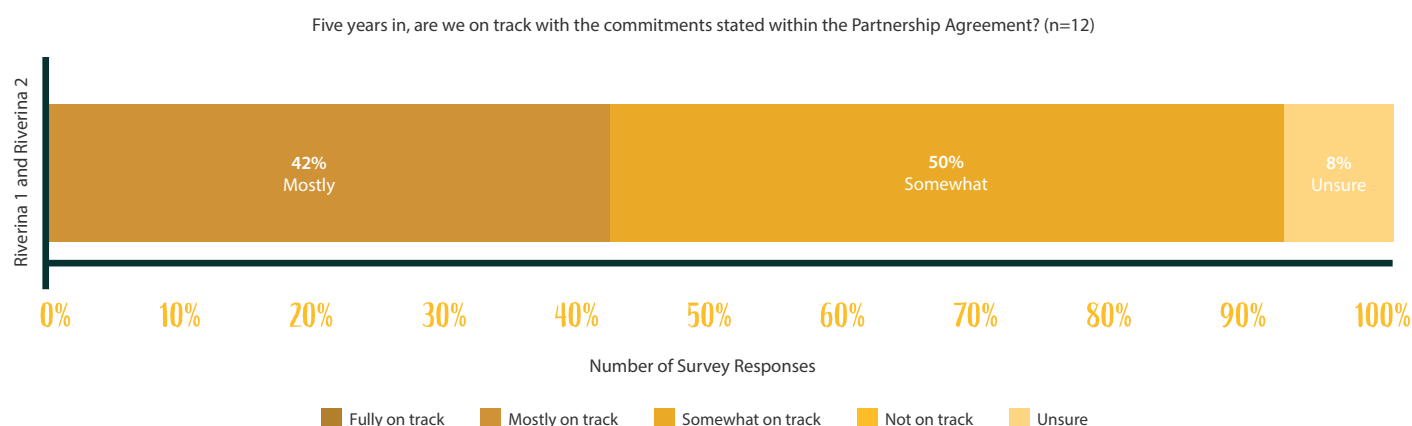
On the 22nd of August 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Riverina 1 & Riverina 2 Super Region held a meeting in Griffith. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

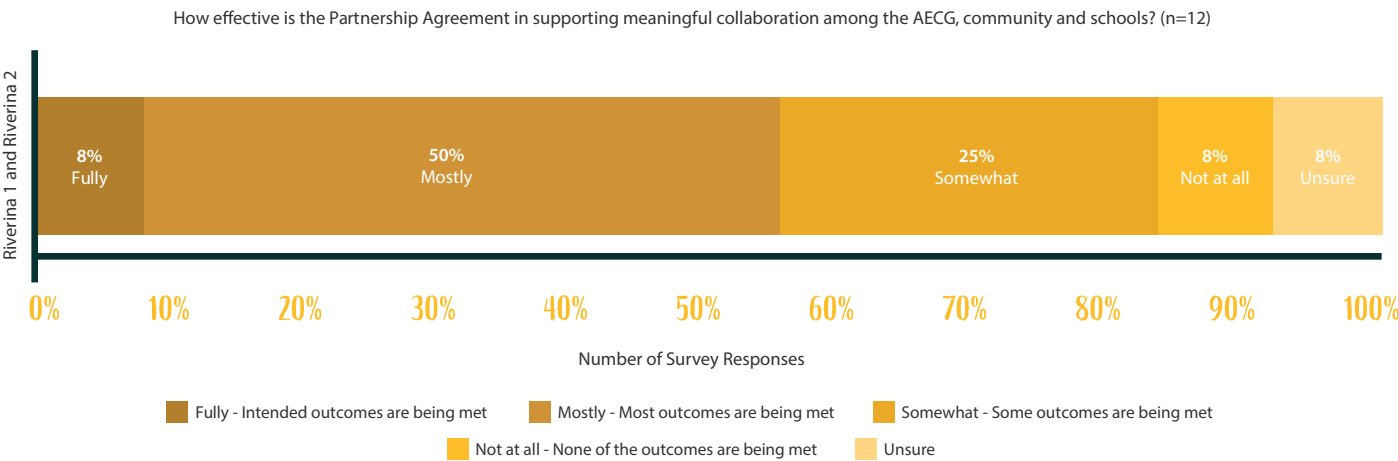
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 12 participants that responded to the survey question, 42% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 50% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Of the 12 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 25% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants acknowledged genuine collaboration is improving with many schools and Principals working more closely with AECGs, fostering mutual respect and stronger partnerships through meaningful engagement.
- It was reported that schools are enhancing engagement with Elders and community members to appropriately integrate perspectives and stories into educational practices.
- Participants observed growing collaboration between primary schools and secondary schools to strengthen connections across different stages of learning and promote pathways including transition programs.



Gaps in Implementation

- Participants identified challenges in shared responsibility between Aboriginal staff and schools. It was highlighted that Aboriginal staff often feel pressured to endorse the Partnership as if it is solely their responsibility, rather than a collective effort across all staff and leadership.
- Many participants noted that the workload associated with maintaining connections with AECGs and community are often concentrated to a few individuals.

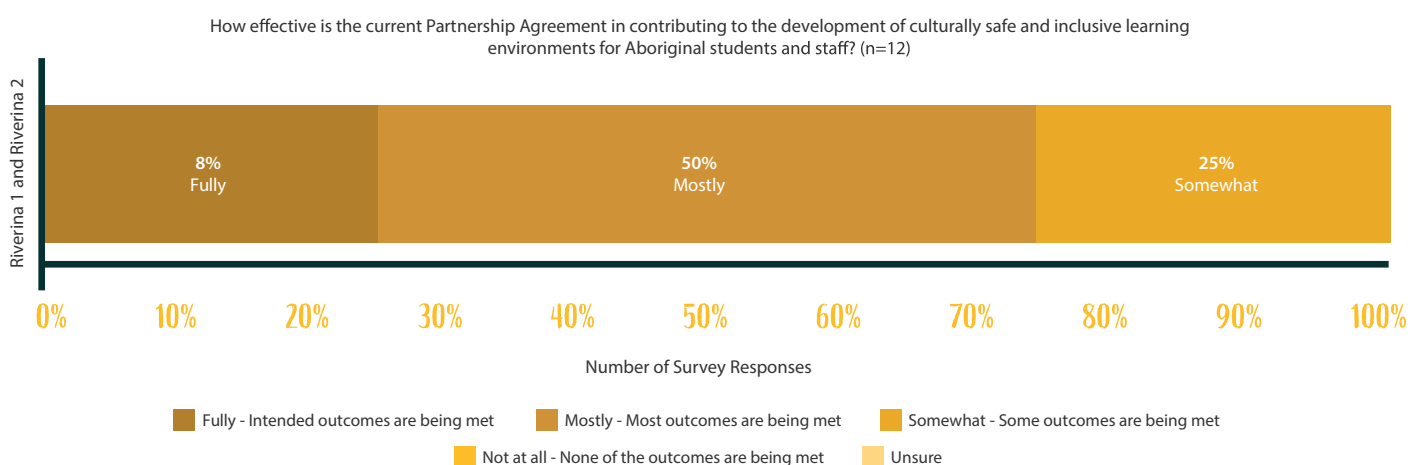
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants discussed the need for improved transparency in how funding is allocated and utilised within schools. Greater transparency would help ensure that resources are directed toward initiatives that genuinely support student learning, cultural inclusion, and community engagement.
- Participants suggested creating a standardised template that schools can use to report back to their Local AECG on the progress of the Partnership. Such a template would provide a clear and consistent structure for documenting actions, achievements, and areas to strengthen implementation, and be presented in AECG meetings.

“Genuine and authentic connection with Elders, valuing their voices, stories and perspectives.”

Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 12 participants that responded to the survey question, 50% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 25% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants noted that cultural awareness training is being implemented more frequently across schools.
- The Department is expanding its efforts to provide PL opportunities focused on Aboriginal education. This includes targeted training for teachers and leaders to embed culturally responsive practices into everyday teaching and school planning.
- Participants highlighted a positive trend in the integration of Aboriginal languages within schools.

Gaps in Implementation

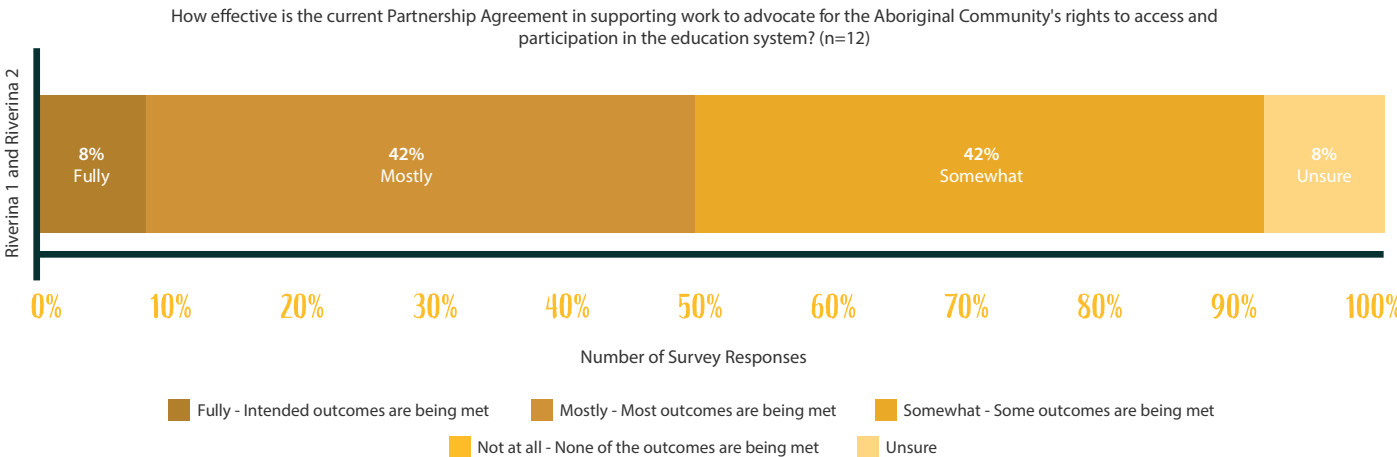
- Participants reported that racism continues to exist within some school communities, creating barriers to cultural safety and inclusion.
- It was noted that some teachers are hesitant to engage with or challenge entrenched views held by older generations regarding Aboriginal Education. This reluctance limits progress toward embedding culturally responsive practices and addressing misconceptions.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants recommended using neutral venues for hosting AECG meetings to create inclusive spaces that encourage participation from students, families, and community members.
- Participants proposed several visible strategies to strengthen cultural safety within schools. Suggestions included flying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, establishing yarning circles, incorporating Aboriginal languages throughout the school environment, and displaying culturally significant artwork.
- Schools should work closely with their Local AECGs to embed Local Aboriginal cultures, knowledges and histories within the curriculum.
- Participants emphasised the need for schools to provide localised learning experiences for students, such as on Country learning experiences and programs delivered by Elders and community members.

Advocacy & Self-Determination

Of the 12 participants that responded to the survey question, 42% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 42% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted the important role of Junior AECGs in amplifying student voice within schools. These groups provide a platform for Aboriginal students to share their perspectives, contribute to decision-making, and influence initiatives that impact their educational experience.
- Participants noted that AECGs are actively acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of Aboriginal students. This recognition not only affirms student success but also strengthens cultural pride and engagement within the school community.

Gaps in Implementation

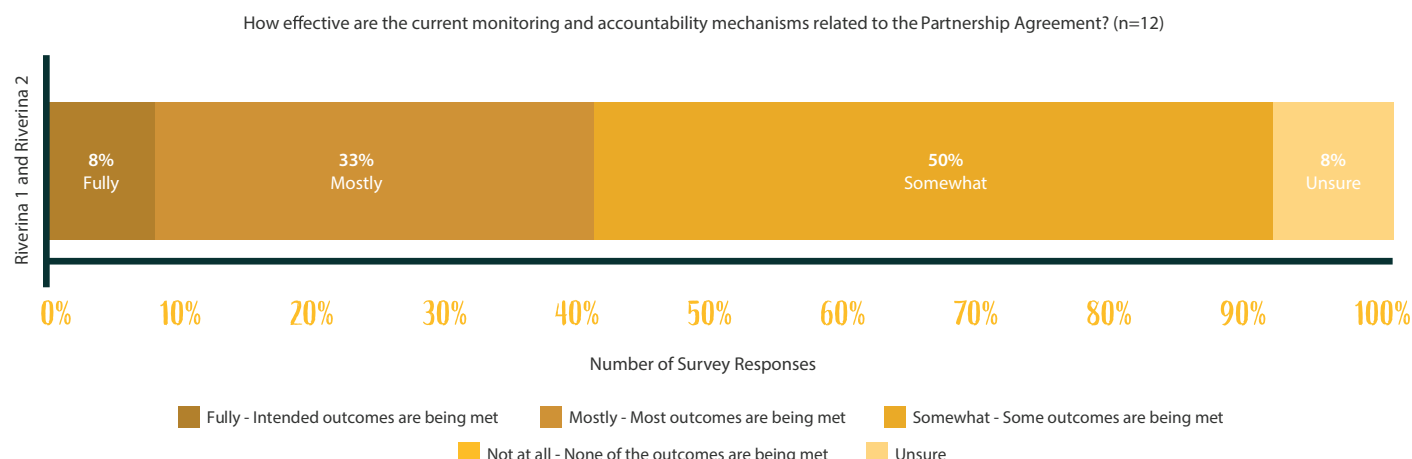
- Participants raised concerns about workload distribution in implementing cultural initiatives and the Partnership within schools. It was noted that these responsibilities often fall disproportionately on Aboriginal staff, leading to fatigue and burnout.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants emphasized the need for schools to provide regular updates on the progress of the Partnership Agreement during executive meetings and AECG forums.
- Regular, collaborative reviews involving schools and AECGs were recommended to ensure accountability and maintain alignment with cultural and educational priorities.
- Greater publicity of AECG activities and the Partnership was recommended through school newsletters, social media platforms, and local newspapers.
- Participants recommended displaying the Partnership prominently within school grounds alongside an Acknowledgment of Country. These visible actions reinforce the school's commitment to cultural respect and inclusion.

Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 12 participants that responded to the survey question, 33% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 50% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that tools such as the Reconciliation Action Plan, Guiding Principles Framework, and School Excellence Plans are valuable mechanisms for accountability and monitoring the progress of Partnership within schools. Participants emphasised that using these frameworks effectively requires regular review, clear reporting, and collaboration with AECGs to ensure actions remain aligned with community priorities.

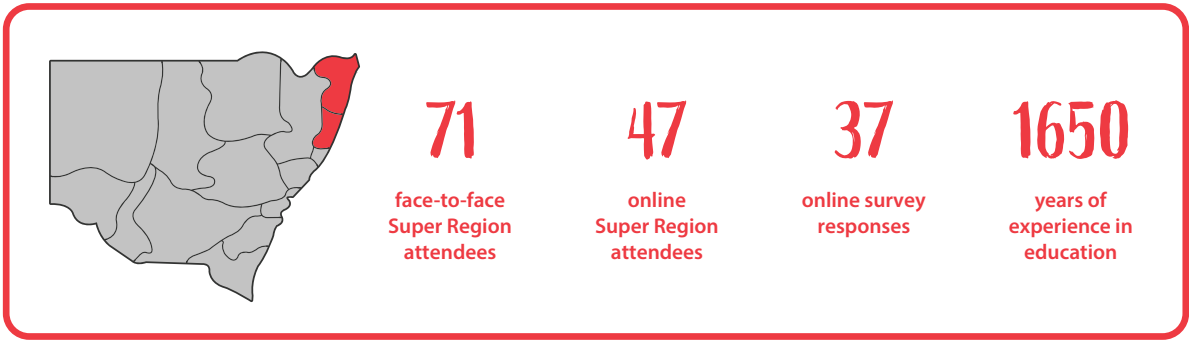
Gaps in Implementation

- Participants noted that the Partnership is often not acknowledged as a collective responsibility across all levels of schools, AECGs and the community. Instead, the responsibility tends to fall on a small group of individuals, which limits its effectiveness and sustainability.
- Participants highlighted that formal reviews of the Partnership are not consistently occurring at the local level.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Establishing Aboriginal student leadership teams, such as Junior AECG, was identified as a key strategy to increase student advocacy and representation.
- Participants highlighted the importance of schools building stronger, more meaningful relationships with families and the wider community to empower voices in education spaces.

Upper North Coast and Lower North Coast



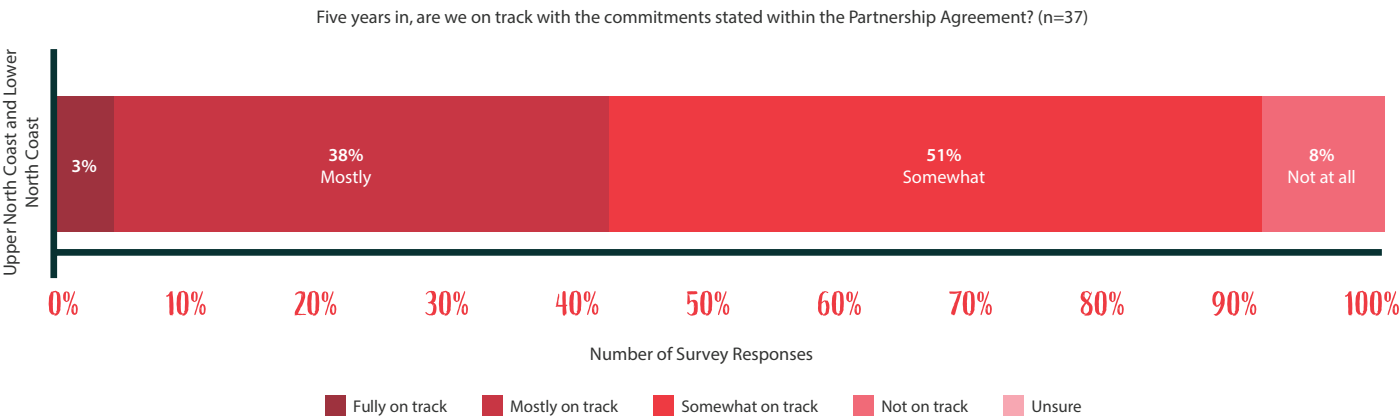
On the 5th of September 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Upper & Lower North Coast Super Region held a meeting in Grafton. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

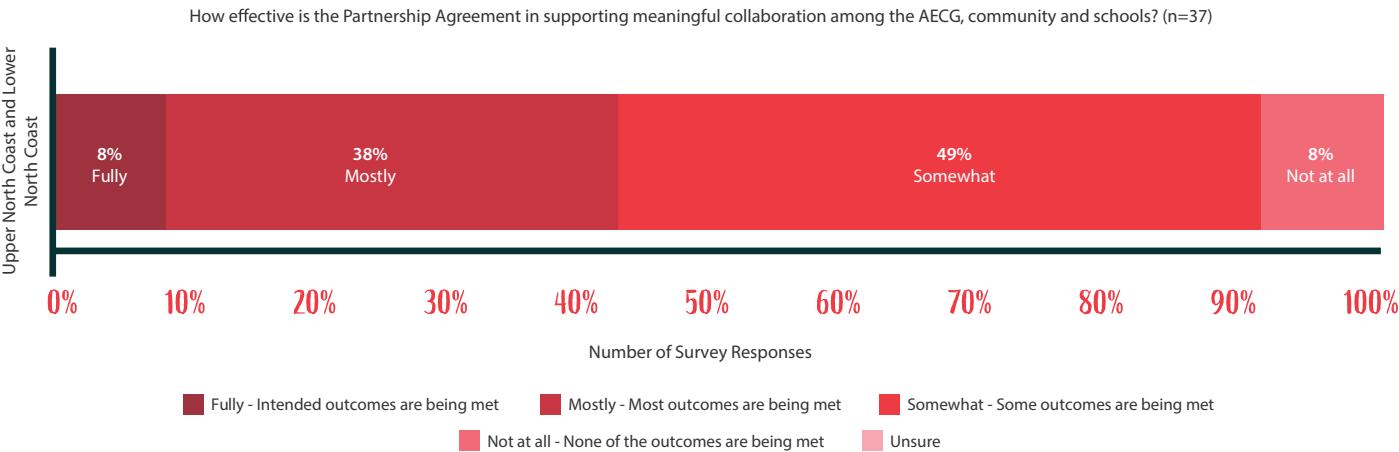
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 37 participants that responded to the survey question, 38% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 51% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships and Collaboration

Of the 37 participants that responded to the survey question, 38% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 49% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that AECG representatives have been included on recruitment panels in schools, ensuring Aboriginal voices influence hiring decisions and school leadership structures.
- It was reported that AECG is actively helping non-Aboriginal staff become more knowledgeable about local communities and Elders, fostering cultural understanding and respect.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants indicated that schools are reportedly not always honouring AECG as the peak advisory body, which undermines the intent of the Partnership and limits authentic collaboration.
- It was frequently mentioned that some participants felt the Department is still just ticking boxes, rather than building genuine relationships, leading to tokenistic engagement and mistrust.

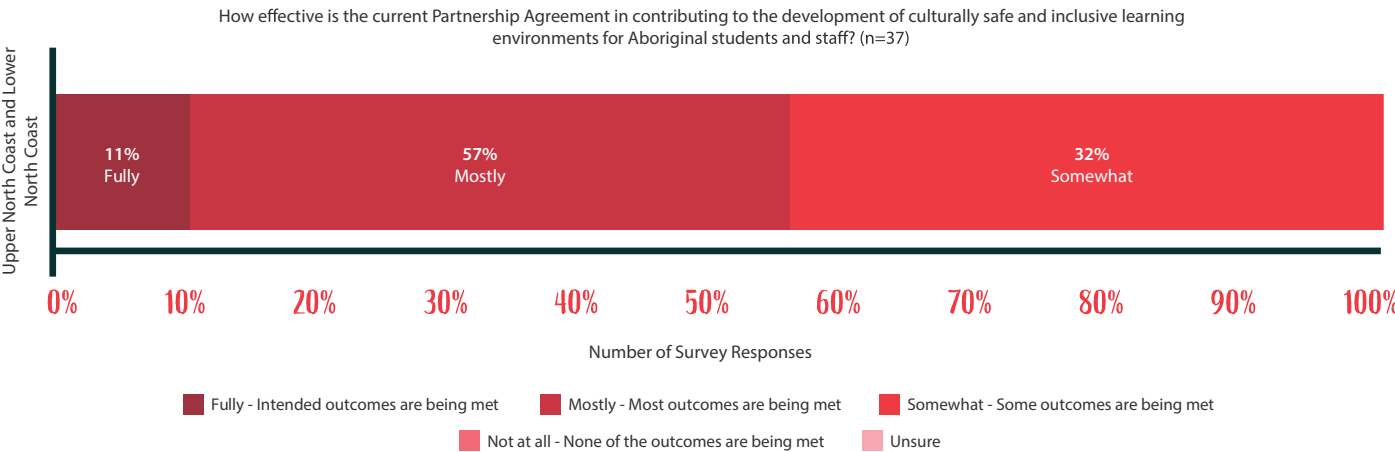
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested that the Partnership should explicitly acknowledge and embed the critical role that parents, carers, and community members play in shaping educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. This involves moving beyond consultation to genuine co-design, ensuring that family and community voices are actively included in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation of school initiatives.
- It was also reported that the Partnership should be formally referenced within School Excellence Plans. Embedding these commitments into School Excellence Plans will provide a structured mechanism for accountability, enabling schools to monitor progress and align initiatives with the principles of the Partnership. This integration reinforces the Partnership as a living framework rather than a static policy document.
- Participants highlighted that meetings should be strategically located within familiar, culturally safe spaces such as schools or AECG venues to foster inclusivity and encourage participation from Elders and community members. This approach can ensure that Aboriginal voices are central to educational planning and decision-making.



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 37 participants that responded to the survey question, 57% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 32% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants indicated that many schools have embedded cultural protocols and symbols into their daily practices. This includes Acknowledgement of Country at assemblies and events, flying Aboriginal flags, and incorporating language into signage and murals. These visible markers of identity help foster respect and cultural pride among students and staff.
- It was also reported that schools are increasingly hosting cultural events such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, and Harmony Day, which provide opportunities for students and families to engage with Aboriginal histories and traditions. These events often involve collaboration with local Elders and AEOs, reinforcing community connections.
- It was also reported that some schools within the Super Region have established an Aboriginal Education committee to oversee initiatives. These committees play a key role in ensuring cultural knowledges are embedded in planning and curriculum, and they provide a structured platform for ongoing dialogue between schools and communities.

Gaps in Implementation

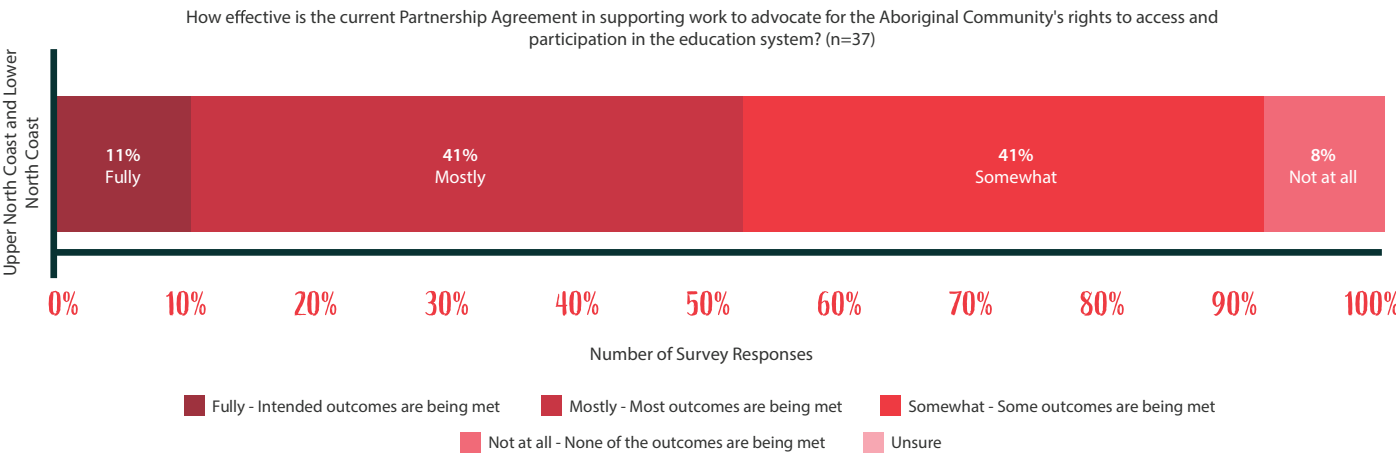
- A recurring concern was that many teachers feel ill-equipped to teach Aboriginal histories and perspectives authentically. This lack of confidence often leads to avoidance or minimal inclusion of cultural content in lessons, which undermines the intent of the Partnership.
- Participants reported that some programs rely on broad, generic Aboriginal content rather than incorporating local histories and cultural knowledge. This approach risks perpetuating tokenism and fails to reflect the diversity and richness of Aboriginal communities within the region.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested introducing a culturally safe space in all schools for Aboriginal students, staff, and community. These spaces could serve as hubs for mentoring, wellbeing programs and cultural activities.
- It was reported that schools should work closely with local Elders and knowledge holders to ensure Aboriginal histories and cultural practices are taught in ways that reflect local contexts. This includes integrating language programs, cultural protocols, and community-led initiatives into everyday learning.

Advocacy & Self-Determination

Of the 37 participants that responded to the survey question, 41% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 41% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that the Junior AECG has been highly effective in providing Aboriginal students with a meaningful platform to share their perspectives. This structure promotes leadership, cultural pride, and peer connection, enabling students to influence school initiatives and advocate for their needs.
- It was reported that some schools have employed local Elders as School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs). This practice strengthens cultural knowledge within schools, fosters intergenerational learning, and ensures that Aboriginal perspectives are embedded in everyday teaching and wellbeing programs.
- Participants noted that Aboriginal people are increasingly being included on merit selection panels. This inclusion ensures that cultural considerations and community priorities are reflected in hiring decisions, supporting a more culturally responsive workforce.
- It was noted that a number of schools have established Student Aboriginal Leadership Teams, providing opportunities for Aboriginal students to take on leadership roles, contribute to decision-making, and promote cultural initiatives within their school communities.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants reported that not all schools or educators actively connect with their Local AECG. This lack of engagement undermines the intent of the Partnership and limits opportunities for authentic collaboration and cultural guidance.
- While Junior AECGs exist, participants frequently mentioned that student input is not consistently valued or incorporated into school planning and decision-making processes. This gap reduces the impact of student advocacy and risks tokenistic engagement.

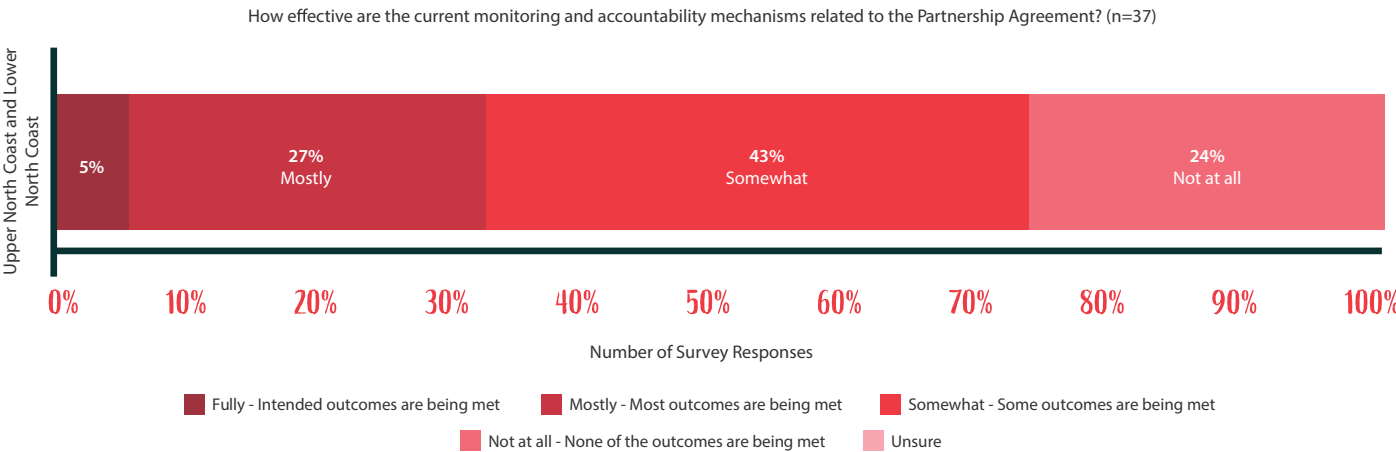
Opportunities to Strengthen

- It was reported that schools need to move beyond one-off consultations and adopt genuine co-design processes with Elders, youth, and families. This approach ensures that educational initiatives reflect local priorities, cultural protocols, and community aspirations, fostering trust and shared ownership.



Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 37 participants that responded to the survey question, 27% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 43% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

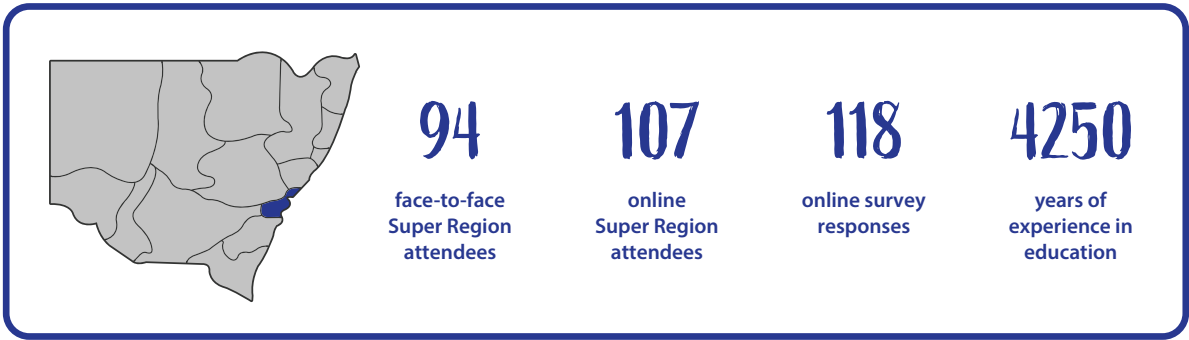
- Participants highlighted that many schools are conducting Personalised Learning Pathway yarn-ups with parents and carers. These meetings provide an opportunity to share updates on student progress, celebrate achievements, and maintain transparency. They also help strengthen trust and ensure families remain actively involved in their children’s education.
- It was also reported that Local AECGs and the Department hold regular meetings to discuss progress and share updates. These meetings serve as a platform for collaboration and ensure that both parties remain aligned with the commitments of the Partnership Agreement.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants noted that outcomes and progress are not always communicated back to the community. This lack of transparency can lead to disengagement and reduce trust in the process.
- It was frequently mentioned that the AECG and the Department do not always report on progress because of competing priorities and workload constraints. This gap undermines accountability and makes it difficult to track implementation effectively.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested that schools and the Department should share key data with AECGs and communities. Providing this information would strengthen trust and enable communities to monitor progress.
- It was also recommended that a formal review or reflection on the Partnership Agreement should occur annually. This process would ensure that commitments remain a priority, allow for timely adjustments, and reinforce accountability across all levels.



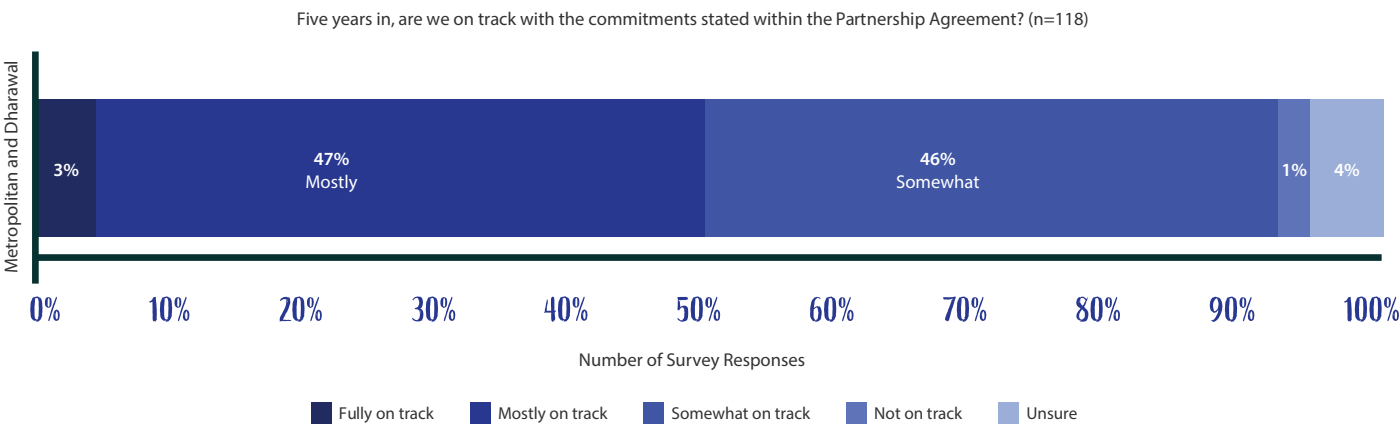
On the 16th of September 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Metropolitan & Dharawal Super Region held a meeting in Sydney. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

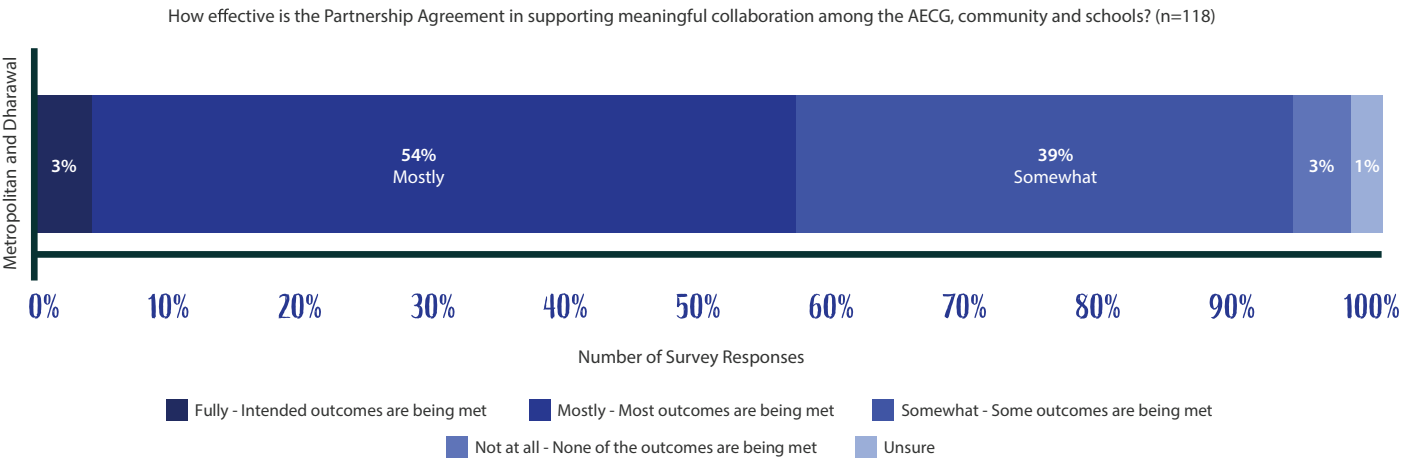
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 118 participants that responded to the survey question, 47% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 46% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships and Collaboration

Of the 117 participants that responded to the survey question, 54% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 39% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that schools are connecting with local Elders, primary and secondary schools, and the AECG.
- It was reported that there has been an increase in Aboriginal student participation in leadership roles, cultural programs, and educational pathways.
- Participants indicated that there is more awareness of the AECG in schools compared to previous years.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was frequently mentioned that the AECG and Department regions do not align, creating confusion.
- Participants reported uncertainty around which local representatives are connected to schools.
- It was highlighted that Aboriginal staff are experiencing cultural load and burnout due to additional responsibilities.
- Participants noted challenges in getting parents involved in sharing their voice.

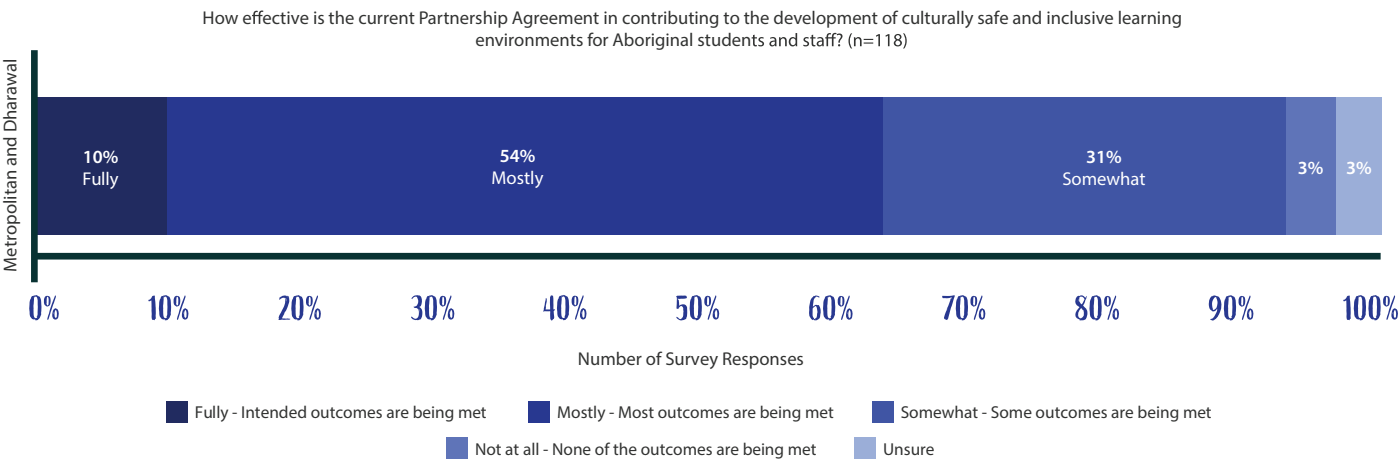
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested that the AECG should introduce programs at universities.
- It was reported that there is a need to celebrate Aboriginal achievements more visibly.
- Participants also highlighted that staff require more professional learning opportunities.

“There is clear shared agreement and commitment to continually improve and strengthen our partnership to improve outcomes for our kids.”

Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 118 participants that responded to the survey question, 54% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 31% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants reported that Aboriginal Educators are being included in executive meetings.
- It was also reported that language has been embedded across schools, alongside Acknowledgement of Country, Aboriginal designs on uniforms, sports houses named in language, and dance programs.
- Participants highlighted that the introduced curriculums have been inclusive of Aboriginal cultures, histories and knowledges.
- It was noted that staff in schools are becoming increasingly culturally responsive.

Gaps in Implementation

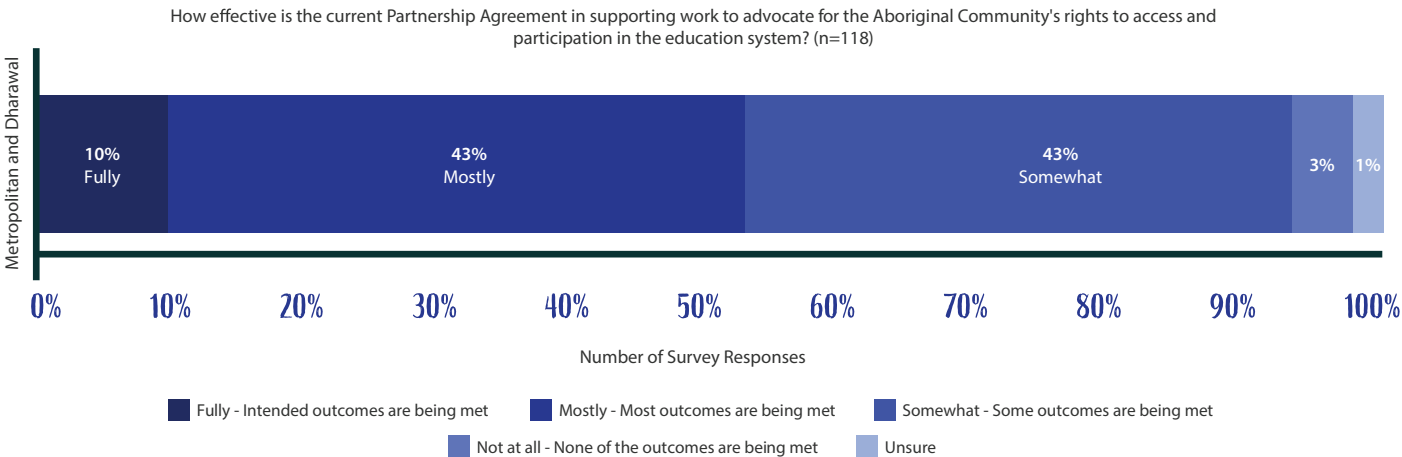
- Participants reported that pockets of racism still exist on school grounds.
- It was frequently mentioned that teachers lack confidence in teaching Aboriginal content due to fear of saying the wrong thing.
- Participants indicated that parents are often unaware of who to go to for support.
- It was reported that there has been a lack of cultural identity among students.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested creating more opportunities to include parent voice in decision-making.
- It was also highlighted that there should be more opportunities for Aboriginal students to lead initiatives.
- Participants highlighted the need for more Aboriginal Education Officers in schools.

Advocacy & Self-Determination

Of the 118 participants that responded to the survey question, 43% of participants believe the Partnership is ‘Mostly’ effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 43% of participants believe it is ‘Somewhat’ effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants reported that student voice is being heard through yarning circles, First Nations captains, and Junior AECG initiatives.
- Participants highlighted that Aboriginal voices are represented through staff involvement and participation in recruitment panels.

Gaps in Implementation

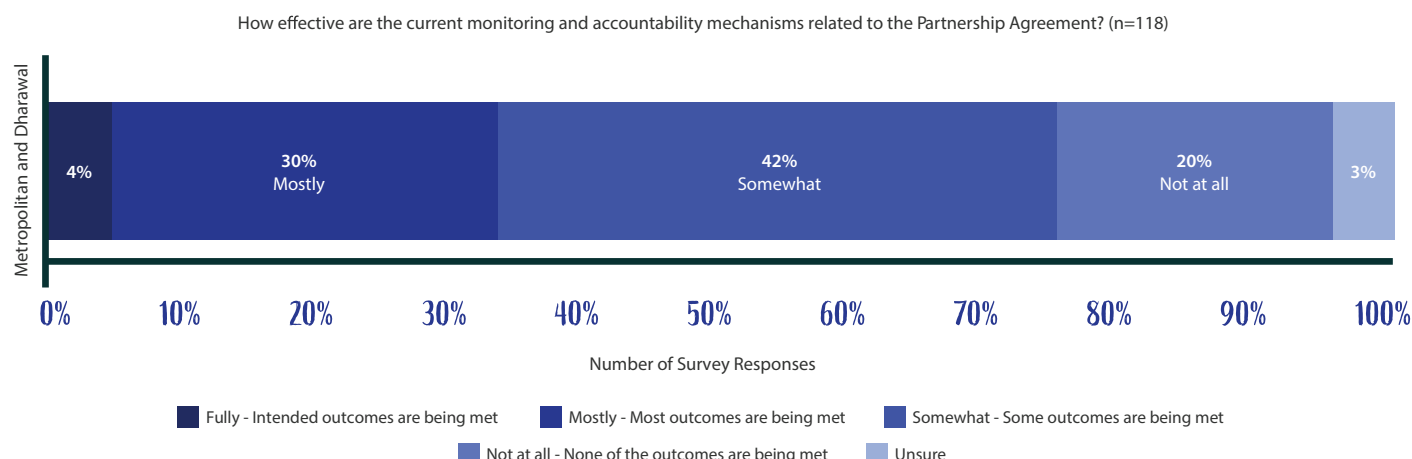
- Participants indicated that some people do not feel culturally safe to share their voice.
- It was also reported that there is a limited number of Aboriginal Education Officers in schools, with some schools having none.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested consulting with parents, carers, Elders, and local high schools to gather feedback.
- It was also highlighted that knowledge holders should be paid for their time and services.
- Participants indicated that Junior AECG needs both local and state representatives, so student voice is not lost.

Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 118 participants that responded to the survey question, 30% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 42% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants reported that schools are using their School Excellence Plan to track progress.
- It was also highlighted that regular meetings are occurring with the community to seek feedback and drive next steps.
- Participants indicated that the Partnership has been included as part of the agenda at AECG meetings.

Gaps in Implementation

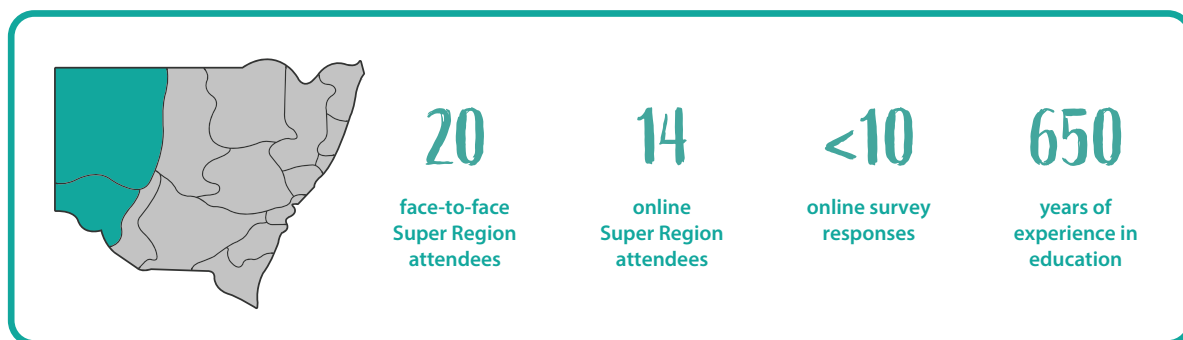
- Participants reported that schools are not sharing information with the AECG at all levels.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested that annual reflection and a school reporting framework need to take place.
- It was highlighted that there needs to be greater transparency around funding allocations.



Western 3 and Riverina 3



On the 18th of September 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Western 3 & Riverina 3 Super Region held a meeting in Broken Hill. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

As there were fewer than 10 online survey responses for this Super Region and to ensure we adhere to privacy regulations, the NSW AECG and the Department were unable to analyse and present quantitative data similar to the other Super Regions.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants reported that some schools are actively engaging in genuine collaboration with local Aboriginal communities. These partnerships have enabled schools to co-host cultural events, embed Aboriginal knowledges into planning, and strengthen trust between educators and families.
- Participants also indicated that most schools recognise the AECG as the primary point of consultation.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was frequently mentioned that Department staff are unaware of policies around Aboriginal Education and the partnership with the NSW AECG.
- Several schools reportedly do not acknowledge the NSW AECG's authority, which erodes trust and limits opportunities for authentic collaboration.
- Participants highlighted a perceived lack of respect from the Department towards the NSW AECG, creating barriers to meaningful engagement and shared accountability.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested introducing language camps in this area to promote cultural identity and community connection.
- It was recommended that Junior AECG representatives should attend senior AECG meetings where appropriate. This would amplify student voice, create leadership pathways, and ensure youth perspectives inform decision-making processes.



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants indicated that a new curriculum has been introduced which embeds Aboriginal histories and culture.
- It was also reported that some schools have created culturally safe spaces for students to connect with Aboriginal Education Officers and other community members. These spaces provide hubs for mentoring, wellbeing support, and cultural activities.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was frequently mentioned that covert racism is still present in some schools, creating unsafe environments for Aboriginal students and staff.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants highlighted the need for more Aboriginal staff and leaders to be appointed in schools.
- It was also reported that teachers need more training to become confident in teaching the curriculum authentically and respectfully.

Advocacy and Self-Determination

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that advocacy and self-determination are increasingly valued within the Department.

Gaps in Implementation

- It was reported that decisions are being made by leadership teams without consideration of community input.
- Participants also highlighted that there is very low family representation in AECG, making engagement difficult.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- It was frequently mentioned that other Aboriginal community organisations, such as Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS) and Elders groups, should collaborate and strengthen relationships with Local and Regional AECGs.

Accountability and Monitoring

Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants indicated that the School Excellence Plan is aligned with the Partnership Agreement.
- It was also reported that some schools have systems in place to monitor progress of the Partnership, such as traffic light frameworks

Gaps in Implementation

- It was frequently mentioned that principals are not held accountable when failing to follow protocols or create culturally safe settings.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested that principals should present information on Closing the Gap initiatives and school statistics and data.
- It was reported that schools and families should have access to a Regional AECG if a local area does not have an AECG representative.



Upper South Coast & Far South Coast



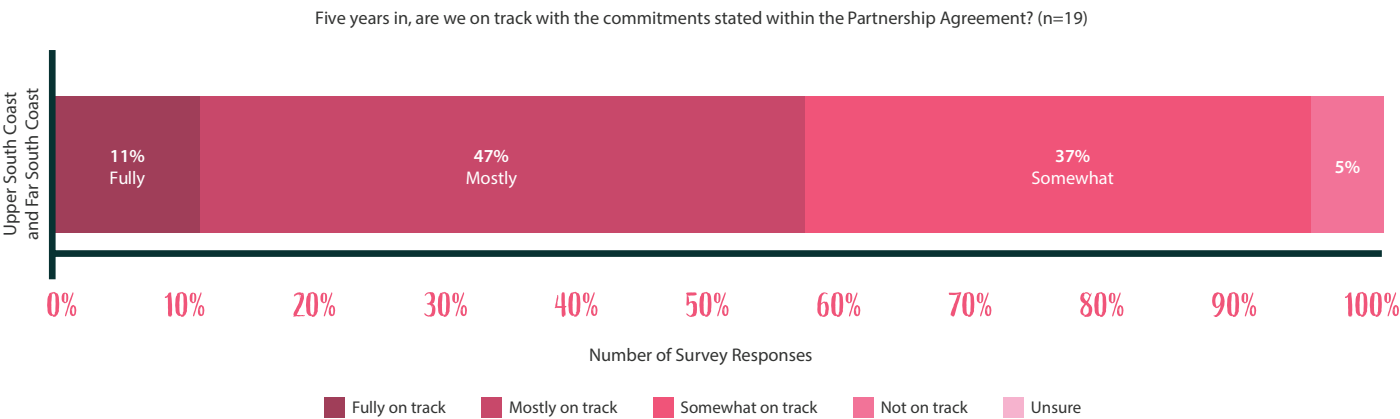
On the 23rd of September 2025, Regional delegates and Department representatives from the Upper & Far South Coast Super Region held a meeting in Batemans Bay. This meeting was held face-to-face and online to provide insights and feedback on how the Partnership is being implemented in practice.

The findings will be presented using the same structure as the overall state-wide analysis. This will include the current strengths, gaps in implementation and potential opportunities to strengthen aligned with the key themes.

Analysis of the findings revealed diversity in experiences and relationships across the Super Region. While both the NSW AECG and Department teams worked to present findings that reflected all perspectives, it should be acknowledged that achieving complete representation of every viewpoint is challenging and can sometimes appear as contradictory. This highlights the complexity of local and regional differences and the need for community-based initiatives and reforms.

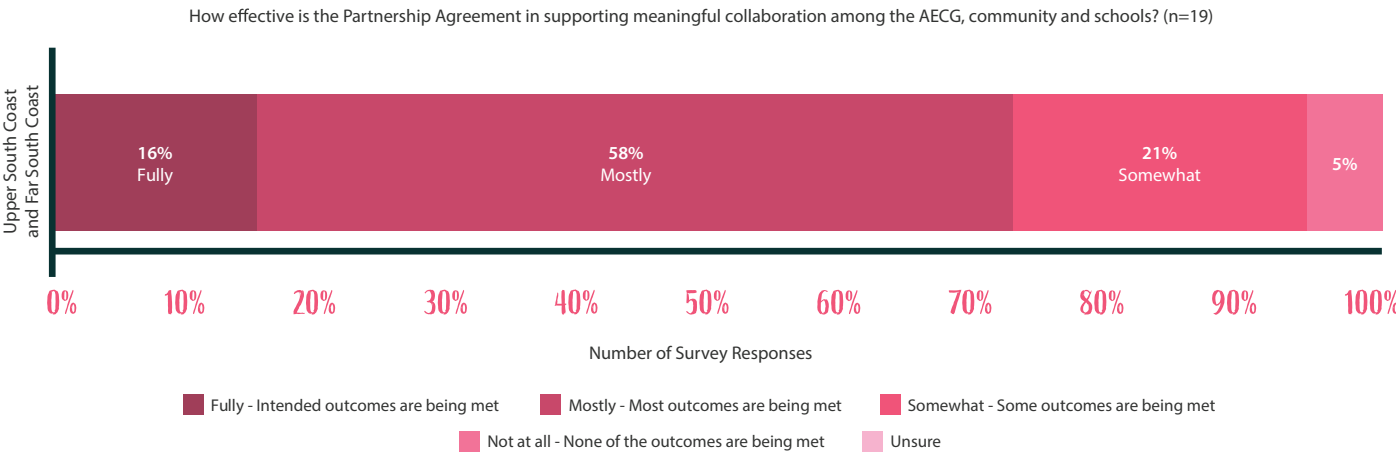
Overall Progress of the Partnership's Commitments

Of the 19 participants that responded to the survey question, 47% of participants believe the Partnership commitments are 'Mostly on track' to being delivered, with 37% reporting they are 'Somewhat on track'.



Genuine Partnerships & Collaboration

Of the 19 participants that responded to the survey question, 58% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting genuine partnerships & collaboration, whilst 21% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that schools are actively building connections with Aboriginal communities, Elders, and families, creating stronger cultural ties and trust. These relationships have enabled schools to co-host cultural events and embed Aboriginal perspectives into planning and curriculum.
- Participants discussed that engagement in AECG-led initiatives such as Junior AECG programs, language activities, and STEM camps demonstrates a commitment to student voice and cultural inclusion. These programs provide leadership opportunities for Aboriginal students and foster collaboration between schools and communities.



Gaps in Implementation

- Participants reported that in areas without a Local AECGs, schools face significant challenges in accessing cultural guidance and community input. This absence limits opportunities for genuine collaboration and risks decisions being made without Aboriginal voices.
- Participants noted that some interactions between schools and communities are perceived as tokenistic, with consultation occurring too late or being limited to symbolic gestures rather than meaningful co-design. This undermines trust and the intent of the Partnership.

Opportunities to Strengthen

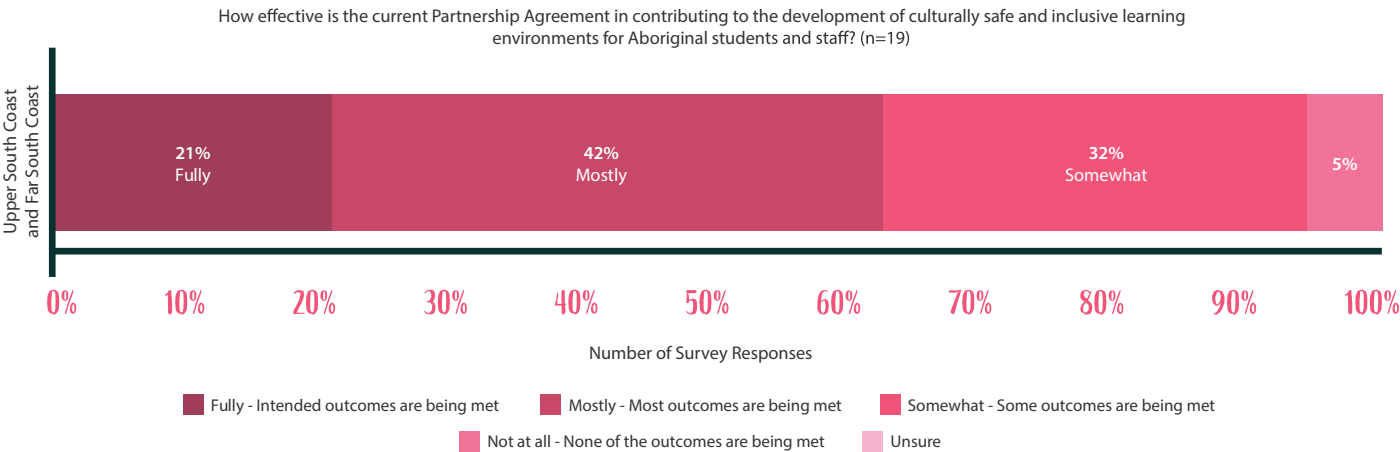
- Participants suggested that schools should adopt a networked approach, connecting with other local schools, TAFE, and universities to share resources and strengthen collaboration. This would create a broader platform for cultural initiatives and student engagement.
- Participants highlighted that re-establishing a Local AECG in some areas is critical to ensure community voice and representation in decision-making. This would provide a structured mechanism for consultation and advocacy, aligning with the principles of shared decision-making.

“Due to the partnership people attend regular meetings, with community members invited and attending. Aboriginal Education meetings occurring with perspectives being shared and included in lessons”



Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Of the 19 participants that responded to the survey question, 42% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting cultural safety & inclusion, whilst 32% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants discussed that dedicated classrooms for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal Education Officers have created culturally safe spaces for learning and connection. These spaces serve as hubs for mentoring, wellbeing support, and cultural activities.
- Participants also mentioned that the visibility of Aboriginal culture has increased through initiatives such as flying flags, incorporating language in signage, and using cultural designs on uniforms and murals. These actions promote pride and belonging for Aboriginal students.
- Participants reported that schools are working closely with local communities to embed local context into the syllabus, ensuring that teaching reflects authentic histories and cultural knowledge.



Gaps in Implementation

- Participants noted that Aboriginal staff are experiencing cultural burnout due to the additional responsibilities placed on them, including leading cultural initiatives and supporting community engagement alongside their core roles.
- Participants indicated that there is a lack of Aboriginal staff in schools, which limits cultural representation and mentorship opportunities for students.
- Participants reported that racism persists in some schools, creating barriers to cultural safety and inclusion. This includes both overt incidents and systemic issues that undermine trust.
- Participants highlighted that funding has been a persistent struggle, which has hindered the implementation of cultural initiatives, reducing opportunities for sustained programs and resources.

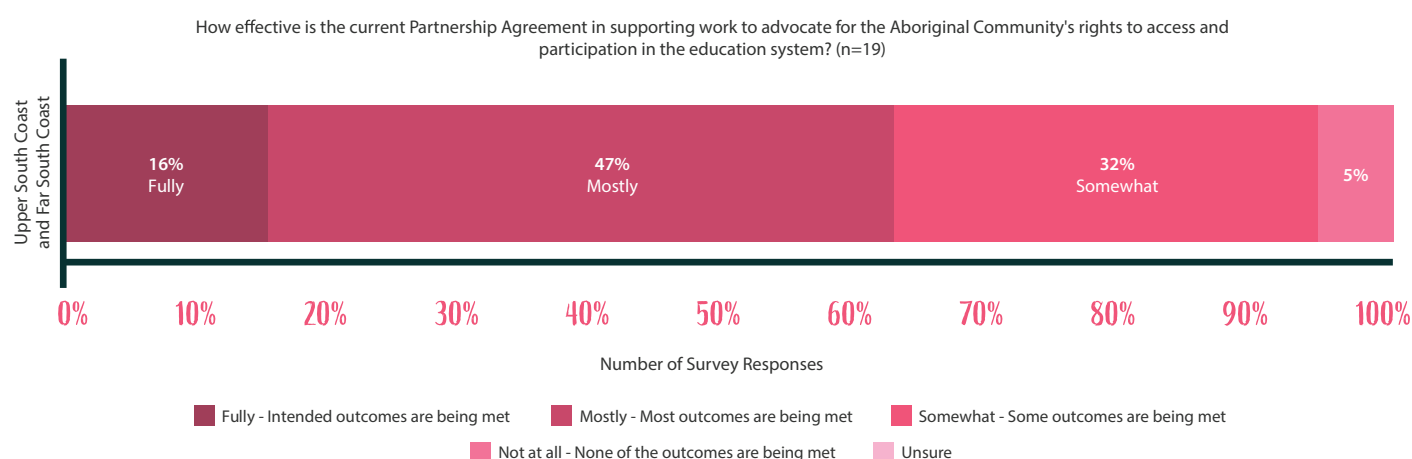
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants suggested creating forums for underrepresented parents and carers to share their voice in decision-making, ensuring diverse perspectives are included.
- Participants indicated that all staff need cultural awareness training to build understanding and foster inclusive practices beyond compliance.
- Participants highlighted the importance of increasing access to Aboriginal mentors for students to support cultural identity, wellbeing and educational success.



Advocacy and Self-Determination

Of the 19 participants that responded to the survey question, 47% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting advocacy & self-determination, whilst 32% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective.



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants highlighted that Junior AECGs are actively advocating for student voice within schools, providing a platform for leadership and cultural pride.
- Participants indicated that schools are connecting with Elders and high school students to strengthen cultural engagement and collaboration, creating intergenerational learning opportunities.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants reported that meetings are often perceived as formal and intimidating, discouraging open dialogue and limiting community participation. This can result in decisions being made without genuine input from families and grassroots members.
- Participants noted that Aboriginal staff frequently work outside their designated roles, taking on additional cultural responsibilities without adequate support, leading to fatigue and disengagement.



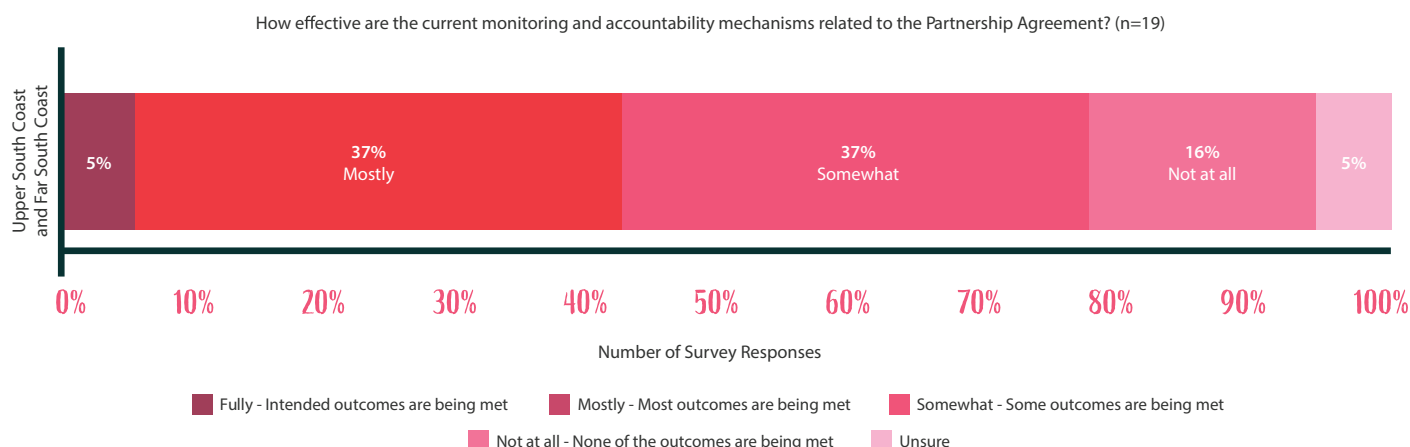
Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants frequently highlighted the need for schools to include more explicit information in their School Excellence Plans. This includes clearly outlining initiatives and measurable outcomes for Aboriginal Education rather than broad statements. Delegates suggested that School Excellence Plans should reflect localised cultural priorities, incorporate community feedback, and demonstrate how schools plan to embed Aboriginal perspectives across curriculum and wellbeing programs.
- Participants also expressed the need for greater parent involvement with the AECG to ensure family voices are heard in decision-making. This could involve creating structured opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to planning processes, attend AECG meetings, and participate in cultural initiatives. Schools were encouraged to adopt strategies that make engagement accessible and culturally safe, such as holding meetings in neutral spaces and providing flexible times for working families.



Accountability and Monitoring

Of the 19 participants that responded to the survey question, 37% of participants believe the Partnership is 'Mostly' effective at supporting accountability & monitoring, whilst 37% of participants believe it is 'Somewhat' effective (Figure 41).



Current Strengths in Implementation

- Participants indicated that School Excellence Plans have been widely recognised as a useful mechanism for tracking student progress and embedding the Partnership commitments into school planning. These plans provide a structured approach for monitoring actions and aligning initiatives with agreed priorities.
- Participants also highlighted that School Reference Groups (SRGs) are active in some schools, offering a platform for collaborative decision-making and ensuring that Aboriginal voices are represented in discussions about school priorities and progress.

Gaps in Implementation

- Participants reported that AECGs do not have access to key school data, including engagement and completion statistics.
- Participants also indicated that School Excellence Plans were also described as not always specific, with some plans lacking clear benchmarks or measurable targets. This can lead to inconsistent implementation and difficulty in assessing whether commitments are being met.

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Participants highlighted that schools should present the Partnership to all staff, including as part of induction programs for new employees. This ensures that every staff member understands the commitments and their role in implementation.
- Participants also suggested developing formal reporting templates for schools to share progress with AECGs, including updates on student outcomes, cultural initiatives, and funding allocations.

