

# Case Study – Enabling Indigenous-led reform

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## The Reform Journey of the La Perouse Aboriginal Community



### Background

The La Perouse Aboriginal community are the traditional people of coastal Sydney. In the early 2000s, a group of young likeminded members of the La Perouse Aboriginal community, now called the ‘La Pa Deadlies’, came together to address challenges facing their community. Over time, this group grew in influence to include key leaders from all La Perouse Aboriginal community organisations and undertook planning to improve the lives of La Perouse Aboriginal community members and re-engage in the economy to minimise reliance on government funding.

This case study outlines the approach of the La Perouse Aboriginal community in undertaking its reform journey. It also explores the outcomes that have been achieved throughout this journey so far, in addition to the future aspirations of the community and highlights of how Jawun has supported this vision. Since establishing its partnership with the La Perouse Aboriginal community in 2012, Jawun has sent over 120 six week or longer term secondments from its corporate and government partners to the community. Jawun has also provided three placements within its Emerging Leaders Program to La Perouse community members, as well as two placements within its Indigenous Corporate Leadership Program and three places within its Stories of Female Leadership (SoFL) Program.

### Approach

The size, influence and united nature of the La Pa Deadlies group is central to the reform journey of the La Perouse community. With leaders from all La Perouse community organisations represented, the group is able to undertake strategic planning to workshop community development priorities that span across all organisations and the entire community.

Chris Ingrey, member of the La Pa Deadlies and La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), has reflected on the weight of community leadership and the strength of having a group of likeminded individuals that can rotate between leadership roles to support each other. This minimises reliance on an individual and provides professional development opportunities ideal for succession planning.

Founded in 2013, Inner Sydney Empowered Communities (ISEC) has been an important vehicle for elevating La Perouse community priorities for government funding. ISEC is one of ten Indigenous communities that make up the Empowered Communities (EC) initiative: *“a set of transformation national reforms for an Indigenous Empowerment Agenda”*. ISEC is governed by a representative Board comprised of members from the two local Aboriginal community alliances – La Perouse and Redfern. Membership to the La Perouse Alliance is drawn from ‘opt-in’ community organisations, including many participants from the initial La Pa Deadlies group. ISEC believes that most of government funding does not support community aspirations and that greater funding efficiency can be achieved by collaborating with local Indigenous communities. To achieve this, ISEC successfully negotiated a 75% weighting on Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding decisions.

ISEC designed its ‘Pathway of Empowerment’ as a framework to evaluate services that receive commonwealth Indigenous Advancement (IAS) funding. A ‘Joint Decision Making’ approach is taken to ensure equal representation from the La Perouse and Redfern communities on the ‘Community Panels’ that evaluate IAS funding and provide recommendations to the Commonwealth Government to redirect funding in line with community priorities.<sup>11</sup>

The EC initiative involves communities developing 'First Priority Agreements' (FPAs) as initial development focus areas to progress. The La Perouse Alliance adopted FPAs including the expansion of the Gujaga Childhood Centre, feasibility analysis to establish a community aged care facility and refurbishment of the old local mission church as a healing centre. The La Perouse Aboriginal community and Jawun share a vision of Indigenous-led empowerment. Reflecting this, Jawun sends secondees from its corporate and government partners to support the development of La Perouse community priorities and to transfer skills to key staff within community organisations.

In total over 35 secondees have supported this important work to date.

- Gujaga childcare expansion FPA – (5)
- Aged care facility (4)
- Mission church restoration (6)
- Various other La Perouse community related projects (11)

Another component of the EC initiative involves Indigenous communities establishing development agendas. The La Perouse Alliance has developed its '20 year vision' which outlines its community development aspirations over the coming decades. These longer-term priorities include improving community health, education, culture and identity, housing and infrastructure and wealth.<sup>[2]</sup>

Jawun support to date has been split across these key areas:

- Community health, including a proposal to establish an Aboriginal Medical Service on country (7)
- Education, including a business case to establish a community-run Registered Training Organisation (3)
- Culture and identity, including assisting with the launch of the Gamay Ranger Program (6)
- Housing and infrastructure, including support for the design of the La Perouse Aboriginal community town plan(18)
- Wealth, including planning and launching new community enterprises and supporting them with customer acquisition and branding strategies (16)

Jawun also supports the development of emerging leaders within the La Perouse community through its Emerging Leaders Program. In 2011, Jawun established this program to bolster capacity building activities in Indigenous organisations and assist with leadership development. Three La Perouse Aboriginal community members have taken part in the program, including ISEC Co-Chair Carrine Liddell, Chris Ingrey and La Perouse LALC Board Member Shallan Foster. Chris took part in the 2013 program, which focused on business and economic development, stating:

*"The Jawun Emerging Leaders program was a great opportunity for me to see what programs and businesses other communities were operating...It really helped me realise the best investment that our communities could make is an investment in our own people".*

Developing relationships within the corporate sector has been an important component of the La Perouse community's reform journey. These relationships have assisted the community with attracting support to accelerate community development priorities. By engaging consecutive secondees from the same corporate organisation, more and more champions are created within that organisation over time. The La Perouse Aboriginal community leverages Jawun Executive Visits in a similar way. These visits involve senior corporate executives visiting Indigenous communities partly to learn about Indigenous Empowerment and the impact of secondments. This has resulted in the formation of strong relationships between the La Perouse Aboriginal community and corporate Australia.

An Advisory Council of corporate organisations has been created by the La Perouse community, including Jawun partners and other organisations, that it consults for advice on a range of issues. Membership on the Advisory Council includes KPMG, Westpac and Norton Rose Fulbright from the Jawun partnership. Westpac has sent twenty secondees to support La Perouse community organisations, with KPMG and NRF sending twelve and six secondees respectively.

The La Perouse Aboriginal community has also shifted how it engages with government to create change. This is partly due to the lobbying skills developed by former ISEC Co-Chair Chris Ingrey during his placement on the Jawun Indigenous Corporate Leadership (ICL) program in 2017. The ICL program involves Indigenous leaders undertaking a 'reverse secondment' to leading corporate organisations to provide corporate experience to Indigenous leaders. Two La Perouse Aboriginal community members have taken part in the program, including

Chris and Brad Cooke – Jawun’s long serving Regional Director in the Inner Sydney region who has been key to the development of both the La Perouse Aboriginal community and Jawun.

Chris undertook his ‘reverse secondment’ within the Industry and International Affairs team at Qantas to learn how to better influence government for his community. Upon completing the program, Chris stated:

*“We do a lot of work with government. Where before we’d just do it, now we frame it as not just what we need to do for you but what you need to do for us...The ICL program gave me the skills to enhance my effectiveness to access and influence government...To lobby in government you have to have a succinct and precise message...They say the number one rule when you are lobbying is to keep it to three things. Three things that we want and three things that they may want to offer.”*

## **Outcomes**

The La Perouse Aboriginal community has significantly progressed its ISEC First Priority Agreements and 20-year vision. This reflects its successful project management, government lobbying and Jawun support of these priorities. The feasibility analysis to establish a community aged care facility has been completed, and funding has been secured for the expansion of the Gujaga Childhood Centre and stage one of the local mission church refurbishment. Planning has also commenced for the establishment of an Aboriginal Medical Service on country to bolster community health outcomes.

The Gujaga Foundation has been created to lead cultural and language restoration and education within the La Perouse Aboriginal community. La Perouse LALC was granted \$1.4 million by the Federal Government to establish a marine urban ranger program, which is now operational, providing jobs to enable the traditional people of coastal Sydney to continue caring for country. The housing and infrastructure priority is in sharp focus, with the Land Council investigating how to leverage its land and asset portfolio to provide additional social housing to the La Perouse community. Finally, options are being explored to develop new enterprises and services to create employment opportunities and wealth for community members, including through strategic partnerships with leading corporate organisations.

## **Next steps**

The La Perouse community plans to continue implementing its FPAs and 20 year vision. This includes supporting the development of young leaders, focusing on culture and language restoration and developing strategic relationships with corporate and government organisations. It also involves continuing to focus on re-engaging with the economy. Through establishing new enterprises, the La Perouse Alliance aims to foster aspiration and job opportunities for community members. Accumulated wealth can then be reinvested to further support the community.

Completion of capital works for the mission church restoration and Gujaga childcare expansion remain a community priority, as does progressing elements of the 20 year vision previously outlined.

Finally, the La Perouse Alliance aims to establish a data centre to track the impact of progress along its development agenda on the lives of La Perouse community members. These elements form the development approach of the La Perouse Aboriginal community.

<sup>[1]</sup> For more information about the ‘Pathway to Empowerment’, ‘Joint Decision Making Model’ and ‘Community Panels’, visit the ISEC Website at <https://isec.org.au/>

<sup>[2]</sup> ISEC Website, ‘Our Vision’ Section, accessed 7 July 2020, <https://isec.org.au/our-vision/>